
DISSERTATION SUBMISSION

TITLE:

**EXPLORING HOW PRIMARY SCHOOL
PRINCIPALS USE EMOTIONAL
INTELLIGENCE IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP**

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DECLARATION



Declaration Masters Student

I, ...MONTSENG DOROTHY LESOLE...declare that the Master's Degree research dissertation or interrelated, publishable manuscripts/published articles, or coursework Master's Degree mini-dissertation that I herewith submit for the Master's Degree qualificationin EDUCATION..... at the University of the Free State is my independent work, and that I have not previously submitted it for a qualification at another institution of higher education.

MDLesole

Student's Signature

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Date

COMPARATIVE EDUCATION AND EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

(Name of Department)



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ABSTRACT

Although emotional intelligence is widely studied in school leadership, principals still face challenges in applying it effectively. These difficulties can hinder decision-making and overall leadership effectiveness. This study explores how three primary school principals utilize emotional intelligence in their leadership roles. Adopting a constructivist paradigm, the research applies Goleman's emotional intelligence model and transformational leadership theories to examine this issue. A qualitative case study approach was used, with data collected through semi-structured interviews and observations. The sample consisted of three purposively selected primary school principals. Findings indicate that principals with high emotional intelligence communicate effectively, navigate school challenges, and strengthen relationships among learners, teachers, and parents. This highlights emotional intelligence as a crucial factor in school success.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, school principals, effective communication.

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CHAPTER ONE: ORIENTATION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to recognise emotions in oneself and others and the ability to control those emotions (Wicks, Nakisher & Grimm, 2018; Wilson, 2020; Ahad et al, 2021 Pellitteri, 2022). Emotional intelligence was proposed as a theory to describe emotional abilities by Salovey and Mayer and made popular by Goleman (Pellitteri, 2022).

Emotional intelligence begins when individuals understand themselves and can manage their emotions in different situations at work and elsewhere (Vrontis, Charani, Nemar & Dib, 2021). Vrontis et al. (2021) further describe how emotional intelligence in the Lebanon health sector was used to reduce resignations, absenteeism and low morale among hospital staff.

Emotional intelligence is necessary to succeed in any occupation (Raymond, Ogunsola & Abutu, 2019). Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and management of relationships are essential parts of emotional intelligence that affect how a school performs (Ahad et al., 2021). Self-awareness, self-regulation and motivation influence how leaders manage their businesses (Fteiha & Awwad, 2020). Pellitteri (2022) argues that emotional intelligence is relevant to school leadership, because school leaders work directly with people.

In this study, the researcher views emotional intelligence as necessary for school managers to improve teachers' job satisfaction, resolve conflicts, relieve stress, and improve learners' results (Fteiha & Awwad, 2020; Valente, Veiga-Branco, Rebelo, Lourenço & Cristóvão, 2020). Emotional intelligence is also necessary to improve job performance, relationship success and employees' mental health (Wilson, 2020). This study aims to explore the leadership practices of primary school principals in using emotional intelligence.

It has been found that certain psychological variables, including emotional intelligence and social competence are related to less psychological distress. The acquisition of emotional and social skills can serve to develop resilience, which is a protective variable against psychological distress (Bru-Luna, Marti-Vilar, Merino-Soto & Cervera-Santiago, 2021). Most adults spend the majority of their working hours at work, the more reason emotional intelligence should be applied. Many adults enter the workplace without the competencies necessary to succeed or excel at their job (Mushibwe, Mpolomoka & Macheke, 2020). But there is one other question that has not been studied much: how do outstanding leaders use their emotional intelligence

(Cherniss & Roche, 2020). Even though emotional intelligence is viewed as a good characteristic for a school leader to have, Lubaddeh (2020), indicates that there is a dark side to emotional intelligence when a leader uses it to manipulate followers to fulfil the leader's own goals, what is called "the dark side" of emotional intelligence. Poor emotional intelligence among leaders therefore generates low work morale, poor work attitudes, high employee turnover and lessened organizational productivity (Gransberry, 2021).

Emotional intelligence is the cornerstone of every decision a principal makes, solving problems and making judgments are part of a leader's system of values and beliefs (Gray, 2009). Board (2022) explains that emotionally intelligent primary school principals who use self-awareness when they experience emotional distress usually take time out to cool down their emotions and collect their thoughts before reacting to the emotional distress. Furthermore, emotionally intelligent principals practice good listening skills and show respect when interacting with parents and learners (Board, 2022). School principals who know themselves well and can direct their emotions, give more positive reactions to the behaviours of teachers and students. They can direct the emotions and thoughts of school members in order to create a better school environment (Kayak & Eskici, 2021).

Emotional intelligence and leadership literature have revealed emotional intelligence positively influences leadership, resulting in increased individual and organizational success (Chargualaf, 2023). Emotional intelligence is highly relevant to educational leadership since the principal must continuously work with individuals and groups to make decisions that affect the school (Pelliteri, 2021).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the literature on emotional intelligence and school leadership, principals face challenges in using emotional intelligence to make decisions in their school leadership. These challenges negatively affect their leadership, which, if left unchecked, can lead to poor decision-making (Pellitteri, 2022).

In a study conducted in Canada with school principals and vice principals, it was found that the emotional intelligence of school managers, leaders and administrators is significant to perform well professionally, which inevitably impacts school standards (Hourani, Litz & Parkman, 2023). They further highlighted that in another study conducted in Oman, the

significance of school leaders' roles in motivating and inspiring teachers, creating learning communities, systems and processes for productive communication across schools was noted (Hourani et. al.,2023).

School principals who know themselves well and can direct their emotions, give more positive reactions to the behaviours of teachers and students in order to create a better school environment (Kayak & Eskici, 2021). Poor emotional intelligence in leaders creates low work morale, poor attitude towards work, high employee resignations and low productivity in organisations (Gransberry, 2021).

This study explores how three primary school principals use emotional intelligence in school leadership.

1.3 MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION

How do three primary school principals use emotional intelligence in school leadership?

1.3.1 Sub-research questions

From the main research question the following sub-questions emerge:

- (a) What are the challenges experienced by primary school principals in using emotional intelligence in school leadership?
- (b) What remedial actions are used by primary school principals to solve schools' challenges using emotional intelligence in school leadership?
- (c) What are the views of primary school principals in using emotional intelligence in school leadership?

1.4 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this study is to explore how three primary school principals use emotional intelligence in school leadership.

1.4.1 Sub-objectives

The study has three sub-objectives as follows:

- (a) To explore the views of primary school principals in using emotional intelligence in school leadership.

(b) To investigate the challenges experienced by primary school principals in using emotional intelligence in school leadership.

(c) To determine the remedial actions used by primary school principals to solve schools' challenges using emotional intelligence in school leadership.

1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW

1.5.1 The Role of Emotional Intelligence in School Leadership

The emotional intelligence of a school leader plays a crucial role in determining the overall effectiveness and performance of a school. School principals handle multiple responsibilities daily, including decision-making, problem-solving, and staff management. This study aims to examine how three primary school principals utilize emotional intelligence in their leadership practices. The following section explores both local and international literature on emotional intelligence.

1.6.2 Defining Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EI) encompasses a set of cognitive abilities that enable individuals to recognize, interpret, express, and manage emotional information (D'Amico, Geraci & Tarantino, 2020). The ability model of EI, as described by these scholars, differs significantly from trait-based or mixed models, which integrate personality traits, motivation, and cognitive abilities. According to Chen and Guo (2020), the Salovey and Mayer ability-based model includes four components: perceiving and expressing emotions, emotional facilitation of thinking, understanding emotions, and regulating emotions reflectively. The mixed model categorizes EI into self-appraisal and expression of emotions, recognition of others' emotions, self-regulation of emotions, and the use of emotions to enhance performance.

1.5.3 Theoretical Models of Emotional Intelligence

Goleman (as cited in Cherniss & Roche, 2020) describes EI as the capacity to be aware of and manage one's own emotions while influencing the emotions of others. His model, primarily focused on workplace performance, identifies five key components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, social skills, and empathy (Bakola & Drifas, 2020). Self-awareness involves understanding one's emotions and acting with authenticity and conviction (Lubbadeh,

2020). Similarly, Bower, O'Connor, Harris & Frick (2018) suggest that self-awareness extends to recognizing personal goals and values. Self-management refers to controlling both positive and negative emotions while maintaining mental clarity (Lubbadeh, 2020). Leaders with high EI can regulate their responses, particularly when handling staff errors, fostering a fair and trusting environment (Bower et al., 2018). Social awareness entails understanding individuals, groups, and organizational cultures, enabling leaders to respond to others' needs effectively (Lubbadeh, 2020). Relationship management involves setting the emotional tone within a group, mentoring, conflict resolution, and fostering teamwork (Fianko & Dzogbewu, 2020). Lastly, motivation drives individuals toward goal achievement, innovation, and resilience despite challenges (Singh, Prabhakar & Kiran, 2022).

1.5.4 Measuring and Developing Emotional Intelligence

Research on EI has focused on three major areas: how to measure it, the strength of its link to critical outcomes, and strategies for its enhancement (Cherniss & Roche, 2020). Studies indicate a positive correlation between EI, job satisfaction, and reduced teacher burnout (Pelliteri, 2021). An emotionally taxing workplace can drain employees, and poor emotional management may weaken human resource practices (Xie, Wilson & Sheeron, 2023). Effective leaders inspire and mobilize their teams, building trust and driving goal achievement. Furthermore, evidence suggests a strong link between EI and career satisfaction, workplace performance, relational success, and mental well-being (Wilson, 2023).

1.5.5 Emotional Intelligence and Transformational Leadership

Emotional intelligence is particularly relevant in educational leadership, where principals must interact with diverse individuals and make significant school-wide decisions (Pelliteri, 2021). Research has linked EI to attributes such as self-leadership, team effectiveness, and leader self-efficacy (Mullen, Luimberg & Tuazon, 2019). Higher EI levels correspond to more competent leadership skills (Mullen et al., 2019). Bukusi (2020) suggests a strong relationship between transformational leadership and EI, as transformational leaders inspire and guide teams toward shared goals while fostering beneficial change (Bush, 2018). Transformational leadership is associated with high emotional and cultural intelligence (Cooper, 2018). It is characterized by charisma, inspiration, delegation, and employee development (Mushibwe et al., 2020). Leaders who exhibit transformational qualities prepare their organizations for success, implement necessary improvements, and manage change effectively (Newton, 2021).

1.5.6 School Culture and Emotional Intelligence

A school's culture reflects its values, attitudes, and collective behaviors (Rosadi, 2023). Factors such as collaboration, interdependence, and a shared mission contribute to a positive school culture (Jackson, 2023). Principals who utilize EI foster environments of trust, ethical values, and inclusivity, thus strengthening school culture (Ukpabio, Ekanem, Ngaji, Ojong & Amalu, 2023). However, building a positive school culture presents challenges, including decision-making complexities, crisis leadership (e.g., pandemics), school accountability, and responsiveness to community needs (Jackson, 2023). Open communication between teachers and principals is vital in cultivating an engaging and supportive school climate (Cassidy, Holmes, Ferguson & Christie, 2020). A positive school climate leads to higher teacher collaboration, increased participation in decision-making, and greater commitment to their roles (Ontong, 2021).

1.5.7 Conflict Management and Emotional Intelligence

Workplace stress can negatively impact employee performance and productivity (Vrontis, Chaarani, Nemar & Dib, 2021). Conflict is common in schools, arising from differences in culture, behavior, and interpersonal relationships (Ali, Shah & Gul, 2023). Disputes may also occur between teachers and external stakeholders such as parents and education authorities. Factors contributing to conflict include communication breakdowns, power struggles, resource allocation, and personality clashes (Dixon, 2023). The consequences of unresolved conflict range from class disruptions and hostility to stress, anxiety, and diminished participation in school activities (Owan, 2018). Dixon (2023) identifies five conflict management styles: competing (assertive and uncooperative), avoiding (unassertive and uncooperative), accommodating (unassertive and cooperative), collaborating (assertive and cooperative), and compromising (moderately assertive and cooperative). A principal's conflict management style is influenced by factors such as self-concept, communication skills, past experiences, and emotional intelligence.

1.5.8 Emotional Intelligence and Student Outcomes

Research shows that emotionally intelligent school principals positively influence teachers, leading to improved student academic performance (Jackson, 2023). Primary schools play a foundational role in shaping young learners' behavior, emotional regulation, stress tolerance, and adaptability (Kartowagiran et al., 2021). EI and leadership literature demonstrate that EI

enhances leadership effectiveness, leading to better individual and institutional outcomes (Chargualaf, 2023). Organizational emotions are complex phenomena requiring effective leadership for optimal functioning (Xie, Wilson & Sheeron, 2023).

In conclusion, Emotional intelligence is a critical component of effective school leadership. Research suggests that EI influences leadership competency, decision-making, conflict resolution, and transformational leadership effectiveness. Principals who apply emotional intelligence foster a positive school culture, build trust, inspire teams, and navigate crises effectively. Additionally, EI contributes to improved teacher well-being, job satisfaction, and student academic outcomes. Given its importance, developing EI should be a priority in educational leadership training and professional development programs.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This section offers an overview of the research of the theoretical framework, paradigm, design and methodology used in this study.

1.6.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by Goleman's Emotional Intelligence model and Transformational Leadership theories.

A theoretical framework consists of a set of principles formulated by experts in a specific field, serving as a foundation for data analysis and result interpretation (Kivunja, 2018). It plays a crucial role in research by offering a structured theoretical perspective that explains various phenomena and relationships coherently (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). A theoretical framework may take the form of a model or a theory. One of the widely applied theories in educational leadership and management is the transformational leadership theory. In this study, both Goleman's emotional intelligence model and transformational leadership theory provide the framework through which the research is conducted.

Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Model

Research has widely recognized emotional intelligence as a crucial factor in effective leadership (Lubich, Rawlings & Menefee, 2022). However, it is noted that enhancing emotional intelligence requires significant time and effort, and many leaders do not fully utilize their existing emotional intelligence to navigate challenges and seize opportunities. Managers

with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to regulate their behavior and cognitive processes, contributing to their leadership effectiveness (Vrontis, Chaarani, Nemar & Dib, 2021). Leadership is understood as a dynamic interaction between a leader and their subordinates, where influence is exerted to achieve organizational goals using various approaches (Cooper, 2018). Effective leadership is often characterized by strategic vision, team-building skills, motivation, perseverance, and loyalty (Xianjin, 2022).

Goleman's emotional intelligence model frames emotional intelligence in terms of performance, whereas Salovey and Mayer initially conceptualized it within an intelligence model, and Reuven Bar-On positioned it within the context of personality (Goleman, 2001). Goleman defines emotional intelligence as the ability to recognize both one's own emotions and those of others, to self-motivate, and to manage emotions effectively to foster personal and relational well-being (Drigas & Papoutsis, 2018). His model consists of five key components: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Blaik, Litz, Azaza & Smith, 2022).

The first dimension, self-awareness, refers to an individual's ability to recognize and understand their emotions and act with authenticity and confidence (Lubbadeh, 2020). Bower, O'Connor, Harris & Frick (2018) emphasize that self-awareness extends to understanding one's values and personal aspirations. The second dimension, self-regulation, involves managing emotions effectively and responding to situations with clarity and focus (Lubbadeh, 2020). Leaders with high emotional intelligence can regulate their impulses, handle challenges fairly, and foster trust in the workplace (Bower et al., 2018).

The third dimension, motivation, is the internal drive to achieve goals, which fuels creativity, persistence, and a proactive approach to overcoming obstacles (Singh, Prabhakar & Kiran, 2022; Bakola & Drifas, 2020). The fourth dimension, empathy, enables leaders to recognize and understand the emotions of others, facilitating meaningful interactions and relationships (Kanesan & Fauzan, 2019). The final dimension, social skills, refers to the ability to build strong relationships, influence others, and effectively manage group dynamics (Lubbadeh, 2020). Strong social skills allow leaders to communicate purposefully and inspire others to move in a shared direction (Bower et al., 2018). Additionally, relationship management plays a crucial role in maintaining a positive organizational climate, fostering mentorship, and resolving conflicts (Lubbadeh, 2020; Fianko & Dzogbewu, 2020).

Emotional intelligence plays a fundamental role in how individuals navigate challenges in schools, businesses, and organizations, influencing both personal and professional success (Goleman, 2001).

Transformational Leadership Theory

Bukusi (2020) asserts that transformational leadership is closely linked to emotional intelligence, as it fosters managerial support, individualized attention, knowledge sharing, and a collective pursuit of common goals. This leadership approach facilitates change by demonstrating support, high emotional intelligence, and ethical leadership. Transformational leadership is a process of influence where leaders encourage followers to adopt specific behaviors that lead to meaningful change (Bush, 2018).

Emotional intelligence plays a key role in transformational leadership, particularly in monitoring, regulating, and expressing emotions. Leaders who exhibit both emotional and cultural intelligence are often regarded as highly effective (Cooper, 2018). The leadership of school administrators is a critical factor in determining school effectiveness, as transformational leadership is characterized by charisma, inspiration, delegation, and coaching (Mushibwe et al., 2020). A major strength of transformational leadership is its ability to equip leaders with the mindset and skills necessary to build successful organizations, support essential improvements, and implement major changes (Newton, 2021).

The concept of transformational leadership was first introduced by James V. Downton in 1973 and later expanded by James Burns in 1978. Bernard Bass (1999) further refined the theory, defining transformational leadership as a style that inspires, stimulates, and considers the needs of followers. Altahitah, Muthalif, Abdulrab, and Al-Maamari (2018) identify four core dimensions of transformational leadership:

Inspirational Motivation: The leader's ability to inspire and motivate followers through a compelling vision and charismatic presence.

Individualized Consideration: The leader's focus on addressing the individual needs and emotions of followers.

Intellectual Stimulation: The encouragement of innovation, empowerment, and independent thinking among followers.

Idealized Influence: The leader's role as an ethical role model who demonstrates high levels of integrity and decision-making.

Transformational leadership is deeply rooted in the involvement of followers in organizational processes (Khan, Nawaz & Khan, 2016). Research by Rajkumar, Nilavathy, and Merlin (2021) highlights the positive correlation between emotional intelligence and transformational leadership, reinforcing Bukusi's (2020) assertion that transformational leadership fosters managerial support, individual attention, and collective goal achievement.

School administrators play a vital role in school effectiveness, with transformational leadership being particularly impactful due to its inspirational and coaching-oriented approach (Mushibwe et al., 2020). Emotional intelligence enhances leadership by equipping leaders with the perspective and skills necessary to foster organizational success, support necessary changes, and drive improvements (Newton, 2021).

Warrick (2023) identifies key competencies for effective transformational leadership, including the ability to lead, manage change, and drive organizational transformation. These skills are teachable and can be developed over time. Transformational leadership relies on a leader's capacity to drive change by leading through example, articulating an inspiring vision, and setting ambitious goals (Hlongwane & Asomaning, 2019).

Research indicates that transformational leadership is associated with higher job satisfaction, improved performance, and greater employee commitment (Hlongwane & Asomaning, 2019). This leadership style has been linked to increased workplace engagement across various industries and cultural settings (Pounder, Stoffel & Choi, 2018). According to O'Rielly and Chatman (2020), transformational leadership fosters a sense of meaning that encourages followers to align with their leader's vision. Additionally, it promotes a culture that prioritizes teamwork and integrity over individual success.

In this study, Goleman's emotional intelligence model and transformational leadership theory are applied to examine how primary school principals utilize emotional intelligence in their leadership roles. These frameworks provide insight into how emotionally intelligent transformational leaders can enhance overall school success.

1.6.2 Research paradigm

A research paradigm is described as a set of common beliefs and agreements scientists share on understanding and addressing problems (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021). The research paradigm used for this study was the constructivism paradigm. Constructivism is based on the premise that research aims to understand the participants' views being studied, by seeking to understand the world of the participants through developing a subjective meaning of their experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Broad and general questions are used to give meaning to a situation. Interactions with others are also used under specific conditions where the participants live and work to understand them and create theory as data is collected (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Constructivists believe that people construct meaning by interacting with the world they live in. This interaction forms the perception of the world people live in; reality is socially constructed (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021).

1.6.3 Research approach

Research methods are the procedures a researcher uses to find answers to the research questions. The approach that was used for the purpose of this study was a qualitative method. Qualitative methods are used to explore and understand a phenomenon being studied, because little research has been done on it or the phenomenon needs further study. Qualitative data is collected when the researcher can understand the participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Qualitative methods rely on written text and images. Qualitative research uses documents, observations and interviews to gather data. Qualitative research is generally appropriate when the researcher's primary purpose is to explore, describe, or explain a social phenomenon or unpack the meanings people give to situations (Leavy, 2017).

This research used qualitative methods, because the researcher sought to collect data in the participants' workplace settings. Telephonic interviews were conducted with primary school principals because circumstances did not allow face-to-face interviews. All three interviews were held telephonically, ensuring that the participants were safe and comfortable. Observations were done to gather more data on how primary school principals use emotional intelligence in school leadership.

1.7 SAMPLING PLAN

In this study, purposeful sampling was used to select participants. Purposeful sampling is useful, because the researcher has limited resources, time and workforce. In this study, the target population was three primary school principals in the Motheo District in the Free State Province. The participants were selected, because they were seen to be relevant to respond to the aim of the study, due to their position in primary school leadership. One principal was selected per school, the total sample size was three participants.

1.8 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with the principals and observation of the principals. These methods were used to ensure triangulation of the data.

1.8.1 Semi-structured interviews

According to Dadzie, Runeson, Ding & Bondinuba, (2018), a semi-structured interview is a conversation with a purpose where questions are somewhat structured and open-ended. One advantage of semi-structured interviews is that they allow the researcher to get a deeper understanding of the different viewpoints of the respondents, as the questions are related to the specific environment in which the respondents work (Ahlin, 2019). This study selected semi-structured interviews, because they enabled the respondents to express their views and ideas freely.

1.8.2 Observation

Observations and observational data provide contextual information (Frechette, Bitzas, Aubry, Kilpatrick & Tremblay, 2020). Qualitative observation is often able to capture the complexity and subjectivity of human behaviour, e.g. participants' facial expressions, body language, word choice and tone of voice, particularly for topics like emotions, attitudes, perceptions or cultural practices. These may not be quantifiable or measurable through other methods. In this study the researcher observed criteria, such as the tone of voice of the principal when addressing learners and teachers, and the use of hand gestures when addressing learners.

1.9 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis involves managing, organising, making sense and deducting from information collected during research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). Qualitative data analysis involves describing patterns in the data to give meaning and interpret the data (Mezmir, 2020). Data can be analysed through inductive and deductive analysis processes. The inductive analysis allows codes to emerge. Descriptive codes are allocated to parts of the data. Pattern coding develops categories and themes (D'Ascoli & Piro, 2023). In this study, a thematic analysis was used to analyse interview transcripts. Field notes collected during observation were studied to find meaning in the data.

1.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE STUDY

The trustworthiness of research is an evaluation of its credibility, transferability, and confirmability (Adler, 2022). In this study, trustworthiness is ensured by the researcher using two methods to collect data, semi-structured interviews and observations to triangulate data collection. Transferability describes the extent to which the findings of research can be transferred to another setting, context or group (Stenfors, Kajamaa & Bennett, 2020). In this study transferability was increased by using purposive sampling to select participants. According to Stenfors, Kajamaa and Bennett (2020), credibility is a measure of how believable and trustworthy the findings of research are. Credibility can be strengthened by using more than one data collection tool. In this study, credibility was increased by using semi-structured interviews and observations to collect data. Confirmability is used to get as close to reality as qualitative research can get (Stahl & King, 2020). Confirmability was increased by observing one principal at the school gate, at assembly and at a briefing meeting.

1.11 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In this study, ethical clearance was obtained from the University of the Free State Research Ethics Committee (clearance number UFS-HSD 2023/2547). Permission to conduct research was obtained from the Free State Department of Education and the participating schools. The ethical principles of confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent and voluntary participation were strictly followed in this study.

1.11.1 Informed consent and voluntary participation

The researcher visited the principals of the selected school and delivered informed consent forms to ask for permission to conduct the research at their schools. The researcher explained that participation in this study was voluntary, and participants could decide to withdraw at any time during the study. Written informed consent was obtained from all the interviews before the start of the interviews.

1.11.2 Protection from harm

Arifin, (2018) stated that some participants feel stressed when interviewed and the researcher must reduce this stress. The participants were not at risk of any type of harm during the study. The interviews were held telephonically, ensuring that the participants were safe and comfortable.

1.11.3 Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity

To ensure privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, all the participants' information and responses shared during the interviews were kept in a locked cupboard to protect their identities. The voice recording and field notes were destroyed after the study was completed. Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity are important factors to consider when one works with participants of research (Arifin, 2018)

1.12 DEMARCATION OF THE STUDY

1.12.1 Geographical demarcation

The study was conducted in three primary schools situated in the Motheo District of the Free State Province in South Africa. The schools were selected, because they have a similar administration, including the principal, deputy principal, departmental heads, educators and learners.

1.12.2 Scientific demarcation

This study focussed on the education management and leadership field with special emphasis on how primary school principals use emotional intelligence in school leadership.

1.13 LAYOUT OF THE CHAPTERS

This study is made up of five chapters as follows:

Chapter 1: Focussed on the background of the study, problem statement, theoretical framework, research methodology, quality assurance of the research, ethical considerations, demarcation of the study and ended with a layout of chapters.

Chapter 2: Article one: Investigating the challenges experienced by primary school principals in using emotional intelligence in school leadership.

Chapter 3: Article two: Determining the remedial actions used by primary school principals to solve schools' challenges using emotional intelligence in school leadership.

Chapter 4: Article three: Exploring the views of primary school principals in using emotional intelligence in school leadership.

Chapter 5: This chapter presents a summary of the study, a presentation of the findings, recommendations, discussion and implications.

1.14 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

This section provided an outline of the background, statement of the problem, aim of the study, as well as research questions and objectives. The chapter gave a summary of the theoretical framework and research methodology used. The ethical considerations applied throughout the study, as well as the demarcation of the study, were highlighted.

CHAPTER TWO: ARTICLE ONE

INVESTIGATING THE CHALLENGES EXPERIENCED BY PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN USING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of emotional intelligence in primary school leadership, emphasizing its importance for principals in managing daily challenges effectively. Emotional intelligence enables principals to communicate, empathize, resolve conflicts, and navigate interactions with stakeholders, including educators, learners, parents, and officials. Using a qualitative case study approach within a constructivist paradigm, the research examines three primary school principals through interviews, observations, and field notes. Findings highlight challenges such as learner behavior issues, uncooperative teachers, and staff conflicts. The study recommends appraising and enhancing principals' emotional intelligence skills to improve school performance.

