

**EXPLORING PRINCIPALS' ETHICAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICES IN TACKLING  
LEARNER-ON-TEACHER VIOLENCE**

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## DECLARATION

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I, **Molotja Sphiwe**, declare that this dissertation entitled **Exploring Principals' Ethical Leadership Practices In Tackling Learner-On-Teacher Violence**, submitted for the qualification of M. Ed. in Education Management and Leadership at the University of Free State is my own work. All the sources that I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of a complete reference list.



**04 August 2024**

.....

.....

**Your name**

**Date**

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I wish to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to:

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To my late grandmother, MaMlotshwa, I am grateful for every moment we shared your wisdom, patience, and warmth that shaped me in ways I am still discovering.

## **DEDICATIONS**

This study is dedicated to my LATE grandmother, MaMlotshwa. You did not get a chance to celebrate my victories with me, but I know you are forever in my heart.

and

My LATE mother, Florence Mlotshwa. To me you are a stranger since life decided to remove you from my life when I was very young but I am grateful for the life you gave me.

## ABSTRACT

This study was about exploring the principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence. The phenomenon of learner-on-teacher violence has become a global area of great concern. The frequent reports about learner-on-teacher violence have made many teachers fear for their lives and have thus affected the quality of teaching-learning processes. Section 12 of the *South African Constitution* stipulates that everyone has the right to be free from all forms of violence, and not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way. This legal legislation stipulates that all Government employees in the Department of Education must perform their duties fairly, with morals, and ethically. This study employed two theories the Ethical Leadership Theory and the Social Learning Theory; the ethical leadership theory provided tenets, which can be used to tackle learner-on-teacher violence, while the social learning theory provided understanding on how the learners' behaviour of violence directed to teachers developed. A qualitative multiple case design was employed in order to explore the principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence.

The study took place in two secondary schools in the eastern Free State. Purposive sampling was employed in order to select four participants, a principal and a deputy from each school. The data for this study was collected using semi-structured interviews, with the two principals and two deputy principals and their data was supported by document analysis. The data in this study was analysed through thematic data analysis, and from this data, five themes emerged. The findings revealed the challenges of ethical leadership experienced by principals in tackling learner-on-teacher violence. The findings found that when the principals are faced with learner-on-teacher violence, they involve parents, evoke the learners' code of conduct, involve the school based support team (SBST) and other committees that can assist in this phenomenon. However, despite their strategies to curb this phenomenon of learner-on-teacher violence, they still experienced challenges such as, parents who do not want to be involved, children from child headed families, lack of support from the department of basic education (DBE), inadequate policies. The study thus recommends the building of alternative schools, learners' code of conduct, south

african school administration management system (SASAMS), quality learning and teaching campaign (QLTC) and parental involvement.

**Keywords:** Ethical leadership, learner-on-teacher violence, ethical practices.

## LISTS OF ACRONYMS

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DBE	Department of Basic Education
DA	Document Analysis
ELT	Ethical Leadership Theory
RCL	Representative Council of Learners
SASAMS	South African School Administration Management System
SBST	School Based Support Team
SASA	South African Schools Act 84 of 1996
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SLT	Social Learning Theory
SSI	Semi-Structured Interview
LTV	Learner-on-teacher violence
LCC	Learners' code of conduct
QMS	Quality Management System
QLTC	Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign

## Table of Contents

<b>SUPERVISOR : DR S.D MAKHASANE .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CO – SUPERVISOR : DR L MDODANA-ZIDE.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>DECLARATION .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>LISTS OF ACRONYMS.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY .....</b>	<b>15</b>
1.1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND.....	15
1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT .....	18
1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	18
1.3.1 Primary Research Question .....	18
1.3.2 Secondary Research Question .....	19
1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES .....	19
1.5 VALUE OF THE STUDY .....	19
1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS .....	20
1.6.1 Learner-on-teacher violence (LTV) .....	20
1.6.2 Leadership .....	20
1.6.3 Ethics.....	20
1.6.4 Behaviour .....	21
1.7 BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	21
1.8 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW .....	22
1.9 OVERVIEW OF THE METHODOLOGY .....	24
1.9.1 Research paradigm .....	24
1.9.2 Research approach.....	24
1.9.3 Research design.....	25
1.9.4 Data collection method.....	25

1.10 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS.....	26
1.11 DATA ANALYSIS .....	26
1.12 TRUSTWORTHINESS .....	27
1.13 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	27
1.15 CHAPTER OUTLINE .....	28
<b>CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>30</b>
2.1 INTRODUCTION .....	30
2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	30
2.3 ETHICAL LEADERSHIP THEORY.....	31
2.3.1 <i>The ethic of care</i> .....	33
2.3.2 <i>The ethic of justice</i> .....	33
2.3.3 <i>The ethic of critique</i> .....	35
2.4 OUTLINING THE SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY.....	36
2.4.1 <i>Social Learning Theory</i> .....	38
2.5 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK THAT SUPPORTS ETHICAL LEADERSHIP.....	40
2.6 CONCEPTS OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE .....	42
2.6.1 <i>The nature of learner-on-teacher violence in South Africa</i> .....	43
2.6.2 <i>The nature of learner-on-teacher violence international literature</i> .....	46
2.6.3 <i>Factors contributing to learner-on-teacher violence</i> .....	48
<b>CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN .....</b>	<b>50</b>
3.1 INTRODUCTION .....	50
3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM: INTERPRETIVISM.....	50
3.2.1 <i>Ontology</i> .....	51
3.2.2 <i>Epistemology</i> .....	52
3.3 RESEARCH APPROACH: QUALITATIVE APPROACH .....	52
3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN: MULTIPLE CASE STUDY .....	53

	10
3.5 DATA COLLECTION .....	55
3.5.1 <i>Semi-Structured Interview</i> .....	55
3.5.2 <i>Document Analysis</i> .....	57
3.6 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS: PURPOSIVE SAMPLING .....	58
3.6.1 <i>The selection of participants: Table 3.6.1 (a)</i> .....	59
3.7 DATA ANALYSIS: THEMATIC ANALYSIS.....	60
3.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS .....	61
3.8.1 <i>Credibility</i> .....	61
3.8.2 <i>Dependability</i> .....	62
3.8.3 <i>Confirmability</i> .....	62
3.8.4 <i>Transferability</i> .....	62
3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....	63
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS .....</b>	<b>65</b>
4.1 INTRODUCTION .....	65
4.1.1 <i>Research Aim and Objectives</i> .....	65
4.2 PROFILE OF RESEARCH SITE AND PARTICIPANTS .....	65
4.2.1 <i>Profile of Research Sites</i> .....	66
4.2.2 <i>Profile of Research Participants</i> .....	66
4.3 DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION .....	67
4.3.1 <i>Participants understanding of ethical leadership</i> .....	68
4.3.2 <i>Ethical Practices in Tackling learner-on-teacher violence</i> .....	70
4.3.3 <i>Involving Internal and external stakeholders in addressing learner-on-teacher violence</i> .....	74
4.3.4 <i>The ethical leadership challenges in mitigating learner-on-teacher violence</i> .....	78
4.3.5 <i>Mitigating the challenges of employing ethical leadership practice when tackling learner-on-teacher violence</i> .....	83
4.4 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS .....	86

	11
4.4.1 Learners' code of conduct .....	87
4.4.2 INCIDENT BOOK .....	90
4.5 SUMMARY OF THE DOCUMENT ANALYSIS .....	93
4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY.....	93
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>94</b>
5.1 INTRODUCTION.....	94
5.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY .....	94
5.3.1 Theme 1: The participants understanding of ethical leadership.....	94
5.3.2 Theme 2: Ethical Practices in Tackling learner-on-teacher Violence .....	95
5.3.3 Theme 3: Involving internal and external stakeholders In addressing learner-on-teacher violence.....	96
5.3.4 Theme 4: Ethical Leadership Challenges .....	98
5.3.5 Theme 5: Mitigating the challenges of ethical leadership.....	100
5.4 CONCLUSION.....	100
5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS.....	101
5.6 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	103
5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY .....	104
5.8 CONCLUSION.....	104
<b>REFERENCE LIST.....</b>	<b>106</b>
APPENDICES .....	119

**Appendix A: Title registration**

**Appendix B: Ethical clearance**

**Appendix C: Permission to conduct research**

**Appendix D: Permission to conduct research from schools**

**Appendix E: Consent forms**

**Appendix F: Interview schedule**

**Appendix G: Turnitin report**

**Appendix H: Language editors letter**

**LISTS OF FIGURES**

		<b>page</b>
<b>Figure 4.4.1 (a):</b>	<b>Example of learners' code of conduct</b>	<b>87</b>
<b>Figure 4.4.1(b):</b>	<b>Example of learners' code of conduct</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Figure 4.4.2(a):</b>	<b>Example of Incident book- 14 April 2023 (School A)</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Figure 4.4.2(b):</b>	<b>Example of Incident book-10 May 2023 (School B)</b>	<b>92</b>

**LISTS OF TABLES**

	<b>page</b>
<b>Table 3.6.1(a): Selection of participants</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Table 4.2.1(a): Profile of research sites</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Table 4.2.2(b): Profile of research participants</b>	<b>67</b>

## Chapter One: Overview of the Study

### 1.1. Introduction and Background

This study explored principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence. Botha & Zwane (2021), the phenomenon of learner-on-teacher violence (LTV) has become a global area of great concern. South African Council for Educators (SACE) (2020), alluded that lowering LTV in school is vitally important. As much as the pupil's safety and well-being are essential in the education sector, the educators' safety and well-being must also be prioritized. Makhanya (2018) asserts that learners' lack of moral standards needs urgent attention because this is related to the fight that is continuously transpiring in schools recently. Previously, pupils were known to be obedient and respectful towards their teachers. However, in recent years, learners have threatened the educators' safety at work. Rampele (2011) argues that learners throughout the world have taken their misbehavior to another level where they even bully their teachers.

Around the world, LTV is a problematic situation. In the United States, for instance, 63 learners out of 1000 reported having experienced violence in a classroom (APA, 2016). Approximately 80% of teachers report having experienced aggression from learners within one academic year, as stated in the nationwide survey carried out in the USA (McMahon et al., 2017). As indicated in the 2010 School Crime and Safety Report, learner-on-teacher violence has affected 9% (352 900) of American teachers, with the number of cases rising to 289 900 between 2007 and 2008. In research conducted in the year 2015/16, it was reported that 105 United States teachers encountered injury in the form of injuries, and 6% of the teachers were physically attacked (Musu-Gillette et al., 2018). According to De Cordova et al. (2019), who support the aforementioned research, 7–13% of American teachers reported having been physically attacked during the study year. Nonetheless, this epidemic of learner-on-teacher violence occurs throughout the United States and other countries (UNESCO, 2017).

According to a study done in Turkey, 24% of teachers reported having been the victims of emotional abuse, 14.7% of verbal aggression, and 6.3% of physical assault at the hands of learners (Dicke et al., 2015). Records of LTV reveal that there have been up to 6990 violent events involving teachers within and beyond the school buildings (Ozdemir, 2012). Several studies have shown the gravity of this LTV phenomenon and the necessity of actions to stop this unethical activity, which is being carried out by learners all over the world.

In Nigeria, studies by Nalah and Audu (2014) have revealed that learners between the ages of 7 and 20 smoke Indian hemp, drink alcohol, and are always near potentially hazardous weapons. In Nigeria, learners carry firearms to class so they can terrorize their teachers and other learners who have chosen not to join the gang (Nalah and Audu, 2014). According to Ogba and Igu (2019), teachers who have witnessed violence may face challenges like shock brought on by mental discomfort, which could impair their ability to operate in the classroom. Furthermore, this tendency can not only affect how well they operate in the classroom but also foster a pessimistic outlook on life in general (Ogba and Igu, 2019).

The behavior displayed by learners in the past decade was not much of a challenge in South African schools; however, this phenomenon of LTV has become worrisome recently in South Africa (Grobler, 2018). The frequent reports about learner-on-teacher violence have made many teachers fear for their lives and have thus affected the standard of teaching-learning processes. Ntuli (2015) indicates that when examining the figures of LTV in schools, South Africa (SA) is ranked the second highest violent nation after Jamaica. Compared to other nations, S.A. has a higher incidence of school violence, with over 10% of incidents occurring there and just 15% being reported and featured in the media. Furthermore, Harris and colleagues (2014) asserted that SA is among the world's most violent countries, citing its ranking of number 15 in the world according to the UN's system of homicide rates per 100,000 population. The violent content has been exposed to learners in their homes, on media, and in social situations.

This study has examined the principals' ethical leadership practices in mitigating learner-on-teacher violence in the context of S.A. Enrich et al. (2015) depict ethical

leadership as the social practice that is aimed at the moral purpose of education, characterized by acting in a just and fair manner, which is perceived as being caring, honest, and principled. Hence, ethical leadership is viewed as making sound and fair decisions courteously, which displays the significance of morality and ethical behavior to those who adhere to it. Furthermore, ethical leadership practice highlights the value of equity and fairness and confronts the norms of power that discriminate against the weak.

According to Section 12 (RSA, 1996:30) of the South African Constitution (*Constitution of RSA (1996)*), every person has the right to be shielded from all types of violence. *The Constitution of RSA (1996)*, in section 195 (a), provides that public administrators should be accountable and also they should possess high professional ethics. This legal legislation stipulates that all government employees in the Department of Education (DOE) must perform their duties fairly, with morals, and in an ethical manner. It also decrees that stringent guidelines ought to be codified into policies to guarantee transparency, accountability, and accessibility in every school. SACE policy speaks to the guidelines for the behavior of educators, which demands acceptable ethical behavior. The South African Schools Act (SASA) (RSA, Act No 84 of 1996) speaks about moral conduct for pupils, educators, and the school governing body (SGB). Hence, the principal is expected to apply ethical leadership principles and strategies when addressing the phenomenon of LTV. The *Constitution of RSA (Chapter 23)* indicates that individuals have the right to equitable working conditions; hence, the principal bears the duty of guaranteeing the security of teachers to create surroundings that are favorable to both teaching and learning.

However, statistics that follow present the degree of violence in schools in SA. Woudstra et al. (2018) claim that 62,1% of educators in Tshwane revealed incidents of verbal abuse, 34.6% reported acts of violence, 27% revealed indirect bullying, and 6.6 % reported cyberbullying, all instigated by learners. The teacher union NAPTOSA (2018) provided statistics on the assault cases against educators in the following provinces: Limpopo Province (942), Gauteng Province (531), Western Cape (26), and Mpumalanga (113). In situations where teachers experience harm perpetrated by learners, their safety is compromised and they turn to retire at an early age (Petso,

2021). Thus, this research examined principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence in the context of S.A.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

The aggressive conduct, which learners display towards their teachers is not only illegal, but it is also unethical. This conflictual behavior of learners has compromised the school safety environment (Elinah, Malatji, and Mthembu, 2022). According to Botha (2016), it is disturbing to find out that learners these days have turned violent not only towards one another but also towards their teachers. Makhasane (2022) mentions that research conducted has depicted South Africa as one of the leading violent countries nationally. Principals, as leaders, are obligated, as per their job specifications, to ensure that all the employees and learners are protected within the school premises and to guarantee that instruction and education take place in a conducive atmosphere (Netshitangani, 2018). Principals, who are considered ethical, should be guided by the following traits: care for others, honesty, fairness, principled decision-making, trustworthiness, and sound morals who will do the right thing. Ethical leaders are esteemed as individuals with abilities to enact the role of moral persons, people who display good morals and lead with ethical conduct to obtain goals and develop followers into better individuals (Vikaraman et al., 2018). The methods of dealing with LTV have not been adequately researched, especially from the school leadership perspective (Makhasane and Majong, 2023). It is for this purpose that this study examined principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling LTV in South African schools.

## 1.3 Research Questions

### 1.3.1 Primary Research Question

➤ What are the principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence?

### 1.3.2 Secondary Research Question

- What is the nature of learner-on-teacher violence in the selected schools?
- What characterizes principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence?
- What ethical leadership practices challenges do principals encounter in tackling learner-on-teacher violence?
- How can the ethical leadership challenges in tackling learner-on-teacher violence be mitigated?

### 1.4 Aim and Objectives

This study aimed to explore principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence.

The following were the **objectives** of the undertaken study:

- To determine the nature of learner-on-teacher violence in the selected schools.
- To identify principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence.
- To determine what ethical leadership practices and challenges principals encounter in tackling learner-on-teacher violence.
- To explore how can ethical leadership challenges in tackling learner-on-teacher violence be mitigated.

### 1.5 Value of the Study

This research is significant in providing data useful to every person in the education sector by providing an understanding of how principals use ethical leadership practices to tackle LTV. Many studies in the S.A. focus on pupils-on-pupils and educator-on-learner violence, but little has been studied about LTV. Moreover, little has been written about how principals use ethical leadership to tackle this LTV phenomenon.

This research also intended to provide knowledge of LTV to the DOE and policymakers to review policies on learners' code of conduct (LCC). Furthermore, the study also informs parents at home about how their learners behave at school. More insight was then given to the principals and teachers concerning the use of ethical leadership practices in dealing with violence against teachers, and how to deal with the unethical conduct of learners.

## 1.6 Definition of Terms

The words that follow were utilized throughout this study and are defined below for clarity. The following concepts, which were specific to the study focus, are explained in detail, and these are learner-on-teacher violence, leadership, ethics, and behavior.

### 1.6.1 Learner-on-teacher violence (LTV)

Learner-on-teacher is defined as the intentional violence, aggression, and acts of threats to a teacher within the school community (Reddy et al.,2018). When learners use violence against the teacher, this is referred to as school violence, and under the framework of this research, learners-on-teacher violence was defined as learners' use of violence to harm the teacher within the school premises.

### 1.6.2 Leadership

Leadership is explained as the act of influencing people for them to attain commonly shared goals between the leader and the follower (Gardner, 2007). The principal, as a leader, has to ensure that his leadership influences the followers; he must lead in a way that is guided by ethical conduct.

### 1.6.3 Ethics

The Greek word for ethics, “Techne ethike,” refers to the scientific study of morality (Capurro, 2009). Ethics looks into the moral behavior of individuals, and this is the core value in leaders being ethical to motivate others to aspire to be like them as leaders.

#### 1.6.4 Behaviour

How a person conducts him/herself towards others. The principals’ behavior must be ethical so that the followers can be inspired to behave ethically.

#### 1.7 Brief Overview of the Theoretical Framework

The Social Learning Theory (SLT) of Albert Bandura (1976) and the Ethical Leadership Theory (ELT) by Brown et al .,(2005) were used as theoretical frameworks for this study. The behavior of individuals is imbibed through observation and imitation (Bandura, 1976). The SLT espouses the notion that the violence that learners display was observed and imitated from the previous generations. According to Collins (2013), this happens through cognitive processes connecting to social setting incidents. In other words, via observations and direct learning, violent behavior may become embedded in the psyche of vulnerable learners. This implies, for example, that if one is subjected to violence in the family, one has a good chance to model the behavior to which one was exposed when growing up. Hence, the SLT was pertinent to this study because it assisted in dissecting the violent behavior of learners, who behave violently against teachers. This theory has further assisted in exploring the roots of the aggressive behavior learners display toward their teachers at school.

Leaders with strong ethical principles act in a way that “respects individuals’ rights and dignity,” according to Trevino, Brown, and Hartman (2003). They are aware of how their decisions may affect other people when they use their social power to benefit others rather than themselves. Also, the ELT was pertinent to this study as it provided tenets that were applied to investigate the learners’ unethical behavior, which has paramount significance to this study and may minimize the unethical behavior patterns of learners by the principal, using ethical leadership practice.

## 1.8 Preliminary Literature Review

School violence is perceived as several forms of violence perpetrated by individuals, such as bullying, intimidation, gangsterism, theft, illegal weapon use, and assault (Terzoudi, 2022). Terzoudi, (2022) states that school violence is demonstrated in two dimensions: intentional and behavioral. It is described as aggressive behavior, which learners exhibit, physical or emotional, in which the purpose is to cause suffering to the teacher in the form of teasing, disparaging, or even murdering them (Botha & Zwane, 2021). The negative phenomenon of LTV has become a matter of serious concern in South Africa. Mncube & Harber (2018) state that hundreds of learners are confronted with disciplinary action for offenses varying from assault, intimidation, drug dealing, and sexual-gender abuse. Gauteng province has expelled 151 learners recently, with 31 being expelled for attacking teachers and other staff members (Mncube & Harber, 2018). Dube and Hlalele (2018) mention that in the Eastern Cape, an educator was reported murdered by a pupil after he failed his subject.

