

# EXPLORING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF ADDRESSING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

By

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### Declaration

I, Damilola Gbemisola, ONAOLAPO, declare that the thesis that I herewith submit for the Doctor Degree of Philosophy in Education Management and Leadership at the University of the Free State, is my independent work, and that I have not I have not previously submitted it for a qualification at another institution of higher education.



25 March, 2024

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Name of Department

## **Abstract**

This study explores the school leadership practices of addressing gender-based violence in the selected Nigerian secondary schools. The issue of gender-based violence in the selected Nigerian schools has been overwhelming for school leaders. The situation of gender-based violence in schools leads to the gap in leadership in Nigerian schools. The study was undergirded by two collaborative theories of Social Cognitive Learning Theory (SCLT) and Social Justice Leadership Theory (SJLT). An exploratory, qualitative research approach was used to explain the school leadership practices in tackling gender-based school violence. Using a purposive sampling technique, two schools were selected, the schools were hotspots of gender-based violence in Ado-Ekiti, Nigeria. Eighteen participants were sampled in two selected schools. Individual interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis were employed to collect data from the participants. The data were analysed using Thematic Analysis (TA). The findings revealed that while school leaders are aware of gender-based violence in their schools, there are discrepancies in their response knowledge of the issue, their response to it, and their attitude towards providing support for the learner victims of gender-based violence. The study concludes by recommending that school leaders be better informed about the prevalence of gender-based violence and for them to be more proactive in providing support to victims of GBV. The study proposed the SRGBV model for addressing school related GBV in schools. Recommendations were made based on the study's findings.

**Keywords:** Bullying, gender-based violence, gender, learners, school administrators, social cognitive learning theory, social leadership theory, teachers, violence.

## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my twin children (Sophia and Samuel). Thank you for being there for Mummy.

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## **List of abbreviations and acronyms**

FME- Federal Ministry of Education

GBV- Gender-based violence

KIva- Kiusaamista Vastaa

MOE- Ministry of Education

NAFDAC- National Agency for Food Drugs Administration and Control

NDLEA- National Drug Law Enforcement Agency

NIDA- National Institute on Drug Abuse

NPE- National Policy on Education

PTA- Parent Teachers Association

SBMTs- School-Based Management Teams

SCLT- Social cognitive learning theory

SJLT- Social justice leadership theory

SM- Social Modelling

SRGBVM- School-Related Gender-Based Violence Model

TA- Thematic Analysis

TESCOM- Teaching Service Commission

UBE- Universal Basic Education

WECD- Western Cape Education Department

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# CHAPTER ONE

## BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

### 1.1. Introduction

This chapter problematises the menace of gender-based violence that predominantly occurs among learners in selected Nigerian secondary schools. It opens a lacuna to be filled in the literature, and justifying the strategy to address the situation. Necessary literatures were consulted and the need for the study was justified. The study's focus and the selection of theoretical frameworks which included the social Cognitive Learning Theory and the social Justice Leadership Theory were established to guide the research. This chapter also outlines the research questions, aims, and objectives. The research design adopted a case study approach. The methods for data generation and selection of participant sites were discussed while thematic analysis was chosen as the data analysis method. Additionally, this chapter explains the study's concepts, values, and significance. It also addresses ethical considerations for conducting the study.

### 1.2. Background to the Study

The secondary school system has been ridden with many challenges of various magnitudes, ranging from leadership lacunas and GBV. Despite the efforts of the government and other stakeholders in policy creation and implementation in secondary school education, there have been crises in the management of GBV in practically all public Nigerian secondary schools (Onojerena & Aluyor, 2013:26; Yagboyaju & Akinola, 2019:2).

Exploring Nigerian secondary school leadership practices is not only important, but it is also necessary for achieving the desired educational objectives. The national objectives of education include the instillation of values and skills as well as the development of both the mental and physical abilities of learners to produce good and reliable citizens (FGN, 2014). To achieve the desired objectives of the schools, it is necessary to enhance current

strategies for managing GBV. Effective management of this issue depends not only on leadership styles but also on the implementation of proper mechanisms. Therefore, managing GBV requires leadership skills, wisdom, and appropriate techniques (David et al. 2018:15; Le Mat et al. 2021:863; Onaolapo et al. 2022:196).

GBV in schools operates within the broader context of a global issue that transcends boundaries, impacting women and girls worldwide (Jones et al. 2024). International organisations have put in place crucial policies to address this concern, such as the 1960 UNESCO convention on discrimination against women, the 1979 convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination, the 1989 convention on the rights of the child, and the 2000 Dakar framework for action on education for all (Spear, 2019; Askin & Koenig, 2023). Despite these initiatives, their effective implementation, especially in developing nations like Nigeria, has faced many challenges. Countries across various regions, from Latin America and Asia to Hungary, England, and Canada grapple with this pervasive problem, as evidenced by studies such as those by Tsourofli (2021), Redai (2019), and Reid et al. (2020).

GBV is a societal problem that extends its impact to schools. The World Bank (2018) reports from global studies show that at least one out of every three girls have encountered GBV in her lifetime, which violates the rights of the girl-child. GBV was observed in Kenya, Zimbabwe, South Africa, Côte d'Ivoire, and Ethiopia, according to these studies (Beninger, 2013:282; Klugman, 2017; Tantu, Wolka, Gunta, Teshome, & Mohammed, 2020:2; Beyene, Chojenta, Roba, Meka, & Loxton, 2019). Every Nigerian child shall have equal opportunities and rights to free primary and obligatory education, according to Nigeria's national education objectives (National Policy on Education, 2014).

Similarly, Furlong, Chung, Bates, and Morrison (1995:283) argue that gender-based school violence affects both boys and girls. This issue is particularly pronounced in Nigeria where Zenn and Pearson (2014) noted that 43% of girls are either abducted by Boko Haram terrorists or married off at ages 16 to 18 in the northern region. Recognising that both males and females can be victims of GBV, this study specifically examines

leadership practices in managing gender-based school violence against female teachers and female learners. It is important to note that gender-based school violence is not exclusive to girls; boys also experience such violence. Rasool (2017:9109) argues that boys are more often victims of GBV than girls in South Africa even though they may be reluctant to discuss the issue. Keller *et al.* (2017:536) observe that 74% and 75% of boys in an intervention group experience physical violence and sexual violence, respectively, in Kenya. Carpenter (2006:88); Debowska, et al. (2021:1239) indicated that violence exposure and victimisation have a stronger correlation between GBV-supportive cognition between girls and boys.

Gender-based school violence is a common phenomenon in Nigerian states which is evident in violence in secondary schools from various states in the country (Fakunmoju and Rasool, 2018; Ekine, Odunfunwa, and Adebayo, 2020; Uloko and Ada, 2022:88). Ekiti State, with the backing of the Norwegian embassy, was among the states that initiated the campaign against GBV. The state parliament enacted the Violence Against Persons Prohibition Act of 2015, which prohibits GBV against any gender. Female genital mutilation (FGM), sexual violence, underage pregnancy, and economic abuse have all been identified as forms of abuse for girls and boys. GBV is an issue for which Nigerian governors' wives have formed a community to address.

The Ekiti State GBV Management Committee, led by the First Lady, Chief Mrs. Erelu Bisi Fayemi, strongly opposes female genital mutilation (FGM), sexual harassment, and all forms of GBV. Some offenders of these menace have been apprehended and sentenced to life imprisonment. Some teachers in Ekiti State were arraigned in court for defiling young learners, in three different schools in Ado-Ekiti, and Osi Community High School; they were against the prohibition of violence law as amended in 2019 (Ogunje, 2021). With all these policies on gender-based school violence, the problem still persists. Learners who are raped victims are either afraid of victimisation or are being threatened by the offenders (Tarzia et al. 2024). They suffer in silence as teachers whom they look up to as '*loci parents*' abuse them, and learners rape themselves (Edwards et al. 2024).

This menace has become a recurrent phenomenon despite efforts to curb them in Nigerian. It has been a bone of contention, as a day hardly passes without news of a rape victim and gender-based assault in the national dailies (Adichie, 2020). It was reported that the police arrest two for allegedly gang-raping a minor of 17-year-old at Osi Ekiti (Ogunje, 2020). The enduring effects of gender-based abuse are evident in Nigerian secondary schools, with long-term negative impacts on the physical and mental health of learners. Sexual assault is a widespread issue in educational environments globally (Poudel, 2014:166). GBV has been researched evidently in extant literatures (Illiya, Abubakar, Aliyu, Galadanci, & Salihu, 2011:124; Peacock & Barker, 2014:580; Ajayi, 2017:83; Fawole, Balogun & Olaleye, 2018). These studies explore GBV from the view of university students' abuse by lecturers, violence among learners, and violence among the girl-child, especially in the northern part of Nigerian. Only a few studies have looked at the leadership aspect of addressing this issue. School-related GBV management in Nigerian secondary schools has been a major concern. Secondary school leaders (Principals, School Management Teams (SMTs), administrators, and parents) are involved in the education project as stakeholders. Wherever this problem arises, school leaders have a responsibility to play, and the school's effectiveness is dependent on how proactive the administrators are (Tobin, 2014; Zuze & Juan, 2018; Cruz-Gonzalez, Segovia & Rodriguez, 2019).

However, bullying, sexual violence, and indiscriminate touching of females are all gender-based types of violence in Nigerian secondary schools, and particularly in mixed-gender schools (Okolo & Okolo, 2018). There are some cases where the principal and school management teams have swept such occurrences under the carpet, transferring such teachers to another school, and pleading to the parents of the victims to overlook the situation to avoid the victim being shamed in the school (Wible, 2004). Leadership is still gender-based (Desalegne, 2019:238; Elias, 2018:176), and there remain concerns about the nature of school leadership that addresses this problem. David et al. (2019:140) and Le Mat et al. (2019:208) suggest that leadership practices can effectively reduce GBV in Nigerian schools by challenging and dispelling cultural and religious beliefs as well as myths that perpetuate such violence. They propose a return to positive cultural practices

that tackle the root causes of GBV. While some teachers and senior students may unknowingly perpetrate abuse, leadership in secondary schools should focus on educating students about these issues and how to prevent them. In this context, the purpose of this study is to examine the leadership practices employed to address GBV in Nigerian secondary schools.

### **1.3. Research Problem**

The leadership practices aimed at combating GBV in Nigerian secondary schools reveal a gap between policy and implementation (Spear, 2019). This study seeks to explore how school leaders address GBV in Nigerian secondary schools. Gender-based school violence is evident in Nigerian schools in bullying, physical violence, verbal harassment, sexual harassment, fighting, and indiscriminate touching of learners through peers-to-peers and teachers-learners contacts. Despite efforts put in place by international and national laws, this problem persists in Nigerian secondary schools (Benninger, 2013; Yang, 2013; Ushe, 2015; Okolo and Okolo, 2018; Murgor *et al.*, 2020, Iloka, 2022:65; Edwards *et. al.* 2023).

GBV is a significant national and global issue, and secondary schools are a microcosm of the society at large. Failure to address this problem can result in severe consequences such as increased dropout rates, incarceration of offenders, and fatalities among victims (Maphumulo, 2019:4). Given the threat the problem poses to school effectiveness and national development, the problem is worth investigating. The problem of the school is addressed daily by effective leadership practices. The cultural and religious interplay necessitated the need to look at leadership means of addressing GBV in schools (Ishaq & Bakwai, 2016:18; Heslop, *et al.*, 2019:65; Agbawodikeizu, *et al.* 2019:49; Nyoni, *et. al.* 2023; Heilman, *et. al.*, 2024). Therefore, this study aims to explore the leadership practices employed in addressing GBV among learners in Nigerian secondary schools.

### **1.4. Research Questions**

This study is guided by the following main and sub-questions:

What are the school leadership practices of addressing GBV in Nigerian secondary schools?

To answer the main research question, the following sub-questions were explored further:

1. What is the nature of GBV in the selected Nigerian secondary schools?
2. What are the causes of GBV in the selected Nigerian secondary schools?
3. How do school leaders address GBV in selected Nigerian secondary schools?
4. Which model can be proposed in the form of school-related GBV?

### **1.5. Research Aims and Objectives**

This study aims to explore the leadership practices of addressing GBV in Nigerian secondary schools.

The following objectives shall guide the study:

1. To explore the nature of GBV cases in the selected Nigerian secondary schools.
2. To describe the causes of GBV in the selected Nigerian secondary schools.
3. To examine how school leaders address GBV in selected Nigerian secondary schools.
4. To formulate gender-based school violence model.

### **1.6. Definition of terms**

#### **1.6.1. Leadership**

Leadership can be described as a deliberate effort to control the conduct of others. There must be a group to lead, the organisation's goals and priorities must be prioritised, and subordinates must carry out specific acts within the group (Ajayi and Ayodele, 2015). Leadership is defined as a leader's functional behaviour regarding subordinates to achieve group goals (Esmer & Dayi, 2017:112). School leaders create the framework,

assign authority and responsibility, and they guide by establishing the organisational vision, by communicating it to employees, and motivating them to achieve it (Ajayi & Ayodele, 2015; Hall, 2016). To harness these resources for the school's success, school management must consider school services, trained personnel, appropriate facilities, and good administrative leadership (Waters and Marzano, 2006).

Leadership is a complex and a continuously developing idea that involves motivating, inspiring, and directing individuals or groups toward a common objective within an organisation or community. Literature by Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber (2009) emphasises the transformational aspects of leadership, focusing on how effective leaders not only facilitate change and innovation but also cultivate followers' growth, trust, and empowerment, thereby enhancing organisational performance and sustainability. Furthermore, modern perspectives highlighted by Northouse (2021) emphasise that leadership is not solely confined to individuals who hold formal positions, but that it can emerge at various levels and across diverse contexts, incorporating collaborative, ethical, and adaptive approaches that foster inclusivity, shared vision, and resilience in navigating complex challenges, as well as in fostering organisational success.

### **1.6.2. School Violence**

School violence is any violence that takes place in any educational institution. This can be done to victims while going to school or within the school environment (Fakunmoju and Rasool, 2018; UNESCO, 2019; Fenny and Falola, 2020). School violence can be in the form of bullying, groping of learners, group fights by girls, verbal abuse, drug abuse, touching girls' buttocks, and locking learners in the toilets, among others. Recent studies by Halladay (2022), and Bradshaw, Waasdorp, and Johnson (2015) underscore the complex nature of school violence, recognising its diverse manifestations, including physical altercations, bullying, cyberbullying, verbal abuse, and even more severe incidents such as school shootings. These studies emphasise that school violence is not solely limited to student-student interactions, but that it can also involve violence directed at teachers or staff members, contributing to a pervasive culture of fear, mistrust, and

insecurity within schools. Moreover, the impact of school violence extends beyond immediate physical harm, and often leads to psychological distress, decreased academic performance, and a disrupted learning environment for learners that necessitates comprehensive preventive strategies and interventions to mitigate its detrimental effects.

Espelage and Swearer (2004) highlight the importance of evidence-based interventions that enhance a positive school environment, develop social-emotional skills, and teach conflict resolution. Key strategies in reducing school violence include implementing comprehensive policies, fostering supportive relationships among students and staff members, and empowering bystanders to intervene effectively. Furthermore, the role of mental health support services, community involvement, and collaboration between schools, families, and local authorities cannot be understated in addressing the underlying issues contributing to school violence and in creating conducive learning environments that prioritise safety and the well-being of all learners.

### **1.6.3. Gender Based Violence**

GBV is violence meted out to individuals because of their gender, disproportionately. It can be in various forms such as rape, bullying, sexual violence, indiscriminate touching of girls' thighs and buttocks, forcing to strip by learners, peeping, snapping each other's nakedness and posting on Facebook, among others (Yang, 2015; Chimtsamartanga & Redebe, 2020; and Dei, 2022). GBV is a widespread problem that includes different types of physical, sexual, psychological, or economic harm inflicted on individuals due to their gender. Recent studies, like that of Jewkes et al. (2020) highlight the intricate and intersecting nature of GBV, illustrating how it is deeply ingrained in unequal power dynamics, societal norms, and cultural practices that sustain gender disparities. This form of violence affects not only women and girls but also men and individuals of diverse gender identities. Moreover, GBV extends beyond individual acts, often reflects broader systemic issues, including institutionalised discrimination and societal attitudes that condone or normalise such behaviours, ultimately hindering gender equality and human rights.

Addressing GBV goes beyond individual incidents to challenging the societal structures that perpetuate it. Recent studies, such as those by Stöckl et al. (2019), stress the importance of comprehensive interventions that involve legal frameworks, educational initiatives, community engagement, and awareness campaigns. Such interventions aim, not only to support survivors, but also to prevent violence through empowering individuals, changing societal norms, and fostering gender-equitable attitudes. Furthermore, these studies highlight the importance of intersectional approaches that consider the varied experiences and vulnerabilities of marginalised groups. They recognise how factors like race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation are interconnected and how they influence experiences of GBV.

#### **1.6.4. Gender**

Gender refers to characteristics of a particular person. It can be in the form of norms and behaviours of being a girl, female, transgender, lesbian, gay, or bi-sexual (Abramowitz and Moran, 2012; Beninger, 2013; Peacock and Barker, 2014, WHO, 2019). It varies from society to society in how they view gender. Gender, being a socially constructed idea, includes the roles, behaviours, expectations, and identities assigned to individuals according to societal norms and cultural beliefs (Wood & Eagly, 2009). Research by West and Zimmerman (1987), emphasises the performative nature of gender, and highlights how it is not an inherent trait, but rather something continuously constructed and enacted through everyday interactions and societal expectations. Moreover, contemporary perspectives by Butler (1990), challenge the binary understanding of gender, and advocates for a more fluid and dynamic approach that acknowledges the diverse and complex ways that individuals express their gender identity beyond traditional categories. This developing perception of gender extends beyond biological factors, acknowledging it as a spectrum that intersects with different elements of identity, like race, ethnicity, sexuality, and socioeconomic status. These factors influence individuals' experiences and opportunities in society.

#### **1.6.5. School-related GBV**

SRGBV is an act or threat against a particular gender in any educational institution which can be in the form of fighting, corporal punishment, bullying, and other delinquent behaviours (Leach, et al. 2019; Vujadinović et al. 2023). School-related GBV (SRGBV) is a prevalent problem that includes different types of violence, harassment, and discrimination that occur within educational environments. It disproportionately impacts girls and gender minorities. Recent literature, such as the work by UNESCO (2016), underscore the multifaceted nature of SRGBV, emphasising its impact on educational access, retention, and the overall well-being of learners. Additionally, studies by Miele, et. al. (2023), highlight that SRGBV extends beyond physical acts, encompassing psychological abuse, sexual harassment, and social exclusion, perpetuating unequal power dynamics, and reinforcing harmful gender norms within schools. Understanding and addressing SRGBV necessitate comprehensive strategies involving policy reforms, teacher training, creating safe and inclusive school environments, and empowering learners to challenge stereotypes and discrimination, as highlighted in recent initiatives, outlined by Guleva-Govender (2022).

## **1.7. Theoretical Framework**

Two theories, namely the social cognitive learning theory and the social justice leadership theory, were used as theoretical frameworks to guide this study.

### **1.7.1. Social Cognitive Learning Theory**

In 1986, Bandura introduced the SCLT, which critiqued existing theories and proposed a new framework that focused on human functioning within social systems. Therefore, personal agency exists within a complex web of socio-structural factors. People are change agents; they design systems, organise human activities and control them. Town's social institutions impose limits while also providing resources and opportunity structures for personal growth and functioning (Schunk, 2012:108). Social cognitive learning theory (SCLT) identifies changeable factors and their formation based on verifiable mechanisms of operation which makes it well-suited for social applications. Bandura (2005:11)

recognised modelling and constructed a special case of discrimination learning. Bandura suggests that knowledge modelling processes offer useful insights into enabling individuals to make personal, organisational, and social changes.

The theory emphasises self-development and functioning regardless of one's societal environment. Social cognitive learning theory differentiates between fundamental human capabilities and how culture shapes these capabilities into diverse forms that are suitable for different cultural settings (Bandura, 2005:12). The relationship between personal, behavioural, and environmental effects can be understood through the notion of social cognitive theory, which deals with the problem of GBV. According to the philosophy of this approach, individuals do not have direct control over the social conditions and institutional procedures that impact their daily lives. Social cognitive theory identifies three types of human agency: individual, proxy, and communal. According to the theory, the explanatory mechanisms were portrayed in terms of forming links between inputs and reactions at the peripheral level, through reward and punishment consequences (Bandura, 2001).

The fundamental principle of social cognitive learning is based on a triadic reciprocal causation model in which human factors such as cognitive, affective, physiologic events, behavioural patterns, and genetic factors all play a part (Bandura 1999:23). All environmental occurrences interact as factors that have a bidirectional influence on one another. The four basic principles of SCLT are as follows: self-regulatory and self-reflective process that is self-organising, vicarious, or proactive. Pajares, Prestin, Chen, and Nabi (2009:283) categorise the first two as human agency, specifically vicarious learning, which involves observational learning. The last case is self-efficacy, which is the factor underlying the implementation of acquired behaviours. Thoughts, feelings, and actions are all under SCLT's control. According to SCLT, human functioning is the result of reciprocal determinism or the dynamics of the interaction of personal variables, behaviour, and circumstances. It was emphasised that a precarious situation of GBV in Nigerian secondary schools can be understood through self-efficacy beliefs and result expectancies which are rarely used to forecast how people would try to exert control over

themselves and their surroundings under oppressive intimate relationships (Steinmetz & Gray, 2018; Bussey & Bandura, 1999:676).

The importance of this theory originates from the view that it ensures that learners behave properly in school by using incentive and punishment systems to ensure that they do well in class. Principals and teachers use the theory to ensure a safe school environment by incorporating learners' conduct in the school through self-motivation, self-advocacy, self-regulation, and self-development. This helps learners behave acceptably in the school system without any GBV. Offenders face severe consequences when caught. The culture of GBV has infiltrated the social system, becoming a significant societal issue. The notion of social cognitive learning engages learners, exposes them to social problems through teacher sensitisation, teaches them how to prevent gender-based problems and how to respond when they occur, establishes safe and reporting systems, and establishes excellent leadership practices. The social cognitive learning theory however has limitations, as argued by (Schunk, 2012:118) that extraneous factors affect learners' perceptions of the applications of self-regulated learning within the context of secondary school, regardless of how teachers or school administrators provide modelling for the learners to emulate. The possibility that SCLT theory has limitations necessitates a need for a more unified theory to complement a better result in addressing GBV challenges in the Nigerian educational system. This gave rise to the need for social justice leadership, which ensures good respective relationships and respect for the human rights of learners in schools.

### **1.7.2. Social Justice Leadership Theory**

Social Justice Leadership (S JL) suggests a solution to a system of oppression, sexism, internalised inferiority, and pervasive inequality. Some studies aver that such inequalities bring tension in a capitalist system in America, bringing the culture down to the school system of marginalised and exclusions of white minorities and black learners (Garza, 2004:579; DeMatthews Edwards and Rincones, 2016:755). Similarly, some scholars aver that structures processes, policy, curriculum, and instruction contribute to such inequities

(Theoharis, 2007:222; DeMatthews, 2015:140; Dematthews and Izquierdo, 2017). Such inequalities exist in the United States of America in the form of sexual orientations, gender inequality, disability, historically and the current marginalising conditions in the school system (Moral, Higuera-Rodríguez, Martín-Romera, Martínez-Valdivia, & Morales-Ocaña, 2020:108). Social justice leadership transforms schools so that all learners succeed. The topic of social justice leadership is rather new to the landscape of Nigerian secondary schools and was appropriate to address the internalised inferiority caused by GBV and the marginalised pervasive inequalities in the system.

The theory of social justice leadership espouses culturally responsive and socially just schools (Grogan, 2014:301). The philosophy of the theory ensures that the leader shares a vision of learning, sustaining a school culture that conducive to learning, and ensuring good management of the school. Unjust policies, learners' marginalisation and educational injustice policy constraints solidify inequities that characterise the school system in Nigerian. These factors distract the school administrators from addressing the civic, humanistic, and social purposes of the school (Dematthews & Izquierdo 2017). SJL emphasises a socially just, more inclusive, democratic, and transformative practice in ensuring school justice and equity (Boske, Osanloo & Newcomb, 2017:361). The philosophy is to help school administrators maintain a GBV-free school. It ensures socially just schools that are free of oppression and reduces the drop-out rate because of shame.

The relevance of this theory is the fact that social justice leadership helps the learners and administrators become wise about the need for socially just schools (Mafora, 2016:2). This takes care of the inequalities in terms of GBV, bullying, and violence perpetrated by learners and teachers within the school system in Nigerian secondary schools (Turhan, 2010:1358). Social justice is not about empathy, feeling sorry, or lowering the standards in the school system, it is about attitudes shaped by the values, beliefs, and lived experiences of leaders and providing children with the opportunity to become social justice advocates in the schools (Garza 2004:580; Brooks, Jean-Marie, Normore, & Hodgins, 2007). Social justice leadership puts an end to oppressive practices,

discriminating actions by school administrators, and behaviours (Ezzani, 2021:228). Wang (2018:473) claims that power struggles between school managers and instructors in secondary schools produce a favourable atmosphere for learners where they are well-represented in decision-making, particularly in those decisions that affect them.

The tenets of social justice leadership promote justice, fairness, and equity by fostering an inclusive, democratic, and varied workplace. The theory's importance stems from the need for whole-school reforms that focus teaching and learning on the acquisition of knowledge that would liberate learners, foster strong relationships in the classroom, and correct abnormal upbringing. The relevance of both theories seeks to find a possible solution to the leadership practices on addressing GBV in Nigerian secondary schools. Both theories focus on leaders being humane and courteous in their interactions with learners in schools, and maintaining a safe environment that is free of GBV issues in Nigerian secondary schools. As a result, framing the study from SCLT and SJL is relevant for leaders to understand how to deal with GBV difficulties in schools where the scenarios emerge. The concepts of both theories were used to analyse the data collected for the study, and for the GBV prevention documents for schools, individual interviews, and focus group interviews. The problem that arises in schools with GBV prevalence was dealt with by the underpinnings of SCLT and SJL principles which provide for inclusive, democratic representation to benefit marginalised learners in Nigerian secondary schools.

## **1.8. Research Design and Methodology**

This study employed an interpretive paradigm to examine leadership practices addressing GBV in selected Nigerian secondary schools. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2018:21) describe the interpretive paradigm as an approach that seeks to understand the social world from the perspective of the participants, focusing on 'verstehen' (understanding) and 'hermeneutic' (interpreting meanings). Participants' subjective views allow them to interpret GBV around them and make sense of their interactions.

Gunbayi and Sorm (2018:63) note that participants have firsthand experience, and they directly interact with GBV in Nigerian secondary schools. The study is ontologically realist. It holds the view that an individual is born into a social world that has its reality. Epistemologically, it is anti-positivist (realistic) as the participants hold the view of their intersubjective world that is directly involved with the subject being involved and voluntarist in human nature. The school administrators interact with the environments. They set aside their preconceptions about cultures, people, and contexts to examine the issue objectively. According to Cohen et al. (2018), Ngozwana (2018:20), and Gunbayi (2020:42), the interpretive paradigm emphasises the understanding of participants' subjective beliefs within the local context. This approach facilitates knowledge acquisition and interaction between participants and researchers. The study's primary focus is on conducting a thorough investigation of leadership practices in addressing GBV in Nigerian secondary schools, aligning it with qualitative research principles. The philosophical and syntagmatic stance affected the choice of research design.

### **1.8.1. Research Approach**

The study employed a qualitative research approach which focuses on how individuals interpret and understand social realities (Muzari et al., 2022). According to Mohajan (2018:24), this approach seeks people's opinions, beliefs, and experiences from their own perspectives. Scholars have emphasised that qualitative research allows research participants to express their views; It delves beneath the surface of phenomena, systematically interprets issues from the perspective of those being studied, and generates new theories and concepts (Hammarberg, Kirkman, and de Lacey, 2016; Cohen et al., 2018:289; Hamilton and Finley, 2020:2). The qualitative approach is relevant to this study as the study adopts a small group for investigating beliefs, experiences, and concepts of participants' normative behaviour about GBV.

### **1.8.2. Research Design**

This study adopted a case study design. A case study investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its actual context, particularly when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are blurred, and when the researcher has limited control over them (Yazan, 2015:138; Korstjens & Moser, 2017:277). Yin (2014) argues that a case study is appropriate when a study seeks to understand why, how, and what happens in a particular situation. Cohen et al. (2018:375) also suggest that a case study provides readers with a concrete example of real people in real situations, aiding in the comprehension of concepts better than mere information provision. The researcher chose a case study to conduct an in-depth investigation into how leaders in selected secondary schools address the issue of GBV in Nigerian schools. The study involved visiting two schools to gather the participants' perspectives. The study adopts a multiple case study as the researcher investigates an issue of GBV phenomenon in two selected schools. It is appropriate and better when the researcher wants to write about a multiple-case issue and writes about a theory backing it up (Gustafsson, 2017:3). The case is GBV and the case is viewed in two schools making it a multi-case study.

### **1.9. Selection of Participants and Research Sites**

This study employed a purposive sampling method in selecting participants. According to Cohen et al. (2018), purposive sampling is a qualitative research technique where researchers select individuals or cases based on specific criteria that align with the study's objectives. Researchers choose participants who are knowledgeable about the issue under investigation. The selected secondary schools were purposefully selected to have a clue on how they address the GBV in their schools. Two principals, two vice principals (academics), two counsellors, six teachers, and 6 learners in their final year in secondary school were sampled. Choosing two schools, two administrators, one counsellor, three teachers, and three learners meant that 18 participants were sampled.

### **1.10. Data Generation Methods**

Document analysis, focus group interviews, and individual interviews were used to collect data because they follow the case study research principles by outlining problems in schools and discovering solutions through in-depth discourse, interrogation, strategic and informed activities (Cohen *et al.* 2018:511). The interviews, document analysis, and focus group interviews as instruments were discussed in the next paragraph. This study also adopted a document analysis as one of the data collection methods. Some documents on GBV with the counsellor were collected from the schools, with the school authorities' permission for the researcher to access them. Document analysis is a critical evaluation of documents to make sense of data in prints (Mackieson, Shlonsky, & Connolly 2019; Casey & Wong, 2020). The GBV prevention documents in schools were collected and analysed. It was appropriate to access the gender-balance prevention documents for the researcher to gain insights into the data.

The individual interview serves as a dynamic interaction between two individuals, delving deep into underlying questions through open-ended inquiries. Open-ended questions, which are adaptable, and which enable the researcher to explore the issues until all uncertainties are clarified, foster discussion and establish a connection between the interviewer and the interviewee (Jonhson, Adkins & Chauvin, 2020:142). Cohen *et al.* (2018:514); Hamilton and Finley (2019:2) aver that an interview enables the interviewer to ask participants to extend, elaborate, and clarify their responses with a depth of richness and to respond comprehensively with honesty. A semi-structured interview with open-ended questions like why, what, why, and how school administrators address GBV in their schools was conducted. The principals, vice-principals, and counsellors were interviewed separately. It was appropriate to use semi-structured interview questions to guide the researcher in asking guiding questions that were appropriate for the participants.

A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) involves a group of participants with similar characteristics discussing a phenomenon with an interviewer (Nyumba *et al.*, 2018:22). Focus group interviews enable participants to share their stories, express opinions, and elaborate without strict question formats (Adler *et al.*, 2019:2). For this study, separate

focus group interviews were conducted for teachers and learners. Each focus group was divided into two mini-groups, one for teachers and another for learners. It was relevant for this study since it allowed participants to debate and express themselves freely on the issue without any fear on the part of the learners with regard to their teachers or power-related issues and constraints between the teachers and their principals. The researcher visited the schools with audiotapes and recorded sessions with the participants.

