





The impact of corruption on victim teachers during promotion processes in South Africa's basic education system



 Mulatedzi Calvin Rambuza^(a)  Mavhungu Abel Mafukata^{(b)*}  Tshimangadzo Selina Mudau^(c)
 Takalani Samuel Mashau^(d)

^(a)Senior Educator, Limpopo Department of Education, Polokwane, Republic of South Africa

^(b)Professor, Department of Development Studies, University of South Africa, Pretoria, 0001, Republic of South Africa

^(c)Senior Lecturer, Department of Nursing Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard Campus, Durban, Republic of South Africa

^(d)Research Professor, Department of Education Management, University of Venda, Thohoyandou, Republic of South Africa

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 05 January 2023

Received in rev. form 24 Feb. 2023

Accepted 17 March 2023

Keywords:

Corruption, Depression, Promotion, Resignation, Stress

JEL Classification:

O15, E41, L4

ABSTRACT

South African teachers are faced with corruption during teacher promotion processes, and this remains unabated. This qualitative paper used three purposively selected case studies of victim teachers to investigate the impact of this corruption on victim teachers. The paper used the Crisis Intervention Theory to underpin the theoretical framework for the analysis. Key informant interviews (KIIs) were administered on a senior union member to solicit crucial data while the primary participants (n=3) were interviewed on face-to-face approach to collect data. Relevant literature was also used to provide supportive and corroborative scientific propositions. The paper discovered that corruption during teacher promotion processes in the South African Basic Education sector was reality. However, in some instances, such claims could not be backed by sustainable evidence. Victim teachers have suffered traumatic experiences resulting in stress, health challenges, relational challenges with colleagues and resignations. The department did not assist victim teachers needing emergency counselling and psychological rehabilitation to cope with the emanating pressure. It is recommended that authorities punish perpetrators of corruption. Victim teachers need to be assisted through professional resolving of their grievances and therapeutic intervention.

© 2023 by the authors. Licensee SSBFNET, Istanbul, Turkey. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Introduction

Several teachers in South African schools have been exposed to a highly abused teacher promotion system (Nesane, 2008; Zengele, 2013a). For these teachers to get appointments into vacant promotional positions, such teachers would have to pay bribes, or face several abusive treatments. Apart from bribes, incidences of sexual favours from female teachers have also been reported (Zengele, 2013a). Zengele (2013a) reasoned and argued that “anarchy, intimidation and nepotism have characterised the filling of promotional posts in South Africa since 1994” Apart from pure corruption, sexual harassments, and bribes, power dynamics were also at play where officials abused their office authority to intimidate and victimise aggrieved teachers. Corruption in the process is also exacerbated by deployment of cadre teachers by unions (Zengele, 2013a). In fact, “the 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” (Zengele, 2013b). The tendencies have lowered the morale of teachers (Zengele, 2013b), and some of them subsequently resigned their positions (du Plessis, 2014). The abuse of teachers takes place even though teachers have been held in high esteem in most countries around the world.

* Corresponding author. ORCID ID: 0000-0002-0958-0609

© 2023 by the authors. Hosting by SSBFNET. Peer review under responsibility of Center for Strategic Studies in Business and Finance.

<https://doi.org/10.20525/ijrbs.v12i2.2351>

Every year the world celebrates the teacher and the teaching profession during the World Teachers Day. Despite all the good mentioned about this noble profession and the precious teacher around the world, global basic and post-school education remain overshadowed with traumatic experiences for teachers. Of late, the events of the 2020 outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic which broke out in Wuhan, China and rapidly engulfed the world with devastating impact on humanity has witnessed sudden negative impact on the psychological and mental health of teachers – especially in the developing regions where support for teachers has been low or poor (Li et al., 2022). It is regrettable that amid this, teachers have not been assisted to cope with the pressure. This leaves the teaching profession to disintegrate into a gutter profession. The welfare of the teacher has therefore been relegated into a non-entity. There has been institutional neglect of teachers as teachers are grossly undermined and underpaid. These factors lead to decreased morale, increased disappointment, discouragement, and demotivation among teachers.

Although teacher challenges have of late become a global challenge, South Africa has however been one of the leading countries whose teachers continue to face unbearable hostile and abusive working conditions and environment (Baloyi, 2016). This practice has reduced the profession into one of the most hated professions in the country (Baloyi, 2016). The profession has lost that historical prestige going with it. Some of the teacher traumatic experiences emanate from their being exposed to vicious criminality, violence, bullying by among others, government officials, parents and learners, social and relational pressures and work-related experiences such as victimisation by their superiors - especially on recruitment and promotion for example (Baloyi, 2016; Janik & Rothmann, 2015; Mafukata & Mudau, 2016; Daniels & Strauss, 2010; Schonfeld, 1990; Ferguson et al., 2012; du Plessis & Cain, 2017).

Teachers exposed to these tendencies often live never to recover from their experiences to serve in the profession. This has increased teacher mass resignations in the past few years in South Africa (Baloyi, 2016; Mafukata & Mudau, 2016; Pitsoe, 2013). Many teachers leave the profession while fewer joined the profession as a result. Those who leave the profession mostly do so in the early stages of their careers making the turnover highest among the younger teachers (Shibiti, 2020). Teacher resignations have become critical in South Africa with deteriorating employment conditions in the sector over the years (Mafukata & Mudau, 2016; Nesane, 2008; Pitsoe, 2013). The number of teachers who express desire to leave the profession has been increasing over the years because of increasing pressure in the sector emanating from un-improving working conditions and hostile work environment (Daniels & Strauss, 2010; Hall et al., 2004). It is not like teachers enjoy leaving the profession, but in most cases, they are forced out by circumstances. In fact, “teachers are motivated to remain with their current school if their contributions are acknowledged, and if they feel that they have made a positive contribution to the social circumstance of the school, such as having a good relationship with learners, colleagues and administrators” (Shibiti, 2020; Furuta, 2015). Teachers have not felt this appreciation from government, parents, and learners as they continue to be victims.