In 2016, in S.A, in the province of Free State, there were about 753 cases of reported violence at school which also depicted the utilization of fatal objects such as knives and other dangerous weapons (Dube & Hlalele, 2018). South African schools have turned out to be battlefields where LTV is a daily experience. All the schools around the seven continents are also affected by the plague of LTV. International research reveals that 4 731 qualified teachers in the kindergarten sector and also the Grade 12 teachers in Minnesota in the USA have experienced one or more types of violence at school (Wei et al., 2013). Tiesman, (2013) contends that In Pennsylvania, 8% of teachers confirmed experiencing physical violence, and 29% reported experiencing violence that is not physical such as threats, sexual harassment, and verbal abuse. School violence is a serious concern, that is affecting the world as a whole, and it is growing exponentially. Hence, principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling LTV are of critical importance.

According to Eranil and Ozbilen (2017), a principal who employs ethical leadership strategies must ensure that he/she creates a positive environment that will enhance

learner performance while further increasing teachers' job satisfaction. Elci, Sener, and Alpan (2013) contend that principals should use the 'reward and punishment' system to hold learners responsible for their violent actions; hence, ethical leadership should indicate to learners that doing the correct thing is anticipated, encouraged, and honored. Eranil and Ozbilen (2017) state that ethical leaders must possess ethical leadership characteristics that propel them to ensure the organizational environment is created under the principles of ethics and reinforce ethical behavior, without allowing unethical behavior. Exposing learners to ethical behavior within the school environment can motivate learners to transition from unethical to ethical so that they will imbibe lifelong sound values, morals, and ethics.

Leadership is alluded to as the act of exerting influence on individuals to comprehend and concur about what must be done and how it must be done effectively while encouraging individuals through collective efforts to achieve shared goals (Yukl, 2013). Four key components of transformational leadership are communication, individualized, consideration, intellectual stimulation, and charisma (Yasir & Mohamad, 2016). Further, transformational leadership claims that individualism migrates to a supportive collective atmosphere for others' development and growth while also looking into the needs of educators - this shows that leadership at school is ethical. Yasir and Mohamad (2016) assert that transformational leadership focuses on promoting equality, justice, and fairness that should be fostered in the school; in this regard, proactive leaders' transformational leadership ensures that principals exhibit exemplary ethical conduct as role models to their colleagues to emulate. Ethical leadership and transformational leadership have similar characteristics that allow individuals to behave ethically and allow the leaders to apply a method of 'reward and punishment' so that colleagues can be held responsible for their actions.

The Manifesto on Values, Education, and Democracy (MVED) (2002), notes that through fostering values, equality, accountability, social justice-honor, equity, respect, and altruism, education is one of the most important factors in the development of learners' moral and ethical character. However, the SASA (Act 84 of 1996) emphasizes the moral behavior of learners and mandates that all schools set up a strict LCC to help the pupils behave morally. It is by this collaborative policy that the

principals abide by to curb the unethical conduct of pupils and protect educators from the aggressive and violent conduct exhibited by some learners.

## 1.9 Overview of the Methodology

The section below concentrates on the research design and methodology. The researcher outlined the regulations employed to carry out research and explore the findings of the phenomenon.

### 1.9.1 Research paradigm

An interpretive paradigm was employed to explore principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence. According to Creswell and Poth (2016), interpretive inquiry focuses on naturalistic methods that emphasize a person's self-understanding as a basis of social interpretation. Nieuwenhuis (2015) concurs that interpretivism looks at individuals' subjective experiences of the social world, how these individuals share meaning, and how they interact with one another in this social context. This study was aimed at comprehending the social world of the participants. Hence, it was located within an interpretive paradigm, which was pertinent to this research as it permitted individuals to analyze their understanding, perspectives, or explanations for the phenomenon under investigation.

### 1.9.2 Research approach

A qualitative research approach was utilized in this study. Qualitative research is a method of inquiry that involves the collection of data in the participants' environment in which the data is analyzed to create meaning (Creswell, 2007). The qualitative research approach is a method employed to scrutinize and analyze people's understanding of certain phenomena or issues affecting a population (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Qualitative research disregards the numeric data of social inquiry; however, it focuses on the texts which are conversations, discourses, and narratives (Jackson et al., 2007). The qualitative approach is relevant because it promotes the

comprehension of ethical leadership practices employed by school principals to tackle LTV.

### 1.9.3 Research design

Multiple case study was utilized in this research. Cohen et al. (2011) advise that a case study design can be employed to investigate phenomena that cannot be explored by numerical analysis. Using the qualitative research design allowed the participants in this research to be at the focus of the research to enhance what is learned about the phenomenon, explain a situation, and investigate differences within and between cases (Yin, 2009). The multiple case study design was employed to investigate a case of ethical leadership practices in addressing violence at school. According to Cohen et al. (2011), a comparison of information is allowed in multiple case study designs as it requires the investigator to conduct a study in two or more settings. This study employed a multiple case study design because it involved educators and principals from two schools who were interviewed to elicit data in the context of ethical leadership in dealing with LTV at school. A multiple case study is pertinent to this research as it allows for a more detailed, rich comprehension of the phenomenon by comparing similarities and differences in how participants perceive or comprehend a case.

### 1.9.4 Data collection method

To collect the generated data semi-structured interviews (SSI) and document analysis (DA) were utilized in this research. SSI enabled interviewees to respond to open-ended questions, which was able to promote flexibility in responses to the questions (Leavy, 2017). Collis and Hussey (1997) state that an SSI involves a conversation between the candidates for the interview and the researcher. The SSI was utilized to address the study's social phenomenon by using the themes gleaned from the research topics to gather data. The SSI is aimed at investigating participants' understanding of how ethical leadership practice was employed in tackling LTV. This study also employed the DA method to collect data. Document analysis can be explained as the documentation of an event (Cohen et al., 2011). The principals from

the two schools were requested to provide documents such as the school policies, LCC, and the incident book. The official documents received from the principals helped to ensure that aspects not covered in the interviews could also be perused for analysis and clarity, as they have also improved the trustworthiness of the findings.

### 1.10 Selection of Participants

For the researcher to examine the principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence, participants were carefully chosen depending on the knowledge they had for this research. Purposive sampling was utilized in this research, it enabled the researcher to select participants with relevant and thick knowledge to contribute to this research. Etikan et al. (2016), indicated that purposive sampling is often not a simple task. I selected participants focusing on the knowledge they possessed, which was suitable for the study. Selected were two principals from two secondary schools in South Africa (Free State, specifically in Qwaqwa) and two deputy principals. The SGB members are not included in this study because they are not on the school grounds daily. Therefore, they would not have rich knowledge of the phenomena which was researched. Learners were also not forming part of the study as they also lacked knowledge of leadership. The two schools that were selected have experienced cases of LTV. The researcher asked for assistance from the District Office of Education to assist in identifying the schools, which were exposed to learner-on-teacher violence. Collecting data from two schools enriched my deep comprehension of employing ethical leadership practices in tackling LTV in South African secondary schools.

### 1.11 Data Analysis

Data analysis allowed me to select and focus on understanding the phenomenon that was investigated. The audio recordings (with consent) were used and helped in the process of transcribing verbatim responses. Cohen et al., (2011) indicated that qualitative data analysis is based on interpreting and comprehending the information provided by participants that relates to relation to themes and patterns. In this study,

thematic data analysis was employed. A professional transcriber did the transcription in this study to avoid the misinterpretation of information and omitting relevant information. The representative reconstruction of participants' narratives and thematic experience-centered narrative analysis were the procedures used in this study. To enhance the validity, trustworthiness, and dependability of the findings, the inquirer must work with the data in qualitative data analysis in addition to overseeing and organizing it (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Creswell (2009) maintains that for a qualitative study, three stages of data analysis can be employed: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing - all done by me. The researcher explained data reduction as the process of summarising a greater amount of information extracted from interview transcripts. It includes the process of classifying and coding information based on the variety of themes of the study. The display data would be all about organizing and comparing the reduced data so that it can be in a format that is understandable and permits the researcher to produce suggestions concerning the issue the study was all about (Creswell, 2009). The last stage is where the researcher makes sense, interprets the data, and analyses the collected data.

### 1.12 Trustworthiness

This study employed four fundamentals of trustworthiness namely: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Considering that this study has adopted SSI, the information garnered from the interviewed candidates was audio-recorded, transcribed, and sent back to the participants to validate the information. All the participants in this study were provided with the interview questions before the starting time so that they could familiarise themselves with the questions to ask for clarity, if necessary. Cohen et al. (2010) assert that it is significant for the interviewee to comprehend the questions asked to increase the interview's credibility.

### 1.13 Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations for research are explained as a guideline for the researcher to follow to reflect on his/her conduct (Strydom, 2005). Every study must abide by research ethics that will involve institutional ethical rules and individual, collective, and

community protocols. Before collecting data an application for ethical clearance was sent to the UFS Ethics Committee. The researcher also followed protocol and asked for permission to conduct research from the Free State Department of Education. Furthermore, the principals of the preferred schools were also asked in a form of writing for permission to conduct the study in their schools and further asked for their and certain staff members' participation in the study. The interviewees were told about how the study was going to be conducted, both verbally and in writing. Also, signed informed (voluntary) consent from all participants was required before the commencement of the research process. Anonymity and confidentiality were protected in terms of privacy of identity and security of information. The participants were given pseudonyms/codes to protect them from harm, such as public criticism and verbal abuse. The information gathered from the interviewee was filed electronically in a password-secure computer that the researcher and the supervisor could access.

### 1.15 Chapter Outline

**Chapter 1:** Gave an overview of the research. The discussion of Chapter One includes background and introduction, problem statement, research aim, objectives, research questions, and the significance of the study. The chapter further provides a brief research methodology and discussions about the study paradigm, data collection, and procedures.

**Chapter 2:** This chapter focused on the literature review and the theories that guided the study. The two theories used in the theoretical framework provided an understanding of learners' behavior and how the behavior could be corrected. To comprehend how pupils' unethical conduct developed, the SLT by Albert Bandura was utilized, and to further understand how to correct the behavior, the ELT was employed. The literature review focused on school violence, both national and international, factors contributing to school violence, and ethical leadership practices employed to curb LTV.

**Chapter 3:** This chapter discussed the methodology for the study. The discussion involved the discussion of the process undertaken to collect pertinent data, which

answered the research questions. This process involves the research methods, selection of participants, and research sites.

**Chapter 4:** This chapter focused on the presentation and discussion of participants data. The data in this chapter was broken down into themes and the data was presented as per the response of participants. The data presented in this chapter was obtained through SSI and DA.

**Chapter 5:** This chapter focuses on the summary and discussion of the data generated from participants in this study, as well as recommendations and the limitations of the study. Lastly, the chapter focused on the researcher's concluding remarks.

## Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### 2.1 Introduction

In the first chapter, the introduction and background, problem statement, research objective, and research questions, which addressed the ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence, were outlined. The chapter discussed the two theories considered relevant in this research. In this chapter, the legislative framework that supports ethical leadership conceptualizes school violence, explores the nature of learner-on-teacher violence (LTV) in South Africa, explores the nature of LTV in international literature, and lastly, looks into factors contributing to LTV.

#### 2.2 Theoretical framework

This research used two theories, which underpin the framework, which would assist in comprehending the problem under investigation. This study is informed by the (ELT) Ethical Leadership Theory (Brown et al., 2005) and the (SLT) Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977). The Ethical Leadership Theory (ELT) was selected in this study to assist in understanding how ethical leadership practices can be employed to curb the unethical behavior of learners. Brown et al (2005), indicated that ethical leadership can be explained as the practice of high moral values, equality, fairness, and the protection of the weak from the privileged. The following three tenets were utilized: ethic of care, ethic of critique, and ethic of justice to explore ethical leadership practice in tackling LTV in this study. Ethics of care is based on building human relationships inside the school (Arar and Saiti, 2022). Ethics of justice is concerned with how laws, policies, and rights are practiced fairly and protect everyone equally (Branson, 2010). The ethic of critique focuses on ensuring that all the injustices are corrected, whereby only the privileged benefit by receiving resources, and the underprivileged are neglected (Starratt, 1994). This theory was pertinent to this study as it would assist in

providing ways in which leaders can practice ethical leadership to address the phenomena of LTV within their schools.

SLT by Albert Bandura states that the aggressive behavior of learners is observed and learned from the environment where people interact (Bandura, 1977). The SLT was explained through the four components of observational learning on how learners acquire behavior and retain this behavior for future use. These components are attention, retention, generation, and motivation. The behavior of learners was explored through models and imitation (Bandura, 1977). Learners have individuals whom they admire and such individuals are referred to as models; they observe their models closely and acquire certain behaviors from these models, and later, learners will imitate the behavior of models. The SLT was pertinent to this study as it was going to provide an understanding of how learners' aggressive behavior was developed and learned.

### 2.3 Ethical Leadership Theory

Ethical leadership produces a social learning perspective from the illustration of regulated applicable behavior from personal and interpersonal relationships; this behavior is advanced to subordinates in two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making (Brown et al., 2005). Ethical leaders are people who are considered to be moral individuals or moral managers. Trevino and Brown (2005) claim that ethical leadership is observed from certain characteristics that a leader must have, such as honesty, trustworthiness, and integrity. Bello (2012) concurs that ethical leadership is based on fundamental values like justice, honesty, integrity, and concern for others. Moreover, moral conduct takes place when a leader acts in the sense that the actions will aid followers to abstain from actions that will put others in harm.

Ethics is a word that was taken from the Greek word *ethos*; this word was used to describe decent behavior (Stefkovic and Shapiro, 2003). Ethics can be explained as rules, beliefs, assumptions, and values employed to have a moral life (Starrat, 2003). Ethical leadership was then derived from the term ethics and was guided by the principles of ethics. Naimah and Utaminingsih (2021) similarly point out that ethics are

rules, beliefs, and assumptions that produce moral existence, further stipulating that the ethical practices inside the classroom dictate that teachers should stick with values, norms, and beliefs. Acar (2011) provided that as ethical leaders abiding by the principles of ethical leadership, principals have to respect the rights of other workers and must treat them properly. Brown, Trevino, and Harrison (2005) describe ethical leadership as the “demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through the personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision making”. Brown and Trevino (2006) indicate that ethical leaders are those leaders who are seen as kind, truthful, principled people who make choices that accommodate everyone and teach their followers the value of ethics and ethical behavior.

Spreading justice, respecting people and their attributes, being dependable, honest, trustworthy, sincere, reciprocal, encouraging democratic decision-making and participation, and being kind and compassionate are all examples of ethical leadership (Yilmaz, 2010). Karakus (2018) points out that ethical leadership behavior, which managers depict, contributes to the reduction of the frequency of unethical behavior displayed by followers. Brown and Trevino (2006) perceive ethical leaders as those leaders who have the characteristics of care, honesty, fairness, empathy, transparency, humility, trust, power inhibition, and balanced decisions. For the sake of this research, an ethical leader is someone fair, trustworthy, caring, democratic, and empathetic.

Some research asserts that several numbers of values can be employed to deal with unethical behavior values such as the ethics of care, justice, and critique (Arar and Saiti, 2022). According to Schwepker (2001), the principal, as the ethical leader, should take an active role in the creation of an environment that is built upon ethical principles and also balances the school’s and employees’ values. Adopting the guidelines of ethical leadership as a principal will assist in creating a positive working environment, and this will increase productivity and employees' job satisfaction when they feel safe and comfortable (Ozbilen and Ookay, 2017). In light of this study, three tenets of ethical leadership were employed to explain how leaders deal with learner-on-teacher violence: ethics of care, justice, and critique.

### 2.3.1 The ethic of care

Ethics of care can be described as a trait that looks at the repercussions of the leader's decisions and actions (Branson, 2010); the ethical leader critically reflects on two questions before making a decision: Who will be hurt by my actions? Who will benefit from the decision? Arar and Saiti, (2022)'s point seems to be that ethics of care is based on interpersonal interaction between a leader (principals) and the members of the organization (teachers, learners, and ground staff). Both Branson (2010) and Arar and Saiti (2022) claim that the ethic of care is interested in building human relationships within the school premises. For this study ethics of care will be employed to sustain good relations within the school whereby the principal will build an atmosphere that is accommodative to everyone at school. The school principals must remain firm in all situations and ensure that everyone within the school is well taken care of and their rights are not oppressed.

Ethics of care emphasizes empathy and accountability for the welfare of every person (Wood and Hilton, 2012). In matters such as learner-on-teacher violence, the principal must ensure that both parties affected are protected and are given a platform to voice out so that even the perpetrator ends up acknowledging the damage caused, sympathizing with the victim, and taking responsibility for his/her actions. Rosenthal (2006) added that the ethic of care wants school principals to focus on matters aimed at learners' success and the best interest of the pupils. Moreover, Starratt (1991) contends that the ethic of care is centered on the well-being of individuals and tries to overcome their stress and empower them. The ethic of care provides that as an ethical leader, one should consider the well-being of others as one of the important functions of the school. To make sure that the objective of the DEO is obtained, the principal, as a leader, must make sure that there is a smooth operation of the school and that the setting is favorable for instruction and learning.

### 2.3.2 The ethic of justice

Branson (2010) claims that the issues surrounding the ethics of justice are how justice, equality, and individual freedom are reflected in the laws, policies, and rights. This

researcher notes that an ethical leader employing the ethics of justice should be guided by this question: What rules, privileges, or policies apply in the relevant area? A leader must deal with unethical behavior professionally; the principal may use relevant policies and laws amended to address the phenomenon of LTV and in the end, the victim should receive justice. In all the government-funded schools in South Africa, all the decisions taken must be guided or led by school policies which are led by the RSA Constitution, Act 108 of 1996. Starratt (1994) claims that fairness and equality are the main values of the ethic of justice. As much as educators are expected to treat others fairly and justly, learners also are expected to treat teachers fairly and justly. Stefkovich (2005) claims that a justice-based ethic upholds each person's constitutional rights as well as their human rights. Rawls (1997) states that justice can be guided by two principles: a) the individuals affected by certain actions ought to be provided with equal treatment, and b) the people involved in action should be provided with similar advantages and decision-making to prohibit injustice and inequity. Wood and Hilton (2012) argue that justice can be grouped into two: general justice, which focuses on following the laws, and particular justice, which focuses on fairness.

Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016) maintain that justice-based ethics have a perspective, that focuses on people's rights, which emerge from the principle of justice and equity. The second perspective is the one that focuses on the rights of the majority with the potential not to benefit specific individuals. However, Mathur and Corley (2014) believe that justice-based ethics indicates a framework for problem-solving that allows people to consider what is just and fair for themselves as well as for every employee at the school. Laws govern schools, and these laws protect each person within the premises. accurately applying this law will create a safe environment for everyone, but if the laws are applied unfairly, this will cause the school to be ungovernable because of dissatisfied individuals. The principal, on the virtue of his position, must protect the rights of each person, be it learners or teachers, and those who are trying to oppress others' rights must be dealt with fairly, and justice must be served to the victims. Vogel (2012) stipulated that for school principals it is significant to include ethics when judging the behavior and interactions of people.

Arar and Saiti (2022) have a similar claim to (Shapiro and Stefkovich, 2016; Mathur and Corley, 2014) that within an organization all members should receive fair

treatment and equality as these are characteristics of the ethic of justice. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016) concur with Branson (2010) by claiming that justice-based ethics acts as the backbone of legal ideas and concepts, which stipulates that legislation and constitutional rights have to be protected in schools. Stefkovich (2005) claims that upholding everyone's civil and human rights is the goal of justice-based ethics; Shapiro and Gross (2008) claim that justice-based ethics prompts inquiries into the impartiality of laws.

Wood and Hilton (2012) indicated that their different kinds of justices namely: procedural, substantive, retributive, remedial, and distributive. In a situation where laws are applied in a fair, unbiased, and impartial manner it is called Procedural justice. Substantive looks at how fair laws are, and substantive justice explores whether laws serve all individuals equally and fairly. Retributive justice focuses on "retribution", which entails punishing those who are violating the laws. Another kind of justice focuses on correcting the wrongs committed by offering the victims reparations, this is remedial justice. The last kind of justice focuses on examining whether the advantages as well as the disadvantages are equally shared, this is called distributive justice.