### **1.11. Data Analysis**

Thematic Analysis (TA) was adopted to analyse the collected data. It offered flexibility by allowing data collection from various sources, including traditional face-to-face interviews and focus group interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, and Braun (2017:24) outline the four phases of TA as familiarising with the data, generating codes, constructing themes, and familiarisation. TA was suitable for this study due to the use of interviews as the data collection method, aiming to understand what, why, and how leaders of secondary schools in Nigeria address the issue of GBV. The Social Cognitive and Social Leadership theories were employed to analyse the collected data. Linneberg and Korsgaad (2019:21) averred that TA involves six stages, namely the inductive process of reviewing evidence, selecting, categorising, comparing, synthesising, and interpreting data for a credible explanation.

### **1.12. Value of the Study**

The findings of this study could provide tips that may assist policymakers, employers of labour in the education industry, education planners, and school administrators on best leadership practices for addressing GBV in Nigerian secondary schools. This study could assist the stakeholders (parents, school management teams, teachers, learners, and school administrators) in what area the school's effectiveness can be enhanced through best leadership practices on addressing GBV in Nigerian secondary schools. The study could assist governments, non-governmental organisations, and the society at large in understanding the best leadership practices for addressing GBV and legislating friendly

reporting mechanisms, appropriate counselling units, and medical facilities for GBV victims. It could assist administrators when preparing for their seminars and workshops. It could also aid future researchers in the same field and uncover additional areas for further research.

### **1.13. Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness in research is a fundamental aspect that ensures the credibility of findings. Quality assurance is ensured through trustworthiness in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed several criteria, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, to ensure the trustworthiness of qualitative research. These criteria have since been further developed by contemporary scholars who have introduced additional approaches to enhance the quality of research.

Nowell, Norris, White, and Moules (2017) emphasise the importance of reflexivity and transparency to enhance credibility. Researchers engaging in qualitative studies are encouraged to maintain reflexive journals, acknowledging their biases and preconceptions, thereby enhancing the authenticity and trustworthiness of their interpretations. Furthermore, ensuring participant validation through member checking, as Creswell and Miller (2000) advocated contributes significantly to credibility by allowing participants to verify the accuracy of their representation in the research findings. Furthermore, employing multiple data sources and methods, as proposed by Morse (2015), aids in triangulation, strengthening credibility by corroborating findings from different angles. Transferability, as explained by Shenton (2004), emphasises the value of offering detailed descriptions of the context and participants. This allows readers to adapt the relevance of the findings to different settings or groups, thereby increasing the credibility of the research results. More about this section is discussed further in the methodology section.

### **1.14. Ethical Issues**

The researcher applied for ethical clearance at the University of the Free State (UFS) immediately after the study was approved by the proposal committee; ethics codes, and all rules and directions established by the Faculty of Education at UFS were followed. The university ethics research committee approved the study with no UFS-HSD2021/1757/21. In Nigeria, an introduction letter was written to school administrators and the Teaching Service Commission, the researcher obtained an introduction letter to visit the schools together with the approved ethical letter. Moreover, before conducting an interview, each participant was notified, and their agreement was requested. The participants were handled with respect, and each participant's/interest groups were protected. The recording was kept in the strictest confidence. Participants were assured that aliases and pseudonyms were used in place of their real names, learners who participated in the study were 18 years and considered adult and ethical for the study. The participants were protected from harm during the course of the field research (Cohen *et al.*, 2018:558; Davies, 2020:3).

### **1.15. Chapter's layout**

**Chapter One:** Introductory background to the study as well as the problem statement.

**Chapter Two:** Literature review: This chapter expatiates on the related literature and concepts that inform the study.

**Chapter Three:** Theoretical framework: The theories that undergirded the study were explained better in this chapter.

**Chapter Four:** Research methodology and design: The research instruments, and procedures for the study were explained.

**Chapter Five:** Data presentation and analysis: The data collected from the field were documented in this chapter.

**Chapter Six:** Findings and discussions: The findings of the study and the discussions were revealed in this section of the study.

**Chapter Seven:** Summary, conclusion, recommendation for practice; Recommendation for further studies.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **THEORETICAL JUSTIFICATION OF SOCIAL COGNITIVE LEARNING THEORY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP THEORY**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter examines the theoretical framework that guided the study. This comprised of two theories: SCLT and SJLT. SCLT focuses on the accuracy of organisational outcomes based on Bandura's research, including its evolution, principles, objectives, relevance to leadership practices in addressing GBV, and limitations that necessitate the use of additional theories for supplementation. The chapter also discusses the need for SJLT as a theory to evaluate existing practices related to leadership practices in schools, the origin of SJLT, its principles and objectives, relevance to school management, and justification for using both SCLT and SJLT for better clarity.

#### **2.2. Evolution and the Origins of Social Cognitive Learning Theory.**

The theory is used as a theoretical framework for the Social Cognitive Learning Theory (SCLT) which originated from the developments of learning theories. It found its origin in Pavlovian's conditioning procedures, where he has images of salivating dogs and animals using a carrot and stick approach (Bandura & Walters, 1977:144; McGuire, 2004:48). Gray and MacBlain (2015:4) averred that Pavlov's behaviourism theory is based on stimulus-response approaches. The Learning Theory has shifted the attention away from the causal investigation of putative interior determinants toward a more extensive examination of extrinsic impacts on responsiveness (Bandura, 2005:15). Human behaviour has been thoroughly studied in terms of the stimuli that elicit it and the reinforcing consequences that change it (Lindblom, 2015:7). Bandura's theory reveals that behaviour is influenced by the environment. It should be noted that behaviour partly produces the environment, and that the resulting environment can be influenced, just as behaviour controls it.

Predictive behaviour is one of the most important factors in hostile settings (Bandura 1982:122). Through rewarding and punishing consequences, behaviour can be moulded into new patterns. Without defining what influences a person's mind, a study of the cognitive control of behaviour is incomplete (Bandura, 1999:23). Bandura's theory became popular as it relates the learning environments to human self-efficacy interplay between the environments and humans (Connolly, 2017:24). Bandura noted that merely developing behavioural patterns is insufficient; it necessitates the engagement of multifaceted self-regulatory processes and corrective feedback systems. This process involves constructing knowledge and converting it into proficient performances (Granziera and Perera, 2019:76). The cognitive in the theory deals with the human functioning or actions within an environment; that is, human functioning is rooted in social systems (Pajares *et al.*, 2009). This is because the cognitive and self-regulative principles of SCLT often serve important functions in causal sequences.

The development of SCLT was proposed and developed by Bandura's ideas of social learning moving from the traditional behaviourism theory to vicarious learning which stipulates that reinforcements are not direct learning, but that learning could also occur through imitation (Illeris, 2018:88). The social cognitive learning theory is a psychological approach to human functioning that emphasises the importance of motivation, learning, and self-regulation in human functioning (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020; Rumjaun & Narod, 2020:86). The need for the origin gives the reader the insight on how the emergence of the theory. This also helps the researcher to understand the principles of the theory which are discussed below.

### **2.2.1. Principles and Objectives of Social Cognitive Learning Theory**

The principles of Social Cognitive Learning Theory are divided into three, according to Bandura's belief of moving from traditional learning theory to social cognitive learning (Bandura, 2005:12). He proposed the power of social modelling, vicarious learning, and self-efficacy as the principles of SCLT (Garcia *et al.*, 2019:225). The following principles

emanate from the theory: self-efficacy, vicarious learning, and the power of social modelling.

#### **2.2.1.1. Self-Efficacy**

Self-efficacy is an important aspect of the mechanism employed in human agencies. It influences the thought patterns, emotional arousals, and the actions performed by individuals within an organisation (Bandura, 1982: 123; Liao, 2021:1879). Consequently, perceived self-efficacy is when an individual accounts for such diverse phenomena in the school with changes in behaviour related to modes of influence. Maddux and Gosselin (2012: 198) stressed that applications of self-efficacy programmes bring human adjustments and adaptation to the behaviour of certain groups within a community.

Self-efficacy, according to Bandura is a person's belief in his/her capabilities to successfully achieve a set task (Bandura & Wessels, 1994: 72). Self-efficacy is a powerful translator for a person to do well in any endeavour. In the area of school, self-efficacy helps individuals to harness efforts, strategies, and persistence in achieving the goals and objectives of education (Heslin & Klehe, 2006:706; Peura, *et al.*, 2021: 2). Children with good self-efficacy achieve good results no matter the challenges, and it is related to their thoughts and actions. Children with poor self-efficacy have issues with their self-esteem and thereby avoid tasks that can make them excel. The principle of self-efficacy is important in the execution of behaviours that are necessary to produce specific performance attainment of reducing GBV in Nigerian secondary schools, as it makes everybody to be responsible and open to achieve the goals and objectives of education. Having discussed the principle of self-efficacy, the next section discusses the principle of social modelling.

#### **2.2.1.2. Social Modelling**

Social modelling is categorised into three areas of psychological functioning influenced by modelling: the transmission of new behaviour patterns, the reduction of fears and inhibitions, and the enhancement of pre-existing response modes (Craig, 1975:376).

Smith (2021:2) also confirmed that human behaviours are determined by the functional relationship between personal factors, the external environments, and the behaviour itself. Using this model, GBV can be seen as resulting from the functional relationships between individual characteristics, social environments, and the GBV behaviours that are exhibited by the learners or the teachers. In other words, Bandura and Hall (2018:79) asserted that children imitate behaviours that they see their peers exhibit, assimilating new learning into already existing concepts. Through this process, children internalize new behavioural patterns into their cognitive development, and whatever behaviour they see their peers do, they do too.

Social modelling is when a teacher or any of the School Management Teams (SMTs) acts as a good model for the learners to emulate through imitation and good principles in addressing GBV in schools (Mokoena, Simelane-Mnisi & Mji, 2021: 336). Social modelling is mentoring the learners on which way to go, not minding the thought influences of those that are abused from home and who bring the same behaviours to affect the cognitive process of the learners.

### **2.2.1.3. Vicarious Learning**

Vicarious learning is the learning that occurs through observation and hearing, other than hands-on instruction. The psychosocial glance of vicarious learning could provide a theory that explains the phenomenon of being multi-causal and affecting intimate relationships within a social setting (Viejo, *et al.*2018: 180). Warren and Baker (2013:10) posit that learners learn inappropriate behaviours through vicarious learning situations in schools. Also, vicarious learning allows individuals to acquire beliefs, cognition, strategies, and behaviours from observation in a social environment (Schunk & Usher, 2012:13). Bandura (1982:124) differentiated three types of vicarious learning namely, response facilitation, inhibition, and observational learning through modelled actions. The principles of social modelling, vicarious learning, and self-efficacy enable the teacher and learner to observe and imitate the behaviours of others and to model positive behaviour that others can emulate and practice; learners need to increase their capabilities to

implement the newly acquired skills, and learners experience support from the leaders of the school to adapt in newly acquired skills (Devi, Khandelwal & Das, 2017:723). After the discussion of the principles of social cognitive learning theory, the next section discusses the relevance of the theory of SCLT.

#### **2.2.1.4. The Relevance of the Social Cognitive Learning Theory**

The relevance of the principles of SCLT showed a triadic relationship with environments, behaviours, and personal efficacy. Self-efficacy influences personal achievement, self-reactiveness, and self-reflectiveness towards achieving a set goal and objective. The theory of SCLT is important to this study because it ensures that social modelling, vicarious learning, and self-efficacy are important in the leadership practices of addressing GBV in schools. Environments have a great influence on the great character of learners, and learners who suffer from gender-based victimised homes replicate these behaviours in schools and influence their innocent peers (Astor & Benbenishty, 2018:93; Uyanne, 2021:63). GBV patterns have been found in schools these days, and they need urgent attention. This is where the applications of the Social Cognitive Learning Theory come in. The theory helps the student to be well-behaved. It creates a relationship between the school environment and the learners, putting rewards and punishments on those offenders within the social environment. The leadership of the school and teachers in leadership capacities ensure the social modelling to influence the behaviours of learners from desisting from GBV in schools. They also employ it to create a safe environment for the learners through conscious efforts in policies and proper report mechanisms and through self-regulatory, self-reactiveness, and self-efficacy in ensuring that the learners achieve the aims and objectives of education (Fawole, Balogun & Olaleye, 2018:67). GBV has infiltrated many cultures, including the Nigerian culture, and so, efforts have been underway to implement the principles of the Social Cognitive Learning Theory which encourages the leader to effectively eradicate the social ills in the Nigerian educational system (Perrin *et al.* 2019:3; Onoyase, 2019:30). When offenders of gender-based abuse are apprehended, there should be proper punishment under the law meted out to them, whether they are teachers or learners, which is enshrined in the

principles of SCLT. With the principles of the theory and the relevance to the school system as highlighted, the preceding session discusses the limitations of the theory.

#### **2.2.1.5. The Limitation of the Social Cognitive Learning Theory**

The cognitive learning process involves equipping the learner with cognitive processes, skills, interests, and capabilities needed to convert instructional stimuli into meaningful information stored in memory (Happs, 1985:159). Learners are observed to gain knowledge through interacting with their environments, and through organising, manipulating, and experimenting with them. This process involves discovering relationships and interrelationships between terms (Money, 1995:66). Behaviourists' approach places little emphasis on the conceptual frameworks that learners bring to the learning situations, and such frameworks allow learners to process and interpret new information that is being processed. However, SCLT is confronted and contended with culture and diversity and long-term interventions. The Social Cognitive Learning Theory is affected by the culture of the learners' cognitive learning process is made for the classroom and not for the general school ethics (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2020:2).

Schunk (2012:102) averred that latent learning theories made use of animals and dolls. This however does not impact much on human behaviours and the interaction between their environments. Though the theory helps the learners' cognitive positive development, self-regulatory processes, and self-efficacy programmes, the applications of the Social Cognitive Learning Theory in classrooms are rather personal developments than the collective responsibilities that the school engages to solve a particular phenomenon (Thornberg, Wänström & Hymel, 2019).

Concluding remarks on the Social Cognitive Learning Theory reveal that scholars recognise that its principles can help deal with some phenomena in schools, including GBV, as observed by the study. It practically means that social modelling, self-efficacy, and vicarious learning can be used as models for addressing GBV in the school system. The theory of SCLT deals with learners' cognitive development and improves

interrelationships between individuals and the environments, by making room for social modelling through teacher emulation of good behaviours. However, there is a need for a strong leadership practice that deals specifically with the social ills in the social system (Groth *et al.*, 2019:2). Hence, the limitation of the theory, which is highlighted above necessitates the need for another supplementary theory in Social Justice Leadership Theory (SJLT), to bridge the gap created by the social cognitive learning theory.

This chapter equally expatiates the need for the SJLT as a theory to test the existing practices concerning the leadership practices in the schools, the origin of the SJLT, its principles, and objectives offer much relevance to school management, and serve as good justification for the use of two theories namely, SCLT and SJLT, for more clarity.

### **2.2.2. Social Justice Leadership Theory**

Social justice leadership theory (SJLT) aims to address the daily realities of school principals through social justice that is intended to transform leadership practices in schools, from traditional leadership practices to a more transformed cultural, curriculum-oriented, pedagogical, and school-wide priorities to benefit marginalised learners in school (Theoharis, 2007:222). However, Wang (2018:472) argued that modern-day social justice leadership practices in schools should include fairness, equity, inclusivity, and openness in addressing marginalised groups in school. The SJLT aims to incorporate the five leadership perspectives (Critical pluralist, transformative, ethical/moral, feminist, and cultural/spiritual) that are recommended for advocating social justice in schools (DeMatthews & Mawhinney, 2014:845). The theory aims to facilitate trust and foster care within the school, and in the case of GBV in schools, there is a need for leadership that is informed. Leaders who are ready to act in cases of such occurrence must do so with care, as this increases the trust of learners in leaders who are concerned about GBV occurrence in Nigerian secondary schools. For readers' easiness, the following theme takes us to the origin of social justice leadership theory.

#### **2.2.2.1. Background and the Origins of Social Justice Leadership**

The theory is used as a theoretical framework for Social Justice Leadership Theory (SJLT). Sergiovanni (1992), claims that schools are characterised by power imbalances and that there cannot be ethical leadership where social injustices and inequalities among people exist. Also, Marshall (2004:6) criticised the traditional form of leadership because it ignored the concerns of social justice.

Over the decade, there have been various concerns about a leadership theory that encompasses the other instructional, moral, and transformative aspects of leadership and that also emancipates the minds of learners and makes school leaders accountable for every action taken in the school, both in the environment and the moral aspects (Blackmore, 2006: 185). There have been organised scholars that have been interested in the emancipation of the school environments. They however formed the opinions of democratisation, equity, fairness, and inclusivity in addressing marginalisation in schools alongside the lines of race, social class, ethnicity, and religion (Berkovich, 2014: 283). This is an attempt by the researcher, not to condemn the leadership practices in schools, but rather to improve them for more inclusive leadership.

Social justice leadership theory emanated from the need for leadership to address a school's social ills through a leadership that is conscious of building relationships, offering hope, and engaging in dialogical and collaborative leadership practices in school, to radically transform schools and the society at large (DeMatthews, 2018). In Nigeria, it has been said that leadership uses various traditional leadership styles as a one-size-fits-all to address the various issues springing up in the schools (Jenkins, 2021:3). The challenges of schools now come with the multiplication of technological knowledge and population explosion in the educational climate. The multi-dimensional manifestations of GBV and other vices are wreaking havoc on the development of the secondary education in Nigeria. Bertrand and Rodela (2018:11) recommend social justice leadership as the perfect theory to address the social challenges in Nigerian secondary schools, as it allows for community engagement, participation, and practices.

#### **2.2.2.2 Principles and Objectives of Social Justice Leadership**

Social Justice Leadership Theory (SJLT) espouses culturally responsive and socially just schools. The tenets and objectives of SJLT support empowerment, collaboration, and team work to achieve the goals of education. Learners' marginalisation and educational injustices that characterise Nigerian schools can always be addressed by the social justice leadership theory (Dematthews & Izquierdo 2017:334). The goal of social justice leadership theory is to create two dimensions of education. Social justice improves academic excellence and produces social justice leaders who are empowered for social change in the community and in the society at large (Shaked, 2019:85). In the same vein, Forde, Torrance and Angelle (2021:212) maintain that social justice leadership theory fosters leaders' inclusive culture, reduces the low level of discrimination among learners, and reduces microaggressions that create hostile environments for learners.

The necessity to resolve aggressions among learners based on race, ethnicity, and culture prompted the development of social justice leadership theory (Morris, Hinton-Smith, Marvell & Brayson, 2022:102). Nigeria is a multi-ethnic country where schools are marked with social exclusions, racial discrimination, and multi-ethnic characteristics which appear to be one of the reasons for school GBV difficulties (Afolabi, 2019:136; Birchall, 2019:5).

Social justice leadership theory's objectives are characterised by fairness, equity, participation, inclusion, critical approach, and moral care (Wang, 2018:473). These principles encourage democratic participation and the emancipation of the learner's mind. Any leader who is encouraged by these principles fights against social inclusions, and fights for equity for learners, despite ethnic differences and diversities in Nigerian classrooms. Similarly, some studies reveal that social justice leadership primarily addresses discrimination and oppression experienced by marginalised individuals or groups based on factors such as race, ethnic background, gender, and disability (Sarid, 2021:11; García-Carmona, Fuentes-Mayorga, and Rodríguez-García, 2021:77; Harrison Jr, et al. 2021:225).

### **2.2.2.3. Relevance of Social Justice Leadership Theory to the Study**

The relevance of social justice leadership theory cannot be overemphasised because of its importance and usefulness in Nigerian secondary schools. Social justice leadership espouses leadership traits that treat marginalisation, discrimination, and especially the inclusion of democratic principles in the daily routine of leadership practices in schools. DeMatthews (2015:140) opines that social justice leadership theory equips leaders with the leadership traits that address the inequities and discrimination that characterise schools today. Nigerian schools are characterised by learners' multi-ethnic characteristics and backgrounds. These characteristics have marginalised and made the school environment toxic. Other studies have also explained that social justice leadership theory has been developed in recent years as a deliberate attempt by school leaders to advocate traditionally marginalised learners, and that it is dedicated to the restoration of a just structure in the school (Berkovich, 2014:283; Zembylas & Iasonos, 2017:2). Social justice leadership theory demonstrates that leaders who are equipped with the social justice principles of equity, fairness, and justice and who are also conscious of race, class, and sexual orientation do very well in addressing the marginalisation of classroom situations (Forde, Torrance, & Angelle, 2021:213).

This theory's significance lies in how social justice leadership helps learners and administrators to understand the importance of creating socially just schools (Mafora, 2016:2). These addresses inequalities related to GBV such as bullying, and violence involving learners and teachers within the Nigerian secondary school system (Arowolo, 2019:18). Social justice is not about sympathy, pity, or lowering standards in schools; it involves attitudes shaped by values, beliefs, and leaders' experiences, providing children with the chance to become advocates of social justice in schools (Garza, 2020:460).

In the same vein, Wang, (2018:471) emphasises the important contribution of social justice theory in effectively addressing GBV in Nigerian secondary schools. The relevance of social justice leadership theory lies in its suitability for addressing social inequalities and injustices in Nigerian schools. Social justice leadership also allows for democratic and inclusive engagement in good leadership practices. The SJLT's importance stems from the need for whole-school reforms that focus teaching and learning on the

acquisition of knowledge that would liberate learners, foster strong relationships in the classroom, and free them from the ways they have been bred to do things (MacDonald, 2021). That is why Arar (2021:2) suggest that social justice leadership practices in schools should encompass three dimensions: distributive justice, relational justice, and cultural justice, which in turn will influence whole-school reforms in an emancipated manner.

The social justice leadership theory school of thought accentuates treating learners and teachers, especially the school leaders in an acceptable manner which explains a particular way the overall school goals and objectives are to be achieved. This is related to the recommendation of Wong and Kwan (2020:546) that social justice democratises the dealings and improves decision-making procedures in schools, particularly, secondary school. Likewise, it also emphasises the responsibility of school leaders in the promotion of social justice in school which according to Shields and Hesbol (2020:3), were essential ingredients for improved school effectiveness, devoid of discrimination. In this way, social justice leadership theory is unequivocally pertinent to this investigation since it is considered as a pattern towards equity and fairness in secondary school administration in Nigerian (Miller, 2020:987; Christman & Ivory, 2019:70). In the case of GBV identities in Nigerian secondary school, social justice leadership theory addresses the phenomenon under investigation.

#### **2.2.2.4. Justification for Using a Blend of SCLT and SJLT.**

The blend of both theories seeks to find a possible solution to the leadership practices of addressing GBV in Nigerian secondary schools. Both theories focus on leaders being humane and courteous in their interactions with learners in schools and in maintaining a safe environment free of GBV issues in Nigerian secondary schools. As a result, framing the study from social cognitive learning theory and social justice leadership theory is relevant for leaders to understand how to deal with GBV difficulties in schools where the scenarios emerge.

The concepts of both theories were used to analyse the data that were collected for the study which include the GBV prevention documents for schools, individual interviews, and focus group interviews. The problem that arises in schools with GBV prevalence was dealt with through the underpinnings of social cognitive learning theory and social justice leadership theory principles which provide for inclusive, democratic, representation principles to benefit marginalised learners in Nigerian secondary schools, to effectively change the leadership narrative which social justice presented.

### **2.2.3. Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter explored the theoretical frameworks that underpin the study, specifically focusing on the social cognitive learning theory and social justice leadership theory. The discussion follows a sequential order, starting with the historical perspectives and origin of the Social Cognitive Learning Theory. It then delved into the principles and objectives of the theory, highlighting its relevance to studying the management of GBV in schools. However, the limitations of the Social Cognitive Learning Theory necessitated the exploration of the Social Justice Leadership Theory, which was discussed later. This discussion emphasises the need to enhance leadership practices in addressing GBV in Nigerian secondary schools. The second theory was examined, focusing on its background, origin, principles, and relevance to addressing the social problem. Additionally, the rationale for utilising both the Social Cognitive Learning Theory and Social Justice Leadership Theory was explored.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RELATED LITERATURE REVIEW FOR LEADERSHIP PRACTICES ON GBV IN NIGERIAN SECONDARY SCHOOL**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter provides a review of the relevant literature on leadership practices for addressing GBV among secondary school learners. It explores the nature of GBV, exemplified by concepts such as sexual harassment/rape, bullying/intimidation, verbal abuse/harassment, abuse of drugs, and indiscriminate touching of learners. The chapter also discusses the causes of GBV in secondary schools, including societal porosity and inequality, discriminatory cultural beliefs, and economic and political influences affecting GBV. Furthermore, it examines previous theories that were used to address GBV in secondary schools. The study's aims and objectives are highlighted and reiterated for clarity. The study aims to explore the leadership practices of addressing GBV in Nigerian secondary schools, with the following objectives:

- To explore the nature of GBV cases in the selected Nigerian secondary schools.
- To describe the causes of GBV in the selected Nigerian secondary schools.
- To examine how school leaders address GBV in selected Nigerian secondary schools.
- To formulate a gender-based school violence model.

#### **3.2. The Nature of GBV Cases.**

In this section, the emphasis was on examining the characteristics of GBV incidents in Nigerian secondary schools. This is done to respond to the study's first objective under the following subheading- sexual harassment/ rape, bullying /intimidation, verbal abuse/harassment, abuse of drugs, and indiscriminate touching of learners.

##### **3.2.1. Sexual Harassment/ Rape**

Sexual harassment/rape in schools is a problem in both developed and developing nations. Research conducted in the United States indicate that 87% of the surveyed students experienced sexual harassment in schools, particularly in grades 7-12. Sexual harassment affects both male and female students and it has a detrimental impact on their academic performance (Lee, Croninger, Linn & Chen, 1996:400; Hill & Kearl, 2011:7; Brown, Biefeld & Elpers, 2020:300). These studies conducted show that sexual harassment occurs in schools in developed nations of the world. Also, some studies conducted in Ghana and South Africa reveal that sexual harassment is present and common in African secondary schools (Chitsamatanga and Rembe, 2020:70; Tenkorang, Amo-Adjei, Kumi-Kyereme, and Kundhi, 2021:815; Matselane, 2021:12). In Nigeria, sexual harassment is also a very common menace in secondary school through studies that confirm that sexual harassment and rape occur within the school premises in Nigeria, both during and after school hours (Okagua & Alex-Hart, 2020:3; Obilor & Miwari, 2021:135; Ogba & Igu, 2019:58).

The gender dimension of sexual violence pertains to the role that gender plays in the occurrence, prevalence, and effects of sexual violence. While sexual violence primarily affects women and girls globally, it is crucial to recognise that men and boys can also be victims, and their experiences should not be dismissed or minimised (Özdemir, 2015; Enaifoghe et al., 2021; World Bank, 2019; and Widanaralalage et al., 2022:1148). Sexual violence is predominantly perpetrated against women and girls. While men and boys can also experience sexual violence, statistics shows that women are disproportionately affected (Murphy-Oikonen, Chambers, McQueen, Hiebert & Miller, 2022:1238). Cultural norms, power imbalances, and discrimination contribute to these disparities. Sexual violence is often about power and control rather than just about sexual desire. Perpetrators may use sexual violence as a weapon to assert dominance and maintain control over their victims (Rackley et. al. 2021:294).

GBV is prevalent in the selected Nigerian secondary schools, with reports indicating that many learners who are particularly girls, face different forms of harassment and violence including verbal abuse, physical assault, and sexual violence. Sexual harassment is a

common occurrence in schools, and it can manifest in various ways, such as through unwanted touching, catcalling, sexting, and sexual advances (Erentzen, Salerno-Ferraro & Schuller, 2022:4). It creates a hostile and unsafe environment for learners, affecting their educational experience and well-being. According to Effiom, Undiyaundeye, Amalu, Undie, and Diwa (2023:3469), the incidents of rape and sexual assault have been reported in Nigerian schools where learners, particularly girls, fall victim to predatory behaviour by teachers, fellow learners, or other school staff members.

Sexual harassment includes unwanted sexual advances and requests for sexual favours, whether expressed verbally or non-verbally, that create a hostile learning environment (Wamoyi, Ranganathan, Mugunga & Stöckl, 2023:109). Gender-based violence, which includes sexual harassment, can become more complex when the victim's experience is influenced by their sexual orientation or gender identity (Gallardo-Nieto, et al. 2021). Sexual harassment in Nigerian secondary schools has been found in the forms of learners calling each other by sexually charged names, peers making sexual comments about each other bodies, asking questions about each other's sexual life, discussing sex-related topics in class, and making comments about learners' anatomy, clothes and looks. These comments can be from teacher, from senior peers to junior peers or from peer to peer (Chime, Orji, Aneke & Nwoke, 2021:124; Aborisade, 2022:221). GBV, particularly sexual harassment, is prevalent in Nigerian secondary schools, as evidenced by the various forms of harassment mentioned. The issues highlighted illustrate how harmful attitudes, norms, and behaviours that are related to gender and sexuality can manifest within the school environment. Sexual harassment is part of child sexual abuse in schools.

Tillapaugh (2022:4) and Kibirige and Margaret (2023:212) submit that there is such a high rate of sexual harassment reported in 2015 that one out of five schools in southern and eastern Africa recorded sexual harassment between pupils of primary schools. This sexual harassment often leads to rape in school toilets and in bushes very close to school, with peers showing each other their genital organs in silent areas in the school (UNGEI, 2013). Uduma, Samuel, and Agbaje (2015:434) confirmed that sexual harassment of

various sorts often leads to psychological stress, and rape leads to early pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases.

However, gender-based prevention policies have been formulated for use in schools from developed nations of the world in the USA, South Africa, and Nigeria. These policies have been adapted from the UN policies guiding schools. The Clery Act (20 U.S.C section 1092 (f) showed in the USA that Officer IX has been seen as a solution to sexual harassment in schools. There is an officer in charge of sexual assault in each school where complaints and reports are made when learners are harassed (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2001, 2014). This has been a working solution in the USA schools, where the rights of the girl-child and boy-child are protected. Also, in South Africa, the Western Cape Education Department (WECD, 1999) suggested in policies that victims of sexual violence can report the situation to the higher authority, and that he/she has legal rights when such a situation occurs. The procedures and stages are highlighted by the education department and it resulted in a positive change in schools when adopted. In Nigeria, the GBV (Prohibition) Law (2011) allows for the prevention of rape, sexual assault, and all-round gender discrimination in the society and the schools. This policy has sexual harassment prevention tips to give room for coordination, report mechanism, and room for police intervention where such situations occur between peers or with teachers and learners.

Sexual harassment/rape has been a phenomenon and common menace in Nigerian secondary schools. It is a growing concern for school leaders in this 21<sup>st</sup> century educational system. The effect of sexual harassment and rape have caused immediate problems for learners, adverse effects on academic performance, and future effects on victims (Rabo, 2022:23). The gendered nature of sexual harassment in Nigerian's secondary schools reflects how most of the victims and perpetrators are influenced by traditional gender roles, societal norms, and power dynamics. Sexual harassment is predominantly perpetrated against female learners and is often rooted in gender-based discrimination and unequal power relations (Ajayi, Chantler & Radford, 2022:467). In this regard, scholars have maintained that sexual harassment/rape has psychological effects on the academic

performance of learners in schools (Obibuba, 2020:53; Danburam, Zakariah, and James, 2021:218). Despite the efforts of the government on GBV prevention policies, the problem of sexual harassment persists in schools and remains a major concern for school leaders.

### **3.2.2. Bullying /Intimidation**

Bullying in general is when superior authority flexes powers on less dominant ones (Kaliampou, Katsigiannis, & Fantzikou, 2022:89). School bullying occurs when perpetrators exert great physical strength or more social power on their victim. School bullying can be verbal and non-verbal. Nickerson, Breese, and Alberti (2023:487) submitted that bullying is the unwanted aggressive behaviour that involves power imbalance with peers, with consequential effects on their academic performance. Bullying can be a significant aspect of GBV, particularly when it involves targeting individuals based on their gender or gender identity.

