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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Investigating the Experiences of School Principals Servant and Ethical Leadership in Gauteng Province

by

Nkeke Onicah Mohlala

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for Master's Degree in the Discipline of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies (ELPS).

at

University of Witwatersrand (Education Campus)

Supervisor: Dr A Naidu

Date: 10 November 2023

DECLARATION

I, **Nkeke Onicah Mohlala**, declare that this study on **Investigating the Experiences of School Principals Servant and Ethical Leadership in Gauteng Province** abides by the following rules:

i. The research report in this mini dissertation is my original work, except where otherwise indicated.

ii. This research report has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

iii. This research report does not contain persons' data, pictures, graphs, or other information unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from others.

iv. This research report does not contain other person's writing unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been cited, then:

   a. Their words have been re-written, but the general information attributed to them has been referenced.

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v. This research report does not contain any text, graphs, or tables copied from the internet unless expressly acknowledged, and the sources are detailed in the report and the reference section.

Researcher's signature: _____ Date: 10 /11/2023

Statement by the supervisor:

This research report is submitted with my approval.

Supervisor' signature: _____ Date: 10/11/2023

STATEMENT BY SUPERVISOR

This research report is submitted with my approval.

Supervisor' signature:  Date: 10/11/2023

DEDICATION

This research report is dedicated to my family, who, through the following, are reminded of Him who presides over everything on Earth:

> *"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" Psalm 27 Verse 1*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Undertaking any study requires a certain degree of sacrifice from its participants. The researcher is mindful of their sacrifices and those of their close associates. Therefore, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to them for their sacrifices and unwavering support.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my family and friends who have patiently supported me, providing a reliable shoulder to lean on throughout this journey. Your unwavering support has been my rock, and I would not have made it here without you.

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I want to thank all my study mates, who have become cherished friends, for your unwavering support and patience. Our friendship has been a source of motivation and strength.

Each of you has played a pivotal role in my achievements, and I am truly blessed to have you in my life. Thank you for being an essential part of this incredible journey.

ABSTRACT

The study aimed to investigate the experiences of school principals in Gauteng Province concerning servant and ethical leadership. Specifically, it sought to assess the awareness level of school principals regarding these leadership styles within the Gauteng Province context, explore their experiences with servant and ethical leadership, and understand how these leadership styles influenced their practices. A qualitative research approach within the interpretivism paradigm was employed to achieve these objectives. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with principals, deputy principals, departmental heads, teachers, and learners from three schools in Gauteng province. The case study design allowed for an in-depth examination of servant leadership practices and ethical leadership by school principals.

The study's findings revealed that some servant and ethical leadership practices were prevalent among some principals in Gauteng Province. They emphasised meeting the needs of both their staff and learners through effective communication and leading by example. Additionally, they - displayed integrity and transparency in decision-making and model ethical behaviour in many areas of leadership for their staff and learners. This research underscores the significance of servant and ethical leadership in fostering a positive school culture and enhancing learner well-being.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

SL	Servant Leadership
EL	Ethical Leadership
DH	Departmental Head
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SA	South Africa

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction and background to the study

The context of school leadership is constantly changing due to global social and economic changes (Queen et al., 2007). Leadership is critical in determining an organisation's success, and its influence depends on the style used (Nayak & Mishra, 2005). Different leadership styles have different effects because they influence subordinates' behaviour and performance (Bhana & Bayat, 2020). Furthermore, the style can impact organisational performance and goal achievement. Servant leadership is a modern style developed in the 1980s when the leader's primary focus was serving others and prioritising their needs and growth (Greenleaf, 1977; Northouse, 2019). Modern organisations strive to adopt servant leadership as an essential leadership style, as it has been demonstrated to enhance ethical standards and promote a culture of ethics within the organisation (Ehrhart, 2020).

Servant leadership shares similarities with ethical leadership but differs in its focus on moral principles and virtue (Centre for Ethical Leadership, 2014). According to Treviño, Weaver, and Reynolds (2019), ethical leaders are viewed as honest, trustworthy, fair, and principled decision-makers who show care for individuals and the broader community. This perception reflects their personal attributes, character, and altruistic motivations. Ethical leadership is particularly important in educational settings as it influences school leaders' behaviour and the overall ethical climate, impacting staff and learner outcomes (Brown et al., 2023; Xu & Cooper, 2022). Moreover, organisations increasingly recognise the need for ethical, people-centred management, advocating for a shift from opportunistic leadership to an ethical and servant leadership paradigm (Van Dierendonck, 2011).

Many examples of failing leadership, as shown, among others, by Haslam et al. (2021), have surfaced in the recent decade. Men and women whose leadership has left organisations in disarray, followers financially drained, governments divided, and the public doubting everything has been featured in the media. With the current COVID-

19 pandemic, numerous schools have struggled to oversee the procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE) on time (Chabalala, 2020). According to the Centre for Development and Enterprise (2023), corruption is a pervasive problem in South African public schools, and principals are among the key players perpetuating it. Leadership is not an amoral phenomenon; ethics should be incorporated into the process because it entails wielding power over others and their futures (Northouse, 2016). He emphasises that ideals should guide leadership behaviour, yet theories before transformational, servant, and genuine leadership did not address ethical issues (Northouse, 2016).

Unethical behaviour is a rapidly growing trend in the education sector, where there appears to be a decrease in ethical behaviour within organisations (Ishak, Haron & Ismail, 2019). The rising number of school scandals has sparked a renewed interest in ethical behaviour. Despite the South African Council for Educators Act of 2000, Section 5c (i), the SACE code of professional ethics specifies that learners must get a fair, honest, and uncompromising education; these trends continue to grow. Teachers must display impartiality, honesty, and ethical behaviour in the classroom. Because of this code, learners will obtain a fair, honest, and uncompromising education. In most virtual or in-person interactions, and their interactions with parents and co-workers, teachers must demonstrate impartiality, honesty, and ethical behaviour (Republic of South Africa, 2000).

Burke claims that leaders fail for various reasons, the two most common of which are ineffective or unethical behaviour (Badaracco, 2013). Both sorts of behaviour harm the organisation, but unethical behaviour erodes the connection of trust between leaders and followers and demonstrates a leader's lack of integrity (Badaracco, 2013). Organisations that experience the consequences of unethical leaders have become concerned about a lack of integrity, yet the drive underlying the behaviour is typically the organisational culture. Servant leadership is “a process that prioritises followers, satisfies their needs, empathises with them, and helps them reach their greatest potential” (Northouse, 2016, p. 225). There are concerns about the quality of leadership demonstrated by the school principals, department heads, and teachers in many schools. In the context of evolving leadership challenges in schools, including

the rise of unethical behaviour and the need for effective leadership styles, this study examines to what extent school principals in selected schools in the Gauteng Province practice servant and ethical leadership. It explores how these leadership approaches address ethical challenges and enhance organisational culture, providing insights into their impact on school effectiveness and ethical climate.

1.2 Problem statement

Leadership in the educational sector is currently facing a crisis characterised by numerous scandals, malpractices, and a growing loss of trust in school leadership. This crisis underscores the urgent need for ethical and servant leadership, as Kumar (2018) highlighted. In many schools in the Gauteng Province, the issue is particularly pressing, with the South African Council for Educators (SACE) reporting 931 cases of unethical misconduct in primary schools and 941 cases in high schools over five years (2008-2012) (South African Council for Educators, 2017). The widespread nature of these incidents raises serious concerns about the ethical standards within schools. It emphasises the critical role of school principals in promoting ethical conduct and a servant leadership approach.

The persistence of unethical behaviour is further highlighted by SACE's 2019/20 annual report, which documented a rise in unprofessional conduct, including 456 finalised misconduct cases. These cases, involving assault (38 per cent), sexual misconduct (22.18 per cent), and funds mismanagement (22.18 per cent), reveal a troubling trend that questions the ethical and moral behaviour of current leadership practices (South African Council for Educators, 2019; 2020). These concerns raise the need to examine whether school principals in Gauteng Province practise servant and ethical leadership. Specifically, there is uncertainty regarding (a) principals' awareness and understanding of servant leadership principles, (b) the influence of servant leadership on their leadership style, and (c) the extent to which they exemplify ethical behaviour in their leadership roles. This problem highlights the need to investigate whether school principals successfully integrate servant and ethical leadership practices to address these pervasive issues and enhance their institutions' integrity and trustworthiness.

1.3 Purpose and rationale

The study investigated whether school principals are familiar with servant and ethical leadership and how these styles influenced their leadership practices in selected schools in the Gauteng Province. It is argued that most traditional school leadership approaches may be inadequate in addressing issues such as power misuse, doubtful leadership behaviour, and unethical conduct in schools. A more value-based leadership strategy may be needed (Jones & Smith, 2021). This approach emphasises prioritising values such as honesty, integrity, respect, and empathy in decision-making, fostering a culture of ethical behaviour, and creating a positive school environment that promotes academic excellence, a positive culture, and personal growth (Brown & Treviño, 2020). Research has shown that value-based leadership can significantly improve school outcomes by promoting collaboration, trust, and better decision-making (Van Niekerk & Botha, 2017). By adopting a servant leadership approach, school principals can create a positive school climate that supports learners' academic and personal success and builds trust and respect among teachers, learners, and parents.

As a Departmental Head, I have worked with principals, each exhibiting different leadership styles. Some principals were self-serving, showing so little personal connection that staff might not even recognise them. Others adopted a more authoritative approach, using staff meetings to issue commands without inviting feedback or discussion from teachers. The frustration caused by a lack of collaboration and ethical guidance from aloof leaders motivated me to study the impact of leadership styles on school culture. This led to my focus on investigating school principals' servant and ethical leadership in Gauteng Province, aiming to understand how these approaches foster a positive and inclusive environment. Conceptually, recent literature supports the observations that leadership styles lacking collaboration, ethical guidance, and genuine engagement with staff and learners can lead to disengaged and demotivated school communities (Leithwood et al., 2020). This underscores the need for leadership approaches that bridge these gaps and promote a more inclusive and supportive educational environment.

This need is supported by Mason (2017), who explained that the values of ethical leaders are focusing on serving first and encouraging others to serve as well. Ethics involve principles and behaviour; leaders must possess both to avoid teacher disagreements. Leaders who only have ethical principles without the discipline to implement them may create a lack of congruence between principles and actions, resulting in conflicts within the educational community (Smylie et al., 2016). Recent research on servant leadership has demonstrated the success of this leadership style in large organisations such as Starbucks, Whole Foods Market, Men's Wearhouse, and Nordstrom. Such companies exhibited "principles of empathy commitment to workers' needs, development, awareness, openness, and sensitivity. Such attributes are applied efficiently to meet the demands of its employees and customers" (Modern Servant Leader, 2015, p.110).

1.4 Significance of the study

Self-serving leaders, unethical behaviour, acts of corruption, and dishonesty in leaders have become a phenomenon in many South African schools and might be addressed by emphasising servant leadership. This study is significant because it aims to provide insights into whether servant and ethical leadership may be needed to eradicate the numerous problems of immoral and dishonest behaviour plaguing many schools. It examined whether ethical and servant leadership is understood and to what extent school principals practice it in the selected schools in the Gauteng Province. Too often, school leaders put their interests ahead of the needs of their staff, students, and community. Another critical significance of this study is its integration of servant and ethical leadership theories. The complementary use of these leadership styles might add more insight into the research on principals' leadership in Gauteng Province. Given the current challenges in schools, the study may confirm that servant and ethical leadership is more relevant than ever (Bshar & Bozoghlanian, 2023).

This study is significant because it will be more descriptive and empirical, contributing to the body of information about how or whether servant leadership is understood, practised, and applied in South African schools to encourage ethical behaviour. The elements that create a successful servant leader are the qualities that describe a character who should make ethical decisions. Other scholars like McMahone (2012)

argue that servant leadership should, in theory, lead to ethical behaviour, but can this be shown in practice? Attempting to find this in previous studies has been hindered by several factors. The first problem is determining whether educational leadership strategy incorporates servant leadership, while the second issue involves the challenge of accurately assessing an organisation's ethical behaviour. While servant leadership remains an emerging topic in educational discussions, this study demonstrates its potential impact and necessity in fostering ethical practices within the educational landscape (Eloff, 2021; Rojas, 2020).

1.5 Aims and objectives of the study

1.5.1 Aim

This study aimed to investigate the extent to which school principals in selected schools in the Gauteng Province understand and practice servant and ethical leadership. The study seeks to understand how these leadership styles influence their practices, decision-making, and the overall school environment.

1.5.2 Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

- Explore school principals' and teachers' awareness, perceptions, and practices of servant and ethical leadership within their schools.
- Investigate how principals' daily practices reflect servant and ethical leadership principles, considering the school's culture and ethos.
- Identify the challenges or achievements school principals face in enacting servant and ethical leadership principles.
- Analyse whether the leaders' awareness and implementation of servant and ethical leadership influence the school environment and culture.
- Examine how servant and ethical leadership practices improve trust, collaboration, and decision-making within schools.

1.6 Main research question

The main research question guiding this study was: To what extent are school principals in the selected schools in the Gauteng Province familiar with servant and ethical leadership, and how do these practices influence their leadership practices and the school environment?

1.7 Critical questions

The following critical questions guided the investigation of the main research question:

- What are the principals' understandings of servant and ethical leadership?
- What specific traits or behaviours characterise servant and ethical leadership in the styles of school principals?
- How do school principals' actions reflect servant and ethical leadership principles?
- How do servant and ethical leadership practices influence the school environment and culture?
- What responses occur within the school when principals display servant and ethical leadership, whether positive or negative?

1.8 Limitations of the study

According to Bryman (2016), establishing the boundaries of the problem space within which research is conducted constitutes demarcating the problem. The scope of the study was restricted to three schools in the Pretoria Central region, and the number of participants was limited to twenty-seven: three principals, two deputy principals, nine department heads, three teachers, and nine learners. The sampling was a small-scale, purposefully selected study; hence, the conclusions may not apply to a larger population (Creswell, 2013). However, while the case selection does not permit generalisability, it does permit rich and in-depth case perspectives.

Due to ethical constraints, the research was performed after school, preventing both the participants and me, as a researcher, from delving further into servant leadership from different perspectives. This difficulty, as highlighted by Dolce and Kezar (2021),

indicates that the time spent on prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, and peer reviewing is advantageous to the study's credibility, which may be affected in the present study. The second difficulty is that some participants may have believed their leadership style was being evaluated, resulting in biased responses. According to Bryman (2016), response bias occurs when respondents do not adequately represent the entire sample population; this happens when non-respondents' answers would have altered the total sample. This was significant to the study during group interviews, as some learners were uncomfortable answering questions in front of others.

1.9 Structure of the study

This section provides the framework for the organisation of the study, which investigated the servant leadership concepts, conceptualisations, and practices of school principals. The preceding study comprised five chapters, the summary of which is detailed below.

Chapter One is a context-setting introduction and overview that sets the stage for the entire research. According to Creswell (2013), the introduction is the report section that gives the audience or reader background information for the research. The first chapter details the concept of servant leadership and its effects.

Chapter Two examined the relevant literature and theoretical frameworks that underpin this research project. The first section is a comprehensive literature study on servant leadership, a term established by Robert Greenleaf in 1970, focusing on conceptualisations, implementation, promotion, and the significance of servant leadership in boosting ethical leadership in an organisation. The second half is conceptually organised using Robert Greenleaf's philosophy of servant leadership, which underpins and connects the study's aim.

Chapter Three discusses methodological and design considerations, such as the research paradigm, research design, methodology, sampling, data generation, data

analysis, dependability, ethical concerns, and the study's limitations. In addition, this chapter briefly justifies the adoption of these methods and methodologies.

Chapter Four provides a discussion of the results. The data obtained from semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and observations were subjected to thematic analysis and coding to investigate the principals' experiences with servant leadership from the participants' various perspectives.

Chapter Five provides an overview of the investigation, its findings, and recommendations. This final chapter brings the study to a close.

1.10 Chapter summary

This chapter provided an overview of the study investigating servant and ethical leadership, focusing on whether school principals in the Gauteng Province know these concepts and their related experiences. This chapter also included the introduction and background of the study, problem statement, purpose and rationale (motive) for the investigation, significance of the study, study objectives and critical questions, limitations or demarcations of the study, research report structure overview, and chapter summary.

The next chapter presents and discusses a literature review related to the focus and aim of the study and the theoretical framework used to read, understand and interpret the study's findings.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The initial chapter presented an overview and context for the investigation, including relevant themes and reasons for conducting the study. The current chapter presents an evaluative summary of previous research on servant leadership, its applicability to school leadership, and the theoretical concepts underpinning this research. A systematic review of the research questions influenced the literature selection.

2.2 Literature review

2.2.1 Servant leadership

Greenleaf (1977, p.7) proposed the notion of servant leadership, in which the fundamental job of leaders is to serve their followers, which is the essence of leadership.

> *The servant leader is first and foremost a servant ... It all starts with the innate desire to serve, to be the first to serve. Then one makes a conscious decision to desire to be a leader... The best and most challenging test is this: Do those who are served mature as people? Do they get healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, and more willing to become servants as a result of being served? What impact does this have on society's underprivileged? Will they benefit, or at the very least avoid additional harm? Greenleaf*
> (Greenleaf 1977, p. 7).

Servant leadership is recognised as a modern model that, when effectively implemented, could address many challenges that ineffective schools face (Van Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015; Parris & Peachey, 2019). According to Sweeney and Fry (2018), servant leaders have no trouble applying various value-based leadership tactics, which may improve the school's organisational environment and culture and promote excellent professional teacher behaviour in schools.

This is further supported by various legal and policy frameworks in South Africa aimed at promoting servant leadership within the education sector. These include the Constitution South African of the Republic of South Africa, which establishes fundamental rights that resonate with the values of servant leadership (Republic of South Africa, 1996a); the South African Schools Act (Act no. 84 of 1996), which emphasises accountability and community involvement in school governance (Republic of South Africa, 1996b); and the Public Service Act (Act no. 103 of 1994), which outlines ethical conduct and service delivery principles that align with servant leadership (Republic of South Africa, 1994). Moreover, the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (WPTPS) focuses on enhancing public service through service-oriented leadership (Department of Public Service and Administration, 1997). Finally, the South African Council for Educators' Code of Professional Ethics (Republic of South Africa, 2000) and the Policy on the South African Standards of School Principals (2016) set standards for school leaders that promote ethical behaviour and embody servant leadership qualities (Department of Basic Education, 2016).

Ethics, defined by Belle and Cantarelli (2017), constitutes a collection of moral standards based on values that pertain to human conduct. This encompasses the morality or immorality of specific actions and the righteousness or wickedness of the motivations and intentions behind such actions. Grobler (2017) elaborates on this notion by characterising ethics as a field of study concerned with responsibilities and moral obligations, as well as with the concepts of right and wrong, good and evil.