### 2.3.3 The ethic of critique

Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005), state that critical theorists may serve as an option to help teachers correct the wrongs while they are looking at the key morals and values. According to Branson (2010), the ethic of critique investigates concepts like language, class, privilege, power, culture, and social power. To do this, it considers the following queries: By these laws, regulations, and policies, who gains? Who is in charge? Ensuring that the laws and policies are implemented and that they accommodate every individual, regardless of background or class. The ethics of critique seek to protect the rights of all within an organization and defend those without power from the ones who are privileged. Murdoch, English, Hintz, and Tyson (2020) contend that the ethic of critique examines educational institutions intending to eradicate unfairness and injustice; this is achieved when the principal creates a trust-based culture so that the learners and staff members feel comfortable in expressing their dissatisfaction.

Furman (2004) contends that principals are compelled to address ethical problems by the ethic of critique within the school premises and examine how the implementation of laws and the distribution of resources only help a particular set of people while failing the other group. Similarly, Shapiro and Gross (2008) provided that the ethic of critique brings awareness to school principals about the inequalities in the social environment as it tries to pursue measures that will correct laws and policies that are not consistent with sound educational practices. The ethic of critique states that principals must critique and analyze policies before they can implement them, this will allow the principals to correct the wrong while looking for key moral values (Shapiro and Stekfovich, 2005). Starratt (1994) argues that the ethic of critique compels school principals to address inequalities in which the school favors the privileged in the allocation of resources and enforcement of regulations. The ethic of critique enables school principals to rectify the wrongs, bring awareness of inequalities, and offer a mechanism to guarantee that their policies are implemented to address the disparities, thus correcting the laws, policies, and practices that favor certain individuals (Shapiro and Gross, 2008).

#### 2.4 Outlining the Social Learning Theory

The violence employed by learners towards their teachers is alarming worldwide, and theories like the SLT have paramount significance in understanding how this behavior developed. Albert Bandura (1977) stipulates that observational learning occurs within the place of socialization, and observational learning is characterized by four elements: attention, retention, reciprocation, and motivation. In Bandura's experiment, he demonstrated that children learn a behavior and then imitate the behavior that has been observed from models. Firstly, the model of observations is a live model whereby an individual will act a certain behavior to the learner. Secondly, the verbal instrumental model is about describing and explaining a behavior; thirdly, the symbolic model is about fictional characters that may be seen in a book, movie, or even on media platforms. All these three observational models are most likely to influence a child to behave like their models.

According to Akers (1985), SLT provides that people are social beings; therefore, they need to socialize and interact with others, and this sometimes results in the acquisition of negative behavior, especially if the behavior observed receives rewards. Similarly, Bandura (1977) concurs that individuals learn from observations that occur within the social context. This implies that through socialization, learners may observe aggressive behavior from other learners, and if this aggressive behavior receives rewards, this behavior is more likely to be observed by other learners. The SLT by Bandura (1976) stipulates that the conduct of an individual is learned through observation and imitation. The SLT applies to this research as it explores the roots of violence, which is displayed by learners towards teachers at school. Learners who turn to exert violence towards their teachers have seen and observed the behavior of someone and saw their models receiving a reinforcement for the behavior; hence, they also resort to similar behavior.

This theory claims that learners observe the behavior displayed by their role models and later imitate it. Bandura and Walters (1963) claim that the core factor that influences learning is modeling. Hill (2001) supports the claim of Bandura and Walters (1963) by stipulating that individuals learn to act in a specific manner from observations of the behavior of interest from their models. As a result, learners who display aggressive behavior towards teachers have acquired the behavior through observation from their role models. Akers and Sellers (2013) claim that people who participate in unlawful acts are often involved or have close relationships with people who are doing unlawful activities and that the behavior receives reinforcement, and this becomes an influence on them. Learners who are disrespectful towards educators have observed the behavior of other learners and saw that those learners are feared at school, and as a result, they exert the same behavior so that teachers and other learners can also fear them.

The SLT indicates that learning is a mental process that happens through observation and direct learning in the social environment (Collins, 2013). This implies that the learner may model behavior that he/she has observed from either media platforms, family members, peers, or a parent who applies aggressive methods as a way of working out a problem. The behavior which learners may imitate depends on whether the behavior observed received any positive incentive. Akers and Sellers (2013) argue

that SLT stipulates that criminal behavior is learned and provides that this behavior is influenced by motivation. Learners who observe violence at their place or in the setting in which they are raised often employ violence as an act of solving problems.

According to De Figueiredo (2012), parents have a significant influence on learners' development of aggressive characteristics; since learners learn through observation, the actions of a parent have a significant influence on the learner's behavior. Learners who resort to aggression most of them perceive the behavior from parents or it was developed because of parental rejection and abusive behavior of parents (Ludht and Freyberger, 2004). As proposed by the SLT, behavior is learned through observation and imitation. The learners who resort to violence have acquired the behavior through observation from their model and later imitate the behavior. The SLT was pertinent to this research since it looks at how behavior is developed and looks at the exposure to behavior, modeling, and imitation (Bandura, 1977). Akers (2009) asserts that individuals involved in criminal activities are a result of acquiring a definition that favors their crime. Similarly, Akers and Sellers (2013) argue that people are only involved in behavior that they have observed from others in their social group.

According to Bandura (1977), individuals' behavior that they mimic is impacted by the traits of the role models, both the actions seen and the consequences of those actions. Friends and family are often the most influential people in the social group individuals turn to imitate or model the behavior of those close to them (Akers and Sellers, 2013). The rewards and punishment that follow the behavior serve as a determining factor whether or not an individual is going to repeat the behavior; behavior is repeated when the act is followed by rewards (Burgess and Akers, 1966). The rewards and the reinforcements have two sides, the positive and the negative side, and this dictates whether the behavior will be repeated or not, meaning the behavior receiving positive reinforcement will be repeated, and the behavior receiving punishment is less likely to be repeated.

#### 2.4.1 Social Learning Theory

The four components of observational learning were employed to explain how individuals acquire behavior and how they retain the behavior so that they can also use it later. Wang (2021) claims that observational learning has four phases which are: attention, retention, generation, and motivation. The four components are explained in the following way.

- A) **Attention:** Individuals get prone to the behavior of the people they look up to, these are people who they observe in their social setting and acquire the behavior by paying attention to the models. According to Bandura (1977), learning happens through observations and rewards; mass media shows violence in a glorified way. As a result, learners become models of behavior, and this contributes to the violent behavior of learners (De Wet, 2009). Learners also model the behavior of people close to them, like family members, peers, and parents, who exhibit aggressive behavior and receive rewards in the form of support, cheering, or gaining respect from others.
  
- B) **Retention:** For the observer to acquire knowledge and “learn”, the observer ought to ensure that the behavior is kept in mind. Bandura (1977) claims that learners only imitate what they have learned and also what they can remember. Learners who exhibit aggressive behavior towards their teachers imitate behavior that they still remember and learned from their models.
  
- C) **Generation:** As a result of the retained behavior, the observed behavior becomes generated and transformed, and the reinforcement will provide a strong influence on the observer, and the behavior will be exerted. A learner who observes a bully gaining respect from bullying others is more likely to imitate the behavior and try to match his aggressive behavior with that of the model.
  
- D) **Motivation:** Through reinforcement and the credits the observer received from the behavior, the observer will actively display the learned behavior. A pupil may employ violence against other people because he has observed peers being rewarded for the conduct, but if the model received punishment

for the behavior, the learner will not imitate the behavior; instead, he will refrain from acting like the peer (Wang, 2022).

The two theories employed in this study work collaboratively in offering an understanding and solution to the phenomena of LTV and the significance of employing ethical leadership practices. The SLT by Albert Bandura states that the behavior of individuals is acquired through observations and imitation (Bandura, 1976). This theory claims that through observations and direct learning, violent behavior may be embedded in the psyche of vulnerable learners. The SLT is pertinent to this research because of its ability to assist in the dissection of the behavior of learners who are behaving violently towards their teachers at school. The SLT concentrates on the behavior of learners and how they have acquired this unethical behavior and offers an understanding of the phenomenon. Ethical leadership theory affirms that leaders guide in a manner that “respects individual's rights and dignity”, these are leaders who are not self-serving they are people who understand that their decisions may affect others when using their authoritative power in serving them (Trevino, Brown, and Hartman, 2003). This theory provides tents, which may be employed to deal with the unethical behavior of learners, and these tents can significantly minimize the unethical behavioral patterns of learners.

The section that follows reviewed the legislative framework that supports ethical leadership. Later, the section focused on concepts of violence happening at school, the nature of learner-on-teacher violence, both national and international, and the elements that are giving rise to LTV.

## 2.5 Legislative Framework That Supports Ethical Leadership

The RSA's 1996 Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) and other legislation protect individuals against unethical behavior. People are equal, and they all have the right to equal protection under the law; equality is the full realization of one's freedom and rights, according to Section 9(1) of the Constitution of RSA. The South African School Act 84 of 1996 (section 8), provides that to manage discipline, teachers are compelled to

ensure all pupils are not endangered within the school premises. Sections (12 and 24) of the Bill of Rights provide that every person has the right to be unaffected by all forms of abuse and to live in a secure atmosphere.

Section 10 of the *Constitution of RSA* (1996) indicates that each individual has the right to inherent dignity and for their dignity to be protected. The *Constitution of RSA* (1996), section 12 Stipulates that every individual in South Africa must be unaffected by all kinds of abuse and not be treated in a way that dehumanizes or even degrades them. The Bill of Rights (section 28d) provides that all children should not be neglected, malnourished, abused, and degraded but rather they should be protected. Therefore, this legislation provides that teachers must protect learners at school and make sure that a secure learning environment. Also, the principal is left with a duty to ensure the educator's and pupil's safety within the school premises, and he must protect each individual's rights.

The SASA (No 84 of 1996) indicates that schools should adopt a code of conduct for learners to guarantee the upholding of discipline for a purposeful schooling atmosphere that provides quality teaching and learning. Teachers also have legislation, which is formulated to guide their ethical conduct, such as the South African Council of Education (SACE). This legislation (SACE) provides a Code of Professional Ethics and this was implemented to promote the ethical conduct of teachers. It is for this reason that it is significant for school principals to guarantee that every individual within the school is highly protected and that no one infringes on their rights. The Regulation for Safety Measures at Public Schools (Government Gazette 22754,2001:66) requires principals to take all necessary measures to protect everyone on the grounds of public schools and the buildings themselves. The principal, as an ethical leader, is, therefore, obligated to ensure that all these legislations are adhered to by the school community and that no one is victimized. Section 16 of the SASA concurs with the regulation for safety measures at public schools, indicating that the principals have the responsibility to provide and make sure that pupils and teachers do not victimize other learners.

Section 8A of the Education Laws Amendment Act (ELAA) (Act 31 of 2007) stipulates that it is against the law for pupils to come with hazardous objects to others, including

drugs and alcohol to school. This legislation further provides guidelines for school principals and principals' delegates to conduct an unauthorized search if there is a plausible suspicion. Under the protection of this legislation, the principal has to guarantee the safety of the staff by acting according to section 8A of the ELAA (Act 31 of 2007). The SASA (Act 84 of 1996) amended the Regulations of School Safety Measures at Public Schools of (2001) that provides that the school principal, police officials, or any delegate to search without the possession of a warrant if there is a plausible suspicion of drugs or dangerous objects in the school. It is invested in the principal and police officials to confiscate any illegal weapons at school and drugs, and anyone found disregarding this legislation must be managed accordingly.

The legislation provided in this study was relevant in depicting how learners and educators should conduct themselves while making sure that teaching and learning succeed. The legislation was relevant in explaining the way of conduct necessary for the education sector and what is deemed unethical conduct within the school premises. In a case where one is infringing the rights of others, the legislation has provided measures to be followed by the school principal to guarantee that such a person receives a fair punishment.

The South African legislation has tried to guarantee the safety and security of each person within the educational setting. The *Constitution* of the RSA (1996), SACE, the SASA (No 84 of 1996), ELAA (No 31 of 2007), and The Regulations for Safety Measures at Public School (Government Gazette 22754,2001:66); these legislations work collaboratively in trying to ensure the safety of all individuals. The violent incidences taking place at school compromise the purpose of education, which is a favorable teaching and learning environment for all. Therefore, the legislations provide measures which can be applied to prohibit this phenomenon of LTV, a proper application of these laws can lead to the reduction of violent incidences at school.

## 2.6 Concepts Of School Violence

MacNeil and Steward (2000) define school violence as the deliberate action that involves harmful words or physical action that ends up with the victim feeling pain

inside the school premises. Similarly, UNESCO (2017) defines this concept of school violence as the victimization of individuals by an aggressive individual that takes place on the school premises. De Wet (2016) concurs that school violence can be explained as the aggressive behavior of learners towards teachers, and this behavior can be physical or emotional with the motive to cause pain to teachers. Capozzoli and McVey (2000) claim that school violence can be explained as individual or group intimidation, threats, harassment, robbery, vandalism, and the use of physical assault, which can result in death or injury within the school. Espelage (2013) argues that school violence can be explained as teacher-directed violence associated with actions taken by learners that are against the school rules and affect the teaching and learning school environment. Therefore, the researcher concurred with both Espelage's (2013) and Capozzoli and McVey's (2000)'s definitions of school violence as an act of going against the school rules and the intentional action of intimidation, threats, harassment, robbery, vandalism, and the physical assault.

LTV can be defined as violence directed at teachers at work, including harassment, bullying, threats, offensive gestures, and physical attacks from learners (Chia et al., 2013). In this study's context, learners were the perpetrators of violence, and teachers were victims of violence. Chia et al. (2013) state that LTV can take place as an act of hitting, beating, kicking, strangling, and even using objects that are dangerous to harm the teacher. Burton (2008) claims that LTV can also be explained as physical threats, sarcasm, teasing, torment, and humiliating remarks that cause emotional damage to the teacher. In light of this research, LTV is explained as the attack on educators by learners. This can be through harassment, bullying, physical attack, sarcasm, insults, humiliation, or even cyberbullying.

#### 2.6.1 The nature of learner-on-teacher violence in South Africa

South Africa (S.A.) is thought to be among the nations with the greatest level of violence worldwide (Collins, 2011). The phenomenon of violence happening at school is a huge problem in S.A.; this violence equally threatens learners and teachers in one way or the other (Le Mottee and Kelly, 2017). Mabasa and Mafumo (2017) argue that

in South Africa, safety at school has become a burning issue judging from the reports of death and injuries at schools despite all the interventions implemented that focus on resolving the safety problem. In South Africa, much emphasis on violence at school focuses on teacher-on-learner violence. However, learners are also perpetrators of violence at school, and this is not directed only to other pupils, but, in most cases, it is directed to teachers (Le Mottee and Kelly, 2017).

The exponential increase in the statistics of LTV has proven the seriousness of this phenomenon. Van der Westhuizen and Maree (2009) provided that assaults taking place in schools are a recurrent phenomenon for most schools in S.A. Burton (2008) concurs by stipulating that 1 in 4 learners or 1 in 4 teachers were once victims of violence in school or near the school premises. Sibisi (2016) asserts by stating that in South Africa, one in five teachers experiences learner-on-teacher violence. Burton (2008) claims that statistics of about 58.1% of teachers and 85.5% of pupils have revealed that they are not safe at school. These statistics and others that were provided depict the damage this phenomenon has caused to the school atmosphere, compromising the security of educators and other learners. The research that has been conducted on school violence stipulates that teachers, learners, and other employees within the school premises are at risk of theft, physical violence, verbal threats, and psychological harm (Burton, 2008).

According to the SACE (2020), it is high time we focus on the implementation of coping strategies, which will help in reducing LTV in schools. Makhasane and Mthembu (2019) state that S.A. is perceived as one of the most violent countries globally, which makes schools in South Africa prone to violence. Teachers are mostly the receivers of violence from learners at school; this has impacted their passion for teaching, and as a result, this has affected the educational goal. Mgijima (2014) points out that the Media in S.A. in the year 2012 reported an incidence of a pupil assaulting an educator with a broom and a chair. Another incident reported was that of a teacher who was beaten unconsciously after taking a mobile phone from a learner during the examination. Similarly, the National School Violence Study (NSVS) also showed a high incidence of abuse which affected teachers in the year 2012.

Teachers in South Africa are reduced to mere punching bags, whereby they sustain

all sorts of abuse coming from learners every day. The Gauteng Department of Education has reported the following cases of teachers being abused: In 2014, 10 cases were reported, 26 cases were reported in 2015, 21 cases were reported in 2016, and cases of teachers abused by learners (Masinga, 2017). Moreover, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2018, a teacher in one of the schools in Gauteng endured an injury after a learner threw a stone to hurt the teacher (Grobler, 2018). Research, which was conducted between the two provinces of Free State and Eastern Cape, produced that 76.7% of educators have encountered aggression from pupils (De Wet and Jacobs, 2006). Despite all the statistics provided by researchers and media platforms exposing learner-on-teacher violence, teachers are still not capacitated with measures to tackle violence perpetrated by learners (David and Waghid, 2016).

The statistics on unethical behavior of learners towards teachers in South Africa, some of these behaviors happen more often than others. De Wet and Jacobs (2006) depict that all the participants in this study had varying experiences of being victimized: 48.3% were ignored, 48.3% were verbally bullied, 46.1% of their classrooms were damaged, 28.7% rumors were spread about them, 21.1% private property damaged, 14.3% physically attacked, 11.6% sexual comments were directed to them. In addition, research has provided that 35.6% of teachers have reported being victimized at school, and 11.8% claim to be victimized on multiple occasions (Burton and Leoschut, 2013). Dzuka and Dalber (2007) assert in their research that they found that 35.4% of teachers experienced harmful verbal behavior from learners. The sad reality is that despite these alarming statistics, teachers are still not capacitated enough with methods to curb violent incidences. Hence, they resort to similar responses to violence (David and Waghid, 2016). Baruth and Mokoena (2016) argue that this violence directed at teachers is an alarming trend that negatively affects teachers as well as pupils, taxpayers, and the educational system.

Teachers who are often exposed to LTV or those who are victims of this phenomenon usually develop low self-esteem, which affects their quality of teaching. According to Steffgren and Ewen (2007), teachers experiencing LTV usually experience anguish, depression, headaches, and disturbed sleep. Neely (2003) concurs that teachers experiencing LTV may have symptoms such as fatigue, headache, stomach pains, and hypertension. Teachers are fearful of attending classes due to LTV. This has a

big impact on how learners succeed and the quality of education they get from these teachers.

#### 2.6.2 The nature of learner-on-teacher violence international literature

Moon, Morash, Jang, and Jeong (2015), indicated that in the United States and globally, LTV is an alarming phenomenon. School violence continues to be worrisome worldwide through the lens of teachers since it is still understudied (Fisher and Kettl, 2003). According to Fisher and Kettl (2003), teachers at school are always at the frontline of school violence and are mostly the victims of LTV. In the K-12 institutions based in the U.S.A., there were two mass shootings at school (Schildkraut and Muschert, 2019). Another tragic incident took place at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. Nikolas, who had a firearm, opened fire, which then led to the killing of 17 people, and 17 more were wounded. This happened after Nikolas was expelled from school (Kennedy, 2021). In Canada, 80% of teachers were reported to have experienced violence in school during their careers (Wilson, Douglas, and Lyon, 2011).

In the year 2005, an overall 55 million learners were found to have enrolled in schools globally, with an additional 6.7 million, which comprised teachers, professional administrators, and supporting staff (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). The findings have provided that the teachers at different schools nationwide are the ones who are all more likely to be the subjects of violence happening at school than pupils (Kondrasuk et al., 2005). Miller and Chandler (2005) provided that in 1999-2000, about 71% of the public schools experienced school violence in the United States. In Slovakia, research conducted depicted that 364 teachers were victims of LTV in recent periods (Dzuka and Dalbert, 2007). Kaupii and Porhola (2012) concur by providing that in Finland, about 175 teachers have been reported as being victims of abuse perpetrated by pupils in five selected primary schools and five selected secondary schools. Mehmet (2012) claims that in Turkey, it was discovered that 24.1% of educators are victims of emotional abuse, 14.7% are victims of verbal abuse, and 6.3% of teachers have experienced assault from learners.

