EFFECTS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST ON THE APPOINTMENT OF PRINCIPALS: PERCEPTIONS ON THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP IN THE VHURONGA I CIRCUIT, VHEMBE EAST DISTRICT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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at the

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR TS MASHAU

2025

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DECLARATION

I **KHWATHISANI MASHILA** declare that "**Effects of Conflicts of Interest on the Appointment of Principals: Perceptions on the Quality of Leadership in the Vhuronga I Circuit, Vhembe East District, Limpopo Province**" is my work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and that this work has not been submitted before for any other degree at any other institution.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I thank God who gave me the strength to endure throughout the study. Without Him, I would not have completed this dissertation successfully. Let His name be praised!

I would like to express special thanks and appreciation to my supervisor, Prof TS Mashau, for the invaluable mentorship he provided throughout the study. Successful completion would not have been possible without his motivation, inspirational guidance, and encouragement. I am grateful for all the support he provided to me.

Special thanks also go to my wife, family, colleagues, and friends for all the prayers and sacrifices they made on my behalf when I had to deprive them of our quality time – to focus on the study. I am forever indebted to them all.

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to determine the effects of conflicts of interest on the appointment of school principals. Specifically, it sought to find out teachers' views regarding the extent to which conflicts of interest affect the appointment of quality school principals; to determine teachers' perceptions regarding the impact of the appointment of poor-quality school principals on the delivery of effective teaching and learning at schools; and to recommend strategies that would help educational authorities eliminate conflicts of interest from appointment processes for school principals. The explanatory mixed-method research design was employed. The population comprised teachers, principals, School Governing Body (SGB) members, and union leaders from secondary schools in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit. Simple random sampling was used for the quantitative phase of the study, and the purposive sampling method was used for the qualitative phase of the study. A questionnaire was used to collect data for the quantitative phase of the study, and an interview schedule was used to collect data for the qualitative phase of the study. The data from the questionnaires was analysed using a computer programme called Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Data reduction and data display were used to analyse the qualitative data. Data from the qualitative phase was used to explain, refine or extend the results from the quantitative phase. Thereafter, both quantitative and qualitative data were integrated into a coherent whole. The study found that conflicts of interest exist in the appointment processes for principals and that the appointment of poor-quality principals compromised the achievement of school outcomes, thereby negating the delivery of quality education to learners. Recommendations were made to all important stakeholders in the appointment process to help eliminate the conflicts of interest.

Key Concepts: School Management and Leadership, Conflict of Interest, Nepotism, Patronage and Corruption

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACE	:	Advanced Certificate in Education
ANC	:	African National Congress
CAPEA	:	California Association of Professors of Educational Administration
COSATU	:	Congress of South African Trade Unions
DBE	:	Department of Basic Education
EEA	:	Employment of Educators Act
HoD	:	Head of Department
INJURLENS	:	International Journal of Law, Environment and Natural Resources
JET	:	Journal of Educational Thoughts
LRA	:	Labour Relations Act
NDP	:	National Development Plan
PAM	:	Personnel Administrative Measures
PEU	:	Professional Educators' Union
SADTU	:	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SASA	:	South African Schools Act
SDG	:	Sustainable Development Goals
SGB	:	School Governing Body
SOP	:	Standard Operating Procedures
SPSS	:	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UN	:	United Nations

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION ii

DECLARATION OF PLAGIARISM iii

DEDICATION iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS v

ABSTRACT vi

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS vii

LIST OF TABLES xiv

LIST OF FIGURES xv

CHAPTER 1 1

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY 1

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND 1

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM 5

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES 5

1.3.1 Secondary Research Questions 5

1.3.2 Hypotheses 6

1.4 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES 6

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY 7

1.6 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW 7

1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 11

1.8 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS 12

1.8.1 School Management and Leadership 12

1.8.2 Conflict of Interest 12

1.8.3 Nepotism 12

1.8.4 Patronage 13

1.8.5 Corruption 13

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1.9 RESEARCH PARADIGM 13
1.10 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY 13
1.10.1 Population 14
1.10.2 Sampling 14
1.10.3 Data Collection Instruments 15
1.10.4 Data Analysis 15
1.11 MEASURES OF QUALITY CONTROL 16
1.11.1 Measures of Quality Control in the Quantitative Phase 17
1.11.2 Measures of Quality Control in the Qualitative Phase 17
1.11.2.1 Credibility 17
1.11.2.2 Dependability 18
1.11.2.3 Confirmability 18
1.11.2.4 Transferability 18
1.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS 18
1.12.1 Permission to Conduct Research 19
1.12.2 Informed Consent 19
1.12.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality 19
1.12.3 Voluntary Participation 20
1.12.4 Reduction of Harm 20
1.12.5 Putting of Identifiers 20
1.13 DELIMITATION OF STUDY 20
1.14 STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT 21
CHAPTER 2 23
LITERATURE REVIEW 23
2.1 INTRODUCTION 23
2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 24
2.3 CONCEPTUALISING CONFLICTS OF INTEREST 25
2.3.1 Types of Conflicts of Interest in the Appointment of Principals 27

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2.4 CONTEXTUALISING CONFLICTS OF INTEREST IN THE APPOINTMENT OF PRINCIPALS IN SOUTH AFRICA 28
2.4.1 The Effects of Conflicts of Interest on the Appointment of Quality Principals .. 30
2.4.2 The Impact of the Appointment of Poor-quality School Principals on the Delivery of Effective Teaching and Learning at Schools 31
2.4.3 How can Educational Authorities Eliminate Conflicts of Interest from Appointment Processes for School Principals? 32
2.5 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING THE APPOINTMENT OF PRINCIPALS IN SOUTH AFRICA 33
2.6 CONCLUSION 36
CHAPTER 3 37
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 37
3.1 INTRODUCTION 37
3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM 37
3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY 38
3.4 POPULATION 40
3.5 SAMPLING 41
3.6 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS 42
3.7 DATA ANALYSIS 42
3.8 MEASURES OF QUALITY CONTROL 43
3.8.1 Measures of Quality Control in the Quantitative Phase 44
3.8.2 Measures of Quality Control in the Qualitative Phase 44
3.8.2.1 Credibility 44
3.8.2.2 Dependability 45
3.8.2.3 Confirmability 45
3.8.2.4 Transferability 45
3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS 45
3.9.1 Permission to Conduct Research 46
3.9.2 Informed consent 46

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3.9.3 Anonymity and Confidentiality 46
3.9.4 Voluntary Participation 47
3.9.5 Reduction of Harm 47
3.9.6 Putting of Identifiers 47
3.10 CONCLUSION 47
CHAPTER 4 48
DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS 48
4.1 INTRODUCTION 48
4.2 ANALYSIS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA 49
4.2.1 Section A: Biographical Details of the Respondents 49
Table 4.1: Gender of the Respondents 49
Figure 4.1: Representation of the Gender of the Respondents 50
Table 4.2: Age of the Respondents 50
Figure 4.2: Representation of the Age of the Respondents 51
Figure 4.3: Representation of the Positions of the Respondents 52
Table 4.4: Qualification of the Respondents 52
Figure 4.4: Representation of the Qualifications of the Respondents 53
4.2.1.5 Union Member 53
Table 4.5: Union Membership of the Respondents 53
Figure 4.5: Representation of the Union Membership of the Respondents 54
Table 4.6: Leadership Roles in Unions of the Respondents 54
Figure 4.6: Representation of the Leadership Roles in Unions of the Respondents 55
4.2.2 Section B 55
Table 4.7: Existence of Nepotism 56
Figure 4.7: Respondents' Views on the Existence of Nepotism 57
Table 4.8: Religious Affiliation 57
Figure 4.8: Respondents' Views on the Existence of Religious Affiliation 58
Table 4.9: Existence of Patronage 58
Table 4.10: Existence of Corruption 59

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Figure 4.10: Respondents' Views on the Existence of Corruption 60
Table 4.11: Extent of Nepotism 60
Figure 4.11: Respondents' Views on the Extent of Nepotism..... 61
Table 4.12: Extent of Religious Affiliation 61
Figure 4.12: Respondents' Views on the Extent of Religious Affiliation..... 63
Table 4.13: Extent of Patronage 63
Figure 4.13: Respondents' Views on the Extent of Patronage 64
Table 4.14: Extent of Corruption..... 65
Figure 4.14: Respondents' Views on the Extent of Corruption 66
Table 4.15: Appointment of Poor-quality Principals 66
Figure 4.15: Perceptions Regarding Whether the Appointment of Poor-quality Principals has a Negative Effect on the Delivery of Effective Teaching and Learning in Schools 68
Table 4.16: Educational Authorities..... 68
Figure 4.16: Perceptions Regarding Whether Authorities are doing Enough to Eliminate the Conflicts of Interest Affecting the Appointment Process 69
Table 4.17: Laws and Policies Governing the Appointment of School Principals 70
Figure 4.17: Perceptions Regarding Whether Interview Panels are Familiar with Laws and Policies Governing the Appointment of School Principals..... 71
Table 4.18: Whether Panels have the Capacity to Deal with Conflicts of Interest that May Arise in Interviews..... 71
Figure 4.18: Perceptions Regarding Whether Panels have the Capacity to Deal with Conflicts of Interest that May Arise in Interviews 72
Table 4.19: Safeguard Against the Influence of Conflicts of Interest During the Interview Process..... 73
Figure 4.19: Perceptions Regarding Whether Panels are Adequately Equipped to Deal with Conflicts of Interest 74
Table 4.20: Interest by Officials to Eliminate Conflicts of Interest 74
Figure 4.20: Perceptions Regarding Interest by Officials to Eliminate Conflicts of Interest 75
Table 4.21: Clear-Cut Strategies to Interview Panels to Assist them to Deal with the Conflicts of Interest that May Arise 76

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Figure 4.21: Perception Regarding Educational Authorities Communicating Clear-Cut Strategies to Interview Panels to Assist them to Deal with the Conflicts of Interest that May Arise 77

Table 4.22: Depiction of the Candidates for Principalship Positions 77

Figure 4.22: Depiction of the Candidates for Principalship Positions Awareness of the Likely Prejudice they May Suffer Because of the Various Conflicts of Interest 78

4.3 ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA AND DISCUSSIONS 79

4.3.1 Presentation and Analysis of the Qualitative Data and Discussions..... 79

Table 4.23: Themes and Sub-themes that Emerged 80

4.4 CONCLUSION 114

CHAPTER 5 115

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS 115

5.1 INTRODUCTION 115

5.2 SUMMARY 115

5.3 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY 116

5.3.1 For the Quantitative Phase the Hypotheses were as Follows:..... 116

5.3.2 For the Qualitative Phase of the Study, the Questions were as Follows:..... 117

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS 120

5.4.1 Recommendations for School Governing Bodies (SGBs): 120

5.4.2 Recommendations for Teacher Trade Unions 120

5.4.3 Recommendations for Circuit Managers and District Managers 121

5.4.4 Recommendation for the Department of Basic Education..... 122

5.5 AREAS OF FUTURE RESEARCH 123

5.6 CONCLUSION 123

5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY 124

5.8 CONCLUSION 124

LIST OF REFERENCES 125

APPENDICES 134

APPENDIX A : DATA COLLECTION TOOLS 134

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APPENDIX B : PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH 142

APPENDIX C: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE 143

APPENDIX D: LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE 144

APPENDIX E: TURNITIN REPORT 145

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Gender of the Respondents 49

Table 4.2: Age of the Respondents 50

Figure 4.3: Positions of the Respondents 52

Table 4.4: Qualification of the Respondents 52

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Table 4.5: Union Membership of the Respondents 53
Table 4.6: Leadership Roles in Unions of the Respondents 54
Table 4.7: Existence of Nepotism 56
Table 4.8: Religious Affiliation 57
Table 4.9: Existence of Patronage 58
Table 4.10: Existence of Corruption 59
Table 4.11: Extent of Nepotism 60
Table 4.12: Extent of Religious Affiliation 61
Table 4.13: Extent of Patronage 63
Table 4.14: Extent of Corruption 65
Table 4.15: Appointment of Poor-quality Principals 66
Table 4.16: Educational Authorities 68
Table 4.17: Laws and Policies Governing the Appointment of School Principals 70
Table 4.18: Whether Panels have the Capacity to Deal with Conflicts of Interest that May Arise in Interviews 71
Table 4.19: Safeguard Against the Influence of Conflicts of Interest During the Interview Process 73
Table 4.20: Interest by Officials to Eliminate Conflicts of Interest 74
Table 4.21: Clear-Cut Strategies to Interview Panels to Assist them to Deal with the Conflicts of Interest that May Arise 76
Table 4.22: Depiction of the Candidates for Principalship Positions 77

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1: Representation of the Gender of the Respondents 50
Figure 4.2: Representation of the Age of the Respondents 51
Figure 4.3: Representation of the Positions of the Respondents 52
Figure 4.4: Representation of the Qualifications of the Respondents 53

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Figure 4.5: Representation of the Union Membership of the Respondents 54

Figure 4.6: Representation of the Leadership Roles in Unions of the Respondents 55

Figure 4.7: Respondents' Views on the Existence of Nepotism 57

Figure 4.8: Respondents' Views on the Existence of Religious Affiliation 58

Figure 4.9: Respondents' Views on the Existence of Patriotism 58

Figure 4.10: Respondents' Views on the Existence of Corruption 60

Figure 4.11: Respondents' Views on the Extent of Nepotism..... 61

Figure 4.12: Respondents' Views on the Extent of Religious Affiliation..... 63

Figure 4.13: Respondents' Views on the Extent of Patronage 64

Figure 4.14: Respondents' Views on the Extent of Corruption 66

Figure 4.15: Perceptions Regarding Whether the Appointment of Poor-quality Principals has a Negative Effect on the Delivery of Effective Teaching and Learning in Schools ……...68

Figure 4.16: Perceptions Regarding Whether Authorities are doing Enough to Eliminate the Conflicts of Interest Affecting the Appointment Process 69

Figure 4.17: Perceptions Regarding Whether Interview Panels are Familiar with Laws and Policies Governing the Appointment of School Principals..... 71

Figure 4.18: Perceptions Regarding Whether Panels have the Capacity to Deal with Conflicts of Interest that May Arise in Interviews..... 72

Figure 4.19: Perceptions Regarding Whether Panels are Adequately Equipped to Deal with Conflicts of Interest 74

Figure 4.20: Perceptions Regarding Interest by Officials to Eliminate Conflicts of Interest ……..75

Figure 4.21: Perception Regarding Educational Authorities Communicating Clear-Cut Strategies to Interview Panels to Assist them to Deal with the Conflicts of Interest that May Arise ……77

Figure 4.22: Depiction of the Candidates for Principalship Positions Awareness of the Likely Prejudice they May Suffer Because of the Various Conflicts of Interest ……..78

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The appointment of school principals in South Africa is infested with challenges (Khumalo, 2021). Various conflicts of interest influence their appointment. This study will focus on the appointment of principals in South Africa, continentally and internationally.

A conflict of interest is *a* set of circumstances that creates a risk that professional judgment or actions regarding a primary interest will be unduly influenced by a secondary interest (Field & Lo, 2009). A conflict of interest would arise in situations where people holding public office commit actions whereby, they serve their personal interests ahead of the public interest (Konov & Gorbachev, 2020:7). In the context of this study, the primary interest would include promoting and protecting the integrity of the appointment process for principals to achieve quality education for the learners, while the secondary interest could include financial gain, the desire for professional advancement, and favours to friends, family, and colleagues (Marilyn & Field, 2009:54). The primary interest, therefore, would be that which the constitution, relevant laws, policies, guidelines, and prescripts set forth to be achieved. Every public official is expected to perform his duties in an objective and unbiased manner. Where a public official has a private or other interest, such interest may influence the official in the performance of his duties. In these circumstances, a conflict of interest may be said to be in existence (Coffie & Hinson, 2022:41).

Certain relationships increase the risk that the primary interests will be neglected because of the pursuit of secondary interests (Marilyn & Field, 2009:55). Conflicts of interest tend to occur where a person in the appointment process, in his official capacity, unduly influences the process to favour an individual or group to whom he owes specific obligations (Sage, 2023:1416) . It follows that conflicts of interest cause

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public officials to take advantage of their positions to serve their private and other interests ahead of the interests of the public.

In the appointment process for principals, these conflicts of interest may manifest themselves in the issues of selling of positions (Khumalo, 2021), interference of trade unions (Khumalo, 2021), nepotism (Dube & Tsotetsi, 2020), and religious association (Dampson, 2019:6).

There is a need to study effective principalship in various national contexts. This is because of the existence of cultural diversity regarding education and schooling. A review of principalship in developing countries is warranted, mainly because educational reforms and policies draw almost exclusively on perspectives of educational leadership taken from Western literature and practice, thereby giving the impression that Western models of principalship are universal (Oplatka, 2004:428). Against this background, the appointment of principals in the South African context needs to be studied, in comparison with contexts in other countries, to strengthen effective school leadership in the country, drawing from international experiences.

The shortage of effective school leaders is a phenomenon that affects even districts in first-world countries, including Canada and the United States (Normore, 2006:42). Various issues affect the process of selection and appointment, and these deny the countries the opportunity to develop and implement appropriate, effective selection and appointment approaches that could replenish the pool of effective principals (Normore, 2006:42). A study in Canada and the United States has provided recommendations to assist educational authorities to integrate effective selection and recruitment into leadership development programs for school principals (Normore, 2006:43).

The state of education in American public schools is such that it does not reflect a commitment to a quality that guarantees the country's continued national supremacy in the economy of the world (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2008:19). With quality leadership, schools in South Africa would be enabled to produce students who will be competitive in the world economy.

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The American system is defective in terms of providing training programmes to those who aspire to be school principals. The system is not selective. Rather, it accommodates anyone, including those with the most minimal qualifications. This is in stark contrast to the policymakers and educational officials in the forty-nine (49) states. Policies and officials believe that only well-prepared and qualified candidates should find admission into training programmes for school principals (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2008:20).

There is consensus in America that public education should be improved. This is undergirded by a concern that poor leadership in schools is responsible for the production of a poor workforce, which is diminishing the influence of America in the global marketplace (Normore, 2006:42).

A study on the effectiveness of principals in the Australian and Japanese education systems revealed that principals agreed that preservice and in-service training were essential to ensure effective leadership at schools (Gamage & Ueyama, 2005:77). The study indicated that principals were of the view that prospective and novice principals should be exposed to observation of exemplary school principals and group work (Gamage & Ueyama, 2005:77). Further, the study maintains that all nations recognise that principals are the core of school improvement, despite differing regarding theories and practices in preparing educational leaders (Gamage & Ueyama, 2005:77).

A study by George (2019:1), in Ghana, revealed that school principals used to be selected and appointed largely because of long service and experience and that few people became principals due to their religious affiliation. The study maintains that long service and religious affiliation still influence the appointment of school principals; however, qualifications, leadership skills, and research publications are considered an advantage. The study recommends that at least a basic school head teacher should possess a qualification in educational administration and leadership, and well-designed pre- and in-service training should also be regularly organised for them based on their needs.

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A study in Zimbabwe revealed that principals in that country are mostly appointed based on their teaching experience as senior teachers (Zikhali & Perumal, 2014:5714). However, most principals were found to be not ready to take up leadership positions upon appointment (Zikhali & Perumal, 2014:5714). The study recommended that Zimbabwe should adopt a national qualification programme to prepare prospective school principals (Zikhali & Perumal, 2014:5714) and give in-service training opportunities to capable teachers prior to their appointment as school principals (Zikhali & Perumal, 2014:5714).

According to Bobrova (2021:90), there is no society that does not have conflicts. Conflicts of interest arise when persons, due to their status, use their influence in their own interests, contrary to the interests of the state. Addressing the issues around the conflict of interests and the settlement of the conflicts of interest are the means to fighting corruption (Bobrova, 2021:90).

Conflicts of interest are a serious cause for concern because they have caused several scandals in the public service in South Africa (Mafunisa, 2003:4). Addressing conflicts of interest has become a top priority around the world (Mafunisa, 2003:4).

According to Dwangu (2022:213), the teacher appointment process is infested with and affected by conflicts of interest. A report emerged in 2016 that the process of selecting candidates for appointment in the education sector is riddled with inconsistencies (Dwangu, 2022:213).

School leaders play a critical role in responding to the demands of society (Chandolia, 2019:455). Society expects school principals to play a multiplicity of roles and act as both managers and leaders (Chandolia, 2019:455). Educational authorities should, therefore, be able to respond successfully to society's demand for them to deal with the issues of conflicts of interest affecting the appointment of principals in South Africa. It could be argued that the delivery of quality education is heavily dependent on the quality of principals (Tshehla, 2022:1). It is therefore of paramount importance that quality principals be appointed to facilitate quality and effective teaching and learning.

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1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In some public schools in South Africa, conflicts of interest have led to the appointment of poor-quality principals, thereby presenting a challenge regarding the achievement of school outcomes. It is often claimed that the challenge of underachievement of school outcomes is attributable to the appointment of incompetent school principals (Khumalo, 2021). While the educational laws and policies are clear on the requirements for the appointment of school principals, certain conflicts of interest on the part of the stakeholders in the process for the appointment of school principals seemingly account for the undesirable appointment of incompetent principals. There have been allegations about compromised appointment processes for principals across the nine (9) provinces of South Africa (Chetty, 2018). The fact that the appointment of incompetent principals compromises the quality of education delivered in schools cannot be overemphasised. The Vhuronga 1 Circuit, like many circuits in the Vhembe District in Limpopo, could not be spared of the allegations. The study seeks to determine the effects of conflicts of interest on the appointment of school principals from the perspectives of secondary school teachers in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit. The study also seeks to help address the UN sustainable development goal number 4, which is about securing quality education for all (Raman & Ghoshal, 2021). The successful tackling of the conflicts of interest that permeate the appointment of principals in South Africa would improve the quality of leadership in our schools, leading to increased achievement of school outcomes.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

What are the conflicts of interest in the appointment of school principals?

1.3.1 Secondary Research Questions

- What are the types of conflicts of interest that affect the appointment of quality principals in public schools?

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- What are teachers' views regarding the extent to which conflicts of interestaffect the appointment of quality principals in public schools?
- What are teachers' perceptions regarding the impact of the appointment of poor-quality principals on the delivery of effective teaching and learning in public schools?
- What strategies can educational authorities implement to eliminate conflicts of interest from the appointment processes for principals in public schools?

1.3.2 Hypotheses

From the literature review and the research objectives, the following research hypotheses emerged, and were used for the quantitative phase of the research study:

- Conflicts of interest in the appointment process for the appointment of principals compromise the appointment of quality principals in public schools.
- The appointment of quality principals makes a substantial difference to the delivery of quality and effective teaching and learning in public schools.

1.4 RESEARCH AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study is to determine the effects of conflicts of interest on the appointment of principals from the perspectives of secondary school educators in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit.

- To identify and describe the types of conflicts of interest that affect the appointment of quality principals in public schools.
- To find out teachers' views regarding the extent to which conflicts of interest affect the appointment of quality school principals.
- To determine teachers' perceptions regarding the impact of the appointment of poor-quality school principals on the delivery of effective teaching and learning at schools.
- To find strategies that will help educational authorities eliminate conflicts of interest from appointment processes for school principals.

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1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Most of the studies about conflicts of interest have been in areas other than education. Areas such as medicine, journalism, and finance have received their fair share of coverage in research about conflicts of interest (Villaran, 2020). This study seeks to close the gap between education and other fields in terms of analysing conflicts of interest. This study offers a unique approach in that it uses a sequential, explanatory mixed-method study to explore the phenomenon of conflicts of interest in appointing principals, using a remote setting in the Limpopo Province.

The researcher envisages that the Department of Basic Education and other stakeholders will tap into the recommendations offered in their planning and deployment of resources in programmes to address conflicts of interest in the appointment of school principals, nationally. This will, in turn, lead to improved achievement of school outcomes as people with the right qualifications, experience, and attitudes will be appointed to the position of school principal. Teachers, working with effective school principals, are most likely to experience an increase in their productivity levels (Baxter & Ehren, 2023). In the final analysis, the learners will be the ultimate beneficiaries of the study, by learning in effective schools, which are associated with higher pass rates. The study thus contributes its fair share in facilitating the UN Sustainable Goal 4, which focuses on achieving quality education for all.

1.6 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

Research has revealed that performance and competency are being undermined as prerequisites for the appointment of principals in public schools and that this has adverse implications for the delivery of quality education because incompetent people cannot lead and manage schools as well as deliver the teaching and learning process effectively (Dube & Tsotestsi, 2020:1; Bush, 2016:537; Jerdborg, 2023:2; Mahlangu, 2014:313; Bush & Oduro, 2015:359; George, 2019:3 & Khumalo, 2021:2).

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Research points to a clear connection between the quality of school leadership, the instructional climate of the school, and student achievement (Shava & Mazenda, 2021).

Nepotism is rife in many countries and *is a major reason for the lack of productivity* (Aydogan, 2009:20). *Nepotism has characterised the filling of promotional posts in South Africa since 1994* (Zengele, 2013:18). A study in Turkey revealed that teachers in that country generally agree that nepotism *exists in the Provincial Education Directorate* (Aydogan, 2009:28).

A study in Hong Kong by Kwan (2011:345) found that appointment panel members who w*ere probably members of the clergy of a religious group were more inclined to look for a match between the values of their religion and those of the candidates*. Their expectation could be that the principal would promote the values of their religious group in the school (Kwan, 2011:345). A study by Miller (2013:175) found that religion was a factor in the appointment of principals in Jamaica. Respondents felt that it was not easy to be appointed as a principal in a Catholic school when one was not Catholic; religious persons would prefer principals of their own faith; and not being affiliated to a particular denomination cost them appointment as principals, etc.

Taylor (2011:3) contended that South Africa's schooling system had been experiencing endemic dysfunction because of the weak capacity of school principals. This had resulted in poor schooling outcomes. In addition, patronage and nepotism account for the appointment of unsuitable principals who rely on creating patronage networks to entrench their positions (Taylor, 2011:3). *The* prevailing *system did not nurture the kind of professional leadership desired to motivate teachers and learners to achieve objectives* (Taylor, 2011:5). India is said to have been experiencing the same problem (Taylor, 2011:5). Collusion and nepotism are rife in the recruitment and promotion of staff in the South African education system (Taylor, 2011:6). It results in *inappropriate people being appointed to positions for which they are ill-equipped: under these conditions, institutional dysfunctionality becomes the norm* (Taylor, 2011:6). A public opinion exists in South Africa that *the unions exert a stranglehold on all appointments* (Taylor, 2011:7). A study in South Africa by Zengele

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(2013:23) found that some SADTU members that were appointed as principals were poorly qualified and less experienced and were not able to facilitate the provision of quality education to learners. It also found that *inherent promotions of key union members to management positions have led to a decline in the motivation and dedication of academically and professionally deserving teachers* (Zangele, 2013:18). A study by Foncha, Abongdia and Mayase (2016:18) revealed that during 2014, newspaper headlines were swamped with unpalatable headlines of SADTU having been engaged in jobs for sale rackets. According to the newspaper reports, principals were being intimidated out of their positions with threats of death and were being replaced by those who paid money to the union officials (Foncha, Abongdia & Mayase, 2016:18).

According to Gonzales and Husain, in Dube and Tsotestsi (2020:1), the stakeholders in education must re-examine and reconsider the processes that hinder development in the education sector. The appointment of people that undermines excellence and productivity should be avoided at all costs (Dube & Tsotestsi, 2020:1). Rather people should be appointed to leadership positions based on competency, hard work, and dedication (Dube & Tsotestsi, 2020:1).

While most of the research on the appointment of incompetent staff has focused on the position of principalship (Emese, in Duba & Tsotetsi, 2020:1). Krasnoff, in Dube and Tsotestsi (2020:2), contends that achieving good quality students is possible where there are principals and teachers of quality who can contribute meaningfully to the teaching and learning process. The claim that the compromised appointment of principals *is affecting the schooling system in South Africa remains a topical issue (Dube & Tsotestsi, 2020:2)* worthy of ongoing investigation.

According to Ramokgotswa (2016:4), the government has since 1994 adopted legislation and measures to facilitate the appointment of teachers to improve the quality of education in the country. The South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996, the Employment of Educators Act, 76 of 1998, and the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) of 2016 form part of the broader government strategy to address issues of fairness in the appointment of teachers to promote quality education for learners.

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However, provisions in the legislation and administrative measures are neglected, and many children suffer greatly because of this negligence (Ramokgotswa, 2016:4). This study will also investigate the legislation, policies, and prescripts that regulate the appointment of principals to contextualise the conflicts of interest that exist during the appointment process for school principals.

It is evident from the above paragraphs that the principalship appointment process is characterised by conflicts of interest, resulting in the appointment of incompetent principals. If this phenomenon is not attended to, schools cannot deliver effective teaching and learning (Mabunu, 2013:59). The principalship appointment process, therefore, should be a subject of ongoing research.