Keywords: leadership, emotional intelligence, principals

1. INTRODUCTION

The main job of a school principal is to work with people's emotions (D'Ascoli & Piro, 2023). In our schools as organisations, school principals need to develop emotional intelligence, in order to lead teachers and learners and effectively and perform the required daily tasks effectively. Oosthuyse (2017) describes emotional intelligence as knowing one's emotions and controlling them so that one may control emotions in other people. Schools are not devoid of emotions. They are characterised by power, people interactions, rules, planning, coordination

and supervision. These tasks must be completed satisfactorily, and this creates challenges to the school principal. As managers, school principals have a significant influence in the school. This study aimed to determine what challenges primary school principals face in using emotional intelligence in their school leadership. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews and observations with the school principals from the three primary schools in the Free State Province.

This article is structured into six sections: literature review, methodology, problem statement, research approach, findings and discussions, recommendations and conclusion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This article seeks to respond to the research question which says: “How do primary schools principals use emotional intelligence in school leadership?” by answering sub-research question one, which says: What challenges are experienced by primary school principals in using emotional intelligence in school leadership? Emotional intelligence begins when individuals understand themselves and can manage their emotions in different situations at work and elsewhere (Vrontis, et al., 2021). They further describe how emotional intelligence in the Lebanon health sector was used to reduce resignations, absenteeism and low morale among hospital staff.

Emotional intelligence is necessary to succeed in any occupation (Raymond, Ogunsola & Abutu, 2019). Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and management of relationships are essential parts of emotional intelligence that affect how a school performs (Ahad et al., 2021). Pellitteri (2022) argues that emotional intelligence is relevant to school leadership, because school leaders work directly with people. Most adults spend the majority of their working hours at work, thus the more reason emotional intelligence should be applied. Many adults enter the workplace without the requisite skills necessary to succeed or excel at their work (Phiri, Mpolomoka, Botha & Macheke, 2020).

It can be argued that school principals must be more than good managers to run schools and that other competencies, such as emotional intelligence, are required (Al Shehhi, Alzouebi & Ankit, 2021). Highly emotionally intelligent principals positively impact the school's environment, so emotional intelligence testing is crucial when selecting principals (*ibid*). To improve the emotional intelligence level of principals, they need to be aware of their emotions.

Al Shehhi et al. (2021) defined awareness of one's emotions as learning about emotions. The literature review section unpacks the following aspects of emotional intelligence and its impact on school principals' leadership styles: how school principals use emotional intelligence, as well as challenges experienced by primary school principals in using emotional intelligence.

2.1 How school principals use emotional intelligence in school leadership

School principals face tasks and responsibilities that demand emotional interactions with teachers, learners, school boards and government officials. These responsibilities must be completed satisfactorily (Silbaugh, Barker & Arghode, 2023). During the COVID-19 pandemic in Australia, school principals had to use emotional intelligence to adapt their leadership approaches to face the challenge of teaching during a crisis (Fernandes, Wong & Noonan, 2023). Socas (2018) argued that the component of empathy in Goleman's emotional intelligence model, influences organisations, especially in leadership. In a study done in China, Tian and Guo (2022) stated that school leadership is a critical factor in determining success. They mentioned that a transformational leader's emotional intelligence could improve teachers' emotional experiences and resilience. Arshad and Zaman (2021) noted that a high level of support for a leader develops respect among workers and that the success of a leader depends on how they have developed workplace relationships and manage these relationships in changing circumstances. Emotions and leadership are linked. Training leaders in emotional intelligence could prepare them to communicate effectively (Cherry, 2018; Howell, 2014).

A good leader's success is shown by what they do and how they react to their colleagues' words. Optimistic and enthusiastic leaders are important, because they get colleagues to do more work faster (Rajkumar, Nilavathy & Merlin, 2020). They further argue that a leader with good problem-solving abilities, who manages stress well, who has a high self-regard and who adapts his decision-making to suit the job, has a positive relationship with leadership effectiveness. A good leader's success is shown by what they do and how they react to their colleagues' words (Rajkumar et al., 2020). Lubbadah (2020) stated that emotional intelligence is critical to succeed at work, in job performance and in leadership. He further mentions that leaders with high emotional intelligence can influence and understand other people's emotions and gain more support from them.

2.2 Challenges experienced by school principals

Principals experience challenges when resolving conflict, teaching during a crisis, improving teachers' emotional experiences and resilience, developing and managing workplace relationships and communicating effectively.

Resolving conflict

Emotionally intelligent people understand that intense emotions are temporary. In a conflict situation, like a co-worker dispute, a thoughtful response is often more effective when delayed until emotions have calmed down. This pause allows for a clearer, more rational assessment of the situation (Cherry, 2018).

Workplace conflicts are unavoidable, but their outcome can be influenced by how they are managed. The level of conflict is directly related to how it is addressed. When conflict is handled well it builds motivation, enhances team spirit and drives personal and organisational growth, leading to a decrease in workplace tensions (Howell, 2014).

Teaching during a crisis

In 2020, schools experienced significant learning interruptions. In Australia schools were directed to move to remote learning. This novel challenge faced by school principals was out of their normal life experiences and has transformed the role of school leadership. School leadership was influenced by instructions from government, unions and medical experts. Principals felt that increasing pressures from these stakeholders let them be bombarded on many fronts as they led their schools (Fernandes, Wong & Noonan, 2023).

Improving teachers' emotional experiences and resilience

Chen and Guo (2022) mentioned that being a teacher requires creative interaction with learners, colleagues, administrators and parents, which is highly emotional and demands attention. They further described that teachers' burnout damages their health and this leads to an increase in absenteeism, poor student achievement and poor job satisfaction. Building a positive school culture carries challenges to the principal. Some of these challenges are decision-making, leading through a crisis (e.g. pandemic), school accountability and responsive schools (Jackson, 2023).

Problems, such as teachers leaving the job, demotivated teachers and poor learner achievement, can be reduced by choosing school principals, who use emotions to develop the emotional intelligence of teachers and learners (Vrontis, et al., 2021).

Developing and managing workplace relationships

Leading others successfully, boils down to creating meaningful relationships, which takes time, effort and focus. A good relationship is built upon trust, respect, self-awareness and open communication. Without open honest and effective communication, relationships will fail. Individuals find it challenging to work effectively in teamwork environments and to resolve conflict, improve job performance and adapt to changing work environments (Vrontis et al, 2021).

Communicating effectively

The creation of an environment characterised by freedom to communicate, is crucial for the introduction of change to an organisation. In any situation of change, a significant factor to determine the level of success of the change is the degree to which the leader is able to communicate the need for change to other members of the organisation (Issah, 2018).

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study employs Goleman's emotional intelligence model and transformational leadership theory to enhance school principals' emotional control. Emotional intelligence is recognized as a skill, ability, or personality trait that influences behavior and decision-making. Originally introduced by Salovey and Mayer (1990), it is defined as the ability to identify, manage, and utilize emotions effectively (Kanezan & Fauzan, 2019; Fianko & Dzogbewu, 2020). Cherniss and Roche (2020) describe it as the capacity to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions, aligning with the ability model, which contrasts with mixed models that incorporate personality traits (D'Amico, Geraci & Tarantino, 2020).

Goleman's model highlights five key components of emotional intelligence: self-regulation, self-awareness, motivation, social skills, and empathy (Bakola & Drigas, 2020). Self-awareness involves recognizing personal emotions and acting authentically (Lubbadeh, 2020), while self-management entails controlling emotional responses to maintain clarity and focus (Bower et al., 2018). Social skills involve understanding interpersonal dynamics and fostering positive relationships (Lubbadeh, 2020), whereas relationship management encompasses conflict resolution, mentoring, and team building (Fianko & Dzogbewu, 2020). Motivation drives personal growth, creativity, and perseverance (Singh, Prabhakar & Kiran, 2022).

Leadership, broadly defined as the process of influencing subordinates to achieve organizational goals, includes elements of vision, team-building, and motivation (Anh, Xian & Shin, 2022). Transformational leadership, which is closely linked to emotional intelligence, focuses on inspiring and supporting employees to foster positive change (Bukusi, 2020). It involves monitoring and managing emotions while cultivating a high level of emotional and cultural intelligence (Cooper, 2018). Effective school leadership, as noted by Phiri et al. (2020), is a crucial factor in school success. Newton (2021) emphasizes that emotional intelligence plays a pivotal role in building successful organizations and motivating employees.

Transformational leadership theory suggests that leaders influence and inspire their followers by addressing their needs and aspirations, ultimately guiding them toward a shared vision (Altahitah et al., 2018). This approach fosters collaboration, enhances motivation, and strengthens employee morale, making it a powerful tool for school leadership (Bush, 2018).

4. METHODOLOGY

This study used the qualitative method to collect data in three primary schools in Botshabelo in the Free State. Data was collected from different participants, using qualitative research tools, by employing semi-structured interviews and observations. Descriptive notes were taken during the data collection, with audio recordings to capture the responses. Data was collected from the school principals from the three primary schools. The semi-structured interviews were used to respond to the research question on how primary school principals use emotional intelligence in school leadership. Observations were used to triangulate the data from semi-structured interviews.

5. SAMPLING PLAN

A sample is a group that is representative of a population (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). In this study purposive sampling was used because the researcher was able to decide what needed to be done and found people who can and were willing to provide information based on their knowledge and experience in primary school leadership.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

According to Mezmir (2020), data analysis is a process of organising data so that it is interpreted and given meaning. Qualitative data can be analysed by describing patterns and categories in the collected data.

There were six semi-structured interview questions used to answer question 1, which says: *What are the challenges experienced by primary school principals in using emotional intelligence in school leadership?* Three principals from three primary schools participated in answering this question. Table 1 below provides the semi-structured interview questions, emerging themes and the participant's categories.

Table 1: Semi-structured interview questions to answer question 1

Semi-structured interview questions	Themes	Categories
1.1. Are you familiar with emotional intelligence? (Yes/No).	Awareness of emotional intelligence.	Primary school principal
1.2 Under which circumstances do you apply emotional intelligence?	Application of emotional intelligence in school interactions.	Primary school principal
1.3 How do you incorporate emotional intelligence in your leadership role?	Incorporating emotional intelligence in school leadership.	Primary school principal
1.4 What challenges have you experienced in applying emotional intelligence in your leadership role?	Challenges in managing emotions among professionals.	Primary school principal
1.5 Which challenges did you manage to resolve successfully when applying emotional intelligence?	Balancing professionalism and personal stake in conflict situations.	Primary school principal
1.6 Which challenges were not successfully resolved when applying emotional intelligence?	Dealing with difficult personalities.	Primary school principal

Question 1.1

In this section, semi-structured interview question number 1 is analysed. The question asked stated: *“Are you familiar with emotional intelligence? (Yes/No).”* This question was answered by the three principals from the participating primary schools. The schools were given pseudonyms as follows: school number 1 (Victory school), school number 2 (Everywhere school), and school number 3 (Self-pride school).

Principal A from Victory school stated:

“Yes I am ngoaneso. (Yes I am, my sister).”

Principal B from Everywhere school asserted:

“Yes maam I am. I understand it has to deal with the level of interpretation of a situation, application of not only experience but reasonability in dealing with a situation at hand, applying your mind as a reasonable person in a given situation.”

Principal C from Self-Pride school stated:

“Yes, I am familiar mama (madam), it is actually the teachers, in fact everybody, the issue of the emotional is something that is very critical to our institutions, eh, actually it cuts across because we cannot only say, eh, leaders should have this emotional intelligence it should be everybody, and emotional intelligence is very critical especially in our organisations.”

Discussions

The study revealed that Principal A is familiar with emotional intelligence. Similarly, Principal B is also familiar with emotional intelligence and highlights that emotional intelligence requires a certain level of interpretation of a situation, application of experience and a reasonable mind when dealing with a situation. Principal C stated that emotional intelligence is a critical component in our schools. Krishnan and Awang (2020) mentioned that emotional intelligence has become a key factor in the educational environment, because it contributes towards the improvement of teaching practice, health and mental well-being of teachers as well as the students’ educational development. Lubich, Rawlings and Menefee (2022), mentioned

that time and effort are needed to improve emotional intelligence of leaders and leaders are not using the emotional intelligence they already have to meet challenges in their leadership. In the discussion presented, the principals are familiar with the concept of emotional intelligence and understand that it can be applied in a school environment.

Question 1.2

In this section, question 1.2 is analysed. The question stated: “***Under which circumstances do you apply emotional intelligence?***” This question was answered by the three principals from the participating schools.

Principal A from Victory school stated:

“Eh, a number of circumstances, eh, more so when you deal with teachers, eh, when you deal with learners, when you deal with parents, you are forced to apply your emotional intelligence.”

Principal B from Everywhere school asserted:

“As a school principal you have a policy to implement, you have the act that you need to also implement, and there are professional ethics that you have to uphold and not everybody understands and sees things the way you do.”

Principal C from Self-Pride school stated:

“Yes. And as a leader, I'm using, eh, emotional intelligence through and through in my leadership mama (madam) because I don't see myself succeeding as a leader if I don't use the principles of, eh, emotional intelligence because once one, can use that approach, even conflict in our institutions will be very minimal.”

One primary school principal, Principal A from Victory school was observed at the gate, assembly and in a briefing session. At the gate, Principal A used a serious tone of voice to urge learners to walk faster towards the assembly spot since the bell had already rung. He used a soft voice to encourage the small ones (Grade R) to walk faster. He also used a finger to point at older learners to walk faster.

Discussions

The study revealed that principal A uses emotional intelligence when dealing with learners, teachers and parents. The notes from observation of Principal A reveal that he faces a challenge of learners who arrive late at school. He uses transformational leadership by arriving early himself. He also uses emotional intelligence by cautioning learners of different ages by using age appropriate methods. Principal B uses emotional intelligence when dealing with the teachers and mentions that as a principal, one is not powerful over the teachers. Principal C uses emotional intelligence throughout school leadership when dealing with everyone in the school. the management of relationships includes to inspire, influence and develop others while managing conflict (Fianko, Afrifa & Dzogbewu, 2020). Overall, the responses demonstrate that school principals recognize the importance of EI in managing relationships, enforcing policies, and reducing conflicts. The literature supports these assertions, indicating that emotionally intelligent leadership leads to improved school culture, teacher satisfaction, and student performance (Scrage, 2022). Therefore, investing in EI training for school leaders could further enhance their ability to handle complex interpersonal dynamics effectively.