Servant leaders are regarded as those with high ethical awareness in their workplace (Klein, 2014). Servant leadership is identified as a viable response to ethical deficiencies in various domains, emphasising the importance of ethics within leadership approaches (Rogers & Ashforth, 2019). As ethical leaders, servant leaders are essential in organisational contexts (Van Dierendonck, 2019; Dierendonck & Patterson, 2015). Jaramillo et al. (2015) report that servant leaders can establish an ethical work environment that promotes ethical behaviours and fosters high-performance outcomes.

2.2.2 International literature on servant leadership

Servant leadership has recently gained more attention internationally than other leadership theories, such as charismatic, transactional, transformational, and distributed/shared leadership, since its introduction in the 1970s (Van Dierendonck, 2019; Wong & Davey, 2020). This increased recognition can be attributed to its focus on empowerment, prioritising the growth and development of those being led (Adams & Forsyth, 2016). They stated "Servant leadership focuses on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong", highlighting its role in enhancing employee engagement and satisfaction. In educational settings, teachers who practice servant leadership emphasise the professional development of colleagues, including principals, departmental heads, and other teachers (Johnson, 2017; Makhubu, 2018; Shields & Richardson, 2016; Slavich & Ashkanasy, 2017).

The foundations of servant leadership can be traced back to biblical teachings, where Jesus Christ exemplified this leadership style through humility, such as washing his disciples' feet. His assertion that "the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve" (Mark, 10, p. 45) highlights the core principle of servant leadership, emphasising the importance of serving others (Liden et al., 2015; Parolini & Ruch, 2020). Moreover, Hermann Hesse's short story 'Journey to the East' illustrates the profound nature of servant leadership by portraying a servant who selflessly prioritises the needs of others. This narrative resonates with the essence of servant leadership, emphasising that true leadership is fundamentally about serving others and fostering their growth (Liden et al., 2015; Parolini & Ruch, 2020). Scholars have emphasised the core principle of serving first and leading second in defining servant leadership (Eva et al., 2019; Liden et al., 2015; Parris & Peachey, 2015), which can create challenges in applying the theory consistently across different contexts and measuring its effectiveness in achieving organisational goals.

According to Greenleaf, servant leadership involves change along the way and should be applied at both individual and collective levels (Greenleaf, 1977). Based on his extensive experience, Greenleaf (1977) described servant leadership as a natural desire to serve first, followed by a conscious choice to aspire to lead. Robert Greenleaf's

(1977) servant leadership model provides a framework for how the concept can be applied within organisations (Eva et al., 2019; Liden et al., 2015). It includes critical components such as serving others, ethical leadership, personal growth, and creating a culture of collaboration and empowerment. The model serves as a blueprint for implementing servant leadership effectively within organisations (Greenleaf, 1977/2002).

2.2.3 Continental (African) literature on servant leadership

The research conducted by Njoroge and Yazdani (2018) emphasises the need for further investigation into servant leadership in African countries, particularly in cross-cultural comparisons and the measurement of servant leadership behaviours. The authors highlight how the cultural context of Africa shapes the implementation of servant leadership and that the values of collectivism, ubuntu, and communalism are fundamental to this leadership approach in African countries. They argue that servant leadership is compatible with African cultural values and can promote ethical and effective leadership in African organisations. This insight contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between culture and leadership. It has practical implications for organisations operating in African contexts, emphasising the importance of successfully recognising and incorporating cultural values to practise servant leadership.

Moreover, their study highlights the importance of cultural values and the role of servant leadership in promoting organisational effectiveness, particularly in employee motivation and trust. The authors also identify challenges to implementing servant leadership in African contexts, such as emphasising hierarchical structures and needing greater attention to ethical leadership. Overall, the article suggests that servant leadership has the potential to contribute to positive social change in African countries and calls for further research in this area (Njoroge & Yazdani, 2018).

Servant leadership is a philosophy that prioritises social responsibility and supports the growth and well-being of others. From an African perspective, servant leadership has been positively associated with leader effectiveness, mainly due to its resonance with African philosophies like Ubuntu, which emphasise communal harmony and

collective well-being (Ncube, 2017). This may be due to Greenleaf's assertion that servant leadership is not defined by actions but rather by the leader's character. However, Eva et al. (2019) propose a framework for measuring servant leadership consisting of eight dimensions: standing back, forgiveness, courage, empowerment, accountability, authenticity, humility, and stewardship.

These eight dimensions serve as a comprehensive framework for analysing how servant leadership can be effectively applied in the unique context of South African schools, ultimately leading to more ethical and impactful leadership practices. On the other hand, Nkomo (2017) discusses the complex heritage of organisational leadership in Africa, noting how it is shaped by colonial legacies and the interaction of various cultural and religious influences, including traditional African beliefs, Islam, and Christianity shape it.

Contemporary leadership trends, such as the emphasis on transactional leadership in African countries, hinder the practice of servant leadership. Moreover, the demanding nature of servant leadership practices and the lack of necessary human qualities contribute to its underutilisation in Africa. Nevertheless, there is growing recognition of the potential benefits of servant leadership in promoting ethical leadership and sustainable development (Lemoine et al., 2020). Njoroge and Yazdani (2018) have also emphasised the importance of further research to understand the cultural context of African leadership and measure the impact of servant leadership behaviours in this context.

The study by Addae (2019) explored the experiences of secondary school principals who practice servant leadership in Ghana. Specifically, it aimed to explore how these principals embody servant leadership principles in their leadership styles and the impact of their approaches on their schools' cultures and effectiveness. Eight participants, including six male and two female secondary school principals, were interviewed using semi-structured interviews. The participants reported that servant leadership helped to improve the performance of teachers and learners, fostered positive relationships with stakeholders, and increased trust and collaboration among staff. Despite facing challenges such as inadequate support from government and

education officials, the need for more training and resources, and the difficulty of balancing competing demands on their time and resources, participants remained dedicated to practising servant leadership, viewing it as a crucial approach to enhancing the quality of education in Ghana (Asuga et al., 2016). Nonetheless, Addae (2019) indicates a pressing need for additional support and resources to facilitate school leaders' effective implementation of servant leadership. These resources may comprise training programmes, mentorship, and access to pertinent literature and best practices.

Furthermore, Anglaare (2017) argues that power dynamics play a significant role in African culture and can create a distance between leaders and their followers, elders and youth, traditional chiefs and subjects, and fathers and their families. This sense of distance can impact relationships and trust within the school, particularly in the context of cultural diversity. Therefore, it may be necessary to provide school leaders with the essential support and resources to effectively practice servant leadership, especially in diverse cultural contexts where power dynamics can create barriers to effective leadership.

A study was conducted by Jeng and Peltier (2018) to examine the relationship between servant leadership and principal effectiveness in the Gambia, West Africa. A total of 24 principals from public secondary schools participated in the study. The participants completed a questionnaire measuring their servant leadership behaviour and self-rated effectiveness as school leaders. The results of the study showed that servant leadership was positively related to principal effectiveness. The study found that the more principals engaged in servant leadership behaviour, the more effective they perceived themselves as leaders. The study identified some servant leadership behaviours most strongly related to principal effectiveness. These included empowering staff, creating a shared vision for the school, and building positive relationships with stakeholders. Moreover, it underscores the importance of specific servant leadership behaviours, such as empowering staff and building positive relationships, in enhancing principal effectiveness.

The study by Ndabaga (2020) explored the experiences of principals practising servant leadership in Rwanda. The study's results demonstrated that the principals' servant

leadership experiences were largely positive, as they helped create a positive school culture, foster collaboration and teamwork among staff, and improve learner-learning outcomes. However, the study also identified several challenges the principals faced in practising servant leadership, such as a lack of resources and support, the need to balance competing demands, and the challenge of changing entrenched organisational cultures. Despite these challenges, the principals remained committed to practising servant leadership, viewing it as a vital means to enhance the quality of education in Rwanda.

Muhonja and Namusonge (2019) studied the experiences of primary school head teachers practising servant leadership in Kenya. This study utilised a qualitative research design, and data was collected through in-depth interviews with eight head teachers who were purposefully selected. The study showed that the head teachers' servant leadership experiences were largely positive. The study identified some of the specific servant leadership behaviours that were most strongly related to the positive experiences of the head teachers. These included empowering staff, building positive relationships with stakeholders, and being a good listener. The findings suggest that these behaviours may be essential for head teachers in Kenya to focus on to improve their effectiveness as leaders.

The findings suggest that by engaging in servant leadership behaviour, head teachers may improve their effectiveness in instructional leadership, organisational management, and stakeholder engagement. The study highlights the resilience and dedication of school leaders in Ghana and Kenya to adopt and implement servant leadership despite various obstacles, demonstrating the leadership approach's potential to enhance educational outcomes.

2.2.4 National (South African) literature on servant leadership

Coetzer et al. (2017) argue that specific characteristics of servant leadership, such as authenticity, humility, integrity, listening, compassion, accountability, courage, and altruism, are crucial to improving the integrity and ethics of school leadership. These characteristics are similar to those identified by other researchers and are essential in creating positive employee attitudes and improving organisational performance.

Kgatle (2018) asserts that servant leadership is critical for enhancing governance, trustworthiness, and accountability in South Africa, particularly given the country's unique past social divisions.

Considering how different demographic groups perceive servant leadership in South Africa is crucial. McCallaghan et al. (2019) argue that Africans report higher levels of servant leadership across dimensions such as interpersonal support, community building, altruism, and moral integrity than their white counterparts. Gender differences exist, with males reporting higher interpersonal support and egalitarianism observations. They also assert that apart from race and gender differences, age and generational cohorts also report varying perceptions of servant leadership.

Kgatle (2018) further asserts that in South Africa, servant leadership can provide a solution to improve governance, trustworthiness, and accountability. In particular, the unique education landscape of South Africa makes servant leadership a critical type of leadership required to address the country's challenges.

According to a recent study, Africans in South Africa exhibit different views on servant leadership compared to their white counterparts, with Africans reporting higher levels of servant leadership observations across various dimensions, such as interpersonal support, community building, altruism, and moral integrity (McCallaghan et al., 2019). Gender differences also exist, with males reporting higher observations in the interpersonal support and egalitarianism dimensions of servant leadership. Apart from race and gender differences, age and generational cohorts also report varying perceptions of servant leadership.

According to Budhram and Geldenhuys (2018), unethical behaviour and mismanagement have become common in South African organisations, including state-owned enterprises and local governments. Kgatle (2018) recommends adopting leadership characterised to improve organisational governance, trustworthiness, and accountability in this environment.

Swart (2018) studied the servant leadership characteristics of principals in historically advantaged public schools in Gauteng, South Africa. Teachers reported that the principals effectively demonstrated servant leadership practices, including organisational stewardship, wisdom, and persuasive mapping, in their daily actions. The study found that these practices contribute to the success of these schools, known for their positive atmosphere and excellent academic results. Recent findings reveal that while there are occasional examples of innovative practices and willingness to take risks in schools within historically marginalised areas, these instances are relatively rare due to the entrenched challenges faced by these institutions (Mahlangu & Nkomo, 2021).

Mthimkhulu and Ukpere (2019) used a qualitative research design to examine servant leadership experiences in the South African context. The authors interviewed leaders from different sectors, including government, non-profit organisations, and the private sector. The study found that servant leadership was perceived as a valuable approach to leadership in South Africa, particularly in light of the country's complex socio-economic and political landscape. The authors suggest that servant leadership can help to address the challenges of inequality, poverty, and corruption in the country.

2.2.5 Criticism of servant leadership

It must also be noted that servant leadership as an emerging paradigm is not without criticism. Van Dierendonck (2017) argues that there is no agreement on the concept of servant leadership, which is being examined in various contexts and cultures. Different conceptualisations have led to multiple approaches being used to study servant leadership. Lemoine (2015) points out that multiple interpretations of servant leadership have been criticised, such as those of Ekinci (2015) and scholars like Kumar (2018), who argue that there is a lack of consensus on the definition of servant leadership, with different variants and theoretical models being proposed by scholars. According to Lemoine (2015), research has shown that theories from various disciplines are being integrated into the current servant leadership paradigm to advance the body of knowledge. One of these theories is the Leader-Member Exchange theory developed by Dan Sereau et al. (1975), which focuses on partnerships characterised by mutual trust, respect, and obligation. Lemoine (2015) notes that this approach

emphasises the interaction between the leader and the follower, similar to the philosophy of servant leadership.

Researchers have indicated that the definition of servant leadership remains ambiguous, with various studies pointing to this lack of clarity (Mayer et al., 2021; Moller et al., 2020). Northouse (2016) further criticises the inconsistent nature of the term "servant leadership," which may devalue the approach compared to other leadership theories. Additionally, Kim, the concept of serving as a prerequisite for leadership is often misunderstood, as the true meaning of service has yet to be clearly defined (Dunn et al., 2019; Nkomo & Ramarajan, 2021). Wiskow (2016) also critiques the lack of a clear method for assessing the characteristics of servant leadership and views it as a compliance-based approach that may neglect the importance of authority in ensuring proper service delivery.

According to Northouse (2016), Sendjaya and Sarros (2018) argue that servant leadership neglects essential leadership duties such as steering, goal setting, and creating an organisation's vision and mission. Moreover, experts rarely apply value-driven servant leadership (Northouse, 2016). Sikoski (2016) further asserts that servant leadership does not understand social power. Whether servant leadership is a lifestyle or a theory remains unclear (Northouse, 2016; Parris & Peachey, 2012). These concerns suggest that this approach leaves numerous unanswered questions about its nature (Northouse, 2016).

Questions regarding the nature and application of servant leadership have persisted since its inception (Dunn et al., 2019; Northouse, 2022). Previous research suggests that servant leadership is an extension of other leadership theories, such as transformational, spiritual, charismatic, and ethical leadership (Chen et al., 2013; Ehrhart, 2004; Howladar & Rahman, 2021; Sendjaya & Sarros, 2018; Smith et al., 2004). However, some argue that the theory is gender-biased, overly religious, and impractical in real-world settings (Eicher-Catt, 2005; Lloyd, 1996). To address these concerns, Ebener and O'Connell (2010) conducted a study that proposed that servant leadership is effective precisely because it does not conform to any leadership style or religious doctrine.

In conclusion, contemporary research highlights that servant leadership plays a pivotal role in developing a leadership framework that effectively addresses pressing global challenges of the 21st century, such as environmental sustainability, security threats, economic development, and bridging the digital divide (Mayer et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022). While some critics consider servant leadership an emerging concept, others consider it a transformative and innovative approach that provides a viable alternative to traditional hierarchical leadership models (Dunn et al., 2019; Mayer et al., 2021). It is worth noting that Greenleaf did not offer a prescriptive "how-to" guide on achieving servant leadership but rather presented it as an inspirational and developmental approach to leadership through service (Frick, 2004; Spear, 2010).

2.2.6 Comparison of Servant and Ethical Leadership with Other Leadership Styles

Servant and ethical leadership share a strong foundation in prioritising moral integrity and the well-being of followers, yet they diverge in their core approaches and leadership dynamics. Ethical leadership, emphasising adhering to moral standards and modelling ethical behaviour, positions the leader as a moral guide who influences followers through a commitment to fairness and justice (Brown & Treviño, 2016). This approach provides a structured framework where the leader's ethical conduct is central to guiding the organisation, unlike servant leadership, which focuses on serving followers' needs as its primary function (Mayer et al., 2021).

Unlike transactional leadership, which focuses on exchanging leader and follower through contingent rewards and structured agreements (Eberly et al., 2017), servant leadership appears less authoritative and structured. Transactional leadership is designed to achieve specific outcomes through clear, predefined agreements. In contrast, servant leadership's focus on follower well-being might lead to a less direct path toward achieving organisational goals. Critics argue that servant leadership's emphasis on serving others can sometimes undermine the efficiency and decisiveness required to meet these objectives (Northouse, 2016).

Transformational leadership, which aims to inspire and motivate followers to achieve significant organisational change, shares some similarities with servant leadership, particularly in its focus on follower development (Banks et al., 2016). However, transformational leadership is more goal-oriented, driven by a vision that aligns followers toward collective success. Conversely, servant leadership may be criticised for placing too much emphasis on individual follower needs, potentially at the expense of broader organisational aims (Lemoine, 2015; Northouse, 2016).

Scholars like Sendjaya and Sarros (2018) further highlight that servant leadership may lack the strategic vision and direction necessary for effective leadership in dynamic environments. This can be a significant drawback compared to transformational leadership, which inherently involves guiding followers toward a shared vision. Moreover, with its clear structures and expectations, the transactional approach contrasts with servant leadership's more fluid and follower-centric nature.

In summary, servant leadership offers a unique perspective by prioritising service to others, but it differs from other leadership styles in its approach and effectiveness in specific contexts. Ethical leadership provides a more consistent moral framework, while transformational and transactional leadership emphasise achieving specific goals and driving change. These differences suggest that servant leadership, while valuable in promoting follower well-being, may face challenges in scenarios where clear strategic direction and strong leadership are required (Mayer et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2022).

2.2.7 Servant and ethical leadership principles

2.2.7.1 Ethics

Lekubu (2021) defines ethics as a system of moral principles that guide human conduct by determining the rightness or wrongness of specific actions and the goodness or badness of the motives and ends behind those actions. Grobler *et al.* (2006) describe ethics as a discipline that focuses on moral duty, obligations, and the distinction between good and bad, right and wrong. Interestingly, one study found that while ethics officers and committees were perceived as less effective in institutionalising

ethics, culture, leadership, and communication channels were more effective (Gao & Forsyth, 2015).

Moral dilemmas arise when one is faced with a decision that requires choosing between two or more morally justifiable options, but each option presents its ethical problems (Rest, 1986). Such circumstances create a paradox where one can only choose to do the right thing by also doing something wrong, which raises complex ethical questions that can be difficult to resolve. For instance, a doctor may face a dilemma when deciding whether to disclose confidential patient information to a third party to prevent harm to that person or the wider community. Such dilemmas can lead to ethical conflicts that require careful consideration of competing ethical principles, including respect for autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, and justice, as emphasised by contemporary scholars (Schroeder et al., 2020; Zoloth, 2021).

Gao and Forsyth, 2015 argue that making ethical decisions in these complex circumstances is influenced by a range of factors, including individual, organisational, situational, and external factors, as well as interpersonal and organisational influences (Pettit et al., 1990). It also involves the development of moral courage to act on one's ethical judgments, even when they are unpopular or may have adverse consequences for oneself or others (Treviño & Nelson, 2016).