Section 59 of the Executive Summary of the National Development Plan (NDP) provides that the appointment process for the appointment of principals needs to be revisited to ensure the attraction of competent people to become principals by the year 2030. The NDP envisages that candidates should undergo a competency assessment to determine their suitability and identify the areas in which they would need development and support; educational authorities should eliminate union influence in promoting or appointing principals; and the Department of Basic Education and provincial departments of education must ensure that human resources management capacity is improved, and recruitment is undertaken correctly. Implement an entry-level qualification for principals. Research in the appointment of school principals is thus necessary to provide recommendations for the improvement of the process of appointing principals (Executive Summary of NDP:60).

While South Africa has wonderful educational goals that are enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic, the South African Schools Act, the Bill of Rights, and other progressive documentation, these goals have not been achievable because of the widespread corruption (Foncha, Abongdia & Mayase, 2016:18).

A study by Dwangu and Mahlangu (2022:212) found that numerous flaws exist in the laws that govern the appointment of school principals in South African schools. The authors argue that there are numerous flaws in the laws that regulate the appointment

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of school principals in South Africa. Fraud and corruption characterise the appointment of school principals in South Africa (Dwangu & Mahlangu, 2022:212). The study was to further probe the report into allegations of selling of teachers' posts that was released by the Department of Basic Education in 2016. According to the report, the appointment of principals was supposed to be made purely based on merit (Dwangu & Mahlangu, 2022:212).

1.7 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study falls under the broad umbrella of governance, educational management, and leadership. Rawls's Theory of Social Justice will be used to provide a theoretical framework for this research study. A theoretical framework could be defined as a blueprint for a research study (Grant & Osanloo, 2014:12). In the same way that a blueprint provides a guide for all those who are involved in a building project, the theoretical framework guides the researcher throughout the research process (Grant & Osanloo, 2014:12).

It is indisputable that John Rawls's theory of social justice is inherently linked to the discipline of education (Khumalo, 2021:4). This theory, therefore, applies to this study. Rawls is regarded as the advocate of social justice and has proposed several principles to define his conceptualisation of the theory of justice (Said & Nurhayati, 2021:31). Rawls's theory of social justice is undergirded by the principles of fairness, justice, and equality of opportunity (Khumalo, 2021:4). This study draws on Rawls's principles of fairness and equal opportunity for all to make a case for the appointment of school principals with the requisite qualifications and experience, as well as the right attitudes. Schools are social systems that have to uphold fair and just recruitment and appointment processes (Khumalo, 2021:4). To this end, all potential candidates have the right to contest promotional posts in a fair and just manner. No individual should be treated better than any other. Manipulation and tampering with the appointment processes is in direct contradiction of the theory of social justice (Khumalo, 2021:4).

Various studies have shown that competent school leadership is key to the effective functioning of schools (Khumalo, 2021:6). Credible empirical evidence that suggests

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the existence of a correlation between school leadership and school performance abounds in literature, making a strong case for the claim that effective principal leadership significantly increases student achievement (Khumalo, 2021:6).

1.8 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

1.8.1 School Management and Leadership

Leadership and management are complementary in nature (Chikoko et al., 2015:454). There is no cut-and-dried division between leadership and management, yet their features are distinct (Chikoko et al., 2015:454). They further assert that management is more a state of behaviour referring to norms, (while) leadership is more a (moral) attitude of influence. Behaving (managing) without a moral attitude is just as problematic as leading without acting according to (given) norms.

1.8.2 Conflict of Interest

Conflict of interest may refer to a situation in which a public official has a private interest that influences or appears to influence a public decision (The Public Service Commission; Gazette No. 32298, 2009). In the context of this research, the concept alludes to abusing one's position within a school, union, or department of education or a teachers' union to ensure one's friends, family, and fellow union members are hired into schools.

1.8.3 Nepotism

Tytko, Smokovych, Dorohokhina, Chernezhenko and Stremenovskyi (2020:166) define nepotism as the situation whereby one with power or influence uses it to help one's own family or relatives to get positions regardless of merit.

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1.8.4 Patronage

According to Boissevain, in Bearfield (2009:67), patronage is founded on the reciprocal relations between patrons and clients, whereby a patron uses his influence to assist and protect some other person, who then becomes his 'client,' and in return provides certain services to his patron.

1.8.5 Corruption

Nye, in Chan and Owusu (2017:3), refers to corruption as any action that deviates from the acceptable way of doing things with the motive of unduly increasing the status of a person or gaining money.

1.9 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm refers to common beliefs and principles regarding how a researcher should understand and address research problems (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:26). The research paradigm guides the actions of the researcher and defines how the researcher views the world around him (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:26).

Four research paradigms can be distinguished. These are positivist, interpretivist, critical, and pragmatic paradigms (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:35). In this study, the pragmatic research paradigm was employed. The researcher has chosen pragmatism because the study seeks to use the best approaches available in gaining knowledge and use every method that helps in discovering knowledge, without having to be restrained by a particular paradigm (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:36).

1.10 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Three designs of conducting research are recognizable. These are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Migiro & Magangi, 2011:3757). The study followed an explanatory, sequential mixed-method design. In line with this design, quantitative data is considered first, and then qualitative information is collected (Subedi,

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2016:572). Thus, the researcher sought to take advantage of the in-depth, contextual nature of the qualitative findings and the representativeness and generalisability of quantitative findings (Migiro & Magangi, 2011:3758).

1.10.1 Population

Gronmo (2020:153) defines population as a group of individuals, objects, or items with common characteristics or attributes. A population is, therefore, considered to be research respondents who should give on the research questions that are asked to them. For this study, the target population was the total number of teachers at all levels employed in the schools in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit. The total number of teachers is about two hundred and fifty (250). A sample of respondents was drawn from this population to participate in the study. Vhuronga 1 Circuit was considered salient because it has the right size of the population for the purpose of this research and because there have been allegations of corruption in the appointment of principals in the last ten (10) years.

1.10.2 Sampling

Sampling is concerned with the selection of units of study (Gronmo, 2020:153). Thus, a sample is a smaller group of the population that is the subject of the study. For the quantitative phase of the study, the selection was based on the highest possible representation of the population. The population comprised teachers, departmental heads, deputy principals, principals, and union leaders from secondary schools. For this reason, simple random sampling, classified under the probability sampling methods, was used. The schools in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit were chosen because of their familiarity with the researcher and some complaints that arose there regarding appointments that were allegedly influenced by conflicts of interest in the last ten (10) years. The research sample for the quantitative phase comprised eighty (80) teachers from 10 secondary schools in the circuit.

For the qualitative phase of the study, the sample was selected based on the subjective judgement of the researcher. In this phase, the researcher used the

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purposive sampling method, classified under the non-probability sampling methods (Eitkan & Bala, 2017:215). Non-probability sampling is exploratory because it makes every effort to achieve a complete understanding of the reality of a phenomenon (Eitkan & Bala, 2017:215). Four (4) school principals, four (4) union leaders, four (4) members of school governing bodies, and eight (8) teachers were subjectively sampled to help explain the quantitative results.

1.10.3 Data Collection Instruments

The first phase involved the collection of quantitative information. The collection of information was done by using a structured questionnaire. According to Daniel (2016:94), the quantitative research approach puts emphasis on numbers and figures regarding the collection and analysis of data. A questionnaire was used to collect data. The main objective of a questionnaire in research is to obtain relevant information in the most reliable and valid manner (Taherdoost, 2016:28).

The second phase involved the collection of qualitative information. In this phase, qualitative data was collected by using semi-structured interviews. An interview schedule was used to collect qualitative data.

1.10.4 Data Analysis

Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie, in Migiro and Magangi (2011:3763), identify seven stages of data analysis in mixed methods research. These are data reduction, data display, data transformation, data correlation, data consolidation, and data comparison. The researcher followed the data analysis stages as explained by Migiro and Magangi below.

> *"Data reduction involves reducing the dimensionality of the qualitative data (for example, via exploratory thematic analysis, memoing) and quantitative data for example, via descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis, cluster analysis). Data display involves describing pictorially, the qualitative data (for example, matrices, charts, graphs, networks, lists, rubrics, and venn diagrams) and quantitative data (for*

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example, tables, graphs). This is followed (optionally) by data transformation stage, where in quantitative data are converted into narrative data that can be analyzed qualitatively (that is, qualitized); Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) and/or qualitative data are converted into numerical codes that can be represented statistically (that is, quantitized, Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998). Data correlation involves the quantitative data being correlated with the quantitized data; this is followed by the data consolidation, wherein both quantitative and qualitative data are combined to create new or consolidated variables, or data sets. The next stage, data comparison involves comparing data from the qualitative and quantitative data sources. Data integration characterizes the final stage whereby both quantitative and qualitative data are integrated into either a coherent whole or two separate data sets (that is,--, qualitative and quantitative) of coherent wholes."

Since this was an explanatory, sequential, mixed-method study, quantitative data was presented and analysed first. It was presented through descriptive statistics in the form of tables and graphs as obtained through the SPSS package. The quantitative data was analysed before it was interpreted by the researcher. The qualitative data was organised according to the themes that aligned with the objectives of the study. The analysis and discussion of the qualitative data combined findings from the literature review and the quantitative phase, providing for data integration. Thus, data from the quantitative and the qualitative phases were integrated into a coherent whole.

1.11 MEASURES OF QUALITY CONTROL

Data was collected in two sequential phases, quantitative and qualitative. Measures of quality control in quantitative research include testing the data collection instrument for validity and reliability, while trustworthiness is the main measure of quality control in qualitative research. Trustworthiness encompasses four key elements: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in qualitative research. For quantitative research, the measures are validity and reliability. Quality control

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measures in mixed methods involve some combination of quantitative and qualitative criteria (McLaughlin, Bush & Zeeman, 2016:716).

1.11.1 Measures of Quality Control in the Quantitative Phase

1.11.1.1 Validity

Validity could be defined as the degree to which a test measures what it purports to measure (Sartori & Pasini, 2007:359). The validity of the questionnaire was tested, considering both the face and content validity. According to face validity, the questionnaire must appear to cover the relevant content of what is being measured (Sartori & Pasini, 2007:362). Content validity was ascertained by using the results of a pilot study. About twenty experienced teachers from across Vhembe East District in the Limpopo Department of Education were asked to appraise and pre-test the questionnaire.

1.11.1.2 Reliability

Reliability could be defined as the degree to which test scores are free from measurement errors, that is, the level of internal consistency or stability of the measuring device over time (Thanasegaran, 2009:1). To ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted using 20 respondents. This involved randomly splitting the instruments into four, two containing odd numbers and the other two containing even numbers (Thanasegaran, 2009).

1.11.2 Measures of Quality Control in the Qualitative Phase

The measurement of quality in qualitative research is focused on trustworthiness, which encompasses credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Sinkovics, Penz & Ghauri, 2008:689).

1.11.2.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the truth of the data or the participants' views and the interpretation and representation of them by the researcher (Cope, 2014:89). To establish credibility, the researcher described his experiences as a researcher and would verify

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the research findings with the participants. Additionally, the researcher could demonstrate engagement with participants, methods of observation, and audit trails to enhance the credibility of the qualitative findings (Cope, 2014:89).

1.11.2.2 Dependability

Dependability refers to the constancy of the data over similar conditions (Cope, 2014:89). In this study, dependability would be deemed to have been established where its findings find concurrence with the findings of other researchers in specific themes. The researcher, therefore, read relevant literature deeply to establish if the findings were consistent with those of the researchers who have studied the problem.

1.11.2.3 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the researcher's ability to demonstrate that the data represents the participants' responses and not the researcher's biases or viewpoints (Cope, 2014:89). The researcher could demonstrate how he arrived at conclusions and how he interpreted the data to demonstrate confirmability. This was achieved by furnishing rich quotes from the participants on the various themes of the findings (Cope, 2014:89).

1.11.2.4 Transferability

Transferability refers to findings that can be applied to other settings or groups (Cope, 2014:89). A qualitative study has met this criterion if the results have meaning to individuals not involved in the study and readers can associate the results with their own experiences (Cope, 2014:89). To facilitate transferability, the researcher provided sufficient information on the informants and the research context to enable the reader to assess the findings' capability of being "fit" or transferable (Cope, 2014:89). The researcher also used thick description that requires providing a deeply detailed account of one's research to check the potential for application to other times, places, people, and contexts (Henry & Foss, 2015). The findings of this study are generalisable because it is chiefly a quantitative study.

1.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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By their nature, mixed methods research fuses quantitative and qualitative research approaches. The researcher, therefore, attended to both ethical considerations that arise in both forms of inquiry. Quantitative issues relate to obtaining permissions, protecting the anonymity of respondents, not disrupting sites, communicating the purposes of the study, avoiding deceptive practices, respecting vulnerable populations, being aware of potential power issues in data collection, respecting indigenous cultures, not disclosing sensitive information, and masking the identities of participants. In an explanatory design, researchers may use a large quantitative database for the initial phase of the research (Subedi, 2016:576).

The ethical principles referred to above were adhered to as follows:

1.12.1 Permission to Conduct Research

An application to conduct research was submitted to the relevant committee of Senate of the University of Venda.

1.12.2 Informed Consent

All individuals who participated in the research were informed that their participation was a matter of choice, and that the researcher would not use fraud, deceit, duress, or similar unfair inducement or manipulation to get information. All participants were informed about their right to withdraw should they wish not to continue providing information at any stage of the research. Moreover, participants were issued with forms that explained the purpose of the study. They were also made to sign consent forms for their involvement in the study.

1.12.2 Anonymity and Confidentiality

Names and identities of the participants in the data collection, analysis, and reporting of the study findings will not be revealed. The researcher promised the participants that their responses would be handled with the strictest confidentiality.

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1.12.3 Voluntary Participation

Participants were informed that they were free to exercise their will whether to participate or not in the study. The researcher explained to all the participants that their participation was voluntary and that if they wished to withdraw or refuse to participate, it would not affect them in any way.

1.12.4 Reduction of Harm

The researcher avoided hurting the participants or their environment in any way. The researcher was always on the lookout for direct or indirect threats to protect the participants against them.

1.12.5 Putting of Identifiers

To follow up on these individuals with qualitative interviews, an identifier was linked to the quantitative database. Some individuals may not want their quantitative data released. Using names without permission constitutes an ethical mixed-method issue (Subedi, 2016:576). Therefore, consent was obtained from the respondents for the researcher to put some form of information in the quantitative questionnaire to help the researcher identify the respondents that provided the quantitative data. This assisted the researcher in selecting respondents that could provide rich data for the qualitative phase. If the identifiers were to be put in without the knowledge and consent of the respondents, it would have constituted an ethical issue.

1.13 DELIMITATION OF STUDY

According to Simon (2013:1), delimitation of the study refers to those characteristics that limit the scope and define the boundaries of the study. This encapsulates the criteria of participants to enrol in the study, the geographic region covered in the study, and the profession or organizations involved (Simon, 2013:1). The study analysed the research problem from the perspectives of teachers in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit of

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the Vhembe East District, Limpopo Province. The results of this study would be generalisable to educators in schools in South Africa.

1.14 STRUCTURE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

- **Chapter 1: Introduction and Background of the Study**

This chapter presents the introduction and background of the study, the problem statement, the aim of the study, the specific objectives of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, the delimitation of the study, the definition of operational concepts and organisation of the study.

- **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter focuses on the theoretical, conceptual, and legislative frameworks underpinning the appointment of quality principals - to enhance quality and effective teaching and learning in schools and reviews the empirical literature on the phenomenon of conflicts of interest in the appointment of principals.

- **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

This chapter covers a detailed research methodology that was used in undertaking this study – to address the hypotheses and the research questions, to resolve the research problem.

- **Chapter 4: Data Presentation, Analysis, and Interpretation**

This chapter deals with data presentation, analysis, and interpretation. The data was collected in two sequential phases. The first phase was about the collection of quantitative data. The quantitative data and results provided a general picture of the research problem. The researcher conducted more analysis of the data by collecting qualitative data with the purpose of refining, extending, or explaining the general picture. In short, quantitative data was collected and analysed. This was followed by qualitative data collection and analysis. Lastly, the data was interpreted. At the stage of the interpretation, the quantitative and qualitative data were integrated. At the stage

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of integration, the findings were synthesised with the findings of the literature and the theoretical framework.

- **Chapter 5: Summary, Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusions**

This chapter focuses on the discussion of the major findings of the study. The chapter also presents a summary of research findings and conclusions, as well as the recommendations and areas of future studies.

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CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the orientation of the study was presented. This chapter reviews the literature that is pertinent to the resolution of the research problem. It considers the theoretical framework that undergirds the study, discusses the concept of conflicts of interest, analyses conflicts of interest in the context of the appointments of principals in South Africa, provides a brief analysis of the laws and policies that govern the appointment of principals in South Africa, and gives a critical account of the empirical literature that was consulted to be able to achieve the aim and objectives of the study.

Several researchers posit that a comprehensive literature review is crucial to any study because it, amongst others, gives the researcher an overview of prior research on the topic, enabling the reader to understand what is and what is not yet known about the topic, thereby providing a rationale or justification for a new investigation (Paul & Criado, 2020; Lim *et al*., 2022; Kraus *et al*., 2023). A good literature review generally considers all the themes and sub-themes of the topic under study and guides the researcher in choosing the theories and methodologies to apply to the studies (Paul & Criado, 2020).

The study sought to determine the various types of conflicts of interest that exist in the appointment process for school principals to enable the Department of Basic Education to proffer strategies to manage or eliminate them. This is essential because the findings of various studies have confirmed that conflicts of interest undermine the

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appointment of quality principals, resulting in inefficiency and ineffectiveness in schools. Literature shows that clear policy guidelines are available to advise schools on how to conduct appointment processes for principals; however, schools continue to experience challenges regarding these processes due to vested interests of some stakeholders (Nxumalo et al., 2021:577). In this vein, it can be argued that the recruitment processes for school principals in South Africa are rendered unfair and unjust, as the actions of those with the vested interests violate the principles of fairness, equality of opportunity, procedural justice, and the Bill of Rights (Khumalo, 2021:1). From the perspective of the literature that was reviewed, the unfair appointment practices must be considered in the context of the negative effects that they bring to the delivery of quality education in our schools.

It has emerged from the literature that it is of paramount importance that ongoing research should be conducted into the appointment processes for school principals, not only to promote school efficiency and effectiveness but also to promote the principles of fairness, equality of opportunity, and procedural justice, as enshrined in the Bill of Rights. Findings from these studies will assist our schools in achieving the school outcomes, most importantly quality education for the learners.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study falls under the broad umbrella of governance, educational management, and leadership. Rawls's Theory of Social Justice was used to provide a theoretical framework for this research study. A theoretical framework could be defined as a blueprint for a research study (Grant & Osanloo, 2014:12, Varpio *et al*., 2020; Larsen & Adu, 2021; Chukwuere, 2021). In the same way that a blueprint provides a guide for all those who are involved in a building project, the theoretical framework guides the researcher throughout the research process (Grant & Osanloo, 2014:12; Watts, 2020).

It is indisputable that John Rawls's theory of social justice is inherently linked to the discipline of education (Khumalo, 2021:4). This theory, therefore, is applicable to this study. Rawls is regarded as the advocate of social justice and has proposed several

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principles to define his conceptualisation of the theory of justice (Said & Nurhayati, 2021:31). Rawls's theory of social justice is undergirded by the principles of fairness, justice, and equality of opportunity (Edor, 2020; Khumalo, 2021:4; Said & Nurhayati, 2021). This study draws on Rawls's principles of fairness and equal opportunity for all to make a case for the appointment of school principals with the requisite qualifications and experience, as well as the right attitudes. This is because schools are social systems that have to uphold fair and just recruitment and appointment processes (Khumalo, 2021:4). To this end, all potential candidates have the right to contest promotional posts in a fair and just manner. No individual should be treated better than any other. Manipulation and tampering with the appointment processes contradicts the theory of Social Justice (Khumalo, 2021:4). The conflicts of interest in the appointment processes for principals pose unfairness and injustice to learners because schools, unfortunately, fall under the leadership of incompetent people who cannot supervise effective teaching and learning effectively, thereby negating their access to quality education.

Various studies have shown that competent school leadership is key to the effective functioning of schools (Khumalo, 2021:6; Pekkolay, 2021; So-Oabeb & du Plessis, 2023). Credible empirical evidence that suggests the existence of a correlation between school leadership and school performance abounds in literature, making a strong case for the claim that effective principal leadership significantly increases student achievement (Khumalo, 2021:6). The application of the principles of social justice as advocated by Rawl thus augurs well for the well-being of the educators and the learners they teach.

2.3 CONCEPTUALISING CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The concept of conflicts of interest is a relatively recent one, having been used in the English dictionary for the first time in 1971 (Hendrick, 2016:18). Since then, there have been numerous and various attempts at defining the concept of conflicts of interest (Hendrick, 2016:18). Attempts at defining conflicts of interest have had to deal with organisations being pulled in separate directions by their responsibilities and interests (Schwab, 2019:111). This occurs when personal interests conflict with the

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inherent responsibilities of the office the person occupies. While the definitions of conflicts of interest that have been offered have common features, they also differ substantially (Schwab, 2019:112). Scholars such as Schwab (2019:127) have thus concluded that conflicts of interest represent one of the defining problems of our time. While literature abounds on conflicts of interest, most of it is addressed to specific audiences such as professionals in the medical profession, journalists, and financial agents (Villaran, 2020).

Villaran (2020) defines conflicts of interest simply as situations in which an interest tempts us to disregard a duty - situations that threaten the interest of someone else. This definition finds expression in the definition, which authors have generally come to accept, a definition that was used in the context of medical research. According to this definition, a conflict of interest refers to a set of conditions in which professional judgment concerning a primary interest … tends to be unduly influenced by a secondary influence (Thompson, in Hendrick, 2016:18). A similar definition was offered by Lo and Field, who defined a conflict of interest as a set of circumstances that creates a risk that professional judgment or actions regarding a primary interest will be unduly influenced by a secondary interest (Hendrick, 2016:18).

It should be noted, however, that there is no consensus among scholars of conflicts of interest about what constitutes a conflict of interest (Hendrick, 2016:18). Some scholars believe that conflicts of interest are material interests that can be objectively determined, such as financial interests (Luebke, in Hendricks, 2016:18). According to Luebke, only financial interests can conflict with the professional interests or obligations. Other scholars, such as Schimdt, believe that other interests should be taken into cognizance in the definition of conflicts of interests (Hendrick 2016:18). Scholars, such as Davis and Friedman, concur with Schmidt arguing that interests encompass all those influences that can affect one's judgement; focusing only on financial ones reduces our understanding of what can lead researchers to be biased. They argue that non-financial interests and relationships can also pose conflicts and potentially lead to bias (Hendricks, 2016:18).

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Scholars, such as Carson, deviate from the usual approaches to defining conflicts of interest. According to Carson (1994:387), the definition of conflicts of interest is broader than it is generally believed, as they do not necessarily require the existence of external financial or personal relationships to be available. Most definitions of conflicts of interest, like the ones offered in the preceding paragraphs, exclude the interests internal to the person hired to perform a certain role. Thus, a conflict of interest could arise because an employee has an interest in being promoted or advancing his career (Carson, 1994:393).

An acceptable definition, according to this researcher, would include both tangible interests, such as money, and intangible interests, such as friendship. This researcher is of the view that while financial interests could arguably be the biggest driver of influencing public officials to promote other interests at the expense of the primary interest, they are also driven to do so by other interests. Thus, a comprehensive approach to defining conflicts of interest, would be much more acceptable than one that places sole focus on financial interests or interests external to the person. In this vein, Luebke's decision would be seen to be too narrow and limiting, to the extent that it would close out other interests from the scope of this study.

2.3.1 Types of Conflicts of Interest in the Appointment of Principals

Nepotism is rife in many countries and is a major reason for lack of productivity (Aydogan, 2009:20). Nepotism has characterised the filling of promotional posts in South Africa since 1994 (Zengele, 2013:18). A study in Turkey revealed that teachers in that country generally agree that nepotism exists in the Provincial Education Directorate (Aydogan, 2009:28). Nepotism is a phenomenon that does not only occur in South Africa. Countries in Southern Africa, Africa, and the world are adversely affected by nepotism. This is because people with requisite skills for jobs are overlooked in favour of relatives, friends, or associates. This has led to underproductivity or lack of productivity. Nepotism contributes largely to the poor performance of schools. Research has shown that where weak and inefficient school principals are appointed because of considerations of patronage and nepotism, schools tend to experience endemic dysfunctionality. India is said to have been

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experiencing the same problem (Taylor, 2011:5). This conclusion is plausible because there are several research findings to support it.

A study in Hong Kong by Kwan (2011:345) found that appointment panel members who were probably members of the clergy of a religious group were more inclined to look for a match between the values of their religion and those of the candidates. Their expectation could be that the principal would promote the values of their religious group in the school (Kwan, 2011:345). A study by Miller (2013:175) found that religion was a factor in the appointment of principals in Jamaica. Respondents felt it was not easy to be appointed as a principal in a Catholic school when one was not Catholic; religious persons would prefer principals of their own faith; and not being affiliated to a particular denomination cost them appointment as principals, etc.

A study by Dwangu and Mahlangu (2022:212) found that numerous flaws exist in the laws governing the appointment of school principals in South African schools. The authors argue that there are numerous flaws in the laws that regulate the appointment of school principals in South Africa. Fraud and corruption characterise the appointment of school principals in South Africa (Dwangu & Mahlangu, 2022:212). The study was to further probe the report into allegations of selling teachers' posts that was released by the Department of Basic Education in 2016. According to the report, the appointment of principals was supposed to be made purely based on merit (Dwangu & Mahlangu, 2022:212).

2.4 CONTEXTUALISING CONFLICTS OF INTEREST IN THE APPOINTMENT OF PRINCIPALS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Most of the studies about conflicts of interest have been in areas other than education. Areas such as medicine, journalism, and finance have received their fair share of coverage in research about conflicts of interest (Villaran, 2020). The fact that there has not been much research on conflicts of interest in education does not mean that conflicts of interest do not exist in education, nor does it mean that the studies of such interests in education are unimportant.

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Schools in South Africa are vulnerable to conflicts, including conflicts that result from the collision of the interests of school stakeholders (Mbokazi et al., 2022:423). It follows that wherever people are working together, there will always be conflicts of interest. Conflicts of interest, therefore, should be seen as inevitable in human life, including school life, because the interests of different people will always conflict. Different individuals or groups of people will always have conflicting vested interests, each wanting their fair share of power, riches, and prestige (Coser in Mbokazi et al., 2022:425). In the appointment process for principals, these conflicts of interest may manifest themselves in the issues of selling of positions (Khumalo, 2021), interference of trade unions (Khumalo, 2021), nepotism (Dube & Tsotestsi, 2020), and religious association (Dampson, 2019:6). More studies have confirmed that the filling of principalship positions in South Africa has been characterised by nepotism, anarchy, and intimidation since 1994 (Matos, 2022). Rangraje (2000) found that the process for the filling of principalship positions in South Africa was characterised by nepotism, intimidation, and bias. Regarding religious affiliation as a source of conflicts of interest in the appointment of principals, Mmadi (2023) argued that this challenge emanates from the fact that some schools continue to align with denominations, while Nthontho (2020) posited that some schools have managed to deal with the conflicting religious interests of their stakeholders while some have not. As for the vested interests of trade unions, several reports have been forthcoming over the years of undue influence and interference by the unions beyond their scope of responsibility of serving as observers (Chetty, 2018:11). Additionally, the ANC policy of cadre deployment has been found to be a root cause of inefficiency in public institutions in South Africa (Bless, 2023). A study by Dube and Tsotetsi has found the appointment of principals based on comradeship to be one of the problems hindering the success of schools in South Africa (Dube &, 2020). Since 1994, the appointments of principals have become politicised and unionised, such that considerations of excellence, qualifications, and competency are negated (Dube &Tsotetsi, 2020:S1). This has led to the provision of poor-quality education, which cannot empower people. In fact, a report from a ministerial task team of 2016 that investigated the allegations of teachers' posts recommended that cadre deployment must be done away with (Dwangu & Mahlangu, 2022).

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2.4.1 The Effects of Conflicts of Interest on the Appointment of Quality Principals

Research has revealed that performance and competency, as prerequisites for appointment of principals in public schools, are not considered, and that this has adverse implications for the delivery of quality education because incompetent people cannot lead and manage schools, as well as deliver the teaching and learning process effectively (Dube & Tsotetsi, 2020:1; Bush, 2016:537; Jerdborg, 2023:2; Mahlangu, 2014:313; Bush & Oduro, 2015:359; George, 2019:3; Khumalo, 2021:2). Empirical literature records that a link exists between good leadership and the successful achievement of school outcomes and decries the ever-growing decline of the quality of school principals in South Africa (Khumalo, 2021).