Question 1.3

In this section, question 1.3 is analysed. The question stated: ***“How do you incorporate emotional intelligence in your leadership role?”*** This question was answered by the three principals from the participating schools.

Principal A from Victory school stated:

“Eh, situations di chenza (change) time to time in the leadership role you’ll meet different people, different emotions and different state sa (of) life (kapa sa bophelo se) different to different three stakeholders, so you have to apply them across as you meet them every day.”

Principal B from Everywhere school asserted:

“There are certain standards that the employer is expecting of you, when you have to apply the policy, when you have to apply the act,”

Principal C from Self-pride school stated:

“Mummy firstly one has to learn what emotional intelligence is all about in order to can be able to incorporate it because I feel that there are components of emotional intelligence if I may allude to them it is the self-awareness, and secondly eh, one has got to be able to manage the emotions and the emotions that you manage are your own emotions as a leader so as to be able to manage the emotions of others. And the third point is around self-motivation. Fourthly, empathy. And the last component that is very critical, it's handling relationships,”

Discussions

Principal A stated that he incorporates emotional intelligence under different situations, as he meets with different people with different emotions at different states of life in his leadership role. Similarly, Principal B also uses emotional intelligence when dealing with different people and applies humanity in doing so. Principal C also uses emotional intelligence when dealing with different people in the school and applies self-awareness, self-regulation, self-motivation, empathy and handling relationships in doing so. Tian and Guo (2022) mentioned that transformational leaders regularly have interpersonal interactions with their subordinates and this brings a positive emotional experience to the teachers and strengthens their ability to overcome stress and exhaustion. Overall, the principals demonstrate an awareness of the necessity of emotional intelligence in school leadership. Their responses align with research suggesting that emotionally intelligent leaders can foster a supportive and resilient school culture (Ukpabio, Ekanem, Ngaji, Ojong & Amalu, 2023). However, while the principals acknowledge the importance of emotional intelligence, their responses suggest a need for structured emotional intelligence development programs in schools to enhance their capacity to apply these principles effectively in decision-making, conflict resolution, and stakeholder engagement. The principals use emotional intelligence across different situations in school leadership on a daily basis.

Question 1.4

In this section, question 1.4 is analysed. The question stated: ***“What challenges have you experienced in applying emotional intelligence in your leadership role?”*** This question was answered by the three principals from the participating schools.

Principal A from Victory school stated:

“It’s challenging haholo (more) so when you deal with professionals because some of them ba fila hore (feel that) when they are angry you don’t have to control your emotions kapa (or) your intelligent.”

Principal B from Everywhere school asserted:

“Uhm, let's take for instance, where you have to where you have to charge a person. Yes. Maybe a misconduct is reported to your office or you observe the misconduct.”

Principal C from Self-Pride school stated:

“Not applying these skills correctly because if you don't apply these skills correctly definitely eh, there will be challenges. if as a leader you don’t master your emotions and your feelings eh you are normally tempted to act as you please according to how you feel and according to your emotions and eh actually you become reactive in your leadership or reactions instead of being reactive, I’m citing an example there, at times you become judgmental and once you are judgmental it means you don’t accommodate other people’s emotions and feelings and at times you are allowing your anger to lead you, you operate through your anger.”

Discussions

Principal A had a challenge of using emotional intelligence when resolving issues with professionals, who are highly emotional when discussing issues around work and so lose their professionalism. Principal B experienced challenges when he had to charge a teacher for misconduct: either the misconduct reported to his office or the misconduct the principal observed. Principal C had challenges when he did not apply self-regulation and became reactive and judgemental in dealing with a teacher. D’Ascoli and Piro (2023) stated that the main function of a leader is to work with the emotions of people. Al Shehhi et al, (2021) pointed

out that school principals need to be aware of the emotions of the people they work with. The principals experienced challenges of remaining professional, charging a teacher for misconduct and remaining non-judgemental when dealing with teachers. These experiences of principals reinforce the idea that emotional intelligence is not merely a desirable trait in school leadership, it is a necessary skill for effective management. The challenges faced by the principals suggest a need for continuous emotional intelligence training, particularly in controlling emotions, resolving conflict and relationship management. By enhancing these competencies, school leaders can create a more stable and emotionally supportive educational environment.

Question 1.5

In this section, question 1.5 is analysed. The question stated: ***“Which challenges did you manage to resolve successfully when applying emotional intelligence?”*** This question was answered by the three principals from the participating schools.

Principal A from Victory school stated:

“A lot of them maam (madam) when she comes to me a tlo quera kapa a tlo complain ka (query or complain about) anything atleast I resolve most of the problems tseo nkileng ka di (that I have) encounter.”

Principal B from Everywhere school asserted:

“Let's say, here, a child who probably has reported that the educator has said something or done something to this child and then, the parent comes in. Now the teacher is a professional. The parent is a parent. And then I just now if you deal with this situation, you then would understand that you cannot bring a child here to sit here and the parent to sit here and this professional to sit here and then say you are resolving a conflict where the child has to say something and the teacher has to answer and the parent has to answer.”

Principal C from Self-Pride school stated:

“Yeah. It is a plethora of challenges, mama (mother). But I try to be mindful of because at times there is this negativity because a person is anxious. I try by all physical means to reduce anxiety, to reduce depression if a person does things out of in that way.”

Discussions

Principal A stated that he solved many problems of queries and complaints from teachers by using questioning techniques to ask the teacher what the teacher thought the solution to the problem they were asking the principal was. Principal B used emotional intelligence to solve cases of learners, who claimed that the teachers had said or done something to the learner and the parents had to be brought in. He talked with the learner privately, with the teacher privately and the parent privately, before having a meeting with all parties involved. Principal C used empathy to resolve challenges of negative and rude teachers in the school, who expressed negativity, because they were anxious and depressed. Nwosu et al. (2023) highlighted that people have different abilities of managing emotions and these abilities affect the level of emotional intelligence that one uses in different circumstances. The principals highlighted that they solved challenges between learners, teachers and parents, using emotional intelligence. Overall, the responses illustrate how emotionally intelligent leaders use reflective questioning, mediation, and empathy to resolve conflicts effectively. These findings support the growing body of research emphasizing that emotional intelligence is a core leadership skill that enhances problem-solving, fosters collaboration, and strengthens relationships within educational institutions (Gransbery, 2021; Wilson, 2023). Schools can benefit from structured emotional intelligence training programs that equip principals with strategies for handling conflicts, supporting teacher well-being, and fostering a positive school environment.

Question 1.6

In this section, question 1.6 is analysed. The question stated: *“Which challenges were not successfully resolved when applying emotional intelligence?”* This question was answered by two principals from the participating schools.

Principal A from Victory school stated:

“In most cases it applies more to learners because eh bona (they) in most cases di (the) problems tseo ba di etsang e tla be e le tsa bongwana tse (that they give are childish)”.

Principal C from a Self-Pride school asserted:

“There are people who are emotional. There are people who are rude in their approach, but you'd realize that this person was rude, this person was emotional, this person was stubborn to understand.”

Discussions

Principal A stated that he struggled to address many learner-related issues caused by immaturity and peer pressure but found problem-solving easier when parents were involved. Similarly, Principal C noted difficulties in managing conflicts when teachers were rude, highly emotional, or resistant to correction. According to Wicks, Nakisher, and Grimm (2018), individuals who can regulate their own emotions and those of others can positively influence them. The findings indicate that principals faced challenges in managing both learner and teacher behavior. This suggests that while emotional intelligence is a crucial leadership skill, its effectiveness depends on individuals' readiness to regulate and communicate their emotions. To address these challenges, schools may benefit from interventions such as learner behavior programs, professional development for teachers, and conflict resolution strategies. Enhancing principals' emotional intelligence can foster a supportive school environment, helping educators reach their full potential and promoting overall school well-being (Hsieh, Li, Liang & Chiu, 2024).

7. DISCUSSION OF EMERGING THEMES

The themes that were identified from the data are discussed hereunder.

Theme 1: Awareness of emotional intelligence

The findings show that all three principals were familiar with the concept of emotional intelligence. Knowledge of emotional intelligence is a key component of school leadership (Cherniss & Roche, 2020).

Principal A responded:

“Yes I am ngoaneso. (Yes I am, my sister).”

Principal B stated that:

“I understand it has to deal with the level of interpretation of a situation, application of not only experience but reasonability in dealing with a situation at hand, applying your mind as a reasonable person in a given situation.”

Principal C supports this by stating:

“It is actually the teachers, in fact everybody, the issue of emotional intelligence is something that is very critical to our institutions”.

The three principals' knowledge of emotional intelligence enabled them to apply it when dealing with different situations in the school.

Theme 2: Application of emotional intelligence in school interaction

The findings demonstrate that the three principals used emotional intelligence under different circumstances.

Principal A stated that:

“A number of circumstances, more so when you deal with teachers, when you deal with learners, when you deal with parents, you are forced to apply your emotional intelligence”.

Principal B agreed:

“As a school principal you have a policy to implement, you have the act that you need to also implement, and there are professional ethics that you have to uphold and not everybody understands and sees things the way you do”.

Principal C further supported this by stating:

“And as a leader, I'm using, eh, emotional intelligence through and through in my leadership mama (madam) because I don't see myself succeeding as a leader if I don't use the principles of, eh, emotional intelligence because once one, can use that approach, even conflict in our institutions will be very minimal, because there's a lot that one has to do along the lines of emotional intelligence”.

According to Kayak and Eskici (2021), a school principal who knows himself well and can control his emotions, is able to provide positive experiences to the teachers and students.

Theme 3: Incorporating emotional intelligence in school leadership

The principals mentioned that they incorporated emotional intelligence throughout their leadership.

Principal A stated that:

“Situations di chenchu (change) time to time in the leadership role you'll meet different people, different emotions and different state sa (of) life (kapa sa bophelo se) different to different three stakeholders, so you have to apply them across as you meet them every day.”

Principal B stated that:

“There are certain standards that the employer is expecting of you. And these standards are or they are in black and white.”

Gray (2009) reported that every decision that a school principal makes requires emotional intelligence, so when school principals use emotional intelligence throughout school leadership, it helps them to solve problems in the school.

Theme 4: Challenges in managing emotions among professionals

School principals interact with teachers, learners, parents and government officials, and these interactions demand a high level of emotional intelligence. According to Krishnan and Awang (2020), the workplace is a distinct community made up of people and the high emotional intelligence of a leader allows the leader to deal with challenges and cope with challenges better.

Principal A agreed by stating that:

"It's challenging haholo (more) so when you deal with professionals because some of them ba fila hore (feel that) when they are angry you don't have to control your emotions kapa (or) your intelligent."

Principal B mentioned that:

"Uhm, let's take for instance, where you have to where you have to charge a person."

Principals experienced challenges of working with angry people and people with bad behaviour.

Theme 5: Balancing professionalism and personal stake in conflict situations

The three principals solved challenges using emotional intelligence.

Principal A stated that:

"A lot of them maam (madam) because emotions is when you meet with people ba controllwang ke di (that are controlled by) emotions and then a ba batla ho burst a be (they would want to burst) the way yena a batlang kateng (they want)."

Principal B mentioned that:

“Let's say, here, a child who probably has reported that the educator has said something or done something to this child and then, the parent comes in.”

Principal C felt that:

“But I try to be mindful of because at times there is this negativity because a person is anxious.”

Principals explained that they were able to solve some problems in the school, using emotional intelligence. Gransberry (2021) agrees that leaders need to manage their emotions, in order to cope with difficult situations and to resolve them.

Theme 6: Dealing with difficult personalities

Emotionally intelligent leaders are able to control their emotions when an employee makes a mistake and manage the situation in a reasonable manner (Bower et al., 2018).

Principal A stated that:

“In most cases it applies more to learners.”

Principal C mentioned that:

“There are people who are rude in their approach, but you'd realise that this person was rude, this person was emotional, this person was stubborn to understand.”

Principals experienced challenges when dealing with learners and rude, emotional and stubborn people in the schools. Xie, Wilson and Sheeron (2023) noted that the workplace can be emotionally draining on the employees and everyone involved, and when leaders cannot manage their emotions, human resources have to assist. It is essential that school principals are able to manage their emotions, in order to control the emotions of other people in the school.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Despite the available literature on emotional intelligence, primary school principals still face challenges in applying emotional intelligence in school leadership, because they need to have knowledge about emotions. This study recommends that providing primary school principals with emotional intelligence skills is key for the creation of a school that is conducive for teaching and learning. A sound knowledge of emotional intelligence is necessary for the success of a school.

The study concludes that there are numerous challenges that primary school principals are faced with in school leadership. Some of these challenges include ineffective communication, teaching during a crisis, conflict resolution, managing change in the education sector, and increasing teachers' morale for the job. Primary school principals also face the challenge of incorporating emotional intelligence when dealing with learners, teachers and the Department of Education's officials.

