



A Case for Adoption of Distributed Leadership Practices in Tackling School Violence

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Abstract

In spite of government interventions and policy frameworks on school safety, the spate of school violence in South Africa remains unabated. Its consequences affect students, teachers and the wider community, a situation that has constituted a major concern to education stakeholders. In this article, we advanced Distributed Leadership Theory (DLT), as theorized by James Spillane, to address the heightened spate of school violence in schools. The conceptual article adopted a concept explication approach via the use of Conceptual Analysis (CA) to delineate the nuanced relationships between the tenets of DLT and school stakeholders' roles in the development of an effective school-specific safety framework. This we did by evaluating two of the existing frameworks vis a vis their deficiencies. Specifically, we proposed a model that emphasises the fusion of the roles of school stakeholders from a leadership perspective and also advanced the core principles of distributed leadership theory to foster a safe school environment. This paper contributed to the literature on strategies for mitigating school violence via the adoption of the proposed model.

Keywords: *Distributed Leadership Theory; Leadership Practices; School Safety; School Violence*

Introduction

School violence is a global phenomenon that has denied millions of children their fundamental right to education (Lester et al., 2017; UNESCO, 2019). This menace has warranted UNESCO intervention, as noted by Cornu et al. (2022) in their article titled "An Introduction to a Whole-Education Approach to School Bullying: Recommendations from UNESCO Scientific Committee on School Violence and Bullying Including Cyberbullying". This document was intended to serve as guidelines for preventing and managing school violence around the world. School violence has been reported to have devastating impacts on the victims such as physical and emotional injuries and can even lead to death. It

negatively impacts on school's reputation and the hosting community (Yusuf & Amzat, 2020; Ngidi & Kaye, 2022). Previous studies also established a link between school violence and dropout rate, absenteeism, stress among students and teachers, poor learning outcomes and teachers' attrition. (Fry et al., 2018; Wallace & Rosales, 2019; Ferrara et al., 2019; Moon & McCluskey, 2020; Kim et al., 2020; Wink Junior et al., 2021; Bartlett et al., 2021; Rubbi Nunan & Ntombela, 2021). Kim et al., (2020) noted that school violence disrupts the learning process and creates fear and lead to increased absenteeism and dropout rate in schools.

Moreso, other factors have been attributed to the prevalence of violence in schools. On one hand, literature has shown a relationship between increased school violence and poor parental socio-economic status, poor school infrastructure, student access to weapons and prevalence of crime in the school community (van Niekerka & Mathews, 2019; Taole & Taukeni, 2021; Obilor & Miwari, 2021). In addition, the abolition of corporal punishment in schools in South Africa cum zero-tolerance safety policy on violence in schools had pressured school administrators and teachers to adopt a more punitive approach to indiscipline, a practice that often results in aggravated violence in schools. On the other hand, experts in school leadership have established a link between a good leadership model and a safe school environment (Spillane, 2006; Dampson et al., 2018; Addae, 2019; Qadach et al., 2019). For instance, leadership has been noted to create school climate change that engenders successful implementation of bullying prevention programs (Bosworth et al., 2015; Addae, 2019; Qadach et al., 2019). Similarly, Crawford & Burns (2020) noted that supportive school response serves as a precursor to a reduction in cases of school violence, while punitive responses increase school violence.

In South Africa, the unabated spate of violence and other forms of aggression within schools has long been an issue of concern to education stakeholders (Manu et al., 2016; Eke & Singh, 2018; Masinga, 2019; Qwabe et al., 2022; Statistics South Africa, 2022; Aphane, 2023). There is no denying that school principals are unskilled in the act of preventing and managing violence (De Cordova et al., 2019); hence, the wave of school violence has been associated with the lack of training on school safety among school administrators (Netshitangani, 2018). In addition, the current teacher training curriculum lacks the violence prevention and management component (Botha & Zwane, 2021). As a result, many school principals are ill-equipped to deal with the challenge of school violence.