O'Halloran (2000) concurs that violence perpetrated against teachers at school is rising the assaulting of teachers in school is rising gradually each day. In addition, male teachers are more in danger of becoming the targets of violence in schools than female teachers, and this was said to be more prominent in middle or junior schools than in high schools. In the State of New Jersey, about 123 incidents of school violence have been reported. This includes vandalism, weapons offenses, substance offenses, harassment, intimidation, and bullying (New Jersey Department of Education, 2014). McMahon et al. (2014) claim that in 2010, about 80% of educators were reported to be victims of violence at school from either the previous school or the current school they are working at; 44% of these teachers were reported to be physically attacked. Moreover, a report carried out stipulated that most teachers were victimized by learners while other teachers were victimized by colleagues and parents (McMahon et al., 2014). Zhang et al. (2016) claim that the Schools and Staffing Survey (SASS) has alluded that 9% of educators are endangered with injuries and about 5% of the teachers were physically attacked by learners within the school in the year 2011-12. In addition, in North Dakota, 3% of teachers have experienced injuries from learners, and in Washington, D.C., 17% of teachers experienced violence from learners.

The statistics provided in this study serve as evidence in exposing the seriousness of the phenomenon of LTV around the world. NSVS provide an alarming report of LTV in the past (Dlamini, 2018). NSVS (2012) states that 35.6% of teachers are victims of LTV, and 11.8% are reported victims of more than one incidence of violence. Kollapan (2006) has provided that South Africa has more than 12 million public school learners, and as a result of the history of violence in S.A., learners and teachers are no longer in safe and conducive environments at schools because of the continual eruption of school violence. Statistics of violence have depicted Jamaica as the leading country with the largest number of school violence, and S.A. is just behind Jamaica with the statistics (Ntuli, 2015). Ethical leadership practices can be considered an essential method to curb LTV in different schools throughout the world. The practice of ethical leadership, when employed effectively, can help in achieving the goal of education, which is working in a favorable teaching and learning atmosphere wherein the act of violence directed towards teachers is eradicated.

### 2.6.3 Factors contributing to learner-on-teacher violence

Communities like informal settlements where people living are prone to drugs contribute to this phenomenon. Vally, Dolombisa, and Porteus (1999) provided that the most prominent factor of violence at school in S.A. is the legacy of political struggle and the negative aspects of the nation's economy as well as the social inequalities. According to Ramorola and Taole (2014), pupils who were born in communities where most youth use or sell drugs school learners are more presumably to use these drugs. De Wet (2016) argues that learners coming from overpopulated areas where community activities are not active learners are likely to take part in school violence. Jordaan (2018) reported that in 2017, 358 cases of violence took place at school in S.A., which included the use of weapons by learners. LTV has left other teachers questioning their safety at work, and others are even considering leaving their profession (Nesane Nesane, 2008).

Poverty can cripple the society and destroy morals in individuals. Phurutse (2005) claims that for schools that are located in areas with low income, school violence is more prone, and learners are more vulnerable to school violence. Chiu (2013) states that learners from households where the parents settle disputes by using conflict their learners are likely to be instigators of violence at school. These learners have assimilated the method employed by their parents or people within their cycle of socialization, whereby they solve problems through violence. Makhasane and Khanare (2018) have provided that learners who come from communities where corruption receive rewards rather than punishment learners are likely to copy the conduct and resort to aggressive behavior at school. Learners tend to behave aggressively because of the factor that they have a poor relationship with mankind (Barry and Kauten, 2013). Learners coming from disadvantaged families are more likely to contribute to LTV because mostly express their frustration through violence.

Miller (2008) stipulates that several variables, including a poor background, high rates of joblessness, and inadequate housing, contribute to pupils' sense of pessimism. Thomas and Bushman (2011) propose that learners suffering from personality disorders may perceive themselves as having high self-importance and resort to

aggressive behavior towards others within the school premises. These are the pupils who are always involved in violent activities, and the cause of these violent events is trivial things that can be resolved by communication. Chauke, Malatji, and Mudua (2019) claim that learners from child-headed families, or those without parents or parents who lack parental skills their children tend to take life for granted and don't respect others. Similarly, Stoddard (2015) concurs that boys who are exposed to parental fights are often caught up in fights with female pupils and female teachers at school. According to Allen (2010), rules that are not clear and not firm in enforcing the rules can create a negative environment, and this will promote antisocial behavior. Employing ethical leadership will promote the security of both pupils and educators within the school atmosphere.

## Chapter Three: Research Methodology and Design

### 3.1 Introduction

This study sought to investigate the principals' ethical leadership in tackling learner-on-teacher violence. The literature reviewed in the previous chapter, Chapter 2, provided a review of the legislative framework, which is aimed at promoting ethical behavior, the nature of learner-on-teacher violence (LTV), factors contributing to LTV, and also the tenets of ethical leadership. The two theoretical frameworks, the Ethical Leadership Theory (ELT) and the Social Learning Theory (SLT), which have framed the study, were also analyzed. This chapter aimed at justifying the research paradigm, approach, and design, which are significant to this study. The data collection was in two folds, semi-structured interviews (SSI) and document analysis (DA). Furthermore, this chapter explains how data was analyzed and also discusses aspects such as trustworthiness and ethical issues.

### 3.2 Research Paradigm: Interpretivism

Khatri (2020) discussed a paradigm as an ideology that provides how individuals think, which is influenced by their beliefs, agreements, and assumptions. This study employed the interpretive paradigm. In exploring principals' applications of ethical leadership practices in tackling LTV interpretivist paradigm was utilized. According to Kumatongo and Muzata (2021), interpretivism reality is based on human social relations and their subjective experiences of the natural world. Moreover, interpretivism believes that reality can be constructed through societal relations such as language, consciousness, and shared meaning. Creswell and John (2018) concur by stating that the goal of interpretivism is to focus on the interviewee's perspective on the phenomenon being researched. Merriam and Grenier (2019) assert that the interpretive paradigm is based on the interpretation and uncovering of the meaning constructed by people and how they make sense of their lives. Creswell and Creswell (2018) also indicated the goal of interpretivism as to focus on the participant's views

of what is studied and provide an interpretation of the information that they have created about the natural world. Creswell and Poth (2018) postulate that interpretivism aims to construct knowledge from the comprehension of an individual's unique perspective.

The Interpretivism paradigm employed in this research enabled participants to dissect their understanding, perspectives, or interpretations of the phenomenon being studied. The interpretivism paradigm is pertinent to this research as it enables the exploration of principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling LTV. This was achieved through the investigation of the individual subjective experience of the social world and how individuals share meaning through their interactions in the social world (Nieuwenhuis, 2015). The participant's knowledge has significant importance to this study through finding meaning and understanding of participants on how principals employ ethical leadership practices in tackling LTV.

For this study, I employed interpretivism and, within the paradigm, explored two philosophical assumptions of ontology and epistemology:

### 3.2.1 Ontology

Ontology is explained as the essence of the real world (Junjie and Yingxin, 2022). Moreover, the researchers provide that reality is not the same for everyone and people can interpret society through observations and measurements. Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) concur that ontology is the essence of reality. In this study, the reality that was explored is that of principals and how they employ the practices of ethical leadership in tackling LTV. Ontology is based on human experience and interpretation of the social world. The reality is not single-sided, but instead of multiple realities, the participants have different interpretations of the phenomena being studied. The multiple realities were explored through the exchange of information between the interviewer and the interviewee in the form of SSI. How participants experience LTV is not always the same; therefore, this influences how principals employ ethical leadership practices in dealing with this phenomenon.

### 3.2.2 Epistemology

Epistemology can be how knowledge of reality is obtained by researchers (Alharahsheh and Pius, 2020). In addition, epistemology is aimed at finding out how knowledge is uncovered to arrive at reality. Epistemology is concerned with how people acquire knowledge. According to Pathiranage, Jayatilake, and Abeysekera (2020), epistemology is all about knowledge that is constructed socially. It does not believe that there is a pre-existing reality. Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) explain epistemology as the essence of human understanding and how it is acquired so that it can be shared with other humans. The research candidate had a similar comprehension of how the principals employ ethical leadership practices in dealing with LTV. I received knowledge about the phenomenon of interest through the reality of those interviewed.

### 3.3 Research Approach: Qualitative Approach

The qualitative research approach was utilized in this research to examine the principals' ethical leadership practice in tackling LTV. The qualitative approach is mostly focused on people. According to Creswell (2019) states that qualitative research is about linguistic data, not numeric data. Leavy (2020) indicates that the qualitative approach is mostly employed by researchers in investigating social phenomena. In addition, this researcher provides that the value of this approach lies in the people's subjective experiences that contribute to the construction of meaning. Creswell and Poth (2018) define qualitative as an approach to studying things in their native habitat, intending to make sense of them or even interpret the phenomenon concerning the meaning humans bring to them. Furthermore, qualitative research is described by Williamson et al. (2018) as an approach employed to look into people's perceptions and understand specifically human-related events.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) indicate that the qualitative approach is about understanding the meaning of a phenomenon ascribed by humans in their social environment. Through in-depth interviews with the interviewees included in this

research, the qualitative researcher was able to obtain a clear picture or comprehension of how principals use ethical leadership practices to address LTV. This study was about *exploring principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence*. This is a social phenomenon that was investigated through the use of DA and SSI. Mills and Gay (2016) assert that to understand the topic being examined, a qualitative research approach collects, analyses, and interprets comprehensible narrative and visual material that is not quantifiable. According to Tracy (2020), qualitative research, which includes interviews and other methods, is used to help researchers understand a phenomenon in a variety of contexts.

Bryman (2012) describes qualitative research as a methodology that uses a diversity of techniques to gather data. Similarly, this research used SSI with the principals and their deputies to find out how they understand the employment of ethical leadership techniques by principals when tackling LTV. Materials that the school principals provided assisted in learning more about the disciplinary procedures employed at the two schools. Neuman (2014) asserts that qualitative researchers contextualize, further interpret, and make sense of the data.

The advantage of using qualitative methods is to allow the researcher to recognize and manage responses as the ethical leadership practices addressing LTV take place (Choy, 2014). The researcher was able to clarify the answers that were unclear to him by asking follow-up questions. The researcher was, therefore, able to create pertinent answers to the phenomenon thanks to the follow-up inquiries. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), open-ended inquiries let participants provide information without any restrictions. The qualitative approach is relevant to this research; it enables the researchers to investigate the social phenomena that are principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling LTV. The qualitative approach has assisted me in exploring the aim of the study. Moreover, it allowed me to acquire more insight, knowledge, and meaning constructed by participants of the phenomenon studied.

### 3.4 Research Design: Multiple Case Study

Research designs, according to Creswell (2015), are methods for gathering, analyzing, interpreting, and publishing data in research reports. According to Bertram and Christiansen (2017), study design is related to the approach a researcher takes to cumulate and evaluate the information necessary to mitigate the study topic. According to Kumar's (2011) theory, research design enables the researcher to build pertinent instruments that will be used to successfully address the research questions. An inquiry technique is another name for a study design (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). In this study, a case study research design was utilized to explore the principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling LTV. To acquire relevant data about the principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling LTV, I had to gather this data from schools that employ ethical leadership. Gustafsson (2017), a case study is adopted to examine actual life cases through a detailed data collection, including several sources of information. This research utilized a multiple case-study design. Multiple case study permitted me to gather data while showing or noting the similarities or differences.

According to Pathiranage, Jayatilake, and Abeysekera (2020), a multiple-case study is appropriate as it allows a single set of cross-case findings and for examining several examples in a single research. Moreover, multiple case study allows for multiple experiments on a case and allows for comparison of knowledge. Gustafsson (2017) contends that multiple case studies allow researchers to scrutinize the data collected from different sites. Swain (2017) provides that this design mainly focuses on asking the "W" questions, which are How and Why, and these center the issue along the themes. This design enabled me to acquire multiple understandings and perspectives of the respondents and examine how participants provided meaning to the study phenomenon. Multiple case study design includes two or more settings which allows for a larger comparison of data. Yin (2013) claimed that a case study collects adequate information and allows the researcher to comprehend how an individual social setting or a group functions and tries to make sense of their world. Lapan, Quartaroli, and Riemer (2012) state that multiple case studies include studying different cases, and this allows the researcher to make comparisons of the data. The multiple case study is important in a way that it enables me to make comparisons of data and allows for in-depth interaction with the data rather than focusing on one single case.

This research was executed in 2 secondary schools in the Thabo-Mofutsanyana district. The diverse experiences of principals and deputies of two secondary schools were investigated through one-on-one interviews. A multiple case study design was employed in this research because the researcher aims to investigate the principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence. This permitted the researcher to cumulate extensive information, from the comparison between data collected through SSI and DA. According to Rossman and Rallis (2017), the case studies' relevance stems from their application of several sources and data collection methodologies. The following techniques could be used: observations, reports, document analysis, interviews, and observations. As a result, this method produces richer data on the topic under study while simultaneously increasing the reliability of the data. Participants are examined in a setting that allows for their comfort level and allows for no manipulation (Zainal,2007). Consequently, this facilitates the understanding of individual perceptions in their natural setting.

### 3.5 Data Collection

DA was employed to supplement the primary data collection method used in this research, which is SSI. SSI was utilized to get an absolute comprehension of participants' perceptions of ethical leadership practice in tackling LTV. The data that was gathered from interviews were sound recorded, and the documents received were stored in a safe locker to ensure the principle of confidentiality.

#### 3.5.1 Semi-Structured Interview

DeJonckere and Vaughn (2019) indicated that interviews are divided into three types, which are open-ended, structured, and semi-structured. SSI and DA were employed in this study to gather data. Data triangulation was employed, which utilized a diversity of data sources in the qualitative study to get a precise comprehension (Carter, 2014).

This study has utilized the data collection tool semi-structured interview. The SSI enabled the researcher to follow up on matters related to the topic. Maree (2021) provides that SSI is employed to verify data with other sources of data. The researcher asked the interviewees open-ended questions, and these were then accompanied by probing questions as a way of getting clarity. The SSI will allow the respondents to respond to open-ended questions that will promote flexibility in their responses to the questions (Leavy, 2017). Zull (2016) asserts that open-ended questions don't have fixed answers; they allow participants to use their own words and voice out their knowledge and experience. The SSI was utilized to collect rich data from the principals and the deputy principals. This was required to facilitate communication between the interviewer and the interviewee to get pertinent information for the study.

SSIs were vital to this study as they allowed new questions to arise in the middle of the study (Ruslin, 2022). SSIs were relevant since they offered a way in which the interviewees could share their ideas or views in their way; the advantage of the SSI is that it enables probing and thus enhances the quality of data (Miller and Brewer, 2013). Semi-structured interview has characteristics, that imply interviews include one-on-one face-to-face interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee (Ruslin, 2022). Moreover, semi-structured interviews can be telephonically or using any social media platform. Babbie (2017) postulates that SSIs are significant as they reduce the chances of the interviewee responding with "I don't know". For this study, SSI was done face-to-face within the school premises between the interviewer and the participants.

The participants who were interviewed using SSI were two school principals and two deputy principals. The participants were asked questions which addressed the aim of this research. In the beginning, the interviewer took all the respondents through interview questions and provided them with the questions to familiarize them with what was going to be asked. The interviews were sound-recorded based on the consent granted by the interviewees. The interviews occurred within the school premises; the interviews were carried out after school, each taking 15 minutes. The interviews were employed to acquire a better comprehension of the application of ethical leadership in tackling LTV at school. The interviews occurred in the comfort zone of research

participants, and they were also carried out in a language that the respondents felt comfortable with.

### 3.5.2 Document Analysis

This study used a variety of methods for gathering data, one of which was DA. Written materials can include memos, agendas, corporate reports, emails, newspaper stories, published and unpublished documents, letters, administrative documents, company reports, and any other document pertinent to the study (Creswell, 2014). In addition, Tracy (2020) indicated that DA involves everything that is made by humans, like hard copies of documents that are relevant to the research phenomena. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), documents such as journals or newspapers are used in qualitative research to supplement the written data provided by participants. Moreover, documents are significant and convenient to the researcher as they are written evidence that also saves the researcher's time to transcribe (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Cardno, Rosales-Anderson, and Macdonald (2017) explain DA as a method of locating, interpreting, and analyzing documents that have relevant information regarding a phenomenon. According to France (2016), documents are physical artifacts, written narratives, and visuals that illustrate the complexity of human existence. According to Wood, Sebar, and Vecchio (2020), there are primarily 2 forms of documents: primary sources and secondary sources. According to Owen (2014), these papers are classified as primary or secondary sources depending on where they were found. Primary sources are written accounts of the author's personal experiences. The disciplinary committee's expertise and sources documents from school principals are given much attention in this study. When it comes to addressing violence on school property, the researcher mostly relies on the actions, statements, and documentation of the disciplinary committee.

Through documents, the researcher can learn the participants' written language and vocabulary (Creswell, 2014). The information gleaned from the papers is real and unaffected by the interviewer's or interviewee's interactions with the interviewer. The

school takes its time developing the learners' code of conduct through extensive consultations with all parties involved to develop policies that may be utilized to enforce discipline on school grounds. As a result, the information from the records is authentic and gives the study a clear image of the goals of the school and the methods used to deal with LTV.

Documents are perceived as the holder of evidence for future reference. Cardno et al. (2017) indicate that DA has an essential advantage in that it, is non-reactive. It offers the researcher a platform to work with it quietly, without the presence of participants, and without drawing attention that will influence the participants. The documents that were analyzed in this research include the learner's code of conduct (LCC), school policies, and an incidence book. Reviewing these documents offers substantive evidence of the interviews taken. DA is relevant to this study as it provided rich evidence about how principals employed ethical leadership practices in tackling LTV.

### 3.6 Selection Of Participants: Purposive Sampling

For the researcher to examine the principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling LTV, respondents were carefully selected based on the knowledge they brought to this study. This study utilized purposive sampling as it allowed me to choose respondents deliberately depending on their capability to produce relevant and thick knowledge of this research. According to Qureshi (2018), sampling is a method that allows me to gather information from a subset of the population so that the data may be utilized to illustrate the characteristics of the entire population. Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim (2016) indicate that purposive sampling is often not a simple task. The researcher selected interviewees based on the knowledge they possess, which is pertinent to the study. Purposive sampling was utilized to choose the schools and interviewees relevant to this study. Creswell (2014) provides that using purposive sampling ensures that participants possess knowledge of the topic and can be able to contribute knowledge. Crossman and Hardesty (2018) claim that purposive sampling is based on my judgment to identify knowledgeable people, which are individuals who can contribute in-depth knowledge of principals' ethical leadership practice in tackling LTV.

The two principals from two secondary schools in South Africa (Free State, specifically in Qwaqwa), and two deputy principals were purposively chosen. The two schools that were decided upon had experienced cases of LTV. I asked for assistance from the District Office of Education to identify the schools that were exposed to LTV. Interviewing contributors from different sites allowed me to explore the similarities and differences between how principals employ ethical leadership practices in tackling LTV.

### 3.6.1 The selection of participants: Table 3.6.1 (a)

**Table 3.6.1 (a)**

<b>Pseudonyms</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>District</b>	<b>Employment Experience (YEARS)</b>
Principal 1 from school A	Male	Thabo-Mofutsanyana	10-15
Principal 2 from school B	Male	Thabo-Mofutsanyana	10-15
Deputy 1 from school A	FEMALE	Thabo-Mofutsanyana	6-10
Deputy 2 from school B	Male	Thabo-Mofutsanyana	6-10

The table above shows the participants' pseudonyms, gender, district, and employment experience. The pseudonyms are as follows: Principal 1 from School A, Principal 2 from School B, Deputy 1 from School A, and Deputy 2 from School B. The letters next to the pseudonyms represent schools: (A) is the first school, and (B) is the second school. Principals and deputies were interviewed individually. The principal's experience ranged from 10-15 years, and deputies 6-10 years.

### 3.7 Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

Data analysis allowed the researcher to determine and concentrate on comprehending the phenomenon investigated. This study adopted thematic data analysis, which focused on interpreting the data provided by participants concerning themes and patterns (Nowell et al., 2017). Thematic data analysis is pertinent to this research as it permitted me to collect data from the social world, and this data followed the researcher's aims and objectives (Maree, 2017). A professional transcriber did the transcription in this study to avoid the misinterpretation and omission of relevant information. In this study, the process that was followed was that of the thematic experience center narrative analysis and the representative reconstruction of participants' stories. The thematic data analysis includes the coding of data and sorting data based on participants' responses, which are acknowledged (McMillan and Schumber, 2010).

The thematic analysis tries to look at similarities between how a certain concept is explained and make sense of the similarities. Data collected from the interviews in this study was recorded, and the recorded information was then converted into codes for me to become acquainted with the collected data. Each participant had a different audio recording folder created. The researcher had to listen to each participant's recording to create data from what the participants produced. The professional transcriber assisted in transferring the recorded data into written data to avoid the omission of relevant data.

