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A Qualitative Exploration of Chinese Schoolteachers' Understanding of Workplace Bullying



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Abstract

This study used qualitative scenario-based interviews to explore Chinese teachers’ understanding of workplace bullying (WPB). Six teachers working in K-12 schools were invited to share their perceptions about the different types of WPB scenarios. The study found that (1) although Chinese teachers lack knowledge of WPB, they suggested that malicious, repeated, and persistent uncivil behaviours are the features of WPB. (2) However, due to the adverse impact on the victims’ dignity, personality, and mental health, the above features cannot be the criteria for defining WPB. (3) New teachers were often targeted and resorted to enduring the situation or leaving their jobs when confronted with WPB. (4) The interplay among personal values, ethical leaders and supportive organisations can significantly mitigate teachers’ perception of WPB. Therefore, teachers expressed a desire for training on the knowledge of WPB, and schools should take responsibility for fostering a collaborative work atmosphere for teachers. In the future, more research should be conducted in the education sector to provide a clear, localised definition of WPB. Additionally, schools in China can draw on policies and strategies from other countries to prevent and address WPB.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	1
Abstract	2
Table of Contents	3
Chapter 1 Introduction	5
1.1 The Motivation of the Research	5
1.2 The Concept of WPB	5
1.3 The Impact of WPB	6
1.4 The Prevalence of WPB in Education	8
1.5 The Structure of Research	9
Chapter 2 Literature Review	10
2.1 Introduction	10
2.2 The Terminology in WPB Research	10
2.3 Debates on Recognition of WPB	11
2.4 WPB in Education	12
2.4.1 The Relationship Between WPB and Other Factors	12
2.4.2 Teacher’s Understanding of WPB	13
2.4.3 Coping Methods in Response to WPB among Teachers	14
2.4.4 Management Strategies of WPB in Education	15
2.5 Conclusion	17
Chapter 3 Methodology	19
3.1 Introduction	19
3.2 Study Design.....	19
3.3 Data Collection	20
3.3.1 Sampling Method and Participants	20
3.3.2 Data Collection Tools.....	22
3.3.3 Pilot Interview.....	22
3.3.4 Scenarios-based Interview.....	23
3.4 Data Analysis	24
3.5 Conclusion.....	25
Chapter 4 Findings	26
4.1 Introduction	26
4.2 Teachers’ Interpretation of WPB	26
4.2.1 WPB: Unawareness and Targeting New Teachers	26
4.2.2 Perceptions on Manifestations of WPB	27
4.3 Identification and Determination of WPB	29
4.4 Teacher’s Coping Methods to WPB	31
4.5 Prevention of WPB	32

4.5.1 High Self-Achievement Demands and Ethical Leadership as Deterrents to WPB	32
4.5.2 Calls for Action and Recommendations to Prevent WPB.....	33
4.6 Conclusion.....	34
Chapter 5 Discussion	35
5.1 Introduction	35
5.2 Interpretation of WPB by Chinese Teachers	35
5.3 The Criteria for Identifying WPB	36
5.4 Coping Methods for WPB.....	38
5.5 Suggestions and Expectations for Avoiding WPB	39
5.6 Conclusion.....	41
Chapter 6 Conclusion	42
6.1 Conclusion.....	42
6.2 Limitations	43
6.3 Implications for Further Research and Practice	44
Reference	45
Appendix.....	53
Appendix A:	53
Interview Guide:.....	53
Scenario Questionnaire:	55
Appendix B: Information Form	58
Appendix C: Consent Form	60
Appendix D: Transcript (Excerpt)	61
Appendix E: Coding Process.....	65
Notes:	65
Table:	66
Appendix F: Signed Ethics Form.....	68

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 The Motivation of the Research

In July 2023, a 23-year-old primary school teacher in Korea committed suicide following malicious accusations and text harassment from parents. Her death triggered a street rally protest with 20,000 teachers, urging the Ministry of Education to implement policies to protect teachers from bullying (Mackenzie, 2023). In December of the same year, a similar tragedy occurred in Henan, China, where another 23-year-old female teacher jumped to her death. In her suicide note, she expressed the overwhelming work pressure she faced, stating, “[...] I am truly heartbroken. I felt like I couldn’t breathe. [...] The cage is shrinking little by little, and we went to work every day with our last breath” (CNR News, 2023). Although these incidents are extreme, they highlight the harmful nature of workplace bullying (WPB).

Despite the similarities, China’s public and governmental response differed significantly from Korea’s. Although these incidents briefly ignited media discussion on teacher stress and load in China, the discourse quickly subsided. The issue of whether WPB exists in the Chinese teaching environment has not received significant attention, and there is a notable lack of public attention regarding its matter (Guo et al., 2015). Based on my experience as a teacher who has endured WPB, the profound impact it has had on my mental health has sparked a deep research interest in this topic during my graduate studies.

1.2 The Concept of WPB

The research of WPB originated in the Scandinavian Peninsula in the 1990s (Einarsen, 2003; Qin and Shi, 2008; Guo et al., 2015). Building on Olweus (1993) and Leymann et al.’s (1990) study, Einarsen et al. defined WPB as:

“Bullying at work means harassing, offending, socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone’s work. For the label bullying (or mobbing) to be applied to a particular activity, interaction or process, it has to occur repeatedly and regularly (e.g., weekly) and over a period of time (e.g., about six months). Bullying is an escalating process in the course of which the person confronted may end up in an inferior position becoming the target of systematic negative social acts. A conflict cannot be called bullying if the incident is an isolated event or if two parties of approximately equal ‘strength’ are in conflict” (2020.p.26).

This concept is derived from several aspects of the European research tradition by Einarsen et al. (2020). They noted that bullying research typically focuses on the perspectives of targets and victims. Building on Olweus (2013) and Leymann (1990), they identified ‘repeated’ (e.g. weekly) and ‘enduring’ (e.g. six months) aggressive behaviours as crucial features of bullying. This implies that bullying is not occasional; it must be systematic, long-term and frequent (Einarsen et al., 2020). Therefore, bullying is not an isolated incident; it constitutes a continuously evolving and hostile work relationship that may progress from indirect attacks, such as spreading rumours and gossip, to direct aggression, like public humiliation (Einarsen, 1999; Einarsen et al., 2020).

Additionally, researchers emphasise there must be a power difference between bullies and those bullied; otherwise, it is considered an interpersonal conflict (Kwan et al., 2016; Einarsen et al., 2020; Kwan et al., 2020). Lastly, Einarsen et al. (2020) mentioned that the significance of intentionality is not considered a defining characteristic in the study of WPB in Europe, as the determination of intent rests with the perpetrator and is difficult to prove (Neuman and Baron, 2005; Nielsen et al., 2017).


1.3 The Impact of WPB

Einarsen et al. (2020) pointed out that bullying involves various negative and unwanted behaviours, ranging from work-related bullying to personal derogation, passive and indirect to active and direct, and can manifest as psychological to physical abuse (Table 1). The repeated occurrence of these behaviours can become a significant source of social stress for victims, leading to severe mental and psychological suffering (Leymann, 1990; Zapf and Einarsen, 2005).

Table 1 Types and Manifestations of WPB (Einarsen et al., 2009; Einarsen et al., 2020)

Types	Manifestations
Work-related issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unreasonable deadlines • unmanageable workloads • excessive monitoring of work • being assigned to meaningless tasks • withholding performance information • opinions ignored



			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being pressured to forfeit entitlements
Personal-related	personal derogation	passive and indirect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social isolation • gossiping and spreading rumours
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • belittling, • insulting remarks • making jokes • persistent criticism • other forms of humiliation
		active and direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • verbal threats • verbal aggression
	physical abuse	physical violence threat of physical violence	

WPB exerts a profound negative impact on both individuals and organisations (Leymann, 1990; Ariza-Montes et al., 2016). On an individual level, WPB has been linked to significant health issues, including an increased risk of new-onset cardiovascular disease (Kivimaki, 2003; Xu et al., 2019), anxiety and depression (Kivimaki, 2003; Fahie and Devine, 2014; Gullander et al., 2014), and even an elevated risk of suicide (Cobb, 2017; Conway et al., 2022). Likewise, WPB contributes to economic losses (Zapf et al., 2020) by increasing absenteeism (Kivimäki et al., 2000) and reducing employee engagement, leading to decreased productivity (Trépanier et al., 2015). Additionally, a toxic work climate is associated with burnout syndrome (Chirico et al., 2021) and a rise in turnover intention (McCormack et al., 2009; Yadav et al., 2020). In the education sector, the impact of WPB on teachers is particularly concerning. The significant stress caused by WPB affects teaching quality (Orange, 2018; Catherine Scheeler et al., 2022) and damages teacher-student relationships (Moon and McCluskey, 2020; Mridul and Sharma, 2024), which can result in a decline in a school's reputation (Fahie and Devine, 2014).

1.4 The Prevalence of WPB in Education

WPB is prevalent across various countries and professional settings (Hsu et al., 2019). The education sector, in particular, is recognised as having a high incidence of bullying (Tracy et al., 2006; Fahie and Devine, 2014; Ariza-Montes et al., 2016; Zapf et al., 2020; Safe Work Australia, 2021). In Britain, a study by Kanani et al. (2022) examined 661 educators in astronomy and geophysics within British higher education. They found that 44% of these educators experienced WPB and harassment, and 65% of formal harassment complaints were not being resolved appropriately. Additionally, minority groups, including Black and minority ethnic individuals, LGBTQ+ people, women, and those with disabilities, reported WPB at 50% higher than the general group. Similarly, in the United States, Konda et al. (2020) surveyed 2,514 unionised education workers in Pennsylvania, with 34% (859 participants) reporting WPB. Meanwhile, Safe Work Australia (2021) issued the sixth annual national statement, revealing that school education ranks among the highest for incidents of WPB.

Research on WPB in China is still in its early stages. The 2022 Chinese General Social Survey found a bullying rate of 16.37% (n=109) among 666 samples from various industries (Zheng et al., 2022). This reporting rate is relatively low compared to other countries, which Zheng et al. (2022) attribute to a lack of awareness about WPB in China. Therefore, advancing research and promoting awareness of WPB in China is crucial.

Moreover, with the progression of research on WPB, numerous countries have introduced anti-bullying policies and enacted regulatory legislation. For instance, Sweden, Germany, France, and Japan have implemented new laws or expanded existing ones to mitigate WPB (Song, 2024). In China, although the first sexual harassment law was passed in 2007 (Cobb, 2017), the legal framework explicitly addressing WPB remains underdeveloped due to limited research in the WPB area (Xiao and Peng, 2014; Song, 2024). Consequently, future research is essential to refine the definition of WPB (Xiao and Peng, 2014; Song, 2024), establish assessment criteria, and determine its prevalence across various industries in China. Such research will be crucial in supporting the development of comprehensive legal frameworks to address WPB effectively.

1.5 The Structure of Research

The previous discussion highlights the following: There is a lack of awareness about WPB in China, and research on WPB is insufficient, particularly in the education sector. As a result, qualitative interviews were applied to explore educators' understanding of WPB.

Chapter 2 critically reviews the research on WPB from various countries over the past decade and presents my research questions.

Chapter 3 details my research methodology and process.

Chapter 4 presents the relevant findings from the data analysis, organised around four themes: Chinese teachers' Interpretation of WPB, Identification and Determination of WPB, Teacher's Coping Methods to WPB, and Prevention of WPB.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings based on the literature and the research questions in Chapter 2.

Chapter 6 summarises my research findings concerning my initial research questions and discusses their limitations and implications.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

WPB has been extensively researched in different countries and fields, it encompasses negative impacts (Gullander et al., 2014; Kopecký and Szotkowski, 2017; Xu et al., 2019), symptoms, solutions (Masi, 2012; Reknes et al., 2016; Tye-Williams and Krone, 2017; Taylor, 2021), and its prevalence in the public sector (Lewis and Gunn, 2007), such as the service industry (Hsu et al., 2019) and healthcare sector (Anusiewicz et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2023). However, research on WPB in China, particularly within the education sector, remains limited. This lack of research has led to a low awareness of the phenomenon among the population. Given that most studies have been conducted in Western countries (Einarsen et al., 2009), there is an urgent need for further research and enrichment regarding the current state of WPB in the education sector and the understanding of WPB in the Chinese context.

The purpose of this chapter is to review recently published literature to offer a deeper insight into the WPB phenomenon in the education field. Specifically, this chapter will focus on the following aspects: the terminology in WPB research, debates on the recognition of WPB, and WPB research in education, including the relationship between WPB and other factors, teacher's understanding of WPB, coping methods, and management strategies of WPB in education.

2.2 The Terminology in WPB Research

The bullying phenomenon has existed throughout history in human society. The research on '*bullying*' or '*mobbing*' was initiated by studying bully/victim problems in schools in the early 1970s Scandinavia (Olweus, 2013). Then, the research on bullying among schoolchildren impacted the studies of WPB after two decades (Branch et al., 2013). Building on the research on bullying among schoolchildren, Leymann brought the term '*mobbing*' to the work setting in his 1986 study (Trenas et al., 2009; Einarsen et al., 2020). In the French-speaking world, 'harassment' is generally used in the bullying phenomenon (Einarsen, 2011), and the concept of harassment sometimes depends on the law in different countries (Kanani et al., 2022; Österman and Boström, 2022). However, in academic discussion, these three terms can be employed interchangeably (Zapf and Einarsen, 2005; Einarsen et al., 2020). In English language literature and Chinese contexts, WPB is consistently used. Specifically, in China, researchers commonly apply the term '*bullying*' and translate it into '*欺负 (qi fu)*' or '*欺凌*

(*qi ling*)', yet Chen (2014) claimed that these translations do not fully capture the essence of bullying. Therefore, it is crucial to clarify the concept of bullying before researching and making policies and laws in China.