CHAPTER THREE: ARTICLE TWO

REMEDIAL ACTIONS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN ADDRESSING CHALLENGES THROUGH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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ABSTRACT

Despite existing research on emotional intelligence in school leadership, principals still face challenges in applying it effectively, which can impact decision-making. This study explores the remedial actions primary school principals use to address school challenges through emotional intelligence. Using a constructivist paradigm, the research applies Goleman's emotional intelligence theories within a qualitative design. Three purposively selected primary school principals participated through interviews and observations, with data supported by field notes. Findings indicate that principals with high emotional intelligence communicate effectively and seek support from stakeholders. The study recommends enhancing principals' communication skills and fostering collaboration within the education sector.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, school principals, Goleman's theory, effective communication.

1. INTRODUCTION

The emotional intelligence of a school leader directly affects the overall performance of a school. The school principal is faced with many tasks on a daily basis, including decision-making in the school. Some researchers suggest that emotional intelligence can be learned and strengthened, while others claim it is an inborn characteristic. Understanding emotions can be key to better relationships, improved well-being and stronger communication (Cherry, 2018). The use of emotions takes place when people use emotional consideration of others and themselves to make respectful decisions (Silbaugh, Barker & Arghode, 2023).

This study aimed to explore how three primary school principals use emotional intelligence in school leadership. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews and observations with the school principals from the three primary schools in the Free State Province.

This article is structured into six sections: literature review, methodology, problem statement, research approach, findings and discussions, recommendations and conclusion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Goleman described emotional intelligence as the ability to be aware of one's own emotions and to control them, as well as the emotions of those that one interacts with. Goleman's model focuses on workplace performance (Ukpabio et al., 2023). Emotional intelligence refers to a set of cognitive abilities that allow people to perceive, understand, express and manage emotional information (D'Amico, Geraci & Tarantino, 2020). According to Cherniss and Roche (2020), research on emotional intelligence has looked at three questions: how to best measure emotional intelligence, how strong the link is between emotional intelligence and important outcomes, and how to increase emotional intelligence. Bakola and Drigas (2020) reported that the field of emotional intelligence is wide and contains the verbal and nonverbal evaluation and expression of emotions, the regulation of emotions for ourselves and others and also the function of emotional content in problem solving.

Board (2022) explained that emotionally intelligent primary school principals, who use self-awareness when they experience emotional distress usually take time out to cool down their emotions and collect their thoughts before reacting to the emotional distress. Furthermore, emotionally intelligent principals practise good listening skills and show respect when interacting with parents and learners. Trust between the principal, teachers and learners is regarded as important for the school to succeed and improve learners' academic performance. Teachers believe that principals should increase their autonomy, appreciate their work and use emotional intelligence when communicating with them (Arar, 2019).

The success of a school depends on the school climate, created by the principal. Learners need social, emotional and cognitive skills, in order to succeed at school. A school principal, who improves the safety of teachers and learners, improves relationships between teachers and learners, improves the quality of teaching and learning in the school and the infrastructure of the school promotes a positive school climate for success (Domitrovich, Li, Mathis & Greenberg, 2019). A culture of respect is important in a school, in order to create positive

relationships between teachers and management (Cassidy, Holmes, Ferguson & Christie, 2020). They further mentioned that continuous and productive dialogue between teachers and the principal is also important to create a positive school culture.

Principals, who use emotional intelligence in their leadership, are in a better position to teach students correct values, and to create a friendly and trustworthy environment in the school to promote a positive school culture. (Ukpabio et al., 2023). They further state that school principals, who are able to read and understand the emotions of teachers, can promote teamwork amongst teachers, establish sound educational goals, motivate teachers, promote friendliness among the teachers, create a sense of trustworthiness among members of the school that eventually leads to a positive school culture.

The literature review section describes the following aspect of emotional intelligence and its impact on school principals' leadership styles: this is remedial actions used by primary school principals to solve school challenges using emotional intelligence.

Remedial actions used by primary school principals to solve school challenges

The remedial actions used by primary school principals to solve school challenges include good problem-solving skills, adopting decision-making to suit circumstances, optimism and enthusiasm, managing stress, and having a high self-regard.

Good problem-solving skills

Valente and Lourenco (2020) reported that high emotional knowledge is related to high problem-solving success. They further highlighted that emotional intelligence is an essential tool for conflict management, as it encourages the negotiator to worry about the opponent's interest. Using collaboration, cooperation and problem-solving to resolve conflict, has a positive effect on the parties involved in the conflict.

Adapting decision-making to suit circumstances

Crises are urgent situations that demand a principal to take fast and decisive actions. Fernandes et al. (2022) reported that during the COVID-19 pandemic, principals had to respond quickly after carefully considering the compulsory and non-compulsory options instructed by the Government to implement in the schools, the scale of implementing those instructions and the effects the implementation would have on the school.

Optimism and enthusiasm

The emotions of a leader can pass onto other people in the organisation (Lubbadeh, 2020). He further mentioned that when the leader is in a good mood, the people around him or her become more confident in their ability to perform the work and make good decisions. Emotionally intelligent leaders can reduce the gap between the employees and the work to overcome burnout. Pellitteri (2021) agrees that a high level of emotional intelligence of a leader increases job satisfaction and reduces burnout of teachers. Wilson (2023) also agrees that there is a direct correlation between the emotional intelligence of a leader and job satisfaction, job performance, success and mental health of subordinates.

Managing stress

According to Stein, Vincent-Hoeper and Gregersen (2020), in any organisation, social support is an important resource and getting support from others is necessary to improve one's functioning and well-being in doing the work. Leaders are tasked with the duty of providing support to the people in the organisation, in order to reduce stress. Regular support from leaders increases the well-being of others and reduces exhaustion.

Having a high self-regard

When one is emotionally intelligent, he/she is self-aware, can self-regulate, can empathise with others, is self-motivated, and has effective social skills. When leaders inspire their colleagues to perform the work at a higher level of achievement, they are referred to as transformational leaders and they work, using their qualities, rather than their official leadership positions (Rajkumar et al., 2021).

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study applied Goleman's emotional intelligence model and transformational leadership theories, as research indicates a strong correlation between the two (Bukusi, 2020). Emotional intelligence is linked to key leadership attributes, including self-leadership, team performance, and job efficacy (Mullen, Luimberg & Tuazon, 2019). Leaders with high emotional intelligence demonstrate stronger leadership skills, as it enhances trust, motivation, and goal

achievement (Lubich, Rawlings & Menefee, 2022). However, many leaders underutilize their emotional intelligence, limiting its potential benefits.

Emotional intelligence involves recognizing, regulating, and leveraging emotions to guide behavior (Kanezan & Fauzan, 2019; Fianko & Dzogbewu, 2020). Studies confirm its positive impact on transformational leadership, job satisfaction, and reduced teacher burnout (Pellitteri, 2022). Effective emotional management requires adaptability and decisiveness in problem-solving (Gransberry, 2021). The field encompasses emotional perception, regulation, and its role in decision-making (Bakola & Drigas, 2020).

Research highlights the importance of emotional intelligence for school leaders, as it directly influences professional performance and school standards. A study in Canada found that principals' emotional intelligence significantly impacted their effectiveness, while research in Oman emphasized its role in fostering motivation, collaboration, and communication among teachers (Hourani, Litz & Parkman, 2023).

Transformational leadership, characterized by vision, teamwork, motivation, and integrity (Ahn, Xian & Shin, 2022), is strongly linked to emotional intelligence (Bukusi, 2020). It enables leaders to influence behaviors and drive positive change (Bush, 2018). This leadership style enhances workplace performance across different contexts (Pounder, Stoffel & Choi, 2018) and fosters a culture of teamwork and shared values (O’Rielly & Chatman, 2020).

4. METHODOLOGY

This study used the qualitative method to collect data in three primary schools in Botshabelo in the Free State. Data was collected from different participants, using qualitative research tools, by employing semi-structured interviews and observations. Descriptive notes were taken during the data collection, with audio recordings to capture the responses. Data was collected with the school principals from the three primary schools. The semi-structured interviews were used to respond to the research question on how primary school principals use emotional intelligence in school leadership. Observations were used to triangulate the data from semi-structured interviews.

5. SAMPLING PLAN

Sampling is a method used to select participants for research (Ahlin, 2019). In this study the researcher used purposive sampling to select participants based on their accessibility and knowledge and experience of the phenomenon being studied.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), data analysis means to manage, organise and make sense of all the separate pieces of information and make inferences from them. There were four semi-structured interview questions used to answer question 2, which says: *What are the remedial actions used by primary school principals to solve school challenges using emotional intelligence?* Three principals from three primary schools participated in answering this question. Table 2 below provides the semi-structured interview questions, emerging themes and the participant's categories.

Table 2: Semi-structured interview questions to answer question 2

Semi-structured interview questions	Themes	Categories
2.1. What measures do you take to solve the challenge of conflict between teachers in the school?	Conflict resolution strategies.	Primary school principal
2.2 Do you receive support from other school stakeholders in addressing school challenges?	Collaborative leadership.	Primary school principal
2.3 What kind of support do you receive from the school stakeholders?	Collaborative support from school stakeholders.	Primary school principal
2.4 Which stakeholders provide support to solve school's challenges?	Diverse and collaborative partnerships.	Primary school principal

Question 2.1

In this section, semi-structured interview, question number 2 is analysed. The question stated: *“What measures do you take to solve the challenge of conflict between teachers in the school”* This question was answered by the three principals from the participating primary schools. The schools were given pseudonyms as follows: school number 1 (Victory school), school number 2 (Everywhere school), and school number 3 (Self-pride school).

Principal A from Victory school stated:

“In most cases it’s nice when you hear di side (both sides) of the story le bona (with them) separately so that ha hona ya arabang e mong (responds to another) as you listen to e mong (the other one).”

Principal B from Everywhere school asserted:

“If this happens between post level 1 teachers, uhm, then I conduct interviews. But these individuals must then state their case, uhm, separately. So that everyone is free to express his or her emotion, eh, before you can take further steps to understand what has happened.”

Principal C from Self-pride school stated:

“My approach stays being that of emotional intelligence, by really trying to check these parties. Like I said, I study the emotions first on both parties. And as I interact with them, I would have studied the emotions, and I’ll take note to say about, teacher A is like this. In his approach, teacher B is like this.”

Discussions

Principal A resolves conflicts by meeting separately with each party, while Principals B and C conduct joint interviews with teachers in conflict. Cherry (2018) emphasizes the link between emotions and conflict, highlighting the need for emotional intelligence in leadership (Wirawan, Tamar & Bellani, 2019). The findings suggest that all three principals use structured conflict resolution methods, allowing teachers to express emotions openly. This approach fosters

communication and ensures fair resolutions, ultimately promoting a harmonious school environment.

Question 2.2

In this section, question 2.2 is analysed. The question stated: “***Do you receive support from other school stakeholders in addressing school challenges?***” This question was answered by the three principals from the participating schools.

Principal A from Victory school stated:

“Definitely, in most cases ke tla be kena le (I will be)with other schools ke tla be ke na le (I have) a group with my peers be ra tla be re shera (where we share)our frustrations and challenges that we have.”

Principal B from Everywhere school asserted:

“Well, yes. I receive a lot of support from my stakeholders. The learners, if say for instance, something in terms of our school values is not observed, and I talk to them at the assembly, I ensure that the learners understand the importance of that value, whether it's about punctuality, about self-respect, about honesty, I ensure that it is something that they see a value in, when I talk to my teachers as part of the stakeholders, when I talk to parents as part of the stakeholders, and the associations that are attached to our school.”

Principal C from Self-pride school stated:

“Yeah. Isn't that as leaders, we need to collaborate? We need to work together. You might excel in one area of your leadership and have a challenge in the other.”

During observation at the school assembly, Principal A used a calm tone to encourage learners to take part in the school raffle to be held later in the month.

Discussions

Principal A receives support from fellow principals in a peer group for advice and problem-solving, as well as from parents to address financial challenges. Principal B gets support from

learners, teachers, and school associations, while Principal C relies on support from peer school leaders. Stein, Vincent-Hoeper, and Gregersen (2020) note that leaders benefit from support to enhance their performance and well-being. These findings suggest that peer support aids leadership, while broader stakeholder support, including parents and teachers, fosters effective governance and problem-solving in schools.

Question 2.3

In this section, question 2.3 is analysed. The question stated: ***“What kind of support do you receive from the school stakeholders?”*** This question was answered by the three principals from the participating schools.

Principal A from Victory school stated:

“They normally support because at least you get a feedback you get a call eh, asking for feedback how did it go and then if some of the problems were not resolved in that at least you have somebody to share it with and they advise further.”

Principal B from Everywhere school asserted:

“Financial support? Moral support? Sharing of ideas on how to grow and sustain the knowledge in our school, networking, moral support, and it's also what we get, even resources. There are resources that we get from the parents as stakeholders.”

Principal C from Self-Pride school stated:

“Yeah, school stakeholders, let's take, maybe the parent. The support that I get from the parents is that when there is a matter to be discussed around issues of academics or learners, they come in their numbers.

So I get unfailing support, other stakeholders like NGOs, we still have NGOs that are attached to the schools, they are really supporting.”

During observation in the briefing session, Principal A used a firm and authoritative tone to remind educators that the week was for monitoring and control of educators' work by departmental heads. His facial expression was calm.

Discussions

Principal A receives professional support from peers who follow up on his case management and from departmental heads, demonstrating collaborative leadership. Principal B gains moral support, networking, and financial resources from peers and school stakeholders. Principal C receives parental support and school uniforms from NGOs linked to his school. Successful leaders rely not only on their skills but also on the relationships they build and how they manage subordinates (Arshad & Zaman, 2021). Principals benefit from professional, parental, financial, and resource support. Lubbadeh (2020) highlights that managing relationships fosters bonds, mentorship, and conflict resolution. The findings suggest that such support is crucial for effective school leadership.

Question 2.4

In this section, question 2.4 is analysed. The question asked stated: ***“Which stakeholders provide support to solve school’s challenges?”*** This question was answered by the three principals from the participating schools.