The data, which was converted into written text, was then organized based on the similarities and differences of ideas. This data was then broken down into themes. The data received from participants through audio-recorded interviews was later transcribed and then filtered and grouped into themes to ensure the coherence of data from interviewees. The researcher took all the data produced by participants, grouped it into themes, and examined if the data fit into the themes he created. This data, which was grouped, was captured into themes in a way that the data collected will be well fitted for the theme it is placed in; the researcher grouped data based on the ability of the data to complement the theme. The data was later interpreted as a way of

examining the usefulness of the data. Researchers note interview transcripts served as the supporting data for the participant's ideas. Reliability and validity were observed in this study by examining whether personal characteristics never influenced the interaction between the interviewee and the interviewer. To improve the validity, trustworthiness, and dependability of the findings, the researcher must work with the data in qualitative data analysis in addition to managing and organizing it (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

### 3.8 Trustworthiness

According to Kivunji and Kuyini (2017), the four standards of trustworthiness for research conducted under an interpretive paradigm are confirmability, credibility, transferability, and dependability. Tracy (2020) concurs that trustworthiness has four important components, which are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Creswell and Poth (2018) argue that trustworthiness is a way to investigate the genuineness of the data in the study. This study has followed the principles of trustworthiness about credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Triangulation involves the use of diverse data-gathering methods to produce data for the topic. Triangulation was achieved by collecting data using SSI and DA.

#### 3.8.1 Credibility

Kivunji and Kuyini (2017) explain credibility as the degree to which the data collected and analyzed is authentic and believable this is due to following all ethical procedures. Punch (2005) defines credibility as how much an instrument can measure the things it is meant to measure. This was accomplished by speaking with individuals who had previously witnessed LTV and were capable of handling situations ethically. As a result of their leadership, the number of these incidents decreased within the school. According to Rafoneke (2017), a researcher can gain participants' trust by telling them that he will be focusing attentively on what they say during the interview. To gain credibility for this study, I asked the interviewees' consent to sound record the

interviews. Two principals and two deputies from different schools were interviewed as a way of getting different perspectives on the investigated phenomena. Participants received transcripts for them to ensure that their ideas were written correctly, and in this way, credibility was achieved.

### 3.8.2 Dependability

Kivunji and Kuyini (2017) state that dependability can be achieved by being able to get the same results again in a similar circumstance. According to Nowell et al. (2017), dependability can only be attained if the research process is carried out in a well-documented, logical, and traceable manner. According to Burke (2014), a qualitative study must possess coherence, insight, and instrument utility to be deemed significant. To make sure dependability I had to make sure that the information collected was as genuine as gathered from interviewees. Dependability utilizes methods that prove that if the same methods were employed with the same participants in the same setting, comparable outcomes would be attained (Shenton, 2004).

### 3.8.3 Confirmability

Confirmability is described as the extent to which future researchers can verify the study's findings (Kivunji and Kuyini, 2017). I utilized member checking by submitting the data back to the interviewees to confirm if the information was as they provided (Delve and Limpacher, 2023). The comprehensive account of the data collection and analysis process enhances the study's confirmability, as the data presented in the report will allow other scholars to scrutinize the design and methodology employed by the author and ascertain whether comparable results could be obtained with identical data collection techniques.

### 3.8.4 Transferability

The findings must be presented in a way that permits transferability, according to Hancock et al. (2016). Transferability suggests that a researcher should give the

reader enough details to enable them to identify the same parallels and discrepancies in a study of their own (Crowe, Inder, and Porter, 2015). Transferability can be explained as the ability to ensure that the data provided has enough contextual data; this is for those who read the findings to be able to relate them to their own (Kivunji and Kuyini, 2017). Purposive sampling and detailed descriptions may help promote transferability, claimed Guba and Lincoln (2005). Transferability can be explained as a generalization of data from the case study with other cases that may be similar (Tracy, 2020). Transferability is achieved through the variety of perspectives of the participants on the phenomena studied (Merriam and Grenier, 2019). The results of this study can be employed by other principals out there experiencing LTV in their schools and used as a method to eradicate this scourge since school violence is a worldwide phenomenon.

### 3.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical consideration serves as the fundamental aspect of research. Therefore, the researcher must plan while still in the course of organizing and creating a qualitative study (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Howitt (2020) discussed ethics as the belief that informs the direction of research, including how the researcher should treat participants. Cohen et al (2018) concur by stating that research ethics is a guideline to a researcher on what is expected and what is not expected in research, including how a researcher should behave or conduct him/herself.

In the process of applying for ethical clearance from the UFS Research Ethics Committee, multiple documents had to be put together. The researcher received ethical clearance from the UFS (The General/ Human Research Ethics Committee (GHREC)). The researcher did not only apply for ethical clearance from the University of the Free State but also applied for permission to conduct the research from the Free State DBE in Thabo Mofutsanyane District. A letter was sent to the two schools that took part in the study, requesting permission to conduct a study to collect data. The letter outlined the aim of the study as well as how the study will be conducted.

This ethics committee has procedures that need to be followed for the research to be done in agreement with the ethical standards. In research, there is a need to obtain consent as well as cooperation from the participants; the consent must also be granted by those in charge of the facilities that will be used when conducting research (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2011). Interviewees were made aware of the purpose of the study verbally, and the informed consent outlined the purpose of the study. Creswell (2007) states that it is significant to protect participants' anonymity. To avoid challenges such as participants being embarrassed because of negative criticism, respondents were told that the data received from them would remain confidential and their identity would be protected. Strydom (2005) argues that no one should be forced into participating in research without his/her consent. The researcher explained to the interviewees that taking part in this research is optional and everyone can retreat at any time if they no longer feel comfortable.

## Chapter Four: Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion of Findings

### 4.1 Introduction

The research design and methodology were covered in the preceding chapter. The data gathered from semi-structured interviews (SSI) and document analysis (DA) is presented, analyzed, and discussed in this chapter. Data presented in this study is organized according to themes. However, the researcher found it necessary also to present a brief overview of how data was analyzed and how the themes were developed from the data.

#### 4.1.1 Research Aim and Objectives

**This study was guided by the following research aims and objectives:**

##### ***Research Aim***

- This study **aimed** to explore principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence.

##### ***Research Objectives***

- To determine the nature of learner-on-teacher violence in the selected schools.
- To identify principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence.
- To determine what ethical leadership practices and challenges principals encounter in tackling learner-on-teacher violence.
- To explore how can ethical leadership challenges in tackling learner-on-teacher violence be mitigated.

### 4.2 Profile of Research Site and Participants

The study sampled two secondary schools from the Thabo Mofutsanyana Education District in the Eastern Free State as research sites. Two participants from each school, the principal and deputy principal, were selected. Tables 4.2.1 (a) and 4.2.2 (b) below present the profiles of the research sites as well as the interviewees.

#### 4.2.1 Profile of Research Sites

Table 1 depicts the profile of the research sites, which are two secondary schools, with pseudonyms School A and School B used to adhere to the ethical consideration of anonymity. In both schools, the leadership and management structures are similar, with one principal, two deputies, and four departmental heads, as well as a quintile 3 ranking. However, the schools differed with the number of teachers, grounds staff, and learners, School A had an enrolment of 1000 learners with 32 teachers, while school B had 1200 learners with the number of educators at 38. The support staff in School A had a total number of 16, while the support staff in School B had 22. The two schools were both located in QWAQWA, surrounded by communities that comprise unemployed community members who depend on government grants.

**Table 4.2.1 (a):** Profile of Research Sites.

	<b>School A</b>	<b>School B</b>
No. of Principals	1	1
No. of Deputy Principals	2	2
No. of Departmental Heads	4	4
No. of Teachers	32	38
No. of Ground Staff	16	22
No. of Learners	1000	1200
Quintile Ranking	3	3

#### 4.2.2 Profile of Research Participants

The biographies of the selected interviewees are presented in Table 2 below in this study. The respondents in this research were two principals and two deputy principals. The composition table illustrates the participant's background, including positions,

gender, experience, qualifications, and pseudonyms. This table is also included in Chapter 3; as a researcher, I found it essential to include the statistics on the demographics of participants to depict the relevancy of selected interviewees in this research. To keep the interviewees identities and their schools private, pseudonyms were used. The pseudonyms used are as follows, Principal 1 from School A, Deputy Principal 1 from School A, Principal 2 from School B, and Deputy Principal 2 from School 2. To represent the two schools, the researcher used code A to represent school number 1 and code B to represent the second school.

**Table 4.2.2 (b):** Profile of Research Participants.

School	Position	Role in the school	Experience in the position	Gender	Code
A	Principal	Head Master	8	Male	Principal 1 from School A
A	Deputy Principal	Deputy	6	Female	Deputy Principal 1 from school A
B	Principal	Head Master	11	Male	Principal 2 from school B
B	Deputy Principal	Deputy	7	Male	Deputy Principal 2 from school B

#### 4.3 Data Presentation, Analysis, and Discussion

The study employed thematic data analysis to analyze the data focusing on interpreting or making sense of the collected data from the SSI with the principals and the deputy principals including the DA of the learners' code of conduct (LCC) and

incidents books. The data that was gathered from the interviewees was used to develop themes and patterns (Nowell, 2017). Five themes emerged from the data, which are as follows:

- ◆ Understanding of ethical leadership.
- ◆ Ethical practices in disciplining learners.
- ◆ Involvement of internal and external stakeholders in addressing learner-on-teacher violence.
- ◆ Ethical leadership challenges in mitigating learner-on-teacher violence.
- ◆ Mitigation strategies on the challenges of employing ethical leadership in tackling learner-on-teacher violence.

#### 4.3.1 Participants understanding of ethical leadership

The data gathered from interviewees through interviews sought the participants' comprehension of ethical leadership. The interviewees seemed to share a common understanding of ethical leadership. The interviewees highlighted that ethical leadership is guiding people in a manner that instills good morals, principles, and values and conducting yourself as a leader in a disciplined manner.

Expressing his views about ethical leadership, Principal 1 from School A stated that:

*Ethical leadership is leading people in a manner that instills good morals or what is acceptable in the school environment or the community.*

Deputy Principal 1 from School A also expressed her views about ethical leadership and indicated that:

*Ethical leadership, I think, focuses on upholding morals and values and obviating dishonesty, unfair labor practices, unfairness to learners, and unfairness to disciplinary procedures. Most importantly, I will say an ethical leader is a leader who can treat discipline as a major to correct, not to punish.*

Principal 2 from School B had a similar understanding as he indicated that:

*I think ethical leadership is a way of leading people and making good decisions based on a set of moral principles and values. Ethical leadership is directed by respect for ethical beliefs and values and the dignity and the rights of others. Ethical leadership involves values like trust, honesty, fairness, accountability, equity, and respect.*

Deputy Principal 2 from School B mentioned that ethical leadership is guiding people in a sense that instills discipline and ensures that things are done fairly and legally without taking sides. The participant had this to say:

*Ethical leadership is leading from a lawful point of view. In essence, that you are not biased in the situation or in the leadership standards you are employing, you must ensure that you are not taking sides. Differentiate right from wrong and be able to hear other people's views and be able to correct them.*

The data presented offers valuable insights into perceptions and understanding of ethical leadership among educational leaders, particularly principals and deputy principals. The data, therefore, highlights the multifaceted nature of ethical leadership in education, encompassing aspects of integrity, fairness, accountability, and a commitment to promoting a positive learning environment conducive to learning and growth. This suggests a commitment to not only adhering to ethical standards but also cultivating a culture of ethical behavior among learners and staff. The findings highlight how important ethical leadership is in establishing trust, influencing organizational culture, and ultimately enhancing staff and pupil achievement.

Ethical leaders lead in a manner that shows honesty, caring, and principled individuals who ensure that their decisions accommodate everyone (Berges-Puyo, 2022). Similarly, the participants seemed to understand ethical leadership as leadership established on upholding moral principles and eliminating unfairness in the workplace and the community around the school. LCC was made available for learners by the two South African (S.A) secondary schools, to direct them towards ethical conduct both within and outside the school. The cover page of the LCC from both schools was created in compliance with the South African School Act (SASA), Act 84 of 1996, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Constitution of RSA), Act 108 of 1996,

and the Regulations for Safety Measures at Public Schools (GN 1040 in the Government Gazette dated October 2001). These laws seek to safeguard everyone against unjust practices and to encourage ethical conduct and equality among all people. According to the participants' data, learners receive an orientation and the LCC at the beginning of the school year to let them know what is expected of them on school grounds. In summary, the theme concerned the participants' perceptions of ethical leadership. The participants shared a common perspective of ethical leadership and answered in a way that indicated a similarity between their opinions and the study's literature.

#### 4.3.2 Ethical Practices in Tackling learner-on-teacher violence

The findings indicate that both schools use the SASAMS system to record learner-on-teacher unethical behaviors and the LCC, as well as inviting learners' parents or guardians to the disciplinary hearings. As the participants alleged, the learners are disciplined following the penalties stated in the LCC, and parents are included in the disciplinary process of their child. Data reveal that although the learners got punished as per the LCC, the aim is to correct the behavior and the effective way to do this is if the school can work together with the parent of the learner. Transparency in disciplining learners serves as one of the practices that principals use to ensure that the school is led ethically. In the disciplinary proceedings of learner-on-teacher violence (LTV), the proceedings are done transparently so that fairness can be achieved not only for the victim but also for the perpetrator. Principal 1 from School A stated as follows:

*I would briefly want to know what has happened, depending on the seriousness of the matter, and then invite the parent or guardian of the learner. Inviting the parent or guardian to school to sit down with him/her indicates what the learner has done. Maybe he/she will assist us if the learner normally displays that behavior at home. The parent will be made aware that learner-on-teacher violence is a serious offense in education and that certain procedures must be followed to discipline the learner as per the learner's code of conduct. This is where the parent will divulge the nature of the child; if it is something*

*new to the child, the parent will indicate. We discuss the matter and deal with it together, trying to find out where the learner gets that type of behavior or what has influenced the behavior. In the disciplinary hearing, the procedures are well explained to the parent, and the learners' code of conduct is provided as evidence that everything is done according to the learners' code of conduct. In this way, the matter is handled ethically with transparency.*

Deputy Principal 1 from School A possessed similar sentiments with the principal regarding the ethical practice employed at school to deal with learner-on-teacher violence; she further added that they use SASAMS as another method. This is what Deputy Principal 1 from School A had to say:

*The principal should try to establish who is the perpetrator and the victim in the whole situation, but not forget that he still must protect both the pupils and the educator and employ the correct steps. When it comes to the issue of the learner, you cannot just discipline or continuously deal with learners' discipline or learner-on-teacher violence without involving the parent. It is important to involve the parent of the learner, and the policy on the learner's code of conduct is also employed or put in place. The LCC is given to all the pupils to give to parents to sign and therefore they are aware that are the misconduct, and these are the possible punishments for such misconduct. The other method that has been encouraged is the use of SASAMS where every misconduct or incident between a learner and a teacher should be recorded, and the records should be kept on SASAMS.*

SASAMS is a South African School Administration Management System. The empirical information indicated that in school B all the cases of LTV were dealt with using the LCC, the aim being to obviate unfairness in dealing with disciplinary issues. Principal 2 from School B indicated that:

*I prefer as a leader to be proactive, and preventative in approach as opposed to being reactive, now in this school we have LCC. We have policies that govern the school as a state organ, so we are using those policies, but in the case of LTV, we use our learners' code of conduct. It stipulates different levels of misconduct and possible sanctions. Now we are doing that to avoid a situation whereby two learners will commit the same misconduct but get different treatment, so our code of conduct has different levels of misconduct and possible sanctions. Now, everyone knows that according to the LCC, LTV is considered extreme misconduct; therefore, it may be accompanied by a possible expulsion. So, when we involve the parents, it is for us to ensure that all the relevant stakeholders take part in disciplining the learner.*

Sharing the same sentiments with the two respondents from School A, Deputy Principal 2 from School B further added that:

*The principal uses the following measures: the first one is the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 and also uses the SASA 84 of 1996 and employs the learner code of conduct. Lastly, He makes sure that parental involvement is taking place in his school. Remember the directive triangle; it involves 3 stakeholders, which are the teacher, the learner, and the parents, so the parents must be responsible and accountable for their children's actions. The disciplinary procedures allow for parents/guardians to be part of the disciplinary proceedings. In this way, the learner will be represented, and the proceeding will be fair. To make sure that the information provided for the case of LTV is authentic both the teacher and the pupil will be allowed to present their side of the story and as well as witness. In this way, neither the teacher nor the learner is oppressed.*

The presented data offers an in-depth view of how the two schools, School A and School B, handle cases of learner-on-teacher violence with an ethical and transparent approach, emphasizing the involvement of all relevant stakeholders, particularly

parents or guardians, in a structured approach to addressing such incidents. The emphasis as the respondents suggested the significance of protecting both the learner and the teacher while employing correct disciplinary steps. Both schools, as the participants alleged, prioritize transparency, fairness, and accountability in dealing with learner-on-teacher violence. This approach not only addresses immediate disciplinary concerns but also fosters a respectful culture, responsibility, and mutual understanding within the school community.

According to Alshammari (2015), ethical leadership focuses on fairness and moral values when making decisions, but also considers the impression the decision will have on the school. Rao (2018) claims that transparency is one of the characteristics of ethical leadership; as an ethical leader, decisions must be just and fair while ensuring the organizational goals are achieved. The invitation of a parent/guardian to a disciplinary hearing also enables the perpetrator to an environment that caters to his/her protection. When the parent is involved in disciplinary hearings, it promotes fairness and transparency. It also allows the parents to take accountability for the behavior of the pupils, and as a result, the different stakeholders will work collaboratively in trying to correct the learner's behavior.

Lawton and Paez (2014) argue that normatively acceptable behavior supported by openness, justice, fairness, integrity, honesty, sincerity, and respect for others is the focus of ethical leadership. The findings suggest that parents are involved in disciplinary hearings, which enables transparency in the proceedings. Fairness and justice are also achieved when the learner is disciplined according to the LCC; this is to avoid dealing with similar cases of LTV differently. The participants' understanding of ethical leadership practices also included traits like transparency, moral values, and the removal of unfairness. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016) stipulated that the ethic of justice must serve as the root for the legal principles and indicated that the laws and constitutional rights must be protected in schools. Mathur and Corley (2014) show that justice provides a framework for problem-solving by first determining what is reasonable and fair for the person as well as the school. In addition, the LCC received from the two schools provides a framework for dealing with learners' misconduct and possible punishments depending on the offense level. In this way, how learners are treated in terms of discipline is fair.

#### 4.3.3 Involving Internal and external stakeholders in addressing learner-on-teacher violence

Data indicated that in addressing LTV the SMTs from the participant schools involved both internal and external stakeholders. The internal stakeholders are teachers, the disciplinary committee, SBST, and RCL, which work collaboratively to curb LTV. The external stakeholders taking part in obviating the phenomenon of LTV are as follows: social development, parents, and the QLTC, which involves police, social workers, and pastors. The findings illustrated that learner-on-teacher violence can be addressed when internal and external stakeholders work together. Parental participation in the disciplinary process and the referral of pupils who need serious interventions are some of the steps that can be taken to address LTV. Constant visits to schools by members of the QLTC, like the police and pastors, are also necessary to give learners spiritual guidance and to remind them of the repercussions of LTV. The complete definitions of the words that have been shortened are as follows: QLTC is Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign, SBST is School Based Support Team, RCL is referred to as Representative Council of Learners, and SASAMS is explained as South African School Administration Management System. Principal 1 from School A shared that:

*We have a committee, the disciplinary committee, that deals with such cases of learner-on-teacher violence. The members of the disciplinary committees may be individuals who may have received complaints of learner-on-teacher violence from the teacher. They will request a meeting with the learner and the teacher and try to understand what has happened. They will also investigate the background of the learner; they may discover that this learner is coming from a child-headed background, sometimes a learner who has been adopted, but there is negligence on the side of the people who adopted the learner. The disciplinary committee may sit down and try to understand the background and try to gather information also from teachers who may know this learner. After finding out the cause of the behavior, we correct the behavior. It is not always that we go for punishment. In short, the committee members practice loco*

*parentis by putting themselves in the situation of the parent to try to understand the cause of the behavior and work on possible solutions that may assist in correcting the behavior of the learner.*

Deputy Principal 1 from School A reported that in the case of LTV, educators report to the departmental head, and RCL also assists in reporting all the violent behavior taking place at school:

*The departmental head invites the parents to school so that they can be involved in helping in a case of learner-on-teacher violence; the code of conduct is also still very important to assist on that issue of learner and teacher violence. Sometimes something that can help is through the peer-to-peer RCL that should be used in ensuring discipline among their peers. Even though the case on the table is deemed extreme, as a deputy principal, I must ensure that correct steps are followed from the beginning of the case until the end. After verification and investigation that the proper procedure has been followed, I must also ensure that both the learner, who is an offender, and the teacher, who is a victim, are treated fairly and justice is served.*

Principal 2 from School B discussion was of the view that in the case of LTV, they involve the SBST as an internal stakeholder:

*The main problem is that you will find that most learners have, to mention a few, anger problems. Some of these learners have issues from home, which is why we have a committee, which is SBST, that supports each learner without any discrimination. As a leader, I must ensure that the policies or the systems that we use as the school to deal with learner-on-teacher violence are well known to everyone not only the issue of the principal but everyone. What is expected of them, and everyone must know what will happen in case we have such a case. Now we have what is called the incident book.*

Principal 2 from school B spoke about the use of SA-SAMS to record incidents and the involvement of the SBST to give support in dealing with LTV:

*This is where all the incidents are recorded. Also, we must use the SASAMS to record those incidents. So now ours is just to state that I will say the symptoms of the behavior that we see, and then from there, we have the system to refer learners to relevant stakeholders. Let's say that we have the problem of anger at the end of the day learners must be referred to someone who must help that learner. That is why we have systems like SBST to say let us involve all the stakeholders.*

The participants also talked about the role of external stakeholders in tackling LTV.