Bullying is a form of aggressive behaviour that involves a power imbalance, and it can take various forms, such as physical, verbal, social, or cyberbullying. When bullying is driven by gender-based discrimination or stereotypes, it becomes a form of GBV (Huang & Vidourek, 2019:200). Okumu, Kim, Sanders, Makubuya, Small, and Hong (2020: 2206) conducted studies in the United States of America (USA) and submitted that gendered bullying occurs among learners, especially the cyberbullying which leads to poor academic performance. Also, in England, some studies showed that learners often experience 35% face-to-face bullying and 15% cyberbullying which often causes depression, anxiety, attempted and committed suicide, and poor academic performance. Additionally, in Africa, Chitsamatanga and Rembe (2020:68) reveal that out of their total participants, 34.4% had experienced bullying: 55.3% reported emotional bullying, 38.4% experienced physical victimisation, 16.9% were subjected to cyberbullying, and 2.8% were victims of verbal bullying.

In Nigeria, bullying is a growing concern in schools, evident in the relevant literature (Oputa, 2020:5; Fareo & Habila,2018:231; Ekwelundu, Nnamdi, and Obi, 2022:334; Olashore,

Osasona, Uwadiae and Akanni, 2020:2). Bullying can be termed as unequal power dynamics between learners that are seen as bullies and their victim (the bullied). Bullying starts with intimidation which leads to post-traumatic stress, and which often leads to low academic performance. Bullied learners are often afraid of school, absent from school, and tend to become truants (Amaewhule & Nukan-Adebayo 2019:45; Obilor & Miwari, 2021:135). Bullying can manifest differently based on gender. Boys may experience physical bullying or be targeted for not conforming to traditional norms of masculinity, while girls may face relational bullying such as social exclusion or rumours about their appearance or relationships (Peguero & Hong, 2020). Bullying in Nigerian secondary schools can be in the form of verbal bullying by calling names, senior learners intimidating and bullying junior learners, spreading of rumours/false information about someone, excluding some set of people from a set of activities in the class, and within the school environment. All these are characterised in almost all the Nigerian secondary schools (Fenny & Falola (2020:565).

The KiVa school programme against bullying was formed by a professor and his team in 2006 from Turku University, Finland. The word KiVa was derived from the Finnish word 'Kiusaamista Vastaan' which means 'against bullying'. This programme was designed to curb bullying in schools, and was deemed successful in Finnish schools. This led the UK government, Italy, and the Netherlands to adopt the programme in schools for 7-15 years learners in high schools. This programme includes KiVa coordinator, and selected teachers who are members of KiVa team intervention in schools. These programmes have been adopted in England and Wales and have been seen to be effective in reducing bullying in schools. The success rate of this programme has been found effective in terms of learner-level bullying perpetration, learner mental health, and emotional well-being and it has improved attendance (Salmivalli, Garandeau & Veenstra, 2012:280; Yang & Salmivalli, 2015:82; Clarkson, Bowes, Coulman, Broome, Cannings-John, Charles, Edwards, Ford, Hastings, Hayes & Patterson, 2022:10).

The United States Nebraska coordinated learner support services and presented anti-bullying policies in schools in the year 2009 to support learners who were affected by bullying and

prevention strategies, to curb such situations in high schools (Rezapour, Khanjani & Mirzaee, 2020:2). However, in Africa, there are no clear policies on bullying, and the leadership of the schools have been battling with this issue in secondary schools (Basic Education rolls out anti-bullying campaign, 2021; Juan, Zuze, Hannan, Govender & Reddy, 2018:2). Government of various phases made sure that there were seminars on bullying and approaches to it. In Nigeria, this is rather a rising recurrent issue in schools and the school leadership has been battling with the issue, using the code of conduct in schools.

### **3.2.3. Verbal Abuse/Harassment**

Schools around the world experience various problems in which verbal abuse and verbal harassment are the most common. Studies in the USA conclude that harassment/abuse is common in high schools and colleges (Miller & Burcham, 2023:332; Miller, 2023:316). In Africa, South Africa is not spared from the violence of verbal abuse in schools, through verbal attacks from peer to peer and from teachers to students. Makola, Ndlovu, and Schlebusch (2022:8731) conducted a study about learner discipline and verbal attacks in secondary school as a common factor in gender-based abuse in South Africa. In the realm of GBV, verbal abuse is frequently employed as a tactic to dominate and control individuals based on their gender or gender identity. This often manifests in teachers verbally abusing learners in schools, and learners verbally attacking each other, which can escalate to physical altercations (Oruche & Ezeiba, 2021:192).

In Nigeria, verbal abuse has been a problem in secondary schools, and school leaders have been trying to curb its effects on learners' academic achievement. In the classroom setting, some teachers have been abusing learners, especially during lesson periods, through verbal attacks on learners which have a resultant effect on learners' academic performance (Olujuwon, 2021:83). Some teachers choose this to verbally harass/attack learners' personalities and these have been a way to denigrate and make learners feel less wanted in the school. This has been a form of GBV in Nigerian secondary schools (Atoyebi & Atoyebi, 2022:268). Instead of choosing to advise learners, some teachers choose to use verbal attacks on learners in the class, leading to emotional abuse while

some learners attack each other in the class and outside the classroom (Owuamanam & Makinwa, 2015:328). On the same page, Aluede, Ojugo, and Okoza (2012:29) submit that Nigerian secondary schools have been ridden with this menace of verbal attacks in the schools, and the leadership of the school has been trying their best to advise both teachers and learners in school.

The rules and regulations have been used as one size fits all for all problems in the school, and teachers have used their discretions to deal with such situations in the case of learner-on-learner violence that erupts from emotional abuse and harassment. The use of guidance and counselling and the invitation of experts to talk to learners about their mental health, emotional abuse, and many rising problems in schools for learners to be aware of the situations at hand. Similarly, the GBV policy in Ekiti state schools defines GBV as any action that seeks to or does degrade individuals physically, psychologically, economically, or emotionally. Victims are encouraged to report such cases to their next of kin or parents and can also directly report to the police, with action being taken against the offender (ESGBV document, 2015). The lack of understanding and implementation of the policy in schools have led to the continued effect of verbal attack/harassment which has also led to emotional abuse, as seen in the data. The succeeding section discusses the next nature of GBV.

#### **3.2.4. Abuse of drugs**

Secondary schools have been plagued with the problem of drug abuse and this has led to many misbehaviours in schools. These problems include intimidation, harassment, sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and rape. This problem has led to various indiscipline in secondary schools around the world, as it is not peculiar to schools in developing nations of the world only (Hynes-Dowell, Mateu-Gelabert, Barros, and Delva, 2011:28; Johns et al., 2018:2). A study on drug abuse was conducted in the USA, and it was confirmed that children from grade 7-12 were abusers of drugs which 5.1% of them follow through till old age. The learners from high school tried heroin, cigarettes, and alcohol. Also, schools in England have the same problems of substance abuse, and children aged

12 have been seen with various drugs in schools (Bonell, et al. 2019:503; Ryan et al. 2020). The use of substance abuse has been a problem in schools in the developed nations of the world. GBV and drug abuse are significant public health and social concerns that can have severe and long-lasting consequences for individuals and communities. Some individuals, particularly victims of GBV, may turn to drug abuse to cope with trauma, stress, or emotional pain (Holt & Birchall, 2023:54). Substance use can temporarily numb the pain or provide a sense of escape from the reality of violence.

In Africa, South Africa to be precise, studies conducted on drug abuse showed that there is a spate of recurring nature of the menace, and has been giving school leaders problems (Hogarth et al. 2019:70; Francis, et al. (2019:3). In Nigeria, drug abuse is one of the problems in the education sector and has reflected a decayed society where you find learners doing drugs. Drugs like '*marijuana*', also known as Indian hemp and alcohol are the most common use of drugs in schools. These drugs have been seen to be in the form of stimulants, narcotic sedatives, tranquilisers, and solvents. These drugs are put in drinks to help them overcome depression, personality disorders, and the availability of drugs. These drugs have been seen in studies to be responsible for general school violence or GBV in schools (Soremekun, Folorunso & Adeyemi, 2020:2).

In the context of secondary schools, peer pressure can be a significant factor contributing to both gender-based violence and drug abuse. Learners may feel compelled to conform to certain norms or engage in risky behaviours to fit in or gain acceptance. Studies conducted in Nigeria found that the prevalence of drug abuse is common in the Nigerian education space and has been common with learners aged 11-15, with 21% to 87% abuse of psychoactive substances which are common to both girls and boys (Olurisha, 2019:3; Shuaibu, Haliza, Samah & Zulkefli, 2020:3146; Sanni & Aransi, 2020:13; Umukoro, et al. 2021:348). The factors that caused this prevalence can be seen to be peer influence, and parental factors, among other factors.

SAMHSA, 2021 conducted surveys in the USA and proffered a solution through the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) in terms of emoji drug code, preparing the difficult

conversation, preventing unsafe drinking on campus, taking action to prevent underage drinking on campus, getting ahead of the problem, community talk to prevent underage drinking, leveraging on partnerships in planning and hosting a community talk and building partnerships. This policy programme has been found effective in reducing the prevalence and overdependence on drugs and in getting learners to focus on their studies. In Nigeria, the National Agency for Food Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC) and the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) have undertaken advocacy programme visits to schools to raise awareness among learners about the dangers of drug abuse (Ifeadi and Agodi, 2024). These efforts aim to educate them on the risks of pharmacy opioids and provide solutions to combatting drug abuse.

### **3.2.5. Indiscriminate touching of learners**

Indiscriminate touching of learners is prevalent in Nigerian secondary schools where male teachers touch female learners' breasts and romanticise young naive learners. Learners also look at one another's private parts in school toilets. This is peculiar to some schools in Nigerian, as some learners are not aware or are too naive to report such issues (Ogbonnaya, Ogbonnaya & Emma-Echiegu, 2011:56; Akdemir, 2022:2; Simorangkir, 2019:263; Hartwig & McMullen, 2021:18). It is a form of abuse in schools when teachers take advantage of young learners through indiscriminate touching of their bodies. Learners in schools from developed nations of the world know their rights and the way to react to such abuse (Coetzee, 2012:76; Kettrey & Marx, 2019:2040; Masilo, 2019:153; Manlove, Ciaravino & Welti, 2021:637). Indiscriminate touching of learners involves unwarranted physical contact that is motivated by the student's gender rather than any legitimate educational purpose. Such behaviour is a violation of the learner's rights, privacy, and personal boundaries and can have severe consequences on their physical and emotional well-being.

This is not the case in Nigeria, as some learners in the secondary schools are in their puberty stage and are sexually active. Thus, they often touch each other indiscriminately after school hours or during break time. This can be termed a Risky Sexual Behaviour

(RSB). Idowu, Ayodele, Omotade, Anu, and Omolola (2017:175) establish that learners watch porn in schools, and this aggravates their sexual desires which often leads to rape, sexual harassment, and sexual abuse in Nigerian schools. Sexual misconduct in schools can result from inadequate sexual education and limited knowledge of child rights, which can lead to instances of inappropriate touching, involving teachers, learners, and peers in Nigerian secondary schools.

This problem has been addressed by the teacher code and the rules and regulations of the school. Nevertheless, the problem continues to plague schools and school leaders the world over. The Ekiti State government adopted a policy which allows learners to report problems of such nature through a whistleblower drop box. School leaders were forbidden to cook for teachers after school hours or run errands for them to avoid being abused. Security officers or gatemen were not permitted keep contacts with the learners, while all teachers were warned to desist from using sexual language or derogatory language on learners. School leaders and teachers should be proactive when such indiscriminate touching occurs in classrooms/schools. The victim should be guided with dignity and privacy when a such matter arises, and the toilets should be safe spaces for female/male learners in schools. The next section discusses the causes of GBV in schools.

### **3.3. The Causes of GBV in Secondary Schools**

GBV in schools can stem from various sources often rooted in societal norms and power structures. Some of the most common causes of GBV in Nigerian secondary schools include Gender norms and stereotypes, power imbalances, Lack of education and awareness, lack of resources, peer pressure and social dynamics, societal porosity and inequality, discriminatory cultural beliefs, economic factors, and political influences.

#### **3.3.1. Gender Norms and Stereotypes**

Social norms and stereotypes regarding gender roles and behaviour can contribute to GBV. For instance, societal expectations may dictate that boys should be aggressive and dominant, while girls should be submissive and compliant. These expectations can lead

to higher rates of violence perpetration among boys and higher victimisation rates among girls (Abdullahi, Adekeye, and Shehu, 2011:240). Gender norms and stereotypes play a significant role in sustaining GBV (Brown, Biefeld, and Elpers, 2020:300). Gender norms and stereotypes are influential in perpetrating gender-based violence (GBV). They represent societal expectations and attitudes that dictate the behaviours deemed appropriate for men and women based on their gender (Matetoane, 2019). Stereotypes are simplified beliefs about individuals' characteristics based on their gender, often with negative and limiting connotations (Friday, Elom and Chika, 2019:22; Olonade, et al. 2021:2; Maina, et al. 2022:331).

Traditional gender norms and stereotypes can create a power dynamic that is conducive to violence (Okeke-Ihejirika, Salami, and Amodu, 2019:100; Ward and Grower, 2020:178). For example, traditional masculinity often includes traits like aggression, dominance, and control, while femininity is associated with passivity, obedience, and submission. This can create a situation where men feel entitled to control or dominate women, and where women are expected to accept this behaviour as normal or even desirable (Iwuchukwu, 2013:13; Kemi & Jenyo, 2016:232). GBV can take many forms, including physical, sexual, emotional, and economic abuse (Airaoje, et al., 2023). It can occur in any setting, including in the home, the workplace, and in public spaces. Addressing GBV requires challenging these gender norms and stereotypes and promoting equality and respect between men and women. This can involve education and awareness campaigns to promote gender equality, as well as providing support and resources for victims of GBV (Viejo, et al., 2018). It may also involve holding perpetrators accountable for their actions and promoting social and cultural change to promote gender equality and respect for all individuals, regardless of their gender.

### **3.3.2. Power Imbalances**

Another cause of GBV is power imbalances in Nigerian schools. Power imbalances, such as those based on gender, age, or social status, can create opportunities for violence. In schools, teachers, staff, and older learners may hold more power than younger learners,

which can make the latter more vulnerable to violence. According to Baumgarten, Simmonds and Mason-Jones (2022), power imbalances are a key factor in GBV. Power imbalances refer to situations where one person or group holds more power, influence, or control over another person or group. Power imbalances are often related to gender, with men being more likely to hold positions of power, and women more likely to be victims of violence (Bareket & Fiske, 2023). In the same vein, Peterman, Kumar, Pereira, and Gilligan (2019:142) assert that power imbalances can take many forms, including economic, social, and cultural. As an illustration, women might experience economic reliance on men, leading to a power imbalance that increases their vulnerability to abuse (Rathnayake et al., 2023). Likewise, societal expectations may compel women to adhere to traditional gender roles, constraining their choices and heightening their risk of experiencing violence.

In educational settings, power differentials may exist between teachers and learners, or among older and younger learners. Teachers and staff often wield more authority than learners, creating a situation where learners are more susceptible to mistreatment. Similarly, older learners may hold more power and influence over younger ones, leading to potential victimisation of the latter (Yoon, Yang, and Tanaka, 2023:374). Addressing these power imbalances is crucial for preventing GBV. This can be achieved by promoting gender equality and by empowering women to attain economic, social, and political autonomy. Moreover, it may involve implementing policies and initiatives that offer support and resources to victims, while also holding perpetrators accountable for their actions. In schools, addressing power disparities could entail fostering a culture of respect and equality, alongside establishing protocols for reporting, and addressing incidents of violence.

### **3.3.3. Lack of education and awareness.**

In the literature, lack of awareness of GBV seems one of the reasons the issue is recurrent in Nigerian secondary schools. Many Learners and staff may not have a good understanding of what constitutes GBV, or how to prevent it. This can lead to a lack of

reporting, and in some cases, a culture of silence around violence. Wanjiru (2021:45) stresses the fact that lack of education and awareness on GBV issues can have significant negative impacts on individuals and the society. One of the most significant consequences of lack of education and awareness on GBV issues is that it can contribute to a culture of silence around the issue. When people are not aware of what constitutes GBV and what resources are available to them, they may be less likely to report instances of abuse, seek help, or support others who have experienced GBV.

Furthermore, Olofinbiyi, (2021:8) avers that another consequence of lack of education and awareness on GBV issues is that it can perpetuate harmful gender stereotypes and perpetuate gender-based discrimination. Without education about gender equity and the implications of GBV, individuals may not understand the negative impacts of such discrimination on women and on other marginalised groups. Additionally, Leburu-Masigo and Kgadima (2020:16620) explain that a lack of education and awareness can hinder efforts to prevent and address GBV. Effective prevention and response efforts require a comprehensive understanding of the root causes and contributing factors to GBV. Education and awareness can help build this understanding and foster a shared commitment to ending GBV. To tackle the dearth of knowledge and awareness surrounding GBV, it is crucial to emphasise educational initiatives and training programmes that are aimed at various age groups and sectors of the society. This entails disseminating information about the nature of GBV, its manifestations, and its repercussions on individuals and communities. It also involves advocating gender equality and dispelling harmful gender stereotypes. Additionally, it is vital to raise awareness about the support services available for survivors and involve men and boys in preventing GBV. The subsequent section delves into the insufficient resources as a contributing factor to GBV in schools.

#### **3.3.4. Lack of Resources**

Insufficient resources are widely recognised in the literature as a key factor that is associated with GBV in schools worldwide, including African countries like Nigeria. GBV

is becoming a prominent concern in Nigerian schools. Schools often lack the resources necessary to address GBV, such as staff training, counselling services, and adequate policies and procedures for reporting and addressing GBV incidents. This scarcity of resources presents a significant obstacle to effectively preventing and addressing GBV. Resources can refer to a range of things, including financial resources, trained personnel, facilities, and equipment. Orr, et al. (2022:2) submit that inadequate resources can hinder efforts to prevent GBV by limiting the availability of education and awareness programmes, public services, and support systems. For example, schools may not have the resources to provide comprehensive sexuality education or training for teachers on how to identify and respond to GBV among Learners. Similarly, healthcare facilities may not have the resources to provide adequate medical care and psychosocial support for survivors of GBV. A lack of resources can also make it difficult to hold perpetrators of GBV accountable. For example, courts may not have the resources to process cases in a timely and fair manner or to provide appropriate legal aid to survivors.

In Nigerian secondary schools, Bawa and Rao (2021:1648) acknowledge that to address the issue of a lack of resources in preventing and responding to GBV, the government needs to prioritise funding for initiatives that aim to prevent GBV and support survivors. This includes funding for education and awareness programmes, healthcare services, legal aid, and psychosocial support. Governments, civil society organisations, and the private sectors can all play a role in providing funding and resources. Chavula, Zulu, and Hurtig (2022:5) suggest that it is also important to invest in training programmes that build the capacity of personnel and service providers to identify and respond to GBV. This includes training for healthcare workers, teachers, law enforcement officers, and legal professionals on how to identify and respond to GBV. In addition, it is important to ensure that resources are allocated fairly and equitably, and by considering the needs of marginalised groups who are at increased risk of GBV. These include women and girls, LGBTQ+ individuals, and people with disabilities. The researcher opines that addressing the lack of resources in preventing and responding to GBV requires a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach that prioritises the needs and rights of survivors and vulnerable populations.

### **3.3.5. Peer pressure and social dynamics**

In Nigeria, secondary schools, and schools around the world experience GBV issues. Peer pressure and social dynamics can also play a role in GBV. Learners may feel pressured to conform to certain gender norms or to engage in violent behaviour to fit in or gain social status. According to Friday et al. (2019:22), it is crucial to recognise that the factors contributing to GBV in schools are intricate and varied. Resolving this problem necessitates a comprehensive strategy that tackles underlying causes, such as shifting societal norms, educational initiatives, and the establishment of policies and protocols to prevent and address instances of violence. According to Espelage, et al. (2022:1360), GBV in schools can be exacerbated by peer pressure and social dynamics.

These factors can contribute to a culture where violence and abuse are normalised or even encouraged, making it more difficult for victims to come forward and for bystanders to intervene. Furthermore, Laursen and Veenstra (2021:890) acknowledge that peer pressure can take many forms, ranging from subtle social cues to overt bullying. For example, if a group of learners regularly make derogatory comments about women or girls, other learners may feel pressured to join in or risk being excluded from the group. Similarly, if a learner is known to be violent or aggressive, others may avoid confronting them out of fear of retaliation.

Social dynamics can also play a role in GBV. Learners who are perceived as popular or powerful may feel entitled to mistreat others, while those who are marginalised or excluded may be more vulnerable to abuse (Allen & Antonishak, 2008). In some cases, teachers or other school staff may be complicit in this dynamic, either by ignoring or downplaying instances of violence or by perpetuating harmful stereotypes. To address GBV in schools, Kellij (2022) avers that it is important to address these underlying social factors. This may involve creating a school culture that values respect, empathy, and inclusivity, and which provides training and resources for learners, teachers, and staff to recognise and respond to instances of violence. It may also involve providing support and resources for victims of GBV, through counselling services or access to legal assistance.

Ultimately, preventing GBV requires a coordinated effort from everyone in the school community, from administrators to learners to parents and caregivers.

### **3.3.6. Societal Porosity and Inequality**

The community dictates what is taken in the school as the school reflects the community. School GBV is often a reflection of societal porosity and inequality. Also, in Africa where culture is represented across all facets of life, including the schools, the culture of a good citizen is gradually eroding the society, and this has affected different aspects of schooling nowadays. In Nigerian secondary schools, it is also evident in the literature and the data collected that GBV has found its ugly head in schools. Societal porosity refers to the degree to which different groups have access to resources and opportunities, while inequality refers to the unequal distribution of these resources and opportunities (Beckfield & Evrard, 2023). GBV is often rooted in unequal power dynamics between men and women, with men holding more power and privilege in society. This inequality can be reflected in access to education, employment, political representation, and in other areas of life. This can create conditions that make women more vulnerable to violence (Gumede, 2023:198). For example, women may be more likely to experience violence in situations where they are economically dependent on men, or where they have limited access to education or employment opportunities.

This can create a power imbalance that can be exploited by abusers. In addition to economic and social factors, cultural and religious beliefs can also contribute to GBV. Traditional gender roles and beliefs about masculinity and femininity can reinforce GBV, with the expectation that men be dominant and aggressive, and with the expectation that women be submissive and compliant (Bareket & Fiske, 2023). Addressing GBV according to Mezie-Okoye (2021:34), requires addressing these underlying societal inequalities and porosity. This may involve advocating for women's rights and promoting gender equality in all areas of life, as well as promoting education and awareness about the root causes of GBV. It may also involve implementing policies and programmes that provide resources and support for victims of violence, as well as holding perpetrators accountable

for their actions. The succeeding section discusses discriminatory cultural beliefs as one of the causes of GBV.

### **3.3.7. Discriminatory Cultural Beliefs**

In Africa, there are some discriminatory beliefs about the myth of GBV and gender stereotypes in male supremacy which has transcended to schools (Sweeney, 2020:287). Also in Nigeria, there is an age-long belief that women are less superior to men culturally, which has brought about some arguments on female genital mutilation, male suppression, and other vices which have transcended the school. Discriminatory cultural beliefs can contribute to GBV in schools by reinforcing harmful stereotypes and justifying abusive behaviour (Wanjiru, 2021:45). For example, in some cultures, women and girls may be viewed as inferior to men and boys, and this belief can be reinforced through language, media, and other forms of socialisation. As a result, women and girls may be more vulnerable to violence and less likely to receive support when they are victimised.

Furthermore, Lemke and Rogers (2020:2) aver that in schools, discriminatory cultural beliefs can manifest in a variety of ways, from gender-based bullying to sexual harassment and assault. For example, male learners may feel entitled to make sexual comments or engage in unwanted touching or groping, while female learners may be expected to tolerate this behaviour as a normal part of school life. Similarly, learners who do not conform to traditional gender roles may be subject to ridicule or ostracism, further reinforcing harmful stereotypes. To address discriminatory cultural beliefs in schools, Espelage, et. al. (2022:1361) opine that it is important to create a culture of respect and inclusivity that values diversity and promotes equality. This may involve educating learners, teachers, and staff about the harmful effects of GBV and the importance of respecting the boundaries of other people and autonomy. It may also involve promoting positive role models and challenging harmful stereotypes through media literacy programmes and other educational initiatives. The researcher believes that addressing discriminatory cultural beliefs requires a long-term approach that involves all members of

the school community and the wider society. The next section discusses economic and political influences as one of the causes of GBV.

### **3.3.8. Economic and Political Influences**

Schools in developing nations like Nigerian secondary schools and schools for young girls, especially in northern Nigeria, are a problem because some religious beliefs support that the girl-child is meant to marry at a younger age and should not be educated. On this premise, economic and political influences also contribute to GBV in schools. For example, in countries or regions where poverty is widespread and where access to education is limited, girls may be more vulnerable to violence and exploitation, as they may be forced to drop out of school to work or marry at a young age. Similarly, in contexts where political instability or conflict is present, schools may become targets for violence, and learners and teachers may be subject to abduction, sexual violence, or other forms of abuse.

Moreover, Stark, Seff, and Reis (2021:211) submit that economic and political influences can also shape the response to GBV in schools. For example, in countries with weak or corrupt legal systems, perpetrators of GBV may be able to act with impunity, while victims may have little recourse to justice or support. Similarly, in countries where gender inequality is entrenched, authorities may be less likely to take reports of GBV seriously or may even blame victims for their abuse. In Ekiti state, there is a GBV policy that deals with the rights of the child where any child, teacher, or principal perpetrating abuse is sanctioned and the learners must be given fair hearings in court.

To address GBV in schools, Olofinbiyi (2021:2), acknowledges that there should be advocacy programmes in place for policies that promote access to education for all children, regardless of gender, that protect learners from exploitation and abuse. It may also involve supporting programmes that provide economic opportunities for women and girls, as well as initiatives that promote gender equality and challenge discriminatory cultural beliefs. Finally, it may involve advocating for legal and policy reforms that ensure

that perpetrators of GBV are held accountable and that victims receive the support and protection they need to recover and thrive. The next session discusses some educational theories regarding GBV.

### **3.4. Education Leadership Theories, Practices, and GBV.**

Many educational leadership theories outline specific leadership styles or characteristics based on key elements such as skills, behaviours, and approaches. These theories typically categorise their components into three groups: the traits, ideas, and behaviours of educational leaders. The following section discusses four educational leadership theories: authentic leadership, transformational leadership, servant leadership, and distributed leadership, and how they deal with GBV.

#### **3.4.1. The Authentic Leader and How to Deal with Gender-based Issues.**

An authentic leader is someone who demonstrates a genuine and sincere commitment to their values, beliefs, and principles (Hollis, 2018). Authentic leaders are guided by a strong moral compass and they act following their core values and beliefs, even when it is difficult to do so (Alvesson & Einola, 2019:384). Authentic leaders are transparent and honest in their communication with others. They build trust and establish meaningful relationships with their followers by being open and vulnerable, admitting their mistakes and weaknesses, and by acknowledging the contributions of others (Johnson, 2019:182). Authentic leaders, according to Gardner et. al (2018:1121), submit that an authentic leader also prioritises the development of their followers, helping them to grow and reach their full potential. They provide support and guidance, challenge their followers to improve, and foster a culture of learning and development within their organisation. Overall, authentic leaders are respected and admired by their followers for their integrity, transparency, and commitment to doing what is right. They inspire others to be their best selves and create a positive and productive work environment.

GBV is a pervasive issue that affects individuals of all genders, ages, and backgrounds (Bansal et al. 2024). As an authentic leader, you can address GBV by taking the following

methods: acknowledge that GBV exists and that it is unacceptable; make it clear that your school has zero tolerance for GBV, and that any incidents should be addressed promptly and with seriousness (Dunne & Salvi, 2014:56). Moreover, leaders can educate learners and staff about what GBV is, how to recognise it, and how to report it. Leaders can also provide training on how to prevent GBV, including on bystander intervention strategies (Leach, Mitchell & Gouws, 2007). Furthermore, Mabaso (2015) opines that the leader should create a safe and confidential reporting system for GBV. This can include providing an anonymous reporting mechanism or designating a contact person to whom learners and staff can report incidents. Also, an authentic leader should respond immediately when an incident of GBV is reported, and respond promptly and effectively (U.N., 2016). He/she should ensure that the victim's safety is the top priority and that appropriate measures are taken to hold the perpetrator accountable. Further, an authentic leader should provide support and resources for the victim, including counselling and legal assistance.

### **3.4.2. Transformational Leader and How to Deal with Gender-based Issues.**

A transformational leader is someone who inspires and motivates their followers to achieve a shared vision or goal. They lead by example, and their leadership style encourages creativity, innovation, and growth. A transformational leader has a clear and compelling vision for the future that inspires the followers (Alblooshi, et al. 2021:340). A transformational leader has a magnetic personality that attracts and motivates followers. A transformational leader is empathetic toward their followers' needs and concerns, and they work to create a supportive and collaborative environment (Nging & Yazdanifard, 2015:1132).

Transformational leaders inspire their followers to be the best they can be, and they encourage their followers to reach their full potential. A transformational leader encourages creativity and innovation, and they are willing to take risks to achieve their vision. A transformational leader is an effective communicator who can articulate their vision and inspire others to support it (Bass, 1999:2). A transformational leader

encourages collaboration and teamwork, and they work to create a supportive and inclusive environment (Amanchukwu, Stanley & Ololube, 2015:8; Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016:192; Gonfa, 2019:2). Embodying these characteristics, a transformational leader can inspire and motivate their followers to achieve great things. They encourage growth, innovation, and collaboration, and they work to create a positive and supportive environment where everyone can thrive.

GBV in schools presents a multifaceted challenge that demands a comprehensive approach. As a transformational leader, addressing this issue involves several key steps. Firstly, creating a safe and supportive environment for learners is paramount. This can be achieved by instituting policies and protocols that explicitly forbid GBV, including sexual harassment and assault (Badri, 2014:3). Additionally, the school can offer counselling services for learners who have endured GBV and ensure that staff members are trained to identify and address such incidents. Transformational leaders can empower learners to become advocates for ending GBV. This can be done by creating learner-led groups that raise awareness about the issue and that provide support and resources for learners who have experienced GBV (Parkes, et al. 2016).

Parents and the community are often crucial in eradicating GBV in schools. Transformational leaders can engage with parents and community members to raise awareness about the issue and encourage them to advocate for change (Pérez-Martínez, et al 2023:469). Collaboration with law enforcement and other authorities is also vital to hold perpetrators of GBV accountable. This includes reporting incidents to the appropriate authorities and ensuring that perpetrators are prosecuted fully. Ending GBV in schools necessitates a joint effort involving learners, staff, parents, and the community. Through policy implementation, empowering learners, community education, and ensuring perpetrator accountability, transformational leaders can significantly contribute to creating a safer and more supportive school environment.

### **3.4.3. Servant Leader and How to Deal with Gender-based Issues**

Servant leadership is a leadership approach that focuses on the leader's duty to serve their team and stakeholders. This style emphasises meeting the needs and fostering the growth of those being led, rather than concentrating on the leader's power and authority. In this approach, a servant leader prioritises the well-being and development of their team and stakeholders (Bavik, 2020:348). The servant leader supports the growth and development of their team, providing them with opportunities to learn and develop. The servant leader actively listens to their team and stakeholders, seeking to understand their needs and concerns (Setiawan & Irawanto, 2020:904). The servant leader fosters a sense of community among their team and stakeholders, encouraging collaboration and mutual support.

The servant leader is humble, and recognises their limitations and weaknesses, and seeks to learn from others (Canavesi & Minelli, 2021:4). Servant leadership can be particularly effective in organisations that value teamwork, collaboration, and employee development. It can help to build trust, foster a positive organisational culture, and improve overall performance (Langhof and Guldenberg, 2020:33). A servant leader can create a safe and inclusive environment for all learners and staff by promoting a culture of respect, understanding, and tolerance (Wheeler, 2012). This can be achieved by providing training on GBV, establishing clear policies and procedures to address it, and by providing support for survivors (Leithwood, 2021:16).