Daniels and Strauss (2010) found that considerable number of teachers were among others battling increased emotional illnesses linked to conditions at their workplaces. Some of these conditions are created by senior colleagues and administrators (Shibiti, 2020; Furuta, 2015). In addition, the ‘abnormal’ workload on teachers emanating from the new teaching modalities – especially during the Covid-19 pandemic where teachers had to migrate into Online teaching for example, which most are not even familiar with has made teachers busier than before (Jones & Kessler, 2020). Teachers are battling fatigue and exhaustion from the long hours of work (Jacobson, 2016; Meier & West, 2020). The outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has also exacerbated teacher conditions of work. According to Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al. (2021), many teachers across the world “have accumulated psychological symptoms since the beginning of the pandemic” and these teachers “have shown great concern for the new unprecedented teaching situation” (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021) resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic environment. This situation is in addition to high numbers of teacher deaths during the Covid-19 pandemic in countries such as South Africa. According to Shepherd and Mohohlwane (2021), South Africa has had high turnover of teacher deaths during the Covid-19 pandemic. Approximately 1100 teachers died during the pandemic leaving substantial vacant positions (Shepherd & Mohohlwane, 2021). Increased vacancy rates in schools translates into added responsibility and workload on teachers (Meier & West, 2020; Mafukata & Mudau, 2016).

The mass resignation of teachers (Mafukata & Mudau, 2016) from the profession and the massive Covid-19 pandemic deaths of teachers could lead to plummeting quality of education in the country. Shibiti (2020) corroborates this assertion arguing that “the quality of education is influenced by the engagement, well-being, retention and performance of teachers”, and unfortunately in the case of South Africa teachers had been exposed to an environment which compromises their well-being, and hence their resignations in large numbers. It is imperative of every education authority to ensure that the mental health of teachers is safeguarded to improve the quality of education dispensed to the country and its citizens (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021).

One crucial challenge forcing teachers out of the profession is corruption during teacher promotion processes. Malinga (2018) argued that teacher promotion processes in the South African schools have had fair challenge on corruption which had generated controversy in the system for some time. The rampant corruption happens in the system despite government’s effort to provide guidelines and policies to be followed in the selection process of those teachers deserving promotion (Malinga, 2018). This challenge is exacerbated by the fact that some senior education officials and teacher union leaders were allegedly involved in this corruption (Pattillo, 2012). Although the role of teacher unions was once reduced into mere observer status during the promotion process at some point in the South African basic education system, the story is now different because the unions have instead regained their influence and have been active determinants of the process most recently (Mhlongo, 2017). The unions are said to have exploited the process to benefit their members by forcing selections to favour them even though they may not necessarily qualify.

Although the influence by unions on the promotion process could be adjudged to be unprofessional, such criticism should consider the fact that this influence may not be uncommon in labour environment. Unionism is about promotion of member interest. What is worrisome is that others (Pattillo, 2012) even contend that teacher unions have often used the promotion process to reward members who were disruptive to teaching and learning in schools. According to Pattillo (2012), the rewarded were teachers who caused mayhem and ungovernability of schools. This assertion portrays teacher unions as thuggish and uncaring. However, evidence backing the authenticity of this assertion is hard to come by. This assertion could as well remain a political statement of rivalry between teacher unions which unfortunately sneaked into empirical debates. There has not been evidence to back the assertion. Understandably, some teacher unions have defended their role in the promotion process. They contend that fighting for its members to be promoted is a moral responsibility of every relevant trade union formation. Mhlono (2017) for instance corroborate this stance arguing that role of teacher unions is correctly that of advancing the interest of their members. Ramokgotswa (2015) concurs and argue that some teacher unions gave in fact complied with the set parameters of the teacher promotion processes. Mhlono (2017) went on to argue that some of these teacher unions have instead been fighting the many years of an abusive system against teachers by calling for transformation – including on promotion processes.

Reviewed literature reveal that emerging trends are that corruption during teacher promotion process go beyond teacher unions. It has been reported in many a study that corruption during teacher promotion process in South African schools has in fact reared its head even among senior officials of the department. Some principals have been the main perpetrators in chief of corruption in the system. Malinga (2018) reported of the influential role of school principals in determining who has to be promoted. Doubt exists on this assertion, however.

Interrogative research on corruption in teacher promotion has been sporadic – especially with regard the impact of corruption on the wellbeing of teachers. Studies on how these tendencies of corruption during teacher promotion processes affected victim teachers have been conspicuously rare in South Africa. Therefore, the main purpose of this paper is to encourage victim teachers to come to the open to share their experiences in order to encourage (public) debate regarding the impact of corruption and related unethical behavior on the well-being of teachers in the South African basic education sector. The main aim of this paper is to investigate the impact of corruption during teacher promotion processes on the victim teachers. The paper therefore asks: What is the impact of corruption during promotion processes of teachers on the victim teachers? Specifically, the paper interrogates:

- i. the role played by senior department officials in the alleged corruption.
- ii. how the tendencies have impacted on the welfare of the victim teachers.
- iii. how victim teachers responded to the tendencies of corruption.
- iv. whether victim teachers were assisted after going through their experiences.

First and foremost, this paper presents the introduction and background to the paper. This is followed by literature review and theoretical underpinnings which anchor the linkage between theory and practice. Thirdly, study design and research methodological approach are presented. This sub-section gives a comprehensive narrative on how data were collected, analysed and presented. Fourthly, the paper presents its findings which are followed by discussions and implications. Finally, this paper concludes with the presentation of the key observations and recommendations.