Principal A from Victory school stated:

“My colleagues, my circuit manager who is my senior at this time, eh, friends, ke na le (I also have) friends who are not teachers but who are managers at their different institutions.”

Principal B from Everywhere school asserted:

“Support from the circuit manager.”

Principal C from Self-pride school stated:

“Yes. we have been having a plethora of stakeholders, maam. Firstly, we have Tiger Brands Foundation, they are supporting us with the breakfast, we are receiving breakfast at our school, So that is the main stakeholder, and then we are having the Kellogg’s people they have adopted us short, recently, they are also an associate. And

we are having the Plant a Tree for Africa they are also our recent associate that are providing us with fruit and shade trees, and then it will be the, we have been adopted by the clinic, our local clinic yeah, they are quite an associate, they celebrated Mandela Day with us, a wonderful thing they did, and the churches of course. We saw the NG and the Methodist and other churches, and they came also to support the school, yeah and the SASSA.”

Discussion

Principal A receives support from his colleagues, circuit manager and friends, who are in managerial positions in other schools and in a local university. Similarly, Principal B also receives support from his circuit manager. Principal C receives support from Tiger Brands Foundation, Kelloggs, Plant a Tree for Africa, a local clinic and churches, who offer support to the school. Lubbadah (2020) reported that leaders who have good relationships with their colleagues, also did well in their jobs. All principals receive support from internal and external stakeholders highlighting the importance of collaboration in sustaining school operations and addressing challenges. The responses suggest that the involvement of stakeholders is important in school leadership, as diverse networks help schools address challenges more effectively.

7. DISCUSSION OF EMERGING THEMES

There were four themes that emanated from the data analysis as discussed hereunder.

Theme 1: Conflict resolution strategies

Emotions and conflict are linked, because leaders work with people. Furthermore, the success of a leader in resolving conflict depends on their ability to recognise emotions, manage emotions and communicate well with people. (Howell, 2014). Principal A used private meetings with teachers that have a conflict and stated that: *“In most cases it's nice when you hear di side (both sides) of the story le bona (with them) separately.”* Principal B supported this approach by saying that: *“If this happens between post level 1 teachers, uhm, then I conduct interviews.”* Principal C also used meetings, and he stated that: *“My approach stays being that of emotional intelligence, by really trying to check these parties. Like I said, I study the emotions first on both parties. And as I interact with them, I would have studied the emotions,”* School principals use meetings, interviews and interactions to resolve conflict between

teachers. School principals that have a high emotional intelligence can promote friendliness among the teachers and this can create a positive school culture (Ukpabio et al., 2023). A culture of respect is important in a school, in that it creates positive relationships between teachers and management (Cassidy et al., 2020).

Theme 2: Collaborative leadership

The findings demonstrate that all three principals receive some form of support from stakeholders. Principal A receives support from his peers in other schools and stated that: *“Definitely, in most cases ke tla be kena le (I will be)with other schools ke tla be ke na le (I have) a group with my peers be ra tla be re shera (where we share)our frustrations and challenges that we have.”* Principal B receives support from the learners, parents, teachers and other associations attached to the school and mentioned that: *“I ensure that the learners understand the importance of that value, whether it's about punctuality, about self-respect, about honesty, I ensure that it is something that they see a value in, when I talk to my teachers as part of the stakeholders, when I talk to parents as part of the stakeholders, and the associations that are attached to our school.”* Principal C agreed and asserted that: *“Yeah. Isn't that as leaders, we need to collaborate? Even with emotional intelligence, you cannot say I'm excellent, there is some areas that, might, be a hinge to you and a colleague to bail you out.”* In a school as an organisation, the job demands support in order to deal with emotions (Xie, et al, 2023). Furthermore, Cayak and Eskici (2021) highlighted that schools contain learners and teachers with different characteristics that require to be managed, so a school principal needs support in managing different emotions from learners and teachers.

Theme 3: Collaborative support from school stakeholders

All three principals receive support from schools' stakeholders. Principal A mentioned that he receives support in the form of advice and feedback from his seniors, and stated that: *“so that you can at least mitigate the situation for now as you wait for advice from your seniors maybe, but in most cases you get support from them in following up in terms of getting to know hore (that) how far are you with the case.”* Principal B receives support in the form of financial support, moral support, networking and resources from parents, and asserted that: *“Financial support? Moral support? Sharing of ideas on how to grow and sustain the knowledge in our school, and networking, moral support, and it's also what we get, even resources. There are*

resources that we get from the parents as stakeholders.” Principal C receives support from the parents and NGOs that are attached to the school, and he mentioned that: *”The support that I get from the parents is that when there is a matter to be discussed around issues of academics or learners, they come in their numbers. So I get unfailing support, other stakeholders like NGOs, we still have NGOs that are attached to the schools, they are really supporting.”* School principals need support from school stakeholders and can achieve this by building good relationships with the stakeholders and by using good communication with the stakeholders (Chargualaf, 2023).

Theme 4: Diverse and collaborative partnerships

All three principals mentioned that they received support from different stakeholders. Principal A mentioned that he received support from his colleagues and peers, and stated that: *”My colleagues, my circuit manager who is my senior at this time, eh, friends, ke na le (I also have) friends who are not teachers but who are managers at their different institutions.”*

Principal B received support from his circuit manager and asserted that: *”Support from the circuit manager.”* Principal C received support from Tiger Brands Foundation, Kelloggs, Plant a Tree for Africa, the local clinic, the local churches and SASSA and stated that: *“Yes. we have been having a plethora of stakeholders, maam.”* Bagwell (2020) reported that school principals that seek the support of others in their school, create a school environment that increases learners’ academic achievement.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Receiving support from others is essential for a school leader to be effective in his/her job. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that primary school leaders should seek support from their circuit managers as their immediate supervisors, their peers in other schools, parents of learners in their school, and the stakeholders that are in the school community, in order to lead schools successfully.

Primary school principals use communication to resolve conflict between teachers. They also receive support to solve school challenges from their circuit managers, their peers, parents, community clinics, community churches and non-governmental organisations that are attached

to the schools. The kind of support they receive is social support, moral support and physical resources.

CHAPTER FOUR: ARTICLE THREE

PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' PERSPECTIVES ON EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence is a set of skills that allow people to understand and control emotions. This study explores how primary school principals apply emotional intelligence in leadership. Emotional intelligence begins with self-awareness and the ability to regulate one's emotions. Using a constructivist paradigm, the research employs Goleman's emotional intelligence model and transformational leadership theory to investigate how principals integrate emotional intelligence into their leadership practices. A qualitative research design was adopted, with a purposive sample of three primary school principals. Data was collected through individual interviews, observations, and field notes. Findings indicate that principals who utilize emotional intelligence view it as essential to effective leadership, helping them manage stress and contribute to their schools' success.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, school leadership, transformational leadership

1. INTRODUCTION

Emotional intelligence can be defined as the ability to identify and control emotions of oneself and others, and to use this information to guide the behaviour of an individual (Kanezan & Fauza, 2019; Fianko & Dzogbewu, 2020).

A high performing leadership is based on the five elements of emotional intelligence. Baesu (2019) highlights the five components of emotional intelligence as self-knowledge, self-control, social consciousness, management of relationships and motivation. According to Lubbadah (2020) self-awareness means the ability to understand one's own emotions and to act with genuineness and certainty. Bower, O'Connor, Harris and Frick (2018) reported that self-awareness includes a person's understanding of his/her own goals and values. Self-management, also known as self-regulation, is the ability of an individual to manage positive

and negative emotions and to act with a clear state of mind and focus (Lubbadeh, 2020). Social-consciousness or social skills is the ability of a leader to understand the emotions of others and empathise with them (Baesu, 2019). Relationship management is the ability of a leader to guide the emotions of a group of people by building relationships, mentorship, empowerment and conflict management (Lubbadeh, 2020; Fianko & Dzogbewu, 2020). Motivation means to use an individual's own best judgement to achieve personal and organisational goals, even when faced with problems (Singh, Prabhakar & Kiran, 2022; Bakola & Drigas, 2020).

Understanding of an individual's personal abilities, mainly self-awareness, self-regulation and motivation, is critical, as it determines how an individual manages his affairs (Fteiha & Awwad, 2020). A study done in Oman by Hourani, Litz and Parkman (2023) indicated the importance of the role of a leader in motivating and inspiring teachers to create successful communication in the school. School principals, who have high emotional intelligence can influence the emotions and thoughts of teachers and learners in the school (Kayak & Eskici, 2021). According to Mullen, Luimberg and Tuazon (2019), emotional intelligence is positively related to leadership qualities, such as team performance, efficacy and job performance. An emotionally intelligent school principal can lead a school to achieve its goals.

This study aimed to explore how three primary school principals use emotional intelligence in school leadership. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews and observations with the school principals from the three primary schools in the Free State Province.

This article is structured into six sections: literature review, methodology, problem statement, research approach, findings and discussions, recommendations and conclusion

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Goleman's model describes the five components of emotional intelligence as self-regulation, self-awareness, motivation, social skills and empathy. According to Lubbadeh (2020), self-awareness is described as the ability to understand one's own emotions and act with authenticity and conviction. Bower, O'Connor, Harris and Frick (2018) agree that self-awareness is an extension of a person's understanding of his or her own goals and values. Self-management is the ability to manage positive and negative emotions and act with mental clarity and concentrated energy (Lubbadeh, 2020). Emotionally intelligent leaders are able to control their impulses when an employee makes a mistake and handle it in a fair, trusting and reasonable manner (Bower et al., 2018). Social awareness or social skills is the ability to

understand people, groups and organisational cultures and to act on one's understanding of others' needs and desires (Lubbadeh, 2020). Bower et al. (2018) describe social skills as being friendly with a purpose and being able to move people in whatever direction a leader wants. Relationship management is the ability to guide the emotional tone of a group, build common bonds, mentor and develop others and manage conflict (Lubbadeh, 2020; Fianko & Dzogbewu, 2020). Motivation is the use of one's own best judgement to direct oneself toward one's goals, which in turn encourages one to be creative, to seek out and implement improvements and to move onward, despite encountering obstacles (Singh, Prabhakar & Kiran, 2022; Bakola & Drigas, 2020). Leadership effectiveness relies on the degree of emotional intelligence held by managers.

Interdisciplinary literature describes emotional intelligence as being positively related to various leader attributes, such as self-leadership, team performance, leader self-efficacy, and job performance (Mullen, Limberg & Tuazon, 2019).

The literature review section unpacks the following aspect of emotional intelligence and its impact on school principals' leadership styles; this is: the views of primary school principals in using emotional intelligence in school leadership.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study applied Goleman's emotional intelligence model and transformational leadership theories, as research indicates a strong correlation between the two (Bukusi, 2020). Emotional intelligence is linked to key leadership attributes, including self-leadership, team performance, and job efficacy (Mullen, Luimberg & Tuazon, 2019). Leaders with high emotional intelligence demonstrate stronger leadership skills, as it enhances trust, motivation, and goal achievement (Lubich, Rawlings & Menefee, 2022). However, many leaders underutilize their emotional intelligence, limiting its potential benefits.

Emotional intelligence involves recognizing, regulating, and leveraging emotions to guide behavior (Kanezan & Fauzan, 2019; Fianko & Dzogbewu, 2020). Studies confirm its positive impact on transformational leadership, job satisfaction, and reduced teacher burnout (Pellitteri, 2022). Effective emotional management requires adaptability and decisiveness in problem-solving (Gransberry, 2021). The field encompasses emotional perception, regulation, and its role in decision-making (Bakola & Drigas, 2020).

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Transformational leadership, characterized by vision, teamwork, motivation, and integrity (Ahn, Xian & Shin, 2022), is strongly linked to emotional intelligence (Bukusi, 2020). It enables leaders to influence behaviors and drive positive change (Bush, 2018). This leadership style enhances workplace performance across different contexts (Pounder, Stoffel & Choi, 2018) and fosters a culture of teamwork and shared values (O’Rielly & Chatman, 2020).

4. METHODOLOGY

This study used the qualitative method to collect data in three primary schools in Botshabelo in the Free State. Data was collected from different participants, using qualitative research tools, by employing semi-structured interviews, as well as observations. Descriptive notes were taken during the data collection, with audio recordings to capture the responses. Data was collected with the school principals from the three primary schools. The semi-structured interviews were used to respond to the research question on how primary school principals use emotional intelligence in school leadership. Observations were used to triangulate the data from semi-structured interviews.

5. SAMPLING PLAN

A sampling describes the method of sampling used, the sample size and the procedure used to invite participants to take part in the study (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). In this study, purposive sampling was used to select the three principals.

6. DATA ANALYSIS

There were four semi-structured interview questions used to answer question 3, which says: *"What are the views of primary school principals in using emotional intelligence in school leadership?"* Three principals from three primary schools participated in answering this question. Table 3 below provides the semi-structured interview questions, emerging themes and the participant’s categories.

Table 3: Semi-structured interview questions to answer question 3

Semi-structured interview questions	Themes	Categories
3.1. Do you think emotional intelligence has a role to play in school leadership? (Yes/No)	Emotional intelligence as a fundamental leadership skill.	Primary school principal
3.2 What are your views regarding the role of emotional intelligence in a school leadership role?	Emotional intelligence as a strategic leadership skill.	Primary school principal
3.3What are some advantages of using emotional intelligence you have experienced in your school?	Emotional intelligence as a core component of successful leadership.	Primary school principal

Question 3.1

In this section, question 3.1 is analysed. The question stated: ***“Do you think emotional intelligence has a role to play in school leadership? (Yes/No)”*** This question was answered by the three principals from the participating schools.