It is worthy of note, that the government via the Department of Basic Education had at different times advanced interventions and strategies to curtail the trend of school violence in schools. Some of these strategies were targeted at improving school security, increasing parental involvement, and efforts to uncover and address the underlying causes of violence in schools. Unfortunately, some of these initiatives are ineffective because of their one-size-fits-all approaches. This confirmed the idea that one-size-fits-all strategies for preventing and managing school violence are often faced with contextual challenges (Banyard et al., 2020). For instance, the South African National School Safety Framework (NSSF) of 2015 from which subsequent interventions took root largely been criticized by scholars for its one-size-fit all approach and lack of proper implementation.

Given the above background, this article aims to draw from the principles of distributed leadership theory such as the leader principle, follower principle and the situation principle to propose a model capable of ameliorating school violence in South Africa.

Methods

This article adopted the conceptualisation research approach to delineate the nuance of the principles of distributed leadership theory and the roles of school stakeholders as a panacea to mitigate and manage violence in schools. Generally, conceptual articles explicate a concept, construct, or principles of established theories to delineate the nuance of the relationship between them and relevant

variables vis a vis a phenomenon of interest. Unlike empirical articles which draw data from empirical evidence via the use of instruments such as interviews, focus group discussions, experimentation and questionnaires, conceptual papers draw it data from extant constructs, literature, concepts, and theories that were developed based on empirical evidence (Hirschheim, 2008; Jaakkola, 2020).

In this study, conceptual Analysis (CA) was adopted to make sense of the principles of Distributed Leadership Theory (DLT) as theorized by Spillane (2006) vis a vis school safety. CA breaks down complex ideas into smaller and more manageable parts (Furner, 2004). It is a "means of clarifying or explicating any giving definition, dimension, and meaning to ordinary and obscure expressions" (Petrina, 2016:1). CA also enables researchers to understand better and explain complex concepts (Horvath, 2016). The rationale for the choice of conceptual analysis in this study hinges on the fact that it facilitates an in-depth examination of the complex and nuanced relationships between distributed leadership and school violence. For the sake of making sense of the explication and proper analysis of concepts and their relationship, we adopted pre-determined themes to explicate the nexus between distributed leadership principles and school violence. Given that CA provided insight into how the variables of DLT and school violence intersect, we were able to advance a leadership model as a blueprint for ameliorating school violence in South Africa.

Theoretical Framework

This study was underpinned by Distributed Leadership Theory (DLT). While we acknowledge that there are various conceptualisations of DLT, the Spillane (2006) perspective highly influenced our understanding of this theory in the school context. Distributed leadership is a theoretical approach that emphasizes the importance of collaboration and distributed decision-making in shaping leadership practices and creating a positive and safe school culture.

Distributed Leadership Theory (DLT)

Distributed leadership holds that leadership is not the sole responsibility of a positional leader, but rather, a shared responsibility among a diverse group of individuals in an organization. This approach to leadership emphasizes the importance of collaboration and distributed decision-making while recognizing the contributions of all members of an organization particularly individuals with requisite expertise in shaping leadership practices. These individuals may not necessarily hold formal positions, yet they are skillful in an area that requires their expertise (Spillane, 2006; Harris & Spillane, 2008). For instance, teachers who had previously taken a course in security and safety before becoming a teacher could be appointed as the head of a school safety committee rather than appointing the deputy principal as the head based on his formal or positional status. Spillane (2006) theorized that distributed leadership features three fundamental principles which are leader, follower and situation. These are subsequently discussed.

Leader Principle: The concept of the leader principle transcends the notion that leadership resides exclusively within the purview of a designated individual or select group; rather, it permeates across the entire organizational fabric, offering the potential for anyone, irrespective of their hierarchical position, to wield leadership influence (Spillane, 2006). Within this paradigm, the leader principle advocates for a collaborative diffusion of leadership responsibilities, where those deemed adept within the organization are entrusted to exercise leadership agency and actively contribute to the process of decision-making. This framework underscores the belief in collective competence as the driving force behind effective leadership, promoting a culture where aptitude and capability take precedence in the pursuit of shared goals.

Follower Principle: Spillane's concept of the follower principle within distributed leadership underscores the notion that followers wield a significant degree of influence in shaping leadership

practices. He contends that followers actively steer the trajectory of leadership initiatives and wield decision-making prowess to bolster the overarching objectives and principles of an organization. Concurrently, it accentuates the imperative for followers to possess a lucid comprehension of the organizational mission, values, and objectives, coupled with an unwavering commitment to advance their realization collectively.