Literature Review

Teachers who felt unfairly excluded from promotion experience acute emotional and psychological disorders which negatively affect them (Janik & Rothmann, 2015; Mafukata & Mudau, 2016; Schonfeld, 1990; Ferguson et al., 2012). These factors contribute to poor quality of education in schools. Janick and Rathmann (2015) argue that “to deliver quality education, well-functioning teachers are needed” in every education system. Proper and effective management of the recruitment and retention systems of teachers in South African schools should be critical priority to create and maintain a vibrant teaching environment (Mkhondo, 2016). This approach could encourage young teachers to join the profession as the teaching profession becomes attractive even to the potential young teachers. Currently, the system lacks this paradigm as majority of practicing teachers are either leaving or contemplating leaving (Du Plessis & Mestry, 2019).

Many teachers who resign from the profession give in to disappointment, disillusionment, demotivation, demoralization, and dissatisfaction (Mafukata & Mudau, 2016). These resultant factors could be in response to negative trends such as corruption and unethical tendencies during teacher promotion processes (du Plessis, 2014). Exposure to corruption lead to increased low levels of motivation, decreased commitment to the profession, low morale which are subsequently accompanied with increased teacher absenteeism amongst others (Baloyi, 2016; Ugoani, 2016; Daniels & Strauss, 2010). Corrupt and unethical tendencies involving education managers and teacher union leaders have been cited as some of the leading factors encouraging teacher dissatisfaction, and their subsequent resignations (Gardiner, 2016). In 2014, widespread corruption in teacher promotion was reported. Positions were allegedly sold for no less than R30 000 (Baloyi, 2016). The Minister of education at the time Ms Angie Motshekga instituted a Task Team to investigate the allegations (Gardiner, 2016). Although the resultant Report revealed mixed results, indications were that there could have been some possible corrupt and unethical practices having taken place during the promotion processes. However, there was no conclusive evidence to suggest that any exchange of money may have occurred to influence teacher promotions and

placements on existing positions. The Report conceded however that, in some cases, outcomes were indeed predetermined and rigged to favour certain individuals.

Most critically, some claims of impropriety leveled against certain individuals and structures in the department of Basic education remained largely unsubstantiated, lacking in fact, inconsistent, unfounded, malicious hearsay based, suspicions and biased (DoBE, 2016). In fact, some of the claims were insinuations of the opportunistic media (DoBE, 2016). It is regrettable that the outcome of these allegations has had some undue impact on some teachers who believed they were victims of the alleged corruption. This study will however demonstrate that some teachers were in fact real victims of some form of corruption and unethicity in the process.

Teachers who felt aggrieved by the alleged exclusions during the promotion processes often developed negative attitudes towards the profession. This attitude influenced their work ethic and subsequent behaviour. Teacher morale would dip, and performance deteriorates (Johnson, 2013). It has been found that teachers often lost enthusiasm and courage in the profession when feeling that their needs were not being met, and that they were not acknowledged and appreciated (Shibiti, 2020; Furuta, 2015; Johnson, 2013).

Promotion is one crucial need for teachers because, apart from being a factor of personal fulfillment which comes with career growth and development among others, it also provides increased economic benefits such as higher wages. On feeling victimised and excluded from promotion, some teachers would eventually resign their positions seeing no future in the sector. Hall et al. (2005) believed South African teachers were in the majority disillusioned with teaching because they see a system with little possibility for promotion (62.2%), reduced prospects for career development (74.5%), no opportunity to participate in decision-making (85.3%) and extremely no recognition of work done (86.4%). These were enough reasons for them to want out. Promotion opportunities in every form of employment is on its own a motivation and crucial incentive for every employee to make commitment to their work. Removing this opportunity is therefore a demotivator, and victim teachers begin to look elsewhere to advance their careers (Nesane, 2008). This frustration aggravates with lack of assistance from authorities to resolve the grievance (Daniels & Strauss, 2010; Baloyi, 2016). Unfortunately, teacher resignations anchored on lack of interest by the authorities to resolve their grievances come with their cost. For instance, “teachers who resign from the teaching profession not only cripple the learners’ right to education but the economy of the country and the society at large” (Nesane, 2008). Nesane (2008) is corroborated by du Plessis (2014) who contended that “it (corruption) endangers a country’s social, economic and political future” as it damages productivity and effectiveness of the employee. According to Nesane (2008), this negatively impacts on the socio-economic development of a country.

Du Plessis (2014) furthermore argues that corruption in the education sector has been neglected for far too long, and therefore stakeholders should be moving faster to finding long lasting solution to it. Du Plessis (2014) contends that corruption in education “should be drastically curbed” Contrary to the South African scenario, it has been reported that international trends opine that corruption in education has been receiving intensified attention for reduction to promote teacher welfare (Ugoani, 2016). Whether implementable or not, popular opinion has been that impropriety and corruption during teacher promotion processes should be considered criminal offence which should be reported to the police (DoBE, 2016). Departmental officials found to have had undue influence on the process should also be also hauled for internal departmental disciplinary remedies (DoBE, 2016). The reasoning is that of safeguarding the interests and wellbeing of the teacher in the workplace. Stakeholders believe that proper and quality education only lies with a quality teacher who practices teaching in a healthy mind and conducive environment. Corruption creates unhealthy circumstances for the teacher while contaminating the teaching-learning practice space.

While there has been enough research interest among policy makers and scholars regarding teacher attrition in government schools of late, that interest only goes as far as investigation of the causes and effect of the attrition. However, interest on teacher welfare research – especially as compromised by unethical conduct and corruption, behaviour of government officials on issues of teacher promotion has not been so popular and forthcoming in South Africa. Serfontein and de Waal (2015) have however penned a notable article investigating “whether South African public education is safe from the corruption ‘bogey’, where reflection is made on professional public-school management, which is the responsibility of school principals” Serfontein and de Waal (2015) focused on accountability and transparency in school leadership – especially amongst heads of school. They also have investigated the extent and depth of corruption in schools. This current paper extends its scope to investigate how corruption in teacher promotion processes in South African Basic education impacts on the welfare of the teacher – the emotional, mental, and psychological health of the victim teacher in the process. It is therefore critical for all involved in the management of education in South Africa – especially the authorities in education to know that “the good health and wellbeing of educators is critical for the provision of quality education” (Human Science Research Council, 2016), and that “the teachers, and their mental health and wellbeing should be of great importance given that they educate the nation” (Daniels & Strauss, 2010). Any opposite of this would breed unproductive teacher workforce often characterised by high levels of depression, anxiety, decreased productivity, low morale and poor work ethic amongst others (Daniels & Strauss, 2010; HSRC, 2016).