2.3 Debates on Recognition of WPB

Scholars have debated whether bullying should be distinguished from other negative behaviours, such as incivility and interpersonal conflicts (Nielsen et al., 2017). In Baillien et al.'s (2017) study, the researchers investigated the distinction between WPB and interpersonal conflict. They used an event-based diary study involving 47 victims and 62 non-victims. The results revealed that victims reported experiencing more negative conflicts compared to non-victims. Additionally, victims reported more frequent negative social behaviours. Most of these harmful conflicts were continuations of previous incidents. Thus, persistence and repetition of behaviours are vital characteristics that distinguish bullying from other hostile actions (Baillien et al., 2017).

However, Tye-Williams et al. (2020) interviewed a diverse panel of experts on WPB, two of whom Mattice and Carbo disagree with strictly defining and differentiating bullying from other forms of abuse. Mattice, the CEO of a human resources consulting firm, and Carbo, a scholar and the President of the National Workplace Bullying Coalition, have extensive experience addressing and researching WPB. Their experience suggests that distinguishing between other forms of abuse and bullying when addressing WPB incidents may further injure the victims. Therefore, to effectively address all negative behaviour, a broader definition that unifies these under a single term is recommended to simplify policy implementation and legislation.

Higgins (2024), an American researcher, provides the same perspective. She rejects repetitiveness and persistence as standards for defining WPB in her research. Instead, she adopts the definitions proposed by Misawa (2010) and Williams and Ruiz (2012). They argue that a severe and threatening event can qualify as bullying. Furthermore, cultural differences play a significant role in this debate (Grimard and Lee, 2020). Salin et al. (2019) attribute variation to factors such as power distance and performance orientation across different countries. For instance, in their study (Salin et al., 2019), compared to European countries, human resource professionals from China and the Gulf countries did not support the use of

repetition as a criterion for defining WPB, as there is no need for further validation criteria for some unacceptable behaviours. Additionally, Fox and Stallworth (2010) suggest distinguishing bullying into rare (occasional) and pervasive bullying. Consequently, perceptions of bullying may vary significantly across countries, cultures, genders, and professional contexts (Hoel et al., 2001; Zapf et al., 2020).

To conclude, various domains and cultural distinctions affect the recognition of bullying behaviours. There is no agreement on the criteria of WPB (Chirilă and Constantin, 2013; De Wet, 2014). In China, this concept has not been researched widely and deeply. Therefore, it is crucial to consider Chinese culture and investigate Chinese professionals' interpretation of WPB.

2.4 WPB in Education

Extensive research on WPB has been conducted since the 20th century. Bullying behaviour is widespread across various social groups, and teacher WPB is no exception. Teachers face heavy work pressure and may experience bullying from leaders, parents, and students (Fox and Stallworth, 2010). International scholars have investigated WPB in the education sector through various theories and methodologies to raise awareness about the importance of a healthy work environment for educators.

2.4.1 The Relationship Between WPB and Other Factors

There has been limited quantitative research in education over the past decade. Chinese scholar Zhao (2015) examined the relationship between WPB and job satisfaction. She analysed 291 survey responses from primary and secondary school teachers in shortage subjects (such as art, science, and physical education). The research found that bullying among these teachers primarily stemmed from work-related issues; they were frequently assigned heavier workloads, and their personal efforts and work rights were often disregarded. Additionally, WPB led to lower job satisfaction, contributing to teacher burnout. However, these findings are not novel. Similar results have been extensively documented in other fields by other researchers (McCormack et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2011; McCarthy, 2019).

Apart from these findings, Ariza-Montes et al. (2016) collected survey data from 261 teachers and subsequently developed a Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, linking the job

demand, job resource, stress and motivation with WPB. The study proves that when teachers are more stressed due to job demands (e.g., having an overwhelming workload, dealing daily with angry parents and students, high emotional exhaustion, etc.), they are more likely to perceive bullying. In contrast, this perception tends to diminish among more motivated teachers (e.g., due to job resources like good salaries, positive subjective feedback, support from colleagues, etc.). Therefore, bullying can be reduced by decreasing job demands and increasing job resources (Ariza-Montes et al., 2016).

While Ariza-Montes et al.'s (2016) quantitative research objectively reveals the impact of stress and motivation on the perception of WPB, it has limitations. The identification of bullying victims in the study was based on a simple self-report measure, asking participants whether they felt bullied. This approach may lead to inconsistencies, as participants' perceptions of bullying might differ from the researchers' definitions (Ariza-Montes et al., 2016). Additionally, the quantitative nature of the study limits the exploration of teachers' more profound perceptions of bullying and the underlying causes of the stressors they face. In contrast, qualitative research can deeply explore teachers' understanding of bullying.

2.4.2 Teacher's Understanding of WPB

Unlike Zhao (2015) and Ariza-Montes et al. (2016), South African scholar De Wet (2014) investigates 59 educators' descriptions of WPB qualitatively. The results show that "relational powerless" teachers (new teachers) are more likely to be publicly disregarded, isolated, and humiliated. Incompetent and unfit principals, along with an authoritarian management style, create a breeding ground for bullying behaviour. This explanation is also supported by qualitative research from De Vos and Kirsten (2015), Higgins (2024) and Mridul and Sharma (2024), which found that perpetrators of bullying are frequently principals, senior teachers, or direct supervisors. Mridul and Sharma (2024), and De Vos and Kirsten (2015) utilised phenomenological interviews to see that bullying is primarily psychological, including emotional abuse, personal insults and humiliation. Additionally, when individuals perceive these behaviours as attacks on their character and assume the role of a victim, they are highly susceptible to experiencing psychological stress (De Vos and Kirsten, 2015).

However, research on WPB in China is still in its early stages, with limited studies focused on WPB in the educational sector. Chinese scholars Zheng et al. (2022) examined WPB through the lens of power dynamics across various industries. They first used qualitative interviews to

establish a theoretical framework and research hypotheses, which were then tested using quantitative data. Their study introduced three dimensions of power imbalance: dependency, substitutability and coerciveness (Zheng et al., 2022). This unique perspective reveals how power influences WPB. Their findings suggest that the importance of resources obtained from work (such as salary, benefits, and social status) determines the dependency of the disadvantaged party in power-imbalanced relationships. Greater dependency on work-related resources increases the likelihood of being bullied. Conversely, higher availability of substitutable resources (such as alternative job opportunities) reduces the probability of victimisation. Finally, when coercive power is regulated by formal or informal systems within the organisation, the incidence of bullying is lower. These findings provide clear direction for developing strategies to prevent bullying.

While there are differences in the definitions of bullying across different researchers and countries, the core findings are consistent. Although some studies are influenced by the researchers' personal experiences (Higgins, 2024; Mridul and Sharma, 2024), which may shape their definitions of bullying, these differences do not significantly affect the overall understanding of the phenomenon. However, Zheng et al.'s (2022) study directly adopted Einarsen et al.'s (2020) definition of WPB. The possibility that Chinese participants might have a different understanding of WPB compared to the researchers could affect the quantitative data. Therefore, before researching WPB in China, it is crucial to first study and clarify the concept within the Chinese context. In the following section, the coping strategies for WPB, as explored in existing research, will be reviewed.

2.4.3 Coping Methods in Response to WPB among Teachers

The coping methods of victims have also attracted the attention of researchers. Perceived bullying can be extremely damaging to victims. They may lose social support, become emotionally drained, and lose control over the situation (Salin and Hoel, 2020). Kwan et al. (2016) suggested the responses to WPB are neglect, voice, acquiescence, and exit. When victims cannot address the problem through "voice" (proactive communication), they typically change their approach to either ignoring or consenting to the bullying behaviour until they ultimately leave the toxic work environment (Zapf and Gross, 2001; Karatuna, 2015; Kwan et al., 2016). McCormack et al.'s (2009) study also proved that bullying has both direct and indirect effects on the intention of teachers to resign.

Over the last decade, studies on WPB have confirmed the validity of Kwan et al. (2016)'s findings (De Wet, 2011; Zhao, 2015; Yang et al., 2023; Higgins, 2024; Mridul and Sharma, 2024). For example, Higgins (2024), in her autoethnography, analysed her complete coping process during her experience of WPB in the higher education field: initial silencing, confusion and reflection, self-doubt and introspection, reporting to the organisation (which proved ineffective), and eventually leaving. Subsequently, she employed meditation, music, and running to mitigate the toxic effects of the work environment on herself. Ultimately, through research and retelling of her experiences, she sought meaning and self-restoration in the process of transcendence.

Similarly, in a study by Chinese scholar Zhao (2015) on bullying among primary and secondary school teachers, it was found that teachers often choose to endure and superficially comply with organisational demands when faced with bullying. This endurance ultimately leads to professional burnout among teachers. Overall, from the coping strategies employed by educational personnel, we can observe that disengagement coping and avoidance coping are commonly used methods (Reknes et al., 2016).

Some scholars have also explored the reasons behind such endurance. One reason is the lack of organisational or personal attention to bullying and weak self-protection awareness (Salin and Hoel, 2020; Zheng et al., 2022). Additionally, to Chinese people, Guo et al.(2015) argue that the long-standing autocratic rule and familialism in traditional Chinese society have instilled a subconscious tendency among Chinese people to obey authority and prioritise self-sacrifice (Yang, 2004). This cultural inclination leads to widespread disregard of bullying by both organisations and individuals, with victims of bullying often adopting attitudes of endurance and silence (Guo et al., 2015). Therefore, teachers urgently require support and resources to address bullying incidents effectively.

2.4.4 Management Strategies of WPB in Education

Previously, it was observed that teachers frequently adopt a strategy of endurance and evasion in response to WPB, as confrontation seldom deters the bully (Klein and Lester, 2013; Karatuna, 2015). Consequently, professionals and scholars (Branch et al., 2012; Gallant, 2013; Taylor, 2021; Higgins, 2024) have explored strategies for preventing and managing WPB. Klein and Lester (2013) suggest focusing on educational support and improving the workplace environment in higher education rather than solely punishing the perpetrators.

Human resources professional Harber et al. (2013) provide an illustrative example of their efforts at George Mason University using the “No Blame Approach”. Specifically, Klein and Lester (2013) explained that this method involves establishing a discussion group for the victim, though the bully’s identity is not disclosed within the group. This allows for support to be provided to the target from multiple perspectives (Klein and Lester, 2013). Additionally, Gallant (2013) frames bullying as an organisational ethical issue and offers five moral strategies to address WPB in Universities.

1. **Conduct an Ethical Audit:** Universities should regularly conduct ethical audits to evaluate how members feel about the organisation’s behaviours and ethics and whether the organisation has taken concrete steps to create an ethical work environment.
2. **Create an Integrous, Caring and Cooperative Culture:** Organisations that foster a supportive atmosphere and prioritise health, safety, and psychological well-being can assist employees in overcoming bullying (Kwan et al., 2016). Gallant (2013) advocates for rewarding cooperative behaviours, such as awarding greater tenure and promotion points and fostering a participatory communication environment where ethical issues can be debated.
3. **Articulate Ethical Standards:** Share a code of ethics with all staff, such as the “Fundamental Values document” (International Center for Academic Integrity, 2021) to ensure a shared understanding of incivility behaviour across diverse backgrounds.
4. **Create Ethical Infrastructures:** This involves building structures (e.g., ethics or academic integrity office, website and working group) and policies (e.g., anti-bullying policy).
5. **Educate students, staff, and faculty:** Branch et al. (2012) propose that improving employees’ awareness of WPB should be the initial step in addressing the issue. Building on this, Gallant (2013) advocates providing ethical decision-making training to all members, including identifying bullying and teaching appropriate response strategies.

In agreement with Gallant (2013), Higgins (2024) identifies the root cause of WPB as leaders lacking a core belief system. Ethical leaders should exhibit integrity, responsibility, motivation, growth orientation, and efficiency (Higgins, 2024). Without a core belief system, a leader can foster a toxic workplace.

Gallant (2013) offers constructive recommendations along with specific implementation steps and examples, which can be applied to teachers in the K-12 educational context. However, she overlooks the psychological impact of bullying on employees, neglecting the importance of emotional regulation strategies. In contrast, Branch et al. (2012) propose a holistic approach that integrates organisational support and personal capacity building, encompassing awareness training, emotion-focused skills, interpersonal skills, and restorative justice measures (including reporting procedures and remediation). Integrating these approaches could lead to a more holistic anti-bullying strategy.

The “No Blame Approach” (Harber et al., 2013), the “Five Moral Strategies” (Gallant, 2013), and the “Holistic Approach” (Branch et al., 2012) emphasise the importance of organisational interventions and resource allocation. However, the effectiveness of these methods in all contexts is questionable. Especially in resource-constrained or culturally entrenched environments, top-down approaches alone may not be sufficient to be promoted. Additionally, the comprehensive nature of these methods might lead to high implementation costs or neglect of more flexible strategies. Therefore, although these approaches provide valuable frameworks for anti-bullying initiatives, their universal applicability and effectiveness require further investigation and reflection.

2.5 Conclusion

Overall, qualitative research methods are more appropriate for in-depth exploring the awareness, dynamics, cause, and coping strategies of WPB. This review has identified a limited body of literature addressing the work environments of primary and secondary school teachers (McCormack et al., 2009; Fox and Stallworth, 2010). Furthermore, there is little reported data on WPB among Chinese teachers. It is crucial to explore how educational professionals perceive, interpret, and cope with WPB to improve the work environment in education settings, reduce the risk of WPB victimisation among teachers, and mitigate the economic losses organisations bear (Hollis, 2015; Mridul and Sharma, 2024). Therefore, research on WPB in the educational sector must urgently be expanded in China. This study aims to apply a qualitative method to shed light on Chinese schoolteachers’ understanding of WPB through the following research questions:

Q1: How do Chinese teachers interpret WPB in school settings?

Q2: How do Chinese teachers perceive the criteria for determining WPB?

Q3: How do Chinese teachers respond to WPB?

Q4: What are Chinese teachers' perspectives on avoiding WPB?



Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

To answer the research questions posed in the previous section, the third chapter concerns the methodology used for this study. The first part of this chapter will outline the study design and the rationale for adopting a qualitative approach. Following this, the data collection process will be explained, including the sampling strategy for participant recruitment, the development of the data collection instrument, and the data collection methods. The third part will then outline the data analysis procedures. Meanwhile, considerations of ethics and moral standards were integrated into every research stage.