Situation Principle: The situation principle of distributed leadership, as put forth by Spillane (2006), underscores the significance of tailoring leadership practices to the specific context while remaining attuned to the demands and requisites of the given circumstances (Connolly et al., 2017). As such, effective leadership entails the capacity to flexibly adjust one's leadership style and strategies to align with the distinctive necessities and obstacles within a particular educational setting (Clarke & O'Donoghue, 2016).

Spillane's perspective emphasizes that the fabric of organizational situations encompasses a spectrum of elements, including artifacts, cultural dynamics, organizational values, team objectives, and the parameters presented by the external environment. These components collectively shape the intricate tapestry of the leadership landscape within an institution.

Considering the notable achievements evidenced in the implementation of the distributed leadership model, particularly in enhancing school effectiveness and elevating student learning outcomes (Sun & Leithwood, 2017), we posit that the challenge of school violence can be effectively addressed through the adoption of an all-encompassing, expertise-driven, follower-centric, and contextually tailored leadership approach inherent in distributed leadership theory. In essence, the comprehensive, inclusive, adaptable, and empirically grounded attributes of distributed leadership theory (DLT) position it as an apt strategy to preempt and manage incidents of school violence within South African educational institutions (Dampson et al., 2018).

Furthermore, it is noteworthy to highlight that the current dearth of research delving into the intricacies of combating school violence through the lens of distributed leadership theory underscores the significance of this study. By advancing the core tenets of distributed leadership theory, this study emerges as a pivotal instrument in curbing the menace of school violence in the South African context. Through a synthesis of theory and practice, the study aspires to pave the way for a safer and more conducive learning environment for South African schools. Hence, the next section explicates the tenet of DLT as a panacea to school violence.

Discussion

The Nexus of Distributed Leadership Theory and School Violence

In this section, we delve into a thematic discourse centered around pre-established themes, firmly rooted in the principles of Distributed Leadership Theory (DLT).

Harnessing the Leader Principle to Tackle School Violence

As earlier indicated, the leader principle of distributed leadership is a concept that focuses on the role of leaders in shaping leadership practices and creating a positive school environment. According to this principle, positional leaders (in this case, the school principal) are responsible for spreading over leadership responsibilities to both positional and non-positional leaders (based on their expertise) in various units of the school to create a culture of trust, respect, and collaboration. (Benoliel, 2020; McMahan et al., 2017). In the context of school violence, extant literature shows a growing body of knowledge indicating that involving stakeholders in school leadership minimizes school violence

(Benoliel, 2020). Hence, employing the leader principle as an integral facet of a school-based leadership model for mitigating school violence necessitates the strategic identification and appointment of individuals well-versed in safety dynamics from the ranks of school stakeholders. For instance, formal/positional departmental and unit heads, heads of School Governing Bodies and Students Representative councils should be saddled with the responsibility of identifying members who are security and safety inclined and appoint them as members of the School Safety Committee (SSC). The idea would engender the selection of a “round peg for a round hole – a departure from the status quo, where positional leaders automatically become members SSC by virtue of their office though lacking the requisite expertise required for being a member of SSC. The school community, as well as the host community, should also be sensitized on the leadership roles of the new non-formal leaders in SSC with a view to receiving maximum cooperation from them. This is because their intelligent information gathering would be from the instrumentation of school community members. Overall, the SSC representative(s) gives a period report of their activities to the school principal, who serves as the chief-security officer in the school. Confirming this notion, previous studies have found that effective leadership practices can create a safe and positive school climate (Bosworth et al., 2018; De Nobile et al., 2016; Mohapi, 2014). In a study, De Nobile et al. (2016) found that leadership practices were essential to the successful implementation of a whole school behaviour management system in Australian schools. Similarly, Bosworth et al. (2018) found that school leadership strongly predicted a reduction in student-reported bullying behaviour in the United States.