Preliminary review of existing literature points to a South African teacher cohort which seems to be overwhelmed by some of the complexities mentioned earlier in the discussion. Teachers are faced with abusive education officials including among other principals and School Governing Bodies (SGBs) who torment them into stressful conditions at their respective work places (Baloyi, 2016). According to Marais-Opperman et al. (2021), the demanding work environment which teachers face on day-to-day basis has often compelled some to resign their jobs. This is common where teachers fail to cope with the distress (Marais-Opperman et al.,

2021). It becomes difficult for education authorities to retain in the service teachers whose well-being have been compromised and disrupted (Marais-Opperman et al., 2021).

It is regrettable that some of the causes of these stressful conditions affecting teachers are created by the treatment the teachers received from the employer. This is common in incidences of massive corruption in teacher promotion processes for instance. Baloyi (2016) and du Plessis (2014) also noted corruption in teacher promotion processes as a major issue affecting teachers. Baloyi (2016) lobbies community-based spiritual organisations such as churches to intervene by addressing the issues. In fact, Pitsoe (2013) would suggest that there must be more transparency in teacher promotion processes to avoid corrupt tendencies, unethical behaviours and conducts of education officials including school principals from sneaking into the process. It has been reported that some school principals lacked managerial ethics and moral values so much that they were often involved in corrupt practices (Serfontein & de Waal, 2015) and in some cases resorting to using utmost coercion and bullying of teachers (de Vos & Kirsten, 2015). With increased levels of abuse of power and unethical conduct of managers in education, transparency gets severely eroded and compromised. Principals often turned themselves into monarchs who decided which teacher gets promoted and which one does not.

In response to these tendencies, Zengele (2013) suggested that appointments to vacant promotional positions in schools should be handled by private agencies on behalf of the education authorities. Parents should also have a stronger voice in teacher promotion processes by monitoring the role played by principals and SGBs for instance. Parents should intervene where incidences of corruption and unethical conduct were reported during these processes (Baloyi, 2016). It is not clear however how Baloyi (2016) expects parents to intervene in the process while parents could only be represented by the very same SGBs in school governance. Borrowing from Baloyi (2016) and Serfontein and de Waal (2015), this paper argues that the involvement of parents in the fight of corruption in public schools in South Africa would assist the cause to expose corruption to a certain extent, but this can only be possible through well capacitated SGBs which represents the interest of parents better in school governance. Quality research should assist stakeholders realise “that corrupt behaviour needs exposure and understanding, to counteract the damage that ensues” This present article is therefore contribution towards ensuring that “the South African public education is safe from the corruption ‘bogey’” Serfontein and de Waal (2015) deliberated on. These recommendations are to assist find solution towards promotion of proper teacher welfare initiatives by curbing tendencies of corruption as far as possible. Du Plessis (2014) extensively wrote on the effect of corruption on teachers. This paper traces these experiences in the South African Basic education persuaded by the fact that there are still widespread unethical, corrupt, and abusive tendencies affecting teachers during the promotion processes. These tendencies negatively impacted on the welfare of teachers, and quality of education in general.

Theoretical and Conceptual Background

The paper adopted Kyriacou's (2011) three approaches to conceptualise teachers' stress as cited in Marais-Opperman (2021). The three approaches involved at work demands such as stress emanating from increased workloads, emotional and behavioural responses on teachers' jobs and related stress and “stress arises when individuals cognitively interpret environmental variables as threatening or harmful, affecting their physical health and psychological well-being” (Marais-Opperman, 2021; Vaughn & Roesch, 2003). This paper is anchored on the Crisis Intervention Theory (CIT) of Duma (2014). When an individual in crisis is assisted by another individual out of the crisis, this is referred to as crisis intervention. In crisis intervention, one who intervenes acts as therapist to assist the victim out of the crisis by lessening the impact of the crisis (Duma, 2014). The therapist mobilises resources to assist the victim. This intervention becomes crucial in situations where the victim is faced with increased levels of stress. Often the victim fails to manage and cope with the stress levels because their coping mechanisms fail them. In crisis intervention, the therapist interrupts the stress process by providing quick and timeous remedies the victim needs. The objective of the intervention is to return the victim to original condition; that is, pre-crisis level (Duma, 2014). Primarily, the victim needs to be assisted within a particular time span to safeguard and guarantee the victim's physical and psychological safety. The victim should be assisted to gain “a sense of psychological equilibrium and self-protection” (Duma, 2014). Because the victim is stressed over a specific issue, intervention measures in this regard should therefore focus on this specific issue. According to Duma (2014), “interveners must concentrate on immediate needs and deal with symptoms that are related to the crisis only” Simply put, the outcome of intervention should be aiming at lessening whatever immediate pressures the victim might be going through with the hope that the victim would be restored to the “previous level of functioning” (Duma, 2014). The impact of the crisis would have been lessened. Evidently, Crisis Intervention Theory (CIT) assumes that the victim has had reduced psychological energy through the experiences the victim might have had. The victim could exploit the anxiety for self-development, because “for without anxieties caused by new life situations, people [the victim] will never develop” (Duma, 2014).