In conclusion, by cultivating a culture of ethical awareness and decision-making and providing individuals with the skills and resources they need to make sound ethical judgments, organisations can create an environment in which moral dilemmas are resolved in ways that promote the greater good and respect for human dignity.

2.2.7.2 Ethical leadership

Ethical leadership has become an increasingly important topic in organisational research as scholars and practitioners recognise the importance of leadership behaviours in promoting ethical conduct and preventing misconduct (Chen & Anderson, 2017). Empirical research has found that ethical leadership is positively associated with various outcomes, including employee performance, job satisfaction, and organisational citizenship behaviour (Mayer et al., 2021).

Sendjava (2018) posited that effective, ethical leadership is contingent upon communicating competently and cultivating trust. Servant leaders achieve organisational outcomes by prioritising the needs of their followers and the community. In the educational sector, a servant leader who prioritises learner outcomes should focus on the well-being of teachers and empower other key stakeholders within the school system to attain these results.

Chen and Anderson (2017) contend that ethical leadership, a leadership style based on values, influences the self-concept and beliefs of followers and, consequently, their motivation, attitudes, and behaviours. Piccolo *et al.* (2010) propose that an ethical leader's behaviour inspires followers to view their work as more meaningful, leading to greater motivation, effort, and productivity. The social learning perspective posits that followers emulate the favourable behaviours of their ethical leader's demonstrated identity, integrate the leader's emphasis on integrity, trust, and shared values into their own identities, and adopt those values (Lin et al., 2017).

Lin et al. (2017) distinguished and operationalised three interrelated but distinct ethical leadership behaviours:

- One of the critical components of ethical leadership is fairness, which includes making impartial decisions, exhibiting honest and trustworthy conduct, avoiding favouritism, and taking responsibility for one's actions (Lin et al., 2017).
- De Hoogh and Den Hartog (2021) identified power sharing as a behavioural dimension of ethical leadership. Ethical leaders promote a participative environment by giving their subordinates a voice, actively seeking and attentively listening to their input, and allowing them to partake in decision-making related to their tasks.
- Role clarification is another critical ethical leadership behaviour that involves communicating transparently and respectfully with subordinates while clearly defining responsibilities, expectations, and performance goals (Lin et al., 2017). Open communication and transparency with subordinates help them

understand what is expected of them and when their performance meets the desired standards.

When leaders are perceived as ethically neutral, their ability to positively influence their followers' moral behaviour is limited, and this perception may have negative consequences. Employees may perceive that the primary value guiding their decisions is the bottom line (Bai et al., 2020; Paine, 2016). According to Treviño et al. (1999), leadership is a critical component of an organisation's ethical culture, and it is up to the leader to prioritise ethics on the organisational agenda (Treviño et al., 2000; Treviño et al., 2003). Moral managers actively work to promote their followers' moral behaviour by establishing clear moral standards and expectations and creating guidelines for ethical conduct (Brown et al., 2015).

Similarly, according to Avolio and Yammarino (2013), great leaders create and communicate a vision for their organisation, engage their followers to build a shared vision, develop a plan to achieve it and guide their organisations in new directions. According to Lin et al. (2017), ethical leaders play a crucial role in shaping the attitudes and behaviours of their followers and employees in the ethical leadership theory. Research has shown a significant relationship between ethical leadership and employees' job satisfaction. Employees are likelier to have higher job satisfaction when their leaders are ethical (Lin et al., 2017).

2.2.7.3 Servant leadership and ethical practice

Van Dierendonck and Patterson (2015) suggest that servant leaders can provide ethical leadership by upholding ethical principles in their leadership practice. Klein (2014) characterises servant leaders as having a strong sense of ethical awareness in their work environment. The ethical values and principles that a leader incorporates into their vision and purpose lay the foundation for leadership ethics. However, while ethical codes and moral principles underpin servant leadership, this leadership theory offers much more. Due to their remarkable ethical conduct, servant leaders can significantly benefit the future of schools, societies, and nations (Smith & Trethewey, 2021).

This aligns with the assertion that ethical codes and moral values are essential components of servant leadership, as they provide a framework for leaders to foster a supportive and ethical organisational culture (Baker et al., 2018; Sendjaya et al., 2019). The leader's ethical conduct and values are essential in building trust, fostering collaboration, and promoting organisational effectiveness. Moreover, servant leadership's impact is not limited to the organisation. Still, it extends to the broader society, as it emphasises the importance of contributing to the common good and making a positive difference in the lives of others. Through their ethical leadership practices, servant leaders can influence the future of schools, societies, and nations by promoting ethical behaviour and creating a culture of service and accountability.

It is argued that ethics play a crucial role in servant leadership and may solve the challenges of inadequate ethical practices across various domains (Dierendonck & Patterson, 2019; Wong & Davey, 2020). Recent research supports the notion that servant leadership can contribute to establishing an ethical culture within organisations (Parris & Peachey, 2013; Sendjaya et al., 2019). Servant leadership is distinctive in emphasising introspection and morality, shaping servant leaders' character and behaviour (Mehta & Pillay, 2011). According to Hunter et al. (2013), the defining feature of servant leadership is the moral obligation to serve others. Recent studies indicate that servant leaders prioritise the needs of their followers over their own, demonstrating self-sacrifice as a fundamental moral value (Lemoine et al., 2020; Wong & Page, 2021).

The significance of ethical individuals contributing to a moral organisation is emphasised by Greenleaf (1977), who asserts that this leads to the establishment of a conscientious society. Kleynhans et al. (2021) agree with this view, arguing that because servant leaders prioritise the needs of others above their own, they can be considered ethical leaders. McMahone (2012) further emphasises the connection between servant leadership and ethical considerations, defining servant leadership as an ethical standard.

According to Sendjaya et al. (2018), servant leaders are guided by their inner moral compass rather than being swayed by the unethical standards that exist in the world.

Recent research suggests that the identity of a servant leader is grounded in a set of positive characteristics that foster supportive relationships and effective leadership (Lemoine et al., 2020; Wong & Davey, 2021). Brown et al. (2015) propose that leaders have a responsibility to set a moral example to create a moral climate for their followers to follow the ethical behaviour of servant leaders. Recent studies indicate that by exhibiting moral courage and integrity and by striving to fulfil the needs of their followers, servant leaders demonstrate a higher level of ethical development that provides long-term value for both individuals and organisations (Lemoine et al., 2020; Wong & Page, 2021). Moreover, they serve as role models and inspire others to emulate their ethical behaviour.

Servant leadership influences the shared learning of followers and eventually develops them into servant leaders. Ling et al. (2016) refer to this process as the trickling effect, leading to a servant-permeated culture or servant organisation. Searle and Barbuto (2015) suggest that Servant Leadership practices contribute to and support ethical conduct by employees at all levels of the institution. As a result, employees will model ethical conduct (Liden et al., 2008).

Recent literature emphasises the duty of servant leaders to educate individuals and organisations about ethical leadership (Lemoine et al., 2020). Moreover, scholars highlight the importance of ethical leaders who serve their followers and uphold moral principles, drawing parallels to figures like Moses as exemplars of ethical servant leadership (Wong & Page, 2021). In today's world, there is a pressing need for ethical leaders who can invest in their followers and foster a supportive environment (Sendjaya et al., 2019). The link between servant leadership and ethics is not often explored in studies. Still, one study by Jaramillo et al. (2015) suggests that servant leaders can create an ethical work environment that leads to better sales performance in the sales industry. The study highlights the role of leaders in shaping the moral climate of an organisation and confirms that workers tend to follow the ethical example set by their leaders. This underscores the importance of leaders modelling ethical behaviour.

2.3 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study was adopted to analyse data and prescribe and evaluate solutions to the problem underpinning the research (Bridges, 2021). The theoretical framework which was a parameter for this study is servant leadership. According to Friedman (2016), servant leadership is distinguished by the following philosophical characteristics: credibility, ethics, vision (conceptualisation and foresight), communication, honesty and integrity, competence, service, stewardship, modelling, visibility, pioneering, influence, persuasion, appreciation of others, listening, encouragement, empowerment, teaching, and delegation. For this study, I did not utilise all nineteen attributes; instead, I utilised a few to understand servant leadership better, the main one being ethics.

A theoretical framework for servant leadership serves as the foundation for analysing data and addressing the research problem. This framework emphasises the importance of serving others as a primary leadership goal and includes philosophical characteristics such as credibility, ethics, vision, and communication. These characteristics guide leaders in their interactions and decision-making processes, ensuring that leadership is effective and aligned with the principles of serving others. By concentrating on specific attributes of servant leadership, particularly ethics, this study explores how these elements contribute to effective leadership and problem-solving within the research context.

Servant leadership encompasses the concepts of empowerment, overall quality, team development, participative management, and service ethic. This form of leadership emphasises “greater service to others; a holistic approach to work; establishing a feeling of community; and the sharing of authority in decision making”, according to the Greenleaf Centre for Servant-Leadership (1997, p. 4). Servant leaders must be value-driven and character-driven, as well as process-oriented. Servant leadership is more significant because school principals, Departmental heads and teachers must prioritise serving their school communities over their aspirations to lead them (Maloles, 2024; Hoag, 2024; Lynch, 2020).

2.3.1 Attributes of a servant leader

Nguyen et al. (2023) argue that individuals seeking servant leaders should prioritise self-reflection to gain insight into their leadership motivations, as these core values and ethics are fundamental to effective servant leadership.

2.3.2 Listening

Servant leaders prioritise and actively seek to understand and clarify the organisation's interests. They are recognised for their receptive listening skills, which encompass the development of both the ability and the willingness to listen to others and learn from them (Baker & Lattimer, 2019). Effective listening skills are essential for building healthy relationships and creating a safe and supportive work environment where followers can express their concerns without fear of reprisal (Jackson, 2021). According to Harris (2018), leaders in Servant Leadership in the Faith-Based Context are people-centred, meaning they prioritise and put the needs of their followers first. Active listening allows for sharing information and provides an opportunity for building strong relationships (Rogers & Farson, 2021).

2.3.3 Empathy

This attribute can benefit learners from low-income families and school staff dealing with tough challenges such as grief. The school will become a place where individuals care for each other. Caring is a fundamental skill that enhances teaching and leadership outcomes and should be intentionally cultivated (Caza et al., 2018; Moyo, 2023). Greenleaf (1977) emphasises the importance of empathy in the workplace, and servant leaders need to trust their employees to organise work in a way that fosters respect, trust, and value among team members.

2.3.4 Healing

Liu (2019) notes that several societal problems, including rape and poverty, have adverse effects on the personal well-being of learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. Leaders with this trait will help learners and faculty members cope with and recover from societal evils and school-related obstacles. Harris (2018) suggests

that effective school leaders continually manage tensions and issues under challenging situations.

2.3.5 Awareness

Sun and Shang (2019) suggest that self-awareness, particularly general awareness, enhances servant leadership. School leaders, aware of their strengths, limitations, style, personality, and preferences, can reflect on their leadership and identify what works and does not work for them and areas for improvement.

2.3.6 Persuasion

Servant leaders rely on persuasion rather than positional power when making decisions within an organisation, as Van Meter et al. (2016) noted. Effective college leaders can integrate controversial decisions and motivate team members to implement them successfully. Instead of coercing people to conform, servant leaders prefer to convince them. When people are content while performing a task, they tend to be more productive than under duress, as stated by Johnason (2017).

2.3.7 Foresight

Kaya et al. (2017) argue that servant leaders possess "the ability to understand the lessons of the past, realities of the present, and anticipate the outcome of their decisions for the future". School leaders with this trait make decisions that benefit the school and its community. According to Greenleaf (1977), as cited in Allen et al. (2018), influential leaders possess a highly intuitive understanding of how past and present events relate to the future. Foresight, the ability to comprehend the nature and significance of upcoming events, is essential for servant leaders to craft a vision that fosters a brighter future for all (Hernandez et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2022).

2.3.8 Stewardship

According to Knox (2018), servant leaders prioritise y and persuasion over control and feel responsible for ensuring their institution's success. School leaders who possess this trait must uphold the Batho Pele ideals established by the South African government across all departments. Greenleaf (1977) posits that institutions rely on

the contributions of their chief operating officers, staff, and trustees to promote the greater good of society.

2.3.9 Commitment to the growth of people

Furthermore, leaders who serve acknowledge their crucial duty to promote the growth of their staff (Allen et al. 2016). When school leaders possess this quality, they provide support to inexperienced learners from low-income backgrounds to achieve success and assist staff members in their development to become skilled teachers, who will, in turn, benefit the learners they are teaching. The servant leader is responsible for recognising and meeting the needs of others and ensuring they have the necessary resources for success. Servant leaders enable people to use their energy for the organisation's greater good by teaching, training, and mentoring. Principals model effective teacher management in schools facing multiple challenges by empowering and motivating others (Harris, 2018; Mareus & Peterson, 2019).

2.3.10 Building community

According to Frick (2018), a servant leader is someone who develops ways to create a sense of community among the staff of an organisation. School leaders who possess this quality can implement changes that encourage teachers to learn from each other, establish their identities as teachers, and become more effective in supporting their learners. To create a network, all nine characteristics of servant leadership must be demonstrated, as it involves working together towards a common goal.

2.4 Chapter summary

The study explored how servant and ethical leadership is conceptualised by researchers globally, continentally, and domestically and examined its implementation and impact on school principals. The chapter began with an overview of the literature on servant leadership, ethics, and ethical leadership and provided the necessary theoretical and conceptual framework for the study.

The next chapter discusses the research methodology and design used in the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented a literature review on servant leadership, tracing its origins from Robert Greenleaf's conceptualisation in 1970 and exploring its implementation, promotion, and significance in enhancing ethical leadership within organisations. The chapter concluded by organising these insights through the lens of Greenleaf's philosophy, a crucial foundation for the study.

Building upon this foundation, the current chapter focuses on the research process. It examines the framework within which the study is situated, outlines the research design employed to generate data, and details the methodologies utilised in conducting the research. Moreover, it discusses the sampling techniques and data generation methods used. This chapter also provides a rationale for the chosen methods, comparing them with alternative approaches. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the criteria for ensuring the quality of the research, addressing aspects such as validity, reliability, triangulation, researcher biases, and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research paradigm

Paradigms are significant in educational research because they are used to define the researchers' worldviews. A worldview is a perspective "way of thinking, school of thought, or collection of common beliefs that impacts the meaning or interpretation of research data" (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Pioneers in the field Guba and Lincoln (1994) define a paradigm as "a core set of beliefs or a worldview that guides research activities or studies". Similarly, the gurus of qualitative research, Denzin and Lincoln (2000), define paradigms as "human constructions involving fundamental principles that demonstrate where the researcher is coming from to generate meaning concealed within data. Thus, paradigms are significant because they provide scholars in each field with the beliefs and principles that dictate what should be explored, how it should be studied, and how the investigation results should be interpreted.

This section explains in detail the research paradigm I used to place this study in terms of how I, as a researcher, can make sense of the interplay between participants and their lived circumstances. The research investigated the experiences of school principals on servant and ethical leadership in the context of Gauteng Province. The study has taken an interpretivist or social constructivist approach, where interpretivism's main principle is to work with the subjective meanings that already exist in the social world (Lenton et al., 2021). According to Creswell (2007), participants want to comprehend the world in which they live. The interpretivism paradigm enabled the researcher to understand the world from the perspective of the participant's views and experiences (Pham, 2018). According to Creswell (2014), the researcher pays close attention to what people say and do daily. These subjective meanings are negotiated socially or historically; they are imprinted on individuals and created through interactions with others, hence social constructivism.

A benefit of employing interpretivist research methodologies is that the responses are reliable and close to the truth (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In addition, qualitative data is obtained using interpretivist methodologies in sociological research. Interpretivists employ methods such as unstructured interviews and participant observations that allow them to gather vast amounts of data about the problem they are investigating and enable the researcher to direct the conversation depending on the responses. In contrast to more strict research methods with a higher degree of reliability, such as questionnaires and organised interviews, qualitative research methods are more flexible. However, the primary data gathered through this approach cannot be generalised as it comes from one's viewpoint or values, reducing the reliability and data representation to such an extent (Hammersley, 2013).

When conducting research, it is vital to consider several elements, including ontology, epistemology, methodology, methods and axiology. These are the several elements that comprise a paradigm (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). In philosophical terms, ontology studies our existence and the underlying nature of reality or being. In other words, it refers to the researchers' opinions about the nature of reality. What can be learned about the world depends on people's presuppositions about what is real or true. What is the truth? How do we categorise reality? These are all ontological concerns of

Ejnavarzala (2019). Does the researcher, for instance, hold that there is one universally applicable and ultimately discoverable reality? As such, this research is predicated on the ontological premise that there are multiple realities, each of which is perceived differently by various people. Moreover, human interactions create new social realities (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2018). Therefore, knowledge of philosophical assumptions will enhance the quality of the study and the researcher's originality.

Epistemology investigates the relationship between knowledge and the researcher during discovery. As a result, it relates to our method of knowledge acquisition. A person's ontological beliefs will reveal the objectivity of the researcher's relationship to what can be known. The researcher in epistemology considers questions like how knowledge is obtained and how we know what we know (Shaw, 2018). Does the researcher, for instance, think that the participant-researcher connection should be objective or subjective? According to the participants in this study, knowledge regarding the experiences of principals was socially constructed and subjective. Moreover, the participants in this study were able to provide a variety of perspectives on the topic.

The term methodology refers to the approach taken to discover new knowledge systematically. It is more practice-based and specific than epistemology, and it is driven by the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the researchers who conduct the study. Therefore, the approach implemented for data collection will have differing degrees of objectivity within the context of the various methodologies (Shaw, 2018). This methodological strategy bolstered this research because it did not require the researcher to make a forecast or exercise control over the leadership behaviours under investigation. Instead, it prioritised the development of well-considered and complex constructs to achieve the most significant possible consensus.

Ontology, epistemology, and methodologies within the inquiry paradigm are interrelated; answering one question shapes how others can be answered. For instance, if a researcher believes that reality can be measured, they will want an objective relationship with the participants. It follows that the choice of methodology would then be experimental. Simply put, it is a matter of congruence (Shaw, 2018).

Axiology addresses “the nature of ethical behaviour, aesthetics, and religion, it refers to what the researcher believes is valuable and ethical. Basic beliefs about what is ethical are embedded in the research paradigm and guides the researcher’s decision-making” (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017, p. 43). Similarly, Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 12) posit that axiology refers to “the role of values and beliefs within the research and the researcher”.

