

**Teachers' Perceptions of Principals' Destructive Behaviors in Ontario: Forms, Impacts,
and Mitigation**

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Abstract

Although the field of educational research has predominantly emphasized the positive aspects of educational leadership, the issue of destructive leadership (DL) remains a persistent challenge in school environments. The present study investigates the perceptions of teachers regarding destructive behaviors exhibited by school principals in publicly funded secondary schools in Ottawa, Ontario. The research focuses on identifying the forms of these behaviors, their impacts on the victims, and potential strategies to mitigate or disrupt their occurrence. By examining the negative dimensions of principal leadership behaviors and their impacts on affected teachers, this study seeks to raise awareness of harmful practices and promote the development of healthier organizational climates within educational institutions. It addresses the following three research questions:

- 1) What principal leadership behaviors are perceived by teachers as destructive in the schooling context in Ontario?
- 2) How have DL behaviors affected victimized teachers in their professional career and/or personal lives?
- 3) What do the victims perceive as strategies to prevent/disrupt the occurrence of DL in schooling context?

To answer these questions, the research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining data from surveys and qualitative insights from in-depth interviews. Data collection involved 72 completed survey responses, which also served as a basis for selecting participants for six interviews. This approach allows a comprehensive examination of both DL prevalence and impacts in educational settings.

The data analysis process unfolded in two phases. First, the quantitative survey data were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to identify patterns and trends in destructive leadership behaviors. Second, the qualitative interview data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis process. This dual approach ensures a robust examination of the phenomenon, integrating statistical trends with rich, contextual narratives from participants' experiences.

The survey findings revealed distinct patterns in the frequency of destructive leadership behaviors. These behaviors were categorized as frequent, moderately frequent, and least frequent yet concerning. Subtler behaviors, such as failing to defend subordinates and disregarding their feedback, emerged as the most prevalent manifestations of DL. DL behaviors which pose significant ethical concerns such as falsifying documents and misappropriating funds were equally less frequent.

Qualitative findings from the interviews provided deeper insights into the forms and impacts of and ways to counter destructive leadership. Participants described a range of perceived destructive behaviors, including sexual harassment, negligence, favoritism, undermining subordinates' dignity, bias and discrimination, unfair criticism, financial impropriety, and abusive monitoring. These behaviors were linked to professional, financial, psychological and physiological effects on teachers. Victims reported experiencing stress, anxiety, frustration, and feelings of worthlessness. Specific accounts highlighted cases where teachers developed severe anxiety due to sudden authoritarian shifts in leadership styles, endured uncertainty from inconsistent feedback, or faced humiliation and isolation through unsupported accusations. The physiological repercussions included sleep disturbances, high blood pressure, and digestive issues,

emphasizing the extensive toll of DL on individuals' overall health. Other effects include job relocation, resignation or absences.

In exploring strategies to mitigate and prevent destructive leadership, participants emphasized the need for advocacy and support mechanisms. Their thoughts included the establishment of accessible and transparent reporting systems, along with institutional interventions to address destructive behaviors. Participants also highlighted the importance of fostering awareness about destructive leadership through professional development programs aimed at both leaders and subordinates. Additionally, victims shared personal coping strategies, including self-reflection, fostering positive relationships, and maintaining physical and emotional distance from destructive principals to minimize personal harm.

By documenting and analyzing the destructive behaviors of school principals, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of leadership dynamics in schooling contexts. It highlights the urgency of addressing the negative dimensions of leadership to create supportive and nurturing environments for teachers. Moreover, the research underscores the importance of leveraging participants' perspectives to inform policy and practice aimed at combating destructive leadership.

Keywords: School leadership, Destructive Leadership, teachers' experiences, coping strategies

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview of the Context

1.1 Introduction

This study documents infrequent voices in the stories often told about educational leadership. It attends to the narratives of secondary school teachers who have been directly targeted and victimized by their principals' destructive behaviors or practices in the schooling context and whose lives have been affected by such negative experiences in their careers as professionals and as individuals. The purpose of this study is to engage with the experiences of those teachers who have encountered this phenomenon in order to identify the various forms it takes and examine its impact on victims. Besides, the study builds on the participants' survival experience and thoughts to understand the different ways the occurrence of destructive leadership (DL) can be prevented or minimized.

