

**Evaluation of the Impact that Teacher Targeted Bullying has on Individual Safety  
Perceptions and Stress**

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## **Abstract**

This study investigated teacher targeted bullying in primary schools to examine whether students serve as an unsafe work stressor for teachers, because teacher targeted bullying is on the rise. The study looked at teacher targeted bullying as an antecedent of stress and the mechanisms, such as mediators and moderators, which affected this bullying-stress relationship. 113 primary school teachers completed a self-report questionnaire which measured bullying, self-efficacy, safety climate perceptions, social support and stress. The results provided evidence that social support from others outside work moderated the low level bullying-stress, and severe bullying-stress relationships. Most importantly, unsafe job perceptions mediated the relationship between low level bullying and stress. The results of this research imply that student bullying can influence teachers to perceive their job as unsafe and lead to stress. These findings can be used to develop effective strategies to not only prevent and manage bullying, but create safer schools for teachers and pupils.

## Introduction

Although substantial research has been conducted on school bullying and the subsequent strategies for intervention have been around for decades (Smith, 2010), bullying remains to be a major issue throughout the world (Anderson, 2011). Furthermore, very little research has investigated the phenomenon of teacher targeted bullying in New Zealand schools which has been recognised in the media over the past few years.

Bullying can have serious adverse effects on an individual's physical and psychological wellbeing and has been identified as a significant precursor of stress (UNISON, 2003). Yet, previous research which has identified teaching as a high stress profession over the decades (Youndhusband, 2006), has generally neglected to investigate bullying as a contributing factor of teacher stress (Wilson, Douglas & Lyon, 2011) and instead has focused on educational changes, such as increased workload and better performance as sources of teacher stress.

Bullying introduces a potential workplace hazard and stressor for teachers with widespread implications. The consequences of bullying are not limited to the teacher's wellbeing, but can adversely affect the pupils learning environment. Thus, bullying in schools needs to be managed successfully by recognising and understanding bullying as a potential workplace stressor for teaching staff.

New Zealand schools are legally required to "provide a safe physical and emotional environment" (Ministry of Education, 2010, p.1) and are obligated to minimise bullying. By not understanding or recognising teacher targeted bullying, schools are neglecting their responsibility to honour this moral obligation.

The current research aims to investigate the phenomenon of teacher targeted bullying as an antecedent of teacher stress and understand how safety climate perceptions and individual differences affect this relationship. The purpose of the research is to make people

aware of the complexity of bullying in primary schools in order to promote change and create safer work environments for teachers in school organizations. In doing so, the results may be used to enhance teachers' quality of work and improve job satisfaction by reducing the unnecessary stress that bullying creates.

## **Bullying**

School bullying between children is not a new phenomenon; however, only in the last 40 years has bullying become of interest to researchers (Olweus, 2003). Systematic research into bullying began mainly in Scandinavian schools in the 1970's. By the late 1980s research into school bullying had attracted the attention of England, Canada, The USA, Japan, The Netherlands and Australia (Olweus, 1993).

A person who is repeatedly and intentionally abused by a more powerful individual over time is a victim of bullying, or "mobbing" as it is known in many European countries (Olweus, 1978). Bullying consists of either covert or overt behaviours that are intended to cause distress to the victim (Davidson & Demaray, 2007).

A 1980s study into school bullying questioned 150,000 Scandinavian students, and reported that for students aged between 6-15 years of age, 15% were regularly involved in bullying issues, as either the bully and/or the victim (Olweus, 1993). In 2002, Olweus used the same questionnaire to conduct another study with 11,000 students. The results reported from that study found that students subjected to bullying had doubled since 1983 and the number of students involved in regular and serious bullying issues increased by 65% (Olweus, 2003).

In an international report that considered school safety in relation to curriculum success, New Zealand was ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> highest for the prevalence of bullying in primary schools. 5000 year 5 students from New Zealand were included in the study, in which they

reported an incidence rate of bullying over twice the international average.  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the 5000 students from New Zealand had been bullied at some stage in the previous month (Mullis, Martin, & Foy, 2008).

### *Workplace Bullying*

Although the bullying literature is dominated by research into school bullying, bullying is not an issue restricted to school children. Whilst research into adult bullying is far less extensive than school bullying (Rayner & Hoel, 1997), bullying does pose a significant problem for many workplaces worldwide. Zapf, Escartin, Hoel & Vartia (2011) looked at empirical research on bullying in European countries over the past 20 years and found that 3-4% of employees are the victims of serious bullying, whilst as many as 15% of employees are subjected to occasional bullying (Rayner & Keashly, 2006). Hoel and Cooper (2000) conducted a study on bullying from more than 70 organizations in Great Britain. From the 5,288 responses they received 10.6% of respondents had been bullied in the last six months, whilst 24.7% had been bullied in the last 5 years.

For negative interpersonal behaviour towards a victim to be defined as workplace bullying, the victim must feel they are repeatedly harassed in the workplace in a way that affects their work performance (Rayner & Hoel, 1997). As a result of this repeated hostile behaviour, workplace bullying is a persistent source of stress for individuals (Bond, Tuckey & Dollard, 2010). Workplace bullying behaviour is predominately indirect, verbal and psychological taunting, rather than physical aggression (Bond, Tuckey & Dollard, 2010; (Rayner & Keashly, 2006). Consequently, workplace bullying is generally subtle (Djurkovic, McCormack & Casimir, 2008) and may be overlooked by, or seem trivial to many colleagues and supervisors especially when the culture of the organization is not one of anti-bullying (UNISON, 2003).

Workplace bullying can be divided into two categories: work-related bullying and person-related bullying. Work-related bullying consists of any behaviour(s) that undermine an individual's professional status (e.g. belittling); isolate the individual (e.g. physically or socially, restricting employment opportunities); and target an individual by assigning excessive and/or unnecessary workloads (Bond, Tuckey & Dollard, 2010; Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf & Cooper, 2011; Rayner & Hoel, 1997). Person-related bullying occurs when the bullying is a personal attack on the individual, such as verbal abuse, intimidation and spreading rumour (Einarsen, Hoel, Zapf & Cooper, 2011).

Bullying introduces a workplace hazard (i.e. distraction, fear, stress) which can have a serious affect on the health and safety of the employees by creating an unsafe environment and increasing the chance of injury (Clark, 2007; Squelch, 2010). A study on psychological risk factors in the workplace, conducted throughout 20 countries, placed workplace bullying as one of the main workplace risks (Pandey, Quick, Rossi, Nelson & Martin, 2010).

The negative effects of workplace bullying are widespread with negative implications not only for the victim but for the overall organisation's performance and effectiveness (Clark, 2007; Rayner & Keashly, 2006). Workplace bullying can cause absenteeism and turnover due to increased stress, decreased job satisfaction, lower morale and reduced commitment to the organization (Clark, 2007; Djurkovic, McCormack & Casimir, 2008; Hoel & Cooper, 2000). The organisation needs to manage the effects of employee absence or turnover in order to maintain current output and innovation (Djurkovic, McCormack & Casimir, 2008). The ramifications of bullying are not restricted to the added expense associated with workplace bullying but also extends to the psychological environment of the organisation. Bullying can reduce trust within the organisation which can lead to a breakdown in the previously perceived safe psychological environment, thus, deterring employees from contributing and committing to the organisation (Rayner & Keashly, 2006).

### *Workplace Bullying in the Teaching Profession*

The majority of research into school bullying has focused on students as the victims of bullying, yet, teachers can be targets of workplace bullying by their principal, colleagues, parents and students (Squelch, 2010). According to Hoel and Cooper's (2000) study of bullying in Great Britain, the teaching profession has the third highest rate of bullying out of 16 industries, surpassed only by postal/telecommunications and prison staff. Several international studies conducted in Great Britain, Ireland, Norway, Sweden and Australia have identified teachers as one of the most high-risk occupations for bullying (Blase, Blase & Du, 2008). Additionally, teachers are the highest users of the *UK National Workplace Bullying Advice Line* and teachers from Australia, Canada, UK, and USA, make up the largest users of *Bully Online's* email service (BullyOnline. 2004).

### *Teacher Targeted Bullying in New Zealand*

Recently there has been a resurgence of media coverage into school bullying in New Zealand as schools are becoming the focus of increasing violence (Steffgen & Ewen, 2007; Galamd, Lecocq & Philippot, 2007; Zeira, Astor & Benbenishty, 2004); however the focus is not only on students being targeted by bullies but on students' aggressive behaviour towards teachers. Nevertheless, previous research literature has failed to recognize teachers as victims of school violence (Galamd, Lecocq & Philippot, 2007), with few reports investigating teacher targeted bullying when dealing with school violence (Zeira, Astor & Benbenishty, 2004).

Violence against teachers is on the rise (NZPA, 2008) as there is growing trend of children confronting staff with intimidation, violence, and aggressive behaviour (Marsh, Williams & McGee, 2009; Waikato Times, 2010). Teachers have reported fear of victimization and fear of violence at school (Dworkin, Haney & Telshow, 1998). Yet, the

Ministry of Education has stated that student bullying of teachers is grossly under-reported. In a report by the New Zealand Post Primary Teacher's Association (Benefield, 2003) pupils were definitively the main source of bullying targeted at teachers, followed to a lesser degree, by staff and parents.

Teacher targeted bullying is an unprovoked aggressive behaviour, intentionally targeted at a teacher (Dupper & Meyer-Adams, 2002; Pervin & Turner, 1998). The aggressive behaviour is repeated and occurs over a period of time (Olweus, 1993). The bullying may be direct, either verbal or physical (hitting, kicking etc), or indirect psychological taunting (rumour spreading, manipulation, etc) by the student to cause distress to the teacher (Davis & Davis, 2007; Olweus, 1993). The student bully has a perceived advantage over the targeted individual in terms of power and strength (Hunter, Boyle, & Warden, 2007; Olweus, 1993), whether this is mental or physical, as teachers are usually powerless to intervene due to school policy requirements.