This research was augmented by utilising a case study methodological strategy because it did not require the researcher to make a projection or exert influence over the leadership behaviours under investigation. Instead, it prioritised the development of well-considered and complex constructs to achieve the most significant amount of possible consensus (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Because of this, my research became value-laden, which means that intensive engagement with the participants was carried out to achieve the study’s objectives, resulting in a deeper comprehension of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As a result, it is necessary to balance the study’s objectives, the researchers’ personal beliefs and values, and several other ethical factors that must be considered when doing research.

3.3 Research design

The qualitative research method was used in this study to understand the meanings of the participants’ experiences of the leadership style followed. According to Swanborn (2010), qualitative case study research seeks “to provide in-depth, detailed information, which, although not necessarily widely generalised, explores issues and their context, clarifying what, how, when, where and among whom behaviours and processes operate, while describing in explicit detail the contours and dynamics of people, places, actions and interactions”. Similarly, Stephen (2015) posits that qualitative research is based on constructivist ontology, which suggests that there is no objective reality but a subjective reality built by participants and that this reality is complex. Qualitative researchers try to make sense of experiences, social situations, or natural phenomena (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

I interacted with the participants in their school context. I tried to understand how they construct meaning and understanding of leadership style, preferably displaying qualities of servant leadership, how they experience it and ethical conduct behaviour. The emphasis was more on the quality and depth of the information, not on the scope and breadth of the information provided. The disadvantage of interaction is at the heart of the qualitative data collection effort; I depended on the participants to agree to give their time. My biases and peculiarities might more easily influence the results (Pham, 2018). More courage and proper interviewing skills had to be deployed to ask follow-up questions within the given time and not in multiple sessions due to the availability of the participants. Qualitative research's fundamental advantages and downsides demonstrate that collecting unique, tailored data will always be vital. It is the ideal way to understand better how specific individuals and groups think. However, due to the subjective character of the data, its veracity and dependability will always be contested (Cope, 2014).

3.4 Research methodology

The research used a multi-case study methodology, which provided tools for studying complex phenomena within the school context. The cases explored school principals' experiences in servant and ethical leadership. According to Yin (2011), a multi-case study design should be considered when: "(a) the focus of the study is to answer "how" and "why" questions; (b) you cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study; (c) you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study; or (d) the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context". The use of a multi-case study methodology was deemed appropriate for this study as it would highlight the lived experience of all the participants and with the advantage of observing effects in a life context and offer an in-depth understanding of the research topic from the participants' voices (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This approach allowed the researcher to gather rich, contextual insights into how servant and ethical leadership are experienced and enacted by principals within the unique environments of each school.

Yin (2018) notes that in a multi-case study, the participants 'speak back', allowing the researcher's preconceptions to be questioned and altered. In addition, a multi-case

study provides a detailed, context-based assessment of the cases based on numerous data sources (Yin, 2014). However, some critics, such as Flyvbjerg (2018), claim that case studies are faulty since they cannot be generalised. Scholars such as Yin (2018) refute this notion by asserting that the data acquired through case studies is accurate and gives participants a voice. It also keeps the comprehensive and essential qualities of actual occurrences. According to Yin (2018), case studies can shed light on other comparable circumstances, providing a level of generalisation. This allowed the researcher to examine their interactions, attitudes, and traits about their experiences and conceptions of servant leadership and ethical leadership.

3.5 Research Sample

The research design, topic, and questions influenced the sample selection for this study. Lawyer (2021) indicates that sampling is "the selection of research participants from the entire population, and involves decisions about people, settings, events, behaviour and social processes to observe". There are no established guidelines or methods for determining a suitable sample size in qualitative research (Marshall et al., 2013). Despite this, smaller sample sizes are frequently questioned. I was the primary data collection instrument; I immersed myself in the research and the research setting. The sample was chosen from three schools, all being primary schools.

The schools were chosen because they are located in urban areas with a dynamic and diverse learner population, including asylum seekers and immigrants from other African countries. This diversity may necessitate more compassionate leadership approaches to address the unique challenges faced by these learners. The schools where conveniently selected as they are close to my area, and I have easily gained access to the participants. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where subjects are chosen because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher (Etikan et al., 2016). Purposeful sampling was used, which is a technique used to seek out participants with specific characteristics that align with the needs of the research (Palinkas et al., 2015). Participants were sampled based on their willingness to participate and because they were relevant to the research. The principals and departmental heads were purposefully selected because they were

exposed to the leadership role and were essential in identifying relevant information that might be crucial to the research.

SCHOOLS	PRINCIPAL	DEPUTY PRINCIPAL	DEPARTMENTAL HEAD	TEACHERS	LEARNERS	TOTAL
Primary School A	1	1	3	1	3	9
Primary School B	1	1	3	1	3	9
Primary School C	1	1	3	1	3	9

Table 3-1: Participants per school

To comply with the ethical concerns, the research participants below are identified using fictitious names.

SCHOOL A					
PARTICIPANTS	**PRINCIPAL**	**DEPUTY PRINCIPAL**	**DEPARTMENTAL HEAD/S**	**TEACHER**	**LEARNER/S**
Pseudonyms	Johnson	Mthembu	Ndlovu	Smit	Sipho
Gender	M	F	F	M	M
Age	50	52	40	29	12/13
Experience	24	27	15	5	-

Table 3-2: Pseudonyms for School A participants

SCHOOL B					
PARTICIPANTS	**PRINCIPAL**	**DEPUTY PRINCIPAL**	**DEPARTMENTAL HEAD/S**	**TEACHER**	**LEARNER/S**
Pseudonyms	**Singh**	**Sithole**	**Van der Merwe**	**Jacobs**	**Zinhle**
Gender	F	M	F	M	F
Age	54	43	37	30	12/13
Experience	10	3	10	5	-

Table 3-3: Pseudonyms for School B participants

School C					
PARTICIPANTS	**PRINCIPAL**	**DEPUTY PRINCIPAL**	**DEPARTMENTAL HEAD/S**	**TEACHER**	**LEARNER/S**
Pseudonyms	Mr Nel	Mr Kgosi	Mrs Mahlangu	Miss Sukhoo	Bonga

Gender	M	M	F	F	M
Age	48	59	50	38	12/13
Experience	4	31	20	7	-

Table 3-4: Pseudonyms for School C participants

3.6 Data generation methods

According to Creswell (2012), a wide range of data collection methods should be used to produce a high-quality multi-case study. Therefore, data-generating methods are essential to guarantee a more complete picture. Interviews and observations were used to generate data for this study. Data from principals, deputy principals, and teachers was gathered using semi-structured interview questions. Learners and departmental heads were interviewed using focus group interview questions. The following section will focus on elaborating on these techniques.

3.6.1 Semi-structured interviews

The research utilised semi-structured interviews because they provide a balance between structure and flexibility. This format allows participants to discuss their experiences, thoughts, and emotions within a guided framework while offering enough flexibility to explore relevant topics in depth. The interviewer can probe further based on the participants' responses, enabling a deeper understanding of the subject matter without the constraints of a fully structured format (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & Lacey, 2016). Consequently, semi-structured interviews permitted the interviewer to appear competent and prepared during the discussion, while participants were free to express themselves in their own words (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2018). According to popular belief, interviews provide a deeper understanding of social situations. Therefore, interviews are best suited when little is known about the subject, or participants' perspectives are required. In addition, they are ideal for investigating delicate topics where participants may not choose to discuss them in a group setting (Silverman, 2000).

Several interviews were recorded with the participants' consent and knowledge. Each subject gave informed consent before agreeing to be interviewed, and their participation was voluntary. Even though I still had to take notes, it helped me focus on the other people in the room. Braun and Clarke (2013) agreed and noted that

verbatim transcription of interviews is necessary since no other approach provides sufficient documentation of every word stated for subsequent in-depth analysis. Therefore, transcriptions were made to serve as a resource for direct quotes and to facilitate data analysis.

I also used focus groups, which are defined as small groups, to participate in a small discussion representing a larger population. Three departmental heads and primary school learners were in focus groups to discuss their experiences. The purpose of these groups was not to agree on the phenomena but to share insight and different opinions. Focus groups expressly involve group interaction as part of the approach. In contrast, group interviews are typically used simply as a quick and straightforward way to collect data from numerous people concurrently. This implies that participants were invited to engage in conversation, asking questions, sharing tales, and providing feedback on one another's experiences and perspectives rather than waiting for the researcher to ask each individual to answer. This method can investigate people's thoughts and feelings and what motivates them to hold those beliefs (Bourne & Winstone, 2020).

In-depth interviews proved to be expensive and time-consuming due to having to work around the interviewees' schedules and eventually obtaining large amounts of material, which makes transcription and data processing challenging and may lead to producing exploratory, not conclusive conclusions. This means that findings are typically not applicable to the general population (Roulston & Choi, 2018).

3.6.2 Covert and active participant observations

Covert and active participant observation were used; a covert observation allowed the researcher to interact with everyone on the school premises without having to introduce myself as a researcher and explain that they were being studied. This allowed the researcher to immerse themselves in the study and ask continuous probing questions about the participants' servant and ethical leadership experiences (Awan, 2017). The primary benefit of covert observation is that it is unlikely for the participants to change their behaviour in response to the researcher's presence. In cases

where participants are aware they are being observed, they might try to modify their behaviour and put themselves in the most favourable light (Bloom et al., 2017).

Another benefit of the covert observation method is that the researcher might observe a group of participants that they may otherwise have not been allowed to study. Although this might not be permissible in many human subjects, other critics agree that the benefits of the research usually outweigh the privacy concern of the group, especially if any person who was not part of the research could be in a position to observe the same group's behaviours (Awan, 2017; Bloom et al., 2017).

Field notes were also scribbled during observations, and open-ended narrative data was written. Observations allowed the researcher to collect first-hand data from where the activity was happening. This allowed me to determine what was going on in real-time and confirm whether the leadership practices of principals reflected servant leadership (Mengel & Northouse, 2021). Servant leadership principles like caring and collaborating can be observed and might even lead to getting answers from groups that do not have the time or willingness to answer questions. The observations also shed some light on school leadership practices and ethical conduct.

To put it another way, observation allowed me to confirm what principals do in practice, as opposed to what principals report they do in practice (Hodge et al., 2016). As a result, I found that using observation as a method was acceptable and significant in properly addressing questions in this study. Subsequently, Informed consent was obtained from participants before any observational data was gathered.

3.7 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is essential in research, particularly when exploring complex, context-specific phenomena such as leadership experiences. This approach systematically organises, interprets, and makes sense of non-numerical data to uncover underlying themes, patterns, and meanings that address the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Heibi & Peroni, 2020). In this study, which investigates the experiences of school principals regarding servant and ethical leadership in Gauteng

Province, thematic analysis was selected as the primary method for analysing qualitative data collected through interviews and observations.

The rationale for using thematic analysis lies in its ability to comprehensively understand participants' lived experiences, facilitating in-depth exploration of leadership practices. This method is particularly valuable for identifying shared experiences and divergent perspectives among school principals, thus illuminating the complexities of servant and ethical leadership. The thematic analysis identifies predominant themes that characterise leadership experiences and the contextual factors that shape these experiences within the educational landscape (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Nowell et al., 2017). By employing this approach, the study aims to draw connections between the findings and existing literature, contributing to a deeper understanding of how these leadership principles manifest in practice.

Thematic analysis is recognised for its flexibility and accessibility in identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). This method effectively captures participants' perspectives, allowing for rich, detailed, and nuanced data descriptions. Given the exploratory nature of this study, thematic analysis is ideally suited for capturing the complexities of principals' leadership practices and their alignment with the principles of servant and ethical leadership.

The analysis process followed a systematic six-step approach as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006):

1. **Familiarisation with the data**: The analysis began with an in-depth review of the data, where the researcher immersed themselves in the raw data by repeatedly reading the transcripts of interviews and field notes from observations. This stage involved engaging with the data to understand the content and context.
2. **Generating initial themes**: The next step involved identifying and highlighting meaningful patterns or recurring topics across the data. Rather than using predefined codes, the researcher focused on emergent themes

directly related to the experiences of school principals in practising servant and ethical leadership. These themes were noted and grouped based on their relevance to the research questions.

3. **Searching for themes**: In this phase, the identified themes were organised into broader categories that reflected the critical aspects of the principals' leadership experiences. Themes were grouped under major categories, such as 'Trust and Transparency', 'Recognition and Fairness', 'Empathy in Leadership', and 'Challenges in Ethical Practice'. This stage involved careful consideration of how different themes related to one another and contributed to the overall narrative of the study.
4. **Reviewing themes**: The researcher then critically reviewed and refined the identified themes to ensure they accurately captured the data's meaning and significance. This involved checking the themes against the data set to confirm that they represented the participants' experiences and adjusting or combining themes as necessary. The goal was to ensure that each theme was distinct, coherent, and relevant to the research objectives.
5. **Defining and naming themes**: Once the themes were finalised, the researcher defined each theme in detail, describing its scope, content, and relevance to the research questions. Clear and concise names were assigned to each theme to reflect its essence and the specific aspect of leadership it represented.
6. **Producing the report**: The final step involved integrating the themes into a comprehensive and coherent narrative that addressed the research questions. The themes were used to structure the presentation of the findings, providing a detailed and nuanced account of the school principals' experiences with servant and ethical leadership. This narrative was further enriched with direct participant quotes to illustrate and support the identified themes.

Thematic analysis provided a robust framework for exploring the multifaceted nature of servant and ethical leadership in Gauteng Province schools. It systematically distilled core experiences and challenges school principals face, offering insights into how these leadership principles are practised and perceived within the educational setting. Recent literature underscores thematic analysis as a valuable tool for exploring leadership behaviours and organisational culture. For instance, Nowell et al. (2017)

highlight its effectiveness in revealing the underlying dynamics that influence leadership. Clarke and Braun (2018) emphasise its suitability for capturing the richness and complexity of leadership experiences.

In this study, thematic analysis was instrumental in uncovering the nuanced ways servant and ethical leadership manifest in school settings, identifying key themes related to trust, recognition, empathy, and ethical challenges—critical components of effective leadership as discussed in the literature (Greenleaf, 1977; Den Hartog et al., 2013; Canavesi & Minelli, 2022). It also allowed the researcher to connect findings to broader theoretical frameworks, enhancing the understanding of how servant and ethical leadership contribute to school improvement and positive organisational culture.

3.8 Issues of Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (2019), credibility is the degree to which the researcher convinces the reader and audience that the research report justifies attention and consideration. Similarly, Norman (2020) asserts that trustworthiness principles verify or evaluate whether the meaning and interpretation of the research reality or truth are reasonable and whether adequate measures have been taken to ensure that the research findings are reliable and are a true reflection or result of what the researcher intended to discover. Trustworthiness is generally assessed through four critical criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Subsequently, Lincoln and Guba (2019) and Yin (2014) say that a study is more likely to be true if it is transferable, confirmable, credible, and dependable.

Credibility asks, “How congruent are the findings with reality?” As mentioned, this question is highly subjective and relies on individual judgments. Credibility is a construction on the part of the reporter(s) and the subsequent reader(s). One method of promoting credibility is through the various processes of triangulation. Credibility is established when research findings represent plausible information drawn from the participants’ original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants’ original views (Noble & Smith, 2015). Roughly stated, triangulating means repeatedly using several sources of information or procedures from the field to establish

identifiable patterns. In other words, did the researcher maintain a presence on-site and cross-reference his knowledge with his participants? (Fusch & Ness, 2015).

Transferability refers to the extent to which the findings of this study can be applied to other contexts or groups. This is enhanced by providing detailed descriptions of the research context and the participants, allowing readers to determine whether the findings apply to their settings. Dependability involves ensuring that the research process is logical, traceable, and documented so that the study's findings are consistent and can be replicated in similar conditions. Dependability is enhanced by maintaining a detailed audit trail, which includes records of raw data, field notes, and the researcher's reflections (Guba & Lincoln, 2019). Confirmability concerns the objectivity or neutrality of the data, meaning that the findings should be shaped by the participants and not by researcher bias, motivation, or interest. Reflexivity and triangulation help establish confirmability by ensuring that the findings reflect the participants' perspectives (Lincoln & Guba, 2019).

Triangulation was used to capture different dimensions of the same observable fact Denzin (2020). This method ensures a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem by integrating multiple perspectives. Interviews and observations were some of the data collection methods used with different participants across the school environment. Findings from the interviews and observations were compared to validate and create a clear picture of the research problem and interrogate different ways of looking into the research problem. Triangulation proved helpful for checking whether the various methods of the same observable fact produced the same results or even highlighted inconsistencies. Extended observations with extended probing questions over an adequate time helped identify relevant information pertinent to the study's observable fact (Taylor & Medina, 2012). The triangulation of interviews, field notes, and observation ensured the accuracy of the conclusions in this study.

3.9 Ethical issues

When conducting research, Lobe (2014) argues that it is essential to consider the accuracy of the information gathered and the morality of our behaviour as

qualitative researchers regarding the subjects we are investigating. In addition, Creswell (2013) adds that thinking about ethics is crucial because of the unpredictability of field work and because doing so is a means to safeguard the researcher and the participants. As a result, I applied for ethical clearance from the Faculty of Education (Human Resource Ethics Committee: Non-Medical) at Wits University. Once permission was granted and an ethical clearance protocol number was awarded, I sought permission from the Department of Education to conduct research in three schools in Tshwane South District Four. In addition, permission was obtained from the principals of the schools. Participants in the study above 18 years had a choice to participate voluntarily and were given written informed consent (Goodwin, 2020). The participants were notified of their right to withdraw from the study at any given time.

Participants under 18 were given an assent form to consent to participate in the study. In contrast, their parent or legal guardian was given a Consent Form to complete, permitting their children to partake in the study as their minors. In this case, separate information sheets and consent/assent forms were supplied for these groups. The assent form was written in an age-appropriate language that the minors could understand. These ethical standards also protect the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants (Mays & Pope, 2021). The data collected here would be utilised exclusively for the study being conducted.

The information about articles that would be written will be communicated in the informed consent form. The original copies of the field notes from observation and semi-structured interviews are kept safe in a locked cupboard. The paperwork can only be identified using numbers and pseudonyms (Lobe, 2020). Personal privacy will be ensured by not using participant's real names. Instead, pseudonyms will be used. The names of the schools will be withheld to protect their identities. They will be referred to as schools A, B and C. Participants will be made aware of the implications of violation of privacy and confidentiality of information; they will, therefore, commit to treating the research with confidentiality (Lobe, 2020).

3.10 Demarcation of the study

The research was restricted to three primary schools that were conveniently chosen and came within the purview of Tshwane South District 4 of the Gauteng Department of Education in Pretoria.