While a significant portion of contemporary scholarly inquiry and literature has been mainly leader-centric (May et al., 2015) and popularized the constructive aspects of educational leadership (Riley et al., 2011; Ryan et al., 2021), failing to acknowledge its negative expressions perpetuates its unchallenged persistence as well as a complicit silence. By tapping into negative manifestations of leadership, this study triggers an important opportunity to confront and mitigate the impact of the occurrence of DL has on the victims. While focusing solely on identifying problems may restrict learning to adverse consequences exclusively, the primary goal of this study is to break the silence surrounding DL in schooling context thereby unlocking opportunities for learning and catalyzing constructive societal transformation.

1.2 Research Field and Context

This study is set in the field of educational leadership. School teachers from different schools provided a broad context for the research, with educational environments in which leadership was exercised with destructive behaviors and resulting detrimental effects providing the specific context. The study gathered data from 72 secondary school teachers through an online survey. Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted with six participants who identified themselves as having experienced destructive leadership, providing personal narratives that contributed to a collective understanding of the phenomenon. Overall, this research sought to improve our understanding of school principal's destructive leadership behaviors regarding their manifestations, consequences, and prevention strategies, with the goal of informing educational practice, and policy interventions aimed at promoting ethical and effective leadership.

1.3 Study Background and Problem Statement

DL persists and has detrimental effects on the victim's well-being and job performance in the workplace (Aasland et al., 2010; Einarsen et al., 2007). However, empirical evidence remains scarce regarding the specific DL behaviors/practices, its direct impact on targeted subordinates, and specifically how this impact has informed the victims' understanding of prevention strategies and coping mechanisms (May et al., 2015; Wieland & Beitz, 2015).

Similarly, contemporary literature on educational leadership has predominantly discussed positive constructions of leadership with more emphasis on successful and effective practices (Day & Gurr, 2014; Ryan et al., 2021). For example, such a positive face of educational leadership has been popularized through studies of instructional (Hallinger & Heck, 2007, 2010; Hallinger et al., 2015), ethical (Banks et al., 2021), and participative (Wang et al., 2022) styles of

educational leadership. Consequently, what happens when leadership goes wrong remains infrequently addressed in literature. This study documents the phenomenon of DL in schooling contexts in the City of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.

Recent empirical studies on DL conducted in the context of this study, Canada, have explored aspects of negative leadership practices or behaviors such as typology (Milley, 2017), sources, frequency of occurrence (Santor et al., 2021), and impact of DL on the victims (Clark & Antonelli, 2013) but a silence remains regarding the victims' thoughts on the strategies to address/prevent the occurrence of such negative behaviors/practices (Pradhan & Jena, 2018). Milley's study has focused on reports of regulatory and disciplinary hearing bodies of school administrators in two provinces of Ontario and Alberta as well as news stories and has documented eight dimensions of maladministration. While this study highlighted the dimensions of maladministration, such work was limited in terms of sources of data.

First, one can easily argue that not all cases of negative leadership behaviors are reported to regulatory bodies because some cases may be settled at workplace, or the victims may prefer to remain silent as they do not expect they will have justice or fear retaliation. Second, documents and news stories may be limited in the sense that their primary intention is not to capture the entirety of victims' lived experiences but rather to document or describe evidence with which legal decisions are made.

Santor et al. (2021) conducted a survey to investigate the prevalence, frequency, and impact of harassment and violence experienced by elementary school educators in Ontario. This study, which included responses from over a thousand educators in publicly funded elementary schools, focused on incidents occurring during the 2018–2019 academic year. The findings revealed that educators faced both high rates and frequent occurrences of these negative

behaviors, which significantly affected their physical and mental well-being, disrupted the classroom learning environment, and undermined job performance and commitment. Furthermore, the results indicated an increasing trend in the prevalence of violence and harassment compared to previous studies.