Principal A from Victory school stated:

“It has a lot of role to play. Why I’m saying it is because rona (us) as principals or as school leadership re ba (we are) more isolated than other groups, say) so it means you need to be very emotionally intelligent so that you win some of the battles.”

Principal B from Everywhere school asserted:

“Uhm, unfortunately, when we interview people that we hire in the positions, especially senior positions, we are not interested in IQ and emotional intelligence.

I wish there was a course for emotional intelligence, especially for leaders. Because it is through emotional intelligence that our intelligent quotient becomes more productive in school.”

Principal C from Self-Pride school stated:

“Mama (madam), it is indispensable. We cannot do without it. It is indispensable. If we can master it, our schools are going to be places of marvel. Because you know what? Why? There is going to be rapport between us. Yeah. The teachers will understand why leaders, why things need to be done in this way. The learners will understand why teachers want things to happen in such a way. The parents will understand why the school wants things to happen in a situation.”

Discussion

Principal A stated that emotional intelligence has a role to play in school leadership, because in a school, principals feel isolated, because each school has one principal who leads a large number of teachers. Similarly principal B agreed that emotional intelligence has a role to play, because it is through emotional intelligence that their intelligence quotient becomes higher and so they become more productive in the school. Principal C also agreed that emotional intelligence has a role to play in school leadership, because it creates understanding between the principal, teachers, parents and learners, in how things should be done in the school. According to Lubbadah (2020), school principals, who showed a high level of emotional intelligence were able to handle the emotional stresses of their schools and teachers saw them as being transformational leaders. All three principals agree that emotional intelligence has a role to play in school leadership, to foster good relationships for everybody in the school. This suggests that emotional intelligence not only improves leadership effectiveness but also contributes to a more positive school environment. In conclusion, all three principals agree that emotional intelligence plays an essential role in school leadership, as it promotes decision-making, stakeholder relationships, and overall school management.

Question 3.2

In this section, question 3.2 is analysed. The question stated: ***“What are your views regarding the role of emotional intelligence in a school leadership role?”*** This question was answered by two principals from the participating schools.

Principal A from Victory school stated:

“My view would then be, it is important for, I would say for the sector here (that) the leadership in schools must be trained in emotional intelligence and it must not just be once off because every term you’ll meet different challenges because of the pressure of each term.”

Principal C from Self-pride school stated:

“Now that is very critical. Yeah, and it allows the school to be balanced in totality. Yeah because, starting from the learner, the parent, the teacher the SMT which is leadership now. I mean, it, that teaches us a school is not a small entity, it is made up of organs and all of these organs have got to work together.”

Discussion

Principal A stated that school leaders need to be trained in emotional intelligence during each school term, because each school term presents its own challenges and principals need to be appraised so that they are equipped with emotional intelligence skills. Principal B stated that emotional intelligence is important because it allows a school to be balanced and function as one entity. Rahman (2021) noted that public organisations need leaders with emotional intelligence, in order to manage challenges and manage their emotions and the emotions of others. The principals view emotional intelligence to be an important part of school leadership that every principal needs to be trained in. These perspectives align with Rahman (2021), who found that leaders in public organisations such as schools and private organisations, must possess emotional intelligence to manage challenges effectively while regulating their own emotions and those of their colleagues. In conclusion, both principals agree that emotional intelligence is a key component of school leadership, and ongoing training should be prioritized

to ensure school leaders can navigate challenges and maintain a well-balanced, collaborative school environment.

Question 3.3

In this section, question 3.3 is analysed. The question stated: ***“What are some advantages of using emotional intelligence you have experienced in your school leadership?”*** This question was answered by the three principals from the participating schools.

Principal A from Victory school stated:

“Advantages would be emotions as you get you manage to not be stressful as an individual to avoid unnecessary conflicts , and then at some point you influence them that when they are faced with challenges they don’t have to think about them more but they think about the situation more.”

Principal B from Everywhere school asserted:

“The greatest advantage is understanding that you are a leader. You are an administrator, but the key role is that you are a leader and as a leader you are able to create an atmosphere of trust, an atmosphere of commitment, a positive atmosphere that considers the well-being of others as employees, the well-being of others as stakeholders and when you put people first people put you first, that improves the quality of the working life of an individual in any institution where people are valued eh, people give more value to the institution that values them, so it is key that every leader must have antecedent knowledge to atleast to apply emotional intelligence.”

Principal C from Self-Pride school stated:

*“And like I say, one has got to show the how and not preach it. Yeah.
And it is worth cascading to all sectors, to the learners, to the SGB, of course, yes.
Because even in our settings as SGB or the SMT or the teachers in a collective way.”*

Discussion

Principal A mentioned that the advantages of using emotional intelligence in school leadership that he experienced, are that it made him not feel stressed about leading a school. Secondly, it helped him to avoid unnecessary conflict in the school. Thirdly, it helped him to influence the teachers to create peace with everyone in the school. Principal B asserted that one advantage he experienced was that emotional intelligence reminded him that as a leader his key role is to lead and create an atmosphere of trust, commitment and a positive atmosphere that considers the well-being of stakeholders. Secondly, he stated that emotional intelligence enabled him to put others first to improve the quality of the working life of everyone in the institution. Principal C stated that one advantage he has experienced is that using emotional intelligence has helped him to lead by example, not preaching what should be done in the school. Secondly, using emotional intelligence has taught him that it is a necessary tool for everyone in the school and it is worth cascading to the learners, school governing body, school management team and teachers. Ontong (2021) pointed out that a positive school climate where there are good learner relations, collaboration between teachers and teachers who are involved in the decision-making processes of the school, builds high commitment to the school from the teachers. School principals that can deal with their emotions create schools that support learning. The principals mentioned the advantages of using emotional intelligence in school leadership are that it creates calm leaders, influential leaders, it builds trust among colleagues, promotes collaborative efforts, builds a positive atmosphere in the school and empowers leaders to lead by example.

7. DISCUSSION OF EMERGING THEMES

The themes that were identified from the data were discussed as follows:

Theme 1: Emotional intelligence as a fundamental leadership skill

Cherry (2018) mentioned that when leaders understand the emotions of the people they lead, they can build better relationships, improve the well-being of the people and build strong communication skills. Principal A mentioned that he felt isolated in the school as he is the principal and he leads a large number of teachers and he stated that: *"Why I'm saying it is because rona (us) as principals or as school leadership re ba (we are) more isolated than*

other groups, ere ke re (let me say) in a school set up principal o ione bo tichere ba 56 so oithola o le ione (there is one principal and 56 teachers, so the principal feels alone) against the 56.” Principal B agreed and mentioned that: *“You’ll find that we have people who are highly qualified, but people who cannot, perfect humanity in the positions they occupy.”*

Principal C further agreed and stated that: *“There is going to be rapport between us. Yeah. The teachers will understand why leaders, why things need to be done in this way. The learners will understand why teachers want things to happen in such a way. The parents will understand why the school wants things to happen in a situation.”*

Relationships formed by an emotionally intelligent school principal bridge the gap between the principal’s leadership position and the teachers, so that a school runs well.

Theme 2: Emotional intelligence as a strategic leadership skill

Principal A believes that emotional intelligence has an important role to play in school leadership and that school leaders should be trained in emotional intelligence on a regular basis, and he mentioned that: *“My view would then be, it is important for, I would say for the sector hore (that) the leadership in schools must be trained in emotional intelligence and it must not just be once off because every term you’ll meet different challenges because of the pressure of each term.”* Principal C also agrees that emotional intelligence is critical to school leadership and stated that: *“Now that is very critical it is very critical. Yeah, and it allows the school to be balanced in totality.”* School principals emphasised the importance of emotional intelligence in school leadership. The emotional intelligence of a school principal is important for teachers to perform well and to improve the standards of a school (Hourani, Litz & Parkman, 2023).

Theme 3: Emotional intelligence as a core component of successful leadership

Principal A mentioned that emotional intelligence helps to manage stress and avoid unnecessary conflicts in the school, and he stated that: *“Advantages would be emotions as you get you manage to not be stressful as an individual to avoid unnecessary conflicts.”*

Principal B highlighted that emotional intelligence helped him to create a positive atmosphere of trust and commitment in the school and he stated that: *“The greatest advantage is*

understanding that you are a leader. You are an administrator, but the key role is that you are a leader and as a leader you can create an atmosphere of trust, an atmosphere of commitment, a positive atmosphere that considers the well-being of others as employees.”

Principal C mentioned that one advantage of using emotional intelligence in school leadership is that it helped him to lead by example and he stated that: *“And like I say, one has got to show the how and not preach it.”* The three school principals agree that there are many advantages in using emotional intelligence in school leadership. Cooper (2020) asserts that while transformational leadership acknowledges that monitoring, control and expression of emotions are important for a leader, emotional intelligence is also an important skill that a transformational leader should use, especially in school leadership.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The perspective of primary school principals, regarding the role of emotional intelligence in school leadership is that it is important for schools to be successful. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that principals need to be trained regularly in how to apply emotional intelligence in school leadership.

Primary school principals need regular appraisal to apply emotional intelligence skills in school leadership. They need skills to create and lead schools that support the wellbeing of teachers and learners in order that schools can succeed as centres of learning.

CHAPTER FIVE: BRIDGING THE ARTICLES, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter bridges the articles of the study and outlines a brief background and context, the summary, conclusions and recommendations, as well as the implications of the study.

This qualitative study aimed to explore how three primary school principals use emotional intelligence in school leadership in the selected schools in the Free State. The study used Goleman's emotional intelligence model and transformational leadership theory as the theoretical framework and was divided into three articles. I used two data collection methods: semi-structured interviews and observations to address the research objectives.

5.2. ARTICLE SUMMARY

5.2.1 Article one

Article one responded to the research objective, which aimed to investigate the challenges experienced by primary school principals in using emotional intelligence in school leadership. The article is titled: "Investigating the challenges experienced by primary school principals in using emotional intelligence in school leadership". The findings revealed that although principals apply emotional intelligence in their leadership role, they still face challenges in applying emotional intelligence, because they lack training on using emotional intelligence in school leadership.

5.2.2 Article two

Article two answered the research objective, which aimed to determine the remedial actions used by primary school principals to solve school challenges using emotional intelligence. The article is titled: "Determining the remedial actions used by primary school principals to solve school challenges using emotional intelligence". The study findings showed that principals need support from circuit managers, who are their immediate supervisors, their learners, colleagues, and clinics, churches and NGOs in the school's community.

5.2.3 Article three

Article three aimed to respond to the research objective of exploring the views of primary school principals in using emotional intelligence in school leadership. The article is titled: “Exploring the views of primary school principals in using emotional intelligence in school leadership”. The findings revealed that school principals need appraisal on how to apply emotional intelligence skills in school leadership to improve the well-being of teachers and learners.

In the following section, the research explains how the research objectives were addressed by the three articles.

5.3. ANSWERING THE RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

5.3.1 Research objective 1: To investigate the challenges experienced by primary school principals in using emotional intelligence in school leadership

This objective was addressed in article one through the research question: What are the challenges experienced by primary school principals in using emotional intelligence in school leadership? The study uncovered that primary school principals face challenges of rude teachers, poor learner behaviour, and highly emotional teachers. It can be argued that principals need to be more than managers and they need other qualities, such as emotional intelligence to run schools (Al Shehhi et al, 2021). This data was important in the study, because it could be used to improve the emotional control in primary school principals.

5.3.2 Research objective 2: To determine the remedial actions used by primary school principals to solve school challenges using emotional intelligence

This objective was addressed in article two through the research question: What remedial actions are used by primary school principals to solve school challenges using emotional intelligence? The study identified that receiving support from the circuit managers, learners, teachers, local clinics and churches, and NGOs was useful to solve challenges in the school. Building relationships and networks with the local community is an effective skill that primary school principals use (Flemming, 2016). This data is important in the study, because social skills help individuals solve their problems.

5.3.3 Research objective 3: To determine the views of primary school principals in using emotional intelligence in school leadership.

This objective was addressed in article one through the research question: What are the views of primary school principals regarding the role of emotional intelligence in school leadership? The study identified that application of emotional intelligence skills is an effective skill to have as a school leader and school principals need to be trained on how to apply emotional intelligence in school leadership. Leaders with high self-awareness are aware how their actions affect their job performance and can receive criticism positively (Flemming, 2016). This data is important, because self-awareness enables individuals to understand the emotions of other people.

5.4. ADDRESSING THE MAIN RESEARCH QUESTION OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to explore how three primary school principals use emotional intelligence in school leadership in selected schools in the Free State. To realise this aim, the main research question was formulated: How do primary school principals use emotional intelligence in school leadership? Three objectives were investigated, with an article dedicated to each of the three objectives.

Article one (Chapter 2) helped to identify the challenges experienced by primary school principals in leading schools. The article revealed that principals face rude teachers, ill-disciplined learners, uncooperative teachers and highly emotional teachers. Primary school principals are aware of emotional intelligence and apply it to work with teachers and learners daily as they lead schools to success. Article one helped me to understand the various challenges that primary school principals face on a daily basis.

Article two (Chapter 3) focused on exposing the remedial actions that primary school principals use to solve challenges in the school. This article showed that principals rely on support from their circuit managers as their immediate supervisors, the teachers, learners, parents and local clinics and churches in the school community. Article two helped me to understand the stakeholders that offer support to primary school principals and the kind of support they offer.

Article three (Chapter 4) revealed the views that primary school principals had regarding the application of emotional intelligence in school leadership. This article exposed that primary school principals believe that the application of emotional intelligence is important in school

leadership, because it improves communication and the achievement of school goals. Article three helped me to understand that emotional intelligence is key to managing a successful school.