Taylor (2011:3) contended that South Africa's schooling system had been experiencing endemic dysfunction because of the weak capacity of school principals. This had resulted in poor schooling outcomes. In addition, patronage and nepotism account for the appointment of unsuitable principals who rely on creating patronage networks to entrench their positions (Taylor, 2011:3). The prevailing system did not nurture the kind of professional leadership desired to motivate teachers and learners to achieve objectives (Taylor, 2011:5). Collusion and nepotism are rife in the recruitment and promotion of staff in the South African education system (Taylor, 2011:6). It results in inappropriate people being appointed to positions for which they are ill-equipped: under these conditions, institutional dysfunctionality becomes the norm (Taylor, 2011:6). A public opinion exists in South Africa that the unions exert a stranglehold on all appointments (Taylor, 2011:7). A study in South Africa by Zengele (2013:23) found that some SADTU members that were appointed as principals were poorly qualified and less experienced and were not able to facilitate the provision of quality education to learners. It is also found that inherent promotions of key union members to management positions have led to a decline in the motivation and dedication of academically and professionally deserving teachers (Zangele, 2013:18). A study by Foncha, Abongdia and Mayase (2016:18) revealed that during 2014, newspaper headlines were swamped with unpalatable headlines of SADTU having

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been engaged in jobs for sale rackets. According to the newspaper reports, principals were being intimidated out of their positions with threats of death and were being replaced by those who paid money to the union officials (Foncha, Abongdia & Mayase, 2016:18).

2.4.2 The Impact of the Appointment of Poor-quality School Principals on the Delivery of Effective Teaching and Learning at Schools

Research points to a clear connection between the quality of school leadership, the instructional climate of the school, and student achievement (Shava & Mazenda, 2021). It could be argued that there is sufficient evidence that where there is quality school leadership, teachers are motivated to achieve goals, and students achieve better results. On the contrary, poor school leadership will result in the underachievement of instructional goals and poor performance by students. Owing to a failure to observe sound ethical conduct, the capacity of public institutions, including schools, to render service effectively and efficiently is hampered (Shava & Mazenda, 2021).

While most of the research on the appointment of incompetent staff has focused on the position of principalship (Dube & Tsotetsi, 2020:1), Dube and Tsotetsi (2020:2) contend that achieving good-quality students is possible where there are principals and teachers of quality who can contribute meaningfully to the teaching and learning process. The claim that the compromised appointment of principals is affecting the schooling system in South Africa remains a topical issue (Dube & Tsotetsi, 2020:2), worthy of ongoing investigation. It is the view of this researcher that this study will contribute to eradicating compromised appointments of school principals through its recommendations.

Conflicts of interest in the appointment of school principals in public schools in South Africa have often resulted in the appointment of weak and inefficient principals. Weak and inefficient school leadership tends to cause schools to experience endemic dysfunctionality. Schools cannot function optimally where staff does not have trust in the administrative and governance leadership of their schools (Baxter & Ehren, 2023).

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Research findings decry a general lack of ethical leadership by South African school principals. Various reports from the Department of Basic Education support these findings (Mlambo & Khumalo, 2022). It is evident from the preceding paragraphs that governments throughout the world have made it one of their top priorities to find ways to prevent or manage conflicts of interest as a way of promoting effectiveness in public service.

2.4.3 How can Educational Authorities Eliminate Conflicts of Interest from Appointment Processes for School Principals?

According to Ramokgotswa (2016:4), the government has since 1994 adopted legislation and measures to facilitate the appointment of teachers to improve the quality of education in the country. The South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996; the Employment of Educators Act, 76 of 1998; and the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) of 2016 form part of the broader government strategy to address issues of fairness in the appointment of teachers to promote quality education for learners. However, provisions in the legislation and administrative measures are neglected, and many children suffer greatly because of this negligence (Ramokgotswa, 2016:4).

While South Africa has wonderful educational goals that are enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic, the South African Schools Act, the Bill of Rights, and other progressive documentation, these goals have not been achievable because of the widespread corruption (Foncha, Abongdia & Mayase, 2016:18).

It is evident from the above paragraphs that the principalship appointment process is characterised by conflicts of interest, resulting in the appointment of incompetent principals. If this phenomenon is not attended to, schools cannot deliver effective teaching and learning (Mabunu, 2013:59). The principalship appointment process, therefore, should be a subject of ongoing research.

According to Gonzales and Husain, in Dube and Tsotetsi (2020:1), the stakeholders in education must re-examine and reconsider the processes that hinder development in the education sector. The appointment of people that undermines excellence and

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productivity should be avoided at all costs (Dube & Tsotetsi, 2020:1). Rather, people should be appointed to leadership positions based on competency, hard work, and dedication (Dube & Tsotetsi, 2020:1). In the view of this researcher, appointments of principals that are based on merit will go a long way in promoting efficiency in schools, while appointments that are based on ethically questionable considerations can only promote dysfunctionality in schools.

Section 59 of the Executive Summary of the National Development Plan (NDP) provides that the appointment process for the appointment of principals needs to be revisited to ensure the attraction of competent people to become principals by 2030. The NDP envisages that candidates should undergo a competency assessment to determine their suitability and identify the areas in which they would need development and support; educational authorities should eliminate union influence in promoting or appointing principals; and the Department of Basic Education (DBE) and provincial departments of education must ensure that human resources management capacity is improved, and recruitment is undertaken correctly. Research on the appointment of school principals is thus necessary to provide recommendations for the improvement of the process to appoint principals (Executive Summary of NDP, 60).

2.5 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK UNDERPINNING THE APPOINTMENT OF PRINCIPALS IN SOUTH AFRICA

This part seeks to provide a brief analysis of the relevant laws and policies that govern the appointment of principals in South Africa, taking into cognizance the principles of fairness, equity, and equality advocated by Rawl and as contained in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. The brief analysis of the legislative framework is based on the discussion above. The researcher moves from the premise that policies for the selection of school principals are crucial for quality education (Khanal & Dev Regmi, 2024). Thus, the devotion of this section is to offer a bird's eye view of the pertinent legislation and policies governing the appointment process for principals in South Africa.

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This section is also relevant to the study because the promotion of teachers to principalship positions is regulated through legislation (Dwangu & Mahlangu, 2022:213). The legislation aims to ensure that the process is run such that it is not influenced unduly (Malefetse, 2019:19). However, weaknesses in the legislation and policies have often been manipulated by stakeholders to pursue their own selfish interests (Dube & Tsotetsi, 2020; du Plessis, 2020; Pakade & Chilenga-Butao, 2021). This manipulation speaks to the stakeholders' successful attempts to unduly influence the promotional process.

The most important pieces of legislation to be promulgated post-1994 to regulate public education are the National Education Policy Act, Act 27 of 1996, and the South African Schools Act, Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) (Kruger et al., 2022). The National Education Policy Act provides for the determination of national policy for education to amend the National Policy for General Education Affairs Act of 1984 to provide afresh for the determination of policy on salaries and conditions of employment of educators (Section 3(1)-(4) of the National Education Policy Act). As derived from its title, SASA was enacted to provide for the structuring, governance, and funding of schools. The main aim was to bring about equality in all the public schools in South Africa. Thus, the racial divides of the past had to be dealt away with – to allow all learners to receive not only the same standard but also the same quality of education (Preamble of SASA). Another important piece of legislation regarding the appointment of teachers, including principals, is the Employment of Educators Act, Act No. 76 of 1998 (EEA). Section 6 of the EEA deals with the appointment of teachers, including their promotion to the position of school principal.

According to Section 20(1) (i) of SASA, educators are appointed by the provincial Head of Department on the recommendation of the School Governing Body (SGB). That is, SASA places an obligation, regarding the appointment of educators, on the school governing body. The school governing body is expected to shortlist, interview, and then forward a list of recommended candidates to the HOD, from which the HOD will make an appointment. This means that the HOD cannot appoint an educator at any level if the appointment is not based on the recommendation of the SGB. The recommendation of the SGB and the appointment of educators are expected to be

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made with due regard having been had to the ability of the candidates being recommended or appointed (Section 7(1)(a) of the Employment of Educators Act, Act No. 76 of 1998 (EEA)). From the provisions of these acts, the law prefers educators at all levels, including principals, to be appointed based on merit. However, owing to various conflicts of interest, stakeholders in the educator appointment process undermine the provisions of the law in pursuance of their own selfish interests. Additionally, SGBs, as an important stakeholder in the appointment process for principals, lack the requisite capacity to interpret and implement educational laws and policies effectively (Makhuvele et al., 2019:190). It could be argued that people without the requisite capacity to perform the important task of recommending principals to the Head of Department for appointment could be persuaded with ease to base their decisions on ethically questionable considerations. Van der Berg et al. in Malefetse (2019:12), found that the officials responsible for recommendations and appointments of principals have very limited knowledge and understanding of labour laws regarding the appointment of principals. Therefore, this has led to the manipulation of the system by stakeholders with vested interests.

Other acts that are essential in the appointment process for principals include the Labour Relations Act, No. 66 of 1995 (LRA), and the Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998 (EEA). Whereas the LRA details what constitutes unfair labour practice as regards the stakeholders in education in terms of the issues of demotion, promotion, or training of employees, the EEA provides guidelines on the processes that deal with promotion and the appointment of principals (Dwangu & Mahlangu, 2022). All the measures contained in the LRA and EEA are geared towards redressing past injustices and promoting equality, equity, and fairness as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. It should follow that undermining the provisions of the Constitution and the acts quoted above, in pursuance of private interests, must be condemned in the strongest possible terms. Lack of adherence to educational laws and policies has often led to the appointment of less and less competent school principals (Ahiaku, 2019:34). It is evident that non-adherence to enabling legislation and policies that govern promotion processes in schools results in unfair and inequitable appointment decisions being made

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The Department of Basic Education School Realities Report (2020) reported that there were about 25 000 principalship positions in South Africa in 2020, making competition for these positions very stiff (Mopp, 2022:1). Conflicts arising from the collision of the conflicts of interest of the stakeholders are thus inevitable (Mbokazi et al., 2022:423). These conflicts arise because the stakeholders are persuaded to place in principalship positions, people who will serve their private interests, instead of primary interests. The private interests are, in the main, motivated by a desire to control school resources and because of favouritism by the leadership of schools (Mbokazi et al., 2022:425).

Whereas the legislation is clear in terms of what roles each of the stakeholders in the appointment process should play, it is mute on the safeguards to be followed to ensure the appointment processes are free from conflicts of interest. Stakeholders with vested interests have often taken advantage of this situation – to push their private interests ahead of the public interest. In fact, it is not surprising that the appointment processes of educators in schools are seen as fraught with fraud and corruption" (Dwangu & Mahlangu, 2022). According to Nxumalo et al. (2021:577), although there are educational policy guidelines in place to guide the processes for the promotion of principals in schools, challenges continue to be encountered because there are stakeholders who stray outside their roles. Educational laws and policies evidently strive to encourage the advancement of the public interest, but the conflicting interests of the stakeholders are making it difficult for the laws and policies to accomplish what they have been promulgated for. Thus, the implementation of the appointment process often runs against the stipulations of educational laws and policies, owing to the conflicts of interest of the stakeholders. From the preceding paragraphs, it could be deduced that the stakeholders' interests are often at variance, not only with the public interest but also with the interests of fellow stakeholders. More concerning is that the promotional processes lack adherence to the constitutional ideals of social justice and democracy (Mampane, 2015:239).

2.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter reviewed the literature which is pertinent to the resolution of the research problem. It considered the theoretical framework that undergirded the study,

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discussed the concept of conflicts of interest, analysed conflicts of interest in the context of the appointments of principals in South Africa, provided a brief analysis of the laws and policies that govern the appointment of principals in South Africa, and gave a brief critical account of the findings from the empirical literature that was consulted - to be able to achieve the aim and objectives of the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the literature review which is relevant to achieving the aim of the study. The aim of this study was to determine the effects of conflicts of interest on the appointment of principals. This chapter presents the research methodology used to conduct the study – to resolve the research problem and achieve the study's specific objectives. Research methodology refers to the approach comprising techniques and procedures that a researcher employs to collect and analyse data to resolve a specific research problem (Walliman, 2021). Aspects of research methodology that were discussed include research paradigm, research design, population, sample, data collection and instruments, data analysis, measures of quality control and the ethical considerations that guided the researcher's conduct throughout the study.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A research paradigm refers to common beliefs and principles regarding how a researcher should understand and address research problems (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:26). The research paradigm guides the actions of the researcher. It defines how the researcher views the world around him (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:26).

Four research paradigms can be distinguished. These are positivism, interpretivism, critical theory, and pragmatic paradigms (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:35). In this study, the pragmatic research paradigm was employed. The pragmatic paradigm advocates

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for the use of practical and pluralistic approaches, which are consistent with mixed methods, to understand human behaviour (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:35). Pragmatists assert that there cannot be one truth but many truths, thereby supporting the view that truths should be constructed collaboratively, using practical and pluralistic approaches that will produce the best solutions to the problems under study (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:35).

The researcher chose pragmatism because the study sought to use the best approaches available in gaining knowledge and using every method that helps in discovering knowledge without having to be restrained by a particular paradigm (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:36). It was envisaged that the approaches and methods selected would be able to assist the researcher in accomplishing the research purposes. That is, every approach that assists in answering the research questions was used (Subedi, 2016:570).

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Three designs of conducting research are recognisable. These are quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Migiro & Magangi, 2011:3757). The study followed an explanatory, sequential mixed-method design. In line with this design, quantitative data was considered first, then qualitative information was collected (Subedi, 2016:572). The researcher thus conducted the study in two phases. The researcher used the quantitative research approach for the first phase of the study and the qualitative research approach for the second phase to arrive at a more complete understanding of the research problem (Migiro & Magangi, 2011:3757). In this research study, the qualitative and quantitative approaches were regarded as complementary rather than competitive and used together based on the nature of the research problem and the research questions (Migiro & Magangi, 2011:3757). Thus, the researcher took advantage of the in-depth, contextual nature of the qualitative findings and the representativeness and generalisability of quantitative findings (Migiro & Magangi, 2011: 3758).

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Mixed methods are not easy to define. Mixed methods research involves using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in a single study (Salehi & Golafashani, 2010:187). A combination of various elements of both quantitative and qualitative approaches is used to give a deeper and broader understanding of a phenomenon than a single approach would yield (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018:32). Leech and Onwuegbuzie, in Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018:32), postulate that undertaking a study through mixed methods entails the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data and the analysis and interpretation of the information to address a particular phenomenon. In this study, the researcher combined the two approaches to facilitate the integration of data collection and analysis techniques of both the quantitative and qualitative methods in sequential phases (Salehi & Golafashani, 2010:187). Researchers agree that using mixed methods increases the accuracy of the results of a research study (Selehi & Golafashani, 2010:188).

The first phase involved the collection of quantitative information. The collection of information was done by using a structured questionnaire. Random sampling was used because the sample was based on the highest possible representation of the population from secondary schools in the circuit. Quantitative approaches are typically associated with positivist perspectives in social research (Das, 2016:8).

According to Bryman, in Daniel (2016:94), the quantitative research approach puts emphasis on numbers and figures regarding the collection and analysis of data. A questionnaire was used to collect data. The main objective of a questionnaire in research is to obtain relevant information most reliably and validly (Taherdoost, 2016:28). The quantitative research approach is scientific in nature, as the data can be analysed by using a computer programme called Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) (Daniel, 2016:94). The advantages of using the quantitative approach include that the results can be generalised to similar groups of people and that it relies on the testing of the hypotheses rather than intelligent guesswork (Daniel, 2016:94).

The second phase involved the usage of the qualitative method. According to Salehi and Golafshani (2010:187), the qualitative method deals with the interpretation and

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exploration that guide researchers to understand and explain events and occurrences, such as humans phenomena from social patterns. In this phase, qualitative data was collected by using semi-structured interviews. Four (4) school principals, four (4) union leaders, four (4) members of school governing bodies, and eight (8) teachers were subjectively sampled.

By following an explanatory mixed-method design, the study sought to collect quantitative data first and then collect qualitative information to help explain the quantitative results. That is, it was envisaged that the quantitative data and results would bring about a general picture of the research problem and that more analysis would follow through qualitative data collection to refine, extend, or explain the general picture (Subedi, 2016:572).

The study fused both the quantitative and qualitative standpoints to explore reality from a perspective that is called the pragmatic paradigm (Subedi, 2016:570). Pragmatism embraces mixed methods to avoid the views of positivism and constructivism, which are linked to quantitative and qualitative standpoints, respectively (Subedi, 2016:570). With the mixed methods, the research questions, rather than the ontological and epistemological choices, are at the centre of the study. NOne of the chief manifestations of the pragmatic approach to the matter of mixing quantitative and qualitative research is the significance that is frequently given to the research question. This position regarding the debate about quantitative and qualitative research prioritises the research question and relegates epistemological and ontological debates to the sidelines. In doing so, it clears the path for research that combines qualitative and quantitative research (Subedi, 2016:571).

3.4 POPULATION

Gronmo (2020:153) defines population as a group of individuals, objects, or items with common characteristics or attributes. A population is, therefore, considered to be research respondents who should give on the research questions that are asked to them. For this study, the target population was the total number of teachers at all levels employed in the schools in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit. The total number of teachers is about two hundred and fifty (250). A sample of respondents was drawn

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from this population to participate in the study. Vhuronga 1 Circuit was considered salient because it has the right size of the population for the purpose of this research and because there have been allegations of corruption in the appointment of principals in the last ten (10) years.

3.5 SAMPLING

Sampling is concerned with the selection of units of study (Gronmo, 2020:153). Thus, a sample is a smaller group of the population which is the subject of the study. For the quantitative phase of the study, the selection of the sample was based on the highest possible representation of the population. The population comprised teachers, members of the school governing body, deputy principals, principals, and union leaders from secondary schools. For this reason, simple random sampling, classified under the probability sampling methods, was used. The schools in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit were chosen because of their familiarity with the researcher and some complaints that arose there regarding appointments that were allegedly influenced by conflicts of interest in the last ten (10) years. The research sample for the quantitative phase consisted of eighty (80) teachers from 10 secondary schools in the circuit.

For the qualitative phase of the study, the sample was selected based on the researcher's subjective judgment. In this phase, the researcher used the purposive sampling method, which is classified as the non-probability sampling method (Eitkan & Bala, 2017:215). Non-probability sampling is exploratory because it makes every effort to completely understand a phenomenon's reality (Eitkan & Bala, 2017:215). The researcher thus used his own discretion about the participants who could provide the best information to deal with the problem statement and research questions - to achieve the study's objectives. It was the view of this researcher that more experienced respondents in each category could provide the best information for the qualitative phase. More experienced respondents were thus preferable. Four (4) school principals, four (4) union leaders, four (4) members of school governing bodies,

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and eight (8) teachers were subjectively sampled to help explain the quantitative results.

In this study, sampling methods and sizes were chosen based on the information required from the population, components of the population, and the purpose of the study.

3.6 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

The first phase involved the collection of quantitative information. The collection of information was done by using a structured questionnaire. According to Daniel (2016:94), the quantitative research approach puts emphasis on numbers and figures regarding the collection and analysis of data. A questionnaire was used to collect data. The main objective of a questionnaire in research is to obtain relevant information in the most reliable and valid manner (Taherdoost, 2016:28).

The second phase involved the collection of qualitative information. In this phase, qualitative data was collected by using semi-structured questions. An interview schedule was used to collect qualitative data.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Onwuegbuzie and Teddlie, in Migiro and Magangi (2011:3763), identify seven stages of data analysis in mixed methods research. These are data reduction, data display, data transformation, data correlation, data consolidation, and data comparison. The researcher followed the data analysis stages as explained by Migiro and Magangi below:

> *"Data reduction involves reducing the dimensionality of the qualitative data (for example, via exploratory thematic analysis, memoing) and quantitative data for example, via descriptive statistics, exploratory factor analysis, cluster analysis). Data display involves pictorially describing qualitative data (for example, matrices, charts, graphs,*

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networks, lists, rubrics, and Venn diagrams) and quantitative data (for example, tables and graphs). This is followed (optionally) by the data transformation stage, where in quantitative data are converted into narrative data that can be analysed qualitatively (that is, qualitised); Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) and/or qualitative data are converted into numerical codes that can be represented statistically (that is, quantitised, Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998). Data correlation involves the quantitative data being correlated with the quantitised data; this is followed by the data consolidation, wherein both quantitative and qualitative data are combined to create new or consolidated variables, or data sets. The next stage, data comparison, involves comparing data from qualitative and quantitative sources. Data integration characterizes the final stage whereby both quantitative and qualitative data are integrated into either a coherent whole or two separate data sets (that is, --, qualitative and quantitative) of coherent wholes."

Since this is an explanatory, sequential mixed-method study, quantitative data was presented and analysed first. It was presented through descriptive statistics in the form of tables and graphs as obtained through the SPSS package. The quantitative data was analysed before it was interpreted by the researcher. The qualitative data was organised according to the themes which aligned with the objectives of the study. The analysis and discussion of the qualitative data combined findings from the literature review and the quantitative phase, providing for data integration. Thus, both data from the quantitative and the qualitative phases were integrated into a coherent whole.

3.8 MEASURES OF QUALITY CONTROL

Data was collected in two sequential phases, quantitative and qualitative. Quality control measures in quantitative research include testing the data collection instrument for validity and reliability, while trustworthiness is the main measure of quality control in qualitative research. Trustworthiness consists of the four elements of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability in qualitative, whereas validity and reliability are for quantitative. Quality control measures in mixed methods involve some

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combination of quantitative and qualitative criteria (McLaughlin, Bush & Zeeman, 2016:716).

3.8.1 Measures of Quality Control in the Quantitative Phase

3.8.1.1 Validity

Validity could be defined as the degree to which a test measures what it purports to measure (Sartori & Pasini, 2007:359). The validity of the questionnaire was tested, considering both the face and content validity. According to face validity, the questionnaire must appear to cover the relevant content of what is being measured (Sartori & Pasini, 2007:362). Content validity was ascertained by using the results of a pilot study. About twenty experienced teachers from the Vhembe East District in the Limpopo Department of Education were asked to appraise and pre-test the questionnaire.

3.8.1.2 Reliability

Reliability could be defined as the degree to which test scores are free from measurement errors, that is, the level of internal consistency or stability of the measuring device over time (Thanasegaran, 2009:1). Piloting was done to ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire. A quarter of the sample was used during piloting. This involved randomly splitting the instruments into four, two containing odd numbers and the other two numbers (Thanasegaran, 2009:2).

3.8.2 Measures of Quality Control in the Qualitative Phase

The measurement of quality in qualitative research focuses on trustworthiness, which encompasses credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Sinkovics, Penz & Ghauri, 2008:689).

3.8.2.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the truth of the data or the participants' views and the interpretation and representation of them by the researcher (Cope, 2014:89). To establish credibility, the researcher described his experiences as a researcher and would verify

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the research findings with the participants. Additionally, the researcher is able to demonstrate engagement with participants, methods of observation, and audit trails to enhance the credibility of the qualitative findings (Cope, 2014:89).

3.8.2.2 Dependability

Dependability refers to the constancy of the data over similar conditions (Cope, 2014:89). In this study, dependability would be deemed to have been established where its findings find concurrence with the findings of other researchers in specific themes. The researcher, therefore, read relevant literature deeply to establish if the findings are consistent with those of the researchers who have studied the problem.

3.8.2.3 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the researcher's ability to demonstrate that the data represents the participants' responses and not the researcher's biases or viewpoints (Cope, 2014:89). The researcher can demonstrate how he arrived at conclusions and how he interpreted the data to demonstrate confirmability. This was achieved by furnishing rich quotes from the participants on the various themes of the findings (Cope, 2014:89).

3.8.2.4 Transferability

Transferability refers to findings that can be applied to other settings or groups (Cope, 2014:89). A qualitative study has met this criterion if the results have meaning to individuals not involved in the study, and readers can associate the results with their own experiences (Cope, 2014:89). To facilitate transferability, the researcher would provide sufficient information on the informants and the research context to enable the reader to assess the findings' capability of being "fit" or transferable (Cope, 2014:89). The researcher also used thick description that requires providing a deeply detailed account of one's research to check the potential for application to other times, places, people, and contexts (Henry & Foss, 2015). The findings of this study are generalisable because it is chiefly a quantitative study.

3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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By their nature, mixed methods research fuses quantitative and qualitative research approaches. The researcher, therefore, attended to both ethical considerations that arise in both forms of inquiry. Quantitative issues relate to obtaining permissions, protecting the anonymity of respondents, not disrupting sites, communicating the purposes of the study, avoiding deceptive practices, respecting vulnerable populations, being aware of potential power issues in data collection, respecting indigenous cultures, not disclosing sensitive information, and masking the identities of participants. In an explanatory design, researchers may use a large quantitative database for the initial phase of the research (Subedi, 2016:576).

The ethical principles referred to above were adhered to as follows:

3.9.1 Permission to Conduct Research

Permission to conduct research was obtained from the relevant committee of the Senate of the University of Venda.

3.9.2 Informed consent

All individuals who took part in the research were informed that their participation was a matter of choice, and the researcher would not use fraud, deceit, duress, or similar unfair inducement or manipulation to get information. All participants were informed about their right to withdraw should they wish not to continue providing information at any stage of the research. Moreover, participants were issued with forms that explained the purpose of the study. They also signed consent forms for involvement in the study.

3.9.3 Anonymity and Confidentiality

Names and identities of the participants in the data collection, analysis, and reporting of the study findings will not be revealed. The researcher promised the participants that their responses would be handled with the strictest confidentiality.

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3.9.4 Voluntary Participation

Participants were informed that they were free to exercise their will whether to participate or not in the study. The researcher explained to all the participants that their participation was voluntary and that if they wished to withdraw or refused to participate, it would not affect them in any way.

3.9.5 Reduction of Harm

The researcher avoided hurting the participants or their environment in any way. Additionally, continuous vigilance was maintained to identify and mitigate any potential direct or indirect threats to their well-being.

3.9.6 Putting of Identifiers

To follow up on these individuals with qualitative interviews, there was a need to devise an identifier linked to the quantitative database. Some individuals may not want their quantitative data released. Using names without permission constitutes an ethical mixed-method issue (Subedi, 2016:576). Therefore, consent was sought from the respondents for the researcher to put some form of information in the quantitative questionnaire/consent form to help the researcher identify the respondents who provided the quantitative data, who could provide rich data for the qualitative phase. If the identifiers were put in without the knowledge and consent of the respondents, it would have constituted an ethical issue.

3.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the research methodology used to conduct the study to resolve the research problem and to achieve the specific objectives of the study. The concept of research methodology was defined. Aspects of research methodology that were discussed include research paradigm, research design, population, sample, data collection and instruments, data analysis, measures of quality control, and the ethical considerations which guided the researcher's conduct throughout the study.

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CHAPTER 4

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the results of the data that was collected for the study. The aim of the study was to determine the effects of conflicts of interest on the appointment of principals from the perspectives of secondary school educators in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit. Since this is a sequential, explanatory mixed-method study, the results for the quantitative and qualitative phases are presented in two sequential phases.

The first phase involved the collection of quantitative information. The collection of information was done by using a structured questionnaire. The quantitative data and results provided a general picture of the research problem. In this phase, the results of the analysis of the quantitative data comprise a description of the respondents' biographic details and a descriptive analysis of the results in tabular and graphic forms. Eighty-one (81) respondents took part in this phase.

The second phase involved the collection of qualitative information. The collection of qualitative information was done by using an interview schedule. The qualitative data sought to refine, extend, or explain the general picture that was painted by the results of the quantitative phase. The data collected was structured according to themes. The twenty (20) interviewed participants were coded for ease of analysis. The educators were given codes ED1 – ED8; union leaders were given codes UN1 – UN4;

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SGB members were given codes SGB1 – SGB4; and principals were given codes PR1 – PR4.

The discussion of the findings of the qualitative phase is followed by a brief synthesis of the findings as per the themes and sub-themes of the study.

4.2 ANALYSIS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA

This section demonstrates how the data collected using the structured questionnaire was analysed.

4.2.1 Section A: Biographical Details of the Respondents

The biographical data consisted of the participants' biographic information such as gender, age, position, qualification, union membership, and union leadership status.

4.2.1.1 Gender

Table 4.1: Gender of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	49	60.5	60.5	60.5
	Female	32	39.5	39.5	100.0
	Total	81	100.0	100.0	

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As shown in Table 4.1 above, 49 respondents, representing 60.5% of the respondents, were male, while 32 respondents, representing 39.5% of the respondents, were female. While male teachers generally showed eagerness to participate, female teachers showed reluctance, some privately expressing fear of repercussions.