Unlike Milley's (2017) specific focus on the leader-follower dynamic outcome, specifically between administrators and educators, Santor et al.'s (2021) study explored violence perpetrated against teachers from multiple actors in school settings including principal-teacher interaction. Such a study confirms the existence of negative leadership practices and behaviors, but it fails to scrutinize and address issues of power imbalance underlying subordinate-directed behaviors which, as Woestman and Wasonga (2015) argue, tend to dominate destructive leadership behaviors in schools.

In the efforts to understand how negative leadership affected teachers, Clark and Antonelli (2013) conducted a survey to explore reasons behind resignation, early retirement and change of career and noted that unhealthy interaction between school leaders and educators dominated other factors in Ontario in 2006-2007 school year. Similar to the works of Milley (2017) and Santor et al. (2021), Clark and Antonelli's (2013) study missed out on the in-person and direct researcher-participant interaction thereby failing to grasp the entirety of the narratives of the victims' experiences of DL. Equally absent in limited literature on negative educational leadership in Canada is the scholarly efforts to explore victims' connections to the strategies for addressing/preventing the occurrence of DL.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

At the heart of this study is the belief that the potential for learning through negative experiences (Shepherd et al., 2011; Stang & Wong, 2014) can improve organizational life. In other words, despite its instrumental role in potentially creating organizational disasters, fuller understanding about the occurrence of destructive leadership may prove instructive in the creation and maintenance of health and wellbeing of staff in the workplace. In the context of the study which sets in the schooling context, the following three research questions are designed to generate knowledge on which leaders' destructive behaviors are experienced by educators in schooling settings and how these negative practices and behaviors influence their life as professionals and persons. It goes a step further to shed light on lessons the victims have learnt from such a negative phenomenon of DL.

1. What principal leadership behaviors are perceived by teachers as destructive in schooling context in Ontario?
2. How have DL behaviors affected victimized teachers in their professional careers and/or personal lives?
3. What do the victims perceive as strategies to prevent/disrupt the occurrence of DL in schooling context?

The first research question seeks to reveal the phenomenon of destructive leadership under different forms as perceived by teachers who have experienced it. Knowledge about behaviors is still of interest because research evidence on the manifestations of DL remains limited. The second question explores the influence that the phenomenon has had on the targeted subordinates whether in their performance of their responsibilities as educators or elsewhere as persons in the wider society they live in. This question extends beyond professional life of the

victims because prior findings have pointed out that the effects of DL on the subordinates are far reaching in the sense that they affect the entire life of the victims (Blase & Blase, 2002; Fahie, 2014; Sam, 2021).

The last research question is intended to draw lessons from destructive leadership through victims' perspectives on the strategies to address or prevent the occurrence of the phenomenon in the work environment, the emergence of resilience, the wider potential for learning from past experiences (Jackson et al., 2007) and the implicit ethical and moral purpose of leadership (Ciulla et al., 2005). The responses to the three questions enhance our understanding of the phenomenon from the subjective view of victimized educators and lay a foundation for efforts seeking to minimize or disrupt the occurrence of negative leadership behaviors in schools.

1.5 Contribution of the Study in Education

In forthcoming chapters, it will be demonstrated that negative leadership behaviors within educational settings significantly impact the health and wellbeing of both educators and school institutions. This influence can manifest negatively, leading to outcomes that require thorough exploration, understanding, and addressing. Notably, there is a scarcity of empirical research specifically addressing negative aspects of leadership in schools.

This study endeavors to fill this gap in academic literature by conducting empirical research on the forms, impact of, and possible strategies to address destructive leadership within school environments. By examining these issues, this study aims to further existing understanding on the forms and effects of DL and propose solutions for addressing or preventing negative aspects of leadership in schooling settings.

1.5.1 Contextual Contribution

The school working environment, which is the focus of this research, has received limited attention regarding the existence of leadership behaviors (Blase & Blase, 2002; Riley et al., 2011). Despite being a unique setting where destructive actions seemingly contradict the norms of nurturing children and promoting learning, this area remains largely unexplored in empirical studies. This oversight is notable given the extensive literature on educational leadership which basically pays more attention to how to improve school outcomes. The prevalent use of hierarchical leadership structures in educational institutions (Hatcher, 2005) makes it particularly susceptible to instances of power misuse resulting in undesired effects on the lives of the victims and schools as institutions.