3.11 Limitations of the study

According to Creswell (2013), research obstacles are what we mean when discussing the study's limitations. Long-term dedication, constant monitoring, several sources of evidence, and expert assessment are what give research credibility, according to Lincoln and Guba (2019). Thus, according to Lincoln and Guba's debate, the limited time allotted for the investigation may have compromised its credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 2019). Principals, departmental heads, and teachers appear to be generally busy and reschedule interview appointments due to other unplanned commitments.

This study employed a purposive sampling procedure, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to other contexts. Therefore, caution should be exercised when applying the study's results to different areas of leadership and ethical conduct. Additionally, as this is a qualitative study, the findings are subject to interpretation and could be influenced by factors such as the researcher's bias and the participants' responses (LaBelle et al., 2020). Time available for the study could be a limiting factor in cases where participants postpone appointments or withdraw from the study before the data collection process is complete. The study could further be limited to the possibility that some participants might doubt the confidentiality statement, which might influence the results.

3.12 Chapter summary

This chapter focused on the methodology used to perform this empirical investigation. The chapter demonstrates that the research is interpretivist and qualitative, using the multi-case study approach. Reasons were provided for using semi-structured interviews and observations as data collection techniques. This chapter also discusses questions of ethics and dependability. The generated data

were analysed following the study questions. The limits and scope of the research were then explored. This creates a way to present and discuss data in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the research design and methodology, detailing the paradigms, designs, sampling techniques, and data generation methods to ensure a robust research process. This foundation established the framework necessary for understanding the study's findings. This chapter examines the findings, building upon the research design and methodology presented in the previous chapter. The comprehensive framework established in the prior chapter serves as the foundation for the investigation. The focus now shifts to the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data, primarily collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews and dynamic focus group discussions.

These analyses are guided by the theoretical framework presented in Chapter Two, providing depth and context to the identified themes and enhancing the understanding of their implications. Moreover, credibility is bolstered by incorporating verbatim participant quotes, ensuring an authentic representation of their voices. Furthermore, the exploration is enriched by integrating insights from the researchers' observations, intertwining these observations with the analytical framework of the identified themes. These themes, rooted in empirical data, serve as the structural framework for the exploration and are consistently applied across all case studies for Schools A, B, and C. They offer a lens through which the intricacies and dynamics of the research subject are examined.

4.1.1 Awareness and Understanding of Servant Leadership

This theme assesses the school principals' awareness and comprehension of Servant Leadership principles, including prioritising others, fostering collaboration, and empathy. It also examines whether principals acknowledge the potential benefits of implementing these practices, such as improving school culture, enhancing teacher relationships, and positively impacting learner outcomes. The main goal is to gauge

how well school principals grasp and apply servant leadership principles to enhance leadership effectiveness and ethical practices in schools.

4.1.2 Impact of servant leadership on leadership style of principals

This theme delves into assessing the extent to which servant leadership principles impact the leadership styles of school principals, with a primary focus on understanding how these principles can enhance leadership effectiveness and foster positive outcomes within educational institutions.

4.1.3 Practices illustrating servant and ethical leadership in schools

The theme uses concrete examples and behaviours to explore how school principals illustrate servant and ethical leadership through their practices and examine how these leadership styles manifest in their routines. The intention is to reveal how servant and ethical leadership principles, such as empathy, active listening, collaboration, and valuing individual perspectives, influence decision-making, communication, and interactions within the school environment.

4.1.4 Servant and ethical leadership as factors for school improvement

This theme thoroughly explores how integrating servant and ethical leadership principles enhances school functionality and advancement. It investigates how these leadership styles impact decision-making, interactions, and communication within schools, fostering positive changes that promote a culture of improvement. Through analysing specific instances and insights from professionals, this research illuminates how embodying servant and ethical leadership principles influences various aspects of school improvement, enriching the educational environment.

4.1.5 Exemplifying ethical and servant behaviour

This final theme delves into the practical picture of ethical and servant behaviour by school principals. It analyses instances where principals exemplify these leadership styles in their actions and decisions. By examining real-world scenarios and drawing from participant experiences, this section underscores how ethical and servant behaviour positively affects the school's atmosphere and stakeholder relationships. It

aims to demonstrate the tangible impact of these leadership styles in creating a conducive and harmonious educational environment.

4.2 Case study of Primary School A

4.2.1 Pseudonyms

To comply with the ethical concerns presented in the preceding chapter, the research participants below are identified using fictitious names.

SCHOOL A					
PARTICIPANTS	**PRINCIPAL**	**DEPUTY PRINCIPAL**	**DEPARTMENTAL HEAD/S**	**TEACHER**	**LEARNER/S**
Pseudonyms	Johnson	Mthembu	Ndlovu	Smit	Sipho
Gender	M	F	F	M	M
Age	50	52	40	29	12/13
Experience	24	27	15	5	-

Table 4-1: School A participants by gender, age and working experience

4.2.2 Introduction

School A is a public primary school in Pretoria, Gauteng Province, serving learners from Grades R to 7. It boasts 34 teachers and 1043 learners, adheres to the South African CAPS curriculum and occupies a modern building constructed in May 2009. Facilities encompass classrooms, a computer lab, a library, and a hall, alongside extracurricular amenities such as a sports field, playground, and music rooms. To ensure a high-quality education, the school prioritises holistic learner development and provides support services, including remedial classes, counselling, after-school tutoring, and career guidance.

4.2.3 Awareness and understanding of servant leadership among school principals

To check how school principals comprehend and enact Servant Leadership principles. The interview began with Mr Johnson, the school Principal, who stated:

> *On Mandela Day, we organise a charity drive to support learners from underprivileged backgrounds by collecting clothes, food, and other essentials for them.*

> *Additionally, we sometimes organise talent shows to raise funds for the school, which we then use to purchase stationery for learners who cannot afford it.*

Activities like charity drives for underprivileged learners and fundraising talent demonstrate a commitment to understanding the community's challenges and serving the community, an essential principle of servant leadership within the school environment. This commitment involves prioritising people's well-being and building a sense of community. The statement reflects how these actions actively support learners' needs and contribute to fostering a caring and inclusive atmosphere. Subsequently, I discussed this with the Deputy Principal, Ms. Mthembu, and Ms. Ndlovu, the Department Head. They both conquered with the principal's stance and confirmed their launch of a Guardian Angel Project funded by the proceeds from Mandela Day. They mentioned that the project aims to create a safety net for learners facing adversity, acknowledging the crucial role of emotional support in their well-being.

Mr Smit, a teacher, shared Mr Johnson's support in his battle against addiction, illustrating Mr Johnson's commitment to staff well-being and putting people first. Mr. Smit recalled:

> *Mr. Johnson's involvement extended beyond empathy; he actively assisted me in joining a rehab programme.*

Brandon, a learner, highlighted Mr Johnson's active involvement in school activities, particularly during the music talent show.

In conclusion, investigating the awareness and understanding of servant leadership principles among school principals reveals a compelling alignment between the expressed viewpoints and demonstrated leadership practices. Mr Johnson's implementation of initiatives like the Mandela Day charity drive and the "Guardian Angel Project", as well as his empathetic assistance to a teacher overcoming addiction, vividly exemplify his commitment to prioritising others and nurturing collaborative

efforts. These practices demonstrate a genuine understanding of addressing people's needs foremost. This corresponds with the insights of Tureman (2013) and van Dierendonck (2017) on the positive effects of servant leadership on organisational dynamics and overall performance. Principal Johnson's leadership approach provides a concrete example of implementing certain servant leadership principles effectively, particularly emphasising prioritising people within educational institutions. This enhances leadership effectiveness and fosters an environment valuing the well-being and growth of individuals.

4.2.4 Impact of servant leadership on leadership style of principals

Principal Johnson provided an overview of the school's commitment to professional development for teachers as he stated that:

> *We've introduced regular teacher training sessions to update them on evolving teaching methods and technology. All school members participate in a sponsored ICT programme.*

The sponsored Information and Communication Technology (ICT) programme, available to all, signifies a commitment to growth and adaptability, emphasising resource management, collaboration, and innovation. Ms Ndlovu, the Departmental Head, echoed these sentiments, emphasising Mr Johnson's encouragement of staff to pursue professional development opportunities aligned with their interests and career goals. She added that:

> *In fact, he introduced an ICT programme that helped me improve my technology skills and made teaching more engaging for my learners.*

I went further to interview the Deputy Principal, Ms Mthembu, who highlighted that:

> *We have a voluntary mentorship programme called "Learners Leading Learners". It promotes a culture of giving back to the community and actively encourages learners to shape their education.*

This initiative cultivates a culture of community involvement, empowering Learners to shape their education proactively. Moreover, the programme's emphasis on guiding essential life skills augments academic and emotional growth in a supportive setting.

Observations of learners using computer labs beyond school hours reflect empowerment and servant leadership fostered by Principal Johnson. This commitment to providing opportunities for skill development and interest pursuit underscores the school's dedication to empowerment.

In summary, the examination of the impact of Servant Leadership on the leadership styles of school principals has highlighted a specific emphasis on empowerment in this context. Through various perspectives within the school community, the core principle of empowerment has emerged as a notable feature of this leadership philosophy (Johnson, 2015). The narratives of Principal Mr Johnson, Deputy Principals Ms Mthembu and Ms Ndlovu underscore the principals' commitment to fostering an environment where empowerment thrives. The school's initiatives, such as the voluntary mentorship programme "Learners Leading Learners", the ICT programme, and ongoing professional development opportunities, reflect a targeted approach to equipping staff and learners with tools, skills, and agency. This empowerment-driven leadership style not only aligns with discussions on effective leadership and organisational culture but also sets a clear example for this particular school seeking to instil a sense of ownership and growth within their stakeholders Makhubu (2018). By prioritising empowerment, Principal Mr Johnson demonstrates actions that influence leadership styles and contribute to a dynamic educational environment where individuals are motivated to reach their full potential.

4.2.5 Practices illustrating servant and ethical leadership in schools

Principal Johnson emphasises his commitment to active, empathetic listening, especially when addressing bullying reports from learners. He swiftly investigates incidents involving parents and stakeholders, prioritising learners' safety and well-being, stating:

> *If a learner is being bullied, I immediately investigate the situation, involving parents and stakeholders.*

Ms Mthembu validated Principal Johnson's proactive stance on bullying, highlighting open communication with involved parties. She notes his understanding of learners' reluctance to report bullying repeatedly and encourages teachers to monitor behavioural changes indicating bullying. These insights from Principal Johnson and Ms Mthembu illustrate the fusion of servant and ethical leadership principles. Principal Johnson's dedication to empathetic listening and swift action aligns with both frameworks. Ms Mthembu's endorsement emphasises their collaborative, proactive approach.

Ms Ndlovu shared her personal experience, highlighting the support she received from the principal and deputy during her bereavement. Their actions extended beyond school, including home visits and check-ins upon her return. The school community contributed through gestures like flower donations. Principal Johnson's provision of access to the school psychologist demonstrated his commitment to a caring environment during difficult times. Subsequently, Mr Smit emphasises his dedication to understanding and patience when Learners face difficulties. He shares an example involving a learner with a learning disability, showcasing his proactive approach to understanding their needs, offering one-on-one support, simplifying tasks, and providing alternative materials. Lelo added that:

> *My teacher noticed my eyesight problem and took action to help me. They arranged for all learners with eyesight problems to receive reading glasses through a partnership with Spec Savers.*

She described her teacher's attentiveness to her eyesight problem, leading to a partnership with Spec Savers to provide reading glasses. This initiative enhances vision and boosts academic performance for Lelo and her peers.

As illustrated in multiple instances, the recurring focus on empathetic leadership practices underscores a commitment to understanding, compassion, and support for

staff and learners. Principal Johnson's proactive approach to addressing bullying and his compassion during personal challenges demonstrate commitment to empathetic leadership. Ms Mthembu's support during bereavement reflects the institution's culture of compassion. Teacher Mr Smit's tailored assistance exemplifies understanding and patience. Lelo's testimony highlights empathetic leadership's positive impact on learners, emphasising its role in creating a safe, inclusive, and supportive educational environment in line with servant and ethical leadership principles. The resonance of empathy across these varied perspectives reinforces its pivotal role in shaping principled and effective leadership within the school (Liden & Neider, 2019; Sendjaya et al., 2018). This focus on empathy significantly influences leadership practices, nurturing a positive educational ecosystem.

4.2.6 Servant and ethical leadership as factors for school improvement

Mr Johnson's insights proved to be of significant value. He had actively collaborated with his team to identify areas requiring improvement while enhancing support for their learners. He stated that:

> *I took immediate action when parents voiced concerns about insufficient communication regarding school events. I devised a comprehensive communication plan encompassing regular newsletters, email updates, and a dedicated school website. Furthermore, I ensured that teachers received training on effective communication strategies, encouraging them to maintain regular contact with parents.*

Similarly, Mr Smith emphasises the significance of accountability:

A significant perspective surfaced through Mr Smith, a teacher deeply committed to fostering accountability among his learners. Mr Smith's practical approach comes to life as he addresses recurrent late-coming and incomplete assignments. Identifying the imperative need for intervention, he orchestrates a thoughtful class discussion on punctuality and assignment completion, underscoring the core concept of accountability, wherein learners recognise their actions and the ensuing repercussions. This proactive stance is a testament to responsive leadership, emphasising the vital

role of transparency and engaging communication in addressing stakeholders' concerns.

Moreover, Mr Smith's narrative underscores the intrinsic connection between responsible behaviour and academic excellence. By nurturing a culture of accountability, he empowers his learners to take charge of their learning journeys, ultimately contributing to enhanced academic outcomes. In summary, Mr Smith's approach exemplifies the harmonious integration of accountability and responsive leadership, shaping a favourable educational landscape conducive to learner success and a supportive learning environment.

Continuing the exploration, Ms Ndlovu shares her perspective:

> *In my team, I noticed instances of missed deadlines and subpar work quality. Instead of solely applying post-facto accountability measures, I took a proactive approach. I organised a workshop on time management and introduced an accountability and rewards system.*

This approach enhanced performance and cultivated a more positive workplace ambience. In recognition, teachers who consistently meet deadlines are excused from the substitution schedule. Ms Ndlovu's proactive solutions for addressing missed deadlines and subpar work showcase the effectiveness of time management workshops and an accountability system. These methods improve team performance and promote a supportive work environment. Providing incentives like exemption from the substitution schedule encourages accountability.

Collectively, insights from participants underscore the role of accountability, a consistent theme in leadership, in improving schools. These narratives collectively emphasise accountability as a valuable tool for establishing transparent expectations, nurturing ownership, and driving continuous improvement within educational settings. These instances accentuate the relationship between accountability and servant and ethical leadership principles (Haeger & Lingham, 2013) and shed light on

accountability's pivotal role in shaping principled and effective leadership practices within educational institutions.

4.2.7 Exemplifying ethical and servant behaviour

Mr Johnson set a remarkable example by making a difficult decision to cancel the annual Spring Fling event. Despite facing pressure from segments of the school community, he prioritised safety and integrity over popularity. He recognised that the event posed potential safety hazards, such as overcrowding and inadequate emergency exits, which could have endangered learners and staff. This principled decision underscored the importance of ethical behaviour and served as a testament to leadership rooted in inclusivity and strict adherence to safety regulations (Brown et al., 2016). The Deputy Principal and Departmental Head's endorsements of his leadership approach further highlighted the value of ethical leadership in fostering a culture of respect and inclusivity (Liden et al., 2015). They praised Mr Johnson for actively seeking input from all team members, regardless of their roles, and attentively listening to concerns.

The learner perspective provided by Sipho added a unique dimension to the discussion. Sipho's proactive concern for a struggling classmate, Thando, demonstrated empathy and awareness of potential barriers to seeking help. The teacher, Mr Smit, responded to Sipho's concern by privately contacting Thando and offering support. This action exemplified ethical leadership principles, emphasising individual well-being and confidence-building (Brown et al., 2016). It showcased how ethical and servant behaviour extends beyond conventional roles, contributing to a culture of mutual aid and empowerment within the school community.

These narratives reinforced the understanding that ethical conduct goes beyond mere rule adherence. It involves challenging decisions prioritising safety and well-being, fostering inclusivity, and proactively supporting individuals. The participants' accounts reflect current research highlighting the significance of ethical leadership in educational environments. Moreover, they underscored how ethical and servant behaviour contribute to a harmonious school atmosphere, promoting inclusivity, respect, and meaningful stakeholder relationships within schools (Liden et al., 2015).

These narratives provide evidence for the tangible impact of ethical and servant leadership in creating an enabling environment and nurturing meaningful stakeholder relationships within schools (Brown et al., 2015).

4.2.8 Conclusion

School A demonstrates various leadership initiatives contributing to a nurturing, empowering, and inclusive educational environment. Principal Johnson's proactive stance on bullying, compassionate support during hardships, and tailored assistance showcase an empathetic leadership style. Empowerment is critical to the school's leadership approach, seen in initiatives like the "Learners Leading Learners" programme and professional development opportunities. These practices are supported by literature that emphasises the significance of empowering leadership for fostering a positive organisational culture Makhubu (2018). The school's dedication to ethical behaviour is demonstrated by Principal Johnson's decision to cancel an event for safety reasons and the culture of inclusivity and respect he fosters. This ethical commitment aligns with findings highlighting the importance of ethical leadership in educational environments (Brown et al., 2015). Accountability is embraced with efforts to address concerns and promote responsible behaviour, consistent with research advocating accountability as a crucial factor in school improvement (Sendjaya et al., 2018). School A's integrating servant and ethical leadership principles creates a nurturing, empowering, and inclusive educational environment that reflects effective leadership and organisational culture.

4.3 Case study of Primary School B

4.3.1 Pseudonyms

To comply with the ethical concerns presented in the preceding chapter, the research participants below are identified using fictitious names.

SCHOOL B					
PARTICIPANTS	**PRINCIPAL**	**DEPUTY PRINCIPAL**	**DEPARTMENTAL HEAD/S**	**TEACHER**	**LEARNER/S**
Pseudonyms	Singh	Sithole	Van der Merwe	Jacobs	Zinhle
Gender	F	M	F	M	F
Age	54	43	37	30	12/13
Experience	10	3	10	5	-

Table 4-2: School B participants by gender, age and working experience

4.3.2 Introduction

School B is a public primary school in Pretoria, Gauteng Province, serving learners from Grades R to 7. It has 56 teaching staff members for 1703 learners. The school follows the South African National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) and occupies a historically significant building from December 1897. Despite its age, the building retains unique architectural features and houses functional classrooms, a computer lab, and a library. Learners can also access extracurricular facilities like a sports field and art classes. School B promotes critical thinking and problem-solving through chess and robotics programmes, enhancing learners' strategic thinking, creativity, and collaboration for their overall development.

4.3.3 Awareness and understanding of servant leadership among principals

Mr. Singh, the principal, shared a compelling narrative. This is what was conveyed during our interview.