A servant leader can encourage open communication among learners and staff, creating a space where people feel comfortable reporting incidents of GBV without fear of retaliation. This can be achieved by establishing a reporting mechanism that protects the confidentiality of survivors. A servant leader can educate learners and staff on the harmful effects of GBV, providing information on what it is, how to recognise it, and how to prevent it. This can be done through workshops, training sessions, and awareness campaigns. A servant leader can ensure that perpetrators of GBV are held accountable for their actions (Spears, 2023). This can be achieved by implementing disciplinary measures, such as suspension or expulsion for learners who engage in such behaviours, and by providing support and resources for perpetrators who seek to change their behaviour. A servant

leader can provide support for survivors of GBV, ensuring that they have access to counselling, medical care, and other resources that they may need to recover from their experiences.

#### **3.4.4. Distributed Leader and How to Deal with Gender-based Issues**

A distributed leader is a type of leader who shares leadership responsibilities and decision-making authority across a group or team. Rather than centralising power and control, a distributed leader delegates authority and encourages collaboration and teamwork. In a distributed leadership model, team members are encouraged to take ownership of their work and contribute their expertise and ideas. In the face of previous studies, distributed leadership can be related to so many components of leadership in schools from top to bottom approach, using a ladder of inclusive leadership to manage problems in the school. The leader facilitates communication and collaboration among team members and supports their development and growth (Harris, et al. 2013:32).

Distributed leadership according to Harris (2004:12) and Spillane (2005:144) show that a distributed leader empowers team members by delegating authority and by giving them the autonomy to make decisions and act. In the same vein, a distributed leader fosters collaboration among team members, encouraging them to work together and share knowledge and expertise. Moreover, a distributed leader values creativity and encourages team members to take risks and try new things. Also, Sammons and Hopkins (2007:338) agree with the above declaration that a distributed leader communicates openly and transparently, sharing information and keeping team members informed about important developments. A distributed leader builds trust with team members by demonstrating integrity, honesty, and respect, and by holding themselves accountable for their actions. Distributed leadership can be effective in organisations that value teamwork, collaboration, and innovation. It can help to create a culture of shared responsibility and ownership, leading to increased engagement, motivation, and performance among team members.

GBV is a serious issue that affects many learners in secondary schools. To effectively address this issue, a distributed leadership approach can be adopted, which involves multiple individuals taking responsibility for addressing GBV in schools. The following steps can be taken by a distributed leader: a distributed leader creates a team of teachers, administrators, counsellors, and other stakeholders to work together on addressing GBV in the school; a distributed leader engages the task force with whom they can work to develop policies and protocols for responding to GBV incidents, including procedures for reporting incidents, investigating them, and providing support to victims. It is also important, to educate staff and learners on what constitutes GBV, how to recognise it, and how to respond to it. Training sessions can be held for teachers and staff, while learners can be taught about healthy relationships, consent, and reporting procedures. Victims of GBV need support, both emotionally and practically. The task force can work to ensure that victims have access to counselling, medical care, and other forms of support.

The task force should monitor the effectiveness of its efforts and adjust as necessary. This can involve gathering feedback from learners, staff, and parents, as well as tracking the number of incidents reported and the outcomes of investigations. By adopting a distributed leadership approach to addressing GBV in secondary schools, multiple individuals can work together to create a safe and supportive learning environment for all learners. The next section discusses the gender-based theories applicable to schools.

### **3.5. Gender-Based Violence theories**

Gender-based theories are theories that seek to explain how gender affects human behaviour, social interactions, and the way individuals are treated in the society. Here are some examples of gender-based theories: socialisation theory, feminist theory, queer theory, and biological theory, all of which are discussed in the succeeding sections.

#### **3.5.1. Socialisation Theory**

This theory argues that gender is largely a product of socialisation. This means that individuals learn gender roles and norms through interactions with others, particularly in childhood (Bem, 1983:600). This theory suggests that gender is not innate, but rather a socially constructed concept. Socialisation theory can be applied to understanding GBV issues in schools, as it suggests that individuals learn gender roles and norms through social interactions, particularly in childhood (Gustafson, 1998:806; Carter, 2014:243). This theory suggests that GBV can be perpetuated by societal norms and expectations around gender, which can reinforce harmful behaviours and attitudes towards women and girls. In the context of schools, socialisation theory suggests that learners may be socialised into accepting and perpetuating GBV through a variety of factors such as peer pressure, media representations, and cultural norms (Bem, 1983:600). For example, if a school culture reinforces traditional gender roles that emphasise male dominance and aggression, this can contribute to an environment in which GBV is more likely to occur.

To address GBV in schools through a socialisation theory lens, it is crucial to offer education and assistance to learners, challenging harmful gender norms while promoting healthy relationships and respect for others (Lawson, 2012:573). This may involve programmes that educate learners about consent, healthy relationships, and gender equality. Moreover, it is essential to support victims of GBV and address the underlying cultural and social factors that contribute to this problem (Goldfarb & Lieberman, 2021:14; Michau, et al. 2015:1673). By addressing these socialisation factors, we can strive to create a safer and more inclusive learning environment for all learners. The next category discusses the feminist theory and how it can solve GBV issues in schools.

### **3.5.2. Feminist Theory**

The Feminist Theory explores the intersection of gender and power in society, focusing on women's experiences. It emphasises how gender-based discrimination and oppression lead to inequality, and advocates for empowering women and marginalised groups. This theory is relevant for understanding and addressing GBV in schools, viewing it as a manifestation of gender discrimination and oppression that particularly affects

women and girls (Few-Demo and Allen, 2020:328; Cannon and Chu, 2021:2; Taha, 2019:3).

This theory underscores the significance of comprehending the societal, cultural, and institutional elements that fuel GBV. It also promotes the empowerment of women and other marginalised groups (Michau, et al. 2015:1673). In the context of schools, the Feminist Theory suggests that GBV can be perpetuated by a culture that reinforces gender inequality and reinforces harmful gender stereotypes. This can include attitudes and behaviours that promote male dominance and aggression, and that view women and girls as inferior or subordinate.

To address GBV in schools through the lens of the Feminist Theory, Christensen (2019:485) emphasises the need to address the underlying societal and cultural factors contributing to this issue. This involves educational campaigns that challenge harmful gender norms and promote gender equality (Ward, 2016:276). It also requires implementing policies that prioritise the safety and well-being of victims, while holding perpetrators accountable. Feminist Theory underscores the importance of empowering women and marginalised groups to speak out against GBV and advocate for their rights (Brink, Mdaka, Matee & Weppelman, 2021:48). This includes providing support to victims and creating opportunities for women and girls to engage in leadership roles and decision-making processes in schools (Allen, 2023:900). By applying the Feminist theory, schools can work towards creating a safer and more equitable learning environment for all students. The following section examines how the Queer Theory can be used to address GBV in schools.

### **3.5.3. Queer Theory**

The Queer Theory challenges traditional notions of gender and sexuality and argues that they are not fixed categories but are rather fluid and constantly evolving. This theory emphasises the importance of understanding the diversity of gender and sexual identities and experiences (Sauntson, 2021:340). Queer Theory can be a useful framework for

addressing GBV in schools. It challenges the traditional binary understanding of gender and sexuality and recognises the complexity and fluidity of these concepts (Garvey and Dolan, 2021:162). This framework encourages an exploration of power dynamics and the hierarchies related to gender and sexuality, which can clarify and address GBV. In the context of schools, Queer Theory can provide a lens for analysing how GBV is perpetuated through social norms and power dynamics. It can help us understand how heteronormativity, cisnormativity, and other forms of oppression contribute to violence and discrimination against LGBTQ+ learners.

One key aspect of Queer Theory is the idea of disrupting norms and binaries (March, 2021:456). Schools can apply this by challenging traditional gender roles and promoting acceptance of diverse gender expressions and identities (Mattheis, De Arellano, and Yoder, 2020:1840). This can create a safer and more inclusive environment for all learners, reducing the prevalence of GBV. Another important aspect of Queer Theory is the recognition of intersectionality, which refers to how different forms of oppression intersect and impact individuals' experiences (Nichols & Stahl, 2019:1256). Schools can apply this by recognising that GBV does not occur in isolation but is intertwined with other forms of oppression, such as racism, ableism, and classism. By addressing these interconnected issues, schools can create a more comprehensive approach to preventing GBV. Overall, the Queer Theory offers a valuable framework for addressing GBV in schools by challenging traditional norms and power dynamics and by recognising the intersectionality of oppression (Few-Demo & Allen 2020:329). Applying this framework, schools can create a safer and more inclusive environment for all Learners.

#### **3.5.4. Biological Theory**

Biological theories examine the role that Biology and Genetics play in shaping gender differences and behaviours. While some biological theories suggest that gender differences are largely innate, others argue that Biology and socialisation both contribute to gender development (Balducci, 2023:2). Biology Theory can offer insights into the underlying causes of GBV and can be useful in addressing this issue in schools. Biology

Theory focuses on the biological factors that influence human behaviour and can help us understand why individuals may engage in violent or aggressive behaviour toward others (Few-Demo & Allen 2020:329). One important aspect of Biology Theory is the role of hormones in shaping human behaviour. Testosterone, for example, has been linked to increased aggression and dominance in males (Zitzmann, 2020:1560; Geniole, et al. 2020:2). Schools can use this knowledge to create educational programmes that teach learners about the biological basis of aggression and how to manage these impulses in a healthy way (Peretz & Vidmar, 2021).

Another aspect of the Biology Theory is the role of Genetics in influencing behaviour. Some studies have suggested that individuals with certain genetic traits may be more predisposed to violent or aggressive behaviour (Sturmey, 2022:90; Matic, et al. 2022:2). Schools can use this knowledge to identify learners who may be at higher risk for engaging in violent behaviour and provide targeted interventions to prevent such behaviour. Additionally, Levin (2020:2) submitted that the Biology theory can offer insights into how trauma and stress can impact brain development and behaviour. Experiencing violence or abuse can have long-term effects on the brain and can make individuals more susceptible to engaging in violent behaviour themselves (Turanovic, 2022:2). Schools can use this knowledge to provide trauma-informed care to learners who have experienced violence and to create a supportive environment that promotes healing and resilience. In general, the biology theory offers valuable insights into the root causes of GBV and can aid in the development of effective prevention and intervention strategies in educational settings. By comprehending the biological elements that contribute to violent behaviour, schools can adopt a more holistic approach to tackling GBV and fostering healthy relationships. The gender-based theories further enhance researchers' understanding of how gender impacts human behaviour, social interactions, and society overall.

### **3.6. Summary of the chapter.**

This chapter provided a literature review focusing on concepts related to the study of leadership strategies for addressing GBV in Nigeria. The review examined existing literature on gender-based issues in Nigerian schools, including the causes of GBV. Additionally, various leadership theories were identified and explored to find those that are applicable to addressing GBV in schools. The review also attempted to conceptualise GBV theories in addressing school-related issues. Relevant policy statements guiding GBV in schools, and the leadership theories closely related to the ones adopted for the study were also reviewed. The chapter concluded with a review of GBV theories.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

#### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the methodological framework supporting the exploration of leadership practices in addressing GBV in Nigerian secondary schools. Scholars widely agree on the significance of research paradigm, methodology, purpose, and participant selection in research considerations. The chapter covers the research paradigm, approach, design, data collection methods, participant selection, data generation, ethical considerations, and trustworthiness. It also includes discussions on data coding, categorisation, and analysis. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key points discussed.

#### 4.2. Research Methodology

Research methodology is the structured approach used to gather, analyse, and interpret data systematically for the purpose of addressing a research inquiry or to resolve an issue (Asenahabi, Busula & Ronoh, 2019:348). According to Muzari, Shava, and Shonhiwa, (2022:14), research methodology is the framework that guides a researcher's actions, ensuring that the research is conducted rigorously and reliably. There are various types of research methodologies, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches. Quantitative research involves collecting and analysing numerical data, while qualitative research involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data such as interviews, observations, and textual data (Barroga et al. 2023). The qualitative research approach was used in this study.

The research methodology typically involves several steps, including identifying the research question or problem, conducting a literature review to understand existing knowledge and research gaps, developing a research design with a chosen approach and sampling strategy, collecting data through methods like surveys, interviews, or

experiments, analysing the data using suitable statistical or qualitative techniques, drawing conclusions, and making recommendations based on the findings. The choice of research methodology depends on the research question, the type of data required, and the available resources. It is essential to select a methodology that aligns with the research questions and adhere to ethical principles throughout the research process.

For readers' easiness and coherence, the objectives of the study are repeated with the aim of the study in mind; that is, to explore the leadership practices of addressing GBV in Nigerian secondary schools and to propose a suggestible leadership model for addressing the situations in schools.

- To explore the nature of GBV cases in the selected Nigerian secondary schools.
- To describe the causes of GBV in the selected Nigerian secondary schools.
- To examine how school leaders address GBV in selected Nigerian secondary schools.
- To formulate gender-based school violence model.

### **4.3. Research Paradigm**

A research paradigm is a philosophical framework that guides researchers in designing and conducting research. It provides a set of assumptions, concepts, and values that underlie the research methods and techniques used to investigate a particular research problem or question (Rahman, 2023:5). The selection of a research paradigm shapes the researcher's perspective on reality, the conception of knowledge, and the researcher's role in the research process. This study is situated within an interpretive paradigm. The decision on which research paradigm to adopt was influenced by factors such as the research question, the characteristics of the phenomenon being studied, and the researcher's worldview and values.

Rehman and Alharthi (2016:52) asserted that the research paradigm assists researchers in understanding what they are about to do and whether they are within or outside of the

scope of a legitimate research. A paradigm could also be described as a model or framework that informs an individual's perceptions of their world (Davies & Fisher, 2018:22). A paradigm in research is the framework that is used to examine a phenomenon. It outlines the researcher's goals concerning his driving forces and anticipated study outcomes (Rahi, 2017:2). The rationales for the choice of interpretive paradigm in this study enabled me to understand the realities of the roles of school leaders in addressing GBV, through the eyes of the participants (the school leaders, the teachers, and the learners). Given the importance of paradigm in research as well as the aim of this study, I chose to adopt an interpretive paradigm.

#### **4.3.1. Interpretive Paradigm**

This study is situated in an interpretive paradigm. The interpretive paradigm is a research paradigm that emphasises understanding and interpreting the social world from the perspective of the people being studied (Wahyuni, 2012:70). Wasis, Jost, and Nilakanta (2007:27) reveal that reality is both subjective and socially constructed; they also posit that people's actions and behaviours are shaped by their beliefs, values, and experiences. Interpretive researchers use qualitative methods, such as interviews, observation, and document analysis to explore research participants' meanings, experiences, and perspectives. Krauss (2005:759) also assert that the research paradigm helps researchers to understand the social context in which people live and the factors that shape their behaviour. Interpretive researchers are interested in exploring the complexity and diversity of human experience, rather than establishing generalisable laws or causal relationships.

However, some scholars criticise interpretive research as it often focuses on an in-depth analysis of a particular context or group of participants, thereby limiting its ability to generalise findings to other contexts or populations (Payne & Wasiams, 2005:256). The researcher purposefully chooses participants and contexts to maximise representation. The researcher ensures that the study covers a broad range of perspectives, enhancing the potential for applicability to other contexts. Interpretive research emphasises the

subjective nature of reality and the role of the researcher in shaping the research process and the findings (Lewis, et. al., 2003:347). This can lead to concerns about bias and lack of objectivity in the research. It is important to note that these criticisms do not necessarily negate the value of interpretive research, but rather highlight the need for careful consideration of the strengths and the limitations of different research paradigms and methods as well as the importance of using multiple methods to triangulate findings and increase the rigour and the rationality of the research.

In this study, I had to understand school leaders' social realities, perceptions, and their experiences in addressing GBV issues in the selected schools. This serves as a basis for me to see through their lenses and therefore interpret based on their worldviews. Similarly, Alase (2017:10) submits that the interpretive paradigm concerns itself with the views of selected individuals' beliefs and perceptions. In this study, I am particularly concerned with school leaders who deal with GBV issues in schools. The adoption and applicability of the interpretative paradigm in this study depend on its suitability for achieving its goals, which include figuring out how participants see the phenomena in their particular social environment. Participants were allowed to share their firsthand knowledge of GBV in schools, its many forms, and the functions of school administrators in addressing the issue.

Paradigms do not exist alone without the mentioning of ontology (the nature of reality), epistemology (how knowledge is been constructed), and methodology (which is the approach of inquiry). These were discussed in the following segments.

#### **4.3.1.1. The ontology of interpretive paradigm.**

The ontology of interpretive paradigm is rooted in the belief that reality is subjective and socially constructed (Morgan, 2022:98). This means that there is no objective reality that exists independently of human experience, but rather that reality is shaped by people's perceptions, beliefs, and experiences (Levers, 2013:2). Interpretive researchers assume that the social world is not something that can be observed or measured objectively, but

that which is created and sustained through social interaction and communication. Shah and Al-Bargi, (2013:253) posit that the ontology of the interpretive paradigm is hinged on the belief that people construct their realities through shared meanings and interpretations of the world around them, and that these meanings and interpretations are constantly negotiated and renegotiated through social interaction.

The ontology of the interpretive paradigm thus emphasises the importance of understanding the subjective experiences and perspectives of research participants, and the need to explore the complexity and diversity of human experience (Kivunja 2017:25). Interpretive researchers seek to uncover the underlying meanings and assumptions that shape people's behaviour and social interactions, and to understand how these meanings and assumptions are influenced by the social and cultural context. Also, the ontology of the interpretive paradigm is characterised by a belief in the subjectivity and complexity of reality and a commitment to understanding the diversity and richness of human experience through in-depth exploration of social phenomena (Scotland, 2012:9). The ontology of the interpretive paradigm is concerned with the multiple realities that are socially constructed. Thus, this study aims to investigate and comprehend the diverse experiences of school leaders addressing GBV in schools, as perceived by participants in various school environments. This will be achieved through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The interpretive paradigm holds the view that a researcher not just concludes with research findings but goes through the process without being biased with the data collected, separating his views from the participants' views, and retaining the originality and genuineness of the data. The application of the interpretive paradigm suggests that the questions asked on the field must resonate with the study's objectives and must thus inform the research findings.

#### **4.3.1.2. The Epistemology of Interpretive Paradigm**

The epistemology of the interpretive paradigm is based on the idea that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and communication (Krauss, 2005:759). Interpretive researchers believe that the social world cannot be understood through purely

objective and detached observation, but rather that understanding is generated through the interpretation of human experience and social phenomena (Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012:2). Interpretive researchers recognise that their perspective and background influence their interpretation of social phenomena and that knowledge is therefore always situated within a particular social and cultural context. They view research as a collaborative process between the researcher and research participants, where meaning and understanding are co-constructed through dialogue and interaction (Kivunja & Kuyini 2017:27).

The epistemology of the interpretive paradigm emphasises the relationship between the subjective experiences and perspectives of research participants, and the need to explore the complexity and diversity of human experience (Al-Ababneh, 2020:76). Within the interpretivist paradigm, the researcher is interested in uncovering the knowledge, truth and realities that exist between the researcher's preconceptions (foreknowledge) and the actual experiences of the participants. This implies the potential for the researchers' own beliefs and assumptions to influence the research process. Interpretive researchers often utilise qualitative methods like interviews and observation to unravel the intricate and layered meanings that individuals assign to their experiences and interactions. The interpretive paradigm's epistemology emphasises collaboration between the researcher and participants, and it recognises the importance of understanding the social and cultural contexts shaping knowledge. In this study, the interpretive paradigm's subjective epistemological principles were deemed suitable as they allowed for the mediation and construction of knowledge through interactions with participants, drawing upon the various realities embedded in their worldviews regarding school leaders' approaches to addressing GBV in the selected schools.

#### **4.3.1.3. The Methodology of the Interpretive Paradigm**

The methodology of the interpretive paradigm emphasises in-depth exploration and understanding of social phenomena through the interpretation of human experience and the meanings that people attach to their experiences and interactions (Gichuru, 2017:3).

Literature showed that there is a link between the methodological stance of research and the paradigm to make complete research. The methodological process is guided by philosophical beliefs about reality, knowledge, and values, otherwise known as a paradigm. It means the theoretical analysis of research (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006:194; Chilisa & Kawulich, 2012:3; Knoblauch, 2014; Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020:42).

Interpretive research relies primarily on qualitative methods such as interviews, focus groups, and participant observation (Jackson, Drummond, & Camara, 2007:22). These methods are used to gather rich, detailed data about participants' experiences and perspectives. Also, interpretive researchers analyse the data they have collected to identify patterns, and themes to develop interpretations of the meanings and underlying assumptions that shape people's behaviour and social interactions. The methodology of the interpretive paradigm emphasises the importance of understanding the complexity and diversity of human experience, and of exploring the rich and nuanced meanings that people attach to their experiences and interactions. A focus on in-depth exploration, subjective interpretation, and collaboration with research participants characterises the methodology.

#### **4.4. Research Approach**

A research approach refers to the overarching method or strategy used to conduct a research study (Alharthi, et. al. 2023). Depending on the research question, data collection method, and desired outcomes, various research approaches can be employed. The three primary research approaches in scientific research are the quantitative approach, qualitative approach, and the mixed-methods approach. The quantitative approach involves collecting and analysing numerical data, using statistical methods that are often used to measure hypotheses, test hypotheses, and identify patterns and relationships between variables (Kotronoulas et. al. 2023). Qualitative research involves collecting and analysing non-numerical data such as texts, images, or observations, to gain insight into complex phenomena and explore subjective experiences (Nasri, 2023). The mixed-methods approach combines quantitative and

qualitative data collection and analysis methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem. This study is situated within the qualitative approach framework.

Qualitative research is an approach to research that centres on comprehending and interpreting social phenomena by gathering and analysing non-numerical data, including texts, images, or observations (Apuke, 2017:2; Mohajan, 2018:23). Qualitative research enquiry is often used to explore complex and subjective phenomena such as attitudes, beliefs, and experiences, and to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning and context of these phenomena (Gaus, 2017:100). Qualitative research methods typically involve collecting data through methods such as interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis (Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge, 2001:6). The data is then analysed through techniques such as content analysis, narrative analysis, and thematic analysis to identify patterns, themes, and meanings (Payne & Wasiams, 2005:296). Patton (2005) asserts that one of the key strengths of qualitative research is its ability to generate rich and detailed data that provide a deeper understanding of the research problem. It also allows for flexibility in the research process, as the research questions can evolve, and change based on the data collected. Qualitative research is often used in exploratory studies to generate hypotheses, and to provide insights that can inform further research.

Qualitative research, however, is often criticised for its lack of generalisability, as findings may not be applicable beyond the specific context or group studied (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020:42). It can also be influenced by biases and subjectivity, as the researcher's interpretations are shaped by their own perspectives and assumptions. Nonetheless, qualitative research remains valuable for the understanding of complex social issues and for providing insights that can inform policy and practice. In this study, qualitative research was appropriate for gaining in-depth insights into participants' perspectives on leadership roles in addressing GBV in schools. Second, I had the chance to engage with the participants in their locations. Thirdly, using a qualitative research technique gave me the chance to connect my research aims, research questions and objectives to the data

gathered. The study is a reflection on Chilisa and Kawulich's (2012:3) assertion that the "interpretive paradigm leans toward the use of a qualitative research approach".

Qualitative research has been discussed above to get an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon of GBV in schools. However, the findings cannot be generalised and the sample size is small when compared to quantitative research findings. Considering the study's objective which is to examine how school leaders address GBV in the selected schools, qualitative enquiry ensures that the phenomenon is discussed well even though the sample size is small. It has been argued above that qualitative enquiry cannot be generalised because of its sample size. As such, the multiple case study design approach was adopted as it helped me to carry out an investigation across multiple contexts which ascribes the generalisation of the study's findings. The following section discusses the case study design approach.

#### **4.5. Research Design**

The research design refers to the researcher's overall strategy to answer research questions or to test hypotheses (Ellis & Levy, 2009:325). It involves a systematic plan of action that outlines the methods and procedures to be used in collecting and analysing data (Alavi & Habek, 2016:64). In addition to choosing a research design, the researcher considered other aspects of research methodology including sampling, data collection, and data analysis (Yazan 2015:138; Korstjens & Moser, 2017:277). Properly designing a study is critical to obtaining valid and reliable results. This study adopted a multiple case study research design. This research design allows the researcher to get an in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon discussed with the participants involved with the problem daily (Hollweck, 2015:109; Crowe, et. al., 2011:2; Yin, 2014). The participants range from an individual to a set of individuals, or a group of individuals coming together to discuss the problem to find solutions to the common problem. This is consistent with my study because most case studies tend to be interpretive (Walsham, 1995:75). The study used a case study research design.

Case study research is a qualitative method that entails thorough exploration and analysis of a single case or a small number of cases (Merriam 1998; Cohen *et al.* (2018:375). The case can be an individual, a group, an organisation, or even an event (Hancock, et al. 2021). Case study research typically involves collecting a variety of data sources such as interviews, observations, documents, and artifacts, and analysing the data to understand the case (Merriam, 1985:205). According to Yin (1999), case study refers to an in-depth exploration and analysis of a case within an environment suitable for research. According to him, case studies can be exploratory, descriptive, and explanatory.

A case study could mean a programme, an event, organization, individual or group of individuals in a social situation who are engaged in analysing a phenomenon (Mohajan, 2018:24). Each of these represents a unit of analysis. For example, the case of this study is the phenomenon being discussed by school leaders in addressing GBV in the selected schools, which also serves as a unit of analysis in this study. This study is a multiple case study of the two selected schools. Multiple case study designs can be adopted to check real-life situations and events, as they show multiple sources of evidence against the phenomenon in the discussion through replication other than mere sampling logic (Crowe, et al, 2011:3). The multiple sources in the case of this study are individual interviews, focus group discussions and documents.

Multiple case studies enabled me to investigate how school leaders manage, or rather, address the GBV issues among learners in the selected schools. It also showed the interconnectedness and interactivities of participant's experiences in addressing the situation in their various schools (Gustafsson, 2017:3). The essence is to check the similarities and differences in thoughts in addressing such situations whenever they arise. One of the key strengths of case study research is its ability to provide rich and detailed information about a case (Hancock, Algozzine & Lim, 2021:45). This information can be used to gain a deep understanding of the case and to generate hypotheses or theories that can be tested in larger populations. The strength lies in the adoption of case studies to both qualitative and quantitative research or mixed method approach; it was best to be called a bridge across paradigms (Luck, Jackson & Usher, 2006:104).

The decision to use a multiple case study approach was based on the aim to deeply explore how GBV is addressed in different school contexts within the same state. This approach allows for a thorough examination of the phenomenon across various settings. It is particularly suitable as the study is framed by social justice leadership and social cognitive learning theories, aiming to investigate and test these theories in the context of addressing GBV in schools. The multiple case study design aligns with the research questions and the theoretical frameworks, providing a comprehensive understanding of the topic. As indicative of the above submissions, the choice, and the appropriateness of the case study for this study also resonates with the research objectives.

#### **4.6. Preliminary Tours to the Ministry of Education and the Ethical Procedures.**

In this section, the process of getting ethical clearance from the University of the Free State is explored. Tours were made to the Ministry of Education after obtaining a letter from the university (a request for permission to conduct research). The first tour was made to the Ministry of Education and the introduction letter from the university was submitted to the Secretary to the Permanent Secretary of the Teaching Service Commission (TESCOM), a unit under the Ministry of Education. At the time the researcher applied for the letter of approval, there was no Permanent Secretary in that position as such, it was recommended that the letter from the university be addressed to the Admin and Supplies Department. The Head of that department of Admin and Supplies attested to the letter and forwarded it to the next senior to the Permanent Secretary of the Teaching Service Commission (TSC).

On the second visit, the letter was addressed to the department that approved the letter of introduction to school principals, to allow the researcher access to the schools without problem. The researcher wrote a letter requesting permission to conduct research in the schools. The Ministry of Education granted the permission, and the letter was then taken to the schools to get approval letters from the school principals. On the second day which was the 8<sup>th</sup> of October 2021, the principal permitted the researcher to conduct the research in their schools, after asking many questions about the research and the aim of

the research. There was a great conversation between the school principals and the researcher to create rapport and to ease the research process. The period concerned was still Covid period recovery and the ethical procedures were followed to get the letters. These letters were later uploaded on the university's ethical website and the process was followed to allow the committee to approve the study on the 29<sup>th</sup> November 2021.

#### **4.6.1. Familiarisation Tour to the School and Interview and Focus Group Discussions.**

Exactly 11 months after the discussion, I proceeded to the field to collect data regarding exploring leadership practices of addressing GBV in school. The school principal was shown the approval of the Ethical Review Committee and the approval from the Ministry of Education. The principal showed concern and called the deputy principal to assist me. A meeting was scheduled for Friday after school hours in Blue School, while the same procedure was repeated in the Red School. The meeting was also scheduled for the following week. The meetings and interviews were concluded in two days.

Having met the principals and the Vice principals, the meeting was arranged where I introduced myself and the purpose of the visit. I explained the focus of the study and why I selected them as participants. I presented the research consent form to familiarise participants with the study aims. The deputy principal contacted the relevant participants, and I intimated them on the purpose of the research and their consent was sought for participating in the study. My appointment for the interviews with the principals, the vice principals, and the counsellors was scheduled with consideration for their convenience to attend to the researcher without affecting their primary assignments. Various days of the week and flexible periods such break time and immediately after school hours were arranged to conduct semi-structured interviews and discussions to align with the focus of the study. The interview and the focus group discussions with the teachers and learners were successful.

The second school was briefly visited the following week to conclude the investigation. I visited the school, and there was a scheduled meeting. The principal, despite his busy schedule, attended to me and afterward referred me to the vice principal, whom I also interviewed. The deputy principal assisted in organising the meeting. The deputy principal called the teachers and sent for the school prefects that is, the Head boy and the Head girl who were well above eighteen years of age. The counsellor said he did not want to participate in the study and was given a chance to be excluded. The meeting was successful in the second school. The participants obliged and cooperated with the researcher. The teachers were selected based on their experience of at least three years in the school setting. The GBV policy was collected in the second school. After the interview and focus group discussions, the researcher thanked the participants, and the teachers' offered prayers for the successful completion of the Ph.D. programme. The selection of participants is discussed in the following section.

#### **4.7. Selection of Research Participants and Sampling Techniques.**

The selection of participants in this study is an important aspect of ensuring credibility of the research process. Before selecting the participants, the researcher clearly defined the research question and the specific population or group of people who are relevant to the question. The school leaders in place of the school principals, the vice principals, the counsellor, and the teachers as well as the learners' head were the participants for the study. The selected schools are a specific demographic group, a geographical area, or a particular institution. When selecting participants, the researcher ensured informed consent, confidentiality, and explained the potential risks and benefits of participation. The selection process should be designed to minimise any potential harm to participants and ensure that their rights are respected. Note that the selection of participants in a research process requires careful planning and consideration of a range of factors to ensure that the research is valid, reliable, and ethical.

##### **4.7.1. Describing the Participants**

The participants in a qualitative study like this are the target to get an in-depth knowledge about the gender-based issue in schools and how such situations are addressed in the selected schools (Dworkin, 2012:1320). That is, the participants are the minute percentage of the represented population (Taherdoost, 2016:19). In this study, the participants involved in the study were school prefects, school principals, vice principals, school counsellors, and teachers, as characterised below.

#### **4.7.1.1. School Principal**

A school principal is responsible for overseeing the school's daily operations and for setting the strategic direction for the school's long-term success (Lunenburg, 2010:2). The school principal provides leadership to the school community, setting a clear vision and mission for the school and ensuring that all stakeholders understand and support these goals (Bush & Glover, 2014:555). The school principal manages the school's day-to-day operations, including overseeing staff, setting policies and procedures, ensuring that the school complies with all relevant regulations and requirements, and creating a safe environment for the learners (Usman, 2016:28). The principal is the head of the organogram in the school which supervises the affairs and the general actualisation of the school's objectives.

The school principals were selected for this study because of their leadership experience. This makes them qualified to be part of the research participants as they deal with the issue of GBV daily. They assisted in ensuring that the study's objectives are actualised. They gave their words to support the project by inviting the vice principals and the teachers to attend the focus discussions and interviews. The principals ensured the overall cooperation of the research participants. They are the eye of the Ministry of Education in schools, and they report directly to the permanent secretary of the Teaching Service Commission (TESCOM). These attributes qualify them to be part of this study.