3.2 Study Design

Positivism and interpretivism are two paradigms that guide how we seek and apply knowledge (Thomas, 2013). According to positivism, social phenomena can be objectively measured through scientific methods (Thomas, 2013; Creswell and Creswell, 2023). In contrast, interpretivism focuses on the subjective meanings people derive from their experiences, constructed through their backgrounds and contexts (Creswell, 2012). Given my interest in exploring how Chinese teachers understand WPB based on their work experience, the interpretive paradigm is particularly appropriate for this study.

Qualitative research, called the interpretive approach, emphasises collecting subjective experiences and interpretations of social phenomena from individuals or groups in a natural context (Seidman, 2006; Creswell, 2012; Creswell, 2018). When we seek in-depth information on sensitive issues, interviews constitute a highly effective method for capturing people's "voices" and "stories" (Hennink et al., 2019, p201). Therefore, considering the sensitive nature of WPB (De Wet, 2011), this study employed the qualitative interview method, which drew on and improved upon the research by Borg (2009).

Borg (2009) employed a mixed-method approach, beginning with a quantitative survey using scenario questionnaires and qualitative interviews to explore English language teachers' conception of research. This study, however, directly integrated the scenario questionnaire into the qualitative interviews, presenting participants with real-life hypothetical scenarios to elicit reflections and insights. This method is particularly effective in sensitive research and studies where participants may lack knowledge or awareness of the topic (Borg, 2009; Jaidin,

2018; Seberger and Patil, 2021; Nazir and Kevern, 2024). It not only streamlines the process but also deepens the relevance of data. Overall, combined with the literature review and research questions in Chapter 2, we have completed the first qualitative research phase—the research design phase (Hennink et al., 2019).

3.3 Data Collection

The data collection phase represents the second stage of the qualitative research cycle (Hennink et al., 2019). In this stage, a purposive sampling method was first employed to recruit participants. Second, a scenarios-based interview guide (see Appendix A) was designed to collect and record the data. Third, once the interview guide was prepared, a pilot interview was conducted to refine it. Finally, the data was collected using the scenarios. Throughout the data collection process, I adhered strictly to the ethical guidelines of academic research (British Educational Research Association [BERA], 2018), which will be elaborated on in the subsequent sections.

3.3.1 Sampling Method and Participants

Qualitative research aims to explore a specific population’s detailed explanations of a phenomenon without generalising the findings to a broader population through statistical inference (Seidman, 2006). As such, a large sample size is not required (Hennink et al., 2019; Saunders et al., 2023), and a purposive sampling method was employed. For my graduate thesis, this method was utilised because it allows for the intentional selection of experienced teachers willing to share their perspectives (Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 2019). Six teachers were purposefully recruited from my former colleagues via the Chinese social media platform WeChat.

This study focuses not on teachers with marked or reported bullying experiences but on broader awareness and attitudes towards WPB among general teachers. Participants with working experience ranging from 8 to 20 years were selected to gain the most in-depth data. Furthermore, to ensure sufficient numbers of participants (Seidman, 2006), teachers from different disciplines and job positions were included (see Table 2). In these ways, more prosperous and more diverse information can be collected.

Table 2: Participants Information

Participants	Working experience	Schools Employed At	Professional role
A	8 years	4	Chinese & Math teacher and Class teacher (currently), Teaching assistant
B	20 years	4	Mental Health Counselor (currently), Chinese as a Second Language teacher, Chinese teacher, Head of Academic, Student Affairs Office
C	13 years	3	Math teacher
D	9 years	1	Art teacher (currently), Teaching assistant
E	12 years	2	Math teacher (currently), Class teacher
F	10 years	5	Chinese teacher and Class teacher

All the participants are females. Five of these six teachers have had additional roles beyond their subject-teaching duties. Specifically, Participants A, E, and F served as class teachers, responsible for students' lives, thoughts, and other administrative affairs and teaching. Participants A and D worked as assistant teachers for two and one year, respectively. Additionally, except for one teacher, all others had changed their workplaces at least once.

However, recruiting participants for this topic was challenging. After two teachers immediately rejected my initial request, I reflected on my communication approach and restarted the recruitment process. While teachers expressed interest in this topic, many admitted they didn't know much about WPB. I explained that the interview does not require specific knowledge; instead, they could draw upon their experiences to contribute valuable insights to the research.

In addition, I assured them of confidentiality and their right to withdraw at any time. With established trust, I obtained informed consent from six teachers. I then sent the Information Sheet (see Appendix B) via WeChat to clarify the study and address any questions. Finally, before the interview, they signed the Consent Form (see Appendix C) and formally agreed to participate.

3.3.2 Data Collection Tools

To avoid participants being unaware of WPB and to address concerns about revealing personal experiences, a hypothetical WPB scenarios questionnaire (see Appendix A) was designed. The questionnaire includes eight WPB scenarios adapted from some negative behaviours in the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised (NAQ-R) (Einarsen et al., 2009).

In the scenarios questionnaire, there are two types of manifestations of WPB, including person-related bullying and work-related bullying (Einarsen et al., 2009). According to the criteria of WPB, some incidents were described as ‘ongoing’ and some as ‘one-time’ events to test teachers’ understanding of the ‘persistent’ element in the definition (Einarsen et al., 2020). Furthermore, leaders, colleagues, and parents were set as the bullying perpetrators to enrich the scenarios. During the interview, the participants were asked, “To what extent do you think this scenario counted as WPB, and why?”

Through this approach, scenarios activated participants’ experiences, prompting them to reflect on past incidents during interviews and eliciting their interpretations. This method also reduced participants’ resistance to discussing sensitive topics, allowing them to express their views more freely. Additionally, it triggered teachers to share their own bullying experiences.

3.3.3 Pilot Interview

To enhance the credibility and reliability of this study, pilot interviews were conducted to test and refine the interview guide. Hennink et al. (2019) argue that participants’ interpretation of interview questions can often be unpredictable, making it advisable to invite participants with similar characteristics for pilot testing. This strategy allows for evaluating the interview’s duration, logical flow, and interviewees’ reactions. Additionally, as noted by Mann (2016) and Seidman (2006), pilot interviews can develop researchers’ skills in establishing rapport, eliciting responses, and listening. Furthermore, this practice facilitated reflexivity, enabling

me to reflect critically on the interactive dynamics of the interviews, including the emotions of both the interviewee and me.

To serve these purposes, two pilot interviews were conducted with my classmates, who are also teachers studying in the Education School at the University of Leeds.

In the initial pilot interview, the process did not proceed smoothly. I repeatedly asked my interviewee for further clarification to gain a deeper understanding. This led to the interviewee expressing impatience with the probing questions, which resulted in a tense and challenging interview atmosphere. Following this interview, I reflected on the process and modified my interview method:

1. Avoid sharing personal experiences and feelings with participants before the interview to maintain a neutral and inclusive attitude.
2. Make sure a foundation of trust is built with participants before the interview begins.

Moreover, some scenarios were revised to achieve the research goals better. After summarising the first interview's experience, another interview was conducted with a trusted classmate. This interview proceeded smoothly. Following this, the formal interviews proceeded.

3.3.4 Scenarios-based Interview

The six interviews were conducted using voice calls from WeChat. Although face-to-face interviews could provide more comprehensive information (Hennink et al., 2019), voice calls were chosen as they eliminate geographical barriers and offer convenience for both parties (Mann, 2016). Additionally, some participants indicated that video interviews might make them uncomfortable; thus, six interviews were conducted using voice calls only. To avoid any potential incidents, interviews were recorded with two recording devices. The language of the interviews was Chinese, and each session lasted approximately 40-60 minutes.

At the beginning of the interview, participants were provided with information about the study, and the principles of anonymity and confidentiality were emphasised after briefly building rapport. The interview was structured into three parts, with the first two requiring the completion of a questionnaire. Following the first part, open-ended questions were posed after

they submitted the questionnaire. For example, “Could you explain why this scenario is definitely WPB?”. Through these sub-questions, every participant drew upon their experiences to thoroughly explain their reasoning and voluntarily shared incidents of bullying they had encountered or observed. However, since each participant provided a detailed discussion of the characteristics of bullying behaviours during the first part of the interview, the questionnaire in the second part was used solely as an interview prompt and was not completed by them. While certain changes were made during data collection, these were driven by specific considerations. As Hennink et al. (2019) argue, iteration is an advantage in qualitative research, allowing for the refinement and adjustment of data collection strategies as the study progresses.

During the interviews, I attentively listened to the participants’ perceptions and responded appropriately, fully expressing my respect. All six interviews were conducted very smoothly. At the end, participants noted that engaging in the research was very meaningful and expressed a desire to understand WPB in the future.

3.4 Data Analysis

This is the third stage of qualitative research, following the data collection phase (Hennink et al., 2019). All the questionnaires and audio files were uploaded to the university’s encrypted OneDrive. The audio files were transformed into verbatim transcripts using Lark Minutes software, with all the identity information anonymised (see Appendix D). These steps ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of the data.

The analytical method employed in this study is thematic analysis, chosen for its simplicity, ease of use, and reliability, particularly for those new to qualitative research (Braun and Clarke, 2021). The thematic analysis involves coding data and developing themes (Braun and Clarke, 2021). Subsequently, a detailed description will follow.

After transcribing the interviews, the thematic analysis was conducted manually through structured steps. First, the transcripts were read multiple times to capture the overall sense of the data, allowing me to immerse myself in the participants’ narratives (Creswell, 2019). Next, one transcript was selected, and the points of interest were noted and labelled as coding (Seidman, 2006). Specifically, different colours were used to highlight the text based on

insights from the literature review and my research questions, annotating the margins with two- to three-word labels.

Similar codes were then grouped into broader themes. This process was iterative, continuously refining, merging, and optimising themes until 5-7 key themes emerged (Creswell, 2019). The detailed coding process, including examples and the final list of themes, is provided in Appendix E.

Finally, the findings section was written based on the identified themes. To ensure the credibility of the analysis, member checking was conducted (Creswell, 2012). Interpretations and conclusions were shared with the participants to confirm their accounts were accurately understood.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research design, data collection process, and data analysis method with particular attention to reflexivity to ensure the study's validity. Reflexivity involves the researcher's reflection on how their background and values might influence the generation and interpretation of data (Hennink et al., 2019). Throughout the research process, I continuously refined the study based on feedback from my supervisor to enhance its reliability and credibility. The next chapter will discuss the findings from the thematic analysis in detail.

Chapter 4 Findings

4.1 Introduction

The primary aim of this research was to delve into Chinese teachers' understanding of WPB, focusing on their perception of WPB, the criteria of WPB, coping strategies, and their views on avoiding WPB. Analysis of the interview data revealed four key themes with the sub-themes. The four themes identified were:

- Chinese teachers' interpretation of WPB
- Identification and Determination of WPB
- Teacher's Coping Methods to WPB
- Calls for Action and Recommendations to Prevent WPB

4.2 Teachers' Interpretation of WPB

When asked about their understanding of WPB, teachers initially said they were unaware of the term. However, when prompted with specific scenarios, they could draw on their own experiences to assess the situations, identify characteristics of bullying behaviour, and provide their reasoning. Moreover, during the interviews, the teachers reflected on their careers, leading them to realise that, despite unfamiliar with the term, WPB exists in their work environments.

4.2.1 WPB: Unawareness and Targeting New Teachers

During interviews, participants were asked if they had any prior understanding of WPB. They all indicated that "(I) had never considered that, as teachers, we might face bullies in the workplace" (PC), and "the concept is not clear" (PE, PF). Nevertheless, after being invited to participate in this study, some participants reflected on their teaching careers and reported their experiences with WPB. For example, Participants C and E recounted their reflections during the interviews:

"When I first came to City W, this class was the worst. But you had no choice but to accept it when you were assigned to it. Why did they assign it to you? They thought you might be a new teacher. You must be in this position now and can't say anything. So, after taking this bad class, my colleagues and I had a lot of work to do. But we didn't get any recognition. I didn't feel it was workplace bullying at the time because I didn't understand it. Afterwards[...] I knew it. I think it was bullying. And after the first

semester, when you knew about this when you talked to (the leader) again, he(he) still felt that you didn't do it well [...] Later after you sent me this (interview information form), I recalled it, and I think that I feel, I must have bullied in the workplace at the time.” – Participant C

“Have (you) ever thought that they have been in this environment for so long that they have been influenced into thinking that this (WPB) is normal? For example, the question (scenario) just now reminded me of the former leader. She is very strict and does not care about the feelings of students and teachers. She may criticise you to your face. But she did help you in the work; she is sincere and not malicious [...] If the whole campus culture is like this, including myself eight years ago [...] I did not think her behaviour was bullying, but as my mindset changed, the environment I came into contact with changed, and the people I came into contact with changed, I would change my view. For the same problem eight years ago, I thought it was not (bullying), but now I think it is. This is an awakening and demand for self-awareness and self-rights” – Participant E

Additionally, these incidents mostly took place when they were “newcomers” (PD, PE, PF) to a school and the bullying typically came from their “partners” (PE), “co-teachers” (PA) or leaders. They were often assigned heavier and more tasks and were subject to arbitrary criticism.

4.2.2 Perceptions on Manifestations of WPB

Table 3: Teachers’ Understanding of Eight Scenarios (Appendix A)

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8
PA	D	D	D	D	Probably	D	P	D
PB	P	D	Not sure	PNOT	D	D	P	D
PC	P	P	P	P	P	P	DNOT	P
PD	P	D	P	P	D	D	D	D
PE	D	D	D	D	D	P	D	D
PF	PNOT	P	D	D	P	D	P	D

Note: Orange colour represents “Definitely WPB”; Yellow colour represents “Probably WPB”; Dark green represents “Definitely not WPB”; and light green represents “Probably not WPB”; Purple means the participant is unable to determine if it is WPB.

The findings revealed that interviewees with more extended work experience had, to varying degrees, witnessed or experienced WPB during their careers. Four teachers shared personal or observed instances of WPB. In contrast, individuals who had not encountered WPB themselves tended to lack a deep understanding of bullying.