> *I am in charge of the "Young Men's Leadership Program", a mentorship programme that aims to help boys develop crucial leadership skills, boost their confidence, and cultivate character traits needed for success in all aspects of life. We clean a nearby church for multiple purposes as part of our activities.*

That exemplifies a profound understanding of servant leadership principles with a strong emphasis on personal growth. The "Young Men's Leadership Program", under his leadership, aims to cultivate essential leadership skills, bolster confidence, and nurture character traits vital for success in various life domains. The programme's unique initiative of engaging learners in cleaning a nearby church is a poignant metaphor for personal growth.

By involving boys in cleaning tasks, Mr Singh is teaching them about humility, teamwork, and responsibility and instilling crucial life skills that resonate with existing literature on servant leadership. The act of cleaning, a metaphor for self-improvement,

reflects the transformational journey these young men embark upon. This approach aligns with research (Norris et al., 2017), highlighting how mentoring programmes contribute to enhanced social skills, empathy, leadership qualities, and self-esteem, all of which are critical for personal growth.

The collaboration between teachers, notably the Deputy Principal Mr Sithole and Mrs Van der Merwe, further emphasises personal growth. Their attentive approach, including tailored support through the psychology department, echoes the values of empathy, customised care, and holistic development associated with servant leadership. This personalised support aligns with research indicating that addressing learners' unique needs contributes to their emotional well-being and academic success (Gamage et al., 2021). The emphasis on personal growth extends to the teachers' endorsement of a learner-centred approach. The Young Men's Leadership programme imparts essential life skills and fosters a nurturing environment prioritising learners' holistic development. This reflects servant and distributed leadership models, where teachers actively promote a growth culture.

Observations within the school environment further substantiate the focus on personal growth. The well-organised notice boards, vibrant atmosphere, and diverse activities collectively contribute to an environment that encourages learners to strive for personal betterment. The announcement of the Young Men's programme event, involving interaction with another school, amplifies the school's commitment to expanding learners' horizons beyond academics and fostering personal growth through meaningful interactions.

Schools that focus on all individuals' well-being, personal growth, and social development through mentoring initiatives and community engagement offer alternative approaches to traditional educational models. According to research by (Norris et al., 2017), school-based mentoring programmes that focus on fostering positive relationships, character development, and a sense of putting people first not only improve academic outcomes but also enhance social skills, self-esteem, empathy, leadership skills, and a sense of social responsibility among learners. Similarly, studies by Botha and Bezuidenhout (2020) show that schools that encourage community

engagement through service-learning projects can instil empathy, leadership skills, and a sense of social responsibility among learners. This underscores the importance of considering the needs and well-being of others in education.

4.3.4 Impact of servant leadership on leadership style of principals

Mr. Singh's intentions were clear from the outset as he initiated the Robotics programme and actively sought funding; he stated that:

> *I worked to secure funding for programmes like Robotics and was fortunate to receive support from a nearby university, providing equipment and teacher training for our school's extracurricular activities.*

His leadership approach reflects his dedication to nurturing the growth of both staff and learners. He tirelessly equips his team with essential resources and creates opportunities for personal development to improve teaching methods. His passionate pursuit of funding, as evidenced by the Robotics programme, is driven by his desire to enhance learners' digital skills. This dedicated effort culminated in a successful collaboration with a neighbouring university, greatly enriching our school's extracurricular offerings.

Singh's leadership philosophy distinctly embodies the principles of servant leadership. His commitment revolves around facilitating the growth of staff and Learners by providing resources and emphasising ongoing professional development. The collaboration with a nearby university for the Robotics programme exemplifies this ethos. Singh's focus on nurturing personal growth and fostering a culture of learning and innovation anchors his leadership in the spirit of service.

Deputy Principal Mr Sithole wholeheartedly supports Mr Singh's commitment to growth, having observed his dedication first-hand. Singh's emphasis on equipping individuals with tools for personal advancement and continuous professional development resonates deeply with Sithole. With the School Governing Body (SGB), Mr Singh and Mr Sithole pledge to elevate staff morale and foster collaboration. Their

innovative approach introduces a 5% honorarium, further inspiring colleagues and engaging learners in this impactful initiative.

Sithole's endorsement of Singh's leadership mirrors the alignment with servant leadership principles, appreciating Singh's commitment to providing resources and opportunities for personal growth. The introduction of the honorarium incentive underscores the strategic and motivational aspects of servant leadership, fostering teamwork and shared commitment. Mr Jacobs, a dedicated teacher, attests to the tangible benefits of professional development. At the same time, Zinhle, a learner participant, exemplifies the transformative influence of Mr Singh's servant leadership, primarily through the Robotics programme. Together, their voices illustrate how servant leadership fosters a culture of recognition, growth, and accomplishment within the school community.

The landscape of leadership has evolved with collaborative strategies. Botha and Bezuidenhout (2020) emphasise shared leadership's potential in promoting engagement and positive outcomes. Mr Singh's collaborative endeavours highlight their adeptness in cultivating a cohesive and motivated team. Furthermore, the enduring impact of experiential learning through programmes like Robotics aligns with the contemporary educational theories of Simmons (2018) and Ellis and Hartley (2021). This narrative validates Mr Singh's innovative educational approach and underscores his proficiency in guiding learners towards meaningful personal and professional trajectories. These academic currents and practical initiatives work together within the intricate fabric of Mr Singh's leadership journey. His approach has reflected the insights of modern educational research but has also demonstrated the effectiveness of these principles in practice, shaping a more enriched educational landscape for all stakeholders.

4.3.5 Practices demonstrating the presence of servant and ethical leadership in principal

Mr Singh actively engages with stakeholders; he emphasises the vital role of feedback from staff, parents, learners, and the governing body in creating an inclusive school environment. A suggestion box was introduced to facilitate this communication,

yielding a significant proposal for a Uniform Bank. The swift implementation of this idea, through donations from the school community, established a valuable resource for learners in need.

> *To guarantee that I am fully engaged in listening to both my staff and learners, an additional communication channel has been established: a suggestion box. The feedback from the box resulted in one significant proposal calling for a uniform bank.*

Deputy Principal Mr Sithole and Mrs Van Merwe endorsed Mr Singh's approach, highlighting the monthly clearing of the suggestion box and the careful consideration of each suggestion. They prioritise addressing one issue at a time to ensure thorough resolution and maintain fairness by allowing anonymous submissions, creating a safe space for open dialogue. Subsequently, teacher Mr Jacobs emphasises the importance of the suggestion box. He shares an example of how an anonymous report prompted immediate action, involving relevant stakeholders and providing necessary support. The suggestion box has proven instrumental in identifying and resolving issues, contributing to a healthier and more nurturing learning environment.

In conclusion, the collective insights from stakeholders in School B support the importance of servant and ethical leadership, particularly highlighting the aspect of active listening. Establishing the suggestion box as a platform for open communication and subsequent responsive actions highlights the school's steadfast commitment to inclusivity, transparency, and continuous improvement. This approach enriches the educational experience and sets a positive example for other institutions. The literature within the past decade on leadership and communication supports the significance of these practices in cultivating a harmonious and effective learning environment. As articulated by Northouse (2018), leaders who engage in active listening create an atmosphere of trust and mutual understanding, which is evident in School B's approach. Moreover, Brown and Treviño (2015) emphasise that ethical leadership fosters a culture of moral engagement and commitment, as displayed by the school's accountability and empathetic listening. Through intentional prioritisation of stakeholders' needs and voices, School B is actively nurturing a culture of

empowerment, growth, and unity, thus embodying the principles of servant and ethical leadership in their purest form.

4.3.6 Servant and ethical leadership as factors for school improvement

Mr Singh stated:

> *Recently, I was faced with budget constraints. Instead of unilateral judgments regarding sports, infrastructure, and ITC upgrades, I initiated a collaborative process with our school management team, teachers, and the governing body. Together, we planned meetings with the finance committee to ensure all stakeholders had a voice in the decision-making process.*

The school's commitment to transparency and ethical decision-making plays a pivotal role in shaping its positive environment, as highlighted by Mr Singh, the principal. He shared an instance where ethical decision-making became paramount due to budgetary constraints. Rather than making unilateral choices, he initiated a collaborative process involving the school management team, teachers, and the governing body. This approach exemplified his dedication to servant and ethical leadership, emphasising inclusive decision-making and fairness in resource allocation.

However, Deputy Principal Mr Sithole added depth to the conversation by emphasising the involvement of the finance committee and staff in budgeting processes. Nonetheless, he acknowledged that not all expenditures were fully disclosed, revealing potential limitations in transparency. These insights underscore the challenge of translating ethical leadership ideals into comprehensive school improvement, highlighting the need for genuine openness in financial matters. Furthermore, Mrs Van der Merwe expressed concerns about transparency and resource allocation decisions, especially when a new School Governing Body is appointed. She pointed out how this can shift priorities and potential distortions in school improvement goals. Observation underscores the complexities of maintaining consistency in transparency and alignment with ethical principles during leadership transitions. In the broader context, while ethical leadership is vital, it is also essential

to consider teachers' perspectives and their role in fostering a transparent and ethical school environment.

In summary, Mr Singh's commitment to transparent, ethical leadership supports its role in school improvement. His collaborative approach to navigating budget constraints demonstrates the value of inclusive decision-making and fairness. However, Deputy Principal Mr Sithole and Mrs Van der Merwe's insights reveal the complexity of maintaining transparency, especially during leadership transitions or shifting priorities. These challenges emphasise the need for ongoing efforts to foster genuine openness and incorporate teachers' perspectives. Ethical leadership remains crucial, but a holistic approach should consider the evolving dynamics in school improvement.

4.3.7 Exemplifying ethical and servant behaviour

Mr Singh stated that:

> *I maintain an open-door policy, extending equal respect, attention, and strict confidentiality to everyone, irrespective of their role or position.*

Regardless of their roles or positions, he ensures equal dignity and fairness in his interactions. This commitment aligns with ethical and servant leadership principles, emphasising the protection of individuals' privacy and creating a safe and trusted space for open communication.

Building upon this ethos, Mr Sithole and Mrs Van der Merwe echo Mr Singh's dedication to respecting everyone in the school community, emphasising the importance of following his lead. They emphasise creating a safe and supportive environment where learners can confidently share their concerns, prioritising their well-being and fostering trust. Their actions exemplify ethical and servant leadership by providing learners with a caring and inclusive atmosphere. Furthermore, Zinhle, a learner in this environment, attests to the high value placed on respect within her classroom. Ethical principles are evident in encouraging open dialogue and respectful debates, fostering an inclusive and engaging atmosphere. Her portrayal showcases how

ethical and servant leadership qualities synergise to create a positive and enriching classroom experience that values diverse viewpoints and supports learners.

In the intricate tapestry of ethical and servant leadership, the luminous thread of respect is woven to nurture an environment of mutual understanding and unity. This respect serves as a foundation, akin to a symbol of compassion amid adversity. “Human Family” resonates, where diverse voices converge in a harmonious chorus of unity. Mr Singh emerges as a torchbearer of ethical and servant leadership, his open-door policy inviting all to a realm of dignity. Like nurturing gardeners of communication, Mr Singh, Mr Sithole, Mrs Van der Merwe, and Zinhle cultivate an atmosphere of openness and confidentiality. They echo the ideals of contemporary leadership scholarship (Northouse, 2018; Crippen & Moyer, 2017), embodying a commitment to inclusivity, safe spaces (Catalano et al., 2017; Smith & Turner, 2015), and fostering open dialogue (Christie & Jurkiewicz, 2019). We are reminded of the warm embrace depicted in these narratives, an embrace reflected in the collaborative efforts, reinforcing the principles of respect and compassion illuminated throughout this journey.

4.4 Case study of Primary School C

4.4.1 Pseudonyms

To comply with the ethical concerns presented in the preceding chapter, the research participants below are identified using fictitious names.

SCHOOL C					
PARTICIPANTS	**PRINCIPAL**	**DEPUTY PRINCIPAL**	**DEPARTMENTAL HEAD/S**	**TEACHER**	**LEARNER/S**
Pseudonyms	Mr Nel	Mr Kgosi	Mrs Mahlangu	Miss Sukhoo	Bonga
Gender	M	M	F	F	M
Age	48	59	50	38	12/13
Experience	4	31	20	7	-

Table 4-3: School C participants by gender, age and working experience

4.4.2 Introduction

School C, a public primary school in Pretoria, Gauteng Province, serves learners in Grades R through 7. As a Quintile 3 school, it offers free education without tuition

fees, funded by the government. Despite having 1009 learners and 27 instructors, resulting in a 38:1 learner-teacher ratio, the school's infrastructure shows visible wear and tear with deteriorating paint. Maintenance issues, including a collapsing ceiling in the examination hall, affect the environment. Worn-out furniture and ventilation problems due to insufficient funding negatively impact classroom conditions. The windows are elevated and hardly functional. The school provides essential amenities like a library and computer centre but lacks funds. The library has limited accessible volumes, hampering learners' access to reading materials. Moreover, the computer centre workstations lack internet connectivity, restricting learners' technology use for education.

4.4.3 Awareness and understanding of servant leadership

The study delved into the awareness and understanding of servant leadership among participants from School C. The principal, Mr Nel, and his team expressed differing perspectives on the concept of servant leadership, particularly in how it was practised within the school.

Mr Nel, as the principal, positioned servant leadership as prioritising individuals and their needs. He highlighted his efforts to enhance teacher morale and create a positive workplace atmosphere through a programme recognising teachers' hard work. He organised regular appreciation events, fostering a culture of excellence and commitment among the teaching staff. This initiative reflected a genuine intent to put the needs of the teachers at the forefront, promoting a sense of value and acknowledgement. Subsequently, the Deputy Principals stated that:

> *During the previous award ceremony, it was noticed that some teachers who regularly achieved exceptional outcomes and had notable accomplishments in their fields were disregarded.*

However, the deputy principal's viewpoint shed light on potential issues within the execution of this programme. The recognition process for outstanding teachers seemed to deviate from merit-based standards, favouring personal relationships and influential

groups. Consequently, the programme's credibility was compromised, leading to disheartenment among deserving teachers who felt overlooked.

Mrs Mahlangu, a departmental head, echoed concerns about transparency and fairness in the recognition process. She indicated a lack of involvement among staff and perceived a bias in the principal's selection of recipients. Her perspective underscored the importance of objective criteria to ensure all deserving individuals receive due recognition. Subsequently, Miss Sukhoo's support for Mr Nel's leadership approach showcased the impact of servant leadership on the classroom level. She translated the principal's prioritisation of individuals into her teaching practices, recognising learner achievements with certificates. She created a positive learning environment by mutual assistance and acknowledging milestones.

Bonga, a learner, provided insight into the learner experience. While some teachers tried to recognise learner achievements through certificates, these recognitions were limited to individual classes. This observation indicated a potential gap in extending recognition across the school community.

Findings reveal a nuanced understanding of servant leadership in School C. Mr Nel's intent to prioritise individuals through recognition demonstrates a commitment to servant leadership principles, yet challenges of transparency and equity surface. The gap between intentions and execution questions the recognition process's effectiveness.

To address these issues, establish a transparent, unbiased framework for recognising individuals. Studies stress fair, inclusive recognition for positive organisational culture (Smith & Adams, 2017; Greenleaf, 1977). Transparency and participation enhance employee satisfaction (Den Hartog et al., 2013). School C's recognition efforts indicate some familiarity with servant leadership, but there is a need for a deeper understanding and more consistent implementation of this leadership philosophy.

4.4.4 Impact of servant leadership on leadership style of principals

The findings shed light on the impact of servant leadership on principals' leadership style within School C. Mr Nel, as the principal, emphasised his commitment to building trust through active listening, transparency in decision-making, and consistent integrity. This commitment was reflected in his practice of conducting frequent staff meetings, maintaining an open-door policy, and providing transparent meeting records. These efforts aimed to create an environment of open communication and inclusivity, fostering a culture of trust and reliance.

However, contrasting perspectives emerged from Mr Kgosi and Mrs Mahlangu, highlighting challenges in cultivating trust. The prevailing sense of unease and gossip in the school environment hindered the establishment of trust. The inconsistency between the principal's messaging – initially promoting open-door accessibility but later emphasising formal appointments – contributed to confusion and undermined the credibility of the leadership's intentions. Similarly, Miss Sukhoo echoed these concerns:

> *One particular concern revolves around the issue of granting leave, as it appears that certain teachers are consistently given more leave compared to others. Additionally, it has been observed that some individuals are allowed to leave early based on personal connections rather than adhering to fair and transparent procedures.*

She pointed to unfulfilled promises and perceived discrepancies in the principal's actions. The perceived focus on forming alliances rather than building a united school community raised questions about the principal's priorities.

Bonga's perspective as a learner illuminated the challenge of trust-building within the school environment. Fear of retaliation and the potential breach of confidentiality discouraged open communication between learners and teachers, hindering the establishment of a trustworthy and supportive atmosphere. An additional layer of complexity emerged from the observations, where, despite assurances of confidentiality, participants expressed apprehension about their responses being

shared verbatim and their potential visibility within the school community. This cautiousness reflected the challenges in fostering an environment where individuals feel comfortable expressing their opinions openly.

The findings underscore the lack of servant leadership within School C due to the absence of trust-building measures. Despite Mr Nel's attempts to emphasise trust through open communication and transparency, the prevailing challenges, including inconsistent messaging, perceived favouritism, and a pervasive culture of unease, demonstrate servant leadership principles' insufficiency in positively shaping leadership practices. Extensive literature highlights that schools grappling with trust and favouritism face hurdles in establishing a conducive learning environment. Trust is crucial for effective teaching and learning; its absence reduces morale, learner engagement, and academic progress. Favouritism compounds trust issues, fostering resentment among faculty and learners. Scholars stress strong leadership, transparent communication, and commitment to fairness and equity as remedies for these challenges within educational institutions. Failing to address these issues can harm the school climate and educational outcomes, underscoring the urgent need for improvement (Canavesi & Minelli, 2022).

4.4.5 Practices illustrating servant and ethical leadership in schools

He stated that Mr Nel's leadership approach involves implementing a unique system to address behavioural issues. His response to the rise in bullying cases exemplified servant leadership principles. By introducing a punishment system that incorporated community service, he aimed to foster empathy, responsibility, and understanding among learners involved in bullying. This approach addressed the behavioural issue and created opportunities for reflection and positive contribution, fostering a sense of respect and kindness in the school environment.