#### **4.7.1.2. Vice principals**

Vice principals, also known as assistant principals are educators who work alongside school principals to manage the day-to-day operations of a school (Dor-Haim, 2021). Vice principals typically have a variety of responsibilities that can vary depending on the needs of the school. Vice principals work closely with school principals to support their vision for the school and to ensure that the school runs smoothly. Vice principals are responsible for managing and supervising teachers and other staff members, including conducting performance evaluations, providing feedback and support, and addressing any issues or concerns that arise (Arrieta, 2021:148). Also, the vice principals play a critical role in supporting the school principals and for ensuring that the school operates smoothly and effectively. They work closely with the staff, learners, and families to promote the students' success, even as they create a positive learning environment. Their experience on the job qualifies them as research participants in the study. Their experience in discipline management makes them qualified to discuss GBV issues in schools.

#### **4.7.1.3. Teachers.**

Teachers are professionals who are employed in diverse educational environments, including schools, colleges, universities, and other educational institutions. They are instrumental in moulding the intellect and prospects of learners by imparting knowledge and skills essential for their academic, personal, and professional development (Malin, 2021). Teachers design and conduct lessons and activities that stimulate and educate their students. They evaluate students' advancement using a range of methods like tests, quizzes, essays, projects, and presentations. Based on this assessment, they offer feedback to students and adapt their teaching methods accordingly. Teachers also create a safe and supportive learning environment by establishing clear rules and expectations, managing classroom behaviour, and fostering positive relationships with their learners (Hussain, Shaheen, Ahmad & Islam, 2019:89).

They are considered qualified as participants in this study as they deal with situations daily in the schools and are seen as leaders and to be closer to the learners in ensuring that the school's overall objectives are achieved. The rationale for choosing consists in

that teachers are part of the curriculum developers and implementers. They are seen as important in the teaching and learning procedure in the school. The teachers selected in both schools were employed based on their three years of experience on the job and in the school and their experience in dealing with gender-based issues in the selected schools.

#### **4.7.1.4. School Counsellor**

School counsellors are licensed mental health professionals who provide support and guidance to learners in secondary schools (Lambie, Stickl Haugen, Borland & Campbell, 2019:52). Counsellors work closely with learners, families, and the school staff to promote academic, personal, and social development, and to help learners overcome challenges that may be affecting their well-being. School counsellors provide individual and group counselling to learners, helping them address a range of issues, such as academic concerns, emotional distress, social isolation, and family problems. School counsellors collaborate with teachers and other school staff to promote students' success and to support learners who may be struggling (McConnell, Geesa, Mayes & Elam, 2020:135). Counsellors may provide consultation and training to teachers and staff, and support for individual learners or groups of learners. In the case of GBV in schools, counsellors are deemed qualified to be participants as they all deal with the situations and have the experience of dealing with such issues as they arise. Their experience was considered valuable, as they provided adequate knowledge of the situations because the learners confide in them, sharing information with them which they cannot share with their parents or teachers.

#### **4.7.1.5. School Prefects.**

The school prefects, according to the study are the school head boys and school head girls who are the leaders of the school (Itamunya & Edabu, 2023:140). According to the Nigerian education system, school prefectship gives a leadership capacity to learners who are influential and who can coordinate others. The selected school prefects were

selected as research participants because they were at the helm of affairs in the schools and have more knowledge about the issue of GBV from other learners, as raised by the research questions. The school prefects are recognised in the organogram as the last at the helm of affairs. They are the closest to the learners and they meet with the school administrators from time to time to manage the school well.

#### **4.8. Sampling Techniques Used for the Study.**

Purposive sampling methods were employed to choose the schools that participated in the study. Purposive sampling, also referred to as judgmental or selective sampling is a non-probability sampling method used in research. Researchers intentionally select specific individuals or groups based on their expertise, knowledge, characteristics, or relevance to the study's goals (Cash, Isaksson, Maier & Summers, 2022; Pandey & Pandey, 2021). The sample for this study consists of 18 participants. The participants are the school head girls and head boys, the teachers, counsellors, the principals, and the vice principals. Sampling techniques refer to methods that are employed to choose a subset of individuals or items from a larger population for study or to draw conclusions about the entire population (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020:181). The choice of sampling technique depends on the research question, the nature of the population being studied, and the available resources (Mishra & Alok, 2022:8). The objective of sampling techniques is to guarantee that the sample accurately represents the population and that the findings can be applied to the entire population (Stratton, 2021:374). Since this study is situated within the qualitative framework, qualitative sampling focuses on selecting a limited number of participants to conduct a detailed investigation into the discussed phenomenon.

In this study, purposive and convenience sampling are the two selected sampling techniques. The schools were purposively chosen due to the researcher's proximity and the accessibility to the participants. Purposive sampling is a non-probability technique where individuals or cases are selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research question. This approach is common in qualitative research, aiming to gain a profound

understanding of a specific phenomenon or experience (Bogopane, 2013). Homogeneous sampling and purposive sampling allowed the researcher to select individuals or cases that are similar in terms of certain characteristics or experiences that are relevant to the research question. This method is used to deepen understanding of a particular phenomenon or experience by examining it in a specific context (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020:40). Purposive sampling techniques are often used in combination with other sampling techniques such as convenient sampling, to ensure that the sample is representative of the population being studied (Scholtz, 2021). The choice of purposive sampling technique is deemed fit for the study to allow representative participants to discuss the nature of the population being studied.

The rationale for my sampling techniques rests on three basic principles that necessitated my actions. Firstly, the theoretical foundations of the Social Cognitive Learning Theory and the Social Justice Leadership theory allowed the issue of GBV to be discussed in the selected schools. Secondly, considering the study's objectives, the participants' selection is purposive as they had adequate knowledge of the phenomenon discussed. Thirdly, the intent of the in-depth discussion on GBV issues in the selected schools is to explore leadership practices of addressing GBV in the selected Nigerian schools. In this study, the school leaders were the first participants. The other participants were recruited through convenient sampling to choose teachers, counsellors, and the school prefects. The next session discusses the research sites.

#### **4.9. Research Sites**

The research site considered for the study is Ado-Ekiti, the capital of Ekiti state, Nigeria. The research sites consist of two selected schools in some parts of the town. Blue school is a pseudonym for a school from the eastern part of the town while red school is a pseudonym for a school from the northern part of the town that was considered convenient for the researcher to access over a short distance. Schools (blue and red) were mixed-gender schools located in a good atmosphere in the state. The red school is situated in a Muslim school setting while the blue school represents a community school

that accommodates all religious groups. The schools were relatively large with an average population of 1500 learners in the schools. The principals and the two vice principals were appointed to manage the schools. One counsellor, two teachers, and two learners were considered participants in the study. The blue school was considered appropriate because the school has a long history on the issues of GBV.

Red school is created for Muslim learners, but as a government school, it accepts learners of other religions. The school has a history of appointing principals of the Muslim faith to uphold the faith in the school, but who do not in any way disturb the people of other religions except on Fridays where prayers are said and the other learners are excused to go home at exactly noon. The red school has one school gate and is located very close to the main road. The school has a mosque worship centre for learners and appointed an imam to teach the learners morals. The school is neatly fenced. Blue school is located within the town and has a history of GBV. The school has only one big entrance and a large compound surrounded by residential houses. In the red school, one principal, two vice principals, one counsellor, two teachers, and two learners were the participants in this study. However, on the competence level, the counsellor in the red school declined his participation in the study, which reduced the number of participants in the Red school to eight participants, instead of nine participants.

#### **4.10. Data Generation Instruments**

The data generated method for this study were three main data methods namely, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. The data instruments are discussed in the following sections.

##### **4.10.1. Semi-structured Interviews**

A semi-structured interview is a qualitative research technique that combines elements of both structured and unstructured interviews (Schmidt, 2004:255; Chauhan, 2022:474). It involves a set of predetermined questions or topics that the interviewer intends to cover but allows for flexibility and exploration of additional questions or topics based on the

participant's responses (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006:315). In a semi-structured interview, worthy of note is that the interviewer follows a general interview guide or a list of key questions, but has the freedom to adapt and modify the order or wording of the questions as the interview progresses.

According to Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik (2021:1360), flexibility allows the interviewer to probe deeper into interesting or relevant areas, explore unexpected avenues of discussion, and capture detailed responses. The structure of a semi-structured interview offers some consistency in the data collected across participants, as the core questions remain the same (Kallio, et al., 2016:2956). However, it also allows for individual differences and unique perspectives to emerge through the exploration of supplementary questions tailored to each participant. One of the key ingredients of a semi-structured interview is that it provides a balance between standardisation and flexibility, enabling researchers to gather rich qualitative data while maintaining some level of comparability among participants.

In this study, some sets of questions were raised to guide the procedures and how school practices are maintained in addressing GBV in the selected schools. The interviewer set the questions ahead as approved by the ethics committee in the university. The questions and further probing questions were asked the participants to get a rich information from them. Drawing from the research objectives, some questions were elicited from the participants to explore their experiences with the phenomenon (Magaldi & Berler, 2020:4826). The semi-structured interview was streamlined to the principal, vice principals, and the counsellor while the focus group interview discussion was targeted at the teachers and the learners. The rationale for adopting the semi-structured interview with the participants enabled me to gain in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon (GBV) and brought out conversations. Semi-structured interviews with the participants also allowed me to gather data and compare participants' perspectives about GBV practices in different contexts.

#### **4.10.2. Focus Group Discussion**

This study adopted a focus group discussion as a method to generate data from the participants. This was done to practicalise and confirm the tenets of the case study approach which allowed democratisation and equal footing in discussion and which is always used with similar homogeneous participants. This kind of instrumentation allowed the researcher and the participants to discuss the phenomenon and suggest the solution to GBV in the selected schools. Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a qualitative research method that involves a small group of individuals (usually 5-10 participants) who come together to discuss a specific topic or research question under the guidance of a moderator or facilitator (Boateng, 2012:55). In the case of this study, the participants comprised of five individuals namely, three teachers and two learners in the two selected schools. The justification for adopting focus group discussion is that focus groups provide a forum for participants to share their opinions, perspectives, experiences and ideas in a group setting with the same characteristics that are homogeneous, allowing for interactive and in-depth discussions (Omar, (2018). In the case of this study, teachers and learners in the GBV group in the schools were contacted based on their experience with the problem. This group is responsible for the advocacy, sensitisation, and prevention of school related GBV in the selected schools.

#### **4.10.2.1. Focus Group Characteristics and Procedures**

In a bid to understand the focus group discussions, focus groups are commonly used to gather rich, qualitative data and to generate insights into people's beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, and experiences (Caretta & Vacchelli, (2015:59); Mishra, (2016:2). They can be employed for various research objectives, such as exploring consumer preferences, understanding public opinions, assessing user needs, or evaluating the effectiveness of programmes. Also, participants are purposively selected based on specific criteria that are relevant to the research topic. The aim is to have a diverse group that represents different viewpoints and experiences related to the research focus. Teachers and school leaders were recruited through various methods, such as purposive sampling and random sampling. A skilled researcher or facilitator leads the focus group session. The moderator ensures the discussion stays on track, encourages participation from all participants,

manages group dynamics, and elicits in-depth responses. They used open-ended questions and prompts to stimulate discussion and explore different perspectives.

A well-designed discussion guide outlines the key topics (GBV), questions, and prompts to guide the focus group session. It provides a flexible structure for the moderator to ensure that all relevant areas are covered while allowing for spontaneous and organic conversations. Focus groups leverage the power of group dynamics, allowing participants to interact and build on each other's ideas. According to Sim & Waterfield (2019:3004), the group setting can stimulate discussions, generate new insights, and uncover shared or divergent opinions.

The researcher ensured that the focus group sessions were typically audio-recorded to capture the discussions accurately. Detailed notetaking by the moderator or an observer is also essential to capture non-verbal cues, group dynamics, and contextual observations. The data collected from focus groups were analysed using thematic analysis, document analysis, or other qualitative analysis techniques. Transcripts and recordings were carefully reviewed and coded to identify patterns, themes, and key findings. The analysis aims to generate rich, in-depth insights and capture the diversity of perspectives within the group (Chauhan & Sehgal, (2022:127).

The researcher ensured that the ethical guidelines such as informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation were observed to ensure the well-being and rights of the participants. Creating a safe and inclusive environment where participants feel comfortable sharing their views is important. Focus groups offer a valuable qualitative research approach for exploring complex topics and for gaining deeper insights into people's attitudes, beliefs, and experiences. They provide a platform for interactive discussions, multiple perspectives, and the exploration of shared meanings (Babu, (2023:42). The next section discusses document analysis.

#### **4.10.3. Document Analysis (DA)**

Document analysis is a research method used to examine and interpret written, printed, or electronic materials as primary sources of information (Bowen, 2009:28). It involves systematically analysing documents to extract relevant data, identify patterns, and gain insights into a particular topic or research question. Documents can include a wide range of sources, such as letters, diaries, official reports, government documents, newspaper articles, legal records, organisational records, emails, websites, social media posts, and other textual materials (Cauvin, 2016). The analysis of these documents can provide valuable historical, social, cultural, or organisational information.

The process of document analysis typically involves the selection of documents, familiarisation, coding and categorisation, extraction, analysis, and interpretation used in this study (Vaismoradi, Turunen & Bondas, 2013:399). In this study, the document used is GBV prevention guide to schools. Also, the Nigerian constitution was also considered. The beauty of document analysis is that the (DA) can be conducted using qualitative or quantitative approaches, depending on the research objectives (Karppinen & Moe, 2012:178). Qualitative document analysis focuses on understanding the meaning and context of the documents, while quantitative document analysis involves numerical coding and statistical analysis of the data. Worthy of note, it is important to critically evaluate the documents used in the analysis, considering factors such as authenticity, bias, authorship, and potential limitations (Altheide, et al. 2008:128). Triangulating the findings with other research methods or data sources helps strengthen the rationality of the document analysis. That is, the semi-structured interviews and DA were used to triangulate and validate the study.

#### **4.11. Data Analysis**

Data analysis involves examining, converting, and structuring data to reveal significant patterns, draw conclusions, and inform decision-making (Craver, 2014:2; Braun & Clarke, 2019:590; Mezmir, 2020:17). It involves various techniques and methods to extract valuable insights and knowledge from raw data. Data analysis plays a vital role in understanding complex phenomena, making data-driven decisions, and gaining valuable

insights to drive business, scientific, or research objectives (Braun & Clarke, 2023:2). The data analysis used for this study is the Thematic Analysis (TA). Byrne (2022:1392) describes thematic analysis as a qualitative research technique employed to identify and interpret patterns, themes, and meanings present in textual data. It systematically analyses qualitative data such as interviews, focus group discussions, survey responses, or written documents, to uncover underlying themes and concepts. Since case studies with multiple contexts are concerned with large data sets, TA was chosen to make meaning of the data collected (Byrne, 2022:1393).

The flexibility of the TA gave me reasons to be flexible while conducting interview sessions. The combination of sound recorders, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis were employed. The main strength of TA is making meaning from the data without losing the verbatim quotes from the participants. Braun and Clarke (2016:191) present six steps for using TA to analyse data. The stages are familiarising the data, generating initial codes, developing themes, refinement, naming themes, and writing reports (Clarke, Braun & Hayfield, 2015:222). The stages are explained below.

**Familiarisation Stage:** The researcher became familiar with the data by reading and re-reading them several times to gain a thorough understanding of the content and context of the data bearing in mind the research objectives. The familiarisation stage in the thematic analysis involves immersing yourself in the qualitative data to deeply understand its content and context (Kumar et al., 2023:4). This stage is crucial for developing familiarity with the data and for setting the foundation for subsequent analysis. The researcher started by thoroughly reading the qualitative data multiple times. In the case of this study, the researcher used interview transcripts, focus group transcripts, and document analysis. As I read, I took notes on the initial thoughts, impressions, and ideas that came to mind.

**Generating Initial Codes:** The researcher started the coding process by identifying and labelling meaningful units of data. These codes are typically short phrases or sentences

that capture the essence of the data (Gormley et al., 2019:136). Generating initial codes is the second stage of thematic analysis, following the familiarisation stage. In this stage, the researcher begins to identify and label meaningful data units, typically short phrases or sentences that capture the essence of the data. The researcher started the process with an open mind without preconceived ideas or expectations. Allow the data to speak for itself and be guided by what emerges from the data. The researcher read through the data again, this time focusing on specific words, phrases, or sentences that captured her attention. Look for patterns, themes, and meanings within the data. This time the researcher underlined the highlighted codes with a focus on the research objectives with a code book ensuring that all codes were well represented under every theme.

**Theme Development:** The researcher explores the codes and identifies potential themes or patterns emerging from the data. The researcher looks for similarities, differences, or connections between codes (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019:260). Searching for themes is the third stage of thematic analysis, following the generation of initial codes. In this stage, the researcher explores the data further to identify potential themes or patterns that emerge from the initial coding process. The researcher reviews the themes, defines and names the themes; s/he also looks for similarities and patterns, identifies high-level concepts, group related codes, refine and revises themes, and stays true to the data.

**Defining and Naming Themes:** The researcher clearly defines each theme and provides a descriptive name that represents its content and meaning. This helps in organising and interpreting the data (Kiger & Varpio, 2020:848). Defining and naming themes is the fourth stage of thematic analysis, following the searching for themes stage (Xu & Zammit, 2020). In this stage, the researcher defines the identified themes and provides descriptive names that accurately capture their content and meaning.

**Reviewing and Refining Themes:** Cross-check the themes against the entire dataset to ensure their accuracy and relevance. Refine and modify themes as needed based on the overall coherence and fit with the data (Xu & Zammit, 2020). Defining and naming themes is critical as it provides clarity and structure to the analysis. Well-defined and appropriately

named themes enable effective communication of the findings and facilitate the interpretation and synthesis of the qualitative data.

**Writing the Analysis:** Prepare a narrative or report summarising the main themes, including supporting evidence from the data (Adu, 2019). Provide illustrative quotes or excerpts to enhance the understanding and credibility of the findings. For each theme, provide a detailed description and analysis. Explain the significance and meaning of each theme to the research question or objective. Discuss the patterns, variations, or connections within and between themes. Consider the broader context, theoretical perspectives, or existing literature to enrich the analysis. The justification for the use of thematic analysis in this study rests on its ability to help the researcher interpret and analyse data in alignment with the objectives of the study divided into meaningful themes. Thematic analysis is therefore appropriate for the study as it allowed me to categorise, make meaning of the themes from the whole data generated, and respond to the themes of the study. The next section discusses trustworthiness.

#### **4.12. Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness, according to (Jones, 2012:61) is a critical aspect of any research study and it refers to the extent to which the research findings are considered credible and reliable. Quality assurance is ensured through trustworthiness in qualitative research. To ensure the trustworthiness of the thematic analysis conducted in this study, several strategies were employed (Hardin, 2002). In qualitative research, trustworthiness is considered to ensure the overall credibility of the research procedures (Guba & Lincoln, 1994:106; Elo, et al. 2014:2; Connelly, 2016:435). However, trustworthiness includes reflexivity; the process involves acknowledging the researcher's subjective influence on the research process and findings. In this study, the researcher-maintained reflexivity by keeping reflective literature throughout the data collection and analysis processes, recording any potential biases or assumptions that could affect the interpretation of the data. The second stage of ensuring trustworthiness is triangulation.

The process involves using multiple sources of data to verify the findings. The study collected data through in-depth interviews, focus groups, and document analysis (Polit & Beck, 2014). The use of multiple sources increased the credibility of the analysis, ensuring that the themes were supported by a range of data sources. The third stage involved member checking which stresses the need for validating the accuracy of the findings with the participants. In this study, the researcher shared the research objectives with the participants to ensure that the interpretations were consistent with their experiences. This process allowed for the verification of the themes and added to the credibility of the analysis. The last stage involved peer review which is obtaining feedback from other experts in the field to ensure the trustworthiness of the research findings. In this study, the researcher sought feedback from colleagues who had expertise in thematic analysis.

In the same vein, Connelly (2016:435) opines that the process of trustworthiness has some stages in qualitative research, which is for qualitative data to be found effective as discussed above. The data must be credible, dependable, confirmable, transferrable, and authentic. This study is found trustworthy as the procedures in the review process are credible, reliable, and the data is authentic from the research participants. The supervisor with the research team always meets from time to time to review every stage in the research process. The peer review process helped the researcher to identify any potential biases or limitations and ensured that the analysis was rigorous and reliable. By employing these trustworthiness strategies, the thematic analysis conducted in this study demonstrated a high level of trustworthiness, providing credible and valid findings that reflect the participants' experiences and perspectives.

#### **4.13. Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations are of utmost importance in any research study, including thematic analysis (Taquette & Borges da Matta Souza, 2022:2). The researcher ensures that the study is conducted ethically, respecting the rights and well-being of the participants involved (Munhall, 1988:151). In the context of thematic analysis and the University of the

Free State, the ethics committee ensured the process through the general and human research committee with no UFS-HSD2021/1757/21 which was approved on the 29<sup>th</sup> of November 2021. Following the ethics guidelines, the researcher ensured that participants were provided informed consent before participating in the study. They were fully informed about the purpose of the research, the nature of their participation, and of any potential risks or benefits.

The researcher obtained written consent and ensured that the participants understood their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The researcher ensured that participants' confidentiality was protected throughout the research process. Information about the participants was removed or anonymised to ensure that the identity of the participants is protected. Data were securely stored and passworded and were accessible only to the authorised researcher. The researcher employed pseudonyms or identifiers to maintain participants' anonymity when presenting the findings. The researcher ensured that participants were treated with respect, empathy, and sensitivity (Shaw, et. al. 2020:278). Participants were not subjected to harm, discomfort, or distress because of their participation. The researcher was also mindful of power dynamics and she avoided exploiting or coercing participants in any way, especially in the focus group with the teachers and the learners. The learners sampled were above 18 years and old enough to be considered as adult.

The researcher ensured that the data collection process was conducted in a manner that critically considered their own biases, assumptions, and potential conflicts of interest that could either impact the research process or the interpretation of the data. It is crucial to acknowledge personal biases and take measures to minimise their influence on the analysis. All necessary documents and approval letters were submitted to the ethical review committee, and the study was approved before proceeding to the field. Ethical rules were followed during data collection (Drolet, et al., 2022:2; Pietilä, et al. 2020:48). Adhering to these ethical considerations, researchers uphold the principles of research ethics, protect the well-being of the participants, and maintain the integrity and credibility of the thematic analysis.

#### **4.14. Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter outlined the research methodology employed in this study, providing a clear explanation of the steps taken to achieve the study's aims and objectives. It comprehensively analysed the research design, paradigm, methodology, research approach, and sampling techniques used. The characteristics of the research participants and the contexts of the selected schools were also detailed. The chapter explained the data collection methods and instruments used as well as the data sources. It discussed the thematic analysis and how it aligned with the research objectives. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the ethical considerations used in the study. The presentation of data is addressed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DATA PRESENTATION

#### 5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the data. This study explores the leadership practices of addressing GBV in Nigerian secondary schools. One primary question and four secondary research questions were raised. They are stated as follows:

- What are the school leadership practices of addressing GBV in Nigerian secondary schools?

To answer the following main research questions, the following sub-questions were explored further:

- What is the nature of GBV in the selected Nigerian secondary schools?
- What are the causes of GBV in the selected Nigerian secondary schools?
- How do school leaders address GBV in selected Nigerian secondary schools?
- Which model can be proposed in the form of school-related GBV?

The primary method used to generate data for the study was semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, complemented by document analysis. This combination allowed for a comprehensive approach to data collection. The interviews provided rich qualitative data directly from the participants, offering personal experiences, perspectives, and narratives. The datasets generated through individual interviews and focus group discussions were analysed first, followed by documents where applicable. The emerging themes and subthemes helped to address the research questions regarding leadership practices in addressing GBV in the selected Nigerian schools. The themes were tailored to answer the main research questions, even though they also responded to specific research questions.

Twelve themes emerged from the data, with some subthemes that spoke to the research questions. The main themes are tabularised below:

**Table 1: Presentation of themes and Explanations**

No	Themes	Explanation
1.	Understanding of GBV	Participants spoke about their understanding of GBV in schools.
2.	Forms of GBV	Examples of gender-based violence were explored as they happened in the selected schools.
3.	The causes of GBV	The participants revealed the supposed causes of GBV in the selected schools.
4.	Places GBV happens in schools.	The participants named the locations of the occurrence of GBV in the selected schools.
5.	Policies against school-based gender violence	The policies of GBV were explored and in place for schools.

6.	<p>Stakeholders' roles in addressing GBV:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roles of administrators in addressing GBV</li> <li>• Roles that parents play in addressing GBV in schools.</li> <li>• Roles of the learners in addressing school GBV</li> <li>• Influence of school leadership practices in addressing GBV</li> </ul>	<p>The roles of administrators in addressing GBV were explored.</p>
7.	<p>Consequences of GBV in the selected schools</p>	<p>The participants explored the consequences that are associated with GBV in the selected schools.</p>
8.	<p>Challenges that schools encounter in addressing GBV</p>	<p>Participants spoke about the challenges that the selected schools encounter in addressing GBV.</p>

As I indicated in Chapter Four, the participants were represented with pseudonyms in compliance with the ethics and guidelines of the research. The school names were represented with red and blue schools to conceal the schools' identity. The participants' names used in the analysis were not their real names. The focus group consisted of teachers and learners who were members of the gender-based club in the selected

schools. The Principal, Vice Principal, Counsellor, focus group for Blue secondary School (connoted by Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Student 1, and Student 2). The Principal, Vice Principal 1, Vice Principal 2, Focus group from the Red School (connoted by Teacher 1, Teacher 2, Student 1, and Student 2).

The data from the participants in both schools (Red and blue) are concurrently presented to corroborate the leadership practices of addressing GBV in the selected schools. Responses from the school leaders were first presented, followed by the teacher's and learner's responses. I presented the findings and added the document analysis where applicable in the study.

## **5.2. Theme 1: Understanding of GBV in Schools**

GBV encompasses a range of behaviours and actions that target individuals based on their gender, often reflecting power imbalances and societal norms (Shuck, et., 2023:3). Understanding how the participants perceived and defined GBV is crucial in addressing gender-based school violence. The following responses from the participants revealed their understanding of GBV in the selected schools. The principal from red school revealed;

*“When a boy or a girl lured himself/herself over others so that they look more superior than the other one.”*

In her response, the Vice Principal for red school shared her understanding of GBV. She remarked:

*GBV is a situation where a person is disproportionately abused or dealt with violently just because of his/her gender. It takes a lot of forms; it could be physical, sexual, or financial. That is my understanding of GBV*

The second Vice Principal, also, in red school said:

*“GBV is violence against girls and women mostly and it can also be violence against boys too.”*

The Counsellor in red school remarked on her understanding of GBV:

*“GBV is a fight to prevent assault from either [the] opposite sex or elderly individual.”*

The focus group discussion data that emerged from red school revealed the understanding of GBV. The focus group discussion consisted of teachers and learners who are members of GBV groups in the schools, as discussed in chapter four of this study. The conversation below started with the teachers and was followed by the learners’:

*“GBV is violence against a person of a particular gender. It is mostly against women or the girl child.”*

*Cuts in... “GBV is when men exercise their power and masculinity over the women.”*

*“It is the violence directed against a person because of their gender disproportionately. It is the violence against women and girls and sometimes on boys, but not common.”*

*“GBV, as I believe, is violence mostly against women and young girls. Sometimes, there can be violence against boys, but not in all cases. It is mostly focused on women, and it could be underage girls and could be married women in their husband's houses as they are being maltreated, and some other terrible cases like that.”*

In blue school, Vice Principal 1 stated:

*“GBV is the abuse of children, particularly girl children and women. It can be abuse of children or women sexually, indiscriminate touching of girls, and punishing the learners unjustly.”*

The second Vice Principal of blue school exposed:

*“My understanding of GBV as a layman is right against human abuse, right of the ladies abused and trampled upon by the opposite sex and at times ladies can also trample upon the right of the opposite sex too; that is, the male counterpart, but it most affecting the girl child.”*

The counsellor in blue School revealed that he does not understand the concepts of GBV. I asked about the understanding of GBV, but he was saying something about assault prevention. He remarked:

*“GBV [prevention] is a fight to prevent [an] assault from either [the] opposite sex or elderly individuals.”*

Teachers and learners also revealed their understanding of GBV in the blue school. The focus group discussions revealed the following discussion:

*“GBV is when a child, either boy/girl or woman is abused physically, verbally, sexually, brutalised, and assaulted. It could be from the parents, family members, or strangers. That is my understanding of GBV.”*

*“GBV is when boys and girls are harassed and bullied by elderly ones or through the opposite sex.”*

*“GBV, in my understanding is when boys /girls are harassed and violated. An example is rape.”*

*“GBV is a violence against a person. It could be a male or female but, in most cases, it happens to the girl child.”*

Teachers' and learners' perceptions about GBV corroborated with the views of the counsellors and school leaders (principal and vice principal). The data suggest that the participants understood the general understanding of GBV in schools and how to prevent such situations in the selected schools. The way individuals perceive and define GBV influences how they identify and respond to such incidents. This is in line with the findings of the studies of Ojo, et. al., (2023:182); and Obi et. al., (2023:110) that refer to the explanation of gender-based school violence to be some ways that girls/boy children's rights are abused in schools. The GBV policy of the Ekiti government states that schools *must meet every Friday to sensitise the learners about GBV*. This ensured that learners in the school were well informed about GBV in schools. The next theme to be discussed is the form of GBV that occurs in the selected schools.

### **5.3. Theme 2: Forms of GBV.**

Schools should ideally provide a safe environment for learners to thrive and interact positively (Parris, 2023:16). However, GBV disrupts this ideal, perpetuating harmful behaviours that are rooted in unequal power dynamics and societal norms. GBV in schools can take various forms such as physical, verbal, or psychological abuse, sexual harassment, bullying, and other harmful behaviours (Hammarén, 2022:36). This study uncovered these occurrences through the experiences of participants. Principals and vice principals noted the presence of various forms of GBV in the selected schools. The principal from Red School remarked that bullying from a senior learner to a junior one is one of the forms of GBV in his school. He remarked thus:

*“We have so many examples of GBV in our school. We have a case where an SS3 student tried to woo a junior student and the junior student rebuffed the boy and the boy slapped her and even inflicted injury on the female student.”*

In her response, the vice principal from Red School stated that bullying is common in the school, where male learners and teachers are the perpetrators:

*The most common is the male learners bullying the female learners. It is more common from the male side; and the teacher's part, it is not uncommon when you see a particular teacher trying to victimise a girl probably because he is attracted to the girl and the girl ignores him to face her studies, then you see some reactions where the girl was now always a victim of cane.*

Red School teachers and the learners in a focus group discussion observed that concerning forms of GBV:

*“Physical GBV and psychological GBV. Physical gender-based is corporal punishment, sexual violence, and harassment while psychological GBV is verbal abuse, emotional abuse, and discrimination. Bullying is an example of GBV that occurs in my school. The senior learners bully the junior ones unjustly.”*

*“The most common one is bullying and threatening among the genders, but it mostly affects the girls.”*

*“Physical violence in the form of fighting, punching, and bullying of the female learners by the male learners.”*

*“Verbal violence in the form of insulting and abusing each other.”*

The principal of Blue School reported a case of rape which he considered a serious form of GBV in schools:

*We normally have cases of GBV. The terrible one we had was towards the end of the last session: a boy took a girl to the toilet with the awareness of his friends because he planned it with his friends. The boy was the one who perpetrated the evil, but it was planned with his friends. According to our investigation, the girl in*

*question was a junior student in JSS3 and the boy was in SS1. So, they seized her bag knowing fully well that she could not go home without her bag. So, it was in the afternoon when the girl was about to go home that she went to go and request her bag and asked why her bag was seized. They tactfully lured her to the school toilet and the girl was raped by the SS1 boy. That is the major one and we also have minor ones where JSS1 or JSS2 student report their mate for either pressing their breast or buttocks. The major one we had was the one of that time.*

Vice Principal 1 from Blue School specified that rape is one of the forms of gender-based abuse that occurred in his school. He stated:

*“In my school, a girl was raped last term in the school toilet by one of the male learners. [The girl] who was drugged... was raped and was sick. The girl could not tell her parents about the incident that happened to her in the school. The girl could not come to school for about a week and her friends came to the school authority and reported the case. The case was handed over to the police.”*

The Vice Principal 2 from Blue school remarked:

*“The example I have is where male learners are fighting girls in the school and senior learners are bullying the junior ones and verbal harassment. The issue of rape or sexual abuse, I don’t have a record of it since I have been transferred to this school.”*

The counsellor from Blue School indicated:

*“There was a case of a boy who raped a girl right on the school premises. The people that saw them saw blood because that was the first time the girl would experience such a thing and the girl did not report that day. It was after a week the friends of the girl reported because that girl had already felt withdrawn. The case was referred to the police and they took the girl to their clinic to check maybe the evil was perpetrated on her. The boy confessed to the act, and he said he had already begged the girl and the case was averted. The fault of the school was that*

*we did not report to the right quarter and that was how the girl was cheated for life by the time we reported the gender-based official they sent.”*

Worthy of note are the excerpts from the teachers and learners (focus group discussions) where the teachers and learners gave forms of GBV in Blue School.