Previous research has indicated that one in three of all New Zealand teachers are exposed to minor forms of bullying daily or weekly by mostly students (Marsh, Williams & McGee, 2009). In 2006, 1/7 of primary school teachers reported at least one physical attack including, pushing, shoving, punching, shouldering, slapping, kicking and stomping, with 58 percent experiencing verbal aggression on a more regular basis (Waikato Times, 2010; Cheng, 2007). In 2004, 435 students were stood down and 155 were suspended as a result of physical assaults on staff (Ministry of Education, 2005 as cited in Marsh, Williams & McGee, 2009).

This aggressive bullying behaviour not only affects the immediate staff, but comes with a cost to the general public in terms of government funded costs associated with health claims. The Accident Compensation Corporation funded 442 teachers treatment following assaults at school during 2008 and 2009 (Roy, 2010). Payouts to primary school teachers

increased from \$1.49 million in 2004 to \$2.48 million in the year to June 2008 (NZPA, 2008). As well as costs associated with medical and psychological care resulting from threats and assaults, further costs result from lost wages, lost days of work, need for training and replacement teachers due to teachers leaving the school profession prematurely and lost teaching time (American Psychological Association, 2011).

Aggressive student behaviour is one of the main sources of psychological distress experienced by some teachers (Pervin & Turner, 1988), with victims of teacher targeted bullying reporting suffering stress as a result (Pervin & Turner, 2008), consequently, school violence has a large negative impact on teacher well-being (Galamd, Lecocq & Philippot, 2007). Poor student behaviour and the resulting stress can impact on teaching performance (Kyriacou, 2000; Zeira, Benbenishy, 2004) which may have a detrimental effect on the learning opportunities of other students (Johnson, Oswald & Adey, 1993). Education enables students to prosper by promoting life skills and high achievement. However, an effective school not only has high achievement amongst its students, but promotes an environment of support and safety to ensure student and teacher wellbeing. Therefore, it is important to discover the effects that bullying may have on the psychosocial working conditions for teachers in order to work on a solution.

### **Workplace Stress**

A stress response results from the interaction between the environment and the characteristics of the individual (Lazarus, 1999). Individuals appraise the environment and will experience stress when they perceive a large discrepancy between the environmental demand(s) (stressor) and the resources available to them to control the demand (LaRocco, House & French, 1980; Lazarus, 1999). Individuals vary in their available resources or their perception of available resources, and for this reason, reactions to the same stimulus will

differ from person to person (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Williams, Smith, Gunn & Uchino, 2010). This approach is understood as a transactional model of stress (Lazarus, 1999) and explains why individual stress responses to a stimulus vary in quality and intensity (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Williams et al., 2010). Individual differences (e.g. knowledge, personality and experience) (Zellars, 2007) explain why some people are resilient to psychological stress whilst others are more vulnerable and develop psychological distress or strain (Lazarus, 1999; Pandey, Quick, Rossi, Nelson & Martin, 2010; Williams et al., 2010).

The dominant view of stress in the research literature is that stressors are a hindrance to the organization and its employees (Pandey et al., 2010). Sources of occupational stress are role demands (e.g. ambiguity, lack of clarity, overload) (Spector, 2006), job insecurity, and interpersonal factors (e.g. bullying) (Clark, 2007). Continuous exposure to any of these sources of occupational stress has been linked to negative behavioural reactions (voluntary absenteeism, poor job performance), physiological reactions (heart disease, high blood pressure, headaches, reduced immune system functioning), and psychological reactions (aggression, anxiety, depression, burnout) for employees (Clark, 2007; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004; Pandey et al., 2010; Spector, 2006).

### *Teacher Targeted Bullying and Stress*

Productive teaching requires low stress environments for the attainment of educational goals and objectives. With bullying behaviour on the rise, the stress manifested by teachers has been proven to have detrimental effects on not only students learning but on teacher health and well-being (Dunham, 1992).

Students have the potential to create a workplace stressor for teachers in the form of bullying and recalcitrance. Stress can occur when the perceived demand from the student exceeds the teacher's perceived capability to respond effectively to it (Whitehead, 2001;

Needle, Griffin, Svendsen & Berney, 2009) as stress results from the imbalance between the environmental demands and the individual response capacity (Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis & Gruen, 1986). When a teacher is exposed to bullying they may not have the ability to minimise and control the situation caused by the student due to individual characteristics or school policy constraints. Therefore, stress arises when the teacher's appraisal of the situation determines that typical responses are not adequate to meet the situational demands and the adaptive behaviour required is perceived to be beyond their means (Needle, Griffin, Svendsen & Berney, 2009). It can be expected that a teacher who is the target of student bullying will be more likely to experience stress than a teacher not exposed to bullying.

### **Factors Affecting the Bullying-Stress Relationship**

Individuals react differently to threats and pressure depending on one's perception of stressful events, which is determined by their previous life experiences, personality characteristics, social support, and strategies for effective coping (Douglas, 2001). Thus, responses to an aversive stimulus are individual and will not result in the same stressful implications for all individuals (Whitehead, 2001). Therefore, stress can be viewed as a complex phenomenon composed of many variables, and as such, antecedents and mechanisms such as moderators and mediators must be considered when investigating the stressor-reaction-outcome relationship (Lazarus, 1999).

### *Safety Climate*

The workplace safety climate consists of safety procedures, policies and practices that individuals perceive to operate within their workplace, and therefore determine the perceived value and importance of safety within the workplace (Neal & Griffin, 2004). It is important

that safety policies, procedures, practices and management practices are consistent with the organisation's safety values, as inconsistency informs safety climate perceptions (Zohar, 2010).

Organisations that actively pursue and prioritise safety in the workplace, through rewarding and encouraging safety compliance, generally lead staff to have positive safety climate perceptions than those organizations who do not visibly value safety (Zohar, 2010).

Safety climate within a school is an individual's perception of how the school views and manages safety in their workplace (Strahan, Watson & Lennonb, 2008). Bullying can affect a teacher's appraisal of the school environment in which they work. If a teacher feels unsafe as a result of the bullying it may negatively alter the teacher's perception of the school's safety climate.

Consequently, individual safety climate perceptions influence subsequent employee behaviour and affective states (Spector, 2003). For example, perceptions of threats to personal safety within one's work environment can have a negative impact on employee attitudes and behaviour (Neal & Griffin, 2000). Thus, when individuals interpret the safety climate of their workplace as poor, job-related stress can result (Hayes, Perander, Smecko & Trask, 1998), which can ultimately lead to negative employee and organizational outcomes, such as, turnover, workplace dissatisfaction, frustration, exhaustion, and intention to leave the teaching profession (Needle, Griffin, Svendsen & Berney, 2009 ).

Negative safety climate perceptions can mediate the relationship between bullying and stress. Students who participate in teacher targeted bullying can act as a workplace safety stressor for teachers, particularly when the bullying leads the teacher to feel unsafe. It can be expected that teachers who are exposed to bullying have a negative view of safety climate which in turn will contribute to higher stress levels.

### *Self Efficacy*

Self-efficacy is the belief an individual has in their own capability to successfully accomplish tasks, and manage situations (Bandura, 1997). Judge, Locke, Durham and Kluger (1998) describe self-efficacy as “one’s capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to exercise general control over event’s in one’s life” (p.19). Bandura (1982) found that extent of self-efficacy determines how challenges, objectives and tasks are approached. Bandura (1978) concluded that people who possess high levels of self-efficacy are confident in their abilities to handle difficult situations effectively. Thus, people high in self-efficacy are more resilient to adversity, expend more effort in the attainment of difficult tasks, persevere and commit to challenges, and recover faster from difficult situations than people low in self efficacy (Bandura, 1978, 1982, 1997; Heslin & Klehe, 2007). This perception of being in control acts to reduce a person’s potential for experiencing stress and impaired functioning by approaching tasks as exciting challenges rather than overwhelming events to be avoided (Spector, 2006). Bullying is an adverse stimulus which can undermine a teacher’s control of their work environment and consequently act as a stressor for the teacher. By providing confidence and belief in one’s ability to successfully manage a situation, self-efficacy can help mitigate the negative effects of bullying to reduce/or eliminate the potential stress response.

### *Social Support*

Social support is the assistance provided by co-workers, friends of family to help an individual manage stressors (Spector, 2007). Social support aids in the appraisal and coping of stress by buffering the negative effects of stress to decrease the intensity of the stress response (Uchino & Birmingham, 2010). Perceived social support gives individual’s confidence to cope and adjust to challenging situations which means they experience less

stress and improved well-being (Zellars, 2007). Access to a reliable and effective social support network can reduce levels of workplace stress by mitigating the potentially deleterious effects of occupational stressors (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Frese, 1999; LaRocco, House & French, 1980). Social support is effective in reducing the effects of job stressors by providing individuals with a source of new knowledge, enhancing employee sense of self-identity/well-being, and facilitating workplace coping mechanisms that reduce stress (Cohen & Wills, 1985, Davidson & Demaray, 2007). In light of the research literature, it can be assumed that when teachers are faced with aversive threats, in terms bullying, those who have social support and assistance to cope with the environmental threat will be less likely to experience stress than individuals without this support.

### **The Present Research**

The main purpose of this study is to obtain an insight into the current issue of bullying of teachers by primary school students and the role of negative safety climate perceptions on the manifestation of stress.

Based on the literature review above, the following relationships are hypothesised and the model is depicted in Figure 1:

H1: Teacher targeted bullying is expected to be positively related to stress experienced by the affected teacher

H2: If a teacher is a target of student bullies, it is expected that they will negatively appraise safety within the school and as a result will report negative safety climate perceptions.

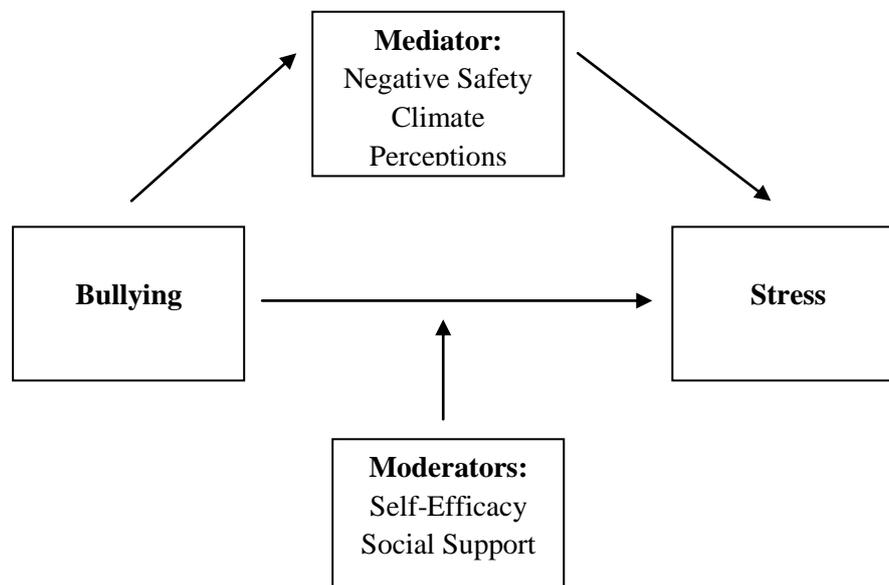
H3: It is expected that when a teacher negatively perceives the school safety climate, they will report higher levels of stress than those with more positive safety climate

perceptions.

H4: Perceptions of the safety climate will mediate the effect of bullying on stress, such that, the positive relationship between bullying and stress will be due to a more negative perception of the safety climate.

H5: It is expected that when teachers are the victims of bullying, those teachers high in self efficacy will be less likely to experience stress than those low in self-efficacy.

H6: When teachers are victims of bullying, it is expected that teachers with high levels of social support will experience less stress than those with low levels of social support.



*Figure 1:* The hypothesised moderated and mediated bullying-stress model.

## Method

### Participants

Participants were New Zealand primary school teachers working at full-primary, co-educational schools and were recruited either via email directly to the school principal or a by an invitation posted on a popular social networking site, *Facebook*. Of the 113 teachers who completed the questionnaire 83% were female and 17% were male. The age of participants ranged from 19 years of age to 63 years of age. 88% of the participants indicated their employment status as full-time, whilst 11% selected part-time and 1% chose other. Table 1 displays the decile rating of the respondents' current schools and their tenure in the teaching profession.

Table 1  
*Respondents Tenure as a Teacher and the Decile Rating of Their Current Primary School.*

Tenure (Years)	N	School Deciles	N
1	25	1	9
2-5	48	2	9
6-10	24	3	6
11-15	10	4	11
16-20	1	5	11
21-25	2	6	11
26+	3	7	24
		8	10
		9	11
		10	11

### Materials

An anonymous self-report, online questionnaire was developed to evaluate the research hypotheses (see Appendix A for questionnaire). The questionnaire was designed to measure teacher targeted bullying, stress, safety climate perceptions, self-efficacy and social support. The online survey was created using Qualtrics; a free online survey

software provided for University of Canterbury students and staff. Using Qualtrics, the questions within each section (self-efficacy, social support, stress, and safety climate perceptions) could be randomised. Qualtrics created an anonymous link for the questionnaire. This link allowed the survey to be accessed from any compatible computer at any time, and for multiple individual's to complete the survey simultaneously.

## **Measures**

### *Demographic Information*

For this section participants were asked to fill-in their age, in number of years, and classify their gender as either male or female. Participants were also asked how long they had worked at their current school, the decile of that school and whether they were affected by the Christchurch earthquakes. Participants were asked to identify their employment status as full-time, part-time or other.

### *Teacher Targeted Bullying*

The scale used was adapted, from the questionnaire created by Pervin and Turner (1998) on the level of teacher targeted bullying, to only include items relevant to the current study. Pervin and Turner's (1998) scale has 21 items that measure teacher targeted bullying in which respondents circle the appropriate answer. Questions include "How long did teacher targeted bullying go on for?" and "What form did the teacher targeted bullying take? Was it verbal abuse, physical abuse, ignoring you, making comments about you to other pupils, damage to your room or property, other?"

### *The Work Safety Scale*

The Work Safety Scale (Hayes, Perander, Smecko and Trask, 1998) is a self-report

questionnaire to measure workplace safety climate perceptions across five domains. The scale consists of 10 declarative statements for each domain. The current study adapted the questionnaire to include only three of the five scales: job safety, management safety practices and satisfaction with safety programmes. Responses were given on a 5-point Likert scale with the following anchors: 1= *strongly disagree* to 5 =*strongly agree*. Selecting strongly agree for the job safety dimensions indicated that the respondent felt their job was unsafe. Selecting strongly agree for the management safety practices dimension indicated that the respondent was satisfied with their management's safety practices. Selecting strongly agree for the safety program dimension indicated that the respondent was satisfied with their work safety program. The alpha reliability coefficients that Hayes, et al., (1998) reported for these scales ranged from 0.88-0.96. The alphas for the current study ranged from 0.92- 0.91.

#### *Perceived Stress Scale*

The 10-item self-report questionnaire measures an individual's evaluation of the degree of stress they perceive in their life. Responses were anchored on a 5-point Likert scale where 1= *never* to 5 = *very often*. Selecting a 5 (or a 1 on reverse worded questions) indicated a high score for stress. Example questions include "In the last month, how often have you felt nervous or stressed?" and "In the last month, how often have you found you could not cope with the things you needed to?" Cohen and Williamson (1988) reported a coefficient alpha of 0.78. The alpha for the current study was 0.89.

#### *Generalised Self-Efficacy Scale*

The scale created by Judge, Locke, Durham & Kluger (1998) was used for the current study. The measure contained eight items to assess generalized self efficacy. Respondents rated their level of agreement on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) on

items such as “I am strong enough to overcome life’s struggles,” and “I feel competent to deal effectively with the real world”. Selecting a 5 (or a 1 on reverse worded questions) indicated high self-efficacy. The reliabilities found by Judge et al., (1998) ranged from 0.81-0.90 across three samples. Alpha for the current study was 0.87.

### *Social Support Scale*

The social support scales developed by Caplan (Caplan et al., 1975) and adapted by Frese (1989) includes three scales, each having five parallel items measuring social support at work, (1) from superiors (2) from others at work and (3) from wife and husband, friends and relatives. All of the measures asked five questions on support: “How much can these people be relied on when things get tough at work?” “How much is each of the following people willing to listen to your work related problems?” “How much is each of the following people helpful to you in getting your job done?” “How much is each of the following people willing to listen to your personal problems?”, and “How easy is it to talk to each of the following people?” Responses were anchored on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = *never* to 5 = *very often* and for the last question, 1 = *very hard* to 5 = *very easy*. Scoring a 5 indicated a high level of social support. The Reliabilities found by Frese (1989) range from 0.86-0.89. Alpha for the current study ranged from 0.85- 0.93.

### **Procedure**

Participants were recruited in two different ways. An online recruitment advertisement (see Appendix B) was posted on a popular social network site *Facebook*, requesting New Zealand primary school teachers to participate in the questionnaire (Appendix A) and to send the advertisement on to any teachers they knew to invite them to also participate.

Emails (Appendix C) were individually sent to 140 primary schools throughout New Zealand, personally addressed to their respective principal with the information sheet attached (Appendix D). The emails (Appendix C) asked if the principals could forward the information sheet onto their teaching staff. The schools were randomly selected using the website Te Kete Ipurangi (<http://www.tki.org.nz/Schools>). Only schools listed as co-educational and full primary were included.

By only contacting teachers indirectly through school principals and *Facebook*, a response rate could not be calculated as it is unknown exactly how many teachers were aware of this research and invited to participate.

The information sheet (Appendix D) explained that the researcher was interested in collecting information from New Zealand primary school teachers on teacher targeted bullying. The information page provided participants with information on the approximate duration of the questionnaire, confidentiality and anonymity, potential risks, the incentive and contact details. It was clearly stated that the research had been extensively reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee. At the bottom of the information sheet was the direct link to the online questionnaire.

The study's design was cross-sectional: each participant was asked to complete one questionnaire with measures that reflected all the variables of interest. The questionnaire titled "*Evaluation of the Impact that Teacher Targeted Bullying has on Individual Safety Perceptions and Stress*" began with an information section giving participant's detailed information about the study, their participation and researcher contacts. Following the information page was the consent form which outlined the risks and implications of participating in the research. Participants were required to click the "*I accept*" button to give their informed consent. Only when informed consent was given could participants begin the questionnaire.

The questionnaire followed the same format for each participant, however, the order in which items within the Social Support, Stress, Workplace Safety and Self-efficacy scales were randomised to counterbalance and ensure that there were no order effects. Lastly, participants were asked to provide their contact details if they wished to receive a report on the study and/or wanted to enter the draw to win one of ten \$50 petrol vouchers. Participants were informed that any supplied email addresses would be stored separately from rest of the questionnaire data to ensure participants anonymity. Upon completion of the questionnaire, participants were thanked for their time and provided with support services that they could contact had they experienced any distress as a result of participating in the study.

## **Results**

### *Preliminary Analysis*

133 questionnaire responses were recorded. All incomplete or partial questionnaire responses (responses with at least one section of the questionnaire left completely blank) were removed from the data analysis, resulting in 113 complete responses. In order to analyse the bullying data, the data for low level bullying, severe bullying and intimidating bullying were re-coded into a continuous single item for each type of bullying. How many types of each degree of bullying behaviour a participant experienced indicated the score they were assigned. For low level bullying participants responses were scored against seven possible options 0 = no low level bullying to 6 = all types of low level bullying had been experienced. For severe bullying responses were scored out of six possible options 0 = no severe level bullying to 5 = all types of severe bullying had been experienced. For intimidating bullying participants responses were scored against six possible options 0 = no intimidating bullying

to 5 = all types of intimidating bullying had been experienced. For all the other measures the participants scores were represented by calculating the average score for each measure. Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics for the average scores on all three bullying types, stress, safety climate perceptions, social support and self-efficacy.

Table 2  
*Average Questionnaire Statistics for Bullying, Stress, Safety Climate Perceptions, Social Support and Self-Efficacy.*

Measures	N	Mean	S.D	Min.	Max.
Bullying					
• Low Level	113	2.14	1.64	0.00	6.00
• Severe	113	0.16	0.37	0.00	1.00
• Intimidating	113	0.58	0.89	0.00	3.00
Stress	109	2.56	0.66	1.00	3.90
Safety Climate Perceptions					
• Job Safety	113	2.01	0.72	1.00	4.10
• Management Safety Practices	111	3.61	0.71	1.00	5.00
• Safety Program Satisfaction	108	3.51	0.59	2.00	5.00
Social Support					
• Supervisor	109	3.70	0.95	1.40	5.00
• Others at Work	110	4.00	0.73	2.00	5.00
• Other Outside of Work	109	4.27	0.65	1.80	5.00
Self-Efficacy	113	4.10	0.58	2.13	5.00

From the sample, 79.6% of teachers reported that they had been exposed to at least one form of low level bullying at some stage in their teaching career with grabbed/shoved and punched/kicked both experienced by 19.5% of teachers. The majority of teachers (84.1%) had not been exposed to any forms of severe bullying; however, 18 teachers reported being victims of this type of bullying. Finally, 37.2% of teachers reported being victims of intimidating bullying at some stage in their teaching career. With 65% of respondents being in the teaching profession for less than 5 years, exposure to bullying has been relatively recent for most.

The duration of reported teacher targeted bullying varied, with 28.3% experiencing the bullying for weeks, 7.1% for years, and for 12% of the teachers the bullying only finished when the pupils left the school. Of the teachers targeted by bullying, 14.2% said the bullying was no real problem, however, most of the teachers who experienced the bullying (38.9%) found the bullying to be of some concern, whilst 26.5% found it serious but bearable and 2.7% found the bullying to be severe and unbearable.

Bivariate correlations were calculated between the 11 variables of interest and are displayed in Table 3.

Low level bullying, severe bullying, and intimidating bullying were found to have no statistically significant relationships with stress, self-efficacy, management safety practices, safety program satisfaction, supervisor support, and support from others at work. However, low level bullying was significantly related to severe bullying and intimidating bullying. That is, the more low level bullying a person experiences, the more severe bullying and intimidating bullying they have experienced. Furthermore, significant positive relationships were found between low level bullying and job safety, and intimidating bullying and job safety. This means that the more low level bullying and intimidating bullying a teacher has experienced the more they rate their job as unsafe. Significant negative relationships were found between support from others from outside of work and all three bullying dimensions, such that, the more support received from others outside of work the less bullying they had experienced.

Table 3  
*Correlations Between Variables.*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Low Level Bullying	-										
2. Severe Bullying	.36**	-									
3. Intimidating Bullying	.43**	.18	-								
4. Stress	.03	.18	-.04	(.86)							
5. Job Safety	.45**	.14	.30**	.30**	(.91)						
6. Management Safety Practices	-.12	-.13	.04	-.32**	-.26**	(.92)					
7. Safety Program Satisfaction	-.12	.07	-.04	-.26**	-.21*	.56**	(.92)				
8. Supervisor Support	.08	-.01	-.02	-.39**	-.11	.41**	.48**	(.93)			
9. Support from Others at Work	.03	-.05	-.03	-.41**	-.22*	.44**	.44**	.61**	(.90)		
10. Support from Others Outside of Work	-.23*	-.23*	-.29**	-.17	-.07	.15	.22*	.36**	.40**	(.85)	
11. Self-Efficacy	-.10	-.15	-.037	-.43**	-.23*	.23*	.24*	.37**	.46**	.27**	(.87)

\*p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01 (two-tailed) ( ) reliability coefficients

## Main Analyses

### Mediation

In order to test Hypotheses 1, 2, 3 and 4, a mediation analysis was conducted. In SPSS a Mediation Macro created by Hayes (2011) was used to conduct the mediation analysis. All three dimensions of safety climate perceptions (job safety, management safety practices and safety program satisfaction) are put into the model as the mediators, with the three dimensions of bullying (low level, severe and intimidating) as the independent variables and stress as the dependent variable. The mediation model is depicted in Figure 2.

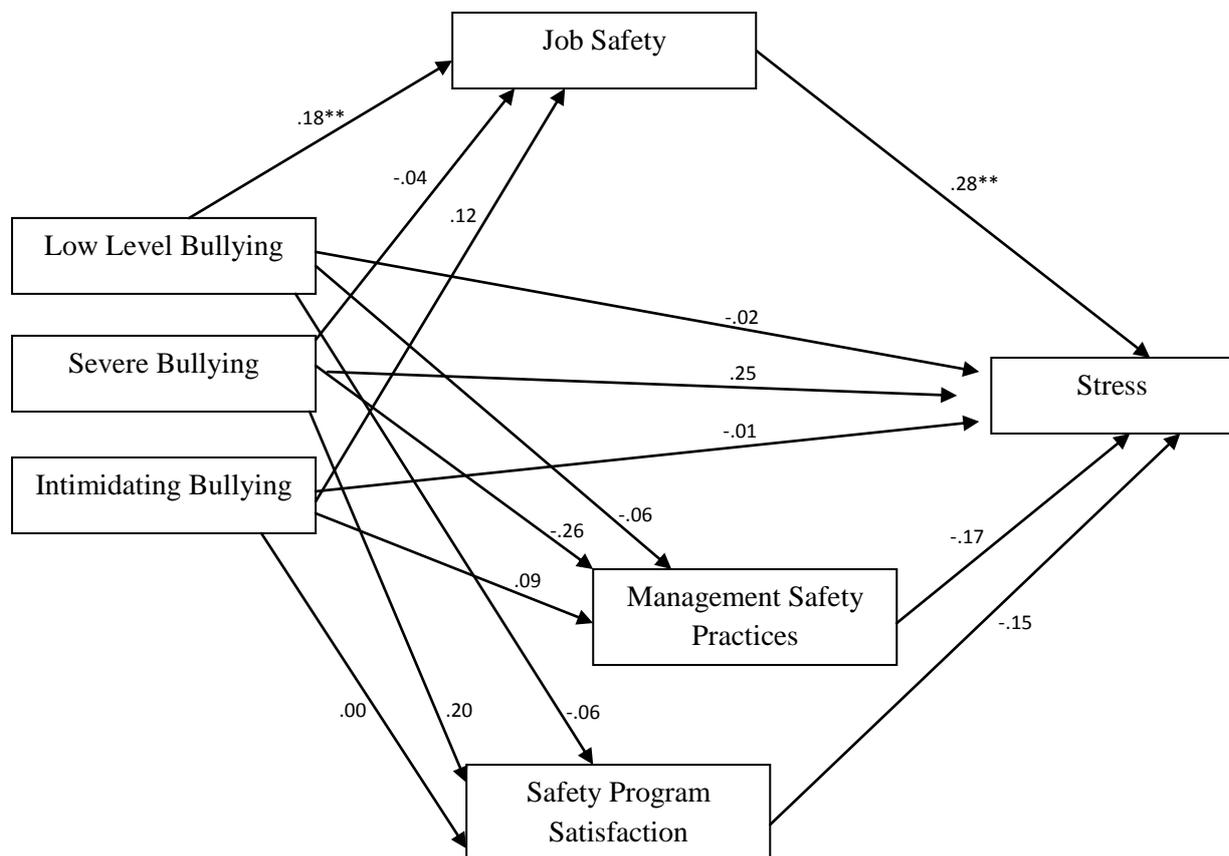


Figure 2: The mediated bullying-stress model. \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$

Hypothesis 1 predicted that teacher targeted bullying would be related to stress. There was no direct relationship between any of the bullying dimensions and stress, and therefore,

Hypothesis 1 was not supported (*coefficients* = -.01 -.25, *s.e* = .05-.19, *p* = n.s).

Hypothesis 2 predicted that if a teacher was a target of student bullies, that they would negatively appraise safety within the school and as a result will experience negative safety climate perceptions. The only statistically significant relationship between bullying and safety climate perceptions was between the low level bullying dimension and the job safety dimension (*coefficient* = 0.18, *s.e* = .05, *p* < 0.01), as a result, only one component of Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that when a teacher negatively perceived the school safety climate, they would be more likely to report stress as a result. Only the perceived job safety dimension of safety climate was significantly related to stress (*coefficient* = 0.28, *s.e* = .099, *p* < 0.01), thus, Hypothesis 3 was only supported for the job safety dimension.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that perceptions of the safety climate would mediate the effect of bullying on stress, such that, the influence of bullying on stress would be due to a more negative perception of the safety climate.

One dimension of Hypothesis 4 was supported with job safety perceptions partially mediating the relationship between low level bullying and stress (*indirect effect coefficient* = .05, *s.e* = .02, *p* < 0.05). All of the other predicted mediating relationships were not significant in explaining the bullying-stress relationship. Perceived management safety practices and safety program satisfaction did not mediate the bullying-stress relationship.

### *Moderation*

Using SPSS, hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to test whether social support and self efficacy moderate the bullying-stress relationship (Hypotheses 5 and 6). All bullying, self-efficacy and social support dimensions were centred prior to conducting the analysis. Hypothesis 5 predicted that self-efficacy would moderate the bullying-stress

relationship, such that, when self-efficacy is low, teachers exposed to high levels of bullying will report higher levels of stress than individuals with high levels of self-efficacy. The results of the analysis for Hypothesis 5 are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4  
*Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Self-Efficacy as a Moderator Between the Bullying Dimensions and Stress.*

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	R Square	$\Delta R$ Square	F Change
<i>Model 1</i>				.20	.20	
Low Level Bullying	-.01	.04	-.03			
Severe Bullying	.25	.17	.14			
Intimidating Bullying	-.05	.08	-.07			
Self-Efficacy	-.47	.10	-.42**			
<i>Model 2</i>				.23	.02	.44
Low Level Bullying	-.02	.04	-.42			
Severe Bullying	.25	.18	.14			
Intimidating Bullying	-.05	.08	-.07			
Self-Efficacy	-.47	.10	-.41**			
Low Level Bullying×Self-Efficacy	.03	.09	.04			
Severe Bullying×Self-Efficacy	-.04	.35	-.01			
Intimidating Bullying×Self-Efficacy	.18	.16	.13			

\* $p < 0.05$  \*\* $p < 0.01$

These results in Table 4 show that Hypothesis 5 was not supported, as the model was not improved by adding the interaction terms in model 2 ( $\Delta R^2 = .02, p = n.s.$ ). Despite there being no significant interactions, there was a significant main effect of self-efficacy on stress when controlling for the bullying dimensions, showing that, higher levels of self-efficacy were related to lower levels of stress.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that social support would moderate the bullying-stress relationship, such that, when social-support is low, teachers exposed to high levels of bullying will report higher levels of stress than individuals with high levels of social support. The results of the analysis for Hypothesis 6 are displayed in Table 5, 6 and 7.

Table 5  
*Hierarchical Regression Analysis for the Supervisor Support Dimension as a Moderator Between the Bullying Dimensions and Stress.*

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	R Square	$\Delta R$ Square	F Change
<i>Model 1</i>				.19	.19	
Low Level Bullying	.02	.04	.06			
Severe Bullying	-.28	.06	-.39			
Intimidating Bullying	.30	.17	.17			
Supervisor Support	-.08	.08	-.11**			
<i>Model 2</i>				.27	.04	.19
Low Level Bullying	-.00	.05	-.01			
Severe Bullying	-.26	.06	-.38			
Intimidating Bullying	.24	.18	.13			
Supervisor Support	-.01	.08	-.02			
Low Level Bullying× Supervisor Support	.09	.05	.22			
Severe Bullying× Supervisor Support	.10	.20	.05			
Intimidating Bullying× Supervisor Support	-.16	.11	-.17			

\* $p < 0.05$  \*\* $p < 0.01$

The results displayed in Table 5 shows that supervisor support did not moderate the relationship between bullying and stress ( $\Delta R^2 = .04$ ,  $p = n.s.$ ).

Table 6 also shows that support from others at work also failed to moderate the relationship between bullying and stress ( $\Delta R^2 = .025$ ,  $p = n.s.$ ). However, a significant main effect of social support from others at work was found, which means that higher levels of social support from others at work was related to lower levels of stress.

Table 7 shows that support from others outside of work moderated the relationship between low level bullying and stress and severe bullying and stress ( $\Delta R^2 = .129$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). A main effect of support from others outside of work was also found, such that, higher levels of social support from others outside of work was related to lower levels of stress. The directions of these interactions are displayed in Figure 3 and 4.

Table 6  
*Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Support from Others at Work as a Moderator Between the Bullying Dimensions and Stress.*

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	R Square	Δ R Square	F Change
<i>Model 1</i>						
				.20	.20	
Low Level Bullying	.01	.04	.02			
Severe Bullying	.29	.17	.16			
Intimidating Bullying	-.07	.07	-.09			
Support from Others at Work	-.36	.08	-.40**			
<i>Model 2</i>						
		.06		.22	.03	.38
Low Level Bullying	-.00	.04	-.01			
Severe Bullying	.29	.17	.16			
Intimidating Bullying	-.05	.08	-.06			
Support from Others at Work	-.35	.08	-.39**			
Low Level Bullying× Support from Others at Work	.07	.06	.14			
Severe Bullying× Support from Others at Work	.13	.24	.05			
Intimidating Bullying× Support from Others at Work	-.03	.10	-.03			

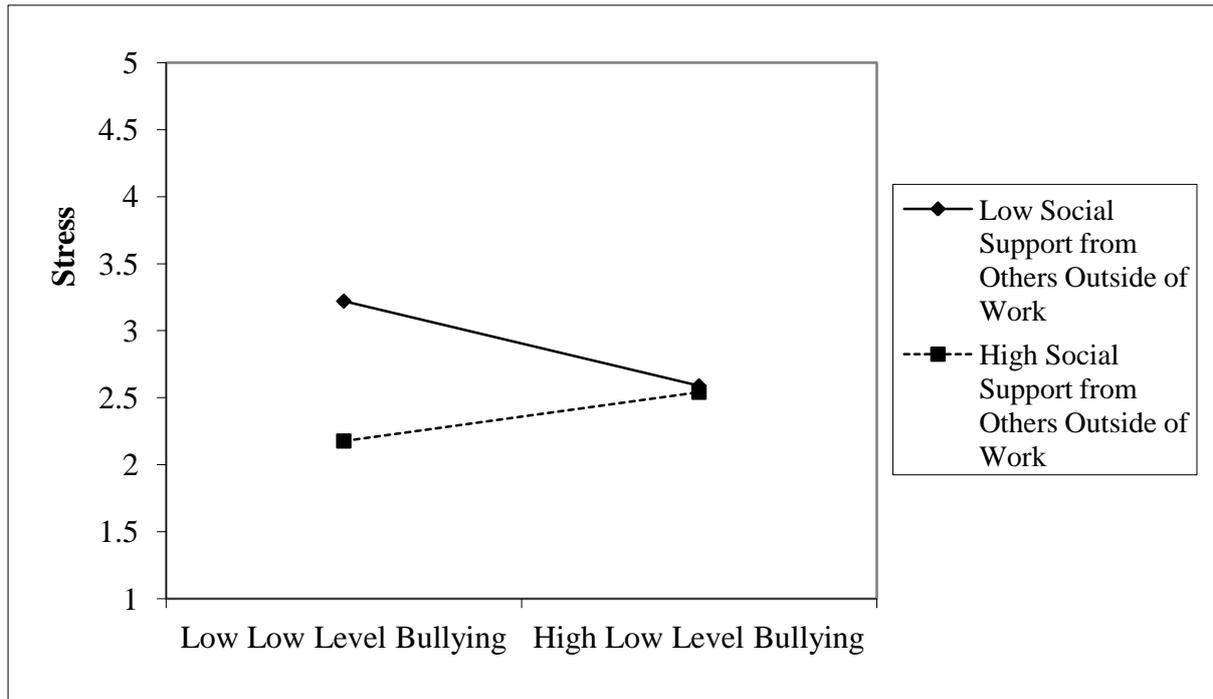
\*p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01

Table 7  
*Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Support from Others Outside of Work as a Moderator Between the Bullying Dimensions and Stress.*

Variables	B	Std. Error	Beta	R Square	Δ R Square	F Change
<i>Model 1</i>						
				.06	.06	
Low Level Bullying	-.01	.05	-.02			
Severe Bullying	.29	.19	.16			
Intimidating Bullying	-.08	.08	-.11			
Support from Others Outside Work	-.18	.11	-.17			
<i>Model 2</i>						
				.19	.13	.00**
Low Level Bullying	-.07	.05	-.17			
Severe Bullying	.27	.22	.15			
Intimidating Bullying	-.01	.08	-.01			
Support from Others Outside Work	-.27	.11	-.27*			
Low Level Bullying× Support from Others Outside Work	.25	.08	.43**			
Severe Bullying× Support from Others Outside Work	.58	.29	.23*			
Intimidating Bullying× Support from Others Outside Work	-.18	.12	-.21			

\*p<0.05 \*\*p<0.01

Figure 3 shows that when there was a high level of social support from others outside of work, teachers exposed to a low amount of low level bullying experienced less stress than teachers who had a low level of social support from others outside of work. There was, however, no difference in reported stress of teachers exposed to a high amount of low level bullying when support from others outside of work was low or high.



*Figure 3: The Interaction Effect of Low Level Bullying and Social Support from Others Outside of Work on Stress.*

Figure 4 shows that when there was a high level of social support from others outside of work, teachers exposed to a low level of severe bullying experienced less stress than teachers who had a low level of social support from others outside of work. Furthermore, when teachers received a high amount of social support from others outside of work, teachers exposed to high levels of severe bullying experienced more stress than teachers who had a low level of social support from others outside of work.

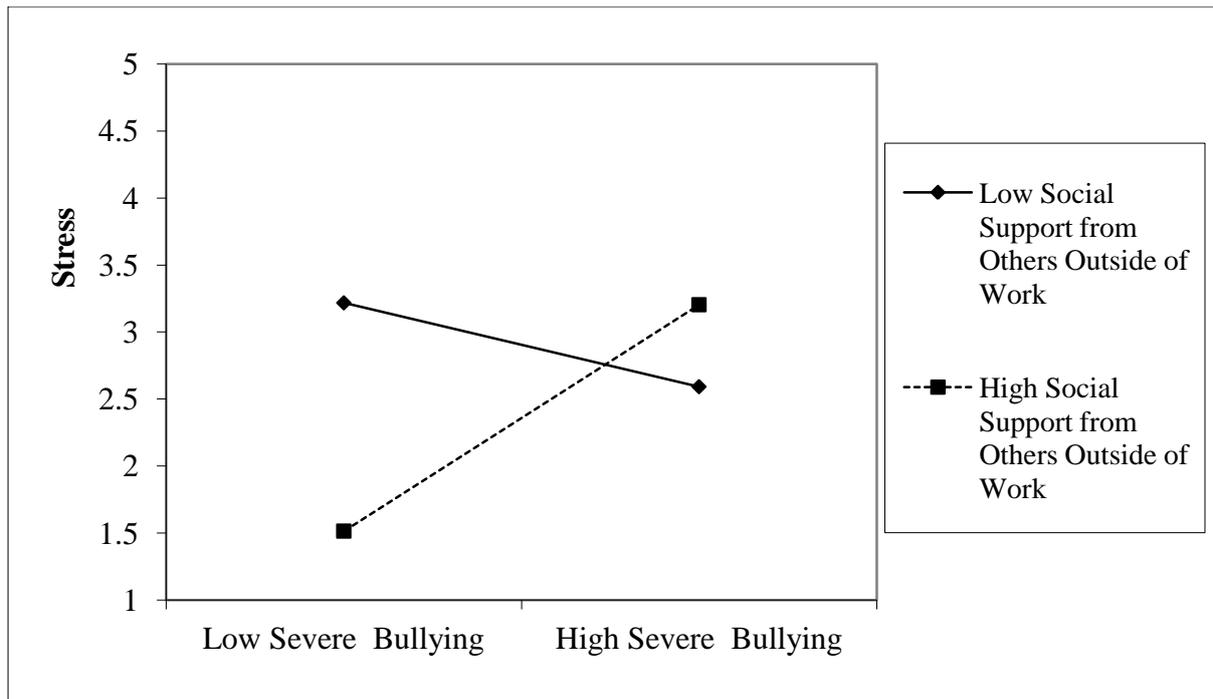


Figure 4: The Interaction Effect of Severe Bullying and Social Support from Others Outside of Work on Stress.

## Discussion

The current research investigated the effects of teacher targeted bullying by students on teacher stress in New Zealand primary schools. Specifically, safety climate, self-efficacy and social support were examined as factors affecting the bullying-stress relationship. It was predicted that these variables would offer an explanation into the relationship between bullying and stress.

### *Bullying-Stress Relationship*

The majority of teachers surveyed for this research had been exposed to some form of low level bullying at some stage in their teaching career, with a small percent of teachers being the victims of severe bullying and nearly half targeted by intimidating bullying. These results

are consistent with previous research which reported low level bullying incidents as far more common forms of teacher targeted bullying than severe bullying (Williams & McGee, 2009). With over half of respondents being in the teaching profession for less than five years the high incidence of teacher targeted bullying in primary schools is an alarming trend. These results are consistent with recent reports, that bullying of teachers is an issue in our primary schools (Marsh, Williams & McGee, 2009; NZPA, 2008; Waikato Times, 2010).

The correlations between each of the three types of bullying (low level, severe and intimidating) and stress show that there was no significant direct relationship between bullying and stress, and therefore, Hypothesis 1 proposing that teacher targeted bullying would be related to teacher's reported stress was not supported. Although the expected negative relationship between bullying and stress was not found, it highlights the complexity of the bullying-stress relationship, in that another influencing factor may explain the conditions under which the bullying-stress relationship can be found.

#### *Safety Climate as a Mediator of the Bullying-Stress Relationship*

The current research used three dimensions of safety climate (job safety, management safety practices, and safety program) as mediators of the bullying-stress relationship. Hypothesis 2 predicted that bullied teachers would have a negative perception of safety within their school. This hypothesis was supported for the effect of low level bullying on job safety perceptions. In that, the more low level bullying the teacher experienced the more unsafe they rated their job. This finding of low level bullying negatively influencing an individual's perception of safety in their workplace is consistent with recent research, which reported that bullying introduces a hazard into the workplace and increases the risk of injury (Clark, 2007; Pandey, Quick, Rossi, Nelson & Martin, 2010; Squelch, 2010).

Hypothesis 3 predicted that teachers would be more likely to develop stress when they have a negative perception of the school safety climate. Support for Hypothesis 3 was found for the job safety dimension, in that, when teachers rated their job as unsafe they were more likely to develop stress than those teachers who did not perceive their job to be unsafe. Finally, Hypothesis 4, which predicted that negative safety climate perceptions would mediate the bullying stress relationship, was supported for the job safety dimension, and therefore, the influence of low level bullying on stress was due to a perception of an unsafe job.

The results of this mediation analysis, showing that perceptions of job safety influencing the bullying-stress relationship, represent an important finding for the purpose of this research. This relationship showed that unsafe job perceptions explained the relationship between low level bullying and stress. Therefore, stress is manifested as a result of low level bullying when the teacher perceives their job as unsafe. This finding supports conclusions made in previous research that when a threat to personal safety in ones work environment is perceived, it can result in negative attitudes, behaviours and affective states for the employee (Neal and Griffin, 2000; Spector, 2006). This finding suggests that student's aggression, threats, and intimidation influences teachers to perceive their job as unsafe, which in turn, can lead to stress.

Low level bullying was a far more common type of bullying than severe and intimidating bullying for this sample. It is therefore suggested that the non-significant effects for severe and intimidating bullying was due to the very small number of people who had experienced these more aggressive types of bullying. Furthermore, the teachers exposed to low level bullying experienced far more incidents and types of low level bullying, than what those experiencing severe or intimidating bullying did for severe or intimidating bullying, as shown by the low mean and variance for severe and intimidating bullying. Consequently, a

non-significant result for job safety mediating the severe bullying-stress and intimidating bullying-stress relationships is not surprising.

The non-significant result of safety program satisfaction and management safety practices in mediating the bullying-stress relationship may be because these two dimensions are not relevant or actively pursued in the school environment. It is plausible that the participants in this research were unfamiliar with the safety program and management safety practices at their school. This is indicated by the average response being *neither agree nor disagree*, the centre point of the scale. It is most likely that teachers' responses were relatively central and had little variance because they had no opinion on these two areas of safety climate. These two scales were taken from a measure primarily used in high risk industries that have the need for clear and visible safety procedures to prevent harmful and deadly consequences. Whilst primary schools need to have safety procedures, it is not perceived as a profession in which safety is imperative, and therefore, some of the items in the scale may have been viewed by respondents as unnecessary and difficult to respond to.

So while we cannot conclude that overall negative safety climate perceptions mediate the bullying-stress relationship, there is support for the notion that negative perceptions of job safety mediate the low level bullying-stress relationship for this sample.

#### *Self-Efficacy as a Moderator*

The current research found no support for Hypothesis 5, which predicted that self-efficacy would moderate the relationship between bullying and stress, for any of the bullying dimensions. Self-efficacy did not affect the relationship between bullying and stress. Teachers in the sample reported high levels of self-efficacy with little variance found for the sample. This restricted range may explain why self-efficacy failed to moderate the bullying-stress relationship. However, self-efficacy had a strong negative relationship with stress in the

regression analysis when controlling for bullying and the interaction effects. This result is consistent with previous research, that people high in self-efficacy experience less stress than those with low self-efficacy (Spector, 2006).

### *Social Support as a Moderator*

In order to test social support as a moderator for the bullying-stress relationship, the three dimensions of support (supervisor, others at work, and others outside of work) were included individually as moderators. Hypothesis 6 predicted that social support would moderate the bullying-stress relationship. Partial support was found for this hypothesis, in that, support from others outside of work acted as a moderator for the severe bullying-stress relationship, and the low level bullying-stress relationship. This finding is consistent with previous research that social support can buffer the negative effects of occupational stressors on workplace stress (Cohen & Wills, 1985; Frese, 1999; LaRocco, House & French, 1980).

Furthermore, these results suggest that when low level bullying is an issue, support from outside of work seems to be more beneficial in reducing stress than the support offered from others in the school organization. For some, being the victim of bullying can be seen as a weakness and so victimised teachers may prefer to seek guidance and support from someone outside of their workplace for fear that other teachers or their principal may see them as incompetent or ineffective in the classroom.

For teachers who had experienced few types of low level bullying, less stress was experienced when they perceived a high amount of social support was received from outside of work than those teachers who had a low amount of support from outside of work. This result was not surprising. However, when teachers were exposed to many types of low level bullying the amount of social support from people outside of work made no difference to their level of stress. Being exposed to more forms of low level bullying perhaps indicates a

greater frequency of bullying, and therefore, support from others outside of work, no matter high or low, may no longer have an impact on resolving stress. The measure of social support from others outside of work used in this study did not specify whether sources of external support were formal (e.g., healthcare) or informal (e.g., relatives). It is assumed that perceptions of support from others outside of work were made in reference to friends and family by most participants. Thus, there may be a point where specific forms of external support (e.g., friends, relatives) is insufficient to mitigate the negative effects of bullying, and other (e.g., professional) sources of support are needed.

The results regarding support from others outside work moderating the relationship between severe bullying and stress were expected for the low severe bullying dimension. However, it appears that stress was greater for individuals exposed to high levels of severe bullying when support from others outside of work was high as opposed to low. This suggests a reversed effect, in that, teachers who are exposed to multiple forms of severe bullying and are experiencing high stress may seek out more support from others outside of work than teachers who are not as stressed by the high level of severe bullying. This conclusion is reasonable, as severe bullying is a serious form of bullying and can cause a great amount of stress for victimised teachers. It is understandable that a much higher level of support is sought from outside the work environment when stress is high.

### **Limitations**

In order to collect the appropriate data required for the current research, a single self-report questionnaire containing all the measures was used. As all data was collected via the same means, common method variance may be a concern, as it can increase correlations between the variables and introduce a source of measurement error (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). In order to overcome the potential effects of common method variance the scales and

items within the scales were randomly ordered. Although this method controls for common method variance, the effects can never be completely removed (Kline, Sulsky, & Revel-Motoriyama, 2000). It would be very difficult to collect the required data and target a large number of people by any other means than self-report. Therefore, even though common method variance can have a small effect on the relationships between variables measured by self-report data, the current data gathering approach stands as a sound alternative for collecting the necessary information to analyse the variables of interest.

The current research design was cross-sectional in that data was collected from multiple participants each completing a single questionnaire. Although this research offers initial insight into the potential relationships between variables, the results found from this cross-sectional data cannot confirm the directionality of relationships. As such, inferences about causation between bullying and stress cannot be made. To comprehensively test the hypothesised model and draw causal inferences, a replication study with longitudinal data is necessary.

Sample size can influence the stability of the findings, and therefore, an adequate sample size is required to make correct conclusions. The sample size for the current study is relatively small for the number of variables to be examined. This small sample size can lower the power to detect significant effects. The sample size may explain some of the non-significant results and low effect size of the regression analyses that were found in this research, as moderator effects usually require large sample sizes (Cohen, et al., 2003). Furthermore, a small sample size may limit the generalisability of results to teachers throughout New Zealand. Replication studies with a larger sample size and response rate would be a solution to this issue. Furthermore, additional studies with high-school teachers are necessary to better understand the teacher targeted bullying phenomenon and to confirm the relationships found in the current research were not found by chance.

Self-selection may have affected not only those who volunteered to participate in the research, but those schools who passed the questionnaire on to their teaching staff. Several schools rejected participating in the research by failing to pass the information on to their teaching staff. The schools that declined participating in the research may have done so for fear of harming their reputation. Furthermore, by inviting their teaching staff to participate in research on bullying, some schools may view it as an admission of a bullying issue in their school, and therefore rejected participating. To reduce this issue, the contacted principals were informed of the questionnaires anonymity and confidentiality; as such, no school or individual could be identified. For the teachers that received the information to participate in the research, self-selection may have created a bias towards those teachers with low safety perceptions and/or high stress levels and those who are victims of bullies. These teachers may be more inclined to complete a survey on these issues. Once again a replication study with a larger sample size is required to allow for generalisability of results.

### **Future Research**

The results from the current research provided an initial analysis of teacher targeted bullying and stress relationship. Future research should explore bullying using additional quantitative measures to provide more information on the frequency and intensity of bullying in a specified time frame, so that the immediate effects on stress can be observed.

It would be interesting for future research to expand beyond the use of one dependent variable (stress) to explore the joint effects of bullying and safety climate perceptions on other outcome variables, such as turnover, organizational commitment, and job performance, to increase our knowledge of how bullying affects outcomes important to organizations.

Other variables may account for the unexplained variance in stress that was not captured in the current study; it may be fruitful to explore the effects of other potential

moderators and mediators of the bullying-stress relationship, such as personal characteristics (e.g., personality, anxiety, self-esteem, negative affectivity). These personal characteristics have been identified in recent research as factors that directly influence how and why stress occurs for some people and not others when exposed bullying (Einarsen, Helge, Zapf & Hoel, 2003). The findings from future research that investigates the extent to which personal characteristics influence the bullying-stress relationship, can be used to formulate effective and comprehensive strategies to control and mitigate the negative effects of bullying for teachers.

The current study only investigated students as the source of teacher targeted bullying and therefore, future research should include parents, colleagues, and principals as potential sources of bullying in order to understand the full extent of the teacher targeted bullying phenomenon and the impact it has on stress and negative safety climate perceptions.

## **Conclusions**

The purpose of the current research was to investigate the prevalence of teacher targeted bullying by students in New Zealand primary schools and examine whether students serve as a source of unsafe work perceptions and act as a stressor for teachers. The results of this initial study into teacher targeted bullying in primary schools showed that student's bullying of teachers in the forms of grabbing/shoving, punching/kicking, verbal abuse, stealing personal property, racial or ethnic personal insults, and physically threatening a teacher, was related to teachers perceiving their job as unsafe. The consequence of perceiving their teaching job as unsafe is that stress is manifested. Stress can lead to many negative behavioural, physiological, and psychological outcomes (Clark, Folkman & Moskowitz, Pandey, et al., 2010; Spector, 2006) which can cause a major disruption to the learning of the students in that teacher's class and well-being of the teacher. Bullying of teachers needs to be

understood and controlled to eliminate the negative effects on the teacher, which can adversely affect pupils' learning.

The results from this research show that social support from people outside of the school organization can help to reduce teacher stress that directly results from bullying, under certain circumstances. An external support person may be more beneficial for teachers who are victimised by student bullying to confide in rather than seeking guidance from senior staff. This allows teacher's who don't currently receive adequate support from others outside of work to confide in someone detached from the school environment for advice and help. An external support person should be easily accessible for all bullied teachers seeking support from a person independent of the school organization.

This research has helped identify the issue of teacher targeted bullying in New Zealand primary schools, and the implications of bullying on teachers health and safety perceptions. This initial research into teacher targeted bullying can be used to highlight the need for more understanding into teacher targeted bullying, not only by students but by all members of the wider school organization. This is necessary to develop effective strategies to not only prevent and manage bullying, but to create a safe and effective work environment for teaching staff and their pupils which is a requirement under the Ministry of Education's National Administration Guidelines.

It takes the whole school to overcome bullying and it is hoped that this research provides the wider school community with awareness of the teacher targeted bullying issue. Awareness is important to encourage school communities to become involved and actively seek means to reduce all school bullying. Bullying can only be overcome when all members of the school organization have unified values and goals, and actively pursue an anti-bullying environment.

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## Appendix A

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### Questionnaire

#### *Evaluation of the Impact That Teacher Targeted Bullying Has on Individual Safety Perceptions and Stress.*

##### **Purpose of the Study**

You are invited to participate in an MSc dissertation study conducted by Emily Byers, under the supervision of Katharina Naswall and Joana Kuntz (Psychology Department, University of Canterbury). The purpose of this study is to investigate the **impact of teacher targeted bullying in New Zealand primary schools on stress and safety climate perceptions**. The study will further the understanding of how self-efficacy and social support impacts stress. This will provide insightful information for primary schools within New Zealand to manage bullying and create safer work environments for teachers.

##### **Procedure**

If you volunteer to participate in the study, you will be asked to fill out this questionnaire. The questionnaire should take **no longer than 15 minutes** to complete.

##### **Potential Risks and Discomforts**

For participants that have been exposed to bullying, the research may remind them of that situation. By thinking about a particular bullying situation and answering questions related to it, it may cause emotional distress. However, by asking about the situation, the questionnaire may give them an outlet and let them express how they were affected, I will provide individuals with information on what to do if one is distressed, and will refer anyone who contacts Katharina Naswell or me with issues relating to distress. Support services and contact details are provided at the end of the questionnaire.

##### **Anonymity**

Any information that you provide will be treated as anonymous. Only the principal researcher and supervisors will have access to raw data. Data will only be presented in aggregated form in research reports, presentations, and papers; therefore, under no circumstances will any of the data you supplied be disclosed to a third party in a way that could reveal its source. The research involves **completing an anonymous questionnaire**, and therefore, you can be assured that your name will not be revealed in any reports or publications generated by this study. The questionnaire data will be stored on password protected computers in secured locations in the Psychology department of the University of Canterbury. It will be destroyed after five years.

**This MSc Dissertation will be available through the University of Canterbury library database.**

##### **Participation and Withdrawal**

Please note that participation in this research is voluntary and you do not have to answer all the survey questions. If you do participate, you have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. If you withdraw your participation, I will remove any information relating to you, however, since the survey is anonymous, once you have submitted your responses it will not be possible to identify your answers.

### **Reward**

On completion of the survey you will go into the draw to win one of ten \$50 petrol vouchers by entering you email address.

### **Rights of Research Subjects**

The University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee has reviewed my request to conduct this project. Please contact Katharina Naswall (katharina.naswall@canterbury.ac.nz) if you have questions or concerns about this research.

**Only current New Zealand primary school teachers are eligible to participate in the survey.**

## **Consent Form for Primary School Teachers**

- I have been given a full explanation of this project and have been given an opportunity to ask questions.
- I understand what will be required of me if I agree to take part in this project.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any stage without penalty.
- I understand that any information or opinions I provide will be kept anonymous to the researcher and that any published or reported results will not identify me.
- I understand that all data collected for this study will be kept in locked and secure facilities at the University of Canterbury and will be destroyed after five years.
- I understand that I will receive a report on the findings of this study on request by providing my details at the end of the questionnaire. (NOTE: The contact information provided will be collected separately from the questionnaire to preserve anonymity).
- I understand that if I require further information I can contact the researcher, Emily Byers or Dr. Katharina Naswall. If I have any complaints, I can contact the Chair of the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee.
- I understand that I will be eligible to win one of the ten NZ\$50 Petrol Vouchers if I complete the questionnaire and provide contact information. (NOTE: The contact information for the prize draw will be collected separately from the questionnaire to preserve anonymity).

I accept that I am giving my consent to participate in this research study (ticking the box indicates that I understand and agree to all the research conditions).

(Only when consent was given could participants begin the online questionnaire)

Q1. Age (in years)

Q2. Gender

- Male
- Female

Please select the following answers that apply to you as a primary school teacher.

Q3. School Decile

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

Q4. Current Employment Status

- Full-time
- Part-time

Q5. How many years have you been teaching at your current school?

- <1
- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-15
- 16-20
- 21-25
- 26+

Q6. During your teaching career do you feel that you have ever been subjected to any of the following **low level bullying** by primary school students?

- Grabbed, Shoved
- Punched, Kicked
- Personal Property Stolen
- Physically Threatened
- Verbal Abuse
- Racial or Ethnic Personal Insults

Q7. During your teaching career do you feel that you have ever been subjected to any of the following types of **severe physical bullying** by primary school students?

- Cut With a Sharp Object
- Hit With an Object
- Attack Requiring Medical Care
- Personal Property Stolen by Force
- Assault by a Group of Students

Q8. During your teaching career do you feel that you have ever been subjected to any of the following types of **intimidating bullying** by primary school students?

- Intimidation Through Staring
- Sexual Harassment
- Gang Intimidation
- Racial or Ethnic Conflict
- Car Vandalized or Broken Into

Q9. How did you perceive the teacher targeted bullying behaviour?

- No Real Problem
- Some Cause for Concern
- Serious but Bearable
- Severe and Unbearable
- I have NOT been subjected to ANY of the above forms of teacher targeted bullying (Q6-Q8)

(When participants selected “I have NOT been subjected to ANY of the above forms of teacher targeted bullying” they were directed to Q15.)

Q10. How long did the teacher targeted bullying go on for?

- Weeks
- Months
- Years
- Until the Pupil(s) Left the School
- It Only Happened Early on in Your Career

Q11. If the teacher targeted bullying has **affected the quality of your life**, has it:

- Lowered Your Expectation of Teaching as a Career
- Caused You to Seek Another Career
- Caused You To Change Schools
- Made You Dread Lessons
- Created a Bad Atmosphere in the Class
- Increased the Stress You Feel
- Other

Q12. Did you report the teacher targeted bullying to any of the following people? Select those that apply

- Friend
- Colleague
- Senior Teacher
- Principal
- Other
- I did not report the bullying

(When participants selected "I did not report the bullying" they were directed to Q14.)

Q13. What was the **consequence of reporting** the teacher targeted bullying?

- Nothing Resolved but Made You Feel Better
- Short Term Improvement
- Problem Resolved
- Made You Feel Ineffectual
- Waste of Time, You Now Grin and Bear it

Q14. If you did not report the teacher targeted bullying, why didn't you? Select **one answer** that best describes why

- You Felt That You Could Handle the Problem Yourself
- You are Expected to Handle the Problem Yourself
- No Mechanism for Staff Support in the School
- You Have Very Little Confidence in the Support Available
- You Thought it Would Make You Seem Ineffectual and Incompetent
- You Have Begun to Accept Teacher Targeted Bullying as a Normal Part of Teaching
- Unsure as Who to Tell

Q15. Do you think that teacher targeted bullying is a problem which is not understood by the: **School Management**?

- Yes
- No

Q16. Do you think that teacher targeted bullying is a problem which is not understood by the: **Educational Authorities**?

- Yes
- No

Q17. Do you think that teacher targeted bullying is a problem which is not understood by the: **Parents and General Public**?