As illustrated in Table 3, scenario eight was mostly identified as WPB. Five participants stated that spreading rumours is the most unacceptable behaviour because it is difficult to stop and can damage an individual’s “credibility” (PE). Participant E said, “The harm from rumours is different; it’s like being attacked by a thousand arrows”.

Another noticeable teacher is Participant C, who identified most scenarios as possible WPB because she believed that, on the one hand, she had “never encountered” certain situations. On the other hand, the other party might not have malicious intent. In contrast to Participant C’s gentle and slow-paced narration, Participant A was very confident in her interview, which was also reflected in her choices. When identifying WPB scenarios, she almost unhesitatingly labelled most as WPB. Initially, she considered Scenario 5 as “definitely WPB”, but during the discussion about the characteristics of bullying, she agreed on the repetition and persistence of bullying behaviours. Thus, because in Scenario 5, the colleague’s demeaning language and shouting occurred only once, she felt hesitant but ultimately changed to “probably is WPB” as she was unsure.

Scenarios 3 and 4 involved parents bullying teachers, and Participant B’s choices in these scenarios significantly differed from those of other teachers. This difference may be because the other teachers, as subject teachers, have ongoing and sustained interactions with parents and students. In contrast, Participant B, working as a support staff member or in a leadership position, has less frequent contact with parents.

However, when discussing the deprivation of rights and overwhelming work pressure, half of the participants tended to accept these widespread societal phenomena. They believed they needed to adapt to this situation accordingly. In Scenario 1, most participants thought that as

teachers, they should “try not to leave” (PC) because “they have to make up for the work later” (PC). Participant F argued that it is probably not WPB. She mentioned, “The work in a school is not like other jobs... frequent leave is indeed problematic” and “employees should consider the overall situation (of the school)”. In Scenario 2, participants acknowledged that “teachers’ excessive workload is indeed a common issue”. Teacher F suggested that this might be a “systemic issue within education”, indicating that “leaders may also find it difficult to resolve” and that individuals need to “adjust themselves”. Conversely, they were more concerned about their opinions being ignored and whether the workload is distributed fairly in these contexts. Participant D asserted, “The main thing about bullying is that it’s unfair”.

In scenario 7, featuring a destructive leader, most participants understood their behaviour, even though it created a tense work environment. Most teachers said, “I didn’t see any intention to belittle others” (PA) and stated that “if their intention is good, I think it is acceptable” (PF) and “They may be quite harsh, but it does not rise to the level of bullying” (PC).

Participants also reported certain subtle negative behaviours as forms of WPB, such as emotional abuse and social isolation. For example:

“I think cold violence is also a kind of bullying [...] it’s your leader will not give you feedback on anything you do.” -Participant D

“For example, when the school is purchasing supplies, teachers in the same grade may be good friends, so they will go shopping together and will not take you with them.” – participant A

Overall, teachers identified the majority of these eight scenarios as WPB. These scenarios involve a range of incivility behaviours, such as spreading rumours, heckling, persistent demeaning language, and threats (Einarsen et al., 2020).

4.3 Identification and Determination of WPB

In discussing negative scenarios, participants used the repetitiveness of the perpetrator’s actions to identify bullying behaviour. This is because if an adverse event occurred repeatedly,

participants could determine that the behaviour was malicious and intentional. Participant A explained that “if it weren’t intentional, it wouldn’t happen repeatedly”, and similarly, Participant D mentioned that “...it (criticism) still continues to be sent...it’s a bit targeted”.

These behaviours give teachers a sense of the bully’s “malice” (PA) and purpose: to try to keep the target of the bullying at a low level. These negative behaviours made them feel “put down” (PC, PE, PF). Participants described these actions as designed to “elevate themselves and put you down” (PA), “to show their authority” (PE), and to “expect others to obey them” (PD). The purpose of bullies is to create an imbalance of power. Furthermore, Participant E describes bullying as “the foot that stepped over (your boundary)”.

In addition, bullying behaviour can seriously affect the victim’s emotions and psychology, even leading to physical reactions (Fahie and Devine, 2014; Higgins, 2024). Particularly when faced with constant criticism of mistakes and threatening behaviours from parents, these actions can induce feelings of “tension and anxiety” (PE), “panic” (PE, PF) and “body stiffness” (PE), making victims “fall into self-doubt” (PF) and think that “even if you know you are doing the right thing, you will still be afraid” (PF). This fear will be “hindered from doing things” (PA). When “already feeling stress and anxiety” (PB) and “affecting mental health and work performance” (PD). Participant B and Participant D believed that it “must be bullying”.

However, in defining WPB, participants emphasised the inherent negative of the behaviour and the significance of personal perception. For example, participant D stated that:

“I think that in the event itself, they just wanted to bully. It doesn’t matter whether it was intentional or not, the length of time, the social status of the person, or the impact later. The impact may be small or large, but I don’t think these are important. The act of bullying is the standard degree. They bullied, and light bullying and heavy bullying will cause the same harm to a person [...] For me, it’s just the feeling in my heart. I think you are bullying me in this matter, then they are bullying me [...]”

To sum up, participants believed that WPB behaviour is characterised by its repetitiveness and its intention to create a power and status imbalance, severely impacting the victim’s psychological well-being. However, when defining the WPB, some participants opposed using these characteristics as criteria. They argued that the malicious nature of bullying

makes it unacceptable even if it occurs only once, regardless of the perpetrator's intent or the actual harm caused.

4.4 Teacher's Coping Methods to WPB

Of the six participants, four reported experiencing WPB, and all four also reported witnessing bullying incidents. Three participants shared their personal experiences of WPB. Their accounts revealed that bullying victims were newcomers or in "weak positions" (PC), and attempts at communication were often futile. Consequently, their typical strategies included either "enduring" (PC) the bullying or "resigning" (PC, PD, PE, PF), sometimes even "leaving the profession" (PC) altogether. When the bullying originated not from individuals but from broader societal or organisational contexts, teachers tended to respond with "compliance" (PF) and "应付", which means coping with work perfunctorily (PF).

In the cases shared by Participant C, teachers did not receive support from leadership or the organisation when bullied, and victims had to find their way out of the situation. Thus, there are typically two potential outcomes when dealing with WPB. If the victim is competent and quickly grows into their role, they may earn the bully's respect and thus escape the oppression. Conversely, the victim with a weaker personality who loses confidence due to the bullying is more likely to resign.

"In front of absolute power, this person who is bullied doesn't seem to have much ability to fight back. Like the music teacher at the school before, he was obviously bullied (by the parents), but he didn't have the ability to fight back either, or he ended up leaving." – Participant E

"There are teachers who were unfortunate enough to be assigned to those kinds of teachers (bullies), and there were actually rumours about it (the bullies), and the whole school knows about it. I think the leaders know all about it too [...] The teacher assigned to them just kept leaving [...] The leaders haven't made any improvements" – Participant B

However, different from others, Participant F took on the role of a hero in her story, using proactive methods to address WPB: "I felt it was bullying, 我就要去告 (I will tell the leader).

Even though I was new, I wasn't afraid because I believed that I hadn't done anything wrong, so I stood my ground and continued to confront her [...]"

4.5 Prevention of WPB

4.5.1 High Self-Achievement Demands and Ethical Leadership as Deterrents to WPB

Participant B stated that she had yet to experience WPB, and this theme emerged due to her misunderstanding of the first part of the question. However, this 'misunderstanding' provided valuable insights into how teachers mitigate the perception of WPB. Initially, Participant B contextualised the scenarios within her work environment, believing such situations had not occurred to her. This perception is primarily due to the following reasons:

First, the high self-expectations and achievement levels make her willing to take on more challenges or additional tasks proactively. She mentioned that "[...] In my work environment... I've always had a strong sense of self-motivation [...] From the beginning until now, I feel that I have been working hard and doing things (on my own initiative), and I may even do better than what the leader requires".

Second, positive relationships with superiors reduce negative feelings at work. When efforts and contributions are recognised and acknowledged by superiors, it enhances the participants' sense of self-worth in the workplace. Participant B stated, "I put in more effort than my colleagues, but my extra work also brings me more opportunities", and "I don't think it's WPB (scenario 1) because I like working. After being valued by my leaders, I have the opportunity to develop and work hard."

Third, a professional training background lays a foundation for Participant B's work values. Additionally, it equips her to provide professional guidance and maintain a stable mindset when handling uncivil behaviour from clients (parents). She said, "[...] because I was already a mid-level manager at that time, and there are many rules for mid-level managers, such as working with an entrepreneurial spirit... So, we often feel that we work with a sense of ownership", and "[...] any questions from the target customers can promote the optimisation of this product, so our training... So, we have a strong awareness of customer service training [...] It will tell me how to deal with it [...], including very standard answers [...]."

The interaction of these three aspects makes it unlikely for the participant to experience WPB. This finding aligns with the suggestions participants provided on how to avoid WPB.

4.5.2 Calls for Action and Recommendations to Prevent WPB

The final interview question asked teachers what support they needed in preventing and addressing bullying. Teachers provided three key suggestions: First, raising awareness among teachers and the broader society about the existence of WPB is crucial, as only then can individuals learn to recognise bullying behaviours. Second, it is vital to empower oneself to become stronger and “bravely challenge” (PC) bullying behaviours in the workplace. Participant F believed, “When real bullying occurs, there is very little support from outsiders”. As Participant F further suggested:

“The first thing you have to raise awareness, you have to be clear [...] that there’s such a thing as bullying, and the second thing is that we may need to read more books, study psychology, and improve our professional quality [...] Through these ways, we can make ourselves a little stronger.”

Considering the previous section’s findings on response strategies for WPB, it is evident that victims of WPB receive minimal support and assistance from their organisations when such incidents occur.

Third, at the organisational level, Participant A shared her work experience:

“This general environment I’m currently working in is pretty good. Among us [...] everyone rolls (driven and always aims for excellence) their own and rarely rolls anyone else, or each of us has very clear individual job responsibilities ... Schools can create a [...] campus culture, that is to say, teachers are not stepping on each other, but a relationship of cooperation and win-win [...] Then this requires the leadership from the principal [...].”

This indicates that management should reasonably allocate and manage the work duties of teachers with different roles and that school leaders should strive to create a “collaborative and cooperative” (PA) school culture. Participant B, a student counsellor, suggested providing psychological “training” to teachers to “apply it in their daily lives.”

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of participants' perceptions of WPB, reactions to WPB, and suggestions for avoiding such behaviour, all based on their workplace experiences. The interpretation of these findings will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 5.



Chapter 5 Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research findings to provide insight into WPB in educational settings in China. The discussion is organised according to the research questions formulated at the study's outset. The main themes addressed include how Chinese teachers interpret WPB, the criteria of WPB identified by Chinese teachers, their coping strategies, and their perspectives on avoiding WPB. These themes will be discussed with the relevant research on WPB reviewed in Chapter 2, which supports the findings of this study.

5.2 Interpretation of WPB by Chinese Teachers

Research on WPB in China is relatively limited (McCormack et al., 2009; Guo et al., 2015). All six Chinese teachers reported a lack of understanding of the concept of WPB, yet four reported having experienced bullying in their school setting during the interviews. This finding aligns with Guo et al.'s (2015) view that WPB is common in China but primarily overlooked by organisations and individuals. Chinese cultural values of deference to authority and self-sacrifice (Yang, 2004) have resulted in the acceptance of bullying as an implicit workplace norm (Guo et al., 2015). Therefore, it was only when the term WPB was explicitly mentioned that participants realised the harmful nature of their experience.

Among the person-related negative behaviours, gossiping and spreading rumours, having one's opinions ignored, verbal threats, and verbal aggression were widely recognised as forms of bullying. Spreading rumours was seen as the most unacceptable by Chinese teachers. This view is consistent with the perspective of human resource professionals from Gulf countries, who also identified rumour-spreading as the most severe form of bullying (Salin et al., 2019). For teachers and other professionals, reputation is a precious asset (Aslani et al., 2016). Teachers are expected to uphold high moral standards as educators and role models, and rumours can severely impact their professional image and career (Ariza-Montes et al., 2016; Einarsen et al., 2020). Furthermore, the uncontrollable spread of rumours and the resulting stigmatisation can be a significant source of social stress for victims in the workplace (Zapf and Einarsen; Einarsen et al., 2009).

Regarding work-related negative behaviours, some participants considered excessive workloads and being implicitly urged to relinquish work rights unacceptable. In contrast,

others felt such behaviours could be tolerable unless specifically targeted at an individual. This finding aligns with Salin et al.'s (2019) and Power et al.'s (2013) research, which noted that people tend to accept work-related negative behaviours in high-performance-oriented cultures (such as the United States, China, and Austria). Since 1978, China has opened to international influences, and participants vary in their assimilation of Western individualism alongside traditional Chinese collectivism degrees. Consequently, their cultural values also influence their understanding of bullying (Grimard and Lee, 2020). In the future, more investigations should be conducted on the cultural differences in bullying perception in China.

Contrary to the studies by De Wet (2014) and De Vos and Kirsten (2015), which identified principals as the primary source of bullying, this study's result indicated that parents, colleagues, and supervisors were the main perpetrators. These individuals, who have direct contact with participants' daily activities frequently, are in the best position to exert bullying behaviours. New teachers, who are in a vulnerable and unstable stage of their careers due to inexperience and lack of adaptation to the school environment, are often the ones most affected (De Wet, 2014; Mridul and Sharma, 2024). They are frequently ignored by leadership, questioned by parents, and given extra workloads by more seasoned teachers (De Wet, 2014; Mridul and Sharma, 2024).