The deputy principal, Mr Kgosi, echoed Mr Nel's sentiment, emphasising collaborative efforts in addressing bullying. Together, they engaged with parents and implemented community service as a corrective measure, demonstrating a shared commitment to cultivating empathy and character development among learners. This reflected the ethical leadership aspect of their approach, promoting values-driven

actions for positive behavioural change. Mrs Mahlangu further corroborated the effectiveness of empathy-driven initiatives. She highlighted the mentorship programme involving older learners as guides for new learners, showcasing a proactive strategy to combat bullying. This programme curbed negative behaviours and nurtured a culture of care and support, reflecting servant and ethical leadership principles.

Adding to the discussion, Miss Sukhoo's perspective highlighted the multi-faceted benefits of empathy-centred approaches. The mentorship programme empowered older learners, allowing them to develop leadership skills while fostering a caring environment. This holistic approach resonated with both servant and ethical leadership ideals, emphasising the development of responsible and compassionate individuals.

Bonga's observation of decreased instances of bullying validated the impact of Mr Nel's community service approach. The introduction of consequences aligned with ethical leadership principles, driving behavioural change and encouraging learners to reflect on their actions. The positive outcomes observed further highlighted the effectiveness of empathy-driven strategies in promoting a harmonious and respectful school environment.

The study's findings underscored the alignment between the daily leadership practices of principals within School C and servant and ethical leadership principles. The emphasis on empathy as a tool to address bullying highlighted the positive impact of servant leadership on school culture. Moreover, implementing community service as a corrective measure reflected ethical leadership's focus on responsible actions and character development.

The results align with literature emphasising empathy and ethical decision-making in leadership (DeWilde & Huebner, 2017). Empathy-driven initiatives have a transformative effect, fostering inclusive and caring environments. These principals demonstrated their commitment to creating positive and supportive school communities by addressing bullying through empathy-driven strategies. In conclusion, the principals' daily practices, rooted in empathy and ethical considerations, reflect elements of servant and ethical leadership principles. Their actions address immediate

challenges and contribute to cultivating values-driven individuals and promoting a safe, inclusive school environment.

4.4.6 Servant and ethical leadership as factors for school improvement

During the interview, Mr Nel acknowledged actively pursuing Wi-Fi connectivity and computer resources. His dedication to preparing learners for an ever-changing world had remained unwavering, and the school's commitment to technology access had aimed to foster innovation, nurturing creativity and critical thinking skills among the learners. This drive for improvement and empowerment had always been at the heart of their mission.

With a shared vision, Mr Kgosi and Mrs Mahlangu focused on equipping learners and teachers with essential computer skills, recognising the challenges posed by limited resources. They had prioritised computer literacy as the key to navigating the digital landscape effectively, believing that this strategic approach would uplift the entire school community and enhance the educational experience for everyone involved.

Collaboration between Mr Nel, the staff, and the school governing body aimed to secure sponsors and IT resources. Their determination in the face of challenges underscored their commitment to providing Learners with the tools they needed to excel in the digital age. While tangible results may have been elusive at times, their resolve had remained unshaken.

Miss Sukhoo mentioned:

> *I have noticed that the principal has been vocal about their vision of incorporating digital technologies, such as smartboards and computers, into our classrooms. However, there has been a lack of significant progress in turning this vision into a reality.*

Miss Sukhoo raised the issue of a gap between the principal's vision and its implementation, highlighting the school's limited resources. Despite these constraints, dedicated teachers like her had strived to create engaging learning experiences using

their personal technology resources. The school might not have provided all the tools, but the teachers had been determined to enhance instruction and learning. Furthermore, Bonga had also emphasised the school's technological limitations compared to others. However, the teachers' resourcefulness in using available technology has been commendable. Despite these constraints, they have persevered in their mission to bridge the resource gap and provide valuable educational opportunities for their learners.

The study's findings suggest the potential significance of servant and ethical leadership principles as catalysts for school improvement within School C, indicating that participants' visions could align with these leadership ideals, possibly reflecting a commitment to fostering growth, empowerment, and positive change in the educational landscape. Literature generally reinforces the importance of servant and ethical leadership in education (Starratt, 2004; Sergiovanni, 2007), highlighting leadership's transformative impact on school improvement through participants' potential dedication to equipping learners with essential skills and providing valuable resources. Their shared commitment to overcoming resource limitations illustrates the potential power of servant and ethical leadership in driving positive change. Despite acknowledged challenges, the participants' collective efforts may demonstrate their dedication to fostering a potentially better educational experience and preparing learners for a dynamic future.

4.4.7 Exemplifying ethical and servant behaviour

Mr Nel's actions included emphasising financial integrity, collaborating with the school governing body, and prioritising ethical practices, all of which contributed to the school's commitment to transparent and responsible financial management. These measures collectively established a culture of trust and ethical conduct within the school.

He added that:

At least three governing body members diligently review and sign off on all the release of funds, ensuring that every decision is made with the utmost integrity.

Mr Nel's approach of entrusting financial matters to the school governing body demonstrated the school's dedication to transparency and accountability. This practice, aligned with ethical leadership principles, was a cornerstone of promoting responsible financial management.

Likewise, Mrs Mahlangu and Miss Sukhoo's fundraising efforts were characterised by their commitment to ethical conduct and strict financial management practices. Their consideration of learners' economic backgrounds underscored the school's empathetic approach to financial decisions, ensuring the process was equitable and inclusive.

The observer's perspective acknowledged the school's commitment to integrity throughout the research process. Their cooperative and transparent engagement exemplified ethical conduct, fostering a research environment built on trust.

The findings revealed a consistent commitment to ethical and servant behaviour within School C. Participants' narratives demonstrated dedication to integrity, transparency, and accountability in various aspects, including financial management and learner behaviour. The literature emphasises the role of ethical leadership in fostering a culture of integrity and trust (Klein, 2014), as revealed by the participants' actions for this study, which aligned with building trust within the school community. The school's dedication to certain ethical and servant behaviours contributes to its ongoing improvement journey. Despite challenges, the participants' commitment to fairness, transparency, and integrity is a guiding force in shaping a positive and ethical school environment.

4.5 Discussion of findings

4.5.1 Awareness and understanding of servant leadership among school principals

In examining the awareness and understanding of servant leadership principles among three school principals, namely Mr Johnson, Mr Singh, and Mr Nel, distinct approaches and outcomes come to light. Mr Johnson's leadership aligns with servant leadership characteristics of empathy and commitment by emphasising the well-being of learners and staff through initiatives such as the Guardian Angel Project and active involvement in Mandela Day. His commitment to prioritising individuals fosters a more compassionate school community. In contrast, Mr Singh's specialisation in the "Young Men's Leadership Program" primarily benefits a specific group of learners, emphasising personal growth and character development. While impactful within its scope, it does not extend as broadly as Mr Johnson's initiatives.

Meanwhile, Mr Nel's leadership intentions are rooted in servant leadership principles, as seen in his recognition programme to boost teacher morale. However, execution challenges, such as transparency and fairness issues, raise questions about the effectiveness of his approach. These principals' approaches vary in their comprehensiveness and execution, and while some elements of servant leadership are evident, they do not holistically embody the principles.

Optimising the impact of servant leadership in education may benefit from a combination of specialised programmes and inclusive initiatives, allowing for tailored approaches that address diverse needs. Mr Johnson's broader initiatives benefit the entire school community, while Mr Singh's programme provides specialised support to a specific group of learners. Both approaches have merits, and teachers can explore ways to integrate them effectively. Furthermore, Mr Nel's recognition programme underscores the importance of aligning leadership initiatives with the principles of servant leadership, but it requires refinement to ensure transparency and fairness. A deeper understanding and consistent application of servant leadership principles may enhance leadership effectiveness and contribute to a more supportive educational environment, although individual results may vary (Moyo, 2021; Smith, 2019; Cerit,

2010). A study by Sipal et al. (2021) found that principals who practised servant leadership reported higher levels of teacher job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Furthermore, the study showed that servant leadership was positively related to learner's academic achievement.

4.5.2 Impact of servant leadership on leadership style of principals

The impact of servant leadership on the principals' leadership styles in the examined schools reveals a spectrum of approaches and outcomes. Principal Johnson's commitment to professional development, the introduction of an ICT programme, and the voluntary mentorship programme "Learners Leading Learners" reflect his dedication to fostering an environment where individuals are motivated to reach their full potential. These initiatives align seamlessly with servant leadership principles, emphasising resource provision, collaboration, and personal development. Observations of learners engaging with computer labs beyond school hours underscore the tangible impact of empowerment as one of the servant leadership principles, as the school provides opportunities for skill development and interest pursuit. Recent literature suggests that adopting certain servant leadership principles can benefit some principals' leadership styles, though the extent of these benefits may differ based on context (Nayak & Mishra, 2005). Although these initiatives are commendable, they reflect specific efforts rather than a complete integration of servant leadership into the principal's overall leadership style (Williams et al., 2019; Greenleaf, 1977).

In contrast, Mr Singh's leadership illustrates certain aspects of servant leadership, particularly in nurturing personal and professional growth. His relentless pursuit of funding for programmes like Robotics and his commitment to equipping his team with essential resources showcase his dedication to enhancing teaching methods and learners' digital skills. The collaboration with a nearby university for the Robotics programme is an example of servant leadership in action. However, it remains a specific application rather than a reflection of a broader leadership style. Mr. Singh's innovative and service-oriented approach incorporates some elements of servant leadership, though it may not represent the full range of principles associated with this leadership style (Molefi, 2020; Anderson, 2019; Greenleaf, 1977). Mr Singh could

work on awareness and conceptualisation to broaden his leadership approach and address the needs of the entire school community.

4.5.3 Practices demonstrating the presence of servant and ethical leadership in principals

In comparing Principals Johnson, Singh, and Nel, it becomes evident that each has some aspects of servant and ethical leadership principles, though not fully integrated. Principal Johnson's empathetic listening and swift action in addressing bullying reports showcase his commitment to the well-being and safety of learners. This approach aligns with servant and ethical leadership frameworks, emphasising empathy, responsiveness, and moral engagement. However, these actions represent specific instances rather than a comprehensive adoption of these leadership styles. On the other hand, Mr Singh's introduction of a suggestion box and the subsequent implementation of the Uniform Bank reflect his dedication to listening and responsiveness to stakeholders' needs, demonstrating some servant and ethical leadership values. However, these are isolated practices rather than a holistic embodiment of servant and ethical leadership. Similarly, Mr Nel's strategy to combat bullying through community service emphasises empathy, responsibility, and character development, highlighting the fusion of both leadership paradigms.

The unique contexts and challenges faced by each school reveal that different approaches to leadership may be necessary, highlighting the importance of adapting styles to specific situations. Principal Johnson's focus on addressing bullying aligns with a particular issue in his school, while Mr Singh's emphasis on feedback channels caters to broader stakeholder engagement. Mr Nel's approach, centred around community service, addresses behavioural issues, offering a nuanced solution to a distinct challenge. These distinctions illustrate that effective leadership requires flexibility and adaptation to meet the varying needs of the school community. Certain practices reflect servant and ethical leadership; however, the degree to which these principles are consistently applied across the schools varies (Zulu, 2021; Brown & Brown, 2019). In essence, the principals' daily practices collectively underscore the overarching value of empathy, responsiveness, and moral engagement in fostering

positive school environments. Still, they highlight the flexibility and adaptability required to navigate diverse educational settings effectively.

Furthermore, empathy and ethical behaviour are critical components of effective leadership, but their presence in isolated instances does not mean that they define the overall leadership approach. Empathy shapes daily practice in all three schools, yet the extent to which it influences broader leadership decisions and strategies remains limited. The connection between empathy and ethical behaviour indicates opportunities for further integration, though challenges remain in fully implementing these leadership ideals within the school context (Dlamini & Dladla, 2019).

4.5.4 Servant and ethical leadership as factors for school improvement

The examination of servant and ethical leadership as factors for school improvement reveals the multifaceted nature of effective educational leadership. Servant leadership, exemplified by Mr Johnson and others, underscores the importance of responsiveness to stakeholder needs, fostering a culture of accountability, and driving performance through clear communication. This approach emphasises the importance of addressing the needs of teachers, learners, and parents, which may contribute to various aspects of school improvement. However, these initiatives alone do not fully capture the holistic nature of servant leadership. In contrast, as demonstrated by Mr Singh and discussed by his colleagues, ethical leadership emphasises the significance of transparent, fair, and inclusive decision-making processes. It seeks to uphold principles of honesty, integrity, and justice in resource allocation and governance but does not necessarily translate into a comprehensive ethical leadership strategy.

Both leadership approaches emphasise accountability and transparency, yet they may provide different pathways for achieving school improvement. The interplay between these leadership styles highlights the need for a balanced and nuanced approach that integrates some aspects of servant and ethical leadership. A comprehensive leadership strategy should strive to meet the needs of stakeholders while upholding ethical principles, recognising the dynamic nature of educational leadership, and addressing the complexities that may arise during leadership transitions and shifting priorities. However, the evidence from these schools suggests that there is still work to achieve

this integration. The interplay between servant and ethical leadership principles can support a holistic approach to school improvement, though varying application levels exist in practice (Mphahlele & Mathipa, 2020; Okech & Ayiro, 2020). One recent study by Dlamini and Dladla (2021) supports that servant and ethical leadership can positively impact education outcomes. The study found that principals who demonstrate behaviours consistent with these leadership principles are more likely to create inclusive learning environments, promote professional development for staff, and foster positive relationships with learners and their families.

4.5.5 Exemplifying ethical and servant behaviour

The exploration of ethical and servant behaviour within educational leadership illuminates the essential role these principles play in shaping the ethos of a school community. Mr Johnson's principled decision to prioritise safety over popularity by cancelling a beloved school event exemplifies a moment of ethical leadership's commitment to moral integrity and stewardship. However, this does not necessarily reflect a consistent ethical leadership style. His decision highlights that ethical leadership involves making difficult choices based on ethical principles and the well-being of stakeholders. Furthermore, the endorsements from his Deputy Principal and Departmental Head highlight the ripple effect of ethical leadership, fostering a culture of respect, inclusivity, and transparent communication. These narratives illustrate that ethical and servant behaviours manifest in specific actions, yet they may not encompass the entirety of the principals' leadership styles.

Simultaneously, Mr Singh's embodiment of servant leadership principles, such as his open-door policy and commitment to equal respect for all, aligns with the servant leadership characteristics of listening, empathy, and dedication to the growth of people. The endorsement of his approach by Mr Sithole and Mrs Van der Merwe reinforces the impact of certain servant leadership principles in fostering a supportive and trusting environment within the school community. Zinhle's learner perspective adds a dimension of authenticity, illustrating how the fusion of some ethical and servant leadership principles creates a positive classroom experience that values diverse viewpoints and empowers learners. While these behaviours positively influence school culture, cultivating a comprehensive ethical and servant leadership

environment would benefit from a more consistent application across the board (Mhlongo & Madikizela-Madiya, 2021; Greenleaf, 1977).

4.6 Chapter summary

Chapter Four focused on analyzing data from interviews and focus group discussions regarding the awareness and implementation of servant leadership principles among school principals. Key principles such as empathy, listening, and respect were examined for their effects on leadership styles and school culture. The findings revealed that servant and ethical leadership may positively influence decision-making, communication, and the creation of a supportive environment. Furthermore, incorporating learners perspectives highlighted how these leadership practices may foster inclusivity and valued diverse opinions in classrooms.

CHAPTER FIVE

REFLECTIVE STUDY SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter presented an extensive analysis of the research results. The present chapter serves as a logical culmination of this study, as it integrates the emerging trends highlighted in the previous chapter with the core objectives of this study. It includes a summary of the research, conclusions, and recommendations. Moreover, the study aimed to investigate (a) the awareness of servant leadership among principals within the Gauteng Province context, (b) the degree to which servant leadership influences their leadership style, if at all, and (c) the extent to which leaders exhibit ethical conduct. This chapter employs these questions as an organising framework to clarify the extent to which they have been addressed. Finally, the chapter concludes by providing recommendations for future research.

5.2 Study summary

Chapter One of the research provides an introduction and overview that establish the context and framework for the entire study. It encompasses the introduction, problem statement, purpose, significance of the research, crucial research inquiries, dissertation structure, and chapter abstract. Furthermore, it briefly mentions the concept of servant leadership and its consequences.

Chapter Two analysed the literature and theoretical frameworks supporting this research project. The initial segment conducts a thorough study of servant leadership, a term coined by Robert Greenleaf in 1970, concentrating on the concept, execution, promotion, and importance of servant leadership in enhancing ethical leadership in an organisation. The latter part is structured based on Robert Greenleaf's philosophy of servant leadership, which forms the foundation and links to the study's objective.

Chapter Three provided a detailed account of various methodological aspects, including the research paradigm, research design, research methodology, sampling,

data collection, data analysis, reliability, ethical considerations, and the scope of the study. The chapter will also explain the rationale behind selecting these methods and methodologies and justify their adoption for the research project.

Chapter Four is dedicated to the discussion of the research findings. The data collected through semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and observations were analysed using thematic analysis and coding techniques to explore the participants' experiences with servant leadership from diverse perspectives. The chapter presented the analysis results and comprehensively discussed the findings and contrasts.

Chapter Five summarises the research project, including its findings and recommendations. This concluding chapter marks the end of the study and provides a final reflection on the research process, the research question, and the overall significance of the study.

5.3 Conclusions

The findings in the study have unveiled crucial insights into the experiences of school principals with servant and ethical leadership in Gauteng Province. The research aimed to understand the awareness, perception, and practice of servant leadership principles among school principals and the resulting impact on ethical behaviour and school improvement. The study highlighted the fundamental importance of servant leadership, characterised by ethics, honesty, and a commitment to aiding others. These qualities were essential for effective leadership and the bedrock for ethical decision-making. Recent studies, such as those by Lewis and Stone (2020) and Ibrahim and Daniel (2019), confirm that servant leadership qualities are pivotal in fostering ethical decision-making and improving leadership effectiveness in educational settings.

The initial examination of the educational landscape revealed troubling statistics related to unethical misconduct, emphasising the urgent need for ethical leadership. Critical questions were posed regarding school principals' awareness of servant leadership, how much they incorporate it into their leadership styles, and whether their daily practices align with servant and ethical leadership principles. These questions

provided a solid framework for our research and facilitated a deeper understanding of leadership dynamics within Gauteng Province schools.

The subsequent exploration focused on the experiences of three school principals: Mr Johnson, Mr Singh, and Mr Nel. Each of these leaders represented a distinct approach to servant leadership. Mr Johnson's leadership was characterised by initiatives like the Guardian Angel Project, which prioritised the well-being of learners and staff, fostering a compassionate school community. In contrast, Mr Singh's leadership specialised in the "Young Men's Leadership Program", targeting a specific group of learners and emphasising personal growth. Meanwhile, Mr Nel's approach was grounded in servant leadership principles, exemplified by his recognition programme to boost teacher morale, albeit facing execution challenges. These diverse leadership approaches underscored the need for a more profound understanding and consistent application of servant leadership principles to create positive school environments. Mansoor and Muna (2021) highlight that, when aligned with servant leadership principles, varied approaches to leadership can significantly enhance school climates, yet they emphasise the importance of consistency in application.