Teacher victims should understand that people at a workplace are exposed to challenges and stressful environments at one time or another. In crisis intervention, the victim is made aware of the potential to recover from the crisis. The victims should be encouraged to acknowledge their situations while freely expressing their emotions. Victim teachers often feel like they have lost on a lifetime opportunity to progress in their careers. They see no future. They feel aggrieved. Therefore, these teachers need to be assisted “to recognize and correct temporary affective behavioral and cognitive distortions brought about by traumatic events” (Duma, 2014). The intervention must finally assist the victim teacher attain positive outcome which would reflect by the decrease in negative behavior (Duma, 2014). Who is best suited to intervene in this crisis? This paper identifies with Baloyi (2016) who contended for a community-based approach with regard interventions in teacher challenges. Baloyi (2016) argued that spiritual entities could be of

assistance to abused teachers by providing spiritual support in the form of counselling. Most victim teachers belong to some of these entities, and their spiritual leaders could be roped in to intervene (Baloyi, 2016).

Research and Methodology

A list of reported cases of teacher grievances on teacher promotion process in the case study district was drawn with the assistance of a teacher union. Eleven cases were receiving attention at the union. The aggrieved teachers were scattered throughout the district. It was not possible neither necessary to interview all the 11 affected teachers for data collection. Three cases were purposively selected from the 11 cases for data collection based on the proximity of the teachers with the researcher. The teachers were telephonically contacted to request them to participate in the study. Two of the teachers were still in the service while one had resigned from the department. The teachers' identities have been concealed to ensure anonymity, and to also avoid possible victimisation. Pseudo-identities are instead used. Background details of each case have been provided in the main report.

Data collection instruments, techniques, and analysis

This paper is a multiple case study augmented by qualitative design. Face-to-face interviews were administered on one senior union leader as Key Informant (KI) and three (n=3) victim teachers whose grievances were with the union. The one case of the teacher who had already resigned was also with the union at the time of the resignation. Supplementary interviews were held telephonically with both sets of participants whenever such need arose. This was done to plug the gaps during data analysis and interpretation. Data were captured in a notebook and later analysed through thematic approach.

Findings and Discussions

The results of this study were presented in two sub-divisions. First, a summary of individual cases on each case was given. This summary was followed by detailed discussion.

Findings

First Case Study: Mrs Tambudzani Mudedekadzi

She is a qualified teacher who holds several Diplomas in Education. In addition, Mrs Tambudzani Mudedekadzi holds three Degrees which include a master's degree. She also has immense teaching experience spanning 32 years. Throughout her career she has been teaching African languages. Mrs Tambudzani Mudedekadzi has had numerous recognition and meritorious Awards for excellence in the teaching of African languages. A position of Curriculum Adviser in African languages was advertised. Mrs Tambudzani Mudedekadzi applied. She was short-listed and called in for an interview. One beautiful morning Mrs Tambudzani Mudedekadzi received a call from her department announcing to her some good news - of her successful interviews. She was asked to report for induction, and to receive her letter of appointment. This was exciting news for anyone who had been teaching for no less than three decades. In the past, she has had traumatizing experiences where her documents would mysteriously disappear at the offices of education authorities. Some documents would get 'lost' at her school. She had lost out on possible promotions in the past in strange ways. The announced news was that moment of wiping away her tears of the past. This appointment was to be a great moment for her in a career spanning nearly 30 years. She broke the good news to her colleagues, family, friends, and fellow church members. This promotion meant the whole world for her. It was prestige and it came with crucial economic benefits.

Approximately 50 Km away from her home, and only 20 Km to reach her destination, driving to the education offices for the induction and collecting her appointment letter, she received what would emerge to be one of her worst and devastating calls in her entire life. The caller uncaringly instructed her:

"Please do not report for the meeting. We were not looking for you. We made a mistake calling you"

It is natural she protested in shock. The caller got sterner:

"I say, don't come! I am trying to save you fuel...rather turn back home when you are still nearer. If you come, it is up to you."

The caller was bullying her and used intimidation to get her comply. She was a victim here but also not respected, and she received no sympathy over a situation she did not create. She was not supposed and expected to be shocked according to the caller. She was a teacher who must take instruction, comply, and forget about it. The caller implied that she was being unreasonable in her demand for clarity.

She received the news driving. She was alone. The news sank her heart. She parked her car outside the road. She began to cry. She recalled all the previous incidences in this horror promotion process. After crying for almost 20 minutes or so by the roadside without any assistance she decided to call her pastor. The news was also devastating to the pastor. The pastor gave counselling over the phone. She gained courage and continued her journey to the venue where she was supposed to collect her appointment letter and attend her induction. It was unbelief which pushed her to the venue, not arrogance. Many who were called like her had already arrived there in jovial mood. Some had received their appointment letters already. They were celebrating their appointments. All she had was humiliation and embarrassment. She was a teacher, and the employer did not expect her to show any emotions of hurt. She was

not expected to feel humiliated and embarrassed. Her emotions were not allowed. She finally accepted her fate and drove back home empty handed. She had to drive back to her school and teach another day like nothing had happened to her.

Second Case Study: Mr Nyamisani (discourage) Mudededzi

Mr Nyamisani Mudededzi had since resigned his post for other opportunities. When he was a practicing teacher, he held a Teachers Diploma and a university degree obtained through distance learning. He had been a practicing teacher for 15 years. He applied for position of deputy principal. Five qualifying applicants were to be shortlisted for interviews. It was standard practice that five candidates be shortlisted unless the qualifying applicants were fewer than five. To the surprise of many teachers during the shortlisting process, only three candidates were shortlisted. Observer teachers of the process raised questions. The principal of the shortlisting school could not explain why this one candidate would not be shortlisted despite his enormous qualifications and experience. The principal of the shortlisting school later confided with the excluded Mr Nyamisani Mudededzi that the decision to exclude him was solicited by Mr Nyamisani Mudededzi's principal who had lobbied the shortlisting principal to exclude him. Mr Nyamisani Mudededzi was to be excluded because he belonged to a rival teacher union to that of the two principals. The principals had targeted Mr Nyamisani Mudededzi because he was opined to be "disrespectful" to principals because he would challenge some of their decisions. Mr Nyamisani Mudededzi's principal advised the shortlisting principal "take him (Mr Nyamisani Mudededzi) at your own risk" A dispute was lodged on the process by Mr Nyamisani Mudededzi's union. This dispute was instead sidelined by the senior education officials, and they instead went ahead to appoint their preferred candidate. Mr Nyamisani Mudededzi resigned and left the teaching profession.