The Follower Principal Approach to School Violence Management

The follower principle of distributed leadership holds that followers are not passive recipients of leadership but active participants in the leadership process (Kim & Oh, 2017). This is because leadership manifest in the interaction between the leaders and the followers. Followers are an agency whose roles are essential to attaining the organisational goal (Chaturvedi et al., 2019) including a violent-free school climate. Followers influence leadership practices via interactions with leaders and other members of an organisation (Connolly et al., 2017), schools inclusive. In managing school violence, the follower principle is a veritable tool for promoting active and engaged followership among all school community members. This involves encouraging students, teachers, and parents’ representatives to actively shape leadership practices and create a positive and safe school culture. For example, followers can create a culture of trust, respect, and collaboration by actively participating in decision-making processes and engaging in open communication with leaders and other stakeholders. As earlier indicated, since the school principal cannot be everywhere simultaneously to ensure total adherence to anti-violence policies, there is a need to identify and appoint competent leaders across all units as members of the School Safety Committee. The following session discussed in detail how follower as a component of distributed leadership could mediate school violence.

Teachers are in a vantage position to identify potential risk factors for violence and play a key role in developing and implementing prevention and intervention strategies (Merwe, 2016). They can also help create a positive school culture that is intolerant of violence (Sil Suh, 2019). They can do this by promoting positive behaviour, respecting all students, and leading by example. Merwe (2016) in a study, correlated the use of emotional intelligence teaching methods and learners' behaviour in South African schools with a focus on the need for democratic school management, emotional intelligence teaching and learner-centred teaching. The study highlighted the significance of fostering positive behaviour in students, improving the overall development of the school and managing a culture of positive behaviour. The result revealed a link between emotional intelligence teaching and positive behaviour among students. Similarly, teachers can help create a safe and supportive environment for all students by working with school administrators and counsellors. It then follows that, when teachers are involved in managing and preventing school violence, they can help make schools safer. Noting the importance of teachers' roles in school violence management, it is essential that teachers feel supported by the school

administration in their efforts to address school violence (McMahon et al., 2017). They should be equipped with the requisite resources and training to effectively carry out their role in violence prevention and management (de Klerk & de Klerk, 2022).

We also argue that student representatives should also be co-opted as members of SSC. When student leaders are involved in managing school violence, the entire school community can benefit (Schellenberg et al., 2007). This is because students being acquaintances of themselves understands one another's tendencies vis-à-vis propensity to foment violence in school. This was confirmed by Burton (2016) in a study that focused on using drama and peer teaching to empower students to manage conflicts, especially bullying, and become leaders in their schools. The research was conducted in primary and secondary schools in Australia and was part of a larger international project using conflict resolution concepts and techniques combined with drama strategies to address cultural conflict in schools. The methodology involved using drama and formal cross-age peer teaching as highly effective strategies in empowering students to manage conflicts in schools. The findings revealed that operating as peer teachers enabled a number of students to assume leadership of the entire program in their schools. Overall, the study suggests that peer teaching can be an effective way to develop student leadership and address bullying in schools.

Similarly, Ponsford et al. (2022), in a study titled, Whole-school interventions promoting student commitment to school to prevent substance use and violence: Synthesis of Theories of Change, adopted a systematic review approach to synthesized theories of change using a best-fit framework to ascertain the role of student commitment in violence prevention in schools. The review involved searching multiple databases, extracting and assessing data from relevant studies, and synthesizing theories of change. According to them, the refined theory recognizes that whole-school interventions prevented violence and substance use among students by monitoring behaviors, providing health education, and implementing a co-constructed discipline system. Furthermore, the authors noted that whole-school interventions have additional ways of preventing violence and substance use beyond building student commitment.

From a distributed leadership standpoint, schools should inaugurate a safety team as a subset/committed within the student representative council. This is because students share similar tendencies with few exceptions and are well-acquainted with their peer propensity to engage in violence. Their responsibilities would include influencing their peers and orientating them on the benefits of good conduct during students' programmes and fora. In addition, they are to serve as security intelligence among the students as well as report incidences of violence to the School Safety Committee.