The research also illuminated the impact of servant leadership on the leadership styles of these principals. Principal Johnson's commitment to empowerment activities, resource provision, and personal development vividly demonstrated how servant leadership principles could shape leadership styles and create dynamic educational environments. Mr Singh's dedication to nurturing personal and professional growth, collaboration, and innovation seamlessly aligned with specific servant leadership values, enriching the educational landscape. These examples suggest the potential benefits of adopting servant leadership principles to enhance leadership effectiveness and foster a culture that values individuals' well-being and growth. This is supported by findings from Brown and Riley (2022), who argue that servant leadership principles, particularly in resource provision and empowerment, play a critical role in enhancing school leadership effectiveness.

Furthermore, the investigation into Principals Johnson, Singh, and Nel unveiled their unique blends of servant and ethical leadership principles. Common threads of

empathetic listening, responsiveness, and moral engagement were evident in their practices, fostering inclusive and caring school environments. However, these leaders showed varying degrees of commitment to prioritising their school communities' ethical development of their school. A study by Moore and Chikwe (2019) suggests that while many school leaders exhibit servant and ethical leadership traits, the consistency of these practices is crucial for sustained positive outcomes.

Within the context of school improvement, our study underscored the significance of servant leadership in responding to stakeholder needs, fostering accountability, and promoting clear communication. On the other hand, ethical leadership emphasises transparent, fair, and inclusive decision-making, upholding principles of honesty, integrity, and justice. The interplay between these leadership styles highlighted the need for a balanced and nuanced approach that integrates servant and ethical leadership elements to enhance the overall quality of education and the school environment. Okech and Ayiro (2020) emphasise the need for a balanced leadership approach, integrating servant and ethical principles to achieve holistic school improvement.

The findings in the study have yielded invaluable insights into the intricacies of leadership within schools in Gauteng Province and the pivotal role played by servant and ethical leadership principles in shaping leadership styles, promoting ethical behaviour, and fostering school improvement. The narratives of Mr. Johnson, Mr. Singh, and Mr Nel indicate how certain ethical and servant leadership activities can cultivate an ethical and empowering school culture where individuals are respected and encouraged to flourish. Ultimately, this research highlights the paramount importance of leadership, which values the well-being and growth of all stakeholders in educational institutions. Lastly, the path to ethical leadership and improved schools requires ongoing commitment, understanding, and a steadfast dedication to the principles of servant leadership, mainly through continuous reflection and adaptation of leadership activities (Mhlongo & Madikizela-Madiya, 2021).

5.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study:

- **Leadership development programmes**: Implement comprehensive leadership development programmes for school principals that focus on cultivating servant and ethical leadership principles. These programmes should offer continuous training and support to help principals understand and apply these principles in their daily practices.

- **Mentorship and peer learning**: Promote mentorship and peer learning opportunities among school principals. Encourage experienced principals who excel in servant and ethical leadership to mentor and share their insights with newer or struggling leaders.

- **Integration of leadership styles**: Encourage principals to effectively integrate servant and ethical leadership styles in their schools. Emphasise the need for a balanced approach that addresses their school communities' unique challenges and needs while upholding ethical principles.

- **Transparent accountability measures**: Establish transparent accountability measures for school principals, focusing on ethical conduct and servant leadership practices. This includes regular evaluations and feedback mechanisms to ensure leaders align their actions with these principles.

- **Curriculum integration**: Embed servant and ethical leadership principles into the educational curriculum for aspiring school leaders. Ensure that future principals have the knowledge and skills to lead with integrity and empathy.

- **Community involvement**: Encourage greater community involvement in school governance and leadership. This can help ensure that schools are accountable to their local communities and that leadership practices reflect community values and needs.

- **Research and evaluation**: Promote ongoing research and evaluation of leadership practices in Gauteng Province schools. Continue to assess the

impact of servant and ethical leadership on school improvement, learner outcomes, and teacher satisfaction to refine and enhance leadership strategies.

5.5 The implications of the study

This study has contributed to understanding the awareness, perceptions, and practices of some principles of servant leadership among school principals and teachers. However, much still needs to be explored in this area. First, future studies could explore the impact of servant leadership on learner outcomes such as academic achievement and well-being. This would provide insight into the effectiveness of servant leadership in promoting positive outcomes for learners.

Second, further research could examine the role of servant leadership in creating a positive school culture. This could include investigating how servant leadership principles can foster a sense of community among school staff and lead to increased job satisfaction and better retention rates.

Third, there is a need for research that explores the relationship between servant leadership and other leadership styles. This would help to clarify the distinctiveness of servant leadership and its potential as a complementary approach to different leadership styles.

Fourth, research could examine the impact of servant leadership on parent and community engagement in schools. This would help determine whether servant leadership principles can be used to build strong relationships between schools and their communities, leading to increased support for education initiatives.

Finally, further research could investigate the impact of training and development programmes on adopting and implementing servant leadership principles among school leaders. This would help identify effective strategies for promoting servant leadership in schools and supporting school leaders in enacting these principles.

Overall, further research is needed to build on the findings of this study and expand our understanding of servant leadership in education. This research can help to guide

policy and practice in schools and support the development of effective leadership approaches that promote positive outcomes for learners, teachers, and the broader school community.

5.6 Chapter summary

Overall, the study on servant leadership and ethical conduct among principals in Gauteng Province emphasises the importance of promoting these leadership approaches to achieve positive outcomes in education. The study suggests intentional efforts to develop servant leadership and ethical behaviour skills among school leaders are needed to create more inclusive learning environments and foster positive relationships with learners and their families. The findings also highlight the potential benefits of promoting these leadership approaches, such as increased teacher job satisfaction, motivation, retention, and better learner outcomes. Further research could explore effective strategies for promoting and measuring the impact of servant leadership and ethical behaviour among Gauteng Province school leaders, aiming to improve education outcomes and promote more equitable and inclusive schools.

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Appendix A: Ethical clearance certificate

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG | WSoE Wits School of Education

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION ETHICS COMMITTEE

CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	PROTOCOL NUMBER: 2022ECE049M
PROJECT TITLE	Investigating the experiences of school Principals Servant and Ethical leadership in South Africa.
INVESTIGATOR	Mohlala Nkeke Onicah
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR	WSOE
DATE CONSIDERED	10 August 2022
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
RISK LEVEL	No Risk
EXPIRY DATE	Date of submission of the Research Report
ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE	CHAIRPERSON Dr. Batseba Mofolo-Mbokane

cc: Dr. A.Naidu

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and ONE COPY returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Signature _____ Date 25 / 08 / 2022

Appendix B: Permission to conduct research

GAUTENG PROVINCE
Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	**07 August 2022**
Validity of Research Approval:	**08 February 2022– 30 September 2022** **2022/342**
Name of Researcher:	**Mohlala NO**
Address of Researcher:	**386 Herby Currer Street**
	Garsfontein
	Pretoria East
Telephone Number:	**012 343 2357 / 073 004 6555**
Email address:	**Onicah.mohlala@gmail.com**
Research Topic:	**Investigating the experiences of school Principals Servant and Ethical Leadership in South Africa**
Type of qualification	**Masters**
Number and type of schools:	**3 Primary Schools**
District/s/HO	**Tshwane South**

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

08/08/2022

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below are met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 355 0488
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

1. *The letter would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
2. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.*
3. ***Because of the relaxation of COVID 19 regulations researchers can collect data online, telephonically, physically access schools, or may make arrangements for Zoom with the school Principal. Requests for such arrangements should be submitted to the GDE Education Research and Knowledge Management directorate.***
4. ***The Researchers are advised to wear a mask at all times, Social distance at all times, Provide a vaccination certificate or negative COVID-19 test, not older than 72 hours, and Sanitise frequently.***
5. *A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s has been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
6. *A letter/document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs, and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.*
7. *The Researcher will make every effort to obtain the goodwill and cooperation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers, and learners involved. Persons who offer their cooperation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.*
8. *Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school program is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.*
9. *Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.*
10. *Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.*
11. *It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.*
12. *The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes, and telephones, and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.*
13. *The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers, and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.*
14. *On completion of the study, the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.*
15. *The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings, and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.*
16. *Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a summary of the purpose, findings, and recommendations of the research study.*

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

.....

Mr. Gumani Mukatuni
Acting CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 08/08/2022

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 355 0488
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

Appendix C: Approval to conduct research

School A

APPROVAL IN RESPECT OF REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to N.O Mohlala (1777949) to conduct research at our institution in respect to the study: Investigating the experiences of school Principals Servant and Ethical leadership in South Africa.

Regards,

Principal

05/09/22

Date

GAUTENG DEPT. OF EDUCATION
TEL: 0 [redacted] 1101
2022 -09- 05
14 [redacted] 0002
TSHWANE SOUTH - D4

School Stamp

School B

APPROVAL IN RESPECT OF REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to N.O Mohlala (1777949) to conduct research at our institution in respect to the study: Investigating the experiences of school Principals Servant and Ethical leadership in South Africa.

Regards,

[redacted]

Surname

Principal

15/9/2022

Date

GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
[redacted]
2022 -09- 15
P.O. BOX 30559
[redacted]
TSHWANE SOUTH DISTRICT - D4

School Stamp

School C

APPROVAL IN RESPECT OF REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to N.O Mohlala (1777949) to conduct research at our institution in respect to the study: Investigating the experiences of school Principals Servant and Ethical leadership in South Africa.

Regards,

[redacted]

Surname

Principal

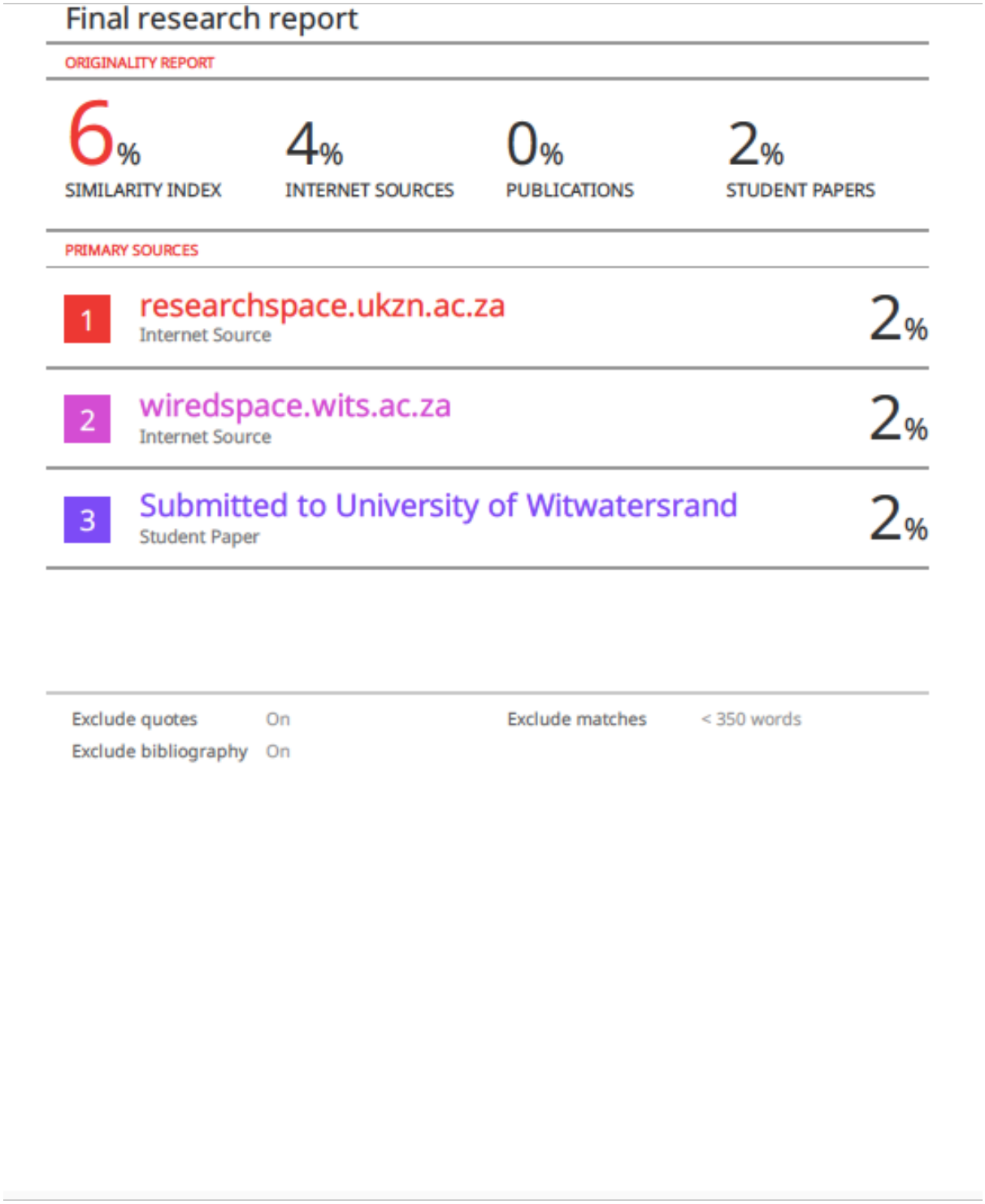
21/09/2022

Date

GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
[redacted]
2022 -09- 21
[redacted]
TSHWANE SOUTH DISTRICT - D4

School Stamp

Appendix D: Plagiarism report



Final research report

ORIGINALITY REPORT

6%	4%	0%	2%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1	researchspace.ukzn.ac.za Internet Source	2%
2	wiredspace.wits.ac.za Internet Source	2%
3	Submitted to University of Witwatersrand Student Paper	2%

Exclude quotes	On	Exclude matches	< 350 words
Exclude bibliography	On		

Appendix E: Informed consent letter to the participants

CONSENT FORM (SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TEAM)



Title of project: Investigating the experiences of school Principals Servant and Ethical leadership in Gauteng Province.

Name of researcher: Nkeke Onicah Mohlala

I, ……., agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

Please circle the relevant options below

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.	YES	NO
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study.	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio-recorded.	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use direct quotations from my interview in their research report.	YES	NO
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (the researcher will not use my name in their research report).	YES	NO
I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained), but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on.	YES	NO

…… …….(Name of participant)…… …….(signature)

Nkeke Onicah Mohlala (name of researcher/person seeking consent) …… (signature) …… (date)

CONSENT FORM (TEACHER)



Title of project: Investigating the experiences of school Principals Servant and Ethical leadership in Gauteng Province.

Name of researcher: Nkeke Onicah Mohlala

I, ……., agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

Please circle the relevant options below

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.	YES	NO
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study.	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio-recorded.	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use direct quotations from my interview in their research report.	YES	NO
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (the researcher will not use my name in their research report).	YES	NO
I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained), but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on.	YES	NO

…… …….(Name of participant)…… …….(signature)

Nkeke Onicah Mohlala (name of researcher/person seeking consent) …… (signature) …… (date)

CONSENT FORM (PARENT)



Title of project: Investigating the experiences of school Principals Servant and Ethical leadership in Gauteng Province.

Name of researcher: Nkeke Onicah Mohlala

I, ……., agree that my child can participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

Please circle the relevant options below

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.	YES	NO
I understand that my child can volunteer to take part in the study.	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio-recorded.	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use direct quotations from my child's interview in their research report.	YES	NO
I agree that my child's participation will remain anonymous (their name will not be used by the researcher in their research report).	YES	NO
I agree that other researchers may use the information my child provides in the interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained), but their names and any personal information will not be used or passed on.	YES	NO

…… ……. (Name of participant) ……. …….(signature)

Nkeke Onicah Mohlala (name of researcher/person seeking consent) …… (signature) …… (date)

ASSENT FORM (LEARNER)



Title of project: Investigating the experiences of school Principals Servant and Ethical leadership in Gauteng Province.

Name of researcher: Nkeke Onicah Mohlala

I, …….., agree to participate in this research project.

I agree to the following:

Please circle the relevant options below

My parents and teacher explained the research study to me. I understand what this study is about.	YES	NO
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study.	YES	NO
I agree that the interview may be audio-recorded.	YES	NO
I agree that the researcher may use direct quotations from my interview in their research report.	YES	NO
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (the researcher will not use my name in their research report).	YES	NO
I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained), but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on.	YES	NO

…… ……..(Name of participant)…… …….(signature)

Nkeke Onicah Mohlala (name of researcher/person seeking consent)…… (signature) …… (date)

Appendix F: Interview Schedule for all participants

ORGANISATION: UNIVERSITY OF WITWATERSRAND	LOCATION: PRETORIA	INTERVIEW LOCATION: PRETORIA
INTERVIEWER: MISS MOHLALA (1777949)	THIRD TERM	

TIME	DATE	INTERVIEWEE'S SURNAME	POSITION	SIGNATURE
14:30	August 2022		Principal - School A	
14:50	August 2022		Deputy Principal - School A	
14:30	August 2022		Departmental Head - School A	
14:50	August 2022		Teachers - School A	
14:30	August 2022		Learners – School A	
14:50	September 2022		Principal - School B	
14:30	September 2022		Deputy Principal - School B	
14:50	September 2022		Departmental Head - School B	
14:30	September 2022		Teachers - School B	
14:50	September 2022		Learners – School B	
14:50	September 2022		Principal - School C	
14:30	October 2022		Deputy Principal - School C	
14:50	October 2022		Departmental Head - School C	
14:30	October 2022		Teachers - School C	
14:50	October 2022		Learners – School C	

Appendix G: Language Editor Certificate

Ntwintwi

Proofreading and Editing Solutions

We Turn Your Documents into a Work of Art!

Date: 14 September 2024

CERTIFICATE OF LANGUAGE EDITING

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to certify that the thesis bearing the provisional title *Investigating the Experiences of School Principals Servant and Ethical Leadership in Gauteng Province*, to be submitted by **Nkeke Onicah Mohlala,** has been edited for language correctness and spelling, consistency, coherence, and completeness of the list of references and cited authors, by Ntwintwi Proofreading and Editing Solutions. Neither the research content and substance nor the author's intentions were altered during the editing process.

Ntwintwi guarantees the quality of the English language in this thesis, provided our editor's changes are accepted, and further changes made to the thesis are checked by our editor.

Yours sincerely,

JABULANI NGCOBO
NTWINTWI PROOFREADING AND EDITING SOLUTIONS