Principal 1 from School A had this to say:

*The Department of Social Development has provided a buddy who will also assist in connecting the school with the social development in cases of LTV that may need further assistance outside the school.*

Deputy Principal 1 from School A indicated that the support they get from external stakeholders is parental involvement in disciplinary proceedings:

*In a case where the challenge or the LTV is a bit extreme or moves through a much more serious light, it is somehow even repeated when you must involve the third party, that is if it has happened more than once. Then this is where you will involve the parent because you can never have a child at school misbehaving and not involve the parents; you must make them aware of their learner's behavior so that the educator can deal correctly with the learner.*

The findings from School A revealed that the external stakeholders involved in addressing learner-on-teacher violence are parents and a buddy from social development. In addition, Principal 2 from School B provided that external support received comes from a committee called the QLTC:

*We also have these committees called QLTC, which involves everyone. We have pastors in that committee, we have police, adopted cop, we have social development, we have social workers, so at least it makes things easier for us; we know if we have this kind of a problem, we can refer it to the relevant person who is appointed to work with us.*

Deputy Principal 2 from School B shared the same sentiments and added:

*The teacher, the learner, the parents, and the school management team relationships are built on trust and have a positive impact on the school's climate and learner discipline. We have what is called the QLTC, which stands for quality, learning, teaching, and community. Such a committee has been established to address learner-on-teacher violence. QLTC includes every member of the community who is a pastor to give spiritual guidance, police to sensitize learners with social ills, and it also includes nurses to give medical support and advice to learners, just to mention but a few QLTC involves every member of the community who can help promote the interest of the school and to ensure that the vision and mission of the school are upheld.*

The findings displayed offer a comprehensive understanding of how two schools, School A and School B, approach cases of learner-on-teacher violence with a multi-stakeholder and holistic perspective, involving internal and external parties to address the issue effectively. In both schools, disciplinary committees play a central role in handling cases of learner-on-teacher violence. These committees are responsible for investigating incidents, understanding the backgrounds of the learners involved, and implementing corrective measures to address the behavior. The emphasis is not solely on punishment but on understanding the root causes of the behavior and working towards solutions that promote positive change. This approach reflects a commitment to practicing loco parentis, where committee members act in the best interest of the learner, akin to a parent's role. By involving internal stakeholders, schools aim to

create a supportive environment conducive to addressing disciplinary issues effectively.

Both schools receive support from the Department of Social Development, which provides a buddy to assist in connecting the school with external resources and services. Additionally, School B mentions the Quality Learning Teaching Committee (QLTC), which comprises various members such as pastors, police officers, and social workers. This committee offers a multidisciplinary approach to addressing the underlying factors contributing to learner-on-teacher violence, including spiritual guidance, sensitization to social issues, and medical support. According to Rosenthal (2006), school principals must prioritize issues related to student success and their best interests per the ethics of care. The approach adopted by both schools reflects a holistic and collaborative effort to address LTV. By involving internal and external stakeholders, schools intend to build a supportive atmosphere that encourages positive behavior and addresses the underlying causes of violence effectively. This comprehensive approach underlines the importance of community involvement and collaboration in ensuring the safety and well-being of both pupils and educators. According to Sellers (2013), most criminals have tight relationships with other criminals, and they become influenced when they observe that their criminal activity is being rewarded. By teaching kids about the consequences of their actions, the QLTC seeks to include outside parties in the system that ends the problem of student-teacher violence. According to Collins (2013), learning is a cognitive process that happens via direct instruction and observation. This suggests learners pick up behaviors from their role models. If their role models act aggressively in confrontations, learners will take after them and utilize the same behaviors when they are in a conflict. The external stakeholders aim to support the school in teaching learners about the consequences of violence between learners and teachers. They also seek to identify the primary cause of the behavior and take steps to entirely eradicate it.

#### 4.3.4 The ethical leadership challenges in mitigating learner-on-teacher violence

Data mentions that the principals encounter challenges in mitigating learner-on-teacher violence. These challenges make it hard for school principals to effectively

employ ethical leadership practices when mitigating LTV. To effectively employ the LCC, the parents need to be part of the disciplinary proceeding; this is to ensure that the parents, as well as the school, work collaboratively in curbing LTV. The findings revealed that even after the school has summoned the parents to the disciplinary hearing they don't show up. The data illustrated that insufficient support from the Department of Education serves as a challenge when trying to employ ethical leadership practices when dealing with LTV. Data suggested that some learners have problems with anger issues, and these learners need a referral, so if the department is not providing enough support of trained personnel, this hinders the principals from effectively employing ethical leadership. Moreover, the findings indicated that a lack of policies that protect teachers from learners' unethical behavior is also a big challenge when employing ethical leadership to address LTV. The principal 1 from School A narrated that:

*It is the same situation where you find that the learner may not want the real parent to come, maybe beating around the bush when we have invited them, but sometimes others are living alone, others are living with grandparents, their mothers are working outside the country. Some of them are learners of parents who got into new relationships, so they left their kids with grannies; it is very difficult for these grannies to deal with these children. The problem we experience is learners who come from child-headed families, parents who don't want to come and take responsibility for correcting the learner's behavior, they will make excuses and send people who won't be of any assistance in helping the school. Sometimes, you might find that the problem comes from home. The child feels neglected; the mother is still alive, staying somewhere in a relationship; the father is still alive, and he is staying with the new spouse. The problem is finding relevant people to come and help in assisting the child; after assisting the learner, we must monitor the behavior, and this must be through the assistance of someone at home who helps in monitoring the behavior at home.*

The narrative from the participant shows that parental involvement is a challenge for other learners. Another participant had this to say, Deputy Principal 1 from School A provided that:

*So, the contextual factors or the factors outside the actual violence are not investigated in terms of the learner they're investigated in favor of the learner to say, here is the learner, maybe at home, there's something there, or maybe the mother and the father are abusing one another, there is domestic violence. That is why this learner is so aggressive in school and aggressive towards everyone. So that's what gives this learner somehow the power to say nothing will happen to me. They won't touch me because I know the law is always on my side, and the other thing that favors them is that they are minors; you cannot do anything to a minor without involving the parents, and you cannot say I will charge the parent because you did this, so the thing of age will also favor them and that you as a parent you're the responsible and must help these children see their misconducts.*

Another participant shared the following narration, Principal 2 from School B said:

*Normally, it is said that two wrongs do not make right; often, we are aware of our rights, but we lack awareness of how we must protect the rights of others in as much as we want ours to be protected. So, I say we must focus on intensifying development on the issue of emotional intelligence. Now, we are saying that for teachers and learners to be able to adhere to the policies, they must first master the art of having control over their emotions and feelings. As black people, let me say that when we have a funeral at our homes, we focus on adults and confide in them, but what about children? These are some of the things that cause anger. Now, we don't have a system that allows learners to raise their frustrations. They don't normally have someone to confide in, so the school remains the only hope for these learners.*

The principal indicated emotional intelligence in both teachers and learners as one of the challenges. Deputy Principal 2 from School B indicated that:

*The challenge that I am faced with is inadequate policies and lack of parental involvement; some parents are denying when you try to involve them; they say I know my child; my child is behaving well at home. You know children may behave well in the presence of their parents, with their peers at school. The behavior may not be the same, so there is a lack of parental involvement in some cases. Not all parents are like that we do have cases where parents are denying. They don't want to get involved and be accountable for their children's conduct. The insufficient support and lack of support from other stakeholders. You know the Department of Education will be raising issues like we don't have enough cars for those district-based support teams to come and visit schools to support and to provide guidance where it is necessary.*

The information points to specific difficulties that School A and School B had while using ethical leadership to reduce learners' and educators' violence. Although the participants claimed that using ethical leadership methods is crucial to reducing learner-on-teacher violence, there are several difficulties in doing so. These are the issues that prevent schools from operating efficiently, which leads to learners being disobedient and negatively impacting the atmosphere that is favorable for teaching and learning. Data indicates that principals are prohibited from using ethical leadership to mitigate violence between learners and teachers if parents do not respond favorably when the disciplinary committee calls them.

De Figueiredo (2012) suggested that because parents serve as role models and learners learn by observation, parents have an important effect on the development of violent conduct in their children. The goal of parents' invitations is to make sure that the school and parents collaborate to produce a supportive atmosphere for teaching and learning. This will help teachers with discipline because children are more terrified of their parents than they are of teachers. According to Section 12 of the *Constitution*

of RSA, no one shall be subjected to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. Because of this legislation, principals make every effort to guarantee that teachers and learners are safe on school property and that no one's rights are violated.

The lack of laws protecting teachers was mentioned as another issue by the participant data. According to South Africa's Constitution, Section 9 (1), all people are created equal and have the right to equal protection under the law as well as equal access to its benefits. According to the SASA (No. 84 of 1996), educational institutions must create guidelines for the behavior of pupils to preserve discipline and create a conducive learning atmosphere. Legislation, such as that created by the South African Council of Education (SACE), is another tool used to guide the ethical behavior of teachers. To encourage instructors to conduct themselves ethically, the SACE includes a guideline of Professional Ethics. But even with its availability, LCC still happens to teachers daily. One reason for this is that parents are rarely present at disciplinary hearings, regardless of the nature of the assault. Teachers will just be victims of learners with no repercussions since the educational system will find a method to shield these learners.

According to De Figueiredo (2012), the aggressive nature of pupils is greatly influenced by their parents; these learners learn through observation and action. The pupils who are susceptible to violence in their environment or homes may adopt violence as a means of resolving problems. The participants provided anger as one of the problems, and some of these learners come from child-headed families. These are the pupils who do not have parental support and are neglected at home. They end up being aggressive and see violence as the only way of protecting themselves from society. The data show that insufficient support from the Department of Education is a challenge when employing ethical leadership to mitigate LTV. According to SACE (2020), it is time for us to start concentrating on developing and putting into practice solutions that will help us lessen LTV in schools. Furthermore, Makhasane and Majong (2023) claimed that insufficient studies have been done on strategies for addressing LTV. According to Government Gazette 22754, 2001:66 Regulations for Safety Measures at Public Schools, administrators are expected to adopt the appropriate safety measures to ensure everyone feels comfortable at school. When it comes to

LTV, school principals have difficulties that make it difficult for them to exercise ethical leadership.

#### 4.3.5 Mitigating the challenges of employing ethical leadership practice when tackling learner-on-teacher violence

The participants offered alternative strategies that they may use to lessen the difficulties of using ethical leadership to reduce violence between learners and teachers. The participant data suggested that parents should be included during teacher-parent meetings to lessen the difficulties of ethical leadership when addressing LTV. Additionally, the school ought to educate these parents or constantly remind them of the value of participating in the education of their children. According to data, law enforcement should be involved in incidents of LTV, particularly involving children who are still enrolled in school and older than 18. School A empirical evidence indicated learners judged dangerous and unfit for regular education should attend alternative schools. It also stated that secondary schools should be the venue for enacting laws on LTV when the child is older than eighteen. Parental involvement in resolving all school-related difficulties is a primary stimulator of children's positive behavior, according to Durisic and Bunijevac (2017). Petso (2021) agrees that parental participation is crucial in preventing learners' unethical actions and encouraging their good behavior. Principal 1 from School A narrated that:

*I think it lies with honesty that when we register learners, we cascade this information to parents, and they understand that when filling out the form, it is not just to fill for the placement of the child; they must understand fully the responsibility that they are signing for, because you will realize that there is lack of education on the side of the parents they understand that I fill the form my child got placement then they think it is the end of the story, they don't even want to come to check learners work. The problem of negligence and lack of honesty on the side of parents, we need to continue educating these parents as the school that when you need a placement for your child or grandchild, you*

*must take full responsibility after putting you on the SASAMS, you are saying you will be responsible for everything. It is about continuing to educate the community about the significance of working together with the school to nurture the child to the desired future.*

The data indicate that education must take place on the side of parents as it appears that they are not aware of how their involvement at school can shape the discipline at school. Deputy Principal 1 from School A had this to say:

*I believe it's only fair that we should not be holistic when it comes to learning teacher violence and maybe policy or rules or whatever because we have primaries and secondaries, and we can deal with those cases in a separate way when you look at secondary schools, we have learners who are no longer miners. So, let's allow the law to deal with someone who is no longer a miner to be dealt with accordingly. Move away from the context of learner-teacher because you are over 18. Let us allow the law to deal with you. This must depend on the severity and the extreme violence that the learner has subjected the teacher to an instance of the miners again; let's have schools, alternative schools, and alternative places where these learners can be taken to and dealt with by people who are trained for such behavior.*

Participants from the same school indicate the need to deal with cases of LTV in a way that the education sectors allow the law to intervene based on the extreme nature of the case. Furthermore, Deputy Principal 1 from School A claims that alternative schools should be formulated to deal with pupils whose behavior is beyond the control of schoolteachers. Deputy Principal 2 from School B mentioned that:

*Ethical leaders should treat everyone fairly and base their judgments on coherent, generally accepted principles such as honesty people should believe in you, people should trust you, people should believe in you and should come to you at any*

*given time knowing that you are honest, and you will be able to carry out duties at hand. I think the only thing that we can do as the school is to ensure that we involve parents during Parents Day when parents are here to communicate with educators in terms of the learner conduct, the learner discipline, and also the performance of the learner at school I think that is where we need to try to talk to them, because when you try to call them during the weekdays they will be coming with excuses that I am far away, so only during those days they are available at school, so during those days that is where we can try to involve them and also to educate them remember parents must also be educated, educate them about the importance of the role that they should play at school.*

The findings provided that is of paramount importance to ensure that parents are involved during Parents' Day to deal with all the issues concerning learners. Principal 2 from School B indicated that:

*Like I said, it's all about education. Remember, the Department of Education, National and International has abolished corporal punishment because we believe that discipline must be educational. We must educate people to obviate a bad element, whatever behavior. Now we say let us educate not only teachers, not only learners but also parents because most of these things originate from home. Because we are now at school, but the problem is where is at home, we only try to mitigate here at school now when the learner leaves, the school goes back to the same situation. So we are saying let us educate all stakeholders in the only way we can build a learner holistically, not only to teach them math and science but to ensure that even the attitude and behavior are also dealt with.*

The results of Schools A and B provided strategies that school principals might use to lessen the difficulties they have in addressing LTV. These issues come up when

school principals use ethical leadership techniques to address LTV. The information provided indicates that these phenomena will be addressed by parental involvement and teaching parents on Parents Day about the significance of their involvement in their child's education. According to the participants, school principals will be better able to handle these instances of violence between pupils and educators if parents are involved in concerns concerning their children. In somewhat extreme cases, participants said that in addition to sending learners under the age of 18 to special schools, where they will find well-trained educators to deal with learners who exhibit disruptive behaviors, they should also turn them over to the police so that the law can take appropriate action. According to the Government Gazette 22754, 2001:66 Regulations for Safety Measures at Public Schools, the principal is required to utilize all necessary precautions to ensure the security of everyone on the school grounds, including students.

According to Branson (2010), the ethics of justice upholds the just application of laws and policies while providing for the protection of individuals. Participants emphasized how crucial it is to safeguard educators by offering substitute education to learners who endanger their safety. According to the SASA (No. 84 of 1996), educational institutions must create guidelines for the behavior of learners to preserve discipline. According to Wood and Hilton (2012), a care ethic is concerned with people's well-being and empathy. The goal of the disciplinary committee and the principals' holistic approach is to uphold an atmosphere that is favorable for teaching and knowledge acquisition for every person. Legislation, such as that created by the SACE, is another tool used to guide the ethical behavior of teachers. The ethics of justice framework (Mathur and Corley, 2014) offers a way to solve issues by considering what is reasonable and fair for both the person and the school community. The goal of using the learners' code of conduct in situations involving violence between learners and teachers is to make sure that all learners are treated fairly and justly during the disciplinary process and to prevent situations where learners commit the same offense but receive different punishments from one another.

#### 4.4 Document Analysis

This section presents an analysis of the data collected from documents that were reviewed to strengthen the research findings of the study, which are the LCC and incident book.

#### 4.4.1 Learners' code of conduct

The LCC acts as the school's law, focusing on learner discipline and eliminating unethical behavior (Zondo and Mncube, 2022). The LCC sets the standards for pupils' conduct at school and describes the disciplinary system that will be enforced by the school for pupils' incidents (Sun, 2015). The LCC applies to every learner on school grounds and when they are out representing the school. The scanned pages in the sections below show the pages of the LCC.

**LEARNER COMMITMENT**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ a learner at \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ understand the rules and their implications and hereby make a commitment to:

- abide by the Code of Conduct and Disciplinary System.
- behave in a courteous and considerate manner toward everyone with whom I interact.
- treat everyone with courtesy and consideration regardless of differences in culture, religion, ability, race, gender, age, sexual orientation or social class.
- take responsibility for my learning by attending classes regularly and punctually and completing all my assessment tasks on time.
- cooperate with my teachers and other school staff.
- assist in making the school a safe place for all.
- seek help if I need it.
- let the school know if I feel my rights have been infringed upon, or if I experience any other difficulty.

Learner \_\_\_\_\_ Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

2

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Table of contents	
a.	Preamble
b.	Rights of learners
c.	Responsibilities of learners
d.	Responsibilities of parents regarding Code of Conduct
e.	Acceptance of Code of Conduct & Implementation of Code of Conduct
5.1.	General Class rules
5.2.	Class rules
5.3.	General Rules, Appearance and school uniform
5.2.1.	Rules for Boys
5.2.2.	Rules for Girls
5.4.	Absent from school
5.5.	Bullying, emotional abuse and victimising
5.6.	Gambling
5.7.	Textbook
5.8.	Knives and other weapons
5.9.	Rules with regard to cell phones, mp3 players/food/music-listening equipment
5.10.	Smoking, alcohol and drugs
5.11.	School property
5.12.	Test and examination
5.13.	Sales
5.14.	Social Occasions
5.15.	Sport and Extra mural of learners (REU) and their role
5.16.	Representative Council of Learners
f.	Disciplinary system for learners
g.	Complation of committees
7.1.	Internal disciplinary committee
7.2.	Disciplinary committee
8.	Disciplinary Action against transgressions against the school code of conduct
8.1.	Grade 1/Level 1 Offences
8.2.	Grade 2/ Level 2 Offences
8.3.	Grade 3/Level 3 Offences
8.4.	Grade 4/Level 4 Offences
9.	Summary of Level 3 and 4 offences
10.	Possible punishments for level 3 and 4 offences
11.	Approval
	3

Figure 4.4.1. (a): Example of the learners' code of conduct (School A).

An example of the LCC that school A provided is seen in the document above. The learner commitment form, which is included on the first page of the LCC, asks the learner to promise to behave per the guidelines. Following their induction, all learners inside the school are handed the guidelines for behavior to sign the learner commitment and take home. Following that, the pupils are asked to bring back the learners' commitment form to the school and preserve the LCC. The table of conduct, which acts as a guide for the content of the LCC, is located on the second page of the document.

**Introduction**

This School is committed to providing an environment for the delivery of quality teaching and learning by:

- Promoting the rights and safety of all learners and teachers and parents.
- Ensuring learners responsibility for their own actions and behaviors.
- Prohibiting all forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance.
- Eliminating disruptive and offensive conduct.