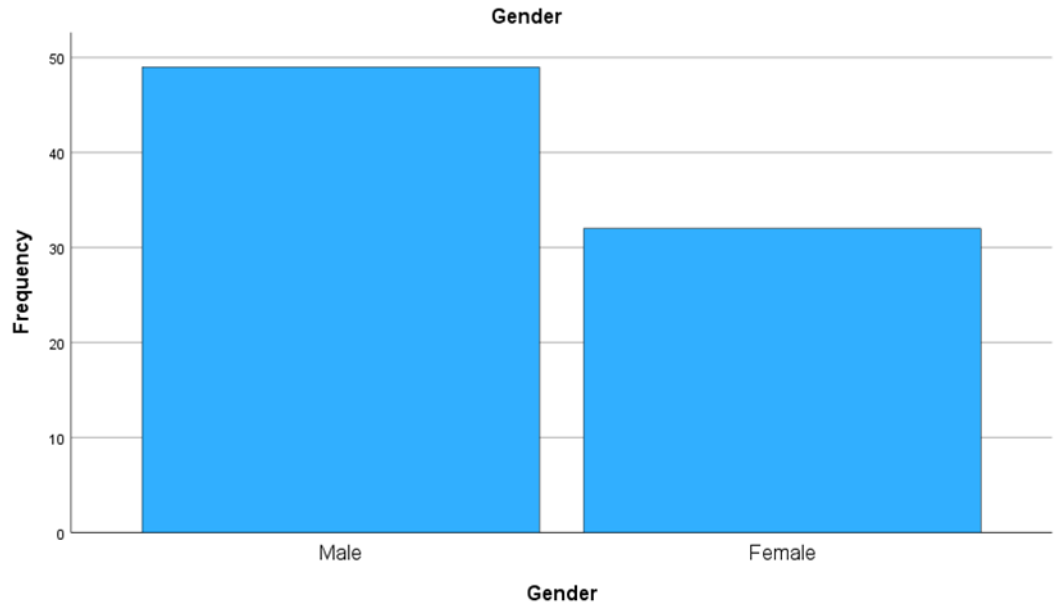


Figure 4.1: Representation of the Gender of the Respondents

4.2.1.2 Age

Table 4.2: Age of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Less than 25 Years	1	1.2	1.2	1.2
	20-30 years	8	9.9	9.9	11.1
	31-40 years	14	17.3	17.3	28.4
	41-50 years	16	19.8	19.8	48.1
	51 years and older	42	51.9	51.9	100.0
	Total	81	100.0	100.0	

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The ages of the respondents are depicted in Table 4.2 above. 1 respondent, representing 1.2% of the respondents, was in the category of less than 25 years. 8 respondents, representing 9.9% of the respondents, were between 26 and 30 years of age; 14 respondents, representing 17.3% of the respondents, were between 31 and 40 years of age; 16 respondents, representing 19.8% of the respondents, were between 41 and 50 years of age, while 42 respondents, representing 51.9% of the respondents, were 51 years and older. The fact that over 70% of the respondents were 41 years and older meant that more than half of the respondents were highly experienced and provided rich data accumulated over time.

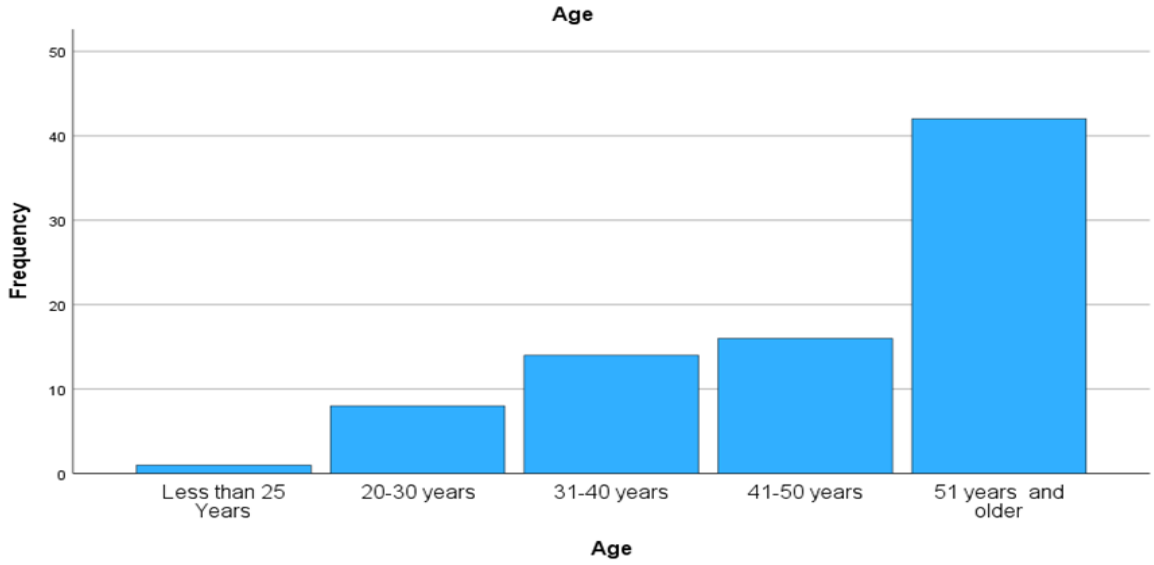


Figure 4.2: Representation of the Age of the Respondents

4.2.1.3 Position

Table 4.3: Positions of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	CS1 Educator	67	82.7	82.7	82.7
	Departmental Head	5	6.2	6.2	88.9

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	Deputy Principal	4	4.9	4.9	93.8
	Principal	5	6.2	6.2	100.0
	Total	81	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 4.3 above, 67 respondents, representing 82.7% of the respondents, were CS1 educators; 5 respondents, representing 6.2% of the respondents, were departmental heads; 4 respondents, representing 4.9% of the respondents, were deputy principals, while 5 respondents, representing 6.2% of the respondents, were principals. It is clear from this table that the researcher sought to achieve a balance by involving specific numbers of respondents from the respondents' positional categories.

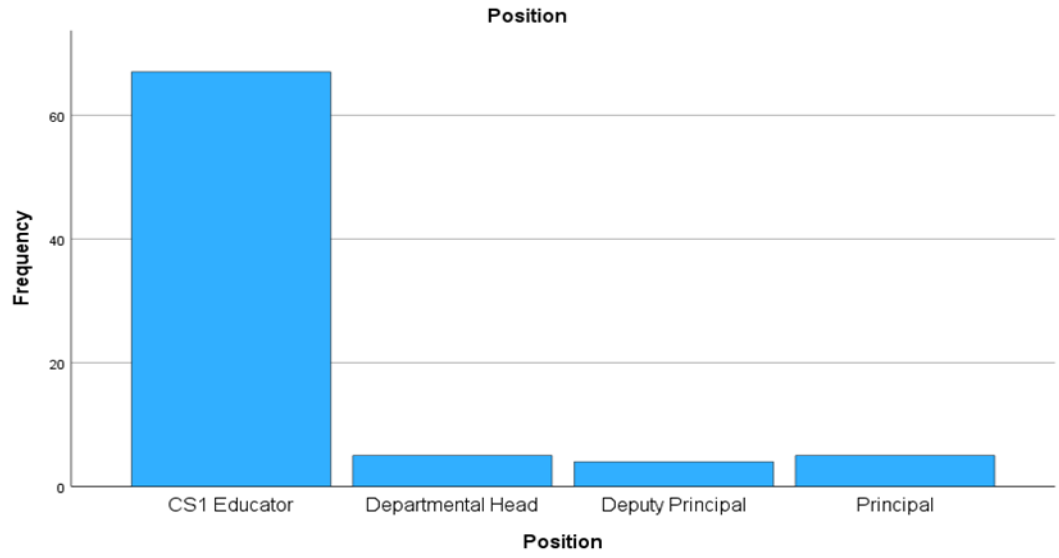


Figure 4.3: Representation of the Positions of the Respondents

4.2.1.4 Qualification

Table 4.4: Qualification of the Respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Teaching Diploma	8	9.9	9.9	9.9

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	Teaching Diploma & Advanced Certificate in Education	17	21.0	21.0	30.9
	Degree	27	33.3	33.3	64.2
	Honours	27	33.3	33.3	97.5
	Masters	2	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	81	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 4.4 above, 8 respondents, representing 9.9% of the respondents, have a teaching diploma as their highest qualification; 17 teachers, representing 21.0 respondents, have a teaching diploma and Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE); 27 respondents, representing 33.3% of the respondents, have degrees; 27 respondents, representing 33.3% of the respondents, have honours degrees; while 2 respondents, representing 2.5% of the respondents have master's degrees. The fact that the respondents possess the required qualifications can attest to the credibility of the findings.

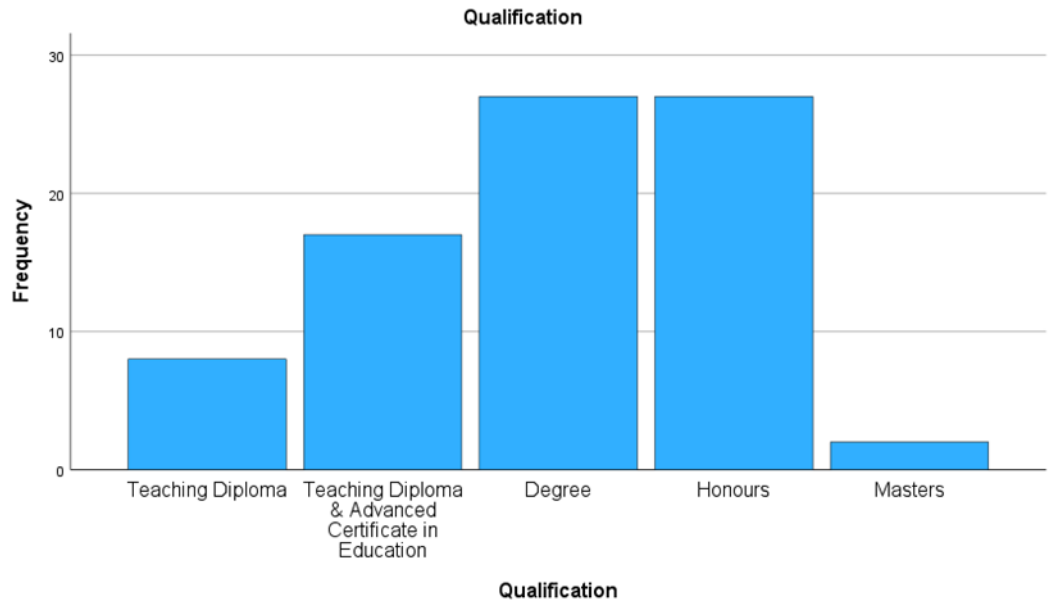


Figure 4.4: Representation of the Qualifications of the Respondents

4.2.1.5 Union Member

Table 4.5: Union Membership of the Respondents

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		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	78	96.3	97.5	97.5
	No	2	2.5	2.5	100.0
	Total	80	98.8	100.0	
Missing	System	1	1.2		
Total		81	100.0		

As shown in Table 4.5 above, 1 respondent, representing 1.2% of the respondents, did not indicate if he or she is a union member. 78 respondents, representing 96.3% of the respondents, indicated that they are members of unions, while 2 respondents, representing 2.5% of the respondents, indicated that they are members of unions. The perceptions of the respondents on issues pertinent to unions are informed, as over 90% of them are union members.

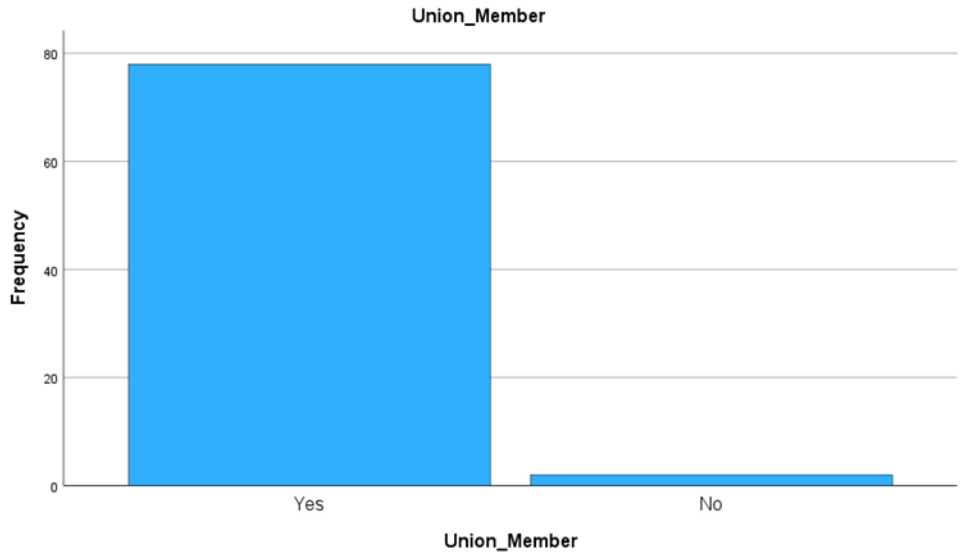


Figure 4.5: Representation of the Union Membership of the Respondents

4.2.1.6 Leadership in a Union

Table 4.6: Leadership Roles in Unions of the Respondents

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		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	25	30.9	30.9	30.9
	No	56	69.1	69.1	100.0
	Total	81	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 4.6, 25 respondents, representing 30.9% of the respondents, indicated that they occupy leadership roles in unions, while 56 respondents, representing 69.1% of the respondents, indicated that they do not occupy leadership roles in unions. The fact that over 30% of the respondents were leaders in their respective unions made it easy for the researcher to subjectively identify the participants that would give rich data pertaining to the role of unions in conflicts of interest.

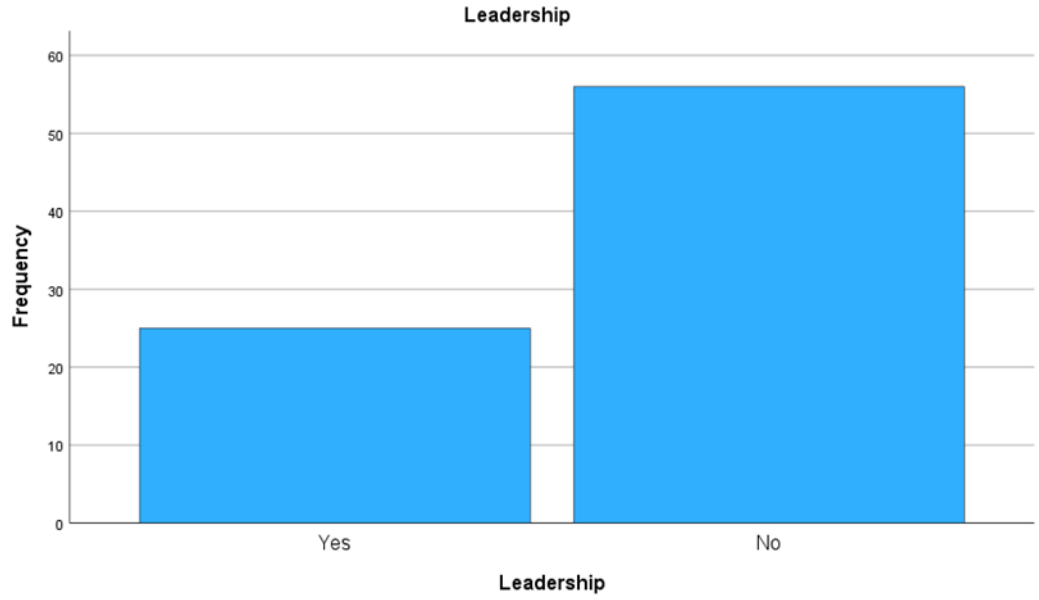


Figure 4.6: Representation of the Leadership Roles in Unions of the Respondents

4.2.2 Section B

Section B presents the data generated using the items in the questionnaire. The data is organised in the format of tables and graphs, using frequency and percentages. There is a brief analysis of the findings after each table. The graphs at the end of

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each item are vital for reference at the stage of the synthesis of the findings, that is, before the qualitative findings are discussed for the refinement, explanation, or extension of the quantitative findings. Thus, it is important that the discussion of the qualitative findings must link with the findings of the quantitative phase. This is because a sequential, explanatory mixed-method study is chiefly a quantitative study. Below is the presentation and brief analysis of the items in the questionnaire.

4.2.2.1 Type of Nepotism

Table 4.7: Existence of Nepotism

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	64	79.0	79.0	79.0
	5	17	21.0	21.0	100.0
	Total	81	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 4.7 above, from the total number of 81 respondents, 64, representing 79.0% of the respondents, believe that the appointment process for principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit is influenced by nepotism. Only 17 respondents, representing 21.0% of the respondents, believe that nepotism does not influence the appointment process for principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit.

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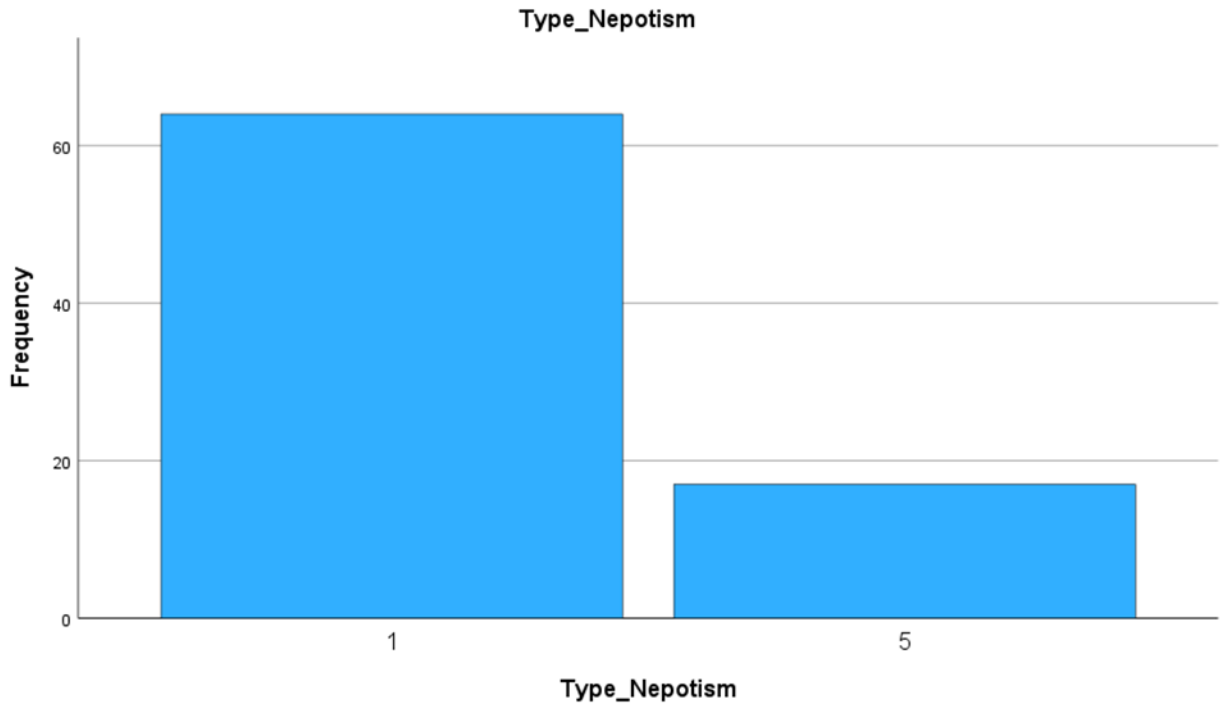


Figure 4.7: Respondents' Views on the Existence of Nepotism

4.2.2.2 Type of Religious Affiliation

Table 4.8: Religious Affiliation

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2	22	27.2	27.2	27.2
	5	59	72.8	72.8	100.0
	Total	81	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 4.8 above, from the total number of 81 respondents, only 22, representing 27.2% of the respondents, believe that the appointment process for principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit is influenced by religious affiliation. However, 59 respondents, representing 72.8% of the respondents, believe that religious affiliation does not influence the appointment process for principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit.

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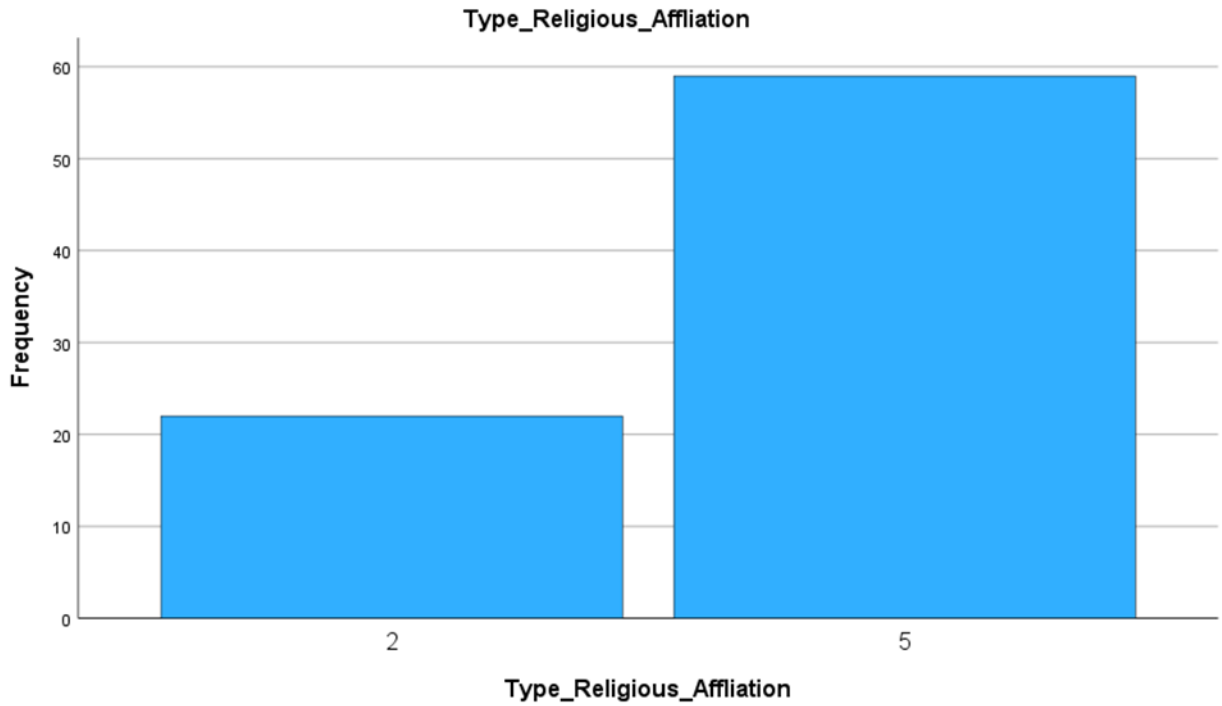


Figure 4.8: Respondents' Views on the Existence of Religious Affiliation

4.2.2.3 Type of Patronage

Table 4.9: Existence of Patronage

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	3	61	75.3	75.3	75.3
	5	20	24.7	24.7	100.0
	Total	81	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 4.9 above, from the total number of 81 respondents, 61, representing 75.3% of the respondents, believe that the appointment process for principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit is influenced by patronage. However, 20 respondents, representing 24.7% of the respondents, believe that patronage does not influence the appointment process for principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit.

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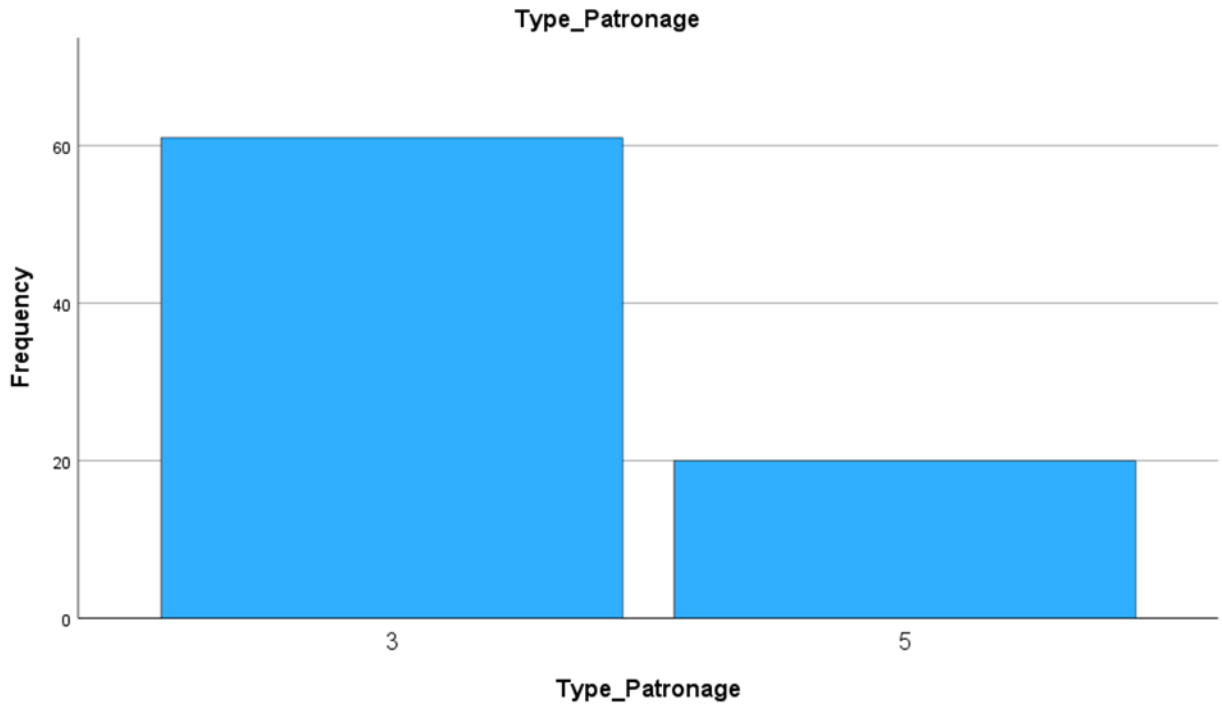


Figure 4.9: Respondents' Views on the Existence of Patriotism

4.2.2.4 Type of Corruption

Table 4.10: Existence of Corruption

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	4	60	74.1	74.1	74.1
	5	21	25.9	25.9	100.0
	Total	81	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 4.10 above, from the total number of 81 respondents, 60, representing 74.1% of the respondents, believe that the appointment process for principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit is influenced by corruption. However, 21 respondents, representing 25.9% of the respondents, believe that corruption does not influence the appointment process for principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit.

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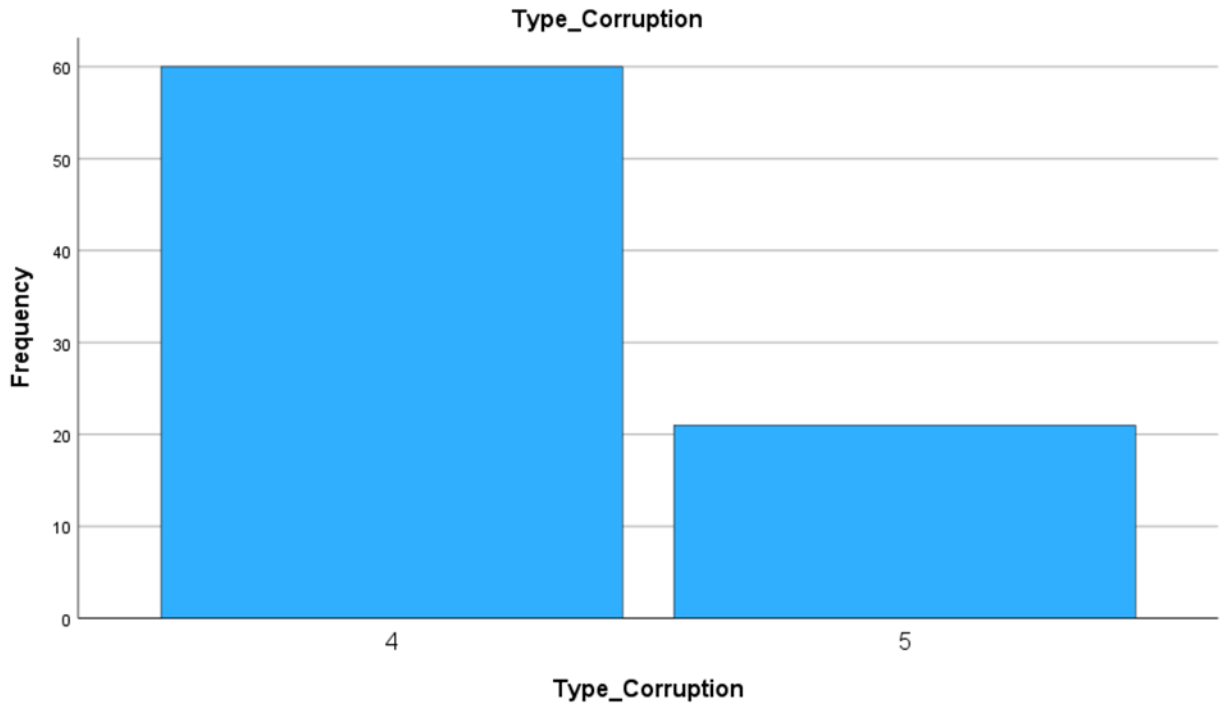


Figure 4.10: Respondents' Views on the Existence of Corruption

4.2.2.5 Impacts of Nepotism

Table 4.11: Extent of Nepotism

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	33	40.7	40.7	40.7
	2	11	13.6	13.6	54.3
	3	13	16.0	16.0	70.4
	4	8	9.9	9.9	80.2
	5	16	19.8	19.8	100.0
	Total	81	100.0	100.0	

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As shown in Table 4.11 above, from the total number of 81 respondents, 33, representing 40.7% of the respondents, believe that nepotism affects the appointment process for principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit to a very great extent; 11 respondents, representing 13.6% believe that nepotism affects the appointment process for principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit to a great extent; 13 respondents, representing 16.0% believe that nepotism affects the appointment process for appointment of principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit to a moderate extent; 8 respondents, representing 9.9% believe that nepotism affects the appointment process for appointment of principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit to a small extent; while 16 respondents, representing 19.8% believe that nepotism does not affect the appointment process for appointment of principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit at all.