*“We have various examples of GBV here in this school like fighting, threatening; that is, the senior learners threatening the girls and the junior ones, bullying. The grievous one happened last term when a girl was being harassed and raped by a senior, the boy seized the girl's bag and the girl waited to collect the bag after the school hour not knowing the bag seized from her was a trap for the boy to carry out his mission. They told the girl the bag was in the toilet, and she went there to search for the bag in the process the boy raped her right in the school toilet. When the school knew about the matter it was then transferred to the police.”*

*“It was the issue of rape my colleagues have said, the girl did not talk on time, and when the friends saw that she was withdrawn and ashamed they reported it to the school authority.”*

*“An example I have as a student is when the senior bullied and beat the junior learners or even his mate unjustly.”*

*“The example of GBV I know is physical and social violence in my school. The senior learners beat and injured the junior learners maybe because of being rude to them or maybe they requested something from the junior and he/she refused, then they used their power over the learners by beating, slapping them.”*

The participants revealed above in Red School that bullying, sexual violence, and learner victimisation from male teachers were common forms of GBV as observed in the school. Also in Blue School, fighting, rape, bullying, and social violence were forms of GBV in the school. The selected schools reported some forms of GBV. While bullying was common in both schools, rape was only found in Blue School where one learner was raped, and

learners' victimisation by teachers was found to be prevalent in Red School. The studies of Fawole, Balogun, and Olaleye, (2018:68); Yekinni and Rasaan (2023:63) are in line with the findings of this study that bullying, rape, fighting, and sexual comments on learners and intimidation are forms of GBV in Nigerian schools. Also, the Ekiti State Ministry of Education Science and Technology (GBV Policy) stipulates that "*Any crime of any form of violence against learners should be reported to the school authority*", but it seems that the learners often do not use the medium on time to report cases of gender-based abuse in the selected schools. The next theme discusses the causes of GBV in the selected schools.

#### **5.4. Theme 3: The Causes of GBV**

The participants, in terms of the causes of GBV in schools suggest that there were external and internal causes of GBV from the two selected participant schools. The participants observed and indicated that society, broken homes, background of learners and teachers contribute to the root causes of GBV. The causes of GBV vary across different societies and contexts, but some common underlying causes in literature are gender inequality, cultural norms, patriarchy, lack of education and awareness, childhood experiences, social acceptance of violence, silencing, and victimisation (Mphatheni & Ntsika, 2022:61; Caroline Farmer et al., 2023:321). In Blue School, the principal revealed that the causes of GBV emanate from societal decadence; he remarked.

*"The society caused a lot. The use of technology like phones has caused a lot because what they watch on the phone, they want to practice it. I believe it is the major cause of GBV."*

The Vice Principal from the same Blue school blamed the causes of GBV in schools on learners and teachers.

*"When the bullies feel they are superior to the other and that they are in charge. On the teacher's part, maybe probably they cannot keep their libido."*

The Vice Principal 2 from the same Blue School revealed:

*Firstly, bad parenting and lack of proper upbringing from the parents. when a mother does not look into the welfare of her daughter to give her some orientation and sex education from home, on getting to the school, the friends teach her something else. Secondly, societal decadence is the major cause of this GBV.”*

A Focus group from Blue School indicated that one of the causes of school-related gender-based violence is underlined in parents and broken homes:

*“The cause of GBV in our school is broken home. The majority of our learners here are from broken homes where the father and the mother are divorced, and they are taken care of by single parents.”*

*“Parents fighting (physical combat) in the presence of their children. This, the children can inculcate in them and when they get to the school they will see as normal behaviour and they often start fighting with their fellow learners.”*

Red School participants gave their insights into what causes GBV in their schools. The principal reiterated in the following conversation.

*“Some of these learners lack discipline and they need parental and proper monitoring. If the parent can monitor their children or ward very well, then the issue of indiscipline will stop.”*

Vice Principal 1 from Red School indicated that peer influence also contributes to GBV in the school.

*“Some of these learners are easily influenced by their peers or friends. They feel because my friend is doing something, I too must do it. This can make them turn to whomever they do not want to be.”*

Counsellor from Red School indicated that:

*“[Causes of gender based] is deeply rooted in discriminatory, cultural abuse and attitude that perpetrated gender inequality and powerlessness in women and girls.”*

Focus group discussions from Red School reiterate that learners from a bad background often reflect in schools:

*“The causes can be set into different reasons, but the most important one is indiscipline. It tells the learners where they come from. If you see a student who is not disciplined, then you quickly tell the background where he/she comes from.”*

*“Transfer of aggression: when a student comes from home without eating and he gets to school, and his friends are playing with him he could easily transfer aggression to his friends or classmate and might lead to fighting.”*

*“Lack of discipline and lack of good parental upbringing are the causes of GBV.”*

It was revealed in both schools that the causes of GBV are interconnected and that they reinforce one another. The participants revealed above that the causes of GBV are mostly from home, as most parents and learners practiced this from home. Participants from the Red School noted that GBV is observed among learners from disrupted family backgrounds, while those from the Blue School emphasised that cultural factors in the society contribute to the occurrence of GBV. In summary, it can be inferred that both schools have instances of GBV, with causative factors rooted in both societal influences and the family backgrounds of the learners. This is similar to the submission of Olofinbiyi (2021:2), that lack of parental awareness and proper upbringing of their children contributes to some of the causes of school-related GBV in Nigerian schools. Also, the GBV policy of Ekiti State revealed that *“parents needed to be aware of the consequences of not being responsible for the well-being of their child and when abused, the student can report to teachers where proper complaints can be made appropriately in schools.”* However, the parents must work hand in hand with the school and be responsible for the

children's well-being at home and in school. The next theme discusses the places where GBV happens in the selected schools.

#### **5.5. Theme 4: Places GBV Happens in Schools.**

This section discusses the participants' view of places where GBV happens in the selected schools. GBV, according to the participants, happens within the school environments, in toilets, hallways, uncompleted buildings, and bushes around the school. GBV in schools can occur in various places and settings within the school environment. It sometimes happens in classrooms, restrooms and locker rooms, sports fields, school buses, teacher staffrooms, school events, and sometimes, it happens online (Wilson, 2006:4; Ngidi and Moletsane, 2023:3). This assertion was also exposed by participants. The principal indicated in Red School that GBV occurs within the school.

*“It takes place in the school and at home. GBV takes place anywhere. It is just that the perpetrator does it in hidden places where they cannot be seen.”*

Vice Principal 1 from Red School said:

*“It takes place everywhere. It could be in the school environment, in the classroom after school hours when all learners must have gone home.”*

Vice Principal 2 indicated that:

*“GBV can take place in the home, classroom, the school toilet, and in secluded places where learners do not visit like the bush.”*

Focus group discussions from Red School, revealed by teachers and learners' participants that GBV often happens in the selected schools:

*“It takes place in secluded places, the school, and in the bush.”*

*“It takes place anywhere. It can take place in religious places like mosques and churches. It takes place in schools and recreation centres.”*

*“It takes place in the school, toilet, and at home.”*

*“It takes place in an uncompleted building and places that are not public.”*

The principal from Blue School also revealed places where GBV occurs in the selected schools where learners abuse each other.

*“It takes place mostly in bushes, toilet, and secluded areas where a student is not seen or don’t patronise. In an uncompleted building because Blue School is filled with buildings that are not used anymore. So, when you see deserted places, that is where most of them carry out this evil act. Some may be unlucky to be seen and when they are seen they will be disciplined and punished while some will not be seen”.*

The vice principal 1 from Blue School briefed:

*“It can take place in the school toilet, nearby bushes around the school, or in an uncompleted building.”*

Vice Principal 2 from Blue School stated:

*“GBV takes place in the home, in the school, in the community, and even on the school field.”*

The Counsellor confirmed that GBV happens occasionally during break time and after school hours in the school toilets.

*“It takes place in the toilet; they fight when they are outside for a break. It also takes place in the classroom when the teacher is not in the classroom, they will perpetrate*

*the evil. There was a case where five girls were touching and pressing another girl's breast in the classroom.”*

Blue schoolteachers and learners from a focus group discussion have this to say about some places where GBV occurs in their schools.

*“It takes place in secluded places, the school, and in the bush.”*

*“It takes place anywhere. It can take place in religious places like mosques and churches. It takes place in schools and recreation centres.”*

*“It takes place in the school, toilet, and at home.”*

*“It takes place in an uncompleted building and place that is not public.”*

The participants above revealed that GBV occurs in the selected schools. Both schools revealed that GBV happens in some places in their schools and has occurred in classrooms, school toilets, secluded places, and in the bushes around the school. The submissions of the participants were also in conformity with the findings of the studies by Obi, et al., (2023:110), that GBV occurs within the school environments. When talking of places where GBV happens in schools, leadership practices should be up and running regarding adequate supervision of the school environments. The next session discussed policies against school-based gender violence.

## **5.6. Theme 5: Policies against school-based gender violence.**

The selected participants revealed in this section the policies in place to address school-related GBV. Policies against school-based gender violence are essential to create a safe and inclusive learning environment for all learners (Jadav & Chakrapani, 2023:307). These policies often include a combination of preventive measures, reporting procedures, and disciplinary actions. The principal from Red School indicated that school rules have been effective as a policy to manage GBV in schools:

*“Any student caught was be sent away either through expulsion or 2 to 3 weeks’ suspension.”*

The vice principal 1 from Red School said:

*We educate the learners; we give them a series of talks. For instance, on Friday, two periods are basically for gender-based issues. We bring in people from outside to talk to them to create awareness of GBV and its consequences. Internally, the counsellor is doing a wonderful job. This is a female-dominated staff school, and the staff are well educated in this field. So, when there are any issues with any form of abuse, they raise it quickly to find a solution to the problem.*

The vice principal 2 from Red School indicated that:

*We have various policies; an example is learners coming to school by 8 in the morning and not going out of the school premises till after closing hours. We have proper monitoring of the learners especially the girls to know what they are doing during the school hour. We also have a policy of sending all learners out of school immediately after school hours in order to avoid this GBV issue.*

Red School teachers and learners in focus group discussion specified that there is a GBV policy in schools:

*The prevention policy in our school is that we say to their hearing every day that they [learners] don’t fight and beat the female learners. We tell them often that if anyone offends them, they should report it to the appropriate authority and not take the laws into their hands and the offender will be punished.*

*We do not have a special or specific policy apart from the policy from the government that the males and females do not have love affairs in the school and there is a limit in their relationship especially in Muslim schools. Respect that is given to women according to our Islamic injunction is what we are doing. In everything we*

*are doing, we consider the female first and must not fight with them. Dressing: this is one of the policies that every Muslim student must cover themselves with a hijab and learners of other religions must dress in all modesty.*

*“The prevention policy we use in our school is that if anyone is a victim of GBV, he/she should not take justice into her hands but rather report it to the appropriate authority for necessary action.”*

*“The policy we use is that we should not take laws into our hands. If a person offends you or victimises you, then we report it to the school authority for appropriate punishment.”*

In the Blue School, the principal emphasised the importance of policy in addressing GBV:

*Firstly, we have called the learners to the assembly severally and addressed them that they must not be found in deserted places; the girls especially must always stay with their mates, so that when they are not found in deserted and lonely places nobody will abuse them.*

*Secondly, we usually advise them on their mode of dressing that they must not dress provocatively. The school uniform of a secondary school does not allow for provocative dressing anyway. They don't wear see-through things that can attract any male towards them.*

The Vice Principal 1 from Blue School exposed:

*We create awareness for the learners on what GBV is all about. We make them aware that fighting is not good. We also address them after the assembly to let them know the policy of the school that fighting, and bullying of junior learners especially girls are prohibited on the school premises, and raping and beating, and punishing learners unjustly are against the school rules and regulations.*

Vice principal 2 from Blue School indicated that there is a club that sees to the sensitisation of GBV in schools:

*The school has a school-related GBV (SRGBV) club. The school organised through non-governmental organisations to introduce a war against GBV. Some of the learners are the watchdog on the school activities for both student-student relationships, teacher-student relationships, and parent-student relationships because the parents can even violate the rights of their children. This school-related GBV (SRGBV) is the people in charge and bring the report to the school counsellor for an onward report to the school management.*

In the same vein, the counsellor from Blue School indicated that learners are trained from time to time to be responsible and to be active bystanders; where GBV occurs, they should not keep quiet;

*We organise a talk with the learners and enlighten them on sex education and let them know the consequences of GBV. We have a club on GBV (SRGBV) in the school. We usually train learners in this club on what to observe and what to do next. We told them when they [learners] see anybody being assaulted, either sexually or by bullying, they should make a report on it and when we gather, they often tell us that we know how to trash the case when in the meeting.*

Blue School teachers and learners' focus group discussions confirmed the narratives from the school administrators that there is a gender-based policy available for schools:

*“We have policies set aside for such violence. We have a group or club (SRGBV) for school-related GBV within the school system if any such GBV occurs, they take charge of the matter and punish the offender.”*

*“We talk to the learners every time on the assembly ground. We advise and counsel them on things not to do and how dangerous it is to their future.”*

*“If there is any issue on the ground the school management calls the GBV official to look into the matter and in some cases, the school involves the police if the matter is out of hand.”*

*“The school counsellor counsels the learners and creates awareness of GBV and its consequences and if any student is caught in the act, the student will be severely punished.”*

The data from the participants above revealed in both schools that there is a GBV policy from the government and codes of ethics for the schools. With the above explanation, the schools have some plans in place to counsel, advise, and create clubs for sensitisation and for empowering learners for bystanders to guide the school compound against GBV in schools. The studies of Akinbode, et al. (2023:4) also confirmed that some states in Nigerian have policies regarding addressing GBV in schools. Ekiti State's GBV policy also stipulates in the directives column (page 11: XIV) that *Principals are to ensure the formation of anti-GBV clubs in schools*. The selected schools adopted school-related GBV policy and have implemented such policies of creating anti-GBV clubs in schools. However, with the implementation of such policies in schools, some cases of GBV in schools are still prevalent according to the participants. The next section presents the consequences of GBV in the selected schools.

### **5.7. Theme 6: Consequences of GBV in the Selected Schools.**

GBV in schools has far-reaching consequences for the victims, perpetrators, and the entire school community (Ibrahim & Ibrahim, 2023:117). The selected participants highlighted the importance of understanding the impacts of such violence on academic performance. The consequences of GBV can be physical, emotional, and psychological, affecting not only the individual but also the overall learning environment and the community (Makhaye & Ajani, 2023:104). The participant exposed further, the consequences of GBV in the selected schools, the Principal of the Red School indicated:

*“It can result in death, maiming, and ridicule. It can also lead to deformity because where a student is beaten and injured, he/she can be deformed through the beating or the abuse.”*

Vice Principal 1 from Red School revealed that the consequences of GBV in schools can be a loss of confidence:

*When a person is abused, he/she becomes very timid and loses confidence. The person abused goes back into her shell and sometimes they become an extrovert. They will not be able to talk and will be scared. They eventually drop out of school because they do not want to face that intimidation.*

Vice Principal 2 from the same Red School reiterates that the consequences of GBV include unwanted pregnancies, among others:

*“The consequences of GBV are unwanted pregnancies, dropping out from school, the victim being traumatised, sexually transmitted diseases (STD), and [sometimes] death.”*

Red School teachers and learners' focus group discussions unclothed the far-reaching consequences of GBV in schools:

*“The learners might be infected with diseases such as sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and drop out of school.”*

*“It can lead to death due to the violence and it also leads to the destruction of the future of the learners.”*

*“In the case of rape, it can lead to unwanted pregnancy and premature birth. Health-wise, it can lead to infection of diseases like STDs or HIV. It can lead to death through the bullying of fellow learners.”*

*“It leads to unwanted pregnancy; the person can be infected with HIV and it can lead to deformity of the learners through fighting and punching of one another.”*

The participants from Red School through focus group discussion also confirmed the same narratives in the selected school. The principal indicated:

*I will say stigmatisation. People that find themselves or even the ones outside the school environment like if a girl or teenager is raped, she becomes stigmatised and most of them cannot voice out. It is this time that we have a government that is seriously working against the idea of GBV. It is then that women have been given a voice to voice out what they are feeling.*

*Most people who have this GBV thing in their homes cannot voice it out because the people will stigmatise them. The major consequence that I see is stigmatisation.*

*Sometimes, if a girl is raped, she does not fill up to society again and feels she has been downgraded and feels something big has been taken away from her and she feels empty. Most of the time, they feel they cannot measure up to the standard of the society, and they become withdrawn.*

*You see most of them cannot join their mates to do what they are doing anymore. And when you go deeper into what is happening you discover that in one way or the other, they must or may have been abused.*

Vice Principal 1 from Blue School uncovered the consequences as learners may drop out of the school:

*“Some learners often drop out of school because she has been raped and feel ashamed to mingle with friends. Another one is unwanted pregnancies, and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).”*

In the same vein, Vice Principal 2 of Blue School also stressed that consequences of GBV can be linked to exposure to diseases:

*“The consequences of GBV are that it can lead to unwanted pregnancies and immoral sexual habits and incurable diseases.”*

The consequence of GBV, as observed by the counsellor from Blue School, is the dropping out of learners:

*The consequence of GBV is the dropping out of school, especially the girl child who was abused sexually. It can also lead to death because if the person abused is withdrawn and ashamed it can lead to death. It may also lead to deformity even when they fight, they can injure each other. Recently two of our learners fought and the teeth of one of them were removed and we invited their parents. It may lead to disease because if a student is abused by a person infected with HIV, you should know the student was in contact with it. It may lead to total hatred of the person that assaulted them. My uncle assaulted me at the age of 10 because I was shy and ashamed and could not tell my parent. I hated my uncle until his death. It can also lead to the inability to have children in the future.*

Participants (Teachers and Learners) from the focus group discussions in Blue School exposed the consequences further in their school:

*“It can lead to poor academic performance, emotional trauma, and low self-esteem.”*

*“It can lead to sexually transmitted diseases (STD), and the student can drop out of school maybe due to shame.”*

*“It can lead to incurable sickness and in a situation whereby the student is very brilliant then it can lead to poor performance in the class.”*

*“It can lead to unwanted pregnancy and early childbirth.”*

The participants from the two selected schools revealed that the consequences of GBV are far-reaching as it could lead to learners dropping out, exposure to diseases, and unwanted pregnancies, as spotted by the participants. The findings above revealed that the consequences are common to both selected schools. The study of Obi, et. al. (2023:259) is in support of the findings that GBV in schools has consequences on both the academic performance and the general well-being of learners. The findings also correspond with the Ekiti State GBV policy for schools, that *female learners, however, when pregnant should be allowed to complete their studies regardless of their situation to avoid dropping out for the girl-child*. The selected schools were aware of the consequences and the leadership practices are sometimes proactive in the measures to put in place to avoid unwanted pregnancies and drop-outs through advocacy programmes. The next section discusses the roles of school administrators in addressing GBV in the selected participant schools.

## **5.8. Theme 7: Stakeholders' Roles in addressing GBV**

The theme is divided into three useful relatable themes; roles of administrators, parents, and learners in addressing GBV, also the influence of school leadership practices in addressing GBV was explored. The subthemes are discussed below.

### **5.8.2. Sub-theme 1: Roles of Administrators in Addressing GBV in the Selected Schools.**

This section presents an analysis on the roles of administrators in addressing GBV in the selected participant schools. The roles of school administrators cannot be over-emphasised in the general well-being of the learners, the security of teachers, and the school community. The leadership roles of school administrators are to create a safe environment where GBV cannot thrive (Rammbuda, 2023:297). The participants mentioned the roles of school administrators (Principals and Vice-principals) which they showcase as indispensable in the selected schools. The Principal of Red School said this:

*“The administrator does a lot because the student knows that if they do contrary to the school rules and regulations they are gone. Even if they are not written down, they know they will be expelled or suspended because it depends on the gravity of the [GBV] offense committed by the student.”*

Vice Principal 1 from Red School cited:

*“We take firm control of the situation and let the learners know the consequences of what they have done and the punishment the student was be taken [arrested]. We don’t because of sending the student away, we punish, educate them, and integrate them back into the system.”*

Vice Principal 2 from Red School opined:

*Every Friday we do have a GBV programme, and we call it school-related GBV (SRGBV) where we invite people from outside to have a lecture with the learners and to shed more light on GBV issues and the consequences of GBV. It helps to create proper awareness among the boys and the girls on the causes, dangers, and aftermath effects of this GBV.*

Participants (Teachers and Learners) from the focus group discussions in Red School mentioned in the school:

*“If there is any case of GBV, the school administrator takes up the matter and punishes the offender by suspending them and if what the offender has done is beyond what the school can control, then it will be reported to gender-based officials to take up the matter.”*

*“The role of the administrator in addressing this GBV is to counsel the learners regularly and to advise them on the issue of GBV and why it is not good for them to engage in it.”*

*“The role of administrator in addressing GBV in our school is that they put consideration on female learners, and they set up a disciplinary committee that will go against molesting of female learners and give them necessary punishment for their action.”*

*“They advise us daily on assembly not to fight and bully the female learners or the junior learners, and they invite all these NGOs to our schools to lecture us on GBV.”*

The Principal from Blue School explained:

*“The role of the administrator is to educate this student. Most of them are very naive, are underage and most of them have not been given sex education from home. Parents are also supposed to do most of this work but because most of them have not been taught most of these things at home, the school administrator must talk to them and the boys. It is not girls that are abused.”*

Vice Principal 1 from Blue School related the roles of school administrators:

*The role of the administrator in my school is that we counsel the learners always and even on the assembly ground every morning. At times we invite people from outside to come and advise them on the issue of GBV, the school counsellor also counsel the learners and lets them [learners] know the consequences of GBV.*

Vice Principal 2 from Blue School conceded that:

*“The role of the administrator in addressing GBV is to have public enlightenment, and counselling, through religious activities and social gatherings.”*

The counsellor from Blue School indicated:

*The role of the administrator in addressing GBV in the school is that the school should make provisions for necessary things needed to gather information, like tape,*

*and give us a conducive environment for meetings, especially the club members. The school management should give the teachers access to the learners, especially in the school so that if they see any student misbehaving, they will be able to discipline them.*

Teachers and learners in focus group discussions from the Blue School revealed:

*“In case of any GBV, the school administrators are the ones that will take up the issue because we teachers cannot do anything but report to the school authority before any step can be taken.”*

*“They often report to the appropriate quarters if there is any form of GBV in the school.”*

*“The administrator often makes the offender not go unpunished and they report to the place if out of what the school can handle.”*

*“The administrators advise the learners that are affected and make sure the offender does not go unpunished.”*

The data by the participants from the selected schools showed the role of school administrators to conduct sensitisation and awareness campaigns to manage the effects of GBV. The study of Nxumalo (2023:6), reveals that teachers and school administrators have a role to play in addressing school-related gender-based schools. Ekiti State’s GBV policy states that *Principals should create a GBV report desk officer office, be aware of their responsibilities in awareness campaigns, and be at the forefront of the process.* The selected schools are aware of their roles and leadership practices in schools creating more collaborative, inclusive, and customised SRGBV clubs that meet the unique needs and ethos of the school community. The next section discusses the roles of parents and community members in addressing GBV in the selected schools.

### **5.8.2. Sub-theme 2: Roles of Parents in Addressing GBV in Schools.**

This section discusses the roles of parents in addressing GBV in the selected participating schools. The roles of parents and well-meaning community members cannot be overstretched, as parents are the first teachers. It is well observed in the Nigerian context that a parent can give birth to a child, but the community grooms the child (Nduka and Ozioma, 2019:224). Turning a blind eye to situations of GBV in schools is a ‘*taboo*’ and it can only be seen in a dysfunctional society (Sande & Chirongoma, 2021:3). Poudel (2016:4) reiterates that parents and well-meaning individuals have a role to play in reducing the menace of GBV in schools. The principal of the Red School indicated that whenever there is an occurrence of GBV in his school, the first thing is to invite the parents:

*“When we have a minor problem, we call the parent and let them know the problem and they support us on whatever punishment will be given to the learners. The parents have been supportive, and they respect our judgment of the learners.”*

Vice Principal 2 stated that:

*“The role of the parent is to teach awareness of GBV to their children and the danger in it.”*

Participants (Teachers and learners) from the Red School focus group discussion engaged:

*“The parents should train their children and educate their children awareness of GBV so that they will not be victims. The parents should talk to and advise their children regularly; they should be close to them to know what is going on with them at every point in time. They should teach them to speak up and not hide anything from them and create time for their children.”*

*“The community and the parents are one. It is the parent that makes the community. so, the role played by the parent is very important. According to the Islamic injunction, the parents are the school because the children copy and imitate their*

*parents. Whatever the parents are doing is what the children are doing. The parent should be a good role model to their children. When the parents live decently, the children too will imitate them.”*

*“The parents play an important role in the lives of their children. The parents should train their children right from childhood because home training is very important in the life of the children. Well-mannered and trained children will not want to get involved in any form of GBV.”*

*“The parents should be of good behaviour because the children copy from them; as we all know; the parents are their children's first teachers.”*

The Principal of Blue School specified the roles of parents in his school:

*The parents have a big role to play because children spend most of their time at home. Out of the 24 hours that we have in a day, the children spend about 13 hours at home. Most parents are too busy, thereby neglecting their role as parents to educate their children from home, to give them proper discipline and proper upbringing.*

The Vice Principal 1 of Blue School said:

*Parents should train their children and should ensure they have good and proper upbringing. They should be aware of what is happening to their children at any point in time. Some parents come to the school and tell us to help them cane and discipline their children, and that they support any punishment given to their children by the school authority.*

Vice Principal 2 of Blue School also reiterates the roles of parents in jointly addressing gender-based abuse in schools:

*Parents are their children's first teachers. Parents should always monitor and advise their children on the issue of GBV and its implications. They should always teach their children sex education and they should inculcate discipline in their children.*

The Counsellor of Blue School echoes the roles of the government and community members in jointly eradicating school-related GBV:

*The government should publicise to the community about this GBV because if they are not informed, they will be deformed. If they are informed and they see anything that is tampering with the lives of their children, they will report to the government and the government will take necessary actions and steps to curb or make sure the perpetrators are punished. In the case of the girl that was raped, when we were pursuing the case, the parents of that child expressed that they were no more interested in the case, because they didn't want their daughter to be exposed more than what had happened.*

Participants for the Blue School focus group discussion (Teachers and learners) revealed GBV in the following conversations:

*In a situation where the student was abused in the school, the parents often bring the case back to the school and informed the school authority about what happened to their children in the school and the school took up the case.*

*“The parents should be aware of whatever is happening to their children and there should be closeness between the parents and the children so that if there is any abuse whatsoever the learners will have the boldness of talking to their parents and the case will be addressed accordingly.”*

*“The parent should not have a nonchalant attitude to whatever is happening to their children. If their children are abused, then the matter should be addressed immediately.”*

*“By reporting to the school authorities and advising their children. By letting them know the risk of being abused by anybody.”*

The data from the participants stressed the roles of parents in addressing GBV in the selected schools. Both schools stated that the role of parents in addressing school-related GBV is to work jointly with the school leaders to ensure safe spaces for the learners and the school community. The studies of Rammbuda (2023:298), Vanner (2023:4), and Maruo et. al. (2023) submitted that parents and community have their roles in the lives of young minds and in creating safe learning spaces where learners can thrive and improve academic excellence. Also, Ekiti State GBV policy stated on (page 11:XXI) in the directives column that *parents and guardians should be appraised on measures in place to protect children in schools and seek their cooperation in that regard*. Having said this about the findings from the selected participants One can infer that the roles of parents are important in ensuring safe schools. The next section discusses the role of learners in addressing GBV in schools.

### **5.8.3. Sub-theme 3: Role of the Learners in Addressing School GBV**

This section discusses the roles of learners in addressing school-related GBV in the selected schools. The role that learners play is quite important in addressing GBV in school because they interact daily with themselves, and if they decide to keep quiet, it will be detrimental to the efforts of school administrators to rid the issues of GBV in schools. The learners need to be apt in reporting issues of a gender nature to the teachers, and teachers in return should do everything within their power to expose the situation by keeping the victims' identity secret while dealing with the situation at schools. The principal of Red School revealed the duties and roles of learners in curbing gender-based issues in schools:

*Some learners are helping us because if they catch any student abusing the other in one way or another, they report it to the school authority. The teacher cannot be*

*everywhere, but the learners can be everywhere so if anyone is caught, they report immediately to the school authority for necessary action to be taken.*

Vice Principal 1 from Red School submitted:

*The learners have been educated, especially the prefects and the captain, to always report issues happening and watch over others. If they see any form of GBV on the school premises, you will see them running here to report or to any of the teachers. From there, we will educate the learners not to use physical means to solve issues that can endanger their lives. On the part of the teachers [verbally] abusing the learners because of their selfish interest, the learners are now talking. So, in our capacity, we will call the teacher and talk to him so as not to cause problems for himself.*

Vice Principal 2 from Red School stated:

*The role of the student is to voice out to the appropriate authority if anyone is harassing and molesting them. If they see anyone doing what is not right, they should report immediately to the school authority for quick action.*

The participants from the focus group discussion comprised of teachers and learners indicated their roles in the following conversations:

*“We have spies among the learners to monitor one another. We use the disciplined ones to monitor the thugs among them.”*

*The learners serve as Internal Security for the school. They are the internal security because they know themselves more well than the teachers. And they report to their teachers or the school authority on whatever is happening among them. We have local securities (amotekun) among the learners which most of the learners don't know. They report daily to the school management on whatever is going on in the*

*school. We use the discipline of learners to monitor, report, and observe the thugs among them and they also report to the counselling unit.*

*The role of learners in our school is to abide by the school rules and regulations laid down by the school authorities and make use of the home training given by their parents. The learners report anyone of bad behaviour in the school.*

*“The role of the learners is to watch over themselves. If I see anyone being abused in any way, then I will report to the teachers or the school authority.”*

In similar narratives, the principal of Blue School opined that:

*“The role of the learners is to be made watchmen over each other. So that if anything happens to anybody, the school management cannot be there all the time, and the teachers cannot be with them all the time when they are playing around and on the field.”*

Vice Principal 1 from Blue School submitted that:

*“The role of the student is to be a watchman for other learners. If they discover that some of their friends are not in the school, they will come and report to the school authority.”*

The role of learners, according to Vice Principal 2 from Blue school remained to report cases:

*“The role of the learners in addressing school GBV is to report any violence either the student who is affected directly, or his/her friend should report.”*

The counsellor stated:

*The role of the learners in the school is that they watch over themselves. Those in the school-related GBV (SRGBV) club sensitise their fellow learners so that any time they have any issue they can contact them directly, and the school management before we forward it to the GBV official.*

Participants in the focus group from Blue School stated:

*The role of the learners is not to keep mute when abused because it can affect the health of the learners. The learners should speak out if they encounter any form of abuse. They can go to the teachers, the counsellor, or the school authority before it is too late.*

*“The learners should watch over others; when they see anyone being abused or going astray, they should report to the school management or their parents.”*

*“The learners should report to his /her parent at home if they cannot report to the school authority so that the matter can be taken up immediately.”*

*By speaking up to anyone they are free with, or members of the school-related GBV (SRGBV) clubs, they will help in reporting the case to the school authority for necessary action. So, through this, we can curb GBV.*

The data above revealed that both schools are conversant with the right roles of learners in addressing GBV in the selected schools. The learners were seen to be watchmen and their brother's keepers in maintaining a safe classroom for learners. This finding is also consistent with the studies of Dodo and Maryam (2022:109); and Rammbuda (2023:297), that the roles of learners in schools is to be the bystanders and be given youth leadership roles in schools for watching and reporting the occurrence of gender nature to the school authorities. Ekiti State GBV policy states that *school authorities should give supervisory roles to teachers, parents, and school prefects in preventing GBV in schools*. With the above exploration, one could assume that only prefects are given roles in school, and this responsibility could be extended to other learners to be bystanders and watchmen for

their fellow learners. The next section discusses the challenges schools encounter in addressing GBV in schools.