In South Africa, School Governing Body is a group of elected representatives who oversees the operation of a school. The committee comprises the school principal, representatives of the student representative council and members who are elected by other school stakeholders, especially parents. As part of its functions, SGBs ensure schools comply with Education Laws and other relevant legislation and provide a safe and supportive environment for teaching and learning (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012; Botha, 2012). In severe disciplinary offences, the SGBs is empowered by the Nationals School Safety Framework to suspend or expel students found guilty (DBE,2015). In the context of managing school violence, SGB functions should transcend merely carrying out an oversight function of supervision and monitoring of policy implementation to include continuous development and enforcement of time-compliant school-based violence prevention and management policies. From a distributed leadership perspective, we, therefore, posit that cognizance should be taken while voting SGB members to ensure that candidates who are security savvy or inclined are voted as members of SSC. It should be noted that these individuals would serve as both representatives of the hosting community on the school safety committee as well as members of SGB, liaising with the community on effective school safety mechanisms. The effectiveness of this idea was alluded to in a study conducted by Benoliel (2018) who investigated how effective teamwork among school management teams members can impact school

violence. Data was gathered from a survey of 692 school members and 92 principals in Israel and the results were validated using a structural equation model. The study showed that school management team effectiveness mediates the relationship between principals' internal and external boundary activities and school violence. The findings underscore the significance of improving knowledge exchange and social relationships among members of SMT in reducing school violence.

The Interplay Intersections of Situation Principles and School Violence Management

According to Spillane (2006), the situation principle holds that leadership practices are context-specific and should be adapted to meet the needs of the situation at hand. In the context of school violence, this principle suggests that school administrators should adopt context-specific strategies in their approach to school safety. Situational consideration becomes essential in managing school violence, given that schools do not exist in a vacuum, implying that school atmosphere and climate are reflections of the socio-economic realities of the community in which that are domiciled (Chávez & Aguilar, 2021; Astor et al., 2021). The neighbourhoods and families in which children and adolescents grow and develop play very influential roles in young people's propensity to commit violence. For instance, community poverty, crime, discrimination, and lack of opportunities for education and employment have all been identified as important family and community risk factors which engender interpersonal violence. (Astor et al., 2021:178).

Given this perspective, it is imperative for schools to design intervention programs that bridge the school-community gap, carefully considering how domestic environments can influence a student's inclination towards school violence. In practical terms, the School Safety Committee should embark on safety needs assessment exercise via a pilot study. The aim of the exercise would be to gain insight into the factors that give impetus to school violence in schools. Participants in the study should include, school administrators, teaching and non-teaching staff, students, parents and law enforcement agency within the school community, for instance, officers of South Africa Police Service. The result of the analysis of the data gathered would depict the prevalent social vices in the community which will in turn inform the development and implementation of a robust and effective school safety framework.

Confirming this notion, Wink Junior et al. (2021) examined the impact of a home-based program on the violent behaviour of elementary school students in Brazil. The methodology used in this study is to explore the variation between schools with and without the program to identify the causal impact. The findings suggest that the home-based program has a significant impact on reducing violent behaviour among elementary school students. The study highlights the role of homes in preventing school violence and suggests that home-based programs can be an effective way to address this issue. This is consistent with the findings of Astor et al. (2021), in a study that examined the impact of opportunity structures on school safety, school climate, and bullying. Lensed with school-centred ecological theory as a conceptual framework, the result showed a causal link between ethnicity/culture and school violence rate. The study also revealed that school staff members' bias towards students and their communities has an impact on safety, interpersonal discrimination and academic opportunities.

In summary, the situation principle of distributed leadership implies that situations play a pivotal role in students' disposition to violence. It also offers a valuable framework for understanding school violence's complex nature. It recognizes the importance of adapting leadership practices to involve all stakeholders (including families) in a fact-finding process that informs the development and implementation of a formidable school-based anti-violence strategy. The subsequent session advances a model that encapsulates the fusion of principles of DLT and stakeholders' roles to attain a safe school environment.

Stakeholders-Oriented Distributed Leadership Model for School Safety (SODLMSS)

This section presents SODLMSS as shown in Figure 1, to exemplify the interconnectedness and nuance of relationships between school leaders, followers and situation in mitigating and managing school violence. We argue that an effective violence intervention program hinges largely on adequate understanding and consideration of the intertwined nature of leader, follower and situation.

The stakeholders-oriented distributed leadership model focuses on stakeholders and underscores the equitable distribution of power and responsibilities among various participants within a school environment. It encompasses school leaders, educators, students, and the school governing body, all working collaboratively to enhance school safety. The model aims to foster collaboration and collective responsibility among stakeholders and to leverage their diverse expertise and knowledge to create a safe learning environment (Harris & Spillane, 2008).