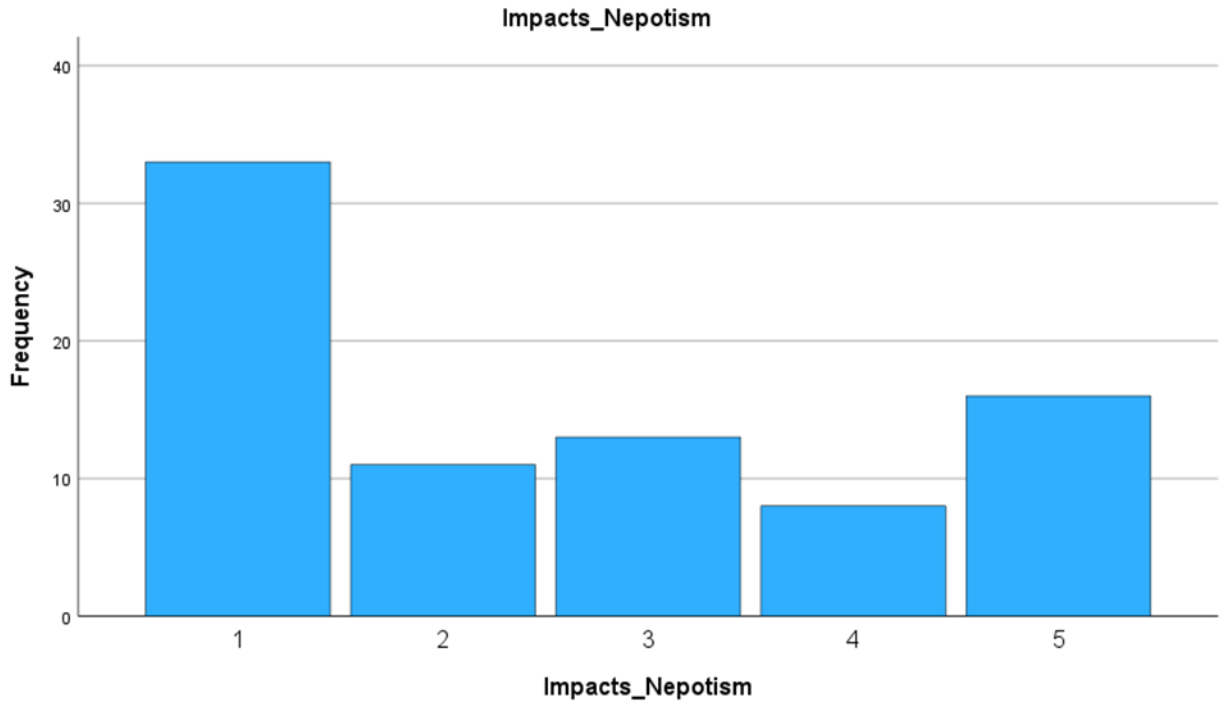


Figure 4.11: Respondents' Views on the Extent of Nepotism

4.2.2.6 Impacts of Religious

Table 4.12: Extent of Religious Affiliation

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		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	3	3.7	3.7	3.7
	2	4	4.9	4.9	8.6
	3	9	11.1	11.1	19.8
	4	12	14.8	14.8	34.6
	5	53	65.4	65.4	100.0
	Total	81	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 4.12 above, from the total number of 81 respondents, 3 respondents, representing 3.7% of the respondents, believe that religious affiliation affects the appointment process for principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit to a very great extent; 4 respondents, representing 4.9% believe that religious affiliation affects the appointment process for principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit to a great extent; 9 respondents, representing 11.1% believe that religious affiliation affects the appointment process for appointment of principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit to a moderate extent; 12 respondents, representing 14.8% believe that religious affiliation affects the appointment process for appointment of principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit to a small extent; while 53 respondents, representing 65.4% believe that religious affiliation does not affect the appointment process for appointment of principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit at all.

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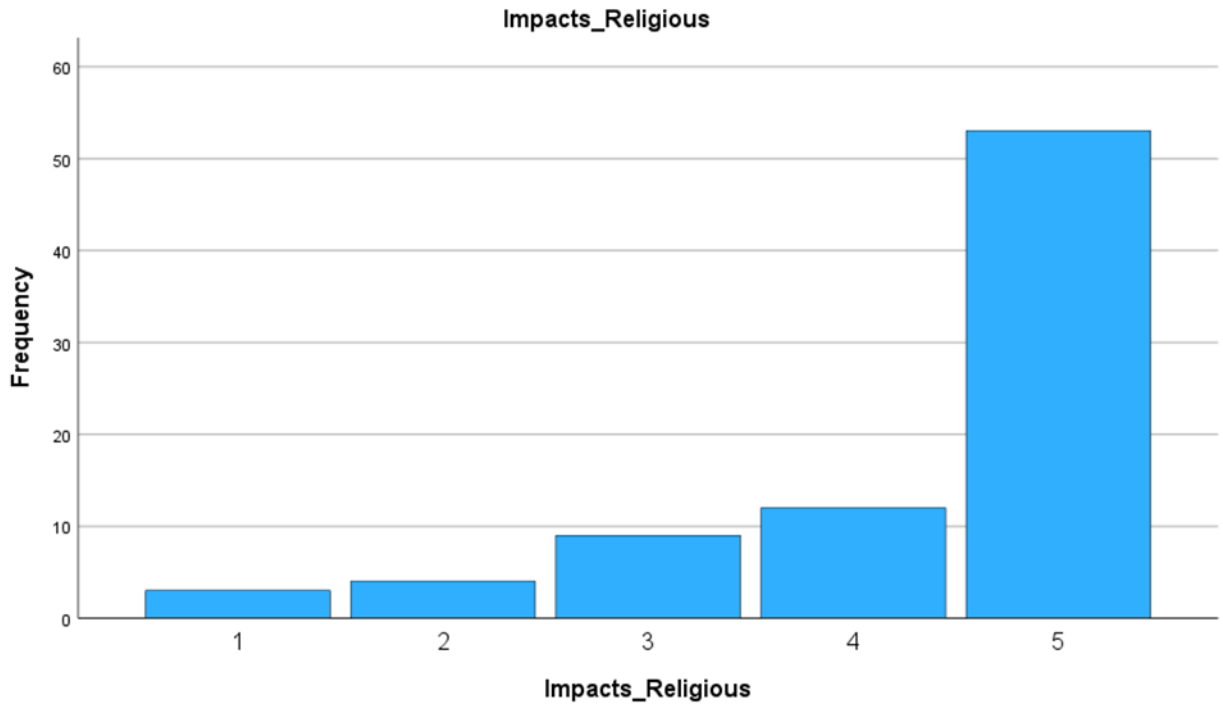


Figure 4.12: Respondents' Views on the Extent of Religious Affiliation

4.2.2.7 Impacts of Patronage

Table 4.13: Extent of Patronage

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	32	39.5	39.5	39.5
	2	11	13.6	13.6	53.1
	3	9	11.1	11.1	64.2

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	4	12	14.8	14.8	79.0
	5	17	21.0	21.0	100.0
	Total	81	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 4.13 above, from the total number of 81 respondents, 32 respondents, representing 39.5% of the respondents, believe that patronage affects the appointment process for principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit to a very great extent; 11 respondents, representing 13.6% believe that patronage affects the appointment process for principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit to a great extent; 9 respondents, representing 11.1% believe that patronage affects the appointment process for appointment of principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit to a moderate extent; 12 respondents, representing 14.8% believe that patronage affects the appointment process for appointment of principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit to a small extent; while 17 respondents, representing 21.0% believe that patronage does not affect the appointment process for appointment of principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit at all.

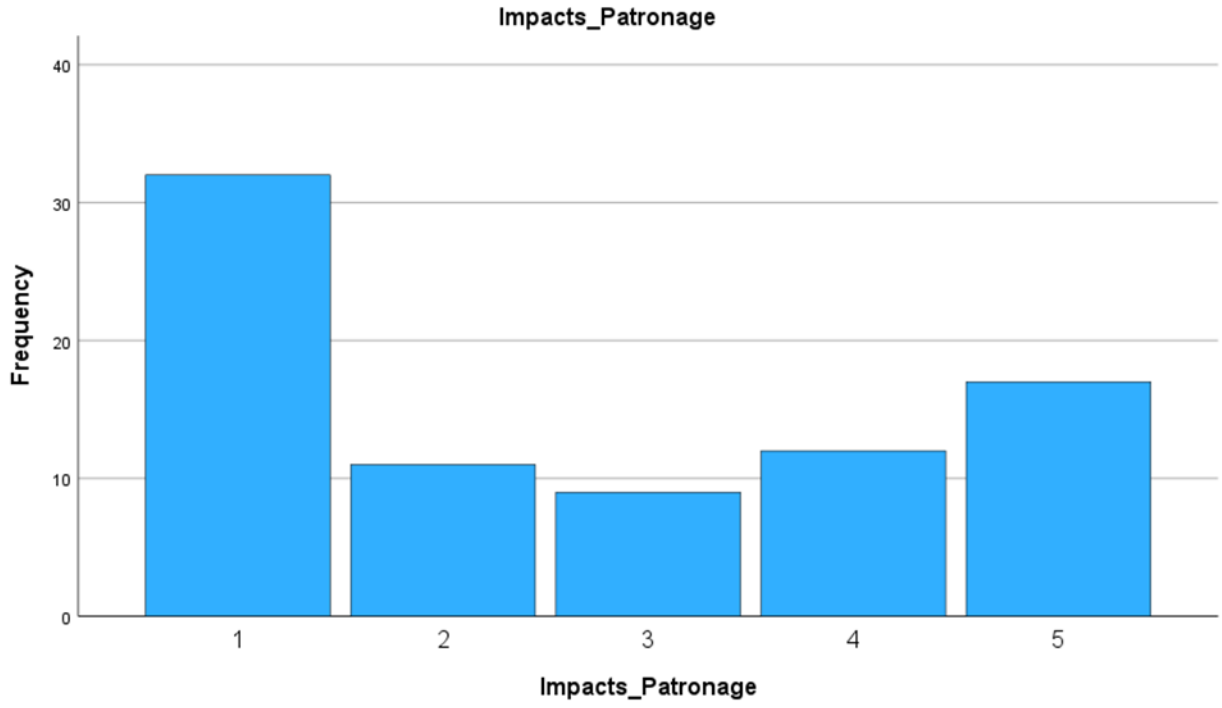


Figure 4.13: Respondents' Views on the Extent of Patronage

4.2.2.8 Impacts Corruption

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Table 4.14: Extent of Corruption

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	39	48.1	48.1	48.1
	2	7	8.6	8.6	56.8
	3	7	8.6	8.6	65.4
	4	8	9.9	9.9	75.3
	5	20	24.7	24.7	100.0
	Total	81	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 4.14 above, from the total number of 81 respondents, 39 respondents, representing 48.1% of the respondents, believe that corruption affects the appointment process for principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit to a very great extent; 7 respondents, representing 8.6% believe that corruption affects the appointment process for principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit to a great extent; 7 respondents, representing 8.6% believe that corruption affects the appointment process for appointment of principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit to a moderate extent; 8 respondents, representing 9.9% believe that corruption affects the appointment process for appointment of principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit to a small extent; while 20 respondents, representing 24.7% believe that corruption does not affect the appointment process for appointment of principals at Vhuronga 1 Circuit at all.

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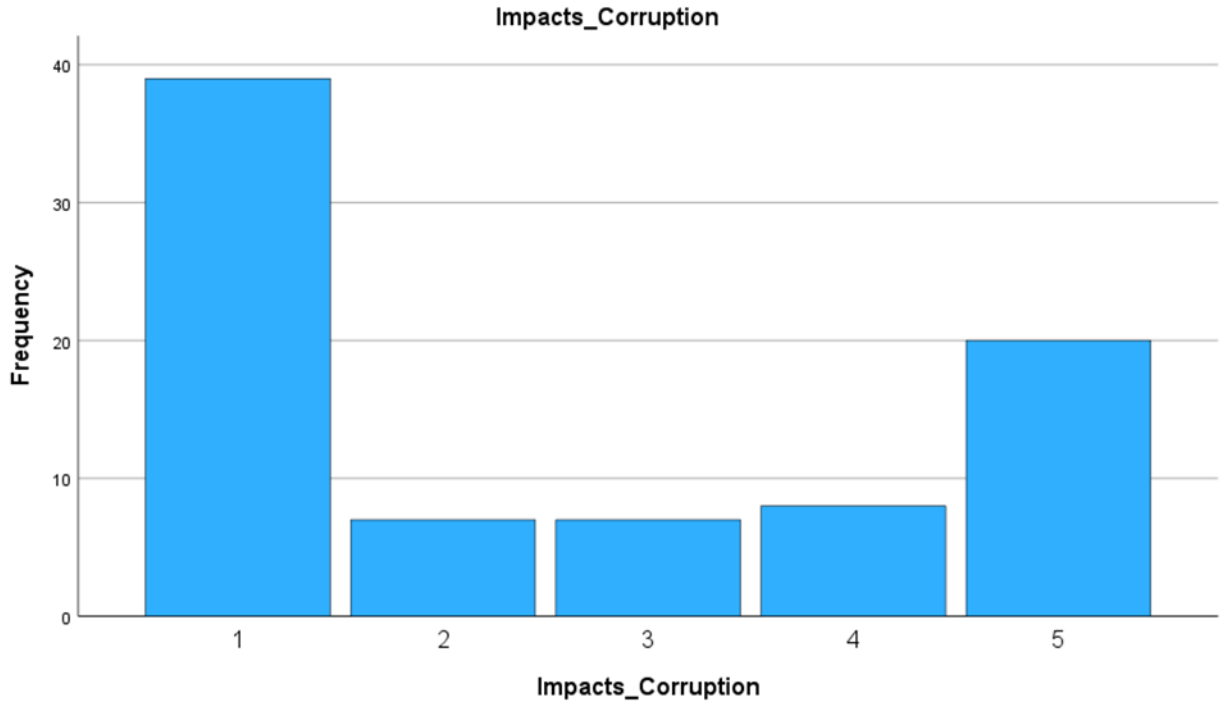


Figure 4.14: Respondents' Views on the Extent of Corruption

4.2.2.9 The Appointment of Poor-quality Principals has a Negative Effect on the Delivery of Effective Teaching and Learning in Schools

Table 4.15: Appointment of Poor-quality Principals

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	52	64.2	64.2	64.2

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	2	26	32.1	32.1	96.3
	3	1	1.2	1.2	97.5
	4	1	1.2	1.2	98.8
	5	1	1.2	1.2	100.0
	Total	81	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 4.15 above, from the total number of 81 respondents, 52 respondents, representing 64.2% of the respondents, strongly agreed that the appointment of poor-quality principals has a negative effect on the delivery of effective teaching and learning in schools; 26 respondents, representing 32.15% of the respondents, agreed that the appointment of poor-quality principals has a negative effect on the delivery of effective teaching and learning in schools; 1 respondent, representing 1.2% of the respondents, was not sure if the appointment of poor-quality principals has a negative effect or not on the delivery of effective teaching and learning in schools; 1 respondent, representing 1.2% of the respondents, disagreed that the appointment of poor-quality principals has a negative effect on the delivery of effective teaching and learning in schools; while 1 respondent, representing 1.2% of the respondents, strongly disagreed that the appointment of poor-quality principals has a negative effect or not on the delivery of effective teaching and learning in schools.

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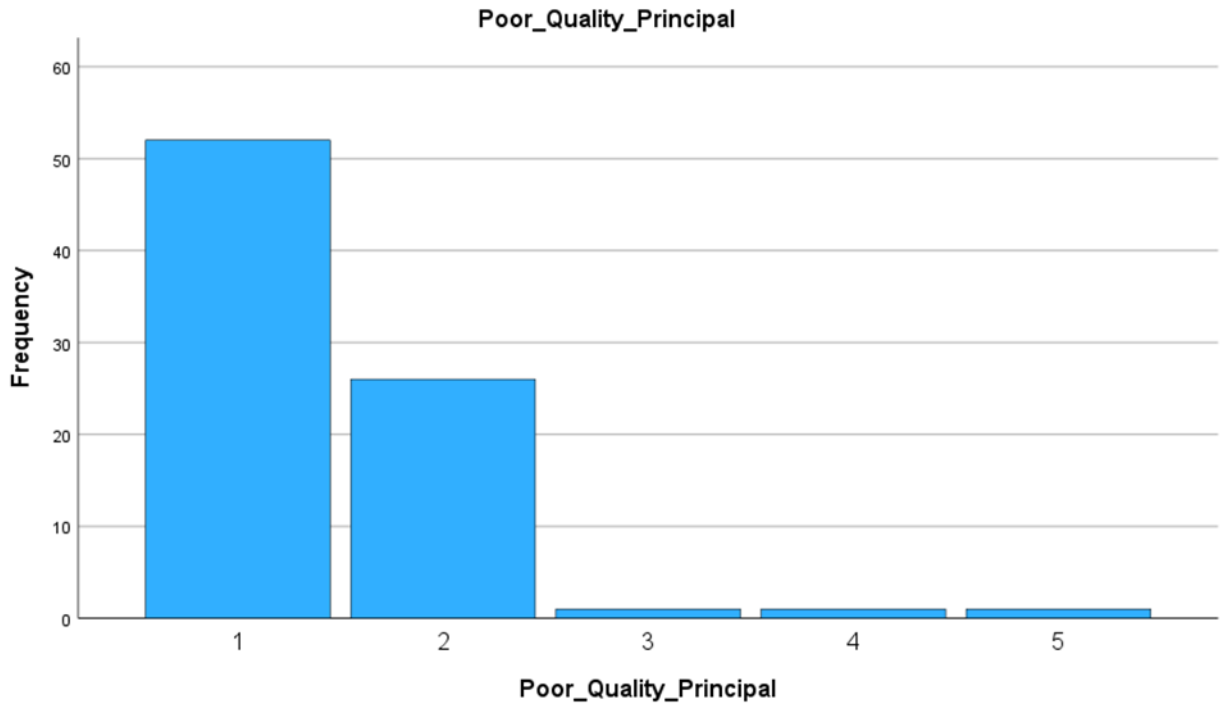


Figure 4.15: Perceptions Regarding Whether the Appointment of Poor-quality Principals has a Negative Effect on the Delivery of Effective Teaching and Learning in Schools

4.2.2.10 Educational Authorities are doing Enough to Deal with the Conflicts of Interest Affecting the Process of Appointing School Principals

Table 4.16: Educational Authorities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	9	11.1	11.1	11.1
	2	30	37.0	37.0	48.1
	3	18	22.2	22.2	70.4
	4	11	13.6	13.6	84.0
	5	13	16.0	16.0	100.0
	Total	81	100.0	100.0	

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As shown in Table 4.16 above, from the total number of 81 respondents, 9 respondents, representing 11.1% of the respondents, strongly agreed that educational authorities are doing enough to deal with the conflicts of interest affecting the process of appointing school principals; 30 respondents, representing 37.0% of the respondents, agreed that educational authorities are doing enough to deal with the conflicts of interest affecting the process of appointing school principals; 18 respondents, representing 2.2% of the respondents, was not sure if educational authorities are doing enough to deal with the conflicts of interest affecting the process of appointing school principals; 11 respondent, representing 13.6% of the respondents, disagreed that educational authorities are doing enough to deal with the conflicts of interest affecting the process of appointing school principals; while 13 respondents, representing 16.0% of the respondents, strongly disagreed that educational authorities are doing enough to deal with the conflicts of interest affecting the process of appointing school principals.

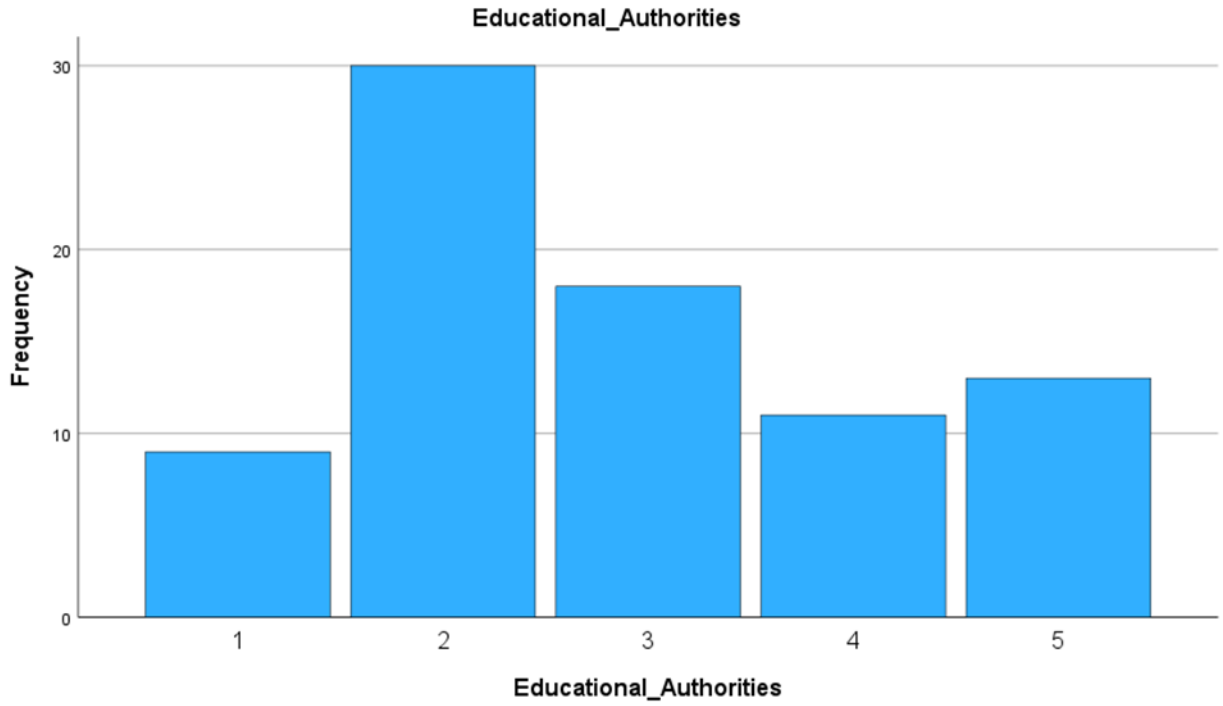


Figure 4.16: Perceptions Regarding Whether Authorities are doing Enough to Eliminate the Conflicts of Interest Affecting the Appointment Process

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4.2.2.11 Interview Panels are Familiar with Laws and Policies Governing the Appointment of School Principals

Table 4.17: Laws and Policies Governing the Appointment of School Principals

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	18	22.2	22.2	22.2
	2	33	40.7	40.7	63.0
	3	13	16.0	16.0	79.0
	4	9	11.1	11.1	90.1
	5	8	9.9	9.9	100.0
	Total	81	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 4.17 above, from the total number of 81 respondents, 18 respondents, representing 22.2% of the respondents, strongly agreed that interview panels are familiar with laws and policies governing the appointment of school principals; 33 respondents, representing 40.7% of the respondents, agreed that interview panels are familiar with laws and policies governing the appointment of school principals; 13 respondents, representing 16.0% of the respondents, were not sure if interview panels are familiar with laws and policies governing the appointment of school principals; 9 respondents, representing 11.1% of the respondents, disagreed that interview panels are familiar with laws and policies governing the appointment of school principals, while 8 respondents, representing 9.9% of the respondents, strongly disagreed that interview panels are familiar with laws and policies governing the appointment of school principals.

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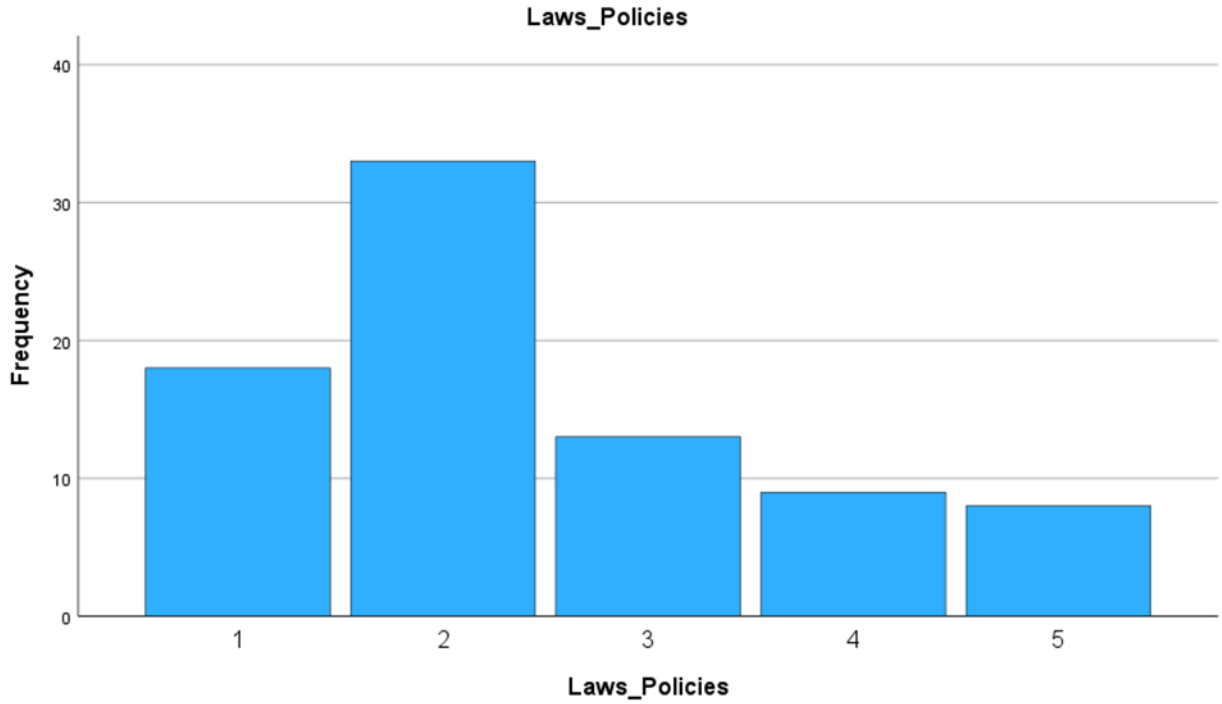


Figure 4.17: Perceptions Regarding Whether Interview Panels are Familiar with Laws and Policies Governing the Appointment of School Principals

4.2.2.12 Interview Panels Generally have the Capacity to Handle Conflicts of Interest Issues that May Arise during the Shortlisting and Interview Processes for Appointment of School Principals

Table 4.18: Whether Panels have the Capacity to Deal with Conflicts of Interest that May Arise in Interviews

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	13	16.0	16.0	16.0
	2	27	33.3	33.3	49.4
	3	14	17.3	17.3	66.7
	4	14	17.3	17.3	84.0
	5	13	16.0	16.0	100.0
	Total	81	100.0	100.0	

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As shown in Table 4.18 above, from the total number of 81 respondents, 13 respondents, representing 16.0% of the respondents, strongly agreed that interview panels generally have the capacity to handle conflicts of interest issues that may arise during the shortlisting and interview processes for appointment of school principals; 27 respondents, representing 33.3% of the respondents, agreed that interview panels generally have the capacity to handle conflicts of interest issues that may arise during the shortlisting and interview processes for appointment of school principals; 14 respondents, representing 17.3% of the respondents, was not sure if interview panels generally have the capacity to handle conflicts of interest issues that may arise during the shortlisting and interview processes for appointment of school principals; 14 respondents, representing 17.3% of the respondents, disagreed that interview panels generally have the capacity to handle conflicts of interest issues that may arise during the shortlisting and interview processes for appointment of school principals; while 13 respondents, representing 16.0% of the respondents, strongly disagreed that interview panels generally have the capacity to handle conflicts of interest issues that may arise during the shortlisting and interview processes for appointment of school principals.