#### **5.8.4. Sub-theme 4: Influence of School Leadership Practices in Addressing GBV.**

This section discusses the influence that school administrators have in addressing GBV in the selected schools. The selected participants revealed that leadership practices influence learners in schools. The positive leadership influence, according to Parkes Et. al., (2016:27) goes a long way in equipping the learners and teachers on the right way to address the issues of gender nature in the schools, through some strategies as discussed in the previous section. The principal of the Red School remarked:

*We discourage the seniors from bullying the junior ones and when they are caught in any form of abuse on the learners, especially the girls they will be suspended from the school and if the offence is grievous, they might be expelled from the system.*

Vice Principal 1 from Red School explained that:

*The influence of school leaders' practices in addressing GBV is that anyone caught in the act of any form of abuse will not go unpunished. Some might be suspended and some expelled, depending on the offence of the learners.*

Red School teachers and learners in a focus group discussion reiterated that:

*"The influence of the school leadership practices is that we expel the erring from the school, depending on the offence committed and we give them internal suspension with hard labour."*

*"At times we made their mates talk to them and ask them about what they see that their mate has done and what advice they will give to him/her."*

*“Is by punishing the learners depending on the offence that he /she has committed.”*

*“Every Friday, the school organises a gathering where they educate us on GBV.”*

The Principal from Blue School also remarked in his school:

*We talked to the learners on morning assembly where we normally give them exhortations from the Bible to let them know the adverse effects of these things if they are practiced by them. So, that is the most important influence we have on them.*

Vice Principal 1 exposed:

*The influence of the school leadership practice in addressing GBV in our school is that every Friday, afternoon we have a social gathering from 12 noon to 1 p.m.*

Vice Principal 2 indicated:

*I will say, leadership by example because in our school you cannot see our teachers fighting. There is no way we don't have conflict, but we do manage our conflict. We discourage the senior ones from beating the learners and we also discourage them from holding cane.*

The counsellor said:

*In terms of bullying, we ask the one who is guilty to go home for two weeks' suspension and after the suspension; the student will be punished for fighting in the school.*

Blue School teachers and learners in focus group discussions have this to say regarding the influence leaders have on learners dealing with GBV:

*The school leadership creates awareness among the learners and lets them know the implications behind it. In addressing the issue, the student may be suspended or expelled, depending on the gravity of what the student has done. The student given suspension will also be punished when coming back to the system to serve as an example to other people.*

*The school leaders talk to the learners every morning on the assembly ground and advise them on the way to live a good life. We talk to them about how to be a better person in society and how they will be useful for themselves in the future.*

A common view among the participants was that school leaders use various leadership strategies to influence positive behaviours among the learners to ensure safe spaces for learning and teaching in the selected schools. Both schools revealed in data that they deal with GBV with leadership practices that are intended to end the menace in schools, and that they are ready and proactive in dealing with issues of gender nature. The study of Ojo et. al. (2023) is in line with the themes from the study that the leadership of the schools has a lot to do in ridding the schools of GBV. The power of strong leadership can determine whether the problem will persist, reduce, or be non-existent in Nigerian schools. The next section discusses the challenges that schools encounter in addressing GBV.

### **5.9. Theme 8: Challenges that schools encounter in addressing GBV.**

This section discusses the participants' views on the challenges they encounter when addressing GBV in the selected schools. The challenges that school administrators encounter while addressing GBV in their schools are somehow relative to the environments and can be either emotional or psychological (Moletsane, 2023:241; Cahill, Et. al. 2023). The principal of Red School stated that:

*The challenge the school encounters in addressing GBV is that if any student is suspended, you will see the chiefs in town coming to the school authority to plead on behalf of the student that they should be released.*

Vice Principal 1 from Red School, in the same manner, indicated the challenges encountered when addressing GBV to be:

*The challenge we have is learners keeping things to themselves and not reporting to the appropriate authority to take necessary actions. And when there is a serious case of either rape, the victim will not want to take it up because of stigmatisation. We have been counselling [advising] them now that if they [learners] have been abused in one way or another, they [learners] should speak up. We told them that keeping things inside will kill them internally [is detrimental to them].*

Vice Principal 2 Red School specified the challenges to be:

*The challenges we have is on the part of the government. The government should provide some materials to the learners, especially the girls, like books to make them be informed. Some female learners also need financial help because the school might not be able to give them all those things, but the government can. Some female learners might not even eat from home and when they see these people promising them all these things, they will fall into their hands, which has led them to be victims of this GBV.*

Participants from the focus group discussions (teachers and learners) from Red School exposed the challenges that the school leadership encounters:

*“The challenges we encounter here are from the parents; they always listen to their children. Some will come here to abuse and harass us [teachers]. The government too is not helping because they will tell us not to chase any student out and this makes the learners misbehave.”*

*“The most difficult challenge is the government policy on education that we should not beat any student or give them punishment. Whatever they do in school is accepted and this is very bad. In the olden days, it was the parents that encouraged the teachers to discipline [beat] learners.”*

*“The challenges are on the parents and the government... parent: when the teacher beats their children, instead of them to hear from both parties they will only hear from the side of their children and start to react.”*

*“The major challenge that we have is the indiscipline on the part of the learners. Some learners don’t obey the rules of the school that you come to school by 8 and go by 2.”*

The principal from Blue School also found out that the challenge is indiscipline on the part of the learners:

*The first challenge is the lack of discipline on the part of the learners and the discipline should be from home. A lot of awareness still needs to be given to these parents. Most of them do not know that education starts at home. We do call PTA (Parent, Teacher Association) meetings to talk and communicate with the parents on these things that happen in the school, but it seems as if those parents still don’t know their roles yet and that is part of the challenges that the school is facing.*

Vice Principal 1 from Blue School indicated the challenge to be:

*The school has so many challenges. Some parents visit the school and start abusing the school authority and some learners invite their hooligan friends on drugs to come to fight and harass us. Some will even try to beat the school authorities and from there, we often invite the police to the school to address the matter.*

Vice Principal 2 from Blue School showed:

*The challenge the school encounters is the indiscipline on the part of the learners. If you ask the learners not to bring their phones to the class, they will hide them and watch pornographic movies on them. The issue of phones has caused a lot in society, and the parents are not helping the situation because they are the ones buying sophisticated phones for their children.*

The counsellor revealed the challenges encountered to be:

*The parents have been coming to harass us when their children are being assaulted especially in bullying. If they injure or beat any of their children, they will make noise; then, we will investigate and have a necessary solution to their grievances.*

The participants from the focus group discussions (teachers and learners) of Blue School exposed the challenges to be:

*“The challenge is that when learners are being abused, they do not report to the school authority immediately for necessary action and by the time the school is aware, it might have been too late to act on the issue.”*

*“The challenge we have is on the part of the parent. The parents at times do not cooperate with the school management and they often come to the school and start harassing and abusing the teachers, instead of looking for a way to cooperate with the school to tackle the problem.”*

*The challenge the school has is that when the student is being harassed or abused in the school, they won't report it to the school management, but they go home and report to their parents while they were supposed to report to the school authority to handle the case. Some parents often come to school to fight with the teachers and school authorities.*

*When some learners are abused in school, they won't inform the teachers or the school authority and when they get home their parents will be like what are your teachers doing in the school and the parents often come to school and start embarrassing the teachers.*

The data above from the participants revealed that parents, the government, and the learners are the major challenges that the school administrators encounter in their duties towards addressing GBV in the selected participating schools. Red school revealed that

indiscipline was the first challenge. The school also confirmed that parents do come to school to fight when learners are being disciplined. In the Blue school, the school leaders laid claim to the government policy and parents coming to school to fight, when addressing GBV. These themes corroborate with the findings in Uloko and Ada (2022:88) that the challenges encountered while addressing GBV can be averted thereby, creating safe schools for learners even in conflict areas. Based on the above, one can infer that school leaders encounter challenges in their day-to-day administration of the school, especially when it comes to addressing GBV in the selected schools. The next section presents the summary of the chapter.

### **5.9. Summary of the Chapter**

In this chapter, I have examined the data gathered from semi-structured interviews, focus group discussion and documents analysis citing (Ekiti State GBV policy). The data was organized into themes that corresponded to the research questions and the themes were further analysed in relation to the document analysed to perfect triangulation of data. From the themes discussed in chapter five, several key findings emerged: the nature, causes, and consequences of GBV in the selected schools, the challenges faced by school leaders in addressing GBV, and the strategies employed by administrators to tackle this issue. These findings, along with their interpretations, are discussed in Chapter Six, which also explores the development of the SRGBV model for schools.

## CHAPTER SIX

### DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS, AND FORMULATION OF SRGBV MODEL FOR SCHOOLS

#### 6.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the key findings of the study and introduces the school-related GBV (SRGBV) model. The study aims to investigate the roles of school administrators in addressing GBV in selected schools. The findings are organised according to the study's objectives, which include exploring the nature, forms, and causes of GBV, as well as its consequences in the selected schools. Additionally, the chapter discusses the challenges that schools face in addressing GBV, the strategies administrators use to tackle the issue, and the influence of school leadership practices on addressing GBV. The chapter concludes by proposing an SRGBV model aimed at enhancing safety in schools. The research questions were raised as follows:

- What is the nature of GBV in the selected Nigerian secondary schools?
- What are the causes of GBV in the selected Nigerian secondary schools?
- How do school leaders address GBV in selected Nigerian secondary schools?
- Which model can be proposed in the form of school-related GBV?

To answer the research questions, the following findings emerged:

- Nature of GBV
- The causes of GBV
- Consequences of GBV in the selected schools
- Challenges that school leaders encounter in addressing GBV
- Strategies administrators implement to address GBV in the selected schools.

In the succeeding sections, the researcher discusses the findings that emerged from the data analysis concerning the literature review, focusing on two theoretical frameworks that undergirded the study. The researcher also linked the study's research questions with the findings of the study.

## **6.2. The nature of GBV in Nigeria secondary schools**

In this section, the participant's understanding of GBV in the selected schools is categorised under the nature of GBV. Also, in this section, forms of GBV in the selected schools are categorised under the nature of GBV. The findings revealed that there is a common view about the participants' understanding of GBV in the selected Nigerian schools. The participants' understanding of GBV is consistent with how it is defined in the literature. There is a consensus among the participants that the way they perceive and define GBV influences how they identify and respond to GBV incidents in their schools. The findings are consistent with the findings of Ojo, et al. (2023:182); Saadu, Ajayi, and Ajiboye (2022:19546), who conducted studies in Nigeria and found that school administrators are aware that the prevalence of GBV is high and that they understand the nature of GBV in schools. This was also corroborated by the submissions of Obi et al., (2023:110) who reveal that school administrators have the right understanding of the issue, and this has contributed to how it is addressed in the schools.

The findings also indicated that participants expressed their views about the nature of GBV by mentioning the forms of gender-based violence. Some common forms of GBV, as stated by the participants were bullying, sexual violence, victimisation of female learners by male teachers, fighting, rape, and social violence. This is in line with the findings of Orr et. al, (2022), that some school administrators know about the common forms of GBV and how it is detrimental to the achievement of school goals and objectives. The knowledge about the nature of GBV is consistent with the Social Cognitive Learning Theory, which believes strongly in the importance of social norms in shaping behaviour and in influencing behaviour (Villalonga-Aragón et al. 2023). For example, in some schools, traditional gender roles and patriarchal norms may likely condone or even

encourage GBV, making it more likely for individuals to engage in such behaviours. The understanding of GBV and the knowledge of the different forms in which it manifests in school settings will make teachers, learners, and school administrators aware of the menace and to guard against the phenomenon in schools.

### **6.3. The causes of GBV in the selected schools**

The study's findings indicating societal influences and broken homes as key causes of GBV align with social cognitive learning theory, which posits that individuals learn behaviours, attitudes, and norms through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. In the context of the selected schools, the participants' consensus on societal influences points to the role of external factors in shaping learners' behaviours. The notion that learners may perpetrate bullying because they observe such behaviours in society is consistent with social cognitive learning theory's emphasis on observational learning. Dwiningrum and Wahab (2020), and Elboj-Saso et al. (2022) support this idea, emphasising the role of societal norms and media influences in shaping students' understanding and enactment of GBV.

Moreover, the participants' association of technology, such as cell phones, with the manifestation of GBV in Blue School further supports the social cognitive learning theory. The theory suggests that individuals learn, not only through direct experiences, but also through the media and technological platforms (Scavarelli et al. 2021). The claim that learners watch violent behaviours on phones and subsequently replicate them reflects the impact of observational learning facilitated by technology. Similarly, the participants in Red School linking of moral decay and the decline of societal values school related GBV aligns with social cognitive learning theory's emphasis on the influence of societal norms and values (Lokot et al. 2020). In essence, the findings of the study provide insights into how external factors, observed through social learning processes, contribute to the perpetuation of GBV within school settings.

The findings of the current study are related to the findings of a study conducted by Jatmiko et. al. (2020), in Indonesia that found that the use of cell phones in schools often promotes school-related GBV and can be linked with the infiltration of the media in schools. Also, Evangelio, et. al. (2022) which was conducted in the United States of America found that cell phones promote cyberbullying. It therefore implies that GBV, that is influenced by society, is not only a challenge in developing countries but also in the developed world. Taking into consideration how the media influences violence aligns with the theory of social cognitive learning theory that when individuals grow up in an environment where violence is prevalent or tolerated, they are more likely to adopt similar behaviours.

The findings of the study, particularly, the influence of broken homes and learner backgrounds on school-related GBV, resonates with the principles of social cognitive learning theory, which posits that individuals learn through observation, imitation, and reinforcement of behaviours in their social environment. The emphasis on broken homes as a contributing factor suggests that learners may witness or experience violence within their family structures, and internalise these behaviours as acceptable or normative (Telzer et al. 2022). Social cognitive learning theory highlights the role of the family and of environmental factors in shaping individual behaviour, and the study's findings underscore how these internalised influences can manifest in school settings, contributing to GBV.

In contrast, the study conducted by Giumetti and Kowalski (2016), in the United States of America, which focuses on cyberbullying perpetuated through cell phones also aligns with the social cognitive learning theory, but it highlights external influences. In this context, learners in America appear to be influenced by external content accessed through cell phones, which shape their behaviours. The findings suggest that, in developed countries, the external cause of GBV is linked to cyberbullying, facilitated by technology. This demonstrates the role of external environmental factors such as media exposure and technological use, in shaping behaviours and attitudes related to GBV, thus providing a

nuanced understanding of how social cognitive learning theory manifests in diverse cultural and contextual settings.

The findings of the study align closely with the tenets of social cognitive learning theory, particularly in how broken families contribute to the shaping of attitudes toward school-related GBV. The study's observation that children who witness domestic violence or experience gender-based discrimination at home may normalise such behaviours or attitudes mirror the core principles of social cognitive learning theory (Chitsamatanga & Rembe, 2020; Heilman et al., 2024). The theory posits that individuals learn behaviours through observation, and if children are exposed to violent or discriminatory behaviours in their homes, they are likely to replicate these behaviours in other social settings, such as schools. The study's focus on the intergenerational transmission of violent behaviour, where boys replicate the aggressive actions witnessed at home, underscores the importance of familial influences in shaping attitudes and behaviours related to GBV.

Additionally, the study's exploration of the impact of single-parent households where boyfriends may perpetrate abuse aligns with the social cognitive learning theory's emphasis on the role of primary caregivers as models for behaviour (Singh et. al. 2021). Makhene (2022) found that the effect of broken homes caused by GBV further supports the idea that family dynamics play a crucial role in shaping attitudes and behaviours. The notion that children observe and learn behaviours, including attitudes toward gender roles from their parents or primary caregivers is a fundamental concept within social cognitive learning theory. Broken homes are characterised by violence or dysfunction, and when children internalise such aggressive or abusive behaviours, it contributes to the normalisation of such actions and potentially perpetuates a cycle of GBV in schools. The succeeding section discusses the consequences of GBV in the selected schools.

#### **6.4. Consequences of GBV in the Selected Schools.**

The consequences of GBV in the two selected schools have been identified as a significant concern, revealing divergent views among participants. The Red School

participants emphasised outcomes such as exposure to sexually transmitted diseases and death resulting from GBV, while those from Blue School highlighted consequences like dropout rates particularly among pregnant female learners, and low self-esteem among victims. These findings resonate with Mutasingwa and Mwaipopo (2023), a study in Tanzania, which reported similar consequences, indicating that the impacts of school-related GBV are not confined to a specific region, but are experienced globally. The Social Cognitive Learning Theory provides a viewpoint for the understanding of these consequences, as learners observe and internalise the aggressive and discriminatory behaviours they witness, and thus, influences their interactions, relationships, and overall well-being.

In the context of the Social Cognitive Learning Theory, learners in environments where GBV occurs may replicate these actions in their behaviour. Witnessing or experiencing such violence erodes learners' confidence, diminishes self-efficacy, and negatively affects their academic performance. Uyanne (2021), found in Ilorin, Nigeria, that when female adolescents are faced with sexual harassment, the consequences are low self-esteem, high dropout rates, and poor academic performance. The theory emphasises the role of observation and modelling in shaping behaviour, and it how exposure to GBV can have pervasive and detrimental effects on learners' cognitive and emotional well-being, thus, creating challenges in navigating social situations safely.

In addressing the consequences of GBV, it is important to consider the role of social cognitive learning theory in shaping both the behaviours of individuals and the broader school culture. Administrators must recognise the power of modelling positive behaviours, fostering a safe and respectful school environment, and implementing interventions that break the cycle of violence through educational programs and awareness campaigns.

### **6.5. Challenges that Schools Encounter in Addressing GBV.**

The study's findings highlight significant challenges in addressing GBV within the selected schools, and the lens of social leadership theory provides insights into understanding and

potentially addressing these challenges. In Red School, the identified challenge of indiscipline aligns with Social Leadership Theory, which underscores the role of leaders in shaping organisational culture. School administrators as leaders play a critical role in establishing and reinforcing behavioural norms within the school environment. These findings diverge from Olowoniyi et al. (2023) which identified challenges such as early marriage, pregnancy, and misconceptions around religion as specific hurdles in addressing GBV. In Red School, the presence of religious misconceptions regarding gender roles and norms was noted as a significant barrier which aligns with Uloko and Ada (2022) who suggest that appropriate strategies are essential for minimising the challenges related to GBV in schools. Also, the contention that parents come to school to confront staff during disciplinary actions points to a potential breakdown in communication and a lack of shared understanding of disciplinary policies. A socially oriented leader, as advocated by Social Leadership Theory, would prioritise effective communication and community engagement to build a consensus on disciplinary approaches and to foster a sense of collective responsibility for maintaining a safe and conducive learning environment.

Similarly, in Blue School where challenges are attributed to the lagging enforcement of government policies and parents' confrontations, the influence of social leadership becomes apparent. A socially conscious leader would advocate for the implementation of policies and work collaboratively with parents to address concerns and to garner support for corrective measures (Psychogios & Dimitriadis, 2021). The absence of strong leadership commitment, as perceived by some administrators, emphasises the need for leaders who are efficient in policy implementation and are socially adept in navigating complex interpersonal dynamics. Social Leadership Theory suggests that leaders who prioritise interpersonal relationships, effective communication, and community engagement contribute significantly to creating a safe and inclusive school environment (Leithwood, 2021). As the study transitions to discussing the strategies that administrators implement, the application of social leadership principles may offer valuable insights into fostering an environment conducive to preventing and addressing GBV within schools.

## **6.6. Strategies that Administrators Implement to Address GBV in the Selected Schools.**

The participants in both schools employ a range of strategies to address GBV and to cultivate safe and inclusive environments. Among these strategies are suspension and expulsions, which serve as disciplinary measures to deter and address instances of GBV. However, a noteworthy finding is the use of corporal punishment, despite its prohibition in schools. This practice, observed by participants, reflects a concerning departure from established policies and raises questions about the alignment of disciplinary actions with ethical and legal standards. Chavula et al. (2023) emphasise the importance of emotional intelligence in implementing policies, counselling, and in conducting disciplinary hearings related to GBV. This aligns with the principles of social justice leadership, which underscores the significance of ethical decision-making, fairness, and equity in addressing complex issues such as GBV within educational settings.

Social justice leadership, as a guiding framework, emphasises the critical role of school administrators in establishing and enforcing policies to prevent and address GBV. Leaders play a pivotal role in setting clear expectations for behaviour, delineating consequences for violations, and establishing procedures for reporting and responding to incidents. The commitment of effective leaders to fostering a safe and respectful school environment is communicated through the consistent enforcement of policies. Moreover, these leaders ensure the availability of support services, including counselling and legal assistance for victims of GBV. The provision of referrals to external organisations, when necessary, further demonstrates leaders' commitment to supporting victims and survivors. This comprehensive approach aligns with the principles of social justice leadership, as it emphasises fairness, equity, and the promotion of a safe and inclusive learning environment.

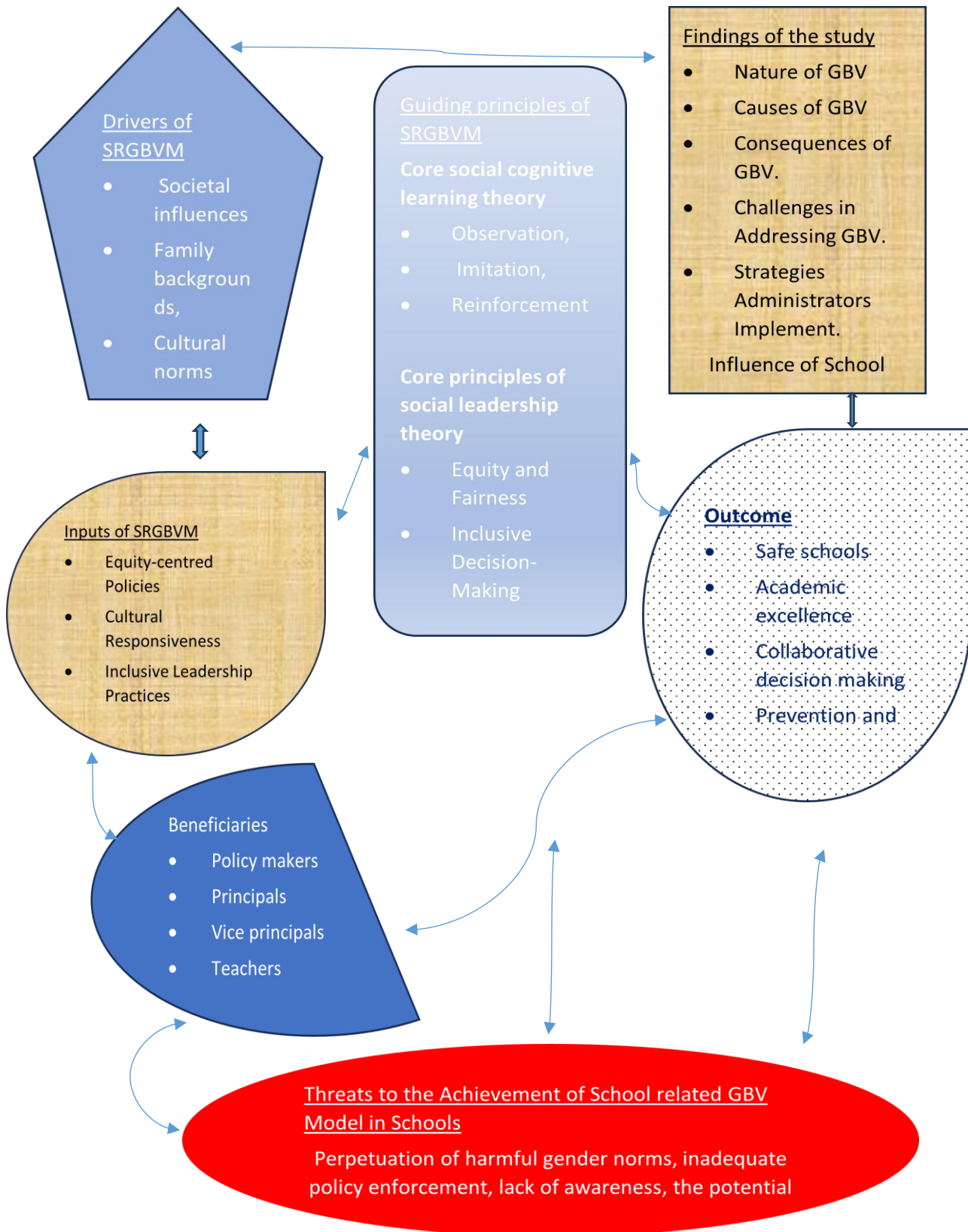
The findings underscore the importance of effective leadership in addressing GBV within school contexts. Social justice leadership principles provide a valuable framework for understanding how leaders can establish and enforce policies, communicate

expectations, and provide support services to prevent and respond to GBV. The challenges identified in the study, particularly the use of prohibited corporal punishment, highlight the need for ongoing training and awareness programmes to ensure that disciplinary actions align with ethical and legal standards (Lokot et al. 2021).

### **6.7. Unveiling the Strategy “*Formulation of SRGBV Model*” for Addressing GBV in Schools.**

The theoretical framework and the study’s findings reveal useful insights into exploring leadership practices for addressing GBV, both internationally and in Nigeria. Chapter Five contextualised the leadership practices of addressing GBV in selected schools. Based on the lessons drawn from this study’s empirical findings and literature review, the researcher proposed a School-Related GBV (SRGBV) model. The SRGBV model is shown below in the following figure.

**Figure 1: School-Related GBV (SRGBV) Model**



## **Figure 1: Explanation for the Proposed School-related GBV Model for Schools.**

The School-related GBV Model (SRGBVM) is an integrated framework designed to address the various facets of GBV within schools. The model identifies key drivers, including societal influences, family backgrounds, cultural norms, and parental confrontations, shedding light on the complex interplay of the factors contributing to GBV. The findings of the study further illuminate the nature, causes, consequences, challenges, strategies implemented by administrators, and the influence of school leadership practices in the context of GBV. The guiding principles of SRGBVM draw from core concepts of the social cognitive learning theory which it emphasises observation, imitation, and reinforcement, and the social leadership theory which emphasises equity, inclusivity, and advocacy for marginalised groups. Threats to the achievement of the SRGBV model encompass the perpetuation of harmful gender norms, inadequate policy enforcement, lack of awareness, and the potential normalisation of violence, which collectively impede efforts to create safe and inclusive schools.

The envisioned outcome of the SRGBV model is a school environment characterised by safety, academic excellence, collaborative decision-making, prevention and intervention strategies, empowerment, inclusion, equitable settings, and behavioural change. These outcomes are driven by the inputs of the model, which include equity-centred policies, cultural responsiveness, and inclusive leadership practices. The intended beneficiaries of this model span various stakeholders including policymakers, principals, vice principals, teachers, and learners, each playing a crucial role in fostering an environment that is free of GBV, and in promoting positive educational experiences. By connecting these components, the SRGBV model offers a comprehensive approach to addressing and preventing GBV within Nigerian schools, by aiming to create a transformative impact on the educational landscape. The components of the model are discussed below.

### **6.7.1.1. Drawing from the Drivers of School-related GBV model**

The drivers for this model include societal influences, family backgrounds, cultural norms, and systemic issues. Societal influences play a significant role in shaping attitudes and behaviours related to GBV within educational environments. Societal norms and expectations regarding gender roles may contribute to the perpetuation of violence, reinforcing harmful stereotypes and power imbalances (Pérez-Martínez et al. 2023). For instance, patriarchal societies may normalise aggression and dominance, influencing how individuals including students and educators perceive and enact GBV. This aligns with studies like the work of Jewkes and Morrell (2010), which emphasises the role of broader societal contexts in influencing behaviours that are related to GBV.

The family environment is a crucial factor in understanding the drivers of GBV in schools (Gausman et al. 2020). Children often learn behaviours and attitudes from their families, and exposure to violence or discrimination within the family can normalise such conducts. Family dynamics, including the presence of domestic violence or gender-based discrimination, may contribute to the replication of these behaviours in educational settings. Research by Fulu et al. (2013) highlights the intergenerational transmission of violence and the impact of family backgrounds on shaping attitudes toward GBV. Cultural norms and values shape the collective mindset of a community and influence perceptions of gender roles and relationships. Some cultures may have deeply ingrained beliefs that perpetuate inequalities and contribute to the acceptance of GBV. For example, cultural norms that emphasise male dominance and control can foster an environment where violence against women is tolerated. The work of Barker et al. (2007), emphasises the need to address cultural norms as part of comprehensive efforts to prevent and respond to GBV within various contexts, including schools.

Systemic issues within schools, such as inadequate policies, poor enforcement mechanisms, and a lack of gender-sensitive curricula, can contribute to the perpetuation of GBV. A study by Cheetham and Gelperin, (2018) highlights the importance of addressing systemic issues, including discriminatory practices and policies, to create safe and supportive learning environments. When educational systems fail to provide clear guidelines and consequences for GBV, it allows for the continuation of discriminatory

behaviours. Addressing systemic issues is crucial for creating a foundation that fosters gender equality and which prevents the perpetuation of violence within schools.

#### **6.7.1.2. Guiding Principles of Social Cognitive Learning Theory and Social Justice Leadership Theory.**

The Social Cognitive Learning Theory, proposed by Albert Bandura, emphasises the role of observational learning, imitation, and reinforcement in shaping individual behaviours. In the context of GBV in Nigerian schools, SCLT suggests that students learn behaviours that are related to violence through observation, particularly within their social environment. The guiding principles include the recognition that learners acquire attitudes and actions by observing models which can be both positive and negative. In addressing GBV, educators and leaders can leverage positive role models and implement interventions that provide alternatives to aggressive or discriminatory behaviours. Bandura's concept of self-efficacy is also relevant in highlighting the importance of individuals' belief in their ability to enact change. Empowering students with the belief that they can contribute to a safe and respectful school environment can be a key principle in addressing GBV in Nigerian schools.

Moreover, social justice leadership theory focuses on creating equitable and inclusive school environments, addressing systemic issues that contribute to gender inequalities. In the Nigerian context, where GBV is a concern, the guiding principles involve promoting fairness, advocating for the rights and well-being of all students, and actively working towards dismantling discriminatory practices. Social justice leaders in Nigerian schools should prioritise the elimination of GBV by implementing and enforcing policies that foster a safe and respectful culture (Gümüş et al. 2021). This includes creating an environment that values diversity, challenges harmful cultural norms, and which provides support services for victims. The principles of fairness, equity, and inclusivity are integral in the approach, ensuring that educational leaders actively engage in the broader social discourse to influence positive change in attitudes and practices related to GBV in Nigerian schools.

### **6.7.1.3. Findings of the Study**

The findings of the study reveal an understanding of the phenomenon within the school context. The nature of GBV was explicated, highlighting diverse forms such as bullying, sexual harassment, and discriminatory practices. The study delved into the causes of SRGBV, elucidating the significant role of societal influences, broken homes, family backgrounds, and cultural norms in perpetuating such violence. Consequences of SRGBV were identified as encompassing academic underperformance, learner low self-esteem, dropout of learners, exposure to sexually transmitted diseases, and sometimes death. The challenges faced by schools in addressing SRGBV were illuminated as including systemic issues, inadequate policy enforcement, and parental confrontations. Administrators employed various strategies, such as awareness campaigns and disciplinary actions to mitigate SRGBV (Wanjiru, 2021). The impact of leadership practices, influenced by Social Cognitive Learning Theory and Social Justice Leadership Theory was evident in creating safer and more inclusive environments. Overall, the study provides an overview of SRGBV, and offers insights into its complexities, contributing factors, and potential avenues for intervention within the Nigerian educational landscape.