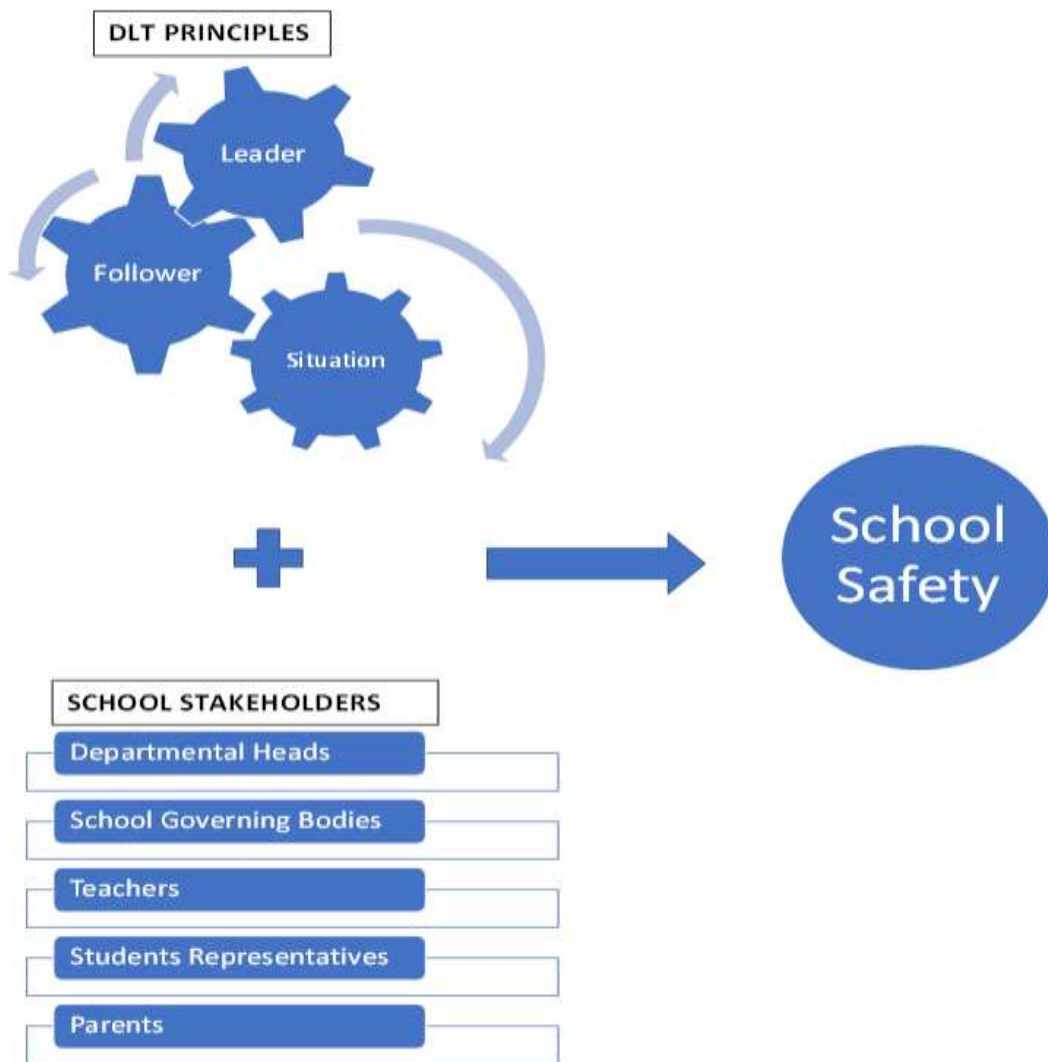


Figure 1. Stakeholders-Oriented Distributed Leadership Model for School Safety (SODLMSS).
(Developed by authors)

School leaders play a crucial role in implementing the stakeholders-oriented distributed leadership model. They need to develop a shared vision of school safety as a strategy to stem the tide of violence in schools and involve stakeholders in decision-making processes. School leaders should also ensure that stakeholders have the necessary resources and training to fulfil their roles effectively. For instance, schools could leverage on the existing partnership between the Department of Basic Education and the South African Police Services (RSA, 2013; DBE, 2016) to organize special training on school safety for members of the School Safety Committee (SSC). In addition, school leaders should establish a culture of trust and open communication to facilitate collaboration among stakeholders in a manner that enhances the task of the School Safety Committee (SSC)