This study sets out to explore this unfamiliar side of leadership in schooling context. By examining the less familiar aspects of educational leadership, the study findings add up to the existing empirical evidence by confirming the existence of negative leadership behaviors in schools and its negative impact on the educators.

1.5.2 Methodological Contributions

The significance of this study is further underscored by its methodology, which involves capturing the negative experiences lived by subordinates to gain understanding about such often muted discussions. Ryan (2018) argues that an inclination towards a positive bias in research prevails, where negative findings often go unpublished, leading to unresolved issues being relegated to the file drawer. However, this omission may signify a neglect of responsibility (Lee, 1993).

Despite being drawn from a limited sample of specific study participants, focusing on their negative experiences is deemed valuable as the findings could offer valuable insights (Shepherd et al., 2011; Stang & Wong, 2014) for addressing poor leadership practices in the education sector, thereby informing future policies and practices (Chi & Liang, 2013). An analogy can be drawn from medical research, where studying pathology is essential for improving health outcomes and promoting well-being. Thus, targeting that pathological side of educational leadership is methodologically valuable and serves as one of the foundations for the significance of this study (Pasiieczny & Glinka, 2016). While dealing with negative experiences, the overarching intention is to generate positive outcomes, a concept rarely explored in literature (Maidaniuc-Chirila, 2015; Wieland & Beitz, 2015).

1.5.3 Practical Contribution

The study provides original insights into the existence of the phenomenon of DL by revealing which forms of behaviors and associated impacts experienced by the study participants in the workplace. Sharing knowledge of the principals' negative behaviors and how educators are negatively affected in schooling context is an important step toward breaking silence that surrounds DL in schooling context (Milley, 2017) to inform and improve. Therefore, an important insight emerging from this study is the recognition that leadership dynamics carry significant learning potential, as they can produce both positive and negative consequences for organizational life. (Stang & Wong, 2014).

The occurrence of DL highlights the need for education stakeholders to critically assess both the idealized view of leadership and its potential deterioration; when leaders prioritize control over ethical governance. Traditionally, leadership is associated with vision, guidance, and institutional success. However, DL often emerges from power struggles, where leaders pursue

results through coercion and enforced compliance. While such methods may yield organizational gains, they ultimately lead to organizational dysfunction, reduced teacher morale, and an unhealthy work environment (Pelletier et al., 2019).

In contrast, leadership models such as distributed leadership provide a more ethical and effective alternative. These approaches encourage collaboration, enhance teacher engagement, and improve decision-making by incorporating diverse perspectives. Research suggests that distributed leadership positively impacts student outcomes and overall school effectiveness, demonstrating that authoritarian tendency is unnecessary for achieving institutional goals (Bush, 2013; Harris, 2013). Thus, while DL may create an illusion of efficiency, shared (constructive) leadership offers a more participatory and ethical model that prioritizes long-term institutional success.

To wit, the existence of DL challenges the notion of leadership as a positive tool, revealing that leadership can also contribute to dysfunction, harm, or organizational decline. This study provides insights into specific leadership behaviors perceived by educators as destructive, as well as their detrimental effects on individuals and school communities, an often-overlooked aspect in conventional leadership definitions. Recognizing the presence and impact of DL calls for a reassessment of leadership as an always-effective phenomenon, extending the focus beyond institutional achievements to include the ethical responsibility of fostering a supportive and respectful professional environment.

Specifically, by acknowledging this leadership paradox, school leaders have the potential to change from negative to positive leadership behaviors or practices. This possibility for learning underscores a moral obligation for leaders to recognize the impact of their leadership

practices on individuals, groups, and the broader organization. Consequently, it emphasizes the inherent responsibilities and accountabilities associated with their roles as school leaders.

Moreover, knowledge of undesired leadership behaviors can equally benefit education policy makers interested in modelling best leadership practices in schooling context. Such policy efforts would emphasize the implementation of different prevention strategies highlighted by the study participants along the existing code of practice in educational management. In the context of this study specifically, findings on the prevention strategies may be of interest to policy making bodies such as the Ontario Ministry of Education and the different school boards in the province. While they can assess how the existing educational leadership policy prevents the occurrence of DL in schooling context, they can equally consider including explicit prevention strategies, should they choose to draw on the revelations from this study to address DL in schools.