### **6.7.1.4. Educational Outcomes**

The educational outcomes associated with School-Related GBV (SRGBV) are extensive and profound, influencing academic performance, student well-being, and the overall educational experience (Hoosen et al. 2022). When schools prioritise safety and implement preventive and intervention strategies, academic outcomes have a positive impact. A safe school environment, free of GBV, fosters a conducive atmosphere for learning, and allows students to focus on their studies without the fear of harassment or discrimination (Houéto & Good, 2020). Academic excellence is closely linked to this safety; when students feel secure, they are more likely to engage actively in the educational process, leading to improved academic performance.

Furthermore, collaborative decision-making and an equitable school environment contribute to positive educational outcomes. When decisions are made collaboratively, considering the input of diverse stakeholders, they enhance a sense of inclusivity and fairness. An equitable school environment ensures that all students, regardless of gender or background, have equal access to resources and opportunities, promoting a level playing field. This supports academic achievement and contributes to a holistic educational experience. Empowerment and inclusion further enhance these outcomes by creating a culture where students feel valued and supported, leading to improved well-being and mental health. Additionally, Qadeer et al. (2024), posited that behavioural change initiatives align with the Social Cognitive Learning Theory, encouraging positive behaviours and fostering a school culture that prioritises respect, empathy, and understanding. In essence, a school environment that integrates these elements is more likely to yield positive educational outcomes, shaping students' academic success and their overall well-being.

#### **6.7.1.5. Beneficiaries of the Model**

The beneficiaries of the School-Related GBV (SRGBV) model encompass a wide range of stakeholders within the educational system. Policymakers stand to benefit as the model provides insights and evidence-based recommendations that can inform the development and implementation of effective policies addressing GBV in schools. Principals and Vice-principals gain valuable guidance on fostering safe and inclusive school environments, equipped with strategies to prevent and address GBV. Teachers benefit by gaining a deeper understanding of the complexities of SRGBV and by receiving support in implementing preventative measures and intervention strategies. Perhaps most crucially, learners are the ultimate beneficiaries as the SRGBV model strives to create a school environment free of violence, thereby promoting their safety, well-being, and academic success. By addressing the nature of GBV, the SRGBV model aims to empower all stakeholders, and foster collaborative and concerted efforts to eradicate violence within school settings.

#### **6.7.1.6. Threats to School-related GBV**

GBV within Nigerian schools poses significant threats that extend beyond immediate harm to individuals. One major threat is the perpetuation of harmful gender norms and stereotypes. The prevalence of GBV can reinforce and perpetuate societal expectations and biases, contributing to the normalisation of aggressive and discriminatory behaviours. This perpetuation of harmful norms not only affects the victims, but it also influences the attitudes and beliefs of the broader school community, hindering progress toward gender equality.

Another critical threat is the inadequate enforcement of policies to address GBV. Despite the existence of policies aimed at curbing the menace, the lack of effective implementation and enforcement allows GBV to persist. Inadequate policy enforcement may be due to various factors, including a lack of awareness among educators and administrators, bureaucratic hurdles, or a lack of resources. This creates an environment where perpetrators are not held accountable, and victims may be hesitant to report incidents, leading to a culture of impunity. The potential normalisation of violence is a further threat, as incidents may be dismissed or downplayed, contributing to a culture where abusive behaviour is deemed acceptable. This normalisation not only hinders efforts to create safe and inclusive schools but also perpetuates a cycle of violence that can have long-term consequences on the well-being and development of students. Addressing these threats requires a comprehensive approach which involves policy reforms, awareness campaigns, and the cultivation of a school culture that rejects GBV.

#### **6.8. Drawing from the Principles of Social Cognitive Learning Theory**

Social Cognitive Learning Theory revolves around the principles of observational learning, imitation, and reinforcement. At its core, the theory posits that individuals learn by observing the behaviours of others and the consequences of those behaviours. The principle of observation emphasises the importance of role models and the impact they have on shaping behaviours. Imitation involves individuals replicating observed

behaviours, while reinforcement refers to the consequences, whether positive or negative, that influence the likelihood of behaviour recurrence. Bandura's concept of self-efficacy is integral to the theory in that it highlights individuals' beliefs in their capability to perform tasks and enact change. Social cognitive learning theory underscores the dynamic interplay between cognitive, behavioural, and environmental factors in shaping human behaviour, offering insights into how individuals acquire, maintain, and modify their attitudes and actions through social interactions and observational experiences.

### **6.9. Drawing from the Principles of Social Justice Leadership Theory**

Social justice leadership theory is grounded in principles that emphasise fairness, equity, and inclusivity within educational leadership. This theory advocates for leaders who actively address systemic inequalities and who work towards creating environments that ensure that every individual, regardless of background or identity, has equal access to opportunities and resources. The core principles include promoting equity and fairness, fostering inclusive decision-making processes that consider diverse perspectives, and advocating for marginalised groups (Shaked, 2020). Social justice leaders strive to dismantle discriminatory practices, challenge bias, and create a school culture that values diversity (Castrellón, 2020). The theory emphasises the importance of leaders who are acting as advocates for social justice, and are actively working to create educational environments that are responsive to the needs and rights of all individuals as well as fostering a sense of belonging and respect within the school community.

### **6.10. Blending Social Cognitive Learning Theory and Social Justice Leadership Theory to Justify the Need for the Proposed SRGBV Model.**

Understanding the ethical and cognitive aspects of this study is made possible by combining Social Justice Leadership Theory with Social Cognitive Learning Theory. Social cognitive learning theory focuses on how people pick up actions and ideas through modelling, self-efficacy building, and observation (Bandura, 2023). The theory highlights how social factors may either support or contradict detrimental norms and behaviours in

the setting of GBV. It emphasises how crucial it is to provide people with strong role models, teach them how to resolve conflicts peacefully and give them the tools they need to become change agents in their communities.

Social justice leadership theory places strong emphasis on the moral and ethical duties that leaders must advance equality, justice, and the destruction of oppressive structures (Obiagu, 2023). Regarding GBV, it demands that school administrators behave morally and actively seek to establish a fair and just atmosphere that is devoid of prejudice and violence. Every person's right and dignity are recognised, and negative power dynamics are attempted to be challenged. The blend of the two theories that combine these ideas results in a paradigm that stresses the moral responsibility of advancing social change and justice while also addressing the behavioural and cognitive components of GBV prevention. This strategy is especially pertinent in the Nigerian setting, where ingrained societal and cultural norms support the continuation of GBV.

The blend of the two theories reflect that schools often play a special role in questioning these standards, offering an alternative story, and using leadership and education to end the cycle of GBV. By highlighting the necessity of challenging harmful norms, offering good role models, empowering learners, and promoting equality and justice, a combination of Social Cognitive Learning Theory and Social Justice Leadership Theory justifies tackling GBV in schools. This method emphasises the moral obligation of educators and administrators to provide a more secure and equitable learning environment while acknowledging the intricate interactions between individual learning environments.

### **6.11. Summary of the Chapter**

In this chapter, the discussion of findings was comprehensively examined and lensed with the appropriate theory in the study. The findings revealed in this section are the nature of GBV, the causes of GBV, consequences of GBV in the selected schools, challenges that school leaders encounter in addressing GBV, and the strategies that administrators

implement to address GBV in the selected schools. Building on the inference from the findings, the researcher proposed a School-related GBV Model to address GBV in the selected schools. The next section discusses the conclusions, recommendations, and contributions to knowledge.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **7.1. Introduction**

This chapter presents the summary of chapters, conclusions, the major contributions to knowledge, recommendations, and implications for school authorities (the policymakers, school administrators, counsellors, GBV desk officers, teachers, and learners), as well as recommendations for further studies. Four research questions were repeated for readers easiness, they are:

1. What is the nature of GBV in Nigerian secondary schools?
2. What are the causes of GBV in Nigerian secondary schools?
3. How do school leaders address GBV in Nigerian secondary schools?
4. Which model can be proposed in the form of school-related GBV?

#### **7.2. Summary of chapters**

This section summarises what the chapters entail, as comprised in this study. These chapters are arranged below.

##### **7.2.1. Chapter One: Introductory Background to the Study**

Chapter One provided an overview of the study, discussing the research problem and the rationale for the research. It highlighted the prevalence of Gender-based Violence (GBV) in selected Nigerian schools and underscored the need for a school-based intervention model. The chapter included a preliminary review of relevant literature to support the study's significance. It also introduced the two theories namely, Social Cognitive Learning Theory and Social Justice Leadership Theory, which frame the study. The chapter also discussed their limitations and the rationale for their combination. The chapter outlined the research questions, aims, and the objectives. It briefly touched on the research

design, paradigm, and approach for the study, focusing on the case study design. Participant selection and the use of thematic analysis were explained. Additionally, the chapter briefly discussed the study's value, defined key terms, outlined the ethical clearance process, and explored trustworthiness. The structure of the thesis, including its chapters, was also outlined.

### **7.2.2. Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework**

This chapter unpacked the two theories that guided the study: Social Cognitive Learning Theory and Social Justice Leadership Theory. The origins of these two theories were traced, and the principles and philosophy of both theories were also explored. Further, the tenets of the theories were explored and their relevance to the study was explored. The limitations of SCLT were shown, thereby creating a gap for social justice leadership theory to cover. At the end of the chapter, the justification for the blend of both theories and their relevance in addressing GBV were explained. The chapter also reviewed recent literatures to support the theory.

### **7.2.3. Chapter Three: Literature Review**

In this chapter, I conducted a literature review on various concepts related to addressing gender-based violence (GBV) in Nigerian schools through leadership strategies. The review revealed an examination of gender-based issues within Nigerian educational settings, including an exploration of the causes of GBV in schools. Additionally, I explored several leadership theories to identify those that are applicable to addressing GBV in schools. The chapter also reviewed relevant policies guiding GBV in schools and examined leadership theories closely aligned with the two theories that were adopted for the study. Finally, the chapter concluded with a review of theories related to GBV.

### **7.2.4. Chapter Four: Research Methodology**

This chapter outlined the research methodology employed in this study. It provided a detailed explanation of the steps taken to achieve the study's aims and objectives,

ensuring clarity for readers. The chapter included a thorough analysis of the research design, paradigm, methodology, approach, and sampling techniques used. It also described the characteristics of the research participants and the contexts of the selected schools. The chapter explained the data collection methods, instruments, and the sources used in the study. Additionally, it discusses the thematic analysis and its alignment with the research objectives. The chapter then concluded with a discussion of the ethical considerations in the study, while the data presentation was addressed in the subsequent chapter.

### **7.2.5. Chapter Five: Data Presentation**

This chapter used the thematic analysis procedure efficaciously. The data generated through multiple case studies, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were arranged and thematised to make meaning. The data that emerged were thematised and aligned with the research questions and objectives according to the principles of thematic analysis as proposed by Braun and Clarke and Weate, (2016). In this chapter, the researcher presented and discussed the data obtained from semi-structured individual interviews and their connection to the Ekiti State GBV policy. The researcher organised the data into themes that addressed the research questions. Based on the themes discussed in chapter five, five major findings emerged: the nature of GBV, the causes of GBV, consequences of GBV in the selected schools, challenges that school leaders encounter in addressing GBV, and strategies that administrators implement to address GBV in the selected schools. The interpretation of findings and the formulation of the SRGBV application structure for schools were discussed in Chapter Six.

### **7.2.6. Chapter Six: Discussion and Interpretation of Findings, and the Formulation of SRGBV Model for Schools.**

In this chapter, the findings were discussed in relation to the relevant theory in the study. The discussion highlighted the roles of school leaders, learners, parents, and community members in working together to ensure safe environments in the selected schools. The

findings included the nature and causes of GBV, locations where GBV occurs in schools, existing policies against school-based gender violence, consequences of GBV in the selected schools, challenges faced by schools in addressing GBV, strategies implemented by administrators to tackle GBV, and the impact of school leadership practices in addressing GBV. Based on the findings, the researcher proposed a model for addressing or preventing GBV in schools.

### **7.3. Conclusions of the Study**

The study examined leadership practices in addressing GBV in schools, and utilised the social cognitive learning theory and social justice leadership theory as theoretical frameworks. Thematic analysis was employed to analyse the data collected from in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, along with document analysis of the Ekiti State School Gender-based Policy. The findings revealed that despite the policy formulated for schools, GBV still occurred in the schools. Also observed was the provision of gender desk officers in schools, as prescribed by the GBV policy even though the school administrators did not create such offices for easy learner access to reports. Instead, the schools relied on the use of counselling services as a one-size-fits-all for the problem of GBV in schools. To mitigate the problems, causes, challenges, and consequences left by GBV in schools, the proposed SRGBV application model was considered a panacea for addressing the GBV problems. Nevertheless, there were some limitations to the implementation of such SRGBV applications which included electricity and data charges; learners are not allowed to bring phones to school, as it could impede the implementation of such policy contextually.

From inference, the study concluded that effective leadership practices and roles of stakeholders in addressing GBV in school with the lens of the two theories (SCLT and SJLT) are a function of safe spaces for all learners where learning can take place without fear or intimidation. This also improves the overall well-being of learners and improves the learner's academic performance. The research questions were answered in chapters

five, six, and seven of this study. The research objectives were stated in relation to the conclusions of the study.

### **7.3.1. Exploration of the Nature of GBV in Nigeria Selected Secondary Schools.**

In conclusion, the study delved into understanding the nature of GBV in selected Nigerian schools. The researcher concluded that there is a common and consistent understanding of GBV among participants. This understanding aligned with the literature's definition of GBV which indicated a shared perception of what constitutes GBV in educational settings. Participants' awareness and recognition of GBV suggest a level of consciousness regarding this issue, which can potentially contribute to more effective identification and response to GBV incidents within schools. Furthermore, the participants' understanding of GBV influencing their identification and response to incidents implies a proactive approach to addressing GBV in schools. This suggests that efforts to raise awareness and educate school staff about GBV have been somewhat successful. However, in conclusion, the study highlighted the need for continued education and training to enhance the capacity of school personnel to effectively address GBV. Finally, the study suggested a solid foundation for addressing GBV in Nigerian schools with an emphasis on understanding, awareness, and proactive responses from the school leaders to the learners.

### **7.3.2. Description of the causes of GBV in the Selected Schools**

The study suggested that the causes, consequences, and challenges of GBV in the selected schools were often influenced by societal norms, broken homes, and technological abuse. The alignment with social cognitive learning theory indicated that learners learn behaviours, attitudes, and norms through observation, imitation, and reinforcement. The study's focus on societal influences reflected the participants' consensus on the role of external factors in shaping learners' behaviours, and specified the need to address societal norms to prevent GBV. Additionally, the association of technology with the manifestation of GBV highlighted the impact of observational learning

facilitated by technology, and suggested the importance of educating learners about responsible technology use. Moreover, the participants' linking of moral decay and the decline of societal values to school-related GBV underscores the influence of societal norms and values on behaviour. This aligned with social cognitive learning theory's emphasis on the influence of external factors on individuals' behaviours. In conclusion, the study provided an understanding of how external factors, observed through social learning processes, contribute to the perpetuation of GBV within the school environment. Addressing these causes requires approaches that consider societal influences, broken homes, and the role of technology in shaping learners' behaviours and attitudes.

There are differing perspectives that suggest that the consequences of GBV are many-sided, encompassing both physical health risks and psychosocial impacts, and the fact that they underscore the need for comprehensive interventions to address the complex issues. The findings also underscore the global nature of the consequences of school-related GBV, as evidenced by the resonance with a study in Tanzania. This indicates that the impacts of GBV in schools are not limited to specific regions but are experienced globally. The application of social cognitive learning theory helps to elucidate these consequences since it suggests that learners internalise and replicate the behaviours they observe, which can perpetuate a cycle of violence. The study suggested the need for school leaders to understand the social and psychological mechanisms at play in schools as well as the interventions in the form of strategies which must be tailored to addressing the causes of GBV in schools, and in ultimately working towards creating safer and more supportive environments for all learners.

It was revealed that the confrontations between parents and staff during disciplinary actions suggest a breakdown in communication and a lack of shared understanding of disciplinary policies. A socially oriented leader would prioritise building relationships with parents and the community to foster a sense of collective responsibility for maintaining a safe learning environment. The study explained that by emphasising communication and community engagement, school leaders can work towards addressing GBV challenges and promoting a culture of respect and inclusivity within schools.

### **7.3.3. Examination of how school leaders address GBV in Selected Nigerian Secondary Schools.**

In conclusion, the study revealed that administrators in both schools employ a variety of strategies to address GBV and foster safe and inclusive environments. These strategies include the use of disciplinary measures such as suspension and expulsion to deter and address instances of GBV. While these measures are intended to maintain discipline and ensure a safe learning environment, the study also highlighted a concerning finding regarding the use of corporal punishment, despite its prohibition in schools. This discrepancy raises questions about the alignment of disciplinary actions with ethical and legal standards, suggesting a need for greater adherence to established policies and guidelines. Furthermore, the findings suggest that while administrators may implement disciplinary measures, there may be a lack of awareness or adherence to policies prohibiting corporal punishment. The study underscores the importance of regular training and education for school staff on the appropriate and effective ways to address GBV. The study suggested the need for clear and consistent enforcement of policies to ensure that disciplinary actions are aligned with ethical and legal standards.

### **7.3.4. Formulation of the Gender-based School Violence Model.**

The study concluded by formulating the school-related GBV Model (SRGBVM). After thorough consideration of the study's data sets, findings, existing literatures, and the leadership strategies often used in the selected schools, the study proposed the SRGBV model to elucidate on a more holistic and impactful framework. The SRGBVM was drawn from core concepts of social cognitive learning theory with its emphasis on observation, imitation, and reinforcement, as well as social leadership theory with emphasis on equity, inclusivity, and advocacy for marginalised groups. Threats to the achievement of the SRGBV model encompass the perpetuation of harmful gender norms, inadequate policy enforcement, lack of awareness, and the potential normalisation of violence which collectively impede efforts to create safe and inclusive schools. The drivers for this model include societal influences, family backgrounds, cultural norms, and systemic issues. The

researcher is convinced that if the model is implemented with the Ekiti State GBV Policy for Schools, It will assist the school leaders in addressing SRGBV in schools for safer schools.

#### **7.4. Contribution to knowledge**

The contributions made to knowledge are in various forms, ranging from contributions of the school-related GBV model for schools to the theoretical and methodological contributions to knowledge, and the contributions to knowledge from the findings. They are discussed in turns in the subsequent sections.

##### **7.4.1. The Model as a Contribution to Knowledge**

The *SRGBV model* for addressing unpleasant situations (GBV) between learner-to-learner or teacher-to-learner is a new contribution to knowledge. This model in the form of a strategy will help schools keep up with the development around the world in terms of addressing school-related GBV, and in sustaining the right practices. This proposed model will assist school stakeholders (school administrators, learners, parents, and policymakers) in addressing GBV in schools. The model comprises the findings, drivers, beneficiaries, school outcomes, as well as some threats to the implementation of the model, particularly to address school-related GBV, as this can contribute to safe schools and enhance learners' academic performance.

##### **7.4.2. Theoretical Contributions to Knowledge**

The adoption of a single theory to understand a phenomenon was contended by Osanloo and Grant (2016:19) who rather proposed that two or more theories can be used to undergird a particular phenomenon, taking into consideration the epistemological values of the researcher, in line with the study's concepts. The study was anchored on two probable theories (SCLT and SJLT). The assumptions and principles of both theories were justified to understand the challenges and causes of GBV and the roles that school administrators perform in addressing the GBV in schools. These assumptions were fused

to form a basis for forming SRGBV model. Prior to this study, there is no study that has investigated this phenomenon (GBV) with the infusion of two theories (SCLT and SJLT), thereby making this study unique.

#### **7.4.3. Methodological Contributions to Knowledge**

The study demonstrates that the phenomenon of GBV can be investigated with a qualitative approach in schools. The roles of school administrators in addressing GBV in schools have been investigated with a quantitative research approach in literature within the Nigerian context. This study's adoption of a qualitative approach introduces fresh perspectives into the investigation. The participants were initially astonished at the level of the semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. They were first contemplating whether to lend their voice because they were all familiar with the questionnaire instrument type of collecting data; the principal had told the researcher to drop the data instrument and come back at a later date for collection. The researcher had to explain to them that their views and inputs were necessary on the subject matter. In researching into the world of participants, the research process positioned the researcher and the participants as co-researchers where they lend their voices, opinions, and experiences relating to addressing GBV in the selected schools. Though the findings cannot be generalised as there were but few samples, it gave an in-depth review of the problem (phenomenon) and the researcher gained an understanding of interacting with the environment.

#### **7.4.4. Contribution to Knowledge from Findings**

The study's distinctive contribution to knowledge lies in its revelation of the failure to fully implement the state's GBV policies, specifically regarding the appointment of designated officers to address GBV in schools. This failure has significant implications, as it leads to delays or absences in reporting sexual harassment or rape incidents, despite awareness campaigns within the school. By highlighting this gap between policy and practice, the study sheds light on a critical area for improvement in addressing GBV in schools. It

highlights the need for more effective implementation strategies as well as the importance of ensuring that policies are not only developed but are also enforced to create safer and more supportive environments for learners.

## **7.5. Recommendations of the study**

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made.

**7.5.1.** This recommendation is based on the study's first finding on the nature of GBV in schools, this encompasses the understanding of all forms of GBV in schools. The findings revealed that the participants have the basic knowledge of GBV and the policies in the schools. The forms of GBV, according to the participants, are physical, verbal, or psychological abuse, sexual harassment, bullying, and other forms of harmful treatment from learner-to-learner or teachers-to-learners. With the prevalence of such GBV forms in schools, the researcher recommends that the government should implement workshops, training, and continuous education programmes for school leaders. These should focus on recognising the signs of GBV, understanding its prevalence, and learning appropriate responses to it. Also, the government should establish dedicated support structures within schools, such as counselling services and safe spaces to assist the victims of GBV. They should also ensure that these services are accessible and confidential.

**7.5.2.** This recommendation is based on the second findings of the study, which are the causes of GBV in schools. The causes of GBV in schools, as observed by the participants, are societal influences, family backgrounds of the learners and teachers, and broken homes. The findings revealed that GBV can be traced to broken homes as learners with such backgrounds of intimate partner violence or abuse from home can easily exhibit such violent behaviours at school. Having said that, the study recommends that parents should be involved in discussions and workshops to raise awareness about GBV. The study also encourages their support in reinforcing positive behaviours that counteract violence at home. Also, collaboration with local community organisations, NGOs, and

authorities to create a comprehensive support network for victims and promote community-wide awareness can contribute to parental responsibility towards the children.

**7.5.3.** This recommendation is based on the study's third finding which is the consequences that learners face when they engage in GBV in school. The participants believed that there are consequences for actions made and that the consequences can have effects on the learner's well-being, and especially the possibility of a dwindling academic performance. The effect can also lead to exposure to sexually transmitted diseases and ultimately death if care is not taken. With these possibilities, the study recommends that there should be an effective collaboration between teachers, counsellors, and school administrators to create a supportive network for victims and a cohesive approach to addressing GBV incidents. Moreover, the school should introduce age-appropriate education programmes on consent, healthy relationships, and on recognising and reporting GBV, which will foster an open and supportive environment where learners can feel comfortable about discussing these issues. Also, learner-led initiatives or peer support groups which are aimed at promoting respect, empathy, and support for victims of violence should be introduced in schools.

**7.5.4.** This recommendation is based on the study's fourth finding relates to the challenges that school administrators face when dealing with or addressing GBV in schools. The participants raised their concerns about parents' non-cooperation and unfavourable government policies in addressing the issues. These challenges often impede school administrators from effectively addressing GBV in the selected schools. The study recommends that schools should collaborate with other schools or institutions facing similar challenges to share best practices and resources in addressing GBV. Also, the schools should engage with community stakeholders, law enforcement, and healthcare providers to create a comprehensive support network. Further, the study recommends that matters of GBV must be discussed with parents in the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) meetings, to ensure that parents are kept abreast of schools and government policies.

**7.5.5.** This recommendation is based on the fifth finding of the study which relates to the strategies that school administrators implement in addressing GBV in schools. The strategies reported by participants were suspension, expulsion for the offenders, and counselling for the victims. The perpetrators often face disciplinary actions from the disciplinary committee before action on the appropriate commensurate punishment is taken. Also, the participants mentioned that there are awareness campaigns and the creation of GBV clubs in the schools to address the problem. In addition, the study recommends that the government should create a model for the school by adopting the study's SRGBV model for schools to reduce and address GBV in schools.

#### **7.5.6. Recommendations for Further Studies**

Further qualitative research in addressing GBV in Nigerian schools could probe the experiences of various stakeholders, including parents, and community leaders, to understand their perceptions, attitudes, and contributions to GBV prevention in schools. Exploring the effectiveness and cultural relevance of specific intervention strategies such as peer education programmes, counselling services, or policy implementations in different regions or among diverse socio-economic backgrounds would offer valuable insights. Furthermore, investigating the role of technology and the social media in perpetuating or mitigating GBV among learners could provide essential understanding for tailored intervention design. A longitudinal study on tracking the long-term impacts of GBV interventions on school climate, academic performance, and mental health outcomes of learners could also offer comprehensive insights for sustainable and impactful policy recommendations in addressing GBV in Nigerian schools.

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## Appendix 1

### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PRINCIPALS, VICE PRINCIPALS AND COUNSELLORS

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION MANAGEMENT, POLICY AND COMPARATIVE  
EDUCATION

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

Thesis Title: Exploring School Leadership Practices of Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Nigerian Secondary Schools

Interview questions for Principals, Vice principals, and counsellors

1. To what extent do you believe that learners' gender-based violence causes problems for you, teachers, and learners? If so, how would you go about addressing it? Would you mind providing an example?
2. To what extent, if any, do you believe that time for curriculum teaching is hampered by gender-based violence issues? How?
3. What are your school's current gender-based violence prevention policies?
4. What is the nature of gender-based violence in your schools?
5. What have you found to be the most successful gender-based violence techniques you used in addressing such situations in the past?
6. What role do parents and a well-involved community have in addressing gender-based violence in schools?
7. To what degree do you have a say in gender-based violence proceedings as an administrator?
8. How much, if any, do you believe learners and parents should be involved in school gender-based violence procedures? If that's the case, how should it be done?
9. What are the causes of gender-based violence in your school, if at all? How?
10. What, in your opinion, is the function of the administrators in addressing school gender-based violence?
11. How important is record-keeping in dealing with gender-based violence in your school?

- Do you have any record of gender-based violence?
- 12. Do you believe there are any other obstacles to effective gender-based violence prevention techniques that we haven't covered yet? If that's the case, what are they?
- 13. Which strategies do you as an administrator implement to address gender-based violence in your secondary schools?
- 14. What school leadership practices are used to addressing gender-based violence in Nigerian secondary schools?
- 15. Which suggestions can be made about leadership practice in addressing gender-based violence in Nigerian secondary schools?

## Appendix 2

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR TEACHERS, AND LEARNERS  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION MANAGEMENT, POLICY AND COMPARATIVE  
EDUCATION  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

Thesis Title: Exploring School Leadership Practices of Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Nigerian Secondary Schools

Focus Group discussion questions for teachers and learners

1. What are your thoughts on gender-based violence prevention policies and how do they influence teachers' attitudes toward their jobs?
2. Are you aware of any gender-based violence situations that may or may not have an impact on student behaviour?
3. Do you believe schools require more or fewer techniques to address behaviour issues?
4. To what extent do you, as a teacher and student, have a say in how gender-based violence procedures are implemented?
5. To what extent, if any, do you believe that time for curricular instruction is hampered as a result of this of gender-based violence issues? How?
6. What part do parents have in gender-based prevention procedures at school? What do you believe their ideal role should be?
7. What kind of rules and gender-based prevention practises communication do you believe would be beneficial?
8. How does gender-based violence manifest (nature) in your secondary school?
9. What are the causes of gender-based violence in your school, if at all? How?
10. What, in your opinion, is the function of the teacher/learner in gender-based violence prevention in schools?
11. What role does a data support system have in addressing gender-based violence issues in your school?

12. Do you believe there are any other obstacles to effective gender-based violence prevention techniques that we haven't covered yet? If that's the case, what are they?
13. How do school leaders address gender-based violence in your secondary schools?
14. Which strategies do you as a teacher implement to address gender-based violence in your secondary schools?
15. Which suggestions can be made about leadership practices in addressing gender-based violence in your school?

Other questions followed these structured questions.

Appendix 3



**GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)**

29-Nov-2021

Dear Mrs Damilola Onaolapo

**Application Approved**

Research Project Title:

**Exploring Leadership Practices of addressing Gender-based violence in Nigerian Secondary schools**

Ethical Clearance number: **UFS-HSD2021/1757/21**

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.



Yours sincerely

**Dr. Adri Du Plessis**

**Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee**

205 Nelson Mandela  
Drive  
Park West  
Bloemfontein 9301 South Africa  
P.O. Box 339  
Bloemfontein 9300  
Tel: +27 (0)51 401 9337 [duplessisA@ufs.ac.za](mailto:duplessisA@ufs.ac.za) [www.ufs.ac.za](http://www.ufs.ac.za)

**Appendix 4**

**Language Editing**

**ADEKUNLE AJASIN UNIVERSITY, AKUNGBA-AKOKO**

**P.M.B. 001**

**FACULTY OF ARTS**



**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STUDIES [iamseunamusa@gmail.com](mailto:iamseunamusa@gmail.com)**

---

23 March 2024

**Language Editing Certificate**

This letter confirms that Mrs Damilola Gbemisola ONAOLAPO's thesis, 'Exploring School Leadership Practices of Addressing Gender-based Violence in Nigerian Secondary Schools' has been edited by a professional language editor. The language editing covered aspects of British

English concord, spelling, punctuation, grammatical structure, and phraseology, with correction recommendations to the author. Thus, please, note that the language editor has not reviewed the final document with the accepted /rejected changes by the author.

Yours sincerely,

**Oluwaseun O. Amusa, Ph. D**

Appendix 5

*From the Principal's Office*

Our Ref.....

Your Ref.....

Damilola Gbemisola Onaolapo,  
Department of Education Management and Leadership,  
Faculty of Education,  
University of the Free State,  
Qwaqwa Campus,  
8<sup>th</sup> October, 2021.

Dear Damilola Gbemisola Onaolapo.


**RE: APPROVAL TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN:**

This is to convey the acknowledgement and approval of your letter of application to conduct a PHD research titled exploring school Leadership Practices in Addressing Gender – Based violence in Nigeria Secondary school in our school Muslim Grammar School in Local Government, State

I hope you will keep to the best practices of research ethics guidelines as indicated in your information leaflet.

I wish you all the best in your research.

Yours faithfully,

GRAMMAR SCHOOL  
  
Date: 05/10/2021  
Date:

Appendix 6

**PR & S DEPARTMENT**

Your Ref No: .....  
All communications should be addressed  
to the Permanent Secretary quoting  
Our Ref No: **TSC/PR&S/232**

Date: **7th Oct., 2021**

The Principals,  
Public Secondary Schools,

**LETTER OF AUTHORITY**

I am directed to introduce to you Damilola Gbemisola Onaolapo, a PhD student in the Department of Education Management and Leadership, University of the Free State, Republic of South Africa.

2. Ekiti State Teaching Service Commission has authorized her to conduct research on the title: Exploring School Leadership Practices in Addressing Gender – Based Violence in Nigeria Secondary Schools.
3. Kindly accord her the necessary assistance needed please.

DIRECTOR  
PLANNING RESEARCH & STATISTICS  
TEACHING SERVICE COMMISSION,  
SIGN \_\_\_\_\_  
DATE **7/10/21**

For: Executive Secretary



# Onaolapo D.G.

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