5.3 The Criteria for Identifying WPB

Although the participants had not previously encountered the concept of WPB, they emphasised the characteristics when discussing why certain behaviours in the scenarios were considered bullying. The results are consistent with the explanation of the features of bullying behaviours provided by Einarsen et al. (2020), namely, that WPB is repetitive and enduring, has hostile intentions, and involves an imbalance of power between the parties. Participants pointed out that some WPB behaviours are repetitive and persistent, aligning with the findings of Leymann (1990) and Baillien et al. (2017) regarding these features. These specific characteristics enable victims to distinguish WPB from general workplace conflicts (Baillien et al., 2017) and recognise the intentionality of the bully, which is creating a state of inequality and making them feel an imbalance in power dynamics (Leymann, 1990; Einarsen et al., 2009; S.V. Einarsen et al., 2020). While the intention of bullying is difficult to prove in real-world scenarios, and perpetrators often retain the power to deny their intentions (Neuman and Baron, 2005; Nielsen et al., 2017), the emphasis placed on bullying intent by participants

in the current study supports Salin et al.'s (2019) findings. This suggests that perceived intent is a significant determinant of WPB among Chinese people (Xiao and Peng, 2014; Song, 2024). Moreover, the findings also appeared that if the behaviour causes severe psychological harm to the victim (Leymann, 1990), it is undoubtedly considered bullying.

Nevertheless, unlike the definition by Einarsen et al. (2009), which focuses on the frequency and persistence of behaviours, the results of this study show that participants disagreed on the criterion that bullying behaviours must occur repeatedly and persist over time when defining WPB (Misawa, 2010; Williams and Ruiz, 2012; Salin et al., 2019; Tye-Williams et al., 2020; Higgins, 2024). On one hand, it is sometimes difficult for victims to determine the persistence frequency and duration, as Einarsen et al. mentioned (2020). For instance, Participant E cited the case of rumours, noting the difficulty in quantifying their frequency yet emphasising their widespread and uncontrollable impact. On the other hand, certain behaviours, such as verbal threats, undermine dignity and cause psychological harm to victims even if they occur only once (Tye-Williams et al., 2020). This is particularly true when there is a disparity in status or power, as such behaviours are unacceptable to the victim and highlight the severe and immediate harm they can cause (Salin et al., 2019; Higgins, 2024).

The frequency of bullying was repeatedly emphasised by participants partly because victims might not recognise bullying behaviours immediately when they first occur (Zheng et al., 2022). Due to the limited knowledge of WPB by Chinese teachers (Guo et al., 2015), sometimes, the targets do not want to believe that such malicious events are happening and might even think it is their problem (Higgins, 2024). Consequently, they often do not recognise WPB at the beginning and miss the chance to respond and intervene in bullying immediately (Zapf and Gross, 2001; Karatuna, 2015). This makes the bullies more aggressive, continuing until the victim is eventually powerless to resist (Zapf and Gross, 2001). Additionally, the difference in power status between the two parties can also make it difficult for individuals to protect themselves at the first time (Einarsen et al., 2020).

Thus, taking into account the inherently negative and unacceptable nature of WPB (Salin et al., 2019; Zheng et al., 2022), characterised by its ability to cause significant psychological harm and disrupt workplace harmony (Leymann, 1990; S.V. Einarsen et al., 2020), emphasising repetition and persistence in the definition is not conducive to the timely identification and handling of bullying behaviours. The characteristics of WPB should not be

used as criteria for determining bullying. Future scholars should further investigate the concept of WPB within the context of China, focusing on cultural factors and the unique challenges Chinese employees face.

5.4 Coping Methods for WPB

Teachers' understanding of WPB also influences their coping methods. Therefore, it is unsurprising that this study confirmed Kwan et al.'s (2016) coping strategies: exit, voice, acquiescence, and neglect. In parallel, their coping strategies mainly involve disengagement coping and avoidance coping (Zhao, 2015; Reknes et al., 2016). Moreover, compared to previous studies (De Wet, 2014; Fahie and Devine, 2014; Higgins, 2024. etc.), this study presents a unique finding that most reported bullying incidents occur during the novice period of teachers' careers. This includes newly employed teachers with no prior work experience and those who have transferred to a new school. These two groups show both similarities and differences in their bullying responses.

When dealing with WPB, two scenarios emerge: bullying from individuals and bullying from organisations. When WPB originated from individuals (parents, senior teachers, superiors), novice teachers often underestimated or were unaware of the harmful nature of the behaviour initially. Additionally, given the relationship-oriented nature of Chinese culture (Yang, 2004), new teachers tend to adopt avoidance or neglect strategies (Guo et al., 2015; Kwan et al., 2016), interpreting such behaviour as a form of cultivation by their seniors. Once they become aware of the bullying, newly employed teachers, due to their lack of work experience and high dependence on their jobs (Zheng et al., 2022), often attribute the problem to themselves and choose acquiescence and temporary endurance (Kwan et al., 2016). This may lead to two outcomes: some teachers grow and gain the bully's approval, thereby escaping the bullying, while others may be unable to withstand the pressure and ultimately resign, potentially leaving the profession entirely (Karatuna, 2015; Taylor, 2021).

Conversely, experienced new teachers tend to be more confident when facing bullying. They usually adopt confrontation and voice strategies, engaging in communication or confrontation with the bully (Karatuna, 2015; Kwan et al., 2016). One possible reason is that their accumulated work experience and skills provide them with more job opportunities, thus reducing their dependency on any single job (Zheng et al., 2022). However, when faced with

severe threatening behaviour, victims often feel powerless and are left with no choice but to resign (Lutgen-Sandvik, 2006).

When bullying stems from social culture and organisational environment, they can only adopt avoidance strategies by accepting reality and appearing superficially compliant, or they resort to perfunctorily response strategies. This finding aligns with Zhao's (2015) previous research. On the one hand, the importance of job resources determines the weak position of teachers, while on the other hand, this coercive power is not well regulated by effective systems (Zheng et al., 2022). From a cultural perspective, this also conforms to the traditional Chinese value of obedience to authority (Yang, 2004; Qin and Shi, 2008; Guo et al., 2015).

Hence, this study's results on WPB's response strategies provide insights into prevention: efforts to prevent bullying should be approached from individual and organisational perspectives.

5.5 Suggestions and Expectations for Avoiding WPB

Based on the discussion of teachers' perceptions and responses to WPB, participants in this study also provided recommendations for reducing and preventing WPB. Most suggestions were from a personal perspective, which may stem from a lack of trust in the organisations (Karatuna, 2015). Similar to strategies used by successful victims in Zapf and Gross's (2001) study, our participants recommended enhancing work capabilities to stop bullying behaviour. They emphasised the need for individuals to become psychologically and skillfully intense (Taylor, 2021), as self-confidence and competence can prevent bullying by earning respect. Otherwise, victims often experience self-doubt when bullied, leading to psychological stress, affecting health, and eventually forcing them to leave their jobs to escape the bully (De Vos and Kirsten, 2015; Higgins, 2024).

The second proposal was from a societal and organisational perspective. Participants suggested that employees should be educated about WPB because recognising WPB is crucial for effectively addressing it. This common suggestion aligns with Branch et al.'s (2012) advice that raising awareness is the first step in managing WPB. Increased awareness enables employees to correctly use the WPB term, understand their feelings, and find solutions (Branch et al., 2012). Furthermore, Gallant (2013), Mridul and Sharma (2024) emphasised the need for organisations to provide training, especially for new employees who, as discussed

earlier, may be in vulnerable situations. For example, Branch et al.'s (2012) holistic approach and Gallant's (2013) moral strategies stressed training teachers to recognise WPB. Labelling WPB can help address the issue effectively (Klein and Lester, 2013).

A top-down commitment is also required, meaning that training should also extend to leaders who need systemic education in ethical leadership and practices (Gallant, 2013; Higgins, 2024). Otherwise, the anti-bullying policy may fail to achieve its intended impact (Branch et al., 2012).

The third suggestion was also related to the organisation. De Wet's (2014) research found that organisational chaos fosters bullying, with vulnerable employees often delegated menial tasks or additional responsibilities in environments lacking accountability, fairness, and transparency. In such an environment, individuals, particularly leaders, are not held responsible for their actions, employees are treated unequally, and there is a lack of open communication regarding policies and procedures. To prevent WPB, this study's participants call for standardising job duties and fostering a collaborative work atmosphere led by the school's leadership. Kwan et al. (2016) highlighted that organisations that create a high psychological safety environment, where employees can express concerns, feel respected and be heard, and receive management support when reporting bullying, can significantly reduce WPB incidents. Furthermore, only in such a climate can positive coping strategies (e.g., communication and reporting methods) be effective (Kwan et al., 2016).

Bring together the insights discussed. The finding also revealed that personal values, ethical leadership, and a supportive organisational environment that interact synergistically could dramatically decrease the incidence of bullying. Participant B already possesses high work motivation, and her leader's continual affirmation and support enhance her sense of personal value and help her maintain this positive attitude at work (Higgins, 2024). Additionally, her organisation provides professional training to aid teachers in managing negative behaviours. The resources provided by the organisation significantly reduce the incidence of bullying, which in turn preserves the teachers' motivation (Ariza-Montes et al., 2016). Therefore, this study found that ethical leaders and supportive organisational environments play a crucial role in reducing the incidence of bullying (Ariza-Montes et al., 2016; Higgins, 2024).

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the key discussion points from the findings of this research study, which interpreted the Chinese teachers' understanding of WPB. This brings the discussion of the findings to a conclusion. The next chapter will discuss the overall conclusions, limitations, and implications.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1 Conclusion

This study explored Chinese teachers' understanding of WPB, addressing the initial research questions through scenario-based interviews. Unlike prior research that often centres on WPB's dynamics (Zheng et al., 2022) and impact (Zheng et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2023), this study uniquely focuses on how Chinese educators perceive WPB behaviours, criteria, coping methods and avoiding suggestions. The findings revealed four key insights and suggested a practical approach to addressing WPB in educational settings.

First, despite their unfamiliarity with the formal concept of WPB, four out of the six participants recounted witnessed or personal experiences of WPB, which they characterised as malicious, repeated, and persistent uncivil behaviours. Particularly intolerable were instances where opinions were disregarded and rumours were spread. Second, the participants challenged the conventional criteria for recognising WPB, arguing that while repetition and persistence are critical, they should not be the determinants of WPB. Given the profound damage WPB inflicts on dignity, personality, and mental health, even a single occurrence should be considered unacceptable. These suggest that although the concept of WPB is not widely recognised in China, the phenomenon is pervasive within the education sector. Third, a particularly concerning finding is that participants, especially new teachers, often resorted to enduring or leaving their jobs when confronted with WPB. Additionally, when bullying originates from the broader societal and organisational, teachers tend to have a perfunctory attitude towards their work. Last, participants tend to use personal empowerment as a primary strategy to withstand malicious behaviours, as they held little hope that their organisation would intervene effectively during instances of bullying. Nevertheless, participants still desired society and organisations to help raise awareness about WPB and improve the work environment. Given the interaction among personal values, ethical leadership and supportive organisations can significantly mitigate teachers' perception of bullying. When developing anti-WPB policies, it is essential to consider these factors to protect teachers from WPB.

In reflecting on the broader impact of this research, it is evident that WPB remains an under-explored issue in educational settings, particularly in China. Although my experience with WPB ended three years ago, its effects were long-lasting. This study represents an academic exploration and a personal journey toward understanding and recovery. However, many

teachers continue to endure WPB, facing difficult decisions between enduring the abuse or leaving their positions. The findings of this study contribute to the body of research on WPB in the Chinese education sector, raising awareness among educators and potentially driving further studies on the localisation of WPB definitions in China. In the future, it is crucial to expand WPB training within educational settings, enabling teachers to recognise risk factors and prevent such distressing experiences.

6.2 Limitations

Despite the efforts to conduct this research thoroughly, several limitations must be acknowledged, given the time constraints and the scope of this graduate thesis.

Sample Size and Generalizability:

The small sample size of six participants significantly limits the generalizability of the findings. While purposive sampling was employed to ensure participants could genuinely discuss this sensitive topic with me, this method inherently restricts the diversity of perspectives. Specifically, the lack of participation from school leaders, such as principals, means the study may not capture the full range of understanding in educational settings. As a result, the findings may only partially represent the broader teaching population or reflect the hierarchical complexities within schools.

Methodological Constraints:

Conducting interviews via voice calls presented limitations in data collection. The inability to observe participants' facial expressions and body language reduces the richness of the data, as nonverbal cues often provide essential context to verbal responses (Hennink et al., 2019). Additionally, this mode of communication prevents the provision of nonverbal support, such as eye contact or comforting gestures, which could have facilitated a more open discussion, especially when participants recounted the distressing of WPB.

Researcher Experience and Interview Depth:

As a novice researcher, my interviewing skills were still developing during this study. A cautious approach was adopted to avoid traumatic experiences for the participants and to maintain objectivity, which may have inadvertently limited the depth of the interviews, such as not following up on some of their narratives as thoroughly. In future research, I will

improve my interview technique and employ more open-ended questioning and topical probes (Hennink et al., 2019).

6.3 Implications for Further Research and Practice

Future research on WPB, particularly in Chinese education settings, could benefit from employing an explanatory sequential mixed methods design (Creswell and Creswell, 2023). Initially, scenario-based surveys could collect extensive data, providing a broad understanding of teachers' perceptions of bullying behaviours and criteria. Following the analysis of survey results, participants could be invited for in-depth interviews to explain their choices, offering richer insights into the complexities of WPB. This approach would address the limitations of this study by broadening the sample size and further investigating the criteria Chinese teachers use to identify and define WPB.

Additionally, this study highlights the need for research into the primary perpetrators of WPB within the educational environment, whether from parents, colleagues, or leaders. Identifying the main perpetrators could lead to the development of targeted anti-bullying interventions and training programs for teachers.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that a top-down approach, starting with organisation leadership, is crucial for effectively addressing WPB. Schools and organisations could benefit from adopting comprehensive anti-bullying strategies, such as the “No Blame Approach” (Harber et al., 2013), the “Five Moral Strategies” (Gallant, 2013), and the “Holistic Approach” (Branch et al., 2012). These methods (Branch et al., 2012; Gallant, 2013; Harber et al., 2013) could be instrumental in implementing anti-WPB policies and establishing clear procedures for managing WPB incidents.

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Appendix

Notes: The translation references Google Translator and EuDic Dictionary.