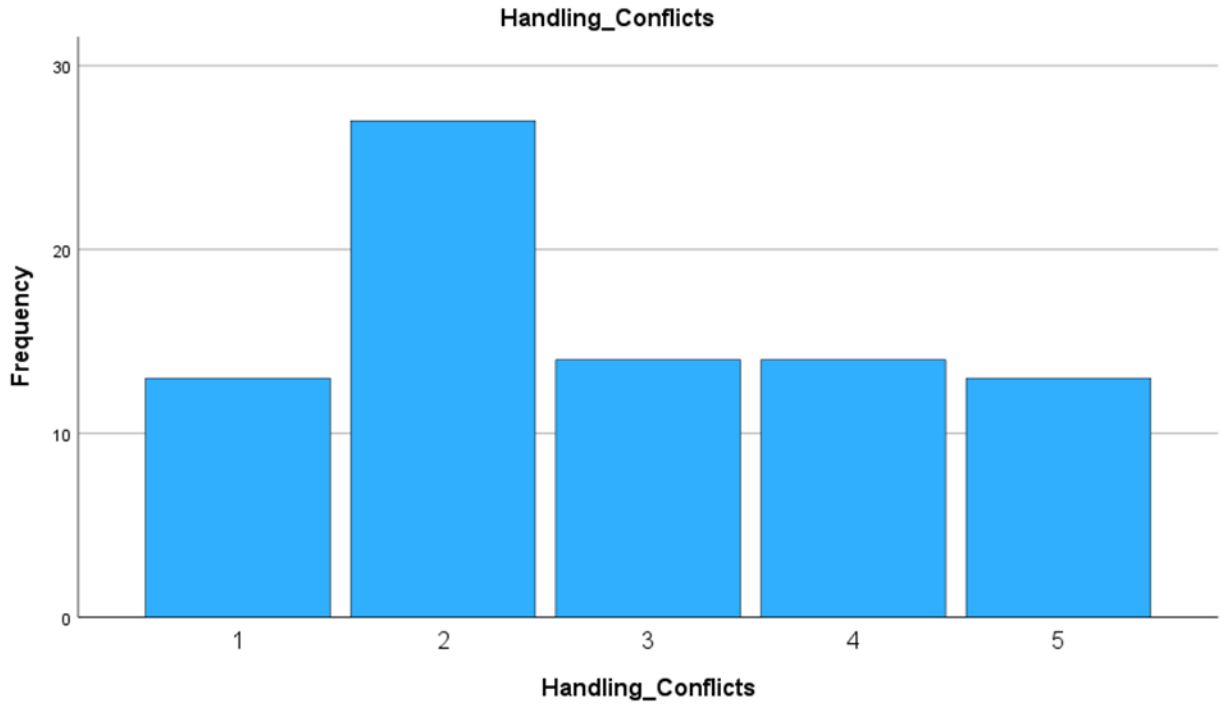


Figure 4.18: Perceptions Regarding Whether Panels have the Capacity to Deal with Conflicts of Interest that May Arise in Interviews

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4.2.2.13 Interview Panels are Provided with Clear and Understandable Guidelines to Safeguard Against the Influence of Conflicts of Interest During the Interview Process

Table 4.19: Safeguard Against the Influence of Conflicts of Interest During the Interview Process

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	14	17.3	17.3	17.3
	2	36	44.4	44.4	61.7
	3	11	13.6	13.6	75.3
	4	11	13.6	13.6	88.9
	5	9	11.1	11.1	100.0
	Total	81	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 4.19 above, from the total number of 81 respondents, 14 respondents, representing 17.3% of the respondents, strongly agreed that interview panels are provided with clear and understandable guidelines to safeguard against the influence of conflicts of interest during the interview process; 36 respondents, representing 44.4% of the respondents, agreed that interview panels are provided with clear and understandable guidelines to safeguard against the influence of conflicts of interest during the interview process; 11 respondents, representing 13.6% of the respondents, was not sure if interview panels are provided with clear and understandable guidelines to safeguard against the influence of conflicts of interest during the interview process; 11 respondent, representing 13.6% of the respondents, disagreed that interview panels are provided with clear and understandable guidelines to safeguard against the influence of conflicts of interest during the interview process; while 9 respondents, representing 11.1% of the respondents, strongly disagreed that interview panels are provided with clear and understandable guidelines to safeguard against the influence of conflicts of interest during the interview process.

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Figure 4.19: Perceptions Regarding Whether Panels are Adequately Equipped to Deal with Conflicts of Interest

4.2.2.14 Educational Authorities from Circuit to District Levels Show an Interest in Eliminating Conflicts of Interest from the Appointment Process for Principals

Table 4.20: Interest by Officials to Eliminate Conflicts of Interest

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	12	14.8	14.8	14.8
	2	32	39.5	39.5	54.3
	3	18	22.2	22.2	76.5
	4	10	12.3	12.3	88.9
	5	9	11.1	11.1	100.0
	Total	81	100.0	100.0	

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As shown in Table 4.20 above, from the total number of 81 respondents, 12 respondents, representing 14.8% of the respondents, strongly agreed that educational authorities from circuit to district levels show an interest in eliminating conflicts of interest from the appointment process for principals; 32 respondents, representing 39.5% of the respondents, agreed that educational authorities from circuit to district levels show an interest in eliminating conflicts of interest from the appointment process for principals; 18 respondents, representing 22.2% of the respondents, were not sure if educational authorities from circuit to district levels show an interest in eliminating conflicts of interest from the appointment process for principals; 10 respondents, representing 12.3% of the respondents, disagreed that educational authorities from circuit to district levels show an interest in eliminating conflicts of interest from the appointment process for principals, while 9 respondents, representing 11.1% of the respondents strongly disagreed that educational authorities from circuit to district levels show an interest in eliminating conflicts of interest from the appointment process for principals.

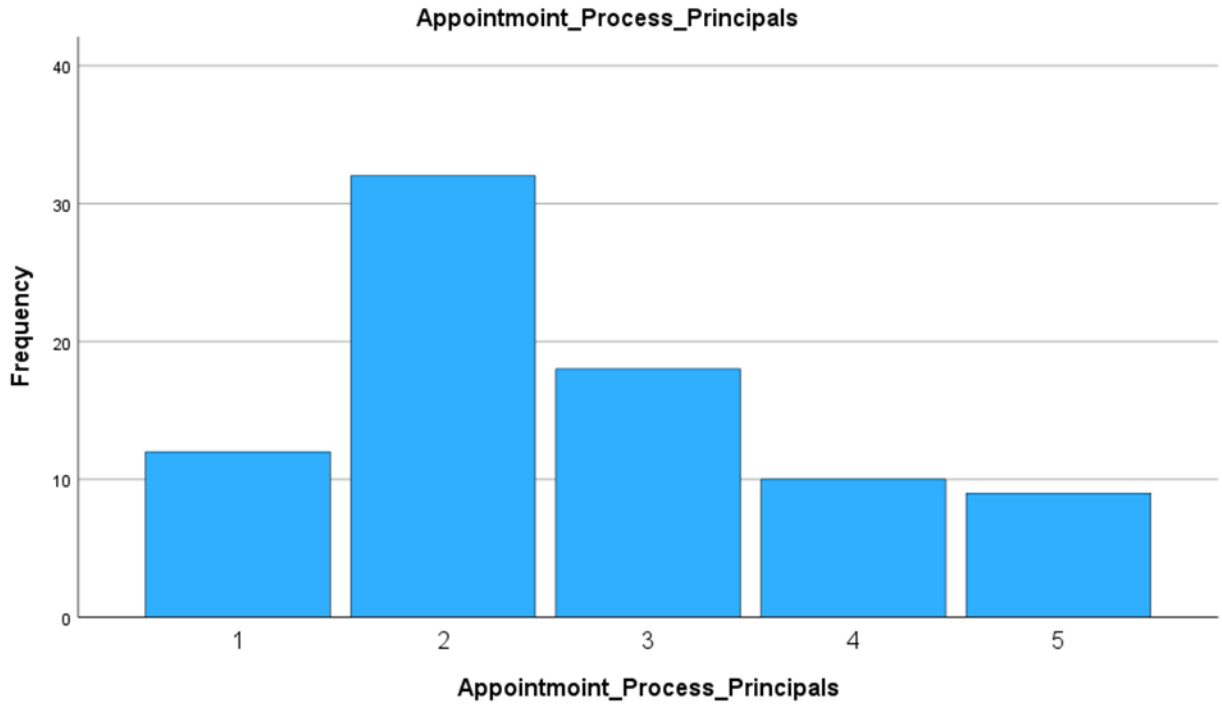


Figure 4.20: Perceptions Regarding Interest by Officials to Eliminate Conflicts of Interest

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4.2.2.15 Educational Authorities Communicate Clear-Cut Strategies to Interview Panels to Assist them to Deal with the Conflicts of Interest that May Arise:

Table 4.21: Clear-Cut Strategies to Interview Panels to Assist them to Deal with the Conflicts of Interest that May Arise

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	10	12.3	12.3	12.3
	2	29	35.8	35.8	48.1
	3	25	30.9	30.9	79.0
	4	11	13.6	13.6	92.6
	5	6	7.4	7.4	100.0
	Total	81	100.0	100.0	

As shown in Table 4.21 above, from the total number of 81 respondents, 10 respondents, representing 12.3% of the respondents, strongly agreed that educational authorities communicate clear-cut strategies to interview panels to assist them in dealing with the conflicts of interest that may arise; 29 respondents, representing 35.8% of the respondents, agreed that educational authorities communicate clear-cut strategies to interview panels to assist them in dealing with the conflicts of interest that may arise; 25 respondents, representing 30.9% of the respondents, were not sure if educational authorities communicate clear-cut strategies to interview panels to assist them in dealing with the conflicts of interest that may arise; 11 respondents, representing 13.6% of the respondents, disagreed that educational authorities communicate clear-cut strategies to interview panels to assist them in dealing with the conflicts of interest that may arise while 6 respondents, representing 7.4% of the respondents, strongly disagreed that educational communicate clear-cut strategies to interview panels to assist them in dealing with the conflicts of interest that may arise.

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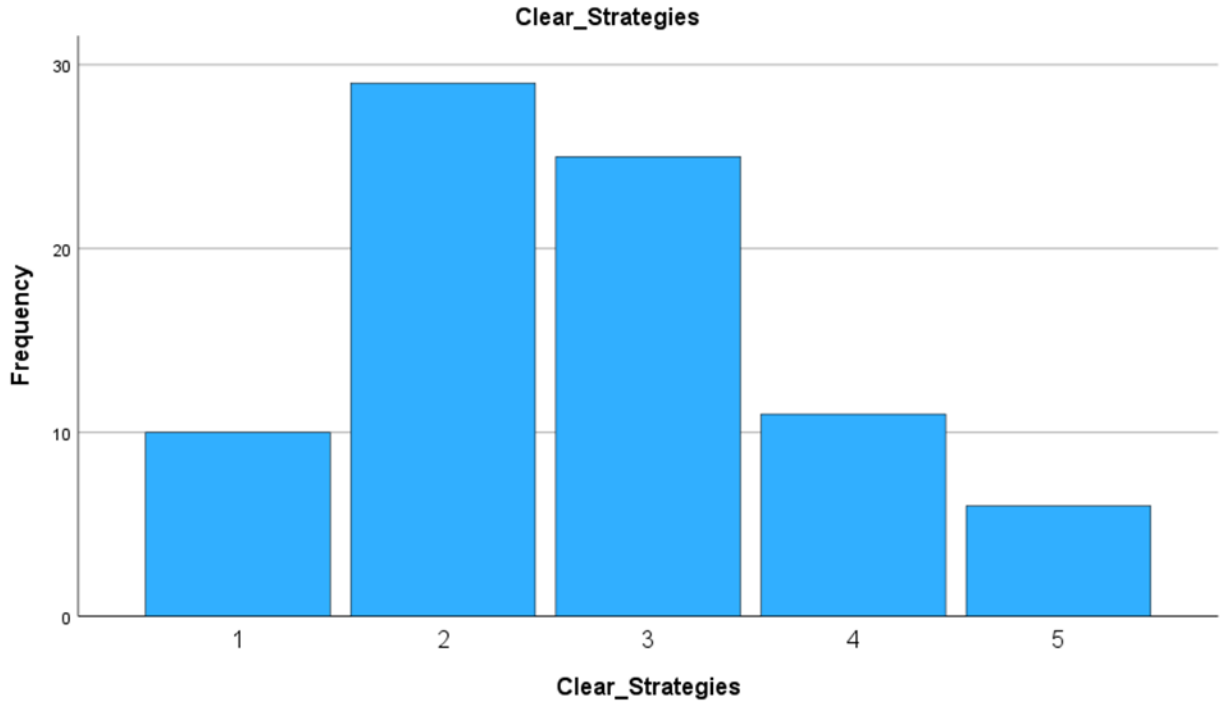


Figure 4.21: Perception Regarding Educational Authorities Communicating Clear-Cut Strategies to Interview Panels to Assist them to Deal with the Conflicts of Interest that May Arise

4.2.2.16 The Candidates for Principalship Positions are Aware of the Likely Prejudice they May Suffer Because of the Various Conflicts of Interest

Table 4.22: Depiction of the Candidates for Principalship Positions

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	24	29.6	29.6	29.6
	2	30	37.0	37.0	66.7
	3	18	22.2	22.2	88.9
	4	5	6.2	6.2	95.1
	5	4	4.9	4.9	100.0
	Total	81	100.0	100.0	

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As shown in Table 4.22 above, from the total number of 81 respondents, 24 respondents, representing 29.6% of the respondents strongly agreed that the candidates for principalship positions are aware of the likely prejudice they may suffer because of the various conflicts of interest; 30 respondents, representing 37.0% of the respondents, agreed that the candidates for principalship positions are aware of the likely prejudice they may suffer because of the various conflicts of interest, 18 respondents, representing 22.2% of the respondents, were not sure if the candidates for principalship positions are aware of the likely prejudice they may suffer because of the various conflicts of interest; 5 respondents, representing 6.2% of the respondents, disagreed that the candidates for principalship positions are aware of the likely prejudice they may suffer because of the various conflicts of interest; while 4 respondents, representing 4.9% of the respondents, strongly disagreed that the candidates for principalship positions are aware of the likely prejudice they may suffer because of the various conflicts of interest.

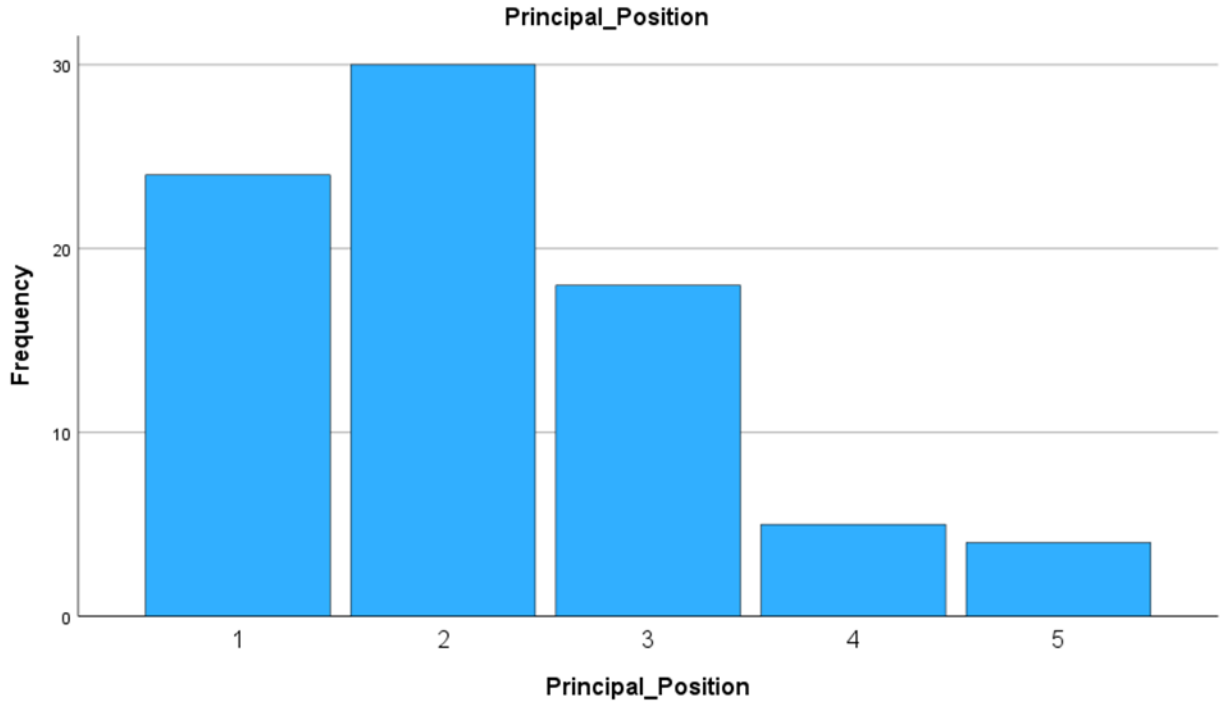


Figure 4.22: Depiction of the Candidates for Principalship Positions Awareness of the Likely Prejudice they May Suffer Because of the Various Conflicts of Interest

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4.3 ANALYSIS OF QUALITATIVE DATA AND DISCUSSIONS

This study is chiefly quantitative. Data from the qualitative phase was used to explain, refine, or extend the results from the quantitative phase. The quantitative and qualitative data would be integrated into a coherent whole at the stage of discussions of findings.

4.3.1 Presentation and Analysis of the Qualitative Data and Discussions

Data is presented according to themes. The themes are aligned with the objectives of the study. The objectives of the study were to:

- To identify and describe the types of conflicts of interest that affect the appointment of quality principals in public schools.
- To find out teachers' views regarding the extent to which conflicts of interests affect the appointment of quality school principals.
- To determine teachers' perceptions regarding the impact of the appointment of poor-quality school principals on the delivery of effective teaching and learning at schools.
- To find strategies that will help educational authorities eliminate conflicts of interest from appointment processes for school principals.

Since this was an explanatory mixed-method study, the quantitative data analysis had already given us a general picture of the perceptions of the educators in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit regarding the effects of the conflicts of interest on the appointment of principals. The role of the qualitative data was, therefore, to explain, extend, or refine the responses that were given by the respondents in the quantitative phase. The participants in the qualitative phase were required to give more understanding regarding the responses that had been given by the respondents. It was not necessary, therefore, to consider under this section the biographical details that were contained in section A of the questionnaire.

It is important to reiterate at this point that the researcher used his own discretion about the participants who could provide the best information to deal with the problem

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statement and research questions - to achieve the objectives of the study. It was the view of this researcher that more experienced participants in each category could provide the best information for the qualitative phase. More experienced respondents were to be thus preferable to become participants in the qualitative phase. Four (4) school principals, four (4) union leaders, four (4) members of school governing bodies, and eight (8) teachers were subjectively sampled and interviewed to help explain the quantitative results. The results, however, were analysed according to the objectives of the study rather than the different categories of the participants. The idea of categorising the participants was premised on achieving a balance in terms of participants and not for analysis purposes. The researcher was of the view that the protection of the participants' identity would be compromised if the results were to be analysed in terms of positional categories. Since this was a very sensitive study, the researcher deemed it extremely necessary to do his utmost to protect the identity of the participants.

Discussions were planned to follow the presentation and analysis of the qualitative findings. The discussions would, where necessary, integrate the theory of the study and the findings of the literature review.

The results of the qualitative phase are presented as depicted in the table of themes, sub-themes, and participants' excerpts, which follows hereunder:

Table 4.23: Themes and Sub-themes that Emerged

Table of themes, sub-themes and participants' excerpts

Themes	Sub-themes
4.3.1.1 Types of conflicts of interest	4.3.1.1.1 Nepotism 4.3.1.1.2 Religious affiliation 4.3.1.1.3 Patronage 4.3.1.1.4 Corruption
4.3.1.2 Effects of poor-quality principals on teaching and learning	

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4.3.1.3 Efficiency in addressing conflicts of interests	4.1.3.3.1 Efforts of authorities on eliminating conflicts of interest 4.1.3.3.2 Support to interview panels 4.1.3.3.3 Capacity of panels to handle conflicts of interest cases 4.1.3.3.4 Authorities' willingness to eliminate conflicts of interest 4.1.3.3.5 Awareness of prejudice by candidates

4.3.1.1 THEME 1: Types of Conflicts of Interest

4.3.1.1.1 Sub-theme1: Nepotism

According to the results of the quantitative phase, nepotistic appointments of principals are rife in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit (see Figure 4.11). The participants in the qualitative phase are divided on the prevalence of nepotistic appointments in the circuit. The following is an account of the prevalence of nepotistic appointments in the circuit according to the participants:

> *Yes, it can be part. Not the biggest problem. Appointed principals usually don't have connections, as relatives or friends. Relations develop at work, collegially*. (Participant ED1)

While Participant ED1 agrees that nepotistic appointments could be taking place in the circuit, he does not seem to believe that the phenomenon is a big problem. This is because, according to the participant, people without connections do get appointed as principals. Participant ED1 posits that people get promoted more for their collegial reputations than family and friend connections. This view contradicts the findings of the empirical literature, in that Matos (2023), for example, contends that the filling of principalship positions in South Africa, since 1994, has been characterised by nepotism. Rangraje (2000) also reported that nepotism influenced the appointment of school principals in South Africa.

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Participant SGB4 somewhat echoes the sentiment of Participant ED1 that teachers become known by colleagues because of their work ethic and get promoted on that basis instead of family and friend relations. According to Participant SGB4:

It is happening. They may prefer him for his track record in terms of producing results and order.

Participants ED1 and SGB4 seem to be making a valid case. However, the mere fact that a teacher would be given preference based on his known track record constitutes a nepotistic appointment because the panel members would not know the other candidates and their track records equally. It is worthy to note, however, that participants ED1 and SGB4 have not said that nepotism does not at all influence the appointment of principals in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit. While nepotistic appointments of principals constitute a big problem according to literature, these two participants have a different opinion.

Contrary to the views of participants ED1 and SGB4, few participants, such as Participant ED3, emphatically say that "*Nepotism does not exist*" in the appointment of principals. There are those, such as Participant ED7, who say that "*I am not sure*" if nepotistic appointments do or do not happen in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit. The views of participant ED3 and ED7 contradict the findings of literature.

According to Participant PR2:

> *Partially, relations play a role. They influence how they structure the panels for shortlisting and interviews. They don't have to share surnames. It was mentioned in the previous interviews. They don't even recuse themselves. The policy is clear in terms of the spouse. It's vague for other relations. People facilitate the growth of those they know.*

Participant PR2, beyond providing surety that relations play a role in the appointment of principals in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit, sheds some light as to how relatives and friends are assisted to get principalship positions in the circuit. It is evident from the assertion of Participant PR2 that those with influence are determined to facilitate the growth of those they know, such that they would go to the extent of ignoring the provisions of

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the official policies on recusal where members of the panel are conflicted. This is a serious cause for concern. The view of Participant PR2 is in sync with the findings of literature.

For Participant UN4:

> *It is not easy to tell because if members of the panel don't disclose that themselves then the others will not know anything about it. But there are allegations that some people who have become too close to the circuit manager are given acting principalship positions and later become principals when those posts are advertised. These people are given acting positions even at schools where they are not working.*

Participants PR2 and UN4 made a serious case about the non-disclosure of conflicts of interest by members of the interview panels, even where they are aware of the existence of same. According to Participant PR2, the vagueness of the relevant policy in terms of relations other than the spouse of the panel member is exacerbating the problem. This could emanate from the fact that the process for the filling of principalship positions in South Africa is characterised by nepotism and bias (Rangraje, 2000).

According to Participant ED2:

> *It is happening. CVs are removed from the box and thrown away. Some people were preferring their friends. They removed the application because they did not want him to be shortlisted. It is not clear at what point, but rumour has it that it was done to pave the way for the preferred candidate. In the school, this one whose application was thrown away was preferred because he is a hard worker.*

Participant ED2 paints a grave picture of the severity of nepotistic appointments in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit. He gives insight into the extent to which some people would go to ensure that those applicants who are not favoured by them cannot get the principalship positions. The sentiments of Participant ED2 are echoed by Participant UN1 when the latter says:

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Panel members do prefer friends and relatives.

Even though Participant UN1 does not elaborate on what is meant by *panel members do prefer friends/relatives,* one gets a sense that she has a strong conviction that friends and relatives are favoured by members of the interview panels. This conviction may be corroborated by the assertion of Participant UN2 when he remarked:
For a cs1 position, a 62-year-old was preferred by the circuit manager because she is his cousin. But the SGB would not allow that.

It is concerning that educational authorities are seen to be interfering with the appointment of teaching personnel, even though the case in point was for an entry-level teaching position. Participant SGB1 also believes, in terms of nepotistic appointments that:
It does happen. The people in authority prefer certain people, their relatives, even friends.

This assertion by Participant SGB1 directly supports that of Participant UN2 above. Other participants, such as Participant ED4, are emphatic in their assertions that the process for appointment of principals in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit is influenced by nepotism:

> *There is nepotism in Vhuronga 1, even with the recent promotional positions. You'll hear the teacher at school B will get the position, even before interviews. Sometimes we are told that going there will be a waste of time. It is no longer fair. Because the principal does not know the other people. It happened like that.*

In support of Participant ED4, Participant UN3 asserts that:

> *Nepotism plays a major role. By the time of the interviews, there would have been meetings already of members of the panels*; *It is happening. Relatives are sitting on panels where relatives are being interviewed. Friends are also doing that. In fact, it is difficult to be promoted in the Vhuronga 1 if you are not from this area* and *It is happening. Even known relatives interview each other. I have sat on panels where*

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members were interviewing candidates that they are related to closely or candidates who are their close friends. People don't disclose. So, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to deal with that. Sometimes these issues come up when objections, disputes or grievances are lodged. But the decision of the panel always goes.

Participant SGB2 makes an important point when he says that:
We hear it being talked about in the corridors and everywhere, but we do not have evidence.

While it is true that concrete evidence may not be readily available to back up the rumours about nepotistic appointments that are heard in the corridors, the absence of such evidence may not in a way presuppose the non-existence of same. In fact, most of the respondents to the questionnaire indicated that there is a high prevalence of nepotistic appointments in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit. In fact, the view of most participants that nepotistic appointments are widespread in the circuit is supported by the finding in the literature that the process for the filling of principalship positions in South Africa is characterised by nepotism and bias (Rangraje, 2000).

The challenge of nepotistic appointments arises from the fact that some people with influence have vested interests – to see to it that their friends and relatives are promoted to principalship positions. This ties in with a finding in the literature review that schools continue to experience challenges regarding the appointment processes for principalship positions due to the vested interests of some stakeholders (Nxumalo et al, 2021:577). This phenomenon is not desirable from the perspective of Rawl's social justice theory because all participants, regardless of their relations to the stakeholders, must be subjected to equal treatment.

4.3.1.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Religious affiliation

According to the results of the quantitative phase, appointments of principals based on religious affiliation are relatively low in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit (see Figure 4.12). The participants in the qualitative phase are divided on the prevalence of appointments

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based on religious affiliation in the circuit. The following is an account of the appointments based on religious affiliation in the circuit according to the participants: Regarding the influence of religious affiliation on the appointment of principals in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit, Participant ED20 had this to say:

Not in our area. Influencers don't even go to church. Doesn't play a role in any way.

Whereas Participant ED11 indicated that:

I have not heard anything like that.

Participant ED13 indicated as follows:

I have not heard anything like that, but I cannot say that it is not happening.

Whereas Participant ED20 utterly dismisses the existence of principalship appointments made based on religious affiliation in Vhuronga 1 Circuit, Participant ED11 is noncommittal, not giving a definite opinion regarding whether such appointments happen or do not happen in the circuit. Participant ED13, however, is also noncommittal but somewhat acknowledges that the appointments based on religious affiliation might be taking place.

Participant PR4, like participants ED11 and ED13, is not sure whether religious affiliation-based principalship appointments happen in the circuit but casts aspersions on the existence of such by saying:

I am not sure, but I don't think that it is possible. I don't see how churches can influence departmental processes.

The following participants, however, are emphatic that principalship appointments that are based on religious affiliation happen in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit:

Participant ED8:

As a Zionist, people frown upon me because of my church affiliation. I am discouraged from applying.

Participant UN3:

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Yes, based on rumours that there is a particular church using people at the district level. The allegation is that they prefer people who attend their own church to be appointed.

Participant ED8:

Religion also plays a vital role. People might obviously want to push candidates who attend the same church as themselves.

Participant ED14:

There is a rumour that some influential churches in the area are using their members to manipulate the appointment processes. They are said to have contacts at the District Office and manipulate some members of the SGB.