5.5. RECOMMENDATIONS

The study put forward the following recommendations to explore how primary school principals use emotional intelligence in school leadership in the chosen schools in the Free State:

- The perspective of primary school principals, regarding the role of emotional intelligence in school leadership is that it is important for schools to be successful. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that principals need to be trained regularly in how to apply emotional intelligence in school leadership.

Primary school principals need regular appraisal to apply emotional intelligence skills in school leadership. They need skills to create and lead schools that support the wellbeing of teachers and learners in order that schools can succeed as centres of learning.

- Despite the available literature on emotional intelligence, primary school principals still face challenges in applying emotional intelligence in school leadership, because they need to have knowledge about emotions. This study recommends that providing primary school principals with emotional intelligence skills is key for the creation of a school that is conducive for teaching and learning. A sound knowledge of emotional intelligence is necessary for the success of a school.

The study concludes that there are numerous challenges that primary school principals are faced with in school leadership. Some of these challenges include ineffective communication, teaching during a crisis, conflict resolution, managing change in the education sector, and increasing teachers' morale for the job. Primary school principals also face the challenge of incorporating emotional intelligence when dealing with learners, teachers and the Department of Education's officials.

- Receiving support from others is essential for a school leader to be effective in his/her job. Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that primary school leaders

should seek support from their circuit managers as their immediate supervisors, their peers in other schools, parents of learners in their school, and the stakeholders that are in the school community, in order to lead schools successfully.

Primary school principals use communication to resolve conflict between teachers. They also receive support to solve school challenges from their circuit managers, their peers, parents, community clinics, community churches and non-governmental organisations that are attached to the schools. The kind of support they receive is social support, moral support and physical resources.

5.6. IMPLICATIONS OF THE FINDINGS

Article one asked: “What are the challenges that primary school principals face in using emotional intelligence in school leadership?” The principals described their challenges, and the article suggested ways that could be used to improve the emotional intelligence of principals. Article two asked:” What are the remedial actions that primary school principals use to solve school challenges applying emotional intelligence?” The principals explained the remedial actions that they have available, and the article suggested actions that could be used to solve challenges in school leadership. Article three asked:” What are the views of primary school principals regarding the use of emotional intelligence in school leadership?” The principals stated their views, and the study came up with recommendations on how principals need to be appraised on emotional intelligence.

5.7. LIMITATIONS

Since the study used a small sample of participants, namely three principals, the findings could not be generalised but instead limited within the context of the three schools in the Free State. This implies that the findings do not represent all primary school principals in the province or the country but could serve as a guideline to interested stakeholders in the education sector. Furthermore, the study was conducted within a limited amount of time and space and this proved to be a challenge.

5.8. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

I recommend that the study be conducted in more schools in the Motheo Education District in the Free State Province to explore whether the way primary school principals use emotional

intelligence applies across other schools in the Motheo Education District and other districts in the Free State or whether it only applies to certain schools in Motheo.

5.9. REFLECTIONS

Firstly, I learned that primary school principals are knowledgeable on emotional intelligence and they apply it to a certain degree in their school leadership, especially when dealing with conflict resolution where they used effective communication.

Secondly, this study has made me realise the need for emotional intelligence skills for primary school principals. Even though principals used emotional intelligence, they expressed a need for further appraisal on the phenomenon.

Thirdly, I realised that it is not easy to get access to interviews and observe people and that schools have different cultures in that some of the practices of one principal were not applicable to the schools of the other two principals and hence some observations were not done.

Lastly, I learned that it is important to be patient, because all the three principals were hard to reach, due to their busy schedules.

5.10. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore how three primary school principals use emotional intelligence in school leadership. The study had three objectives, and from these objectives, three sub-research questions were formulated and answered in the three articles. The study exposed the challenges that primary school principals face in school leadership, the remedial actions that they use to solve school challenges and their perspective on the role of emotional intelligence in school leadership. The study concludes that primary school principals' knowledge of emotion control plays a critical role in school leadership. The extent to which a principal uses emotional intelligence in school leadership, increases when it is used in combination with transformational leadership.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Ethical Clearance from The University Of The Free State



GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

Registration Number: REC-112922-058

18-Jun-2024

Dear Ms Montseng Lesole

Application Approved

Research Project Title:

Exploring how three primary school principals use emotional intelligence in school leadership

Ethical Clearance number:

UFS-HSD2023/2547

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 via an Amendment on RIMS to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit a Final Report on RIMS for your study/research project to the ethics office once the project has concluded. Should you require more time than the allotted 12 months to complete this research, please apply for an extension by submitting a Continuation/Report on RIMS. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance. We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Adri Du Plessis

Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee

205 Nelson Mandela P.O. Box 339
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Park West
Bloemfontein 9301
South Africa
Bloemfontein 9300
Tel: +27(0)514019337
adri@uofcs.ac.za
www.uofcs.ac.za



APPENDIX B: Approval from the Free State Department of Education to Conduct Research

Enquiries: M.Z. Thango
Ref: Research Permission M. D. Lesole
Tel: 051 464 8808
Email: MZ.Thango@fseducation.gov.za



34A Companje Crescent
Enrichpark
Bloemfontein
9300

Dear Ms. M. D. Lesole

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE FREE STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: MOTHEO 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 Mofheo Education District. The details in relation to your research project with the University of the Free State are as follows:

Topic: Exploring the Leadership Practices of Primary School Principals In Using Emotional Intelligence.

1. **List of schools involved:** Hohlle Primary School, Seithati Primary School and Tholo Primary School.
2. **Target Population:** Three Primary School Principals of the selected schools.
3. **Period of research:** From the signature of this letter until 30 September 2024. 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 sound copy of the research document should be submitted to the Free State Department of Education, Room 101, 1st 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. MZAMO W. JACOBS
DIRECTOR: QUALITY ASSURANCE, M&E AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

DATE: 07/03/2024

RESEARCH APPROVAL BY M. D. LESOLE, PERMISSION LETTER AT 34A COMPANJE CRESCENT, MOTHEO DISTRICT
04/01/2024, 1st Floor, Thuto House, St. Andrew Street, Bloemfontein, 9300 - Thuto House, Room 101, 1st Floor, St Andrew Street, Bloemfontein

www.fsdoe.gov.za

APPENDIX C: Request to Schools to Participate in The Research Study, Information Leaflet And Consent Form.

Research study information leaflet and consent form

Date: March 2024

Title of the research project : Exploring how three primary school principals use emotional intelligence in school leadership

Researcher: Montseng D Lesole

Contact number: 0713777218

Faculty : Education

Department: Comparative Education and Educational Management

Study leader: Dr B J Mthanti

Contact number: 0514013125

My name is Montseng Lesole. I am a teacher at Setjhaba se Maketse Combined School in Botshabelo in the Free State. I am currently studying for my Masters in Education with the University of the Free State. I am doing research as part of the requirements to obtain the qualification. I am interested in how primary school principals use emotional intelligence to lead schools.

The aim of the study is to explore the leadership practices of primary school principals in using emotional intelligence. I am conducting this study because principals are faced with daily tasks that require them to interact with various stakeholders in order to make decisions for the school and the skill of emotional intelligence is relevant for decision-making.

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

I chose primary school principals as participants because of their position in the school. The principals were chosen based on their school location because it is around the school where I teach. Three primary school principals were chosen for this study because the researcher has limited time and resources to conduct large –scale research.

You will be expected to respond to a set of questions during an interview and also be observed as you control movement of learners at the gate, make announcements in the staffroom and at school assembly. This study involves audio recording of semi-structured interviews and note taking of observations. Open –ended questions will be asked. The expected duration of interviews is thirty minutes and the observations are expected to last for thirty minutes.

Your participation in this research is voluntary and there is no penalty or loss of benefit for nonparticipation. Being in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a written consent form. You are free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.



APPENDIX D: Research Title Registration Letter



16 October 2023

APPLICATION FOR TITLE REGISTRATION

Applicant: Lesole, MD
Student Number: 2002027023
Discipline: Education Management and Leadership
Study Code: Masters (EMLA8900)

Dear Ms Lesole

Your registered title is as follows: *"EXPLORING THE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN USING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE"*

All of the best with your studies.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Patrick Mafora
Chair: CTR committee

Ms CS Duvenhage
Secretary: CTR committee

205 Nelson Mandela Drive | Park West, Bloemfontein 9301 | South Africa
P.O. Box 339 | Bloemfontein 9300 | South Africa | www.ufs.ac.za



APPENDIX E: Language Editor Letter

Michelle Woolley

WRITER EDITOR PROOFREADER TRANSLATOR

Bachelor of Library and Information Science: B.Bibl.
Reference & Research Librarian
Bachelor of Arts Honours in Translation Studies and Editing

Associate Member of Professional EDITORS' Guild (PEG)

CERTIFICATE OF EDITING

This letter certifies that I have edited the Thesis detailed below.

Title:

Exploring how three primary school principals use emotional intelligence in school leadership

Author:

Montseng D. Lesole.
Student number: 2002027023

Regards
Michelle Woolley



Date: 29/11/2024

michellewoolley12@gmail.com
083 298 2077

Professional
EDITORS
Guild

APPENDIX F: Similarity Report

2002027023 M D LESOLE M ED FINAL 2024.docx			
ORIGINALITY REPORT			
10%	8%	6%	5%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS
PRIMARY SOURCES			
1	Submitted to University of the Free State Student Paper	1%	
2	issuu.com Internet Source	1%	
3	Newton, Lindsey Michelle. "Exploring Self-Aware School Leaders' Communication Techniques and Emotional Responses", Grand Canyon University, 2022 Publication	1%	
4	www.icpel.org Internet Source	1%	
5	scholar.ufs.ac.za Internet Source	1%	
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10	Venesser Fernandes, Winnie Wong, Michael Noonan. "Developing adaptability and agility in leadership amidst the COVID-19 crisis: experiences of early-career school principals", International Journal of Educational Management, 2023 Publication	<1%	
11	hdl.handle.net Internet Source	<1%	
12	Submitted to Embry Riddle Aeronautical University Student Paper	<1%	
13	Ye Tian, Yungui Guo. "How Does Transformational Leadership Relieve Teacher Burnout: The Role of Self-Efficacy and Emotional Intelligence", Psychological Reports, 2022 Publication	<1%	

15 Board, Jennifer Landry. "A Study of Emotional Intelligence of Primary School Principals and the Impact of that Emotional Intelligence on School Climate", Southeastern Louisiana University, 2022

Publication

<1 %

16 Lyons, Byron Mandell. "Principals' Perceptions of Leading with Emotional Intelligence in Urban School Settings.", Concordia University Chicago, 2021

Publication

<1 %

17 Rodriguez, Rosalinda. "The Role of Emotional Intelligence Training in Educational Leadership: A Correlational Analysis", University of Phoenix, 2022

Publication

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APPENDIX G: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

EXPLORING HOW THREE PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS USE EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

Principal semi-structured interview questions

Study title: Exploring how three primary school principals use emotional intelligence in school leadership

Participant consent

Dear participant

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research. I appreciate the fact that you are prepared to give me some of your valuable time and chance to learn from you. You are selected because of the position you hold in the school and the experience you have.

The aim of the interview is to explore the leadership practices of primary school principals in using emotional intelligence. I will also observe you when you control the movement of learners at the gate, when you make announcements in the staffroom and when you address learners at assembly.

These individual interviews will be recorded and then transcribed. I give you my assurance that the information you give me is confidential and anonymous. I cannot tell other people about the personal details of our discussion and I cannot mention your name. I can however use your information and those of others in a way that is not recognized as information of one particular person.

Kindly answer the questions as honestly as possible as, your answers will assist this study to get more information about exploring the leadership practices of primary school principals in using emotional intelligence.

Main research question

How do primary school principals use emotional intelligence in school leadership?

Article 1: Challenges experienced by primary school principals in using emotional intelligence in school leadership

1.1 Are you familiar with emotional intelligence? (Yes / No)

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1.2 Under which circumstances do you apply emotional intelligence?

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1.3 How do you incorporate emotional intelligence in your leadership role?

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1.4 What challenges have you experienced in applying emotional intelligence in your leadership role?

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1.5 Which challenges did you manage to resolve successfully when applying emotional intelligence?

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1.6. Which challenges were not successfully resolved when applying emotional intelligence?

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Article 2: Measures taken by primary school principals to address challenges within schools by employing emotional intelligence

2.1 Are you familiar with emotional intelligence? (Yes / No)

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2.2 What measures do you take to solve the challenge of conflict between teachers in the school?

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2.3 Do you receive support from other school stakeholders in addressing school challenges?

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2.4 What kind of support do you receive from the school stakeholders?

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2.5 Which stakeholder/s provide support to solve school's challenges?

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Article 3: Perspectives of primary school principals regarding the application of emotional intelligence in school leadership

3.1 Are you familiar with emotional intelligence? (Yes / No)

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3.2. Do you think emotional intelligence has a role to play in school leadership? (Yes / No)

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3.3 (i) If YES - What are your views regarding the role of emotional intelligence in school leadership role?

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3.3 (ii) If NO - Why do you think emotional intelligence has no role in school leadership?

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3.4 What are some advantages of using emotional intelligence you have experienced in your school leadership?

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APPENDIX H: Observation Template

OBSERVATION TEMPLATE FOR OBSERVING PRINCIPALS

This template will be used to observe the principal at the school gate, assembly and in the staffroom.

Observed: Principal

Date: _____

	Light-hearted	Serious	Angry	Laid back	Comments
Tone of the principal addressing learners at the gate					
Tone of the principal addressing learners at assembly					
Tone of the principal addressing teachers in the staffroom					
Use of hand gestures when addressing learners at the gate					