Third Case Study: Mr Mafela Thoro

Mr Mafela Thoro was an experienced teacher who held a master's degree. He had served as member of School Management Team (SMT) for several years in his previous school. He transferred to the current school through promotion as Deputy Principal (DP). Mr Mafela Thoro was a member of the majority teacher union in his circuit. Not long after arriving at his new school, his principal retired. Mr Mafela Thoro was appointed acting principal with immediate effect. He acted as principal for at least two years before the position was advertised. Mr Mafela Thoro applied for the vacant position. To his surprised, he was not shortlisted despite him having been acting at this position. In addition, Mr Mafela Thoro was highly qualified to an extent that it was almost impossible to find all five shortlisted candidates having better qualifications than him. The shortlisted applicants had indeed lower qualifications than him. In addition, he had managerial experience as he had been acting in the position for approximately two years. In shock and disbelief, Mr Mafela Thoro discovered that his union's senior leader who also was member in his School's Governing Body (SGB) had influenced the shortlisting process to exclude him. He found that the five applicants were in fact "shadow" pool because the plan was to give the position to one of the applicants who was a former principal of another school. This principal was facing departmental investigations and possible disciplinary procedures for alleged maladministration and misconduct at his former school. A conspiracy was hatched with him and the senior union leader for this investigated principal to be transferred to this school where Mr Mafela Thoro was already acting in the position. Mr Mafela Thoro lodged a dispute with the department and asked his union to represent him. He also lodged a complaint with his union about the conduct of the senior member. Both these cases were in one way or the other going to be adjudicated for by the culprit union leader. After some lengthy disputes and counter-disputes, Mr Mafela Thoro was appointed principal at this school after the process had to be re-run at the intervention of the district authorities.

Discussion

In Case Study 1, the officials were disrespectful, bullying, unsympathetic with the 'victim' teacher. The teacher's circumstance was ignored. It was like the teacher had caused the problem instead of the officials. The teacher suffered emotional and psychological trauma and received no assistance from the department to deal with the devastating reversal of her appointment. The officials could have done better. Even if it could have been a mistake out of human error, the actions of the officials necessitated the suspicions with the teacher. Any appointment of the "right" candidate after the "correction" of the mistake was therefore suspicious. It got more frustrating for the aggrieved teacher. First, the teacher was faced with a hostile and unsympathetic principal who mocked her for trying to challenge authorities by complaining. Aggrieved teachers are often set against their colleagues in a portrayal that depicts them as being "crybabies" and/or troublesome. Their colleagues are bullied to avoid getting into offering professional support to the aggrieved, to isolate these teachers socially and emotionally. At school level, the teacher was faced with a long bureaucracy mostly not willing to assist with her grievance. When the omission is something which happened at the senior level of the system, it becomes even harder for the aggrieved teacher because he or she is faced with "the powerful" people. Here, power is absolute, and it is abused to an extent that the aggrieved teacher would feel intimidated and powerless. The teacher is emotionally tortured and drained to submission in total disregard and ignorance of the grievance. The grievance is "squeezed to death" on its own. The teacher has nowhere to go and has no one to speak to. The teacher is expected to return to class and teach like there has never been any grievance. It is business as usual, and the teacher must discharge responsibilities the same way as the previous day. This is supposed to be a democratic system promoting best practices on the wellbeing of the employee for better performance. Why would senior bureaucrats of a government of the people by the people treat employees worse than apartheid and Bantustan education systems did? This is a practice which relegates constitutional rights of employees, and securities of basic employment conditions as provided by the South African Labour Law and other instruments such as *Batho Pele* into the dustbin of corruption, maladministration, unethical conduct, and gross executive incompetence. Education managers should know better that teaching is one (extremely) stressful job in public

service (Ferguson et al., 2012). This explains why there is a high number of teachers who were dissatisfied with teaching (Schonfeld, 1990). When teachers are faced with these experiences, their performances drop, and schools are faced with low quality teaching which lead to poor school performances and dysfunctionality. Compromised quality of teaching leads to poor education which is detrimental to national economic, democratic, and social development (Janik & Rothmann, 2015). The consequences of these experiences have increased number of teacher resignations in public basic education (Mafukata & Mudau, 2016). Existing studies on teacher resignations in public schools have mainly focused on the complexities teachers faced with learner behaviour and other professional technicalities such as poor and low wages, excessive workload on teachers, personal financial matters of teachers amongst others (Mafukata & Mudau, 2016; Ferguson et al., 2012). Efforts have been made to improve on teacher workload, correction of learner behaviour to assist teachers do their work better and easier, and many other employment conditions troublesome to teachers put in place. However, efforts to assist traumatised teachers facing frustrations, anxieties, depression, and stress after suffering real and/or imaginary 'exclusions' from promotions have been sidelined. The behaviour of the education officials in Case Study 1 reveals an attitude of shaming and embarrassing the teacher.