Even though the results of the quantitative phase show a relatively low prevalence of this type of conflict of interests, the firm allegations by these participants are worrying and are worthy of investigation.

According to empirical literature, religious association was found to be part of the conflicts of interest that influence the appointment of principals (Dampson, 2019:6). Additionally, Mmadi (2023) also found that schools continue to align themselves to denominations. The principles of social justice require that there should be fair and equal opportunity for all. Giving positions to people on religious affiliation would, therefore, amount to the contravention of the principles of social justice, as advocated for by Rawl.

4.3.1.1.3 Sub-theme 3: Patronage

Alongside nepotism and corruption, appointments of principals based on patronage have a relatively high prevalence in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit, from the perspectives of the respondents to the questionnaire (see Figure 4.13).

Participant ED3 remarked:

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Patronage is part and parcel of the appointment process. There are two major unions, PEU and SADTU. SADTU has influence.

From the remarks of Participant ED3, it can be deduced that appointments that are based on patronage are a common feature in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit and that both unions that are operational in the circuit are involved in the fierce contestation for principalship positions. However, SADTU is presumed to have greater influence because of its huge membership. Other participants concur with the assertion of Participant ED3.

Agreeing with the sentiments of Participant ED3, Participant UN2 had this to say:

> *They even dispute on behalf of the candidates. We are not going to get the best candidates. It boils down to mismanagement of schools. Schools run poorly. They tend to please their masters who put them. Principals are removed from one school to another. Authorities redeploy principals willy nilly. All secondary principals belonged to SADTU before the recent interviews. SADTU is the biggest influencer.*

SADTU's alleged lodging of disputes on behalf of members, without members having initiated it, would be an indication of the fierce contestation of the principalship positions in which the two unions are involved. Participant ED3 goes on to decry the consequences that the appointment of poor-quality principals would have on the achievement of school outcomes. The influence of PEU is indeed minimal, and Participant ED4 suggests a reason for that when that participant remarked:
PEU cannot influence because they are generally undermined. PEU is not regarded at circuit level.

Participant ED4's argument implies that PEU, if it had numbers, would be respected and have influence in the principalship appointment processes in the circuit. Participant ED4's remarks, therefore, are complementary to those of participants ED3 and UN2. The views of participants ED4, ED3, and UN2 are reinforced by the following participants' remarks:

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Participant ED6:

Lots of people are complaining that unionists are receiving favours from their unions.

Participant UN4:

> *Usually, unions prefer their own members to be promoted. SADTU principals in panels will favour SADTU members, vice versa. The unions are rivals. SADTU lost many members in one of the big schools because the principal is PEU.*

Participant ED2:

Possibly, it is happening. Unions are lobbying for their members. Both unions are involved. It is like something normal. It happens across the world.

Participant ED7:

> *With unions, we often hear that SADTU members are being appointed because SADTU is a popular union. SADTU leaders make sure their members are promoted to increase membership of the union. Qualifications also count. To be a member of SADTU is an added advantage.*

Participant UN4:

> *Yes, it happens. We champion our own in our union. Same applies to PEU. You want them to champion the mandate of the union. You don't want your members to be harassed. It's all about support. They just need to meet the minimum requirements. They might not necessarily qualify academically. We even lobby and persuade some of our members to withdraw in favour of others. We would even have a list of preferred candidates for principals. These come as directives from the leadership, we cannot question them.*

Participant ED5*:*

> *We do not have concrete evidence, but the allegations appear to be true. People who are named as preferred candidates prevail most of the*

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time. Unions do fight it out openly for their members to get the positions. Things happen before the interview; people are given questions before the interviews. This is happening and the unions keep quiet because they have interests.

Considered together, the contentions of participants *ED6, UN4, ED2, ED5, and ED7* show that the allegations of the interference of the educator trade unions in Vhuronga 1 are rife; both unions are involved; SADTU has an upper hand because of its huge membership; the lobbying for the positions in favour of union leaders and members is extensive; and both unions are aware of the undue influence in which their leadership and membership are involved.

Participant UN3 paints a gloomier picture of the phenomenon when she remarked that:

SADTU has power here in Vhuronga 1. They can do whatever. They have the link from here to the district. That is why it is easy for them to remove applications. A primary school principal was appointed without having applied. His application was brought into the room. The district knows about it. He is not qualified. He is got only a teacher's diploma; it was a while ago. He was an important official of SADTU at the time.

Participant UN3 suggests, therefore, that the influence of SADTU is such that it goes outside the jurisdiction of the circuit, and that qualification and other requirements are not considered if one is an influential SADTU official. This allegation is a serious cause for concern. Participant SGB3 concurs with Participant UN3 when she argued that:

That's happening. I have heard about that. Union leaders are influencing the processes to favour themselves and their membership. Panels are dominated by members of these unions. They are not even more experienced or more educated. It is surprising how they succeed at this rate. For 31 years as a teacher, since posts began to be advertised, I have noticed that. They are nonetheless able to run the schools.

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It follows from the contention of Participant SGB3 that both unions alike fight for the appointments of their leaders and members. Participant SGB3 sheds light on how the unions go about ensuring that their leaders or members get appointed as principals, for example, by making sure the interview panels are dominated by their own leaders or members. Another point worth considering is that the unions are ready to disregard the experience and qualification requirements just for their preferred candidates to prevail. Unlike Participant ED3, Participant SGB3 contends that the principals appointed based on patronage can run the schools.

Participant SGB1 offers another dimension by arguing that:

> *It is very much happening. Members of a particular union don't even qualify. They try to overlook acting principals if they are not members of SADTU, even though they meet the requirements. An acting principal was being denied access to being a permanent principal just because he's not a member of SADTU. With the intervention of the other union and his school's SGB, he ended up getting the position. You must belong to a particular union to get a position. Quality candidates are being overlooked. Greed plays a major role. Productivity is affected. Quality of education is no longer available. Parents withdraw their children.*

Participant SGB1 makes a serious allegation concerning the potential gatekeeping of acting principals from getting appointed permanently because they are not members of a particular union. It is interesting to note that the rival union and the SGB could intervene on behalf of the acting principals. This is an unfortunate situation considering that the policies that are put in place to protect the public interest are being ignored in pursuance of vested individual and group interests of some stakeholders. It was demonstrated in the literature review that different individuals or groups of people will always have conflicting vested interests, each wanting their fair share of power, riches, and prestige (Coser in Mbokazi et al., 2022:425). It was indicated that these vested interests could manifest themselves in the interference of trade unions. On whether the political unions exert influence on the appointment processes for principalship positions in Vhuronga 1 Circuit, Participant ED1 had this to say:

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Politics is not that much involved. The influencers don't even belong to the same political organisations.

Participant SGB4 comes close to supporting Participant ED1 by remarking:
I have not heard anything like that.

However, participants UN1 and SGB2 contradict participants SGB4 and ED1 by declaring that:

> *SADTU and ANC have a political connection because SADTU is an affiliate of COSATU. The vast majority of SADTU members are ANC.* (UN1)
>
> *Yes. It is too rife. Top management at circuit level prefer SADTU members. They think PEU people are not good enough to lead. They prefer SADTU people. They look down upon PEU members. The connection comes from ANC-Cosatu alliance. There is cadre deployment, even at municipalities. Card carrying members of the ANC are preferred. The group of people he works with to manipulate the appointment processes belong to SADTU. We also hear the circuit manager himself is SADTU. Most SADTU people don't have qualifications. They use SADTU as a ladder to promotional positions. On getting the positions, they are not effective, even spending most of their time attending political meetings. They even instruct their members in panels to overlook qualifications because they know their members are mostly underqualified.* (Participant SGB2)

Participant UN1 thus believes that SADTU members leverage their political connections with the ANC, by virtue of SADTU being an affiliate of COSATU, which is an ally of the ANC in the previously ruling tripartite alliance, to get promotions to the principalship positions. Participant SGB2 corroborates this view by suggesting that even circuit managerial positions are given to SADTU members primarily based on their connections to the ANC.

For Participant ED8, the:

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> *Political parties get involved through unions. In village politics, these things are discussed. We need those who will pursue the objectives of the ruling party. We don't want people who will pull in different directions.*

This could explain why members of the ruling party are inclined towards appointing their comrades. The objective seems to have been to want to put principals who will pursue the agendas of the then-ruling party easily. However, participants PR4 and UN4 have contradicting views:

> *Appointments are done in terms of the relevant Limpopo collective agreement number 2 of 2020. It is not about patronage, but about who qualifies in terms of the collective agreement. I heard about the allegations but people without connection to the ANC or SADTU are being appointed. The rumours are not always confirmed, but people hold on to their perception. Both unions observe and sign off the reports to the department.* (Participant PR4)

> *Union leaders are exposed to leadership. It puts them in good stead when they apply for principalship position because their strengths are known.* (Participant UN4)

For Participant PR4, the promotion of educators to principalship positions, based on patronage, is non-existent; there are just allegations to that effect. The allegations cannot be true because there are principals in the circuit that have no connections to either the ANC or SADTU. This participant insinuates that people will sometimes entertain false opinions, which they will unfortunately hold onto, even when the conditions on the ground indicate otherwise. It is a view of this researcher that where people have contradicting convictions on a particular phenomenon, such views must be subjected to an investigation to determine their correctness. For Participant UN4, the ascension of union leaders to principalship positions should not be surprising because their leadership capabilities are known already by the time they apply for principalship positions.

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Participant PR1 agrees with Participant PR4 by saying that*:*

Political parties don't seem to be involved. I have not heard anything like posts being given to people because they belong to a certain political party.

It is interesting to note, however, that some educators, such as participants ED8 and ED6, remain adamant that patronage plays a key role in the appointment of the principals in the circuit, arguing that:

> *The dominant union, SADTU, strives to see to it that its members, especially those in leadership positions, are promoted. In one school, a non-SADTU member was sacrificed for a SADTU member with lesser qualifications and experience. SADTU leadership apparently works with corrupt personnel at the District Office to make sure that the applications of those that are not favoured are destroyed. This is also happening with Departmental Head positions.* (Participant ED8)

> *Members of SADTU become principals more easily than those of PEU because interview panels are composed mostly of SADTU members. The interest of SADTU is to grow the membership of the union by luring members with the prospects of getting promotional positions.* (Participant ED6)

Participant UN4 suggests a rationale for unions to exert influence to have their leaders and members promoted to the position of principal by arguing that:

> *It is normal for unions to fight for their members to be promoted. Unions fight to make sure that their members form the majority in the panels to make it easy to push the mandate of the union. There is a struggle for power and dominance. So, promotion to principalship positions is seen as an avenue to grow the membership of the unions.*

Even though unions and some educators have come to accept the phenomenon of promotion to principalship positions based on patronage as normal, this phenomenon was found unhealthy for schools as per the literature reviewed and from the perspective of Rawl's theory of social justice. For example, *several reports have been*

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forthcoming over the years of undue influence and interference by the unions beyond their scope of responsibility of serving as observers (Chetty, 2018:11); the ANC policy of cadre deployment has been found to be a root cause of inefficiency in public institutions in South Africa (Bless, 2023); and a report from a ministerial task team of 2016 that investigated the allegations of teachers' posts recommended that cadre deployment must be done away with (Dwangu & Mahlangu, 2022).

4.3.1.1.4 Sub-theme 4: Corruption

As already indicated in opening the analysis of sub-theme 3, appointments of principals that are based on corruption are relatively high in Vhuronga 1 Circuit, according to the respondents to the questionnaire (see Figure 4.14).

Participant ED7 gives us a reason behind educators committing acts of corruption to get the principalship positions when he said that:

> *People want to be principals at bigger schools because of the varying benefits attached to post levels of principals. Authorities are given something, especially the circuit manager.*

It can be inferred from the conviction of Participant ED7 that people are motivated by monetary benefits when they commit acts of corruption. It is also suggested that the bigger schools are the ones that people mostly target because of the bigger salaries that are attached to principalship positions in these schools. The allegation that even the circuit manager is the recipient of the bribes is worrying and thus worthy of investigation.

Participant SGB1 agrees with Participant ED7 by saying that:

> *I am saying this through experience. A misunderstanding would be created among the SGB members. The circuit manager would then appoint the panel on behalf of the SGB. Usually, the SGB does not understand the whole framework, they come in to manipulate. The circuit manager would work hand in glove with the union. It's a very serious issue, and money could be exchanging hands. A panel member confessed to me that he was being used by the circuit manager for 1,*

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2, 3. She said it was not about money, but she did confess. Patronage and corruption are very big. They push such that you would see that there is something for themselves to gain personally.

Further than supporting the allegations of Participant ED7, Participant SGB1 gives an indication as to how authorities facilitate corruption. Participant SGB1 claims to have been informed by a person who was used in such corruption. This, too, is a cause for great concern.

More participants, such as participants UN1, ED5, SGB2, ED2, and ED4, concur with participants ED7 and SGB1:

Too rife this one. You pop around R100 000 for principal and for deputy principal up to R50 000. They were fighting for … as a big school. People were being asked to pay about R150 000. There is a syndicate that facilitates these things. They know what kind of panels to put together to succeed. They work with Chairpersons of SGBs. (Participant UN1)

We hear people are buying positions. It is claimed that people are paying huge amounts, starting from R50 000.00. (Participant ED5)

People pay up to R100 000. Another principal, I heard, paid R120 000 to be transferred to another school with a higher post level. Roughly R40 000 for departmental heads. We think the circuit manager knows about these things. (Participant SGB2)

There are rumours of positions at all levels being sold. But I haven't evidence. Around R40 000.00 for principalship positions. You'll never know who is being paid to influence the outcome of the interviews. It is an illegal thing. (Participant ED2)

People say it is happening. They even mention the sums of money involved. It is said to be between R90 000.00 and R150 000.00

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depending on the post level of the principalship position. Educational authorities, corrupt union leaders and SGB members are cited as some of the people who participate in the corruption. (Participant ED4)

From participants UN1, ED5, SGB2, ED2, and ED4, we gather that:

Allegations of the selling of the principalship positions are rife; the alleged selling prices for the positions range from R40 000.00 to R150 000.00 depending on the size of the school; syndicates that are said to be behind the selling of these positions include influential people such as educational authorities, members of the SGBs, and members or leaders of trade unions. It is interesting to note from ED2 that the syndicates cover up their tracks very well because they know that what they are doing is illegal.

Even more damning is the conviction of Participant UN2 when saying:

Corruption is a cancerous wound in this circuit. It cannot be healed. People are paying up to R50 000. The circuit manager makes sure. He is even appointing cs1 educators on credit, they pay him monthly. Even R150 000 for the previous principal of one of the big schools in the circuit. The current principal of that school was not favoured. But he's very effective.

This allegation is of greater concern because it places the circuit manager at the centre of the selling of the principalship positions in the circuit, also accusing him of not valuing the exceptional performance of some principals because he does not favour them.

Participant SGB3 agrees that there is widespread corruption in the appointment of principals in the circuit but shares a view that the corruption syndicates cannot have their way where the SGBs are effective. She said that:

Our SGB is effective. And it was commended by the district officials for their efforts in curbing the corruption. The circuit manager tried to bypass the SGB.

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It is worthy to note, from the assertion of Participant SGB3, that there are educational authorities that want to see the appointments being done properly and that there are Participant SGBs that stick to the correct procedures without fear of the educational authorities.

Most participants agree that they have heard that corruption related to principalship positions is taking place in the circuit. They also agree that there is no concrete evidence yet to prove such allegations. These participants include:

Participant ED8:

> *We always hear about that. But we have no concrete evidence. But it is in the grapevine every time positions are advertised. You wonder where they get the money. Money must be given to too many people. You can't pay them all. We wonder how all this is possible. We are told everyone up to the circuit manager must get a cut. It is not possible to see people exchanging money, but the frequency of these reports can make you to believe that it is happening.*

Participant PR4:

I might have heard by I cannot confirm because it takes place privately. No, I haven't heard about the amounts involved.

Participant PR1:

People are talking, we cannot deny this. But we cannot confirm this.

Participant PR4 gives a hint as to why concrete evidence may not be available to prove the corruption when he says, "… *I cannot confirm because it takes place privately.*" Participant ED8 corroborates him by saying, "*It is not possible to see people exchanging money."*

Participant SGB4 argued that:

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Money is exchanging hands for people to enrich themselves and for others to get what they want. The eagerness of panellists to push for certain candidates tells you there is corruption.

Unlike the other participants, Participant SGB4 seems to be determined that corruption is taking place. His reasoning, somewhat persuasive to this researcher, is that members of the panels are sometimes too eager to see certain candidates prevail. His suspicion could be that the eagerness is derived from the fact that they have been paid, and a possible fear of consequences should they not succeed.

The allegations, whether true or not, must be addressed to harvest healthy collegial relationships in the schools. According to Participant UN3:

It must be addressed. It is causing divisions among colleagues People become bitter; collegiality is affected. It is surprising that those with better qualifications, experience and work ethic do not emerge successful at times. Sometimes those that attempt to buy become more bitter when they don't succeed, leading to vendettas.

Participant ED6 agrees with Participant UN3 by saying that:
It becomes more and more ugly that colleagues set each other up and make false accusations, sometimes using the girl children.

On sexual favours happening for promotion to principalship positions, Participant ED3 had this to say*:*
Sexual favours are said to be happening. But you can't prove that.

Participant UN4 is of a slightly different view, which is persuasive according to this researcher.

Participant UN4:
Maybe for deputy principals, there is no female principal in the 11 secondary schools. Very sexist, so questionable. Maybe at primary schools.

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The allegations that some of the participants made are too serious to be ignored. For example, participants PR3 and ED1 had these to say:

> *Corruption is the biggest cancer. Even people who are going to be interviewed can select people to sit on the interview panel. It is easy to do it when they themselves are members of the SGB, or they can get members of the SGB to do that on their behalf. My suspicion is that they buy SGB members. I was approached by a principalship candidate who wanted me to be part of the panel to interview him. I did not agree because I knew another candidate, a hard worker, who was going to be interviewed for that position. Rumour has it that educational authorities, including the circuit manager, are part of these shenanigans. There is also a suspicion that money could be exchanging hands, with some candidates rumoured to have paid up to R150 000.00 to be a principal of a big school. Sometimes principals of smaller schools want to move to bigger schools for greener pastures. This causes problems. Just recently there was one such principal who wanted to move to the biggest school in the circuit. The circuit manager was involved in the scheme to move this principal to the biggest school. The vacancy that he would leave at his current school would then be given to another principal of a smaller school for him to work nearer his home. A deputy principal from another school would then be moved to fill the vacancy left by the latter principal in an acting capacity. The deputy principal would become principal when the post gets advertised. There have been instances where such arrangements were implemented in the past.* (Participant PR3)

> *Corruption is rife. This corruption seems to be facilitated from the higher offices, such as that of the circuit manager. People who are close to the circuit manager are hand-picked by him to fill vacancies in acting capacities, only to be appointed permanently when the positions are advertised. Even people who are principals, who are close to the circuit manager, are preferred to move on to be principals of bigger schools. In the recent posts, there is an allegation that about three principals*

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close to the circuit manager were preferred to take charge of three schools which are bigger than those they are running now. But this did not work because the SGB at one of the big schools decided to side with the acting principal who is not close to the circuit manager. The SGB is very influential. If the SGB does not come to the party, the schemes of the circuit manager and his friends collapse. (Participant ED1*)*

As shown in the literature review, the legislation governing the appointment of principals prefers that principals must be appointed based on merit. The literature review has also shown that, owing to various conflicts of interest, stakeholders in the educator appointment process undermine the provisions of the law in pursuance of their own selfish interests. Stakeholders that undermine due appointment processes thus undermine the law and defeat the principles of social justice, such as fairness and equality of opportunity for all. Of greater concern, they expose schools to poor leadership, thereby subjecting learners to an education of a poor quality. It is worth mentioning that, in addition to corroborating the literature, the perceptions of the participants are in line with the first hypothesis of the quantitative phase, which is:

- Conflicts of interest in the appointment process for the appointment of principals compromise the appointment of quality principals in public schools.

Theme 1, sub-themes 1 to 4 have addressed the first and the second objectives of the research, which are to:

- To identify and describe the types of conflicts of interest that affect the appointment of quality principals in public schools.
- To find out teachers' views regarding the extent to which conflicts of interest affect the appointment of quality school principals.

The following theme addresses the third objective of the study, which is to

- To determine teachers' perceptions regarding the impact of the appointment of poor-quality school principals on the delivery of effective teaching and learning at schools.

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4.3.1.2 Theme 2: Effects of poor-quality principals on teaching and learning

According to the results of the quantitative phase, most of the respondents believe that the appointment of poor-quality principals has a negative effect on teaching and learning in schools (see Figure 4.19). This is in line with the second hypothesis of the quantitative phase, which is as follows:

- The appointment of quality principals makes a substantial difference to the delivery of quality and effective teaching and learning in public schools.

Since this is an explanatory mixed-method study, the role of the qualitative data is to explain, refine, or extend the general picture as painted by the results of the quantitative phase. It is important, therefore, to try and understand the views of the participants regarding how the appointment of poor-quality principals affects teaching and learning adversely.

It is also important to mention from the outset that all the participants in the qualitative phase replicated the findings of the literature. Only six verbatim accounts were recorded from the participants because there was data saturation for this theme. The literature review also showed us that it is empirically proven that the appointment of poor-quality principals results in the under- or non-achievement of school outcomes (Khumalo, 2021).

The following is an account of how the participants explained the relationship between the variables in the second hypothesis:

Participant ED1:
Schools run poorly as I have already indicated.

Participant ED2:
Those that were not appointed because they did not have the money become demotivated, leading to the collapse of schools.

Participant ED3:

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Such people lack leadership knowledge and skills and can therefore not run schools effectively.

Participant ED4:

They are underqualified, they cannot lead, no knowledge of management, cannot manage teachers/learners/curriculum. The result is poor quality.

Participant UN1:

> *It affects the smooth running the school. Without qualifications and experience, the principals become a problem because they cannot be able to deliver.*

Participant UN4

> *Obviously, the school will go down because of the poor quality of the results, the results go down, teachers don't respect the principal. The quality of work generally is affected negatively.*

As already mentioned, the perceptions of the participants regarding theme 2 were a replication of the literature review and in accord with the second hypothetical statement. For example, empirical literature records that a link exists between good leadership and the achievement of school outcomes and decries the ever-growing decline of the quality of school principals in South Africa (Khumalo, 2021); owing to a failure to observe sound ethical conduct, the capacity of public institutions, including schools, to render service effectively and efficiently is hampered (Shava & Mazenda, 2021). Giving learners school principals who are not capable of achieving school outcomes is tantamount to denying them access to quality education and therefore a contradiction of the principles of Rawl's social justice theory. It is also detrimental to the achievement of the UN Sustainable Goal 4, which advocates for the provision of quality education.

4.3.1.3 Theme 3: Efficiency in addressing conflicts of interests

Theme 3 addresses objective 4 of the study, which is:

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- To find strategies that will help educational authorities eliminate conflicts of interest from appointment processes for school principals.

4.3.1.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Efforts of authorities on eliminating conflicts of interest

As per the literature reviewed, legislation places an obligation on educational authorities and SGBs to ensure that the appointment processes for principals are run accordingly. This sub-theme, therefore, focuses on the efforts of the authorities in dealing with conflicts of interest, from the perspectives of the participants.

In the main, most of the respondents in the quantitative phase thought the educational authorities were doing something to deal with the conflicts of interest (see Figure 4.16). However, the perceptions of the participants in the qualitative phase project a different view. This is what the participants had to say:

Participant ED4:

> *They are not doing enough. They have interest. They cannot act decisively. It's not all about the public interest, it is personal. People being moved from school A to school B are pushed without any track record. These people are very close. I am 35 years old teaching. It became worse with the employment of the incumbent circuit manager.*

It follows that Participant ED4 believes that the educational authorities are doing something to address the conflicts of interest. However, their efforts are not adequate according to him. Participant ED4 argues that the reason they cannot intensify their efforts to fight the conflicts of interest is that they themselves are personally conflicted, favouring those who are close to them.

Participant ED6:

They themselves are part of the problem. They exacerbate it. No corruption can be possible without them.

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Participant ED6 agrees with Participant ED4 that the educational authorities cannot be effective in fighting the conflicts of interest because they are involved in the furtherance of these conflicts of interest.

SGB3:

Their efforts are not enough because rumours are recurring.

For Participant SGB3, if the educational authorities were doing enough, the rumours would have subsided over time. She agrees with Participant ED4 that the educational authorities' efforts to fight the conflicts of interest are inadequate.

Participant SGB1:

They're doing nothing. It is always recurring in the last ten (10) years.

Whereas Participant SGB1 agrees with Participant SGB3 that the rumours have been recurring over time, she, unlike Participant SGB3, believes that the educational authorities are doing nothing to fight the conflicts of interest.

Participant ED1:

> *You first steal R10, R100, up to a billion gradually. He started small but his hands seem to be in the cookie jar. There is no concrete evidence. Until Zondo Commission we just heard things, then the commission confirmed that things were happening. We need some investigation, not on the scale of Zondo, but we hear principals being shot in front of teachers and kids in faraway places. The bitterness affects the mind, a contaminated mind is a dangerous mind.*

Concurring with participants ED4 and ED6 that the educational authorities are themselves involved in the furtherance of the conflicts of interest, Participant ED1 places the circuit manager at the centre of the corruption. He highlights the seriousness of the dangers inherent in the conflicts of interest by drawing our attention to the principalship-related murders that have occurred elsewhere across the country.

Participant UN2:

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They turn a blind eye. I have not seen any effort from them. They should be addressing mass meetings of unions on the matter.

Participant UN2 believes that the educational authorities' efforts to curb the conflicts of interest would be visible if they were to use forums of trade unions' mass meetings as platforms to address the conflicts of interest.

Participant ED7:

> *He is not doing anything. He comes to you softly likely he is helping you. But deep down he knows his mission is accomplished. He leaves no paper trail. He tries his best to talk the problem away. That is my personal experience with him.*

Participant ED7 shares a particular conviction, allegedly drawn from personal experience with the circuit manager. This could be interpreted as a demonstration of the loss of confidence that some educators have developed in the circuit manager.

Participant PR2:

The circuit manager sends a departmental representative to oversee the process for every principalship position.

Participant ED5:

Authorities cannot do anything because there is no whistleblowing.

Participants PR2 and ED5, alike, portray the circuit manager as doing something to address the conflicts of interest. Participant PR2 gives us the positive action that the circuit manager performs, while Participant ED5 blames the non-action of the authorities in the absence of control systems, such as whistleblowing.

From the findings of the literature, different individuals or groups of people will always have conflicting vested interests, each wanting their fair share of power, riches, and prestige (Coser in Mbokazi et al., 2022:425). This could explain the lack of zeal by the educational authorities to address the various conflicts of interest.

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4.3.1.3.2 Subtheme 2: Interview panels are familiar with laws and policies governing the appointment of school principals

The general picture on this theme, as portrayed by Figure 4.17 in the quantitative results, is that most of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that interview panels are familiar with laws and policies governing the appointment of school principals.

On this theme, data saturation was reached. Most of the participants seemed to believe that panel members, especially those from the SGB, were not familiar with the laws and policies pertaining to the appointment processes for principalship positions.

Participant ED8 had this to say:

SGBs do not care about constituting panels that are knowledgeable in law and policies. They just need people who will toe the line. That's all.

Participant PR3 said that:

> *There's generally a lack of understanding of laws and policies regarding the appointment of principals. Few people, especially those from the unions are familiar with the laws and policies.*

Empirical evidence from the literature corroborates the assertions of the participants. For example, SGBs, as an important stakeholder in the appointment process for principals, lack the requisite capacity to interpret and implement educational laws and policies effectively (Makhuvele et al., 2019:190).

4.3.1.3.3 Subtheme 3: Support to interview panels

The general picture on this theme, as portrayed by Figure 4.18 in the quantitative results, is that more respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that support is given to interview panels as opposed to those who either strongly agree or agree. The findings of the qualitative phase amounted to a refinement of those of the quantitative phase.

Participant SGB3 had this to say:

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There is no support. SGBs lack capacity.

Participant UN1 said that:

I don't think, you hear negative reports when people come out of the interviews.

On whether the SGBs are supported in running the interviews, participants SGB3 and UN1 share the same sentiments, believing that support is not given.

Participant ED1 asserted that:

> *There are issues of mandates. They carry out these mandates.* (Authorities would be heard saying) *A ri khou toda u nangelwa thukhi. Mandate u khou ri kha ri wane hezwi* (Venda for: Do not select trash for us. The mandate says we should recommend this person). *It is either nepotism or someone got paid. The mandate is not named. It is something akin to cadre development.*

Participant ED1 insinuates that support is not given deliberately so that the preferred candidates of the educational authorities prevail in the end. However, Participant UN4 argues that support is given to the SGBs through workshops, but the conflicted stakeholders still go on to favour their candidates.