Furthermore, the findings of this study might be informative for school boards, councils and superintendents as they oversee the implementation of different educational policies and other schooling activities. To sum up, drawing on the study findings related to forms, deleterious effects of, and strategies to disrupt DL, interested educational stakeholders such as school principals, policy making bodies, school boards, school Council and superintendents can take more informed decisions than before.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

1.6.1 Leadership and Educational Leadership

Despite extensive literature on leadership or its importance, a common understanding of what the concept precisely means remains elusive (Blakesley, 2008; Northouse, 2010; Scovetta & Ellis, 2015). Sometimes efforts to describe this popular term are often placed on the leaders'

behaviors and the leading process outcomes but a widely accepted definition still remains lacking (Vroom & Jago, 2007; Yukl, 2010). Although, it is often associated with a range of adjectives such as transformational, transactional, scholars such as Scovetta and Ellis (2015) or Vroom and Jago (2007), argue that the term leadership remains abstract and open to multiple interpretations.

Considered as dynamic rather than static thing of outcomes or behaviors, however, leadership adopts a more dynamic conceptualization where it is understood as a function (Avolio, 2007) or a process (Rowe, 2006). Northouse (2010) and Yukl (2010) agree with such an understanding of leadership by defining it as a process of influence to achieve organizational goals. It then becomes easier to capture who or what is involved in the leading process. Lord et al. (2001) note that this process consists of the interplay between the leader, those ‘led’ and the context in which it is exercised. Hence, incorporating the leader, the led and the contexts into the definition, it then turns out that the leadership as a construct underlies both leadership and followership (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014) and the context wherein it is exercised.

Understanding leadership as a process involving various actors within a specific context allows us to explore how leaders engage their followers in organizational life within that very context. Frequently, leadership is associated with influence and the methods used to achieve organizational goals (Bush & Glover, 2003; Vroom & Jago, 2007). Considering the nature of this process, the actors involved, and the context in which they interact, leadership emerges as a dynamic interaction between leaders and followers within a given context, seeking to achieve organizational goals (Scovetta & Ellis, 2015; Yukl, 2010).

However, the definitional problem that must be carefully addressed is to further clarify this type of influence. Clarification is needed because this process of influence is believed to lead

to organizational outcomes, but it sometimes fails to deliver such promises. In other words, leaders are portrayed as having the skills, resources, integrity, good sense, practical wisdom and good intentions and respect for the followers (Shay, 2000) but some of them fail to deliver positive results.

Such portrayal of leadership, which is popular in contemporary literature on the subject, has strongly influenced a naive construction of leadership as capable of serving nobility. For example, scholars such as Northouse (2010) argue that leadership is exercised in authentic and ethical relationships between actors. Focusing solely on the positive qualities and practices of leaders results in a partial perspective that reinforces the centrality of the leader in defining the construct of leadership.

Therefore, theorizing and empirical studies on leadership tend to highlight its influence as transformational (Khoo & Burch, 2008; Muchiri et al., 2012), transactional (Spahr, 2015), servant (Sendjaya et al., 2008; Spears, 2010), authentic (Emuwa, 2013; Gardner et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008) on the one hand. On the other hand, the positive conception of ‘influence’ implies leader’s central role, along with their values, self-concepts, and dispositions (Riley et al., 2011) in the process of leading to desired outcomes. Understood as central figure in the process, leader has the potential to initiate an interaction from the center outwards perhaps intolerant of the reverse to happen.

To illustrate the centrality implied in the definition of leadership, one can consider the following arguments from educational leadership scholars. Educational leaders initiate and share a vision for the successful future of the school (Hallinger & Heck, 2007; Hallinger et al., 2015), engage in their endeavors driven by moral purpose and a commitment to benefit society at large, as advocated by Duignan (2006), Isaacson (2013), Sergiovanni (2007), and Starratt (2004).

Further, they exhibit virtues like respect, generosity, and trustworthiness, as highlighted by Schumaker and Sommers (2001). They acknowledge and appreciate the contributions of others (Bush & Middlewood, 2005).