The 'victim' teacher is faced with a mammoth responsibility. Assuming that the process was corrupt, this teacher has to be subjected to a corruptly appointed "senior" who should serve as subject adviser despite this "adviser" having to have far lesser qualifications. Apart from lesser qualifications, Mrs Tambudzani Mudedekadzi is a multiple award winner in subject performance whereas the corruptly appointed Curriculum Adviser is nowhere near this characterisation. Painfully so, Mrs Tambudzani Mudedekadzi is firstly informed of the appointment into the position and even called in to collect letter of appointment and invited to attend induction for the position, which all get reversed in a wink of an eye a week later. The instruction is direct, bullying, and uncaring "Do not come. We were not looking for you. We made a mistake" The calling departmental official expects this teacher to accept instruction without raising any questions. When raising questions, the official intimidates her saying "We will charge you with insubordination" Mrs Tambudzani Mudedekadzi should just comply. The teacher's emotions and psychological trauma induced by the employer are disregarded. The employer cares less of the well fare of the teacher. The teacher is expected to return to class and perform normally just as she had been doing before. She fell into stress and depression, and got herself hospitalised. In addition, she had to pay for the huge medical bills. Back to work, she had to face negative relational attitudes and behaviour from mockful colleagues who celebrated her collapsed appointment. Her conditions at work become unbearable and difficult for her to be an effective teacher.

Although in Case Study 1 the victim teacher contemplated resigning from the department, first, she could not because of her age. She is left with few years of service for retirement. Secondly, she would not be able to get any other employment elsewhere. In her own words, the victim teacher said "I do not see any hope in this department. I must just accept it. I am not good enough to get any recognition despite my work known by everyone except certain individuals at the department - my employer" Evidently, she had lost confidence in the department.

In Case Study two, this paper established that maladministration and unethical behaviour happened. The teacher was deliberately sidelined and excluded from the process. The qualified teacher is excluded from the process for reasons outside competence and capabilities. It is personal dislike of the teacher by his principal that gets the teacher excluded. His principal used his influence to manipulate the process. The victim teacher resigned forthwith citing loss of confidence in the department.

In Case Study 3, the victim teacher's confidence in the union is greatly compromised. However, the fact that the department assisted positively to redress the situation has strengthened the victim teacher's confidence in the department. It is regrettable that these cases provide attitudinal platforms for negative perceptions amongst young people who might dread becoming teachers.

Conclusions

This paper aimed to investigate the impact of corruption during the promotion processes of teachers on the victim teachers. It emerged in the study that much of the alleged corruption and unethical tendencies were levelled against individual senior education officials and teacher unions. First, while there has been evidence of a flawed teacher promotion process, it is not immediately clear and conclusive that such flaws were out of corruption and unethical practices by departmental officials. In the case of Case Study 1 for example, the situation could have emanated from a simple bungle on an administrative issue out of human error. However, the handling of this case was shabby and unprofessional. In view of the crisis management theory, the senior department and the trade union failed to counseling to the victims to minimize the psychological effects of either the "human error" or maladministration that occurred.

Secondly, it does not appear teacher unions used corrupt and unethical means to push their members to be promoted. It is unfair to expect unions not to carry out this crucial mandate of their existence. However, the poor administration of the process raised concerns and grievances amongst teachers. To call these administrative omissions "corruption" would be a contested assertion. The evidence for this assertion is weak.

To assess how alleged 'excluded victim' teachers reacted and responded differently, this paper found that some resigned while some accepted the incidents and moved on, with some who got their cases redressed. It can then be concluded that with efforts to address the unethical and mal-administrative practices at the workplace will minimize pain and restore fairness and justice.

Due to the limited scope of the paper, further studies can focus on the performance of teachers who faced administrative and unethical exclusion. The paper did not explore the measures taken to manage the after-effects of exclusions of the victim teachers to ensure psychological well-being at the workplace.

Teacher unions should be educated (trained) on their responsibilities regarding safeguarding teacher welfare during promotional processes, among others regarding adherence to ethical conduct anchored on appropriate legislation. Clear guidelines of sanctions against officials and principals who engage in unethical practices should be developed and enforced. Negatively affected teachers should be referred for corrective professional assistance.

Acknowledgments

The authors acknowledge the institutions in which they work from because of the support they received in terms of provision of time to embark on this difficult project. Some of the authors came as far as KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng Province to join the other three researchers for field work and other tasks. To all our colleagues at our respective departments, we say, bravo colleagues.

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, M.A., J.H. and S.; methodology, C.R., T.S.; validation, M.A.; formal analysis, T.S.; investigation, M.A.; writing—original draft preparation, M.C.; writing—review and editing, M.A., M.C. and T.S.