Participant UN4:

They are supported. There are workshops conducted. People still do their own things.

According to Participant ED5:

They are workshopped, but the system is corrupted already. The effort is wasted, money put into the workshops is money down the drain.

Participant ED5 is fully in agreement with Participant UN4 in that she believes that workshops will never correct the situation because the corruption in the system is too deep.

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Participant PR3 argued that:

> *Where they lack capacity, they must appoint others to do it on their behalf. The danger is that the SGB tries to influence the panels and sometimes makes recommendations contrary to those of the panels they appointed.*

This reinforces the notion that SGBs are capacitated and are allowed to, if not fully capacitated, appoint those with the capacity to run the interviews on their behalf, but the main challenge is the SGBs' conflicts of interest. According to the literature, there is inadequate support given to interview panels as Van der Berg et al., in Malefetse (2019:12), stated that the officials responsible for recommendations and appointments of principals have very limited knowledge and understanding of labour laws regarding the appointment of principals.

4.3.1.3.4 Sub-theme 4: Capacity of panels to handle conflicts of interest cases

Figure 4.19 of the quantitative results shows that most of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that panels are adequately equipped to deal with conflicts of interest.

On whether the panels can handle the conflicts of interest cases that may arise during the interviews, Participant UN1 had this to say:

> *Through union representation. Disputes come later through the unions. The interviews would have continued. People would claim that they only knew later than the wife of someone who was being interviewed.*

The panels are not much concerned about addressing the conflicts of interest in the interviews, as such cases are only brought up later by way of disputes. Participant SGB3 seems to agree with Participant UN1 when she, when responding to the question of whether members of the panels recuse themselves if they are conflicted, declares that:

I have never come across that.

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The following participants contradict participants UN1 and SGB3 in that they argue that the members of the panels are generally aware that they should recuse themselves if they are conflicted and that conflicted members are requested to recuse themselves:

> *There is no capacity. They get there knowing they are related to people. They just want to push to appoint their own people. They don't disclose. They know conflicts must be declared but they look the other way.* (Participant PR3)

> *People are told to excuse themselves. Some with integrity do excuse themselves, some without integrity do not, solely to favour their preferred candidates.* (Participant PR1)

> *They ask you to recuse yourself if you feel like. It is voluntary and not mandatory. And this is contrary to policy.* (Participant UN2)

It is interesting to note, from Participant UN2, that the request for recusal is interpreted as voluntary rather than mandatory. This is tantamount to a violation of the relevant policy. Van der Berg et al., in Malefetse (2019:12), found that the officials responsible for recommendations and appointments of principals have very limited knowledge and understanding of labour laws regarding the appointment of principals. It can be concluded, therefore, that interview panels lack the sufficient legal knowledge to deal with the various conflicts of interest.

4.3.1.3.5 Subtheme 5: Authorities' willingness to eliminate conflicts of interest

The general picture from the quantitative findings, as portrayed in Figure 4.20, is that most respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that authorities display a willingness to eliminate conflicts of interest. Most of the participants, however, argue that educational authorities do not display a willingness to eliminate the conflicts of interest. From the empirical literature, it can be deduced that this is because of the pursuit of their own vested interests. For example, their professional judgment or actions regarding a primary interest are being unduly influenced by a secondary interest (Hendrick, 2016). When officials prioritise their own selfish interests at the

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expense of the public interest, they directly violate Rawl's principles of social justice, such as fairness, justice, and equality of opportunity (Khumalo, 2021:4).

The following participants reiterated that the educational authorities are reactive because of their perceived involvement in the conflicts of interest:

Participant ED3:

The district entertains cases when they are reported. They try their level best.

Participant UN2:

They come in during the induction of SGB. They apprise them of their roles. Otherwise, they are reactive.

Participant ED1:

> *They are part. They come and address but deep down they know what they are doing. Those that fought the redeployment at the primary school suffered repercussions, underwent some disciplinary process, then transferred and had their salaries docked. It is not easy to measure the impact of this as it is a primary school.*

Participant ED4:

> *They show no interest at all. They must be uprooting it. They must be sending independent people from other districts to constitute the panels. SGBs must ask the circuit manager for assistance. We need new faces, even new to the SGB.*

4.3.1.3.6 Sub-theme 6: Awareness of prejudice by candidates

The general picture from the quantitative findings as portrayed in Figure 4.22 is that most of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that the candidates for principalship positions are aware of the likely prejudice they may suffer because of the various conflicts of interest.

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On whether the candidates have an awareness that they may likely be prejudiced as they go for interviews, the following participants had this to say:

Participant ED1:

Focus is on attaining the position. They don't worry about what will happen.

Participant ED4:

> *Yes, sometimes local people are preferred. In most cases, local people are absorbed everywhere. The son of the soil is preferred. Appointing someone from outside upsets schools, principals are sabotaged all over.*

Participant ED7:

> *It demotivates. In our circuit, people end up not applying. Fewer applications are received for positions of principal. They temper with scores to make sure their preferred candidates prevail. I won't even apply.*

Participant UN2:

> *Yes. You know very well that the position could be belonging to someone else. You have a sense that it is a waste of time. There are some rumours that the position belongs to so and so. Most of the time the rumours are confirmed by the outcome of the interviews.*

Participant ED6:

I am just applying. They have their own people who are targeted.

Participant UN1:

People conclude that those acting will be appointed because they have the upper hand.

Participant SGB4:

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> *It is pathetic that the other four candidates know that they are just accompanying the one who was acting, even when he is not capable. It may help to appoint into the panels unknown people who won't prefer the "home boy.*

Participant ED8:

Yes, it happens. It is predetermined most of the times, and rumours are being confirmed.

Participant UN4:

> *It's always the case. There is always a mandate. The SGBs are involved. The cancellation of career pathing has exacerbated things. People fight for managerial positions. With senior and master teachers career paths available, this was not happening.*

Participant ED6:

I have told myself that I will never apply for a principalship position because of the fierce contestation that goes into it and the corruption.

Almost all the participants, except for Participant ED1, agree that the candidates are likely aware that they will be disadvantaged in favour of a preferred candidate when they go for interviews. Where educators are demotivated to apply for principalship positions for fear of potential prejudice, it could be argued that the learners might be denied access to quality education in the process, as poor-quality principals who are motivated by unethical considerations may get appointed instead of knowledgeable people with requisite expertise and experience. Thus, the appointment of poor-quality principals is unfair to both the disadvantaged teachers and the learners, as such principals cannot run schools successfully. This must be fought against as far as Rawl's social justice theory is concerned, because these unethical practices deprive educators of equal employment opportunities and result in the appointment of the wrong people as principals, thereby denying learners quality education. The literature review has also addressed the issues of trust and relationships and unethical leadership. For example, research findings decry the general lack of ethical

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leadership by South African school principals (Baxter & Ehren, 2023). Various reports from the Department of Basic Education support these findings (Mlambo & Khumalo, 2022); and schools cannot function optimally where staff does not have trust in the administrative and governance leadership of their schools (Baxter & Ehren, 2023).

4.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the results of the data that was collected for the study. The results for the quantitative and qualitative phases were presented in two sequential phases.

The first phase involved the presentation of the data that was collected through the structured questionnaire. The quantitative data and results provided a general picture of the research problem. In this phase, the results of the analysis of the quantitative data comprised a description of the respondents' biographic details and a descriptive analysis of the results in tabular and graphic forms.

The second phase involved the collection of qualitative information through a semi-structured interview. The qualitative data was used to refine, extend, or explain the general picture that was painted by the results of the quantitative phase. The data collected was structured according to themes. Thus, data integration took place in this phase, as the discussion gave a brief synthesis of the findings from both the quantitative and the qualitative data.

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CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Four, the collected data was presented and analysed. This chapter presents the summary, conclusion, and recommendations of the study. It summarises the contents of all the preceding chapters, presents the findings of the study in line with the hypotheses and research questions of the study, presents the recommendations of the study and the conclusions from the study, as well as the limitations of the study.

5.2 SUMMARY

This section presents the summary of each chapter for the purpose of integrating the study. The aim of this study was to determine the effects of conflicts of interest on the appointment of principals.

The chapters are summarised as follows:

- **Chapter 1**

This chapter presented the introduction and background of the study, the problem statement, the aim of the study, the specific objectives of the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, the preliminary literature review, the delimitation of the study, and the organisation of the study.

- **Chapter 2**

In addition to providing an overview of the literature on the conflicts of interest, their influence on the appointment of school principals, and the effects thereof on the delivery of quality school outcomes, this chapter also focused on the theoretical and legislative frameworks underpinning the appointment of quality teachers to enhance quality and effective teaching and learning in schools.

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- **Chapter 3**

This chapter covered a detailed research methodology that was used in undertaking this study. The research methodology was on the aim of the study, which was to determine the effects of conflicts of interest on the appointment of school principals. Aspects of the research methodology covered in this chapter included the research paradigm, population, sampling, data collection and data analysis, ethical considerations, and measures of quality control.

- **Chapter 4**

This chapter focused firstly on the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the quantitative data collected through the questionnaire. Secondly, the chapter focused on the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the qualitative data collected through the interviews. Lastly, the chapter covered the integration of both the quantitative and qualitative data at the discussion of the findings of both sets of data.

- **Chapter 5**

This chapter discussed the major findings of the study, presented a summary of research findings and conclusions and recommendations, and areas for further studies.

5.3 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This section presents the findings of the study based on the aim of the study, which was to determine the effects of conflicts of interest on the appointment of school principals.

5.3.1 For the Quantitative Phase the Hypotheses were as Follows:

- Conflicts of interest in the appointment process for the appointment of principals compromise the appointment of quality principals in public schools.
- The appointment of quality principals makes a substantial difference in the delivery of quality and effective teaching and learning in public schools.

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The findings from the empirical literature show that a positive link exists between the variables in the hypotheses. That is, conflicts of interest in the appointment process for the appointment of principals were found to compromise the appointment of quality principals in public schools, and the appointment of quality principals was indeed proven to make a substantial difference in the delivery of quality and effective teaching and learning in public schools.

The views of most of the respondents (about 98%) to the questionnaire aligned with the findings of the literature, with 64.2% of the respondents strongly agreeing that the appointment of poor-quality principals has a negative effect on the delivery of effective teaching and learning in schools. 26 respondents, representing 32.15% of the respondents, agreed that the appointment of poor-quality principals has a negative effect on the delivery of effective teaching and learning in schools; 1 respondent, representing 1.2% of the respondents, was not sure if the appointment of poor-quality principals has a negative effect or not on the delivery of effective teaching and learning in schools; 1 respondent, representing 1.2% of the respondents, disagreed that the appointment of poor-quality principals has a negative effect on the delivery of effective teaching and learning in schools; while 1 respondent, representing 1.2% of the respondents, strongly disagreed that the appointment of poor-quality principals has a negative effect on the delivery of effective teaching and learning in schools.

5.3.2 For the Qualitative Phase of the Study, the Questions were as Follows:

- What are the types of conflicts of interest that affect the appointment of quality principals in public schools?
- What are teachers' views regarding the extent to which conflicts of interest affect the appointment of quality principals in public schools?
- What are teachers' perceptions regarding the impact of the appointment of poor-quality principals on the delivery of effective teaching and learning in public schools?
- What strategies can educational authorities implement to eliminate conflicts of interest from the appointment processes for principals in public schools?

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5.3.2.1 QUESTION 1: What are the types of conflicts of interest that affect the appointment of quality principals in public schools in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit?

The participants' perceptions were sought regarding the existence of the various types of conflicts of interest as derived from the literature review and confirmed by the respondents to the questionnaire. Most of the participants indicated that three of the four conflicts of interest, as identified in the empirical literature, affected the appointment of principals in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit. These relate to nepotism, patronage, and corruption. A few indicated that appointments of principals that were made based on religious affiliation were taking place in the circuit.

5.3.2.2 QUESTION 2: What are teachers' views regarding the extent to which conflicts of interest affect the appointment of quality principals in schools in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit?

Participants were asked questions on their views regarding the extent to which each type of conflict of interest affected the appointment of quality principals in schools in the Vhuronga 1 Circuit.

- **Nepotism**

Most of the participants indicated that nepotism had a huge role in the appointment of teachers in the circuit. Participants explained how friends and relatives were being unfairly assisted to get principalship positions. Few participants indicated that nepotism played no role in appointing principals in the circuit.

- **Religious Affiliation**

Most of the participants thought appointments of principals based on religious affiliation were not taking place in the circuit. However, few participants believed that appointments of principals based on religious affiliation, though not common, were taking place in the circuit. The latter participants explained what they knew about this phenomenon.

- **Patronage**

Most of the participants indicated that appointments of principals based on patronage were widespread in the circuit, with some seeing nothing wrong with it. They explained

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how such appointments were taking place. They claimed it was common for members, especially leaders of the teacher trade unions and members of certain political parties, to be promoted to principalship positions unfairly. Both teacher trade unions that are operating in the circuit were seen as culprits of such appointments. Few participants did not believe that appointments of principals based on patronage were happening in the circuit, although some of these participants admitted that they had heard rumours about such appointments.

- **Corruption**

Most of the participants indicated that appointments of principals based on corruption were rife in the circuit. They explained how they heard the corrupt appointments were taking place. The corrupt activities that were highlighted included bribery and the granting of sexual favours, with most participants adamant that sexual favours were not being granted. Few participants did not believe that appointments of principals based on corruption were happening in the circuit, although some of these participants admitted that they had heard rumours about such appointments.

5.3.3. QUESTION 3: What are teachers' perceptions regarding the impact of the appointment of poor-quality principals on effective teaching and learning in public schools?

Participants' perceptions were sought regarding the impact of the appointment of poor-quality principals on effective teaching and learning in schools in Vhuronga 1 Circuit. All the participants but one indicated, in alignment with the findings of the empirical literature and the results of the quantitative phase, that the appointment of poor-quality educators in schools affects teaching and learning adversely.

5.3.4. QUESTION 4: What strategies can educational authorities implement to eliminate conflicts of interest from the appointment processes for principals in public schools?

Questions 4 to 10 in the interview schedule were designed to draw from the participants the strategies that can be implemented to eliminate conflicts of interest from the appointment processes for principals in public schools. These strategies will be shared in the recommendations section below.

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5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the comprehensive findings of this study, the researcher recommends the following:

5.4.1 Recommendations for School Governing Bodies (SGBs):

Every SGB should draw Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for shortlisting and interviewing principals. The SOP should provide guidelines on how the SGB will go about composing its shortlisting and interviewing committee and set the minimum standards for selecting members for the shortlisting and interviewing committee. The SOP should be adopted as a working document, which may be improved as and when the need arises to close the loopholes that could be identified over time.

- Every SGB should adopt a statement of commitment that binds every member of the shortlisting and interviewing committee to uphold the highest standards pertaining to the declaration of confidentiality, honesty, and disclosure of conflicts of interest. This would remind committee members about the requirement for them to be of integrity.

- Every SGB should run an induction programme to familiarise the shortlisting and interviewing committee with the procedures which they must follow in the selection process. The SGB should explain succinctly their expectations of the shortlisting and interviewing committee.

5.4.2 Recommendations for Teacher Trade Unions

Teacher trade unions should train a pool of observers to provide support to the selection committees as provided by the South African Schools Act. The observers must be aware of the roles and responsibilities of an observer in the selection process. These pools should be replenished whenever it is necessary and should receive ongoing guidance on how to work effectively with the shortlisting and interview committees.

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- Teacher trade unions should adopt a code of conduct which specifically deals with the conduct expected of the observers, which they forward to assist in the selection process. Consequences should be applied to all observers who act contrary to the provisions of the code of conduct.

- Teacher trade unions should run workshops to familiarise their members with the various conflicts of interest that may arise during the shortlisting and interviewing processes and how to deal with them. Unions should state categorically that it is wrong and illegal to exert undue influence on the shortlisting and interviewing committees to appoint candidates based on ethically questionable considerations such as nepotism, religious affiliation, patronage, and corruption.

- Trade unions should, at every cycle of shortlisting and interviews, issue a communique to their members, encouraging them to refrain from engaging in any activity that may be seen to be undermining the selection process and bringing the names of the unions into disrepute.

5.4.3 Recommendations for Circuit Managers and District Managers

- Educational authorities, at circuit, and district levels, should stick to their roles and responsibilities in the selection process as provided for in the personnel administrative measures and the relevant policies and prescripts.

- Educational authorities should keep their relationships with their subordinates (teaching and administrative) and leaders of the teacher trade unions strictly at a professional level. They should be wary of being seen as too friendly to some principals, teachers or union leaders.

- Following the publishing of every vacancy list, the educational authorities should issue circulars to schools in their jurisdiction, reminding every stakeholder about its role per the South African Schools Act, and encouraging them to desist from any conduct that may be seen to be undermining the

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selection processes and bringing the name of the Department of Basic Education into disrepute.

- Educational authorities should encourage school governing bodies to develop and adopt standard operating procedures for shortlisting and interviewing committees and the statements of commitment by their members to ensure the selection is done effectively and to minimise the lodging of grievances and disputes. These documents should be audited by the department to ensure alignment with the relevant laws and policies.

- Workshops should be conducted biennially within the circuits to conscientise teachers about the principles of fairness, equality of opportunity, and justice inherent in the laws governing the recruitment of teachers at all levels. This is important because every teacher should be encouraged to apply. This will also address the perception that the selection processes are done with fear, favour, and prejudice.

5.4.4 Recommendation for the Department of Basic Education

- The department should consider reintroducing the career path of senior and master teachers to help reduce the fierceness in the contestation for the promotion to the managerial position of principal.

- The department should introduce a toll-free hotline number to report corruption related to promotional positions. An independent service provider should manage this hotline number, and the identity of the informants must remain anonymous.

- The department should adopt a whistleblowing policy specific to corrupt activities regarding promotional positions.

- The department should, at least once biennially, commission small-scale investigations into the allegations of corruption regarding promotional positions.

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5.5 AREAS OF FUTURE RESEARCH

Further studies are necessary to explore the phenomenon of conflicts of interest in the appointment processes for principals from the perspectives of the circuit managers. The circuit manager is a significant stakeholder in this process. Considering that circuit managers are also fingered in wrongdoing, it would only be fair to grant them an opportunity to be heard, as not doing so may constitute a violation of the natural rule of justice, *Audi alteram partem*, which advocates that those who are accused of wrongdoing must have the right to a fair hearing.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This study aimed to determine the effects of conflicts of interest on the appointment of school principals. This study found that conflicts of interest in the appointment process for the appointment of principals compromise the appointment of quality principals in public schools and that the appointment of quality principals makes a substantial difference in delivering quality and effective teaching and learning in public schools. Findings from the literature, as well as the quantitative and qualitative phases, are the same in this regard. The study also found that the various types of conflicts identified from the literature review, such as nepotism, religious affiliation, patriotism, and corruption, affect the appointment processes for principals in Vhuronga 1 Circuit. Regarding the extent to which conflicts of interest affect the appointment of principals in the circuit, the study found that nepotism, patriotism, and corruption affected the appointment of principals to a great extent. However, only a few respondents indicated that appointments made based on religious affiliation either did not exist or existed to a minimal extent.

This chapter recommended the strategies that every important stakeholder can implement to help eliminate the conflicts of interest in the appointment process for principals. It is a fervent wish of this researcher that the study's findings and recommendations will help fight the conflicts of interest in the appointment processes for principals, thereby granting equality of opportunity for promotion to all candidates and paving the way to providing quality education for all our children.

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5.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher faced challenges in reaching all secondary school teachers in the circuit to gather responses through the questionnaire and individual interviews. However, the carefully chosen sampling methods for the two sequential phases made it possible for him to overcome this limitation. This approach ensured that the results of the quantitative phase were generalisable, enhancing the study's overall validity.

5.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided a summary, conclusions, and recommendations based on the study's findings. It outlined key insights of all the preceding chapters and presented the findings of the study in line with the hypotheses and the research questions of the study. Additionally, it presented recommendations and acknowledged the limitations of the study.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A : DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

"Effects of Conflicts of Interest on the Appointment of Principals: Perceptions on the Quality of Leadership in the Vhuronga I Circuit, Vhembe East District, Limpopo Province"

The study seeks to find out teachers' views regarding the extent to which conflicts of interest affect the appointment of quality school principals; to determine teachers' perceptions regarding the impact of appointment of poor-quality school principals on the delivery of effective teaching and learning at schools; and to recommend strategies that will help educational authorities eliminate conflicts of interest from appointment processes for school principals.

Kindly be informed that your participation in the study is voluntary and that you are free to withdraw at any stage without prejudice. Be advised also that your name and identity will not be revealed and that your responses will be treated with the strictest confidentiality. Please be advised further that the researcher may seek your permission to put an identifier in the questionnaire solely for the purpose of helping him to follow up on you with an interview for the qualitative phase.

SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS

Please circle the number that represents the appropriate response.

1. Gender of Respondent

Male	1
Female	2
Other (Specify)	3

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2. Age of Respondent

Less than 25 years	1
25-30 years	2
31-40 years	3
41-50 years	4
51 years and older	5

3. Position of Respondent

CS1 Educator	1
Departmental Head	2
Deputy Principal	3
Principal	4

4. Educational qualification of respondents

Teaching Diploma	1
Teaching Diploma & Advanced Certificate in Education	2
Degree	3
Honours	4
Masters	5
PhD	6

5. Are you a member of a teachers' union?

Yes	1
No	2

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6. Are you occupying a leadership position in a union?

Yes	1
No	2

SECTION B: "Effects of Conflicts of Interest on the Appointment of Principals: Perceptions on the Quality of Leadership in the Vhuronga I Circuit, Vhembe East District, Limpopo Province"

1. The following conflicts of interest affect the appointment of school principals in Vhuronga 1 circuit (You can circle more than one response):

Please circle the number that represents the appropriate response (You can circle more than one number):

Nepotism (granting favours to relatives or friends)	1
Religious affiliation (granting favours to members of some church denominations)	2
Patronage (granting favours to members of unions and political parties)	3
Corruption (granting favours to some people in anticipation of monetary gain or sexual benefits)	4

2. To what extent do you think each of the following conflicts of interest affect the appointment of school principals in Vhuronga 1 Circuit?

Please circle the number that represents the appropriate response.

	To a Very Great Extent	**To a Great Extent**	**To a Moderate Extent**	**To a Small Extent**	**To no Extent (Not at all)**
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**

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2.1 Nepotism					
2.2 Religious affiliation					
2.3 Patronage					
2.4 Corruption					

For the remaining questions, please place an X in the box that represents your response.

Item No.	Questions	Place an X in the Box that Represents your Response				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3.	The appointment of poor-quality principals has negative effect on the delivery of effective teaching and learning in schools					
Item No.	**Questions**	**Place an X in the Box that Represents your Response**				

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		Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
3.	The appointment of poor-quality principals has negative effect on the delivery of effective teaching and learning in schools	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Educational authorities are doing enough to deal with the conflicts of interest affecting the process of appointing school principals.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Interview panels are familiar with legislation (laws and policies) that govern the appointment of principals.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Interview panels generally have the capacity to handle conflicts of interest issues that may arise during the shortlisting and interview processes.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Interview panels are provided with clear and understandable guidelines to safeguard against the influence of conflicts of interest during the interview process.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Educational authorities from circuit to district levels show an interest in eliminating conflicts of interest from the appointment process of principals.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Educational authorities communicate clear cut strategies to interview panels to assist them to deal with the conflict of interest that may arise.	1	2	3	4	5

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Item No.	Questions	Place an X in the Box that Represents your Response				
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
10.	The candidates for principalship positions are aware of the likely prejudice they may suffer because of the various conflicts of interest.	1	2	3	4	5
11.		1	2	3	4	5
12.		1	2	3	4	5

I thank you so much for your contribution.

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INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

"Effects of Conflicts of Interest on the Appointment of Principals: Perceptions on the Quality of Leadership in the Vhuronga I Circuit, Vhembe East District, Limpopo Province"

The study seeks to find out teachers' views regarding the extent to which conflicts of interest affect the appointment of quality school principals; to determine teachers' perceptions regarding the impact of appointment of poor-quality school principals on the delivery of effective teaching and learning at schools; and to recommend strategies that will help educational authorities eliminate conflicts of interest from appointment processes for school principals. Kindly be informed that your participation in the study is voluntary and that you are free to withdraw at any stage without prejudice. Be advised also that your name and identity will not be revealed and that your responses will be treated with the strictest confidentiality.

Kindly be informed that your participation in the study is voluntary and that you are free to withdraw at any stage without prejudice. Be advised also that your name and identity will not be revealed and that your responses will be treated with the strictest confidentiality. Please be advised further that the researcher may seek your permission to put an identifier in the questionnaire solely for the purpose of helping him to follow up on you with an interview for the qualitative phase.

1. **In your view, what types of conflicts of interest affect the appointment of quality principals in public schools in Vhuronga 1 Circuit?**

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2. **What are your views regarding the extent to which conflicts of interest affect the appointment of quality principals in public schools?**

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3. **What are your perceptions regarding the impact of the appointment of poor-quality principals on the delivery of effective teaching and learning in public schools?**

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4. **What strategies can educational authorities implement to eliminate conflicts of interest from the appointment processes for principals in public schools?**

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I appreciate your time and thank you so much for your contribution.

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APPENDIX B : PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

LIMPOPO
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

OFFICE OF THE PREMIER

TO: Ms. MABOGO

FROM: PROF I SWARTS

CHAIRPERSON: LIMPOPO PROVINCIAL RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (LPREC)

REVIEW DATE: 07 AUGUST 2024

SUBJECT: EFFECTS OF CONFLICTS OF INTERST ON THE APPOINTMENT OF PRINCIPALS: PERCEPERTIONS ON THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHI IN THE VHURONGA I CIRCUIT, VHEMBE EAST DISTRICT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE

RESEARCHER: MASHILA K

Dear Colleague

The above researcher's research proposal served at the Limpopo Provincial Research Ethics Committee (LPREC). The committee is satisfied with the methodological and ethical soundness of the proposed study.

Decision: The proposal is granted full approval.

Regards

Chairperson: Prof I Swarts



Secretariat: Ms J Mokobi



Date: 12/08/2024

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APPENDIX C: ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

NAME OF RESEARCHER/INVESTIGATOR:
Mr K Mashila

STUDENT NO:
9208283

PROJECT TITLE: Effects of Conflicts of Interest on the Appointment of Principals: Perceptions on the Quality of Leadership in the Vhuronga I Circuit, Vhembe East District, Limpopo Province"

ETHICAL CLEARANCE NO: FHSSE/24/CSEM/04/1505

SUPERVISORS/ CO-RESEARCHERS/ CO-INVESTIGATORS

NAME	INSTITUTION & DEPARTMENT	ROLE
Prof TS Mashau	UNIVEN, Educational Management	Supervisor
Mr K Mashila	UNIVEN, Educational Management	Investigator – Student

Type: Masters Research
Risk: *Minimal risk to humans, animals, or environment (Category 2)*
Approval Period: May 2024 – May 2025

The Research Ethics Social Sciences Committee (RESSC) hereby approves your project as indicated above.

General Conditions
While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following.

- The project leader (principal investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the REC:
  - Annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project, and upon completion of the project.
  - Within 48hrs in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project.
  - Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.
- The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the REC. Would there be deviated from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
- The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date; a new application must be made to the REC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the REC retains the right to:
  - Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project,
  - To ask further questions; Seek additional information; Require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.
  - withdraw or postpone approval if:
  - Any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected.
  - It becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the REC or that information has been false or misrepresented.
  - The required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately,
  - New institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions A it necessary

ISSUED BY:
UNIVERSITY OF VENDA, RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
Date Considered: April 2024

Name of the RESSC Chairperson of the Committee: Prof M. Mwale-Manjoro

Signature.....

UNIVERSITY OF VENDA
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
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2024 -05- 15
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Thohoyandou 0950

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APPENDIX D: LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

Office No. 06
Department of English, Media Studies and Linguistics
University of Venda
P/Bag X 5050
Thohoyandou
0950

12 February 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This serves to confirm that I proof-read and edited the dissertation titled “Effects of Conflicts of Interest on the Appointment of Principals: Perceptions on the Quality of Leadership in the Vhuronga I Circuit, Vhembe East District, Limpopo Province” by Khwathisani Mashila, Student number: 9208283.

Regards



Vincent N. Demana (PhD)
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APPENDIX E: TURNITIN REPORT

EFFECTS OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST ON THE APPOINTMENT OF PRINCIPALS: PERCEPTIONS ON THE QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP IN THE VHURONGA I CIRCUIT, VHEMBE EAST DISTRICT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE

ORIGINALITY REPORT

4%	5%	3%	1%
SIMILARITY INDEX	INTERNET SOURCES	PUBLICATIONS	STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

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2	Shuti Steph Khumalo. "A critical examination of the recruitment processes of the South African principals from Rawls perspective: A conceptual argument", Cogent Social Sciences, 2021 Publication	1%
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