The Code of Conduct spells out the rules regarding learner behavior at the school and describes the disciplinary system to be implemented by the School concerning transgressions by learners. The Code of Conduct applies to all learners while they are on the School premises or when they are away from School representing it or attending a School function.

Section 8 (4) of the SA Schools Act provides that all learners attending a School are bound by the Code of Conduct of that School. All learners attending the School are expected to sign a statement of commitment of the Code of Conduct (Annexure A). The administration of the Code of Conduct is the responsibility of the Disciplinary Committee of the School.

I, ..... a learner at ..... School, understand the roles and their implications and hereby commit to:

- Abide by the code of Conduct and Disciplinary System
- Behave in a courteous and considerate manner and respect other learners, the LRC, all members of staff and visitors to the School.
- Treat everyone with respect regardless of differences in culture, religion, ability, race, gender, age, sexual orientation of social class
- Take responsibility for my learning by attending regularly and punctually and completing all my assessment task on time
- Cooperate with my teachers and other School staff
- Assist in making the School a safe place for all
- Seek help if I need it let the School know if I feel my rights have been infringed, or if I experience any other difficulty.

Learner .....  
Parent/Guardian .....

Date .....

**ANNEXURE B**

Table 1: List offences per grade of offence

Grade 1: Offences	Grade 2: Offences	Grade 3: Offences	Grade 4: Offences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Littering</li> <li>• Excessively noisy or unruly behaviour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vandalism</li> <li>• Interfering with another person's possessions/prop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possession of weapons that can cause physical injury/knives, etc)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of weapons that cause physical injury (knives, etc)</li> </ul>

*Figure 4.4.1.(b) : Example of the learners' code of conduct (School B).*

An example of the LCC from School B is provided in the document above. The introductions and goals are listed on the first page of School B's LCC. These goals include creating a safe and supportive learning environment, upholding everyone's rights and safety, holding learners accountable for their actions, and, finally, removing disruptive and offensive behavior. The learners' commitment form is displayed on the second page, which is identical to the one from School A. This is the commitment form that learners receive at the beginning of the school year, along with stationery. It serves as an introduction to the expectations of learners and what behavior is expected of them as members of the institution.

#### 4.4.2 Incident book

The events listed below were noted in the incident books of the two participating schools in this study. The incident from School A that was selected for this analysis was the 14 April 2023 scanned document. The scanned document dated May 10, 2023, from school B, was the incidence that was chosen for this study's benefit.

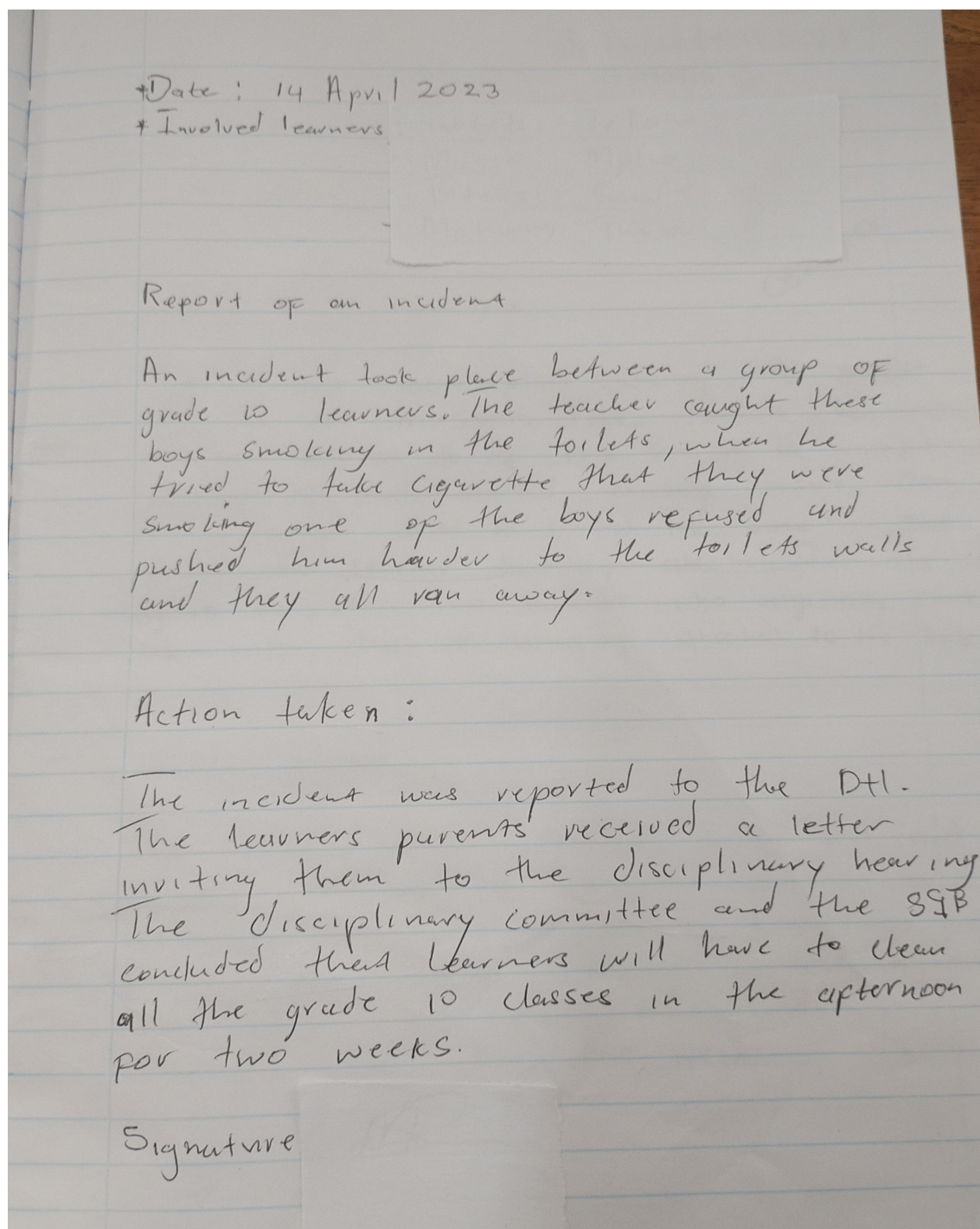


Figure 4.4.2 (a): Incident book – 14 April 2023 (School A).

When a group of learners in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade in school A were caught smoking and would not listen to their teacher, who was reprimanding them, the learners chose to push the teacher and flee, as depicted in Figure 4.3.6.3. Parents were summoned to the disciplinary hearing, as per the scanned document (Figure 4.3.6.3). The decision

made at the hearing was that learners who violated the LCC would have to help cleaners clean the classrooms for two weeks.

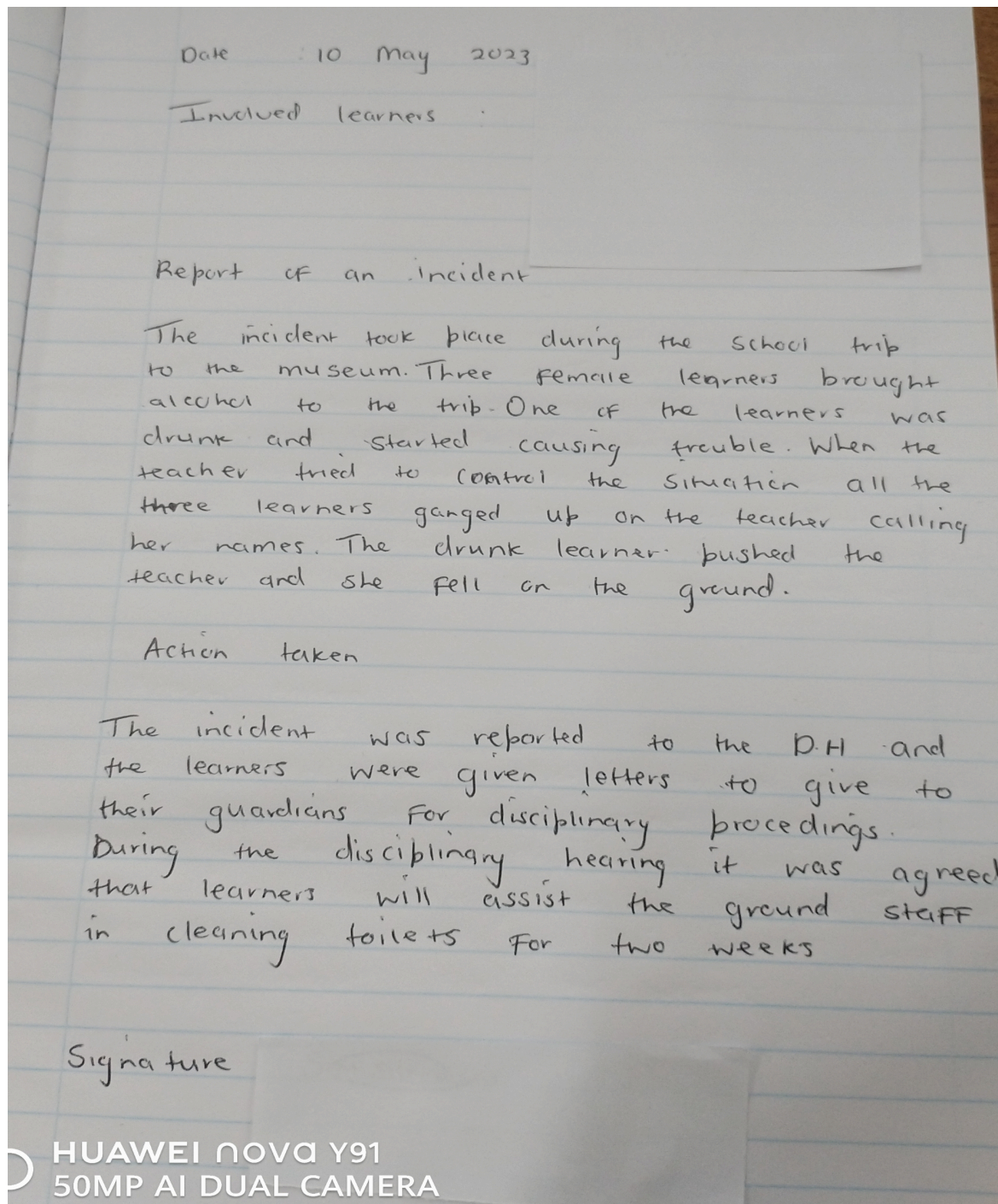


figure 4.4.2.(b) : Example of an incident book- 10 May 2023 (School B).

The scanned document (Figure -4.3.6.4) from School B emphasized the event involving a teacher and three learners that happened during a field trip. It was discovered that the learner who initiated this altercation was under the influence of alcohol. The teacher faced verbal and physical abuse from the girls when she attempted to maintain control over the situation. As seen in the scanned document (Figure 4.3.6.4), the parents of the girls were called to the school for a hearing. The disciplinary committee determined that helping the ground staff clean the restrooms for two weeks would be an appropriate penalty.

#### 4.5 Summary of the Document Analysis

The incident books received from the two secondary schools showed that cases of LTV are apparent in the schools. However, in school A, the LTV apparent is verbal and physical violence, and also in school B, the LTV experienced is both verbal and physical violence. The ethical practice employed by the two schools is parental involvement in disciplining the learners. The data gathered from the interviews on ethical practice in disciplining learners demonstrated that teachers apply a learners' code of conduct when disciplining learners. This information received from the two schools is also backed up by the data received from participants' interviews.

#### 4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter analyzed and presented the study data obtained from SSI and DA. The information obtained from the interviews showed how participants understood ethical leadership. The information gathered from the interviews also revealed the ethical leadership practice that various stakeholders used to address LTV. The information collected from the interviews also highlighted the difficulties in using ethical leadership to address LTV. The data that emerged from the interviews provided strategies for resolving these issues. The data gathered through the interviews also showed that the interviewees understood what was meant by ethical leadership. The study's findings, as well as recommendations, are discussed in the upcoming chapter.

## Chapter Five: Summary of the Findings, Conclusion And Recommendations

### 5.1 Introduction

The study was aimed at exploring the principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence. The previous chapter focused on data presentation, interpretation, and analysis of the data from the two participating secondary schools. This chapter will discuss the main findings of chapter four. This chapter presents the conclusion made from the findings and later discusses the limitations of the study and recommendations.

#### **Aim and Objectives**

This study **aimed** to explore the principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence.

The following were the objectives of the study:

- To determine the nature of learner-on-teacher violence in the selected schools;
- To identify what characterizes principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence.
- To determine what ethical leadership practices and challenges principals encounter in tackling learner-on-teacher violence.
- To explore how can ethical leadership challenges in tackling learner-on-teacher violence be mitigated.

### 5.2 Summary of the Study

#### 5.3.1 Theme 1: The participants understanding of ethical leadership

The findings revealed that the interviewees comprehended ethical leadership as leading people in a manner that the leadership can employ good morals in followers. All the participants concurred that ethical leadership is based on the principles of honesty, values, respect, and trustworthiness. The understanding of ethical leadership by participants resonates with that of Brown and Trevino (2006), who described ethical leadership as leading individuals in the sense that one is guided by the following principles: care, honesty, fairness, empathy, and transparency. The findings provided that ethical leadership aims to remove dishonesty, power centralization, and, most importantly, to correct rather than to punish. Among the participant's responses, one of the participants claims that ethical leadership is based on leading individuals in a lawful perspective in a manner that is not biased and tries to correct the wrong without taking sides.

### 5.3.2 Theme 2: Ethical Practices in Tackling learner-on-teacher Violence

Participants shared the ethical practices employed in tackling learner-on-teacher violence (LTV) at their schools. Considering the data received from the interviewees, it is indicated that the common practices include parental involvement, which is aimed at ensuring transparency, utilizing learners' code of conduct (LCC) and SASAMS. The respondents from the two schools reported that they engage parents, call parents send letters, and invite them to school. The data revealed that this is done to allow parents to help in disciplining learners.

The data suggested that the parent is invited to the disciplinary proceedings by the committee members, which will include the SGB, committee members, and the child, to divulge the case of LTV. The parent is also offered an opportunity to bring new information to the table of the child if he/she is aware of the learners' behavior or if it is a new thing.

Positive parental involvement has been deemed as one of the effective strategies in dealing with LTV; it is apparent that most learners are afraid of their parents but not teachers; this is the data received from the participants. Saiti (2022) claims that the

ethic of care aims to fix the relationships of all people inside the school premises. This is done by ensuring that perpetrators are corrected and victims are given justice.

LCC is one of the policies employed in dealing with unethical behavior of pupils within the school premises. The two participating schools provided the researcher with the LCC for document analysis. The reviewed literature, as well as the data received from participants, states that LCC is a legal document that is used to mitigate learners' unethical behavior and promote democratic values of the constitution (RSA, 1996 (b)). The participants from the two schools emphasized the LCC as being the method that enables them to keep discipline within the school democratically and ethically. These findings are similar to that of Northouse (2013), who claimed that in decision-making, ethical leaders must ensure fairness and justice, and these are two essential things to consider in decision-making.

The other method employed is the use of SASAMS, which is another method of keeping records of the learner's behavior. This is used by the disciplinary committee. Each learner's misconduct is recorded in the SASAMS so that all educators can be aware of the learner's behavior. The SASAMS is employed for record-keeping and reference. When a learner is taken in the new school, his/her records are accessible in the SASAMS. In this way, it makes things easier for the committee to know the kind of learner that they are dealing with.

### 5.3.3 Theme 3: Involving internal and external stakeholders In addressing learner-on-teacher violence

The findings provided strategies that are employed by different stakeholders within and outside the school to deal with LTV. The employed practices are the use of social development, SBST, parental involvement, learners' code of conduct, peer-to-peer intervention, and the disciplinary committee.

QMS, in short, is defined as a Quality Management System in which all the teachers have classroom management as a performance standard. It was found that teachers

normally would deal with unethical behavior within the classroom using their classroom management strategies. This finding is consistent with the finding of Northouse (2013), which revealed that leaders must ensure an effective working atmosphere, which comprises of the following traits, trust, and nurturance that will assist followers grow into better individuals. In cases where it is beyond the control of the educator or in extreme cases like learner-on-teacher violence, it is when the teacher will involve the supervisors or the disciplinary committee.

The data showed that each school that participated in the study has a disciplinary committee that deals with learners' unethical behavior. The committee aims to gather information about the matter at hand, share data with the principal, invite the parent, and work collaboratively in disciplining the learner and ensuring everyone is protected. The members of the disciplinary committee, after receiving a complaint, sit down, talk about it investigate the matter until they get all the necessary information, then communicate with parents requesting them to avail themselves at school so that the matter can be addressed. A letter coming from the principal is issued to invite the parent with a brief explanation of the aim of the invitation. This is done to ensure fairness and that the hearing is conducted in a manner that will not only benefit the victim but also give the perpetrator a chance to repent with the assistance of the parent.

The findings indicated that each school has its own SBST, which is an abbreviation for school-based support team; this committee assists teachers in effectively providing support to all the learners experiencing learning barriers. This finding concurs with the White Paper 6 of (2001) that states that public schools should establish (SBST) that will work with the (DST) district support team, which will assist all educators in teaching inclusive education. Inclusive education means that teachers must teach learners with disabilities such as behavioral problems, emotional, learning, social barriers, communication as well and interaction barriers. This is consistent with the findings provided by Principal 2 from school B that learners may have anger issues as one of the major issues; therefore, since teachers are not psychiatrists, the DST must assist with the learner who is having behavioral problems, and this is done through referral to relevant stakeholders outside the school environment. This finding concurs with

Kanungo and Mendonca (1996), who revealed that ethical leaders put followers first intending to support and nurture the followers into behaving ethically.

The findings indicated that School B has a committee called the QLTC, meaning the Quality Teaching and Learning Committee and this committee involves other stakeholders outside the school. These stakeholders are police officers, nurses, doctors, pastors, and other stakeholders who are willing to participate in the development of society and ensure learners are given the best education as per their right to a conducive learning environment. A typical example is that the school invites a pastor to pray for learners and narrate stories from the bible about what happens to those who are behaving in a way that is not biblically accepted. Also, they invite the police, and the police would come with criminals to explain to learners that life in prison is not as it is portrayed in the movies. They put more emphasis on that bad behavior will lead them into criminal activities, and they will be arrested, and prison is not a good place for humans.

The findings suggest that peer-to-peer leadership (RCL) also promotes ethical behavior within the school premises. Empirical data revealed that RCLs are responsible for ensuring that pupils do not transgress the LCC when they're outside the classrooms. The findings indicated that RCL are taken to leadership camps to be trained, this is done to ensure that they are aware of what is expected from them as leaders. Moreover, empirical data indicate that leadership training instills ethical principles in the RCL, which is expected to be implemented within the school premises. The findings suggest that teachers have incident books, whereby they write all the incidents that transpire within the classroom with learners who are transgressing the guidelines for behavior. The participants provided that this incident book is used hand in glove with the SASAMS, the incidents were further recorded in the SASAMS as evidence to everyone within the education sector about how learners are behaving.

#### 5.3.4 Theme 4: Ethical Leadership Challenges

The literature consulted in this study showed that poverty, informal settlements, and unemployment are major factors that contribute to LTV (Miller, 2008). The findings suggest that dealing with learners, unethical behavior is a challenge for the school because of socio-economic factors. The findings indicated that the challenges encountered by the schools, in most cases, are dealing with learners who are living with their grandparents. Learners who are living with grandparents have more freedom to do everything they want because their grandparents allow them, and they are not firm in disciplining their grandchildren. When grandparents were invited to the schools, they made excuses that they couldn't walk or were sick, and then it became hard for the educators to discipline the learner without the presence of the parents.

Another challenge that was revealed by the findings was that pupils who come from child-headed families, in some cases you find that the parent left them alone to start a new family with a new wife/husband, these learners when you need someone to account for their behavior no one can come to school and assist in disciplining the child. This was also found by Yavuzer (2000), who reported that learners could be more aggressive and disruptive when they are experiencing much pressure coming from parents, such as marital disputes, divorce, or neglect.

The bigger challenge faced by the schools in disciplining learners is the attitude received from parents and lack of involvement. The literature reviewed for this study revealed that a close relationship between parents and educators can contribute to positive self-discipline in learners and thus reduce the teacher's load of work linked to disciplining learners (Lekalakala, 2019). Empirical data reveal that if the parents of learners are not giving bad remarks, they don't come to school to take responsibility for the behavior of their pupils, and this makes it hard for educators to instill discipline ethically. Le Mottee and Kelly (2017), it is reported that when the parents and the teacher have a close relationship, it reduces TLV. The other challenge that participants raised was the lack of support from the Department of Education. When the school tries to communicate with the Department of Education about the need for external interventions the data from participants revealed that they will be receiving excuses from the department that transport is not available or the person responsible for that is currently busy with departmental work.