Appendix A:

Interview Guide:

感谢您来参加这次访谈，我们的采访主要围绕以下几个方面: Thank you for participating in this interview. Our interview mainly focuses on the following aspects:

1. 了解您对职场欺凌的感知情况。 Understand your perception of workplace bullying.
2. 谈谈您对教师面对职场欺凌应对策略的看法，以及是否有一些支持建议。 Talk about your views on teachers' coping strategies for workplace bullying and whether there are some support suggestions.

我们的谈话将在采访过程中使用转录软件“飞书备忘录”进行录音和转录。我们谈话的所有内容将仅用于我的论文数据分析，只有我的评分老师可以看到。整个面试过程将以匿名方式进行，您的身份不会被他人识别。面试中的问题没有正确或错误的答案。如果任何问题让您感到困惑或不舒服，您可以随时提问或拒绝回答。我们将充分尊重和接受您的所有意见和观点。 Our conversation will be recorded during the interview and transcribed using “Lark Minutes” transcription software. Our conversation's contents will only be used for my paper data analysis and can only be seen by my grader. The entire interview process will be conducted anonymously, and your identity will not be identified by others. There are no right or wrong answers to the questions in the interview. If any questions make you confused or uncomfortable, you can ask questions at any time or refuse to answer. We will fully respect and accept all your opinions and views.

我们的访谈预计持续 40 分钟至 1 小时。访谈前请您签署这份知情同意书。面试前您有任何问题都可随时提问。 Our interview is expected to last 40 minutes to 1 hour. Please sign this informed consent form before the interview. You can ask any questions you have before the interview.

Interview Protocol Project: A qualitative exploration of Chinese schoolteachers' understanding of Workplace Bullying

Time of interview:

Date:

Interviewer: [REDACTED]

Interviewee:

Part 1:

在采访前请您阅读以下几个情景，您认为在多大程度上以下场景可以被判别为职场欺凌。答案没有对错。Here are some scenarios for you to assess. To what extent could the following scenarios be identified as workplace bullying? There are no right or wrong answers.

Following up question:

1. 在这次采访之前，你知道职场欺凌这个概念吗？能说说你对这个现象有多少了解呢？ Before this interview, were you aware of the concept of workplace bullying? Can you tell us how much you know about this phenomenon?
2. 为什么认为这项肯定是职场欺凌？ Why do you think these items are definitely WPB? 你觉得哪些方面让你感受到了被欺负？ In what ways do you feel you were bullied?
3. 为什么这项不算职场欺凌？ Why is this not considered WPB?
4. 为什么这项不确定呢？ Why is this item uncertain?
5. 职场欺凌出现时你（老师们）会如何应对呢？ 5. How do you (teachers) respond when workplace bullying occurs?
6. 职场欺凌还有有哪些形式呢？ 可以补充吗？ What are the forms of WPB? Can you add more?

Part 2: Criteria of WPB

在区分欺凌行为和其他负面冲突和不礼貌行为时，这里有一些判断标准，你认为职场欺凌必须符合这些标准吗？ Here are some criteria for distinguishing bullying from other

negative conflicts and impolite behaviour. Do you think workplace bullying must meet these criteria?

Part 3: Coping method and suggestions for avoiding WPB

1.如果出现了 WPB，你认为教师们和你通常会怎样处理呢？

If you are experiencing WPB, what is your (or teachers') possible solution?

2.您认为在减少职场欺凌行为上您需要哪些支持和帮助呢？ What support and help do you think you need to reduce bullying in the workplace?

Scenario Questionnaire:

第一部分：这里有一些场景让您来判断，您认为在多大程度上以下场景可以被判别为职场欺凌。答案没有对错。**Part 1:** Here are some scenarios for you to assess. To what extent could the following scenarios be identified as workplace bullying? There are no right or wrong answers.

1. 学校的工作总是很繁忙，对于请假领导都很不高兴，学校也总是暗示大家要有奉献和敬业的精神，不给别人添麻烦。所以虽然你有请假的权力，但也不敢使用，因为担心领导对你有意见。The school is always very busy, and the leadership is often displeased when employees request leave. The school frequently implies that everyone should show dedication and commitment and avoid causing inconvenience to others. As a result, although you have the right to take leave, you hesitate to use it, fearing that the leadership may develop a negative opinion of you.

不确定 肯定不是 可能不是 可能是 肯定是
Unsure Definitely not Probably not Probably WPB Definitely WPB

2. 你和同事被分配了更多的课程和额外的行政任务，尽管你们跟上级提出了工作负荷太重的问题，但管理层并没有提供任何支持和调整。这导致你不得不在下班后和周末工作以应对这些要求。You and your colleagues have been assigned additional classes and extra administrative tasks. Despite raising concerns about the heavy workload with your superiors, management has not provided any support or adjustments. This forces you to work after hours and on weekends to meet these demands.

不确定 肯定不是 可能不是 可能是 肯定是

3. 你经常受到某位家长的持续批评，这些批评针对教学中或班级管理中的小错误或失误。家长每周都会发很多信息，指出Ta认为的教师在课程计划、作业安排，甚至是课堂管理中的错误。尽管你努力解决这些问题，但家长仍然继续发送批评信息，给你造成了压力和士气低落的环境。You are frequently criticised by a particular parent, who

points out small mistakes or oversights in your teaching or class management. The parent sends multiple messages weekly, highlighting what they perceive as errors in your lesson planning, assignment arrangements, or even classroom management. Despite your efforts to address these issues, the parent continues to send critical messages, creating a stressful and demoralising work environment for you.

不确定 肯定不是 可能不是 可能是 肯定是

4. 您在处理学生问题上受到了家长的质疑。尽管你有充分的理由做出对学生的处罚决定，但家长仍然不满意，威胁向你的领导投诉或利用法律手段解决问题。这给你造成了压力和士气低落的环境。You are questioned by a parent regarding how you handled a student issue. Although you had solid reasons for your disciplinary decision, the parent is still dissatisfied and threatens to complain to your superiors or take legal action. This situation creates a stressful and demoralising environment for you.

不确定 肯定不是 可能不是 可能是 肯定是

5. 有一次，你作为领导在会议上讨论近期的考核内容，指出了同事们工作中需要改进的地方。一位资历深和年长的男性教师对此表示不满，为自己辩解，大声呵斥你啰里八嗦，并且企图用当众大吼大叫震慑你。During a meeting where you, as a leader, discussed recent evaluation content, you pointed out areas for improvement in your colleagues' work. A senior and older male teacher was dissatisfied, defended himself, and loudly scolded you for being long-winded, attempting to intimidate you by shouting in front of everyone.

不确定 肯定不是 可能不是 可能是 肯定是

6. 作为领导，当你开会时你的一个同事总是表现出不满，有时会故意打断你提出的建议，并用贬低的语言攻击你的专业能力。这种持续的负面行为已经严重影响了你的心理健康和工作表现，导致你在工作中感到极大的压力和不安。As a leader, one of your colleagues consistently shows dissatisfaction during meetings, sometimes deliberately interrupting your suggestions and attacking your professional competence with derogatory language. This ongoing negative behaviour has severely impacted your mental health and work performance, causing you great stress and discomfort in the workplace.

不确定 肯定不是 可能不是 可能是 肯定是

7. 你的领导脾气很不好，对老师们非常严格。老师们在教学过程中只要出现不足就会遭到严厉的批评，有时甚至当着所有人的面，老师们见到他（她）都感到非常的紧张，生怕说错话，做错事。但在这种管理风格下学校的整体教学质量一直保持着很高的水平。Your superior has a bad temper and is extremely strict with the teachers. Any shortcomings in teaching are met with severe criticism, sometimes even in front of everyone. Teachers feel very anxious around them, fearing to say or do anything wrong. However, under this management style, the school has maintained a high standard of teaching quality.

不确定 肯定不是 可能不是 可能是 肯定是

8. 有人散播关于你教学能力不足的谣言。Someone is spreading rumours about you.

不确定 肯定不是 可能不是 可能是 肯定是

第二部分 Part2:

欺凌的一些评判标准的看法

1. 欺凌行为必须反复发生(例如每周)并持续一段时间(例如六个月) Bullying must occur repeatedly (e.g., weekly) and persist over a period of time (e.g., six months).
2. 欺凌产生时双方权利地位 (工作, 社会和经济地位等) 最终存在不平等 Bullying occurs when there is an eventual imbalance of power or status (work, social, or
3. 欺凌一定是故意伤害 Bullying must involve intentional harm.
4. 行为造成较为严重负面影响 (身体, 心理, 工作方面等) The behaviour must result in significant negative impacts (physical, psychological, work-related, etc.).
5. 欺凌是一个不断升级的过程, 欺凌行为不会单独发生。Bullying is a progressive process, with the behavior escalating over time rather than occurring as isolated incidents.

Appendix B: Information Form

尊敬的参与者，

Dear participant,

欢迎您参加我的研究！本研究旨在了解中国教师对“职场欺凌”了解与认知现状。本信息表将说明研究目的及研究涉及的内容。请阅读以下信息，如需更多资讯请联系相关研究人员，感谢您花时间参与！Welcome to join my research! This study aims to understand the current understanding and cognition of "workplace bullying" among Chinese teachers. This information sheet will explain the purpose of the research and what it involves. Please read the following information and contact the relevant researchers if you need more information. Thank you for taking the time to participate!

需要做什么？ What do I have to do?

这项研究要求您参加大约 30-40 分钟的录音访谈。您将被要求阅读几个基于工作场所的场景，并询问您是否认为它们是职场欺凌的示例。This study requires you to participate in an audio-recorded interview for approximately 30-40 minutes. You will be asked to read through several workplace-based scenarios and ask questions about whether you think they are examples of WPB.

参与研究能获得什么？ What are the possible benefits of taking part?

参与我们的研究将使您初步了解职场欺凌的知识，帮助您认识到可能发生在职场中的不文明行为。同时，这也是一个思考和反思职场欺凌现象并贡献自己观点的机会，这些观点可能有助于进一步讨论和认识到这类行为对职场人员的影响。Participating in our study will provide you with a preliminary understanding of workplace bullying, helping you recognise potential instances of incivility in the workplace. This is an opportunity to think about and reflect on WPB and contribute their views that could be useful for further discussion and impact of recognising this.

是否参加？ Do I have to take part?

您可以自由决定是否参与调查,您可以随时取消参加，并且您不会因此受到任何的影响和损失。You are free to decide whether to participate in the research. You can cancel your participation at any time and will not suffer any consequences or losses.

研究资料的使用、传播和储存 Use, dissemination and storage of research data

在采访期间，我们的谈话将被录音并转录成文字。研究数据将仅被用于学术研究，并安全地储存在受大学认可的 OneDrive 平台中。研究数据将被匿名并安全储存直到研究彻底结束。数据的储存会严格遵守利兹大学的数据保护政策。During our interview, our conversation will be recorded and transcribed, and everything you tell me will only be applied for analysis. Your personal information will be saved and secured on a password-protected drive at the University of Leeds. You can also find information on the University's [Privacy Notice for Research](#)

您的个人资料将会被如何处理？ What will happen to my personal information?

整个采访全程采取匿名的方式，您的身份信息也不会被他人识别。您的个人信息（例如:姓名，工作地点，联系方式等）将保存在利兹大学受密码保护的驱动器上。原始数据不会以任何形式被公开。您还可以在大学的研究隐私声明中找到信息。The entire interview will be anonymous and your identity will not be identified by others. Your personal information (e.g. Name, workplace, contact number etc.) will be saved and secured on a password-protected drive at the

University of Leeds. The original data will not be made public in any form. You can also find information on the University's [Privacy Notice for Research](#).

谁在组织这项研究？ Who is organising the research?

利兹大学教育学院将协助开展这项研究。这是我的教育硕士研究论文的一部分。The University of Leeds, school of Education will be facilitating this research. This is part of my master's research dissertation in Education.

研究人员的联系方式 Contact me for further information.

Researcher:

Email: [REDACTED]

Supervisor: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

利兹伦理委员会: EthicsEnquiries@leeds.ac.uk

若您对研究有任何疑问都可在保密的情况下与我讨论。此外，如果您对本研究有任何问题不想与研究团队成员讨论，请通过联系导师 [REDACTED] 博士或联系大学教授研究伦理委员会。If you have any questions about the research, you can discuss them with me confidentially. Additionally, If there are any issues regarding this research that you would prefer not to discuss with members of the research team, don't hesitate to get in touch with supervisor [REDACTED] or the Faculty Research Ethics Committee at the University of Leeds.

Appendix C: Consent Form

Consent to take part in Qualitative Research on Chinese Schoolteachers' Understanding of Workplace Bullying

参与《中国小学教师对职场欺凌认知的定性研究》同意书

	Add your initials next to the statements you agree with 如果您同意，请在声明旁边添加您名字的首字母缩写
I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet/ letter explaining the above research project and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the project. 我确认我已阅读并理解参与信息表，并且我有机会提出有关研究的问题。	
I agree for the data I provide to be archived at trusted online profiles in an anonymised form. 我同意将我提供的数据以匿名形式存档在可信赖的在线档案中。	
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw this research at any time and without giving any reason and without there being any negative consequences. In addition, should I not wish to answer any particular question or questions, I am free to decline. 我了解，我的参与是自愿的，我可以随时退出这个研究，且无需给出任何理由，这对我不会产生任何负面后果。此外，如果我不想回答任何特定问题，我可以拒绝。	
I agree to take part in the above research project. 我同意参加上述研究项目。	

Name of participant 参与者姓名	
Participant's signature 签名	
Date 日期	
Name of lead researcher 研究者姓名	
Signature 签名	
Date* 日期	

Appendix D: Transcript (Excerpt)

报告欺凌
reporting
WPB
experience

Senior
teacher
bullies new
teacher

manifestati
ons of
Bullying

coping
method

领导不作为
Leadership
inaction

Participant C 34:22

嗯，所以现在的这个学校就有点就普通的民办学校了。然后现在就会有一些老师是属于创校就来的，他资历比较老，然后有些就是新老师可能刚进来，嗯，那老老师刚开始的时候可能就会带有一种有色眼镜看这种新老师。然后新老师一进来，他可能会跟他搭班，比如说班主任肯定是语文老师，他肯定是比较资历、比较老的。嗯，然后那个你进来的年轻老师可能英语，可能数学老师，嗯，那他可能跟他配班，他可能就会给这个老师让他，嗯，多带课。嗯，比如说看班或者说要干什么活？因为正班和副班不是搭配干活。Well, so now this school is a bit like an ordinary private school.