Funding: This research was not funded.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to restrictions.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- Baloyi, M.E. (2016). The Church's pastoral role concerning challenges faced by teachers in South African public schools: Some practical theological perspective. *In die skriflig* 50(1), 1-9.
- Daniels, D., & Strauss, E. (2010). Mostly I'm driven to tears, and feeling totally unappreciated: Exploring the emotional wellness of high school teachers. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 9 (2010), 1385–1393.
- De Vos, J., & Kirsten, G.J.C. (2015). The nature of workplace bullying experienced by teachers and the bio-psycho-social health effects. *South African Journal of Education* 35(3), 1-9.
- DoBE. (2016). Report of the Ministerial Task Team. DoBE, Pretoria. <https://www.gov.za/sites/defaultreport2016.pdf>. accessed on (Accessed October 31, 2016).
- Du Plessis, A., & Cain, G. (2017). Exploring perceived sources of conflict among educators in three ENCA, 2014. South Africa: A history of violence. <https://www.enca.com/opinion/south-africa-history-violence>. (Retrieved February 8, 2019).
- Du Plessis, P. (2014). Corruption in education – Stealing the future. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(23), 1308-1316.
- Du Plessis, P. & Mestry, R. (2019). Teachers for rural schools - a challenge for South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 39(1), 51-59.
- Duma, M.A.N. 2014. Crisis Counseling and Intervention in Rural Schools in South Africa. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(27), 529-536.
- Ferguson, K., Frost, L., & Hall, D. (2012). Predicting Teacher Anxiety, Depression, and Job Satisfaction. *Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 8(1), 27-42.
- Furuta, S.H. (2015). A case study of teacher retention in three Title I Hawaii schools. Doctoral thesis. Ann Arbor, MI: ProQuest.
- Gardiner, M. (2016). Government cadre deployment and corruption subverts education. <https://mg.co.za/article/2016-05-27-00-government-cadre-deployment-and-corruption-subverts-education>. (Accessed February 8, 2019).
- Hall, E., Altman, M., Nkomo, N., Petzer, K., & Zuma, K. (2005). Potential Attrition in Education: The impact of job satisfaction, morale, workload and HIV/AIDS. Report to the ELRC, HSRC, Pretoria. <https://www.gtac.gov.za/Researchdocs/Potentia.pdf>. (Accessed October 9, 2019).
- Human Science Research Council (HSRC), (2016). The health of educators in public schools in South Africa. Department of Basic education, Republic of South Africa, Pretoria.
- Jacobson, D.A. (2016). Causes and Effects of Teacher Burnout. [dissertation PhD thesis]. [Walden]. Walden University.
- Janik, M., & Rothmann, S. (2015). Meaningful work and secondary school teachers' intention to leave. *South African Journal of Education*, 35(2), 1-13.
- Johnson, S.M. (2013). Impact of stress and burnout interventions on educators in high-risk secondary schools. [dissertation PhD thesis]. [Stellenbosch]. University of Stellenbosch.
- Jones, A.J., & Kessler, A. (2020). Teachers' emotion and identity work during a pandemic. *Secondary Teacher Education*, 5(2020), 1-9.
- Kyriacou, C. (2011). Teacher stress: From prevalence to resilience. In J. Langan-Fox & C.L. Cooper (Eds.), *Handbook of stress in the occupations* (pp. 161–176). Cheltenham and Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Li, H., Ma., & Liu, Q. (2022). How the COVID-19 pandemic affects job sentiments of rural teachers. *China Economic Review*, 72(2022): 101759.

- Mafukata, M.A., & Mudau, A.V. (2016). Exploring Teacher Mass Resignation and Early Retirement from Public Schools. *Dirasat, Human and Social Sciences*, 43(5), 2243-2255.
- Malinga, B.V. (2018). *Exploring teachers' experiences in the selection processes of school leaders*. [dissertation master's thesis]. [Pietermaritzburg]. University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Marais-Opperman, V., Rothmann, S., & Van Eeden, C. (2021). Stress, flourishing and intention to leave of teachers: Does coping type matter? *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology/SA Tydskrif vir Bedryfsielkunde*, 47(0), a1834. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v47i0.1834>
- Meier, C., & West, J. (2020). Overcrowded classrooms—the Achilles heel of South African education?. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 10(1), 1-10.
- Mhlongo, J. (2017). Perspectives held by teacher union representatives and principals of educator promotion interviews. [dissertation master's thesis]. [Pretoria]. University of Pretoria.
- Mkhondo, S.S. (2016). The influence of leadership and management on teacher retainment in Mpumalanga schools. [dissertation master's thesis]. [Pretoria]. University of Pretoria.
- Nesane, M.A.N. (2008). Selected school-related factors influencing the migration of teachers from the teaching profession: an educational management perspective. Unpublished Master's thesis, University of South Africa. Pretoria.
- Ozamiz-Etxebarria, N., Santxo, N.B., Mondragon, N.I., & Santamaría, M.D. (2021). The Psychological State of Teachers During the COVID-19 Crisis: The Challenge of Returning to Face-to-Face Teaching. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11 Article 620718. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.620718>
- Pattillo, K.M. (2012). Quiet Corruption: Teachers Unions and Leadership in South African Township Schools. [dissertation BA (Hons) thesis]. [Middletown, Connecticut]. Wesleyan University.
- Pitsoe, V.J. (2013). Teacher attrition in South Africa: trends, challenges and prospects. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 36(3), 309-318.
- Ramokgotswa, N.I. (2015). The role of teacher unions in the appointment and promotion of teachers in public schools. [dissertation master's thesis]. [Pretoria]: University of Pretoria.
- Schonfeld, I.S. (1990). Psychological Distress in a Sample of Teachers. *The Journal of Psychology*, 124(3), 321-338.
- Schonfeld, I.S., Renzo Bianchi, R. & Luehring-Jones, P. (2017). Consequences of Job Stress for the Mental Health of Teachers. T.M. McIntyre et al. (eds.), *Educator Stress, Aligning Perspectives on Health, Safety and Well-Being*. Springer International Publishing AG.
- Serfontein, E. & de Waal, E. (2015). The corruption bogey in South Africa: Is public education safe? *South African Journal of Education*, 35(1), 1-12.
- Shepherd, D. & Mohohlwane, N. (2021). The impact of COVID-19 in education - more than a year of disruption. Study (NIDS) – Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (CRAM).
- Shibiti, R. (2020). Public school teachers' satisfaction with retention factors in relation to work engagement. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology/SA Tydskrif vir Bedryfsielkunde*, 46(0), a1675. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v46i0.1675>
- Ugoani, J.N.N. (2016). Education corruption and teacher absenteeism in Nigeria. *Independent Journal of Management & Production*, 7(2), 546-566.
- Vaughn, A.A. & Roesch, S.C. (2003). Psychological and physical health correlates of coping in minority adolescents. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 8(6), 671–683.
- Zengele, T. (2013a). Have Teacher Unions taken over the South African education system? Redeployment in Progress. 2013 WEI International Academic Conference Proceedings Istanbul, Turkey. The West East Institute, pp 18-24.
- Zengele, T. (2013c). A critical Analysis on Processes of Filling Promotional Posts in South African Schools: A Transactional Leadership Perspective. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 4(3), 603-610.
- Zengele, T.Z. (2013b). Leadership within the South African Education System. *J Soc Sci*, 35(1), 61-69.

Publisher's Note: SSBFNET stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



© 2023 by the authors. Licensee SSBFNET, Istanbul, Turkey. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

International Journal of Research in Business and Social Science (2147-4478) by SSBFNET is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.