Teachers are an essential component of the stakeholders-oriented distributed leadership model for school safety. They can provide valuable insights into the safety needs of students and identify potential safety risks within the school. They are at a vantage position (by virtue of their proximity and influence on students) to contribute to the development of safety policies and procedures and provide training to students on safe behaviours and emergency response. As such, school administrators should involve teachers in decision-making processes related to school safety (Mat Lazim, 2022).

Students also have a critical role to play in the stakeholders-oriented distributed leadership model for school safety. They are strategically placed among their peers and are often privy to violent incidents prior to such incidence, hence, they can contribute to the identification of safety risks within the school and provide feedback on the effectiveness of safety policies and procedures. Students can also be trained to respond to emergency situations and to report any safety concerns to school authorities. In view of this, school administrators should involve students in the development of safety policies and procedures and provide them with the necessary training and resources to contribute to a safe learning environment. The school governing body provides oversight and support to school leaders and ensures that safety policies and procedures are effectively implemented. They should nominate willing members who are safety inclined (as members(s) of SSC) as well as allocate resources to support safety initiatives and advocate for a safe learning environment for all stakeholders.

Notably, SODLMSS considers, the unique context and situation of each school as a basis for developing an anti-school violence framework. School leaders should conduct safety assessment as the school context and situation evolves to identify safety risks with a view to developing strategies to address them. They should also ensure that safety policies and procedures are aligned with local and national safety standards and regulations.

In summary, we propose SODLMSS as a collaborative leadership approach that involves school leaders, teachers, students, and the school governing body in ensuring a safe learning environment. School leaders must involve stakeholders in decision-making processes, establish a culture of trust and open communication, and conduct safety assessments to address safety risks. Teachers, students, and the school governing body also play critical roles in contributing to a safe learning environment.

Conclusions

This article delves into the intricate dynamics between distributed leadership theory and the functions of school stakeholders, presenting a framework aimed at alleviating and effectively managing instances of school violence within the South African context. Through a comprehensive review of pertinent literature encompassing school leadership, the concept of violence, the prevalence of school violence in South Africa, and an assessment of existing school safety frameworks along with their limitations, the study highlights the manifestation of Distributed Leadership Theory. The interplay between its principles and the multifaceted roles undertaken by school stakeholders in fostering violence-free educational environments is elucidated, culminating in the proposal of the Stakeholders-Oriented Distributed Leadership Model for School Safety (SODLMSS).

Recommendations

Based on the foregoing, distributed leadership is recommended to be further explored and implemented as a strategy for addressing and preventing school violence in South Africa. Specifically, we recommended that the Department of Basic Education take cognizance of the following:

1. Develop a clear understanding of the principles of distributed leadership and how they can be applied in the specific context of South African schools.
2. Involve all stakeholders in the leadership process, including students, teachers, and parents, and encourage active followership and collaboration.
3. Foster a culture of open communication and inclusivity and seek out the input and feedback of all stakeholders in shaping leadership practices.
4. Be responsive to the specific needs and concerns of the school community, and tailor leadership practices accordingly.
5. Stay current on the latest research and evidence on effective leadership practices and implement strategies and policies that are most likely to create a positive and safe school culture.
6. Moreso, school leaders can create a more positive and safer environment for all stakeholders by taking a comprehensive, inclusive, and evidence-based approach to leadership.

Future Directions

To further give credibility to this paper, empirical studies on the suitability of distributed leadership in addressing and preventing school violence in South Africa are needed. A study could be conducted to investigate the specific challenges and barriers to implementing distributed leadership in South African schools and identify effective strategies for overcoming these obstacles. Additionally, a study could be conducted to evaluate the impact of distributed leadership on reducing school violence in a specific South African school or group of schools over an extended period. This could provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the distributed leadership model in the South African context and inform future efforts to promote a positive and safe school culture. Such studies should involve multiple methods of data collection and analysis, including surveys, interviews, and observations, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of distributed leadership in reducing school violence in South Africa.

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