### 5.3.5 Theme 5: Mitigating the challenges of ethical leadership

The findings showed that to deal with the challenges, the following measures must be employed: educating parents and community members, allowing the law to play its part, having alternative schools for misbehaving learners, and involving parents during Parents' Day. The findings provided that the strategy that must be employed is to keep on educating parents and the community about the significance of taking part in the education of their children to make them understand the significance of parental participation in learners' education. Another empirical data from participants showed that we should invite police in extreme incidents and the law should deal with these learners as adults if they are over 18; in this way, we can curb LTV.

The empirical data further provided that in cases of LTV, learners above the age of 18 should be handed to the police and should be punished as adults, but those below the age of 18 should be taken to alternative schools. The literature consulted in this study claims that according to Section 12 of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, (1996), it is recorded that everyone has the right not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhumane, or degrading way. On the other hand, a study conducted by Stefkovich (2016) reports that the ethic of justice intends to protect the civil and human rights of all people. Data from participants indicated that these alternative schools should have people trained to deal with such learners. In that way, normal schools will have a conducive environment for well-behaved learners, and teachers will be safe and will enjoy their work. Another strategy that came up from the empirical data was that there is a need for the involvement of parents during Parents' Day; if learners are not behaving well, their parents should be kept longer during Parents' Day to account for the behavior of their children. In this way also parents will see the need to come to school often to check the conduct of pupils.

## 5.4 Conclusion

This research centered on investigating principals' ethical leadership in tackling LTV. The empirical data of this study indicated that LTV continues to be a challenge in schools. The difficulties encountered by principals in employing ethical leadership are as follows: lack of parental involvement, lack of support from the Department of Education, and inadequate policies to protect teachers. The leaders of the secondary schools employed various ethical leadership practices to curb the phenomenon of LTV despite the challenges that they faced. The empirical data revealed that the ethical leadership practices employed by school principals included the involvement of parents during parents' day, educating parents about the significance of being part of their children's education, and allowing the law to handle cases that include learner-on-teacher violence.

### 5.5 Recommendations

Everyone in education, such as the principal, deputy principal, departmental heads, educators, learners, school governing body, parents, and ground staff, should work collaboratively in implementing ethical leadership. The Department of Education should provide support to schools in ensuring that the goal of ethical behavior within the school is achieved. The experienced principals should attend continuous professional development trainings on ethical leadership and the novice principals should be adopted by experienced principals and be scaffolded by experienced principals and capacitated with ethical leadership. The circuit managers must make sure that they encourage school principals to capacitate the deputies as well as the departmental heads with ethical leadership through professional development programs initiated by the schools. The school principals should also work with the school management to ensure that training also takes place within the school, where teachers will be professionally developed in ethical leadership. Through interaction with learners, educators will have to ensure that in their process of teaching learners, they also teach them to behave ethically and show them that it is expected of them to be ethical within or outside the school premises. Ethical behavior should be emphasized on Parents' Day, during the 1st week of school opening in a new year. Pupils and parents should be taken through the LCC so that they become aware of

what is expected from them. In this way, ethical leadership will influence the school environment, and the principles of ethical leadership will guide all stakeholders within the school premises.

The following are further recommendations:

- i. **Parental involvement:** The participation of the parents is one of the initiatives suggested by principals to stop LTV. However, not all parents are willing to support this school principal. As a result, this makes it difficult for school leaders to employ ethical leadership. In this regard, the study suggests that parents should be professionally developed continuously with strategies they can use to instill ethical behaviors in their children and reprimand any unethical act a child might do even if he/she is playing. Children learn through observations, so parents must ensure they reprimand any violent behavior that might influence the child to mimic. Parents should be held accountable for regularly visiting the school to check the conduct of the pupils and academic performance. Parents should be regularly involved through collaborative efforts with the school to take responsibility for dealing with their children if they receive a report that their children are perpetrators of LTV.
- ii. **QLTC:** The empirical data indicate that through functional QLTC, the ethical behavior of learners can be achieved when the school involves all the stakeholders to ensure that pupils are continuously reminded about the significance of being always ethical. The QLTC must ensure that every 6 months, they reserve a day to invite external stakeholders to educate learners on the repercussions of violent and unethical behaviors.
- iii. **SASAMS:** The use of SASAMS as a measure that will record all the unethical behavior of learners and will serve as evidence to all stakeholders, but not only will it serve as evidence, it will also reflect the schools' progress in checking how far is the school in achieving the goal of ethical leadership. The DBE must use the records in SASAMS to

assist schools with alternative ways of handling pupils who are culprits of school violence.

- iv. **Learners' Code of Conduct:** The LCC was explained to be a legal document that can be used to eradicate unethical behavior within the school, as this document has measures that are used to correct learners' behavior. School leaders must ensure that they abide by the LCC; this document must be evoked without any compromise, no matter if the misconduct is minor or severe. Parents should be made aware of the LCC and sensitized to the misconduct and all the sanctions involved, this will enable parents to continuously monitor their child's behavior at school.

## 5.6 Suggestions for Future Research

The findings of this study may inform future researchers of a similar topic to involve the departmental heads as well as teachers so that their perception of principals' ethical leadership can also be explored. Future research may also consider:

- i. Investigating how the principals ensure that all the staff members are capacitated with the principles of ethical leadership and that they know what is expected from them.
- ii. Investigating how teachers ensure that learners are continually reminded that ethical behavior is necessary and is expected from them.
- iii. Further studies that might want to explore a similar topic should try and investigate how principals are capacitated with ethical leadership by the circuit advisors.
- iv. Inquiring on how all the stakeholders are capacitated with the principles of ethical leadership and how is it made aware that it is expected of them to behave ethically within the education sector.

## 5.7 Limitations of the Study

Mhlongo (2017) states that limitations are things hindering the researcher from smoothly conducting the study. The principals' busy schedule and continual postponing of scheduled appointments for data collection. Nevertheless, a few principals expressed reluctance to permit the researcher to carry out the study at their establishments, while a few others pledged to contact the researcher as soon as they became available, but they never followed through. The challenges above contributed to factors that hindered the smooth conducting of the study.

## 5.8 Conclusion

This study was carried out to explore the principals' ethical leadership in tackling learner-on-teacher violence. The study identified the obstacles that principals face when attempting to address learner-on-teacher violence through ethical leadership practices. These difficulties include children from child-headed households, a lack of support from the Department of Education, and a lack of parental involvement. Furthermore, the literature this study examined showed that factors including unemployment, poverty, and informal settlements are linked to violence between learners and teachers. The researcher offered strategies that can be used to address issues about principals' ethical leadership in addressing violence against teachers.

The following is a list of methods that can be used to address the challenges:

- ✧ On Parents Day, discussing concerns about learners with parents.
- ✧ Possessing a working QLTC in the schools.
- ✧ The Department of Basic Education must use the SASAMS records to help schools address incidents of unethical behavior of learners.
- ✧ Effective implementation of the Learners' Code of Conduct to prevent violence between learners and teachers.

The researcher also recommends that inexperienced principals and deputy principals should be continuously trained in ethical leadership practices. Teachers

and department heads should also be included in this professional development, not just principals and deputy principals. The study also made it clear how important it is for parents and learners to have instruction that would help them behave ethically both inside and outside of school. In this sense, ethical behavior will permeate the educational environment, and all parties involved will cooperate to advance ethical behavior. Limitations and suggestions for future researchers will help individuals who wish to investigate a related subject

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## Appendices

## Appendix A: Title registration



29 November 2022

APPLICATION FOR TITLE REGISTRATION

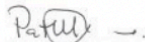
**Applicant:** Molotja, S  
**Student Number:** 2016177764  
**Discipline:** Management and Leadership  
**Study Code:** Master's (EDML8900)

Dear Mr Molotja

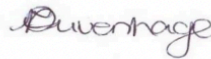
**Your registered title is as follows:** *"Exploring principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence"*

All of the best with your studies.

Yours sincerely,



Prof Patrick Mafora  
Chair: CTR committee



Ms CS Duvenhage  
Secretary: CTR committee

## Appendix B: Ethical Clearance

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

18-Jul-2023

Dear Mr Sphiwe Molotja

**Application Approved**

Research Project Title:

**Exploring principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence.**

Ethical Clearance number:

**UFS-HSD2023/0005/23**

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**

Adri  
Du  
Plessis

Digitally  
signed by Adri  
Du Plessis  
Date:  
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18:56:42  
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205 Nelson Mandela Drive P.O. Box 339  
Park West Bloemfontein 9300  
Bloemfontein 9301 Tel: +27 (0)51 401 9337  
South Africa [duplessisA@ufs.ac.za](mailto:duplessisA@ufs.ac.za)  
[www.ufs.ac.za](http://www.ufs.ac.za)



## Appendix C: Permission to Conduct Research

Enquiries: M. Z. Thango  
 Ref: Research Permission: S. Molotja  
 Tel. 051 404 8808  
 Email: [MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za](mailto:MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za)



67 Molapo  
 Witsieshoek  
 Phuthaditjhaba  
 9866

Dear Mr. S. Molotja

### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: THABO MOFUTSANYANA DISTRICT

This letter serves to inform you that you have been granted permission to conduct research in the Free State Department of Education within the Thabo Mofutsanyana Education District. The details in relation to your research project with the University of the Free State are as follows:

**Topic:** Exploring principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence.

1. **List of schools involved:**
2. **Target Population:** Two Principals, two Deputy Principals, four Departmental Heads and four educators at the selected schools.
3. **Period of research:** From the signature of this letter until 30 September 2023. Please note that the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year. Should you fall behind your schedule by three months to complete your research project in the approved period, you will need to apply for an extension. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.
4. The approval is subject to the following conditions:
  - 4.1 The collection of data should not interfere with the normal tuition time or teaching process.
  - 4.2 A bound copy of the research document should be submitted to the Free State Department of Education, Room 101, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Thuto House, St. Andrew Street, Bloemfontein or can be emailed to the above-mentioned email address.
  - 4.3 You will be expected, on completion of your research study to make a presentation to the relevant stakeholders in the Department.
  - 4.4 The ethics documents must be adhered to in the discourse of your study in our department.
5. Please note that costs relating to all the conditions mentioned above are your own responsibility.

Yours Sincerely

Mr. MZAMOW JACOBS  
 DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE, M&E AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

DATE: 19/04/2023

Enquiries: M. Z. Thango  
 Ref: Notification of research: S. Molotja  
 Tel. 051 404 8808  
 Email: [MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za](mailto:MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za)



District Director  
 Thabo Mofutsanyana District

Dear Ms. Mabaso

**NOTIFICATION OF RESEARCH: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH PROJECT IN THABO MOFUTSANYANA DISTRICT**

This letter serves to inform you that Mr. S. Molotja has been granted permission to conduct research in the Thabo Mofutsanyana District under the auspices of the University of the Free State. The details in relation to the research project are as follows:

**Topic:** Exploring principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence.

1. **List of schools involved**
2. **Target Population:** Two Principals, two Deputy Principals, four Departmental Heads and four educators at the selected schools.
3. **Period of research:** From the signature of this letter until 30 September 2023. Please note the department does not allow any research to be conducted during the fourth term (quarter) of the academic year nor during normal school hours. The researcher is expected to request permission from the school principals to conduct research at schools.
4. **Research benefits:** This study aims to provide knowledge of this phenomenon of learner-on-teacher violence to the Department of Education and policymakers to review policies on learners' code of conduct. The study will also inform parents at home about how their learners behave at school. More insight will be given to the principals and teachers regarding the use of ethical leadership practices in dealing with violence against teachers, and how to deal with the unethical conduct of learners.
5. The Sub-directorate of Research and policy will make the necessary arrangements for the researchers to present the findings and recommendations to the relevant officials in the Department.

Yours Sincerely,

**Mr. MZAMW. JACOBS**  
**DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE, M&E AND STRATEGIC PLANNING**

DATE: 19/04/2023

## Appendix D: Permission to conduct research from the School



### REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Dear *Principal*

I am Siphiwe Molotja doing research and would like to request permission to conduct my research at *your school*.

**DATE**

*August 2023*

**TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

*Exploring principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence*

**PRINCIPLE INVESTIGATOR / RESEARCHER(S) NAME(S) AND CONTACT NUMBER(S):**

Molotja Siphiwe                      2016177764                      063 607 5897/ 069 222 8214

**FACULTY AND DEPARTMENT:**

*Faculty of Education*

*Management and Leadership*

**STUDYLEADER(S) NAME AND CONTACT NUMBER:**

Dr SD Makhasane                      0587185464

Dr L Mmodana Zide                      0587185176

**WHAT IS THE AIM / PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?**

*The aim of this study is to examine principals' application of ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence in schools. The purpose of this study is to contribute knowledge of ethical leadership practices to the education sector, teachers, principals and*

205 Nelson Mandela Drive/Rylaan, Park West/Parkwes, Bloemfontein 9301, South Africa/Suid-Afrika  
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SMT on how they can tackle learner-on-teacher violence employing the ethical leadership practices.

#### WHO IS DOING THE RESEARCH?

*My Name is Molotja Siphiwe i am a teacher by profession, I teach Natural Sciences and Social Sciences. I choose to do this project specifically of lack of application of ethical leadership in education sector. I am conducting this study in order to assist current and future educational leaders about the significance of employing ethical leadership in order to tackle learners unethical behaviour.*

#### HAS THE STUDY RECEIVED ETHICAL APPROVAL?

This study has received approval from the Research Ethics Committee of UFS. A copy of the approval letter can be obtained from the researcher.

**Approval number:** *Insert approval number*

#### WHY ARE YOUR INSTITUTION/ORGANISATION/COMPANY INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT?

*The participants were chosen through purposive sampling technique and that entails choosing the participants based on the knowledge they possess which is useful for the phenomena under research. Hence, this study will be having 7 participants who are falls part of the disciplinary committee.*

#### WHAT IS THE NATURE OF PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY?

*The participants role in this study is to respond to a series of semi-structured questions. The participants are also expected to aid the study with knowledge and with documents which may have the content knowledge of the phenomenon under investigation. The questions to be asked in this study are tailored within the research questions of the study which are :What are the principal's ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence ? What is the nature of learner-on-teacher violence in the selected schools ? What characterizes principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence ? What ethical leadership practices challenges do principals encounter in tackling learner-on-teacher violence ? How can the ethical leadership challenges in tackling learner-on-teacher violence be mitigated ?*

#### WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

205 Nelson Mandela Drive/Rylaan, Park West/Parkwes, Bloemfontein 9301, South Africa/Suid-Afrika  
P.O. Box/Posbus 339, Bloemfontein 9300, South Africa/Suid-Afrika. T: +27(0)51 401 9111,  
[www.ufs.ac.za](http://www.ufs.ac.za)



All school stakeholders stand to benefit from this study. The study will assist in equipping the subject advisors, principals' as well as all those under his/her leadership with the knowledge of ethical leadership practices in solving the problems they encounter at work but mostly in tackling the unethical behaviour of learners in order to achieve the goal of the department of basic education which is to have a conducive learning and working environment for both teachers and learners. This study will also assist policy makers in noting the significance of ethical leadership and also drafting or amending other policies which put much emphasis on the use of ethical leadership within the education sector.

#### **WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL RISKS TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**

There are no potential risks for taking part in this study.

#### **WILL THE INFORMATION BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?**

Ethical consideration for the study cover areas such as anonymity, confidentiality, privacy as well as the voluntary participation of all participants. No participants will be coerced into taking part in this study. Participants personal data like their names, surnames and cellphone numbers will not be published in the study but will be kept in the safe lock by the study supervisor for in case of triangulation and to confirm identity of the participants.

#### **HOW WILL THE INFORMATION BE STORED AND ULTIMATELY DESTROYED?**

The researcher will print 3 hard copies after this study has been conducted and completed. One hard copy will be sent to the library for safe keeping and reference by other researchers, the other copy will be sent to the supervisor for the safe keeping and the last copy will be with me the principal researcher.

#### **WILL THERE BE PAYMENT OR ANY INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS STUDY?**

There will be no payment or any form of incentives for taking part in this study.

#### **HOW WILL THE INSTITUTION / ORGANISATION / COMPANY BE INFORMED OF THE FINDINGS / RESULTS OF THE STUDY?**

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Siphwe Molotja on 063 607 5897/ 069 222 8214. The findings are accessible from January 2024 onwards. Should you require any further information or want to contact the researcher



about any aspect of the study, please contact me on the numbers provided above or use the following email, [Mlotshwa1986@gmail.com](mailto:Mlotshwa1986@gmail.com). Should you have a concerns about the way the research was conducted , you may contact the study supervisor [Dr Sekitla Makhasane](#) on 0587185464 / [Dr Lulama-Mdodana Zide](#) on 0587185176 during office hours 08h00 to 16h00 .

Yours sincerely

[Siphiwe Molotja](#)



## Appendix E: Consent Forms




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**PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

**Project Title:** Exploring the principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence

**Researcher:** Molotja Sipiwe

I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Molotja Sipiwe (2016177764) from the University of the Free State. I understand that this research project is designed to study principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence. I, as individual/ Principal /Deputy/ SMT/ Teacher understand and agree that I am being invited to take part in an interview. I also understand that in agreeing to participate:

- My participation is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation.
- The interview will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.
- Field notes will be written during the interview and audio taped as well. I understand I can decline to be recorded.
- I understand that if I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview, I am at liberty to decline to answer any question or to leave the interview session.
- I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using the information obtained from the interview. My confidentiality as a participant will remain secure. Subsequent uses of recordings and data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect anonymity of individuals and institutions.
- Administrative and other teaching staff in this school will neither be present during the interview nor have access to raw notes or transcripts of either the interview. This precaution will prevent any of the findings having personal negative repercussions for me.
- If I choose to be interviewed, I have the right to view and comment on the



transcribed interview data before the findings are analyzed.

- I have read and understand the participant information sheet provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.
- I have been given a copy of this consent form.

I hereby agree / disagree (circle the applicable option) to participate in the **interview** for this study.

I hereby agree / disagree (circle the applicable option) to the **audio recording of my interview** for this study.

**Initials and surname of the participant** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed of the participant** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signed by researcher** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F: Interview Schedule

**(SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEW)****ETHICAL LEADERSHIP**

1. In your own words what is ethical leadership?

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2. What ethical leadership practices do you employ to deal with learner-on-teacher violence?

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3. How does different stakeholders at your school employ ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence?

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4. What ethical leadership challenges do you face when trying to mitigate learner-on-teacher violence?

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5. How can the challenges of employing ethical leadership practice when tackling learner-on-teacher violence be mitigated?

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----- END OF THE INTERVIEW -----



## Appendix G: Turnitin Report

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	SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS
<b>PRIMARY SOURCES</b>				
1	hdl.handle.net	Internet Source		1%
2	Submitted to University of the Free State	Student Paper		<1%
3	cultureandvalues.org	Internet Source		<1%
4	Dladla, Jacob Mshado Japie. "The Management of Teaching and Learning of Street Children in Gauteng Schools", University of Pretoria (South Africa), 2023	Publication		<1%
5	repository.up.ac.za	Internet Source		<1%
6	uir.unisa.ac.za	Internet Source		<1%
7	Submitted to North West University	Student Paper		<1%
8	samj.org.za	Internet Source		<1%
9	SC... Int...	Internet Source		<1%
10	Masango, Johannes Mboneni. "The Roles of the Principal and the SBST in Supporting			<1%

## Appendix F: Language editor letter



## SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

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**Tel:** +27 18 389 2289

**Fax:** 018 389 2134

**Cell:** +27 72 626 8446

**E-mail:** Oziniel.Ruzvidzo@nwu.ac.za

**Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> June 2024

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To Whom It May Concern,

**REF: Language Editing and Proof-reading of Dissertations/Theses**

Dear Sir or Madam,

This serves to confirm that I have proof-read and edited the **M.Ed. Dissertation** of **Siphiwe Molotja** (Student number: **2016177764; UFS**) entitled: **Exploring principals' ethical leadership practices in tackling learner-on-teacher violence**. The candidate then later corrected all the identified language and technical errors to my utmost satisfaction. Thus, the document presented here is of sufficient and acceptable academic standards.

Editor

**Prof. O Ruzvidzo**