To wit, aspects of partiality and centrality discussed in this section are the outcomes of conceptualizing leadership as a positive process only. This conception aligns with the industry of education, where educational leaders are expected to be well-behaved servants (Duignan, 2006; Isaacson, 2013) as they pursue excellence for the benefit of their students (Caldwell, 2006), where they are guided by ethical standards often prescribed in the policy. However, this understanding is incomplete, because it is limited to the ideal, perfect situation, and it does not necessarily express what happens in practice. In a practical sense both negative and positive aspects of influence are possible. In the case of negative influence, the leadership process can fail to meet desired ends. Such negative leading may include leaders' behaviors and/or practices that result in detrimental effects on the followers and organization. In this study, we refer to '*negative leading*' as 'destructive leading' that we call *destructive leadership* in the following subsection.

Although this study focuses on school principals, it is important to acknowledge that destructive leadership (DL) is not solely a result of individual leadership traits, but it is also shaped by broader societal and institutional forces. Societal values that prioritize hierarchical authority, competitive performance metrics, and rigid compliance frameworks can create conditions conducive to coercive leadership practices. Pelletier et al. (2019) suggest that high-stakes accountability measures and institutional pressures frequently compel leaders to adopt authoritarian approaches that emphasize control over collaboration. These systemic influences reinforce power imbalances, undermine teacher autonomy, and stifle innovation, ultimately fostering a culture of fear and compliance within educational environments.

1.6.2 Destructive Leadership

Krasikova et al. (2013) highlighted three problems surrounding efforts to define DL as mainly being: absence of standardized definition of destructive leadership that would demarcate its boundaries thereby distinguishing it from similar phenomena, multiplicity of terms that can be used interchangeably or with close meanings and a lack of theoretical framework that clearly defines what constitutes DL as well as its consequences. In line with this multiplicity of terms, a number of nouns and adjectives have been used by scholars to study the negative leadership behaviors namely unethical (Almeida et al., 2022; Sam, 2021), abusive (Mackey et al., 2013; Marchant-Pérez et al., 2024; Tepper, 2007), irresponsible (Oplatka, 2016), narcissistic (Maccoby, 2007; Nevicka et al., 2018; Schaubroeck et al., 2007), pseudo-transformational (Schuh et al., 2013; Tian et al., 2023), toxic (Hughes, 2022; Lipman-Blumen, 2005), destructive (Aasland et al., 2010; Einarsen et al., 2007; Ryan, 2018; Ryan et al., 2021) or tyrannical (Ashforth, 1994; Pelletier, 2010). Other scholars have used terms such as maladministration (Cypres, 2020; Milley, 2017; Milley & Dulude, 2021), workplace bullying (Samnani, 2021) or petty tyranny (Ashforth, 1994).

Considering such a variety of descriptors of the DL, the study agrees with scholars in the field that destructive leadership is a term worth using in scholarly work because:

- i) It captures well the inherent harmful effect embedded in destructive leading common to other forms of leading (Krasikova et al., 2013),
- ii) It equally highlights the contrast of the constructed view of leadership as destined to serve a purpose (Ryan et al., 2021),

- iii) Destructive leadership as a research construct seems to have been widely used and accepted in the academic research community (Ryan et al., 2021) and,
- iv) It represents another form of leading (Einarsen et al., 2007), under which rather than residing at opposing ends of a single constructive–destructive spectrum, destructive leadership embodies an alternative face of leadership where a leader can act constructively and destructively.

Destructive leadership (DL) therefore, refers to that form of leader behaviors or practices that can be considered as “harmful and deviant toward followers and/or the organization” (Thoroughgood et al., 2012, p. 231). Thoroughgood et al. (2012) reiterate that DL remains “a unique form of harm doing that is unequivocally tied to the leader’s voluntary engagement in such behavior” (p. 231).

Typically, in this study, the definition of DL is aligned with Krasikova et al.’s (2013) understanding of DL as ‘harmful behaviors embedded in the process of leading’ (p.130). Specifically, this study focuses on the principal-teacher interaction (leader-subordinate), highlighting how mistreatment or abuse