- Yes
- No

Q18. Questions in this scale ask you about your **feelings and thoughts** during the last month. In each you will be asked to indicate by selecting **how often** you **felt or thought a certain way**. Please respond to the questions **in relation to your job as a school teacher**.

	Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often
In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly?	<input type="radio"/>				
In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?	<input type="radio"/>				

	Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often
In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and “stressed?”	<input type="radio"/>				
In the last month, how often have you felt confident in your ability to handle your personal problems?	<input type="radio"/>				
In the last month, how often have you felt things were going your way?	<input type="radio"/>				
In the last month, how often have you found you could not cope with all the things you had to?	<input type="radio"/>				
In the last month, how often have you been able to control irritations in your life?	<input type="radio"/>				
In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?	<input type="radio"/>				
In the last month, how often have you been angered because of the things that were outside your control?	<input type="radio"/>				
In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?	<input type="radio"/>				

Q19. How often can each of the following people be **relied on** when things get tough at work? Select one answer for each person using the scale below.

	Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often
Supervisor	<input type="radio"/>				
Others At Work	<input type="radio"/>				
Person Outside of Work (friend, partner etc)	<input type="radio"/>				

Q20. How often is each of the following people **willing to listen** to your work related problems? Select one answer for each person using the scale below.

	Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often
Supervisor	<input type="radio"/>				
Others at Work	<input type="radio"/>				
Person Outside of Work (friend, partner etc)	<input type="radio"/>				

Q21. How often is each of the following people **helpful to you** in getting your job done? Select one answer for each person using the scale below.

	Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often
Supervisor	<input type="radio"/>				
Others At Work	<input type="radio"/>				
Person Outside of Work (friend, partner etc)	<input type="radio"/>				

Q22. How often is each of the following people **willing to listen** to your personal problems? Select one answer for each person using the scale below.

	Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Fairly Often	Very Often
Supervisor	<input type="radio"/>				
Others At Work	<input type="radio"/>				
Person Outside of Work (friend, partner etc)	<input type="radio"/>				

Q23. Please indicate **how easy** you felt the following people were **to talk to**. Select one answer for each person using the scale below.

	Very Hard	Hard	Neither Hard Nor Easy	Easy	Very Easy
Supervisor	<input type="radio"/>				
Others At Work	<input type="radio"/>				
Person Outside of Work (friend, partner etc)	<input type="radio"/>				

Q24. Think about your job as a teacher. Do you agree or disagree that each of the following words or phrases **describes your job**? Select one answer for each statement using the scale below.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Could Get Hurt Easily	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hazardous	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unhealthy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Chance of Death	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safe	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Risky	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fear for Health	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unsafe	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dangerous	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q25. Think about **your management**. Do you agree or disagree that each of the following words or phrases **describes your management**? Select one answer for each statement using the scale below.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Provides Enough Safety Training Programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rewards Safe Workers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provides Safe Equipment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q25. Think about **your management**. Do you agree or disagree that each of the following words or phrases **describes your management**? Select one answer for each statement using the scale below.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Provides Safe Working Conditions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Keeps Workers Informed of Hazards.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conducts Frequent Safety Inspections	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provides Safety Information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Responds Quickly to Safety Concerns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Investigates Safety Problems Quickly	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q26. Think about your safety program at work. Do you agree or disagree that each of the following words or phrases **describes your safety program at work**? Select one answer for each statement using the scale below.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Unclear	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
First Rate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helps Prevent Accidents	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Useful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Good	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Worthwhile	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Doesn't Apply to My Workplace	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Does Not Work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Effective in Reducing Injuries	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q27. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. Select one answer for each statement using the scale at the top of the page.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I often feel like a failure.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can handle the situations that life brings.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often feel that there is nothing that I can do well.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I usually feel that I am an unsuccessful person.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am strong enough to overcome life's struggles.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I usually feel I can handle the typical problems that come up in life.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
At root, I am a weak person.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel competent to deal effectively with the real world.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q28. Request a copy of the report by filling out your contact details below. (NOTE: The contact information provided will be collected separately from the questionnaire to preserve anonymity).

Email

Q29. To go into the draw to win one of the ten NZ\$50 petrol vouchers, provide contact information below. (NOTE: The contact information for the prize draw will be collected separately from the questionnaire to preserve anonymity).

Email

Thank you for completing the survey, your participation is greatly appreciated. **Click next** at the bottom of the page **to submit the survey**.

Bullying is a serious issue. If participating in the questionnaire has caused any distress, please contact any of the following support services.

**Department of Labour:** The Department of Labour provides information and investigates problems to do with employment and workplace health and safety.  
Phone: 0800 20 90 20

**Employee Assistance Services:** Provider of employee support services including workplace bullying.  
Phone: 0800 327 669  
Email: [ak@eapservices.co.nz](mailto:ak@eapservices.co.nz)  
Website: [www.eapservices.co.nz/contact](http://www.eapservices.co.nz/contact)

**Lifeline:** Offers free, professional and confidential 24 hour helpline counselling services.  
Phone: 0800 543 354

**NZEI 0800 HELP:** Is a free national service to all NZEI members so that they can get the help they need when they need it.  
Phone: 0800 NZEI HELP (693 443)

**Relationship Services:** Personal counselling.  
Phone: (04) 472 8798  
Email: [reception@relationships.org.nz](mailto:reception@relationships.org.nz)  
Website: [relate.org.nz/contactus](http://relate.org.nz/contactus)

## Appendix B

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### ***Facebook Recruitment Advertisement***

#### *Survey for NZ Primary School Teachers*

Hey primary school teachers, it would be greatly appreciated if you could spare 15 minutes to help me with my Masters research project. The survey is completely anonymous and confidential. To participate you must be a primary school teacher currently teaching in New Zealand. For those of you that are not primary school teachers could you please invite friends or family that are to participate in my research.

In return for your time you will be entered into a draw to win one of \$50 petrol vouchers. Invite your friends to participate and share the potential winnings!

Please follow the link to take this survey:

[http://canterbury.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_ePaNualFVhFOpIU](http://canterbury.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_ePaNualFVhFOpIU)

This research is being conducted as part of my MSc. in Applied Psychology at the University of Canterbury. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether full-time primary school teachers are affected by bullying by students, their perceptions of the safety climate within their schools and how this could affect stress. The study will further the understanding of how self-efficacy and social support impacts stress. This will provide insightful information for primary schools within New Zealand to manage bullying and create safer work environments for teachers. This study has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee.

## Appendix C

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### Email Sent to Principals

Dear

Your school has randomly been selected to participate in the following University of Canterbury Master's research study. I understand that this a very busy time of year for your school, which is more pressurized with it being an extra short term. However, I need the participation of your staff in order to complete my research. The research is completely anonymous and your school or teaching staff can not be identified in any way.

The purpose of this survey is to discover the extent to which primary school teachers are affected by teacher targeted bullying by students. In addition, I would like to examine whether students serve as a source of unsafe work perceptions for teachers, and as a result, cause teachers unnecessary stress. Your teaching staff can provide current information and insight into the complex issue of teacher targeted bullying. This information can then be used to understand the complication of bullying in primary schools in order to promote change and create safer work environments for teachers in school organizations.

The encouragement of your staff to participate in the survey is invaluable to my research. Could you please email your staff the attached information sheet. Please do not hesitate to contact me for further information. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Emily Byers

Telephone: +64 3 3843783

Email: [epb18@uclive.ac.nz](mailto:epb18@uclive.ac.nz)

18/10/2011

## Appendix D

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Telephone: +64 3 3843783  
Email: epb18@uclive.ac.nz  
2/8/2011



### **Evaluation of the Impact That Teacher Targeted Bullying Has on Individual Safety Perceptions and Stress.**

#### **Information Sheet for Primary School Teachers**

You are invited to participate in an MSc thesis study conducted by Emily Byers. This thesis is under the supervision of Dr. Katharina Naswall and Joana Kuntz (Psychology Department, University of Canterbury). If you agree to take part in the research you will be asked to complete an online (web-based) questionnaire about bullying in your current school, safety climate perceptions, self-efficacy, social support and stress. This will take approximately 15 minutes. On completion of the survey you will go into the draw to win one of ten \$50 petrol vouchers. The research is completely anonymous and **no school or teaching staff can be identified in any way.**

The purpose of this survey is to discover the extent to which primary school teachers are affected by teacher targeted bullying by students. In addition, I would like to examine whether students serve as a source of unsafe work perceptions for teachers, and as a result, cause teachers unnecessary stress. You can provide current information and insight into the complex issue of teacher targeted bullying. This information can then be used to understand the complication of bullying in primary schools in order to promote change and create safer work environments for teachers in school organizations.

Please note that participation in this research is voluntary and you do not have to answer all the survey questions. If you do participate, you have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty. If you withdraw your participation, I will remove any information relating to you, however, since the survey is anonymous, once you have submitted your responses it will not be possible to identify your answers.

Any information that you provide will be treated as anonymous. Only the principal researcher and supervisors will have access to raw data. Data will only be presented in aggregated form in research reports, presentations, and papers; therefore, under no circumstances will any of the data you supplied be disclosed to a third party in a way that could reveal its source. The research involves completing an anonymous questionnaire, and therefore, you can be assured that your name will not be revealed in any reports or publications generated by this study. The questionnaire data will be stored on password protected computers in secured locations in the Psychology department of the University of Canterbury. It will be destroyed after five years.

The results of this research may be used to revise and improve bullying programmes in New Zealand's primary schools. You can request to receive a report on the study at the end of the completed questionnaire.

The University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee has reviewed my request to conduct this project. If you have any questions about the study, or where you can turn to get help with these issues, you may contact either me (details above), or Dr. Katharina Naswall (katharina.naswall@canterbury.ac.nz) and we will provide you with more information. If you have a complaint about the study, please contact the Chair, University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee, University of Canterbury, Private Bag 4800, Christchurch (human-ethics@canterbury.ac.nz).

If you agree to participate in this study, please complete the consent form at the beginning of the online questionnaire by 4/3/2012. Click the following link: [http://canterbury.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_ePaNuaLFVhFOpIU](http://canterbury.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_ePaNuaLFVhFOpIU) (hold Ctrl button while you click the link) to be directed to the anonymous online survey.

Thank you in advance for your contributions

Emily Byers