Some teachers came when the school was founded and had more experience, and some were new teachers who may have just come in. Well, the old teachers may look at these new teachers with tinted glasses at the beginning. Then, when the new teacher comes in, he may be paired with him. For example, the head teacher must be a Chinese teacher who is older and more experienced. Well, the young teacher who comes in may be an English or math teacher well, then they may be paired with them, and they may ask this teacher to teach more classes. Well, for example, watching the class or doing some work? Because the main class and the assistant class do not work together.

我现在接触的一个年轻老师，他跟我们是同一级的数学老师，他的课就比我们多，我们带那个阳光就带学生出去玩，下午的活动课，嗯，他就比我们要多一些，每周他都要多上一些，相当于要替班主任上一些，但是他没他不能他，他说了也没有用诶，班主任安排你做。他就是觉得，反正他这一年一整年他都每周比我们多上一节课，除此以外可能还有一些别的小事情，嗯，打扫卫生或者干什么事，嗯，他都要多干一些啊。我觉得这种就是老教师在这其实是一种欺凌，就相当于让他多干活。I'm in contact with a young teacher who is a math teacher at the same level as us. She has more classes than us. We (take turns bringing) students out to play on sunny days, and she has more afternoon activity classes than us. She has to teach more classes every week, equivalent to taking over for the class teacher. But she can't do it without them. It's useless for her to say it, because the class teacher arranges it for you. She thinks she has taught one more class than us every week for the whole year. In addition, there may be some other small things, such as cleaning or doing something, so she has to do more. This is actually a form of bullying by the old teacher, which is meaning to asking her to do more work.

Interviewer 36:39

那只能就是忍着，有沟通啥的吗？Then, she can only bear it. Is there any

重复的
持续的
Repeated
Continuing
a long time

communication?

Participant C 36:45

第一年我觉得，嗯，他只能忍着他沟通。那别人老师跟他说我要干什么，我有什么什么事，反正你也没处说。你不可能向领导。（为啥？）去反馈的话，人家领导没有说你必须上，你只能上一个，你上两个，其实都是都，就是怎么说呢？领导那边的人都是说你们正负班互相协调。嗯，就有时候可能，而且有的时候我们也会调，比如说今天有什么活动，有个什么大像一年级刚来的时候活动多，今天下午可能所有老师都在场。或者明天下午有搞有个活动，所有老师都得在场，嗯，或者有的时候哪个老师开会要跟你调，给你调换一下课，所以有时候也说不清。但是我们可能就是，嗯，比如说我只有周四下午我去看，其他时候我一概不去。嗯，因为我来这学校我知道很多了，我知道我就只要上一个，可是新老师在刚开始他不知道的时候他上了两个，那他就必须得上两个。

In the first year, I think, well, she can only endure and communicate. Then, other teachers expressed what I wanted to do and what I had to do. Anyway, you have no place to tell. You can't report to the leader. (Why?) If you report it, the leader didn't say that you must have the class, you can only take one, you can (also) take two, in fact, it's all, how to say it? The people on the leader's side said that you should coordinate with each other between the support and class teacher. Well, sometimes it's like..., and sometimes we will adjust, for example, if there is an activity today, there is a big activity like the first grade they just came (to the school), all the teachers may support this afternoon. Or there is an activity tomorrow afternoon, all the teachers have to be present, well, or sometimes a teacher has a meeting to adjust with you, and change your class, so sometimes it's hard to explain. But we may be, well, for example, I only have the class on Thursday afternoon, and I won't go at other times. Well, because I came to this school, I know a lot. I know that I only need to take one, but the new teacher went to two when she didn't know at the beginning, so he had to take two.

Interviewer 37:53

嗯，他就只能这么着，也 没法处理。Well, that was all she could do, there was nothing she could do about it.

Participant C 37:57

他也说过，但是人家老师可能用什么语言给他搪塞，怼回去了，他就他说不过他也没办法啊。平时他还表面还是很和和气气的。但是确实，嗯，就是我们也不好去说，比如说我知道他比别人，他比我们多上一个，但是我不可能去跟他那老，我现在跟他那个班主任很熟。嗯，我也知道这个班主任平时可能人也挺好的，跟我对我也挺好的，我们没有利益冲突，但我不可能去为他去争取，我没法说。嗯，不好说，你知道吗？

对。She did say it, but the teacher might have used some language to evade her, and she couldn't say anything. She usually seemed very friendly. But it's true that, well, it's hard for us to say it. For example, I know she has one more class than others, but I can't go to her teacher (lead teacher). I'm very familiar with her lead teacher now. Well, I also know that this lead teacher is probably a nice person, and she treats me well, and we have no conflict of interest, but I can't fight for her. I can't say it. Well, it's hard to say, you know? Right.

Interviewer 38:38

包括它自己试图解决。但是其实也没什么... Including its own attempt to solve it, but it's actually nothing...

Participant C 38:42

对，但是如果他下一次再跟别人换班的时候，他就知道了，因为他已经不是新人了。反正新人在这种学校我不知道，以前 A 学校我我不太了解。嗯，不太记得了，大家在 W 这边，因为以前很公立，就是完全像跟公立学校一样的。嗯，现在的慢慢变成私立的，很多老师还是比较老资历那种，就是还是会有人捧着他呀。嗯，他会给新人多少会有点压力，比如说让新老师多上公开课，让新老师出作业，老师他们就说你今天把那个什么什么作业出了，你把那个什么什么出了，他就给你安排这个活，你没法拒绝。Yes, but if she changes shifts with others next time, she will know, because she is no longer a newcomer. Anyway, I don't know about newcomers in this kind of school. I don't know much about School A before. Well, I don't remember much. Everyone in city W, because it used to be very public, it was just like a public school. Well, now it is slowly becoming private, and many teachers are still relatively old and experienced; that is, there are still people who support them. Well, they will put some pressure on newcomers; for example, let new teachers give more demo classes and let new teachers assign homework; the teachers will say, "You give such and such homework today, you do such and such work" They will assign you these work, and you can't refuse.

Interviewer 39:35

那这个万一是出于就是想锻炼你呢？What if this is just to train you?

Participant C 39:39

有可能是出于想锻炼你，但是说如果是出于想锻炼你可能就搞那么一次两次，是不是？但是你出了这个队以后，每一周都会问你，比如说，诶？你这周的口作业出了吗？这周的口算出了吗？嗯，这个活就变成是你的活了。（嗯，明白），嗯，就默认。诶，这个作业以后每周都是你出，因为比每周，像我们这个学校现在各个年级每周

都会留作业。It may be out of the desire to train you, but if it is out of the desire to train you, you may only do it once or twice, right? But after you present this work, you will be asked to do it every week, for example, eh? "Have you finished this week's oral homework? Have you finished this week's oral calculation?" Well, this job becomes your job. (Yes, I understand), yes, it is accepted. Hey, this homework will be done by you every week from now on. Because every week, like our school now, has homework for each grade every week. 那作业要老师自己出, 哪怕你扫描一扫描别的教科书的作业上的作业你也需要花时间编辑。The homework must be done by the teacher themselves, and even if you scan the homework from another textbook, you still need to spend time editing it.

Interviewer 40:18

所以到后面你并不觉得它是为了让你成长, 给你安排锻炼, 而是就是单纯的有点。So later on you don't feel that it is for your growth or to arrange training for you, but it is just a bullying.

Participant C 40:27

对。还有比如说每每学期要上什么课, 他可能如果这个组里, 那他直接就年轻老上, 年轻老师去, 嗯, 要干什么都年轻老师去。也是锻炼说也是一种锻炼, 但是, 但是时间久了, 如果总所有的都是让你这么干, 嗯, 就会觉得其实也是一种嗯欺。Yes. For example, if there is a class to be taught each semester, if they are in the group, they will directly let the young teachers take the class. Young teachers will do everything. It is also a kind of training, but after a long time, if you are always asked to do this, you will feel that it is actually a kind of bullying.

Appendix E: Coding Process

Notes:

欺凌行为

- ① 超负荷的工作
- ② 意见被忽视
- ③ 威胁
- ④ 大声呵斥
- ⑤ 倚老卖老
- ⑥ 公众场合
- ⑦ 负面言语
- ⑧ 无故解雇
- ⑨ 小错抓着不放
- ⑩ ~~侮辱~~
- ⑪ 谣言
- ⑫ 严厉的批评

→ 本质

目的性/故意性. 打压. 占上风. 功利

隐性的. → 不能第一时间识别

反复性. 持续性

欺凌

本身: 打压, 不尊重, 心理压力

因为隐性, 所以不好识别

但当其持续, 才能看出故意和目的. 相反只有其故意持续和持续

因为其在定义欺凌时给予者更看重负面行为本身, 不同又用这些特性来定义欺凌, 而是欺凌对象的目标.

最为无权: 新老师, 助教. 受到的欺凌可能性最高.

只能忍耐.

应对式.

建议:

应对态度 & 经验

如何预防这是伸过来的胚.

1 (2) 3 4 5 6 7 8

①: 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Table:

Code	Theme
<p>以前不了解 never known before</p> <p>没有意识到 didn't realise before</p> <p>超出自己认知范围 beyond my own cognition</p>	<p>Lack of knowledge of WPB</p>
<p>新教师 New teachers</p> <p>年轻教师 Young teachers</p> <p>助教 Teaching assistants</p>	<p>New and powerless teacher is easy to be the target</p>
<p>无竞争 No competition</p> <p>高动力 High motivation</p> <p>自信 Confidence</p> <p>意义感 Sense of significance</p> <p>培训 Training</p> <p>关怀会削弱负面感受 Caring will weaken negative feelings</p>	<p>Personal value and enticla leader and supportive organise can weaken negative feelings</p>
<p>离开 Leave</p> <p>辞职 Resign</p> <p>忍着 Endure</p> <p>默默接受 Accept silently</p> <p>发疯 Go crazy</p>	<p>Response method</p>
<p>反复发生 Repeated</p> <p>持续 Continuing a long time</p> <p>恶意 malicious</p> <p>故意 intentional</p> <p>有目的 purposeful</p> <p>打压 oppressive</p> <p>占上风 dominant</p> <p>不平等 unequal</p> <p>不尊重 disrespectful</p> <p>心理压力 psychological pressure</p> <p>害怕 fear</p> <p>恐惧 terror</p> <p>碍手碍脚 terror, hindrance.</p>	<p>Charaterristic of WPB/ recongnise</p>

不可调节 unadjustable	
超负荷的工作 Overload of work	manifestations of Bullying
意见被忽视 Opinions ignored	
威胁 Threaten	
大声呵斥 Shout loudly	
倚老卖老 Pull rank because of age	
公众场合 In public places	
负面言语 Negative language	
小错揪着不放 Holding on to small mistakes	
谣言 Rumour	
严厉的批评 Harsh criticism	

Appendix F: Signed Ethics Form

DISSERTATION PROPOSAL AND BLOCK ETHICAL REVIEW FORM 2023/2024

STUDENT NAME	
STUDENT NUMBER	██████████
PROGRAMME (incl. Full time/Part time)	MA Education
DATE FIRST SUBMITTED	24/05/2024

1.	Your Topic
Topic	Chinese schoolteachers' views on workplace bullying, including their identification, attitudes and methods of handling it, and the reasons for making such choices.
Motivation	<p>The interest in this topic stems from social news and my own working experience. Last year, a primary school teacher committed suicide due to malicious accusations and text harassment from parents in Korea. Then her death triggered a street rally protest with 20,000 teachers to prompt the Ministry of Education to address relative policies to protect teachers from bullying. This piece of news also aroused my resonant and began to reflect on my own experience. It was the first time that I realized I may have experienced bullying. When I was accused or questioned about my work, I would only be asked to reflect and address the issue by myself. These kinds of experiences led to self-doubt and caused me to suffer from depression and anxiety for a long time. I could not understand my experiences at that time, so I quit my job and studied abroad. However, when I encountered the concept of workplace bullying (WPB), I suddenly understood what I suffered and ended my self-doubt.</p> <p>In the same year, three Chinese teachers also committed suicide due to the same reasons and the overloaded workload. However, it only sparked discussions about work pressure among some teachers. Moreover, the concept of bullying is rarely mentioned in the workplace, especially in school settings in China. The first step in addressing bullying among teachers is to understand what workplace bullying is. Therefore, I want to understand teachers' views on these kinds of news and their perceptions of workplace bullying (WPB) among Chinese teachers. However, when I discussed this topic with my colleagues, almost all of them asked me the same question in return: "What is the definition of workplace bullying?" This made me wonder whether the lack of insight into WPB is due to a lack of awareness or a lack of experience. In this research, I aim to explore Chinese primary school teachers' understanding of workplace bullying.</p>
Working title	A qualitative exploration of Chinese schoolteachers' perception of Workplace Bullying
2.	Your Project
Theoretical context	<p>Experienced WPB will harm individuals' working state and health. Many studies have shown that WPB is associated with burnout syndrome (Chirico et al., 2021), leads to turnover intention (Yadav et al., 2020) and a higher risk of new-onset cardiovascular disease (Kivimaki, 2003; Xu et al., 2019). Likewise, it also results in anxiety and depression (Kivimaki, 2003; Gullander et al., 2014). Teaching is a profession that contributes significantly to the development of a country, so it is important to make everyone aware of the existence of WPB and take action to eradicate such behaviours. Then, the human right to dignity of teachers and the working environment to teachers can be guaranteed positively.</p> <p>After German behaviourist Konrad Lorenz proposed the concept of mobbing in the 1970s, Leymann brought this term to the work setting (Trenas et al., 2009).</p>

Leymann(1990) refers to it as one or a group of people persistently (almost every day, lasting at least 6 months) pursuing hostilities and unethical communication with an individual until he mentally collapses into a vulnerable state, and causes immense psychological torment, even impairing their social functioning. Building on Leymann et al.'s study, Einarsen et al.(2020)defined the WPB as the same meaning as “harassing, offending, socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone’s work”, and he offered three key characteristics of the identification of WPB: (1) occur repeatedly,(2) regularly (e.g. weekly) and (3) over a period of time (e.g. about six months) (Graves, 2002). In addition, he emphasised there must be a power imbalance between bullies and bullies (Graves, 2002). In Tye-Williams et al.'s (2020) research, they interviewed seven seasoned professionals and scholars. In contrast with other researchers, Catherine Mattice and Sarah J. Tracy do not agree to strictly, partially define and distinguish workplace bullying behaviour from other abuses, because all negative behaviour results in damage to the human right to dignity in the workplace, in addition, differentiating between harassment and bullying when dealing with issues is harmful to employees. Therefore, there is no unified definition of WPB (Chirilă and Constantin, 2013; De Wet, 2014), referencing certain academic definitions while ensuring that they encompass all forms of uncivil behaviours, as bullying often escalates from such behaviours. Additionally, in China, most people have never considered this concept. Thus, it is also crucial to consider China’s culture and investigate Chinese professionals’ understanding of WPB.

Chinese people possess a minimal understanding of WPB, and the study of this concept in education is fairly limited. However, in recent years, international interest has increased in the WPB study towards teachers. De Wet’s (2014) study utilised a qualitative functionalist approach and applied Hodson et al.’s (2006) two-dimensional model of bullying to explore the understanding of WPB among teachers. In his study, an open-ended questionnaire was employed with a descriptive definition and a question, “Please share with me your experience(s) as a victim and an onlooker of bullying”, to the 181 participants. Then the data were analysed through the directed content analysis method, namely, underlying the theory of two-dimensional model to coding the data and guiding the analysis. He found that the relational powerless or vulnerable teachers are more likely to be bullied; organisational chaos reigns and incompetent leaders are likely to indulge in bullying behaviour; relational powerless and organisational chaos reigns interact with each other in the workplace; This two-dimensional model needs to be enriched with broader societal factors, for instance, the impact of unique history and culture to the people in China. Before further refining the theory of WPB, China should start to conduct more research to understand the concept of WPB among various workplace professionals in China, especially teachers.

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- De Wet, C. 2014. Educators’ understanding of workplace bullying. *South African Journal of Education*. **34**(1), pp.1–16.

	<p>Einarsen, S., Hoel, H., Zapf, D. and Cooper, C.L. (eds.). 2020. <i>Bullying and harassment in the workplace: theory, research and practice</i> 3rd edition. Boca Raton: CRC Press.</p> <p>Graves, D. 2002. <i>Fighting back : overcoming bullying in the workplace</i>. McGraw-Hill Professional.</p> <p>Gullander, M., Hogh, A., Hansen, Å.M., Persson, R., Rugulies, R., Kolstad, H.A., Thomsen, J.F., Willert, M.V., Grynderup, M., Mors, O. and Bonde, J.P. 2014. Exposure to Workplace Bullying and Risk of Depression. <i>Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine</i>. 56(12), pp.1258–1265.</p> <p>Kivimaki, M. 2003. Workplace bullying and the risk of cardiovascular disease and depression. <i>Occupational and Environmental Medicine</i>. 60(10), pp.779–783.</p> <p>Leymann, H. 1990. Mobbing and Psychological Terror at Workplaces. <i>Violence and Victims</i>. 5(2), pp.119–126.</p> <p>Trenas, A.F.R., Cabrera, J.H. and Osuna, M.a José Pino 2009. Predictors for bullying at work in the field of education. <i>Innovar : revista de ciencias administrativas y sociales</i>. 19(Edición Especial 2009), pp.65-71.</p> <p>Tye-Williams, S., Carbo, J., D’Cruz, P., Hollis, L.P., Keashly, L., Mattice, C. and Tracy, S.J. 2020. Exploring workplace bullying from diverse perspectives: A Journal of Applied Communication Research forum. <i>Journal of Applied Communication Research</i>. 48(6), pp.637–653.</p> <p>Xu, T., Magnusson Hanson, L.L., Lange, T., Starkopf, L., Westerlund, H., Madsen, I.E.H., Rugulies, R., Pentti, J., Stenholm, S., Vahtera, J., Hansen, Å.M., Virtanen, M., Kivimäki, M. and Rod, N.H. 2019. Workplace bullying and workplace violence as risk factors for cardiovascular disease: a multi-cohort study. <i>European Heart Journal</i>. 40(14), pp.1124–1134.</p> <p>Yadav, R.S., Dash, S.S., Sinha, S. and Patky, J. 2020. Impact of Work-Place Bullying on Turnover Intention: A Study among Indian School Teachers. <i>South Asian journal of management</i>. 27(4), pp.33–58.</p>
<p>Research questions</p>	<p>This research aims to explore “What are Chinese teachers’ perceptions of WPB.”</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the current perception of WPB among teachers in China? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What forms do they believe WPB can take? Who can be the perpetrators of bullying? What do they think is the cause of bullying in the school? How do Chinese teachers perceive the criteria for determining bullying? 2. What coping strategies do teachers have when facing workplace bullying, and what support do they need?

<p>3.</p>	<p>Your Research design</p>
<p>Overview</p>	<p>To obtain in-depth data on teachers’ understanding of WPB, a qualitative methodology and methods will be applied to explore these research questions and a scenario-based interview is employed to get general understanding of WPB among Chinese teachers. This method draws on the Borg’s(2009) study on the English language teachers’ conceptions of research.</p>

	<p>The design of these scenarios will draw on examples from the Negative Acts Questionnaire-Revised and incorporate some teachers' practical experience.</p> <p>Participants will be asked to read through several scenarios that depict examples of WPB. They will be asked to consider whether they think the scenario is an example of WPB and their reasons for their answer.</p> <p>The interview will be piloted with a group of Chinese teachers in MA Education School of University of Leeds and revised in light with their and my supervisor's feedback.</p>												
Quality	<p>To guarantee the credibility of the research, the participants will be recruited not only the teachers who experienced WPB, but also teachers who have not experienced WPB but interested in this topic. In this way to avoid the participants' bias.</p> <p>To enhance the confirmability of the research, in data analysis stage, the interpretations will be generated and quoted accurately from my participants. In addition, my interview guided from, and transcript will be provided in my thesis to show the transparency of my research.</p> <p>To make sure the transferability and dependability, my participants will be recruited from different schools and institutions, and they come from different stages and subjects.</p> <p>To ensure some reliability, the interview will be standardised, and the same scenarios will be used. However, given the qualitative and inductive nature of this research, as well as its focus on individual experience and interpretation, it is unlikely to be fully replicable.</p> <p>Reference: Borg, S. 2009. English Language Teachers' Conceptions of Research. <i>Applied Linguistics</i>. 30(3), pp.358–388.</p>												
Data-generation:	<p>Purposeful sampling can be utilized to recruit Chinese participants who are interested in this topic. They will be recruited from MA Education programme in the University of Leeds, and my former colleagues who are working in schools in China. Therefore, a part of the Interview will be conducted in Leeds by face to face in a study room, and other teachers who is working in China the interview will take place online via WeChat. The interview will be recorded by my phone, and transcribed by Lark Minutes which is a Chinese office software.</p> <p>The Interview is expected last within 30-40 minutes in June. 4-6 participants are planned to be recruited.</p>												
Data-analysis	<p>After the data collection, a thematic analyse will be used to analysis the data. Manual data analysis techniques will be employed to coding my data.</p>												
Timeframe	<table> <tr> <td>Submit Ethic Form & Research proposal.</td> <td>Before July</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Search for literature participants)</td> <td>5.27—5.31 (while recruiting participants)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Write literature review.</td> <td>6.1—6.15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Interview (while writing Methodology)</td> <td>6.16—7.05</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Data analysis</td> <td>7.06---7.18</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Write Finding</td> <td>7.20---8.01</td> </tr> </table>	Submit Ethic Form & Research proposal.	Before July	Search for literature participants)	5.27—5.31 (while recruiting participants)	Write literature review.	6.1—6.15	Interview (while writing Methodology)	6.16—7.05	Data analysis	7.06---7.18	Write Finding	7.20---8.01
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Write literature review.	6.1—6.15												
Interview (while writing Methodology)	6.16—7.05												
Data analysis	7.06---7.18												
Write Finding	7.20---8.01												

	Write introduction & Conclusion. Refine	8.05---8.20
4.	Ethical Considerations	
Training	I have received training related to ethics in research through various channels. Last year, I took a three-hour lesson in my Module 5044 to learn about research ethics. We were informed about the definition and the importance of ethics. To adhere to ethical principles, researchers have the obligation to seek informed consent, respect confidentiality and anonymity, ensure voluntary participation, etc., from participants. In addition, I have also read literature about ethics in research, such as BERA, and the ethics sections in various research articles.	
Ethical concerns	Workplace bullying is a sensitive topic for people in a work setting. On one hand, hierarchy exists in bullying situations, so I must ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of my study, and any identifiable information of my participants cannot be mentioned in my research. On the other hand, recalling the experience of bullying may inflict secondary harm on my participants. Therefore, necessary psychological support and books on WPB will be recommended to my participants at the end of the interview.	
Research not requiring ethical review	If your research involves no data-generation involving human or animal participants, and no other ethical considerations arise, please type 'X' in the box to the right. You may proceed immediately to the end of the form. If your research does involve human or animal participants, please continue.	
Research participants	Will the participants be from any of the following groups? Answer 'Yes' or 'No'.	
	A) <i>Children under 16.</i>	No
	B) <i>Persons with a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator.</i>	No
	C) <i>Other vulnerable groups.</i>	No
	If you have answered 'Yes' to any of the above, please explain why the research has to be conducted with such participants, in the box below.	
	Supervisors should also consider whether an individual application to FREC might be appropriate. Before suggesting this supervisor should contact Head of Area.	
Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)	A Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check will be needed for researchers working with children or vulnerable adults in the UK. So, if you have answered 'Yes' to A) or C) above you will need to complete the boxes below.	
	Do you currently have a DBS enhanced disclosure? Answer 'Yes' or 'No'.	
	If 'Yes', how recently was it conducted?	
Participant involvement	What will the participants be asked to do in this study (e.g. number of visits, time, travel required, interviews etc.)?	
	They will be asked to take part in an interview, and it may last between 30-40 minutes.	



	How will the potential participants be recruited?
	First, my former colleagues who work in schools will be asked if they would like to join in my study. Secondly, experienced Chinese teachers in the University of Leeds Education School will be recruited in our class.
	How will you gain informed consent from the participants?
	To gain informed consent from my participants, an information sheet will be provided to them first, including the research topic, research aim, the procedures of my research, the potential risks and benefits, confidentiality measures, data usage, and their rights as participants. They will be given enough time to make a decision, and my contact information will be provided to my potential participants so they can consult me with any questions during this time. Additionally, after I obtain verbal consent, written consent will be requested from my participants. Before they sign the consent form, I will emphasize their rights as participants, including the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences, and ensure they fully understand the research information. Given that I know the participants from work and study, I will also assure them that there is no obligation to participate.
	Moreover, all these processes will be conducted in a private and confidential manner to ensure my participants feel comfortable and safe.
	How will you make sure that participants understand the information you provide about the project?
	To ensure my participants fully understand above information, all content will be provided in Chinese. Then in my dissertation it will be translate in to English.
	Will interviews/ questionnaires discuss any topics or issues that might be sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting? In the main you are advised to avoid such topics. If questions on such topics are unavoidable, what strategies will you adopt to prevent your questions causing distress and how will you deal with distress if it is caused?
	During the conversation, if my participants recall some negative experiences and become emotional, I will show patience and give them enough time to calm down. It is also necessary to ask if they need to reschedule our interview or withdraw. Moreover, after the interview, if deemed necessary, psychological consultancy organizations and related books will be recommended to my participants.
	What are the potential benefits and risks for participants?
	This study aims to promote the concept of WPB. It is hoped that this study can serve as a reference for policymakers to establish policies to improve the working environment for teachers. In addition, if negative experiences can provide value to future research, it may also encourage individuals to let go of past adverse experiences.
	Does the research involve any risk to you as a researcher? If yes, what is the risk?
	Studying this topic may lead me recall and face negative experience, so it will pose minimal risk to me. However, if I do become upset or distressed during the research, I will seek support from my supervisors and from support services available at the University.
	How will you ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the participants?

	<p>Confidentiality: No one else knows that he or she is participating in my interview. Participants are promised that any information provided by them will be solely used for research analysis with me and my supervisor. Additionally, it will not be utilized for any other purpose or shared with any other individuals or groups.</p> <p>Anonymity: Participants' name and workplace and any other identifiable information will not be mentioned in my research.</p>
	<p>What will you do to keep the personal information you collect as secure as possible? Please note you are required to keep data on your M-Drive or university Cloud space or under lock and key if hard copy.</p>
	<p>All data will be recorded on my phone and transcribed by Lark Minutes. For face-to-face interviews, the conversation will be recorded on my phone and transcribed by Lark Minutes. Online interviews will be conducted via WeChat video call, and only the audio will be recorded on my phone. Transcripts will be generated in the same way as face-to-face interviews. After transcription, all data will be exported to my computer and securely stored in the university's encrypted OneDrive. Once transcription and translation are complete, the audio recordings will be deleted from OneDrive, and all remaining research materials will be securely stored on OneDrive.</p>

DECLARATION

TO STUDENTS AND SUPERVISORS:

This declaration is to be completed by the student, signed by the supervisor and counter-signed by another academic before data collection can begin. Supervisors who are unclear about whether to give the project ethical clearance may consult the School of Education Ethical representatives or the Head of Taught Postgraduate Area.

<p>I agree to adhere to the procedures outlined in this plan.</p> <p>Student signature: _____</p>	<p>Date: 24.05.2024</p>
<p>I give permission for the research outlined in this plan to go ahead.</p> <p> Supervisor signature: _____</p>	<p>Date: 24.05.2024</p>
<p>I give permission for the research outlined in this plan to go ahead.</p> <p> Counter-signature of programme academic: _____</p>	<p>Date: 24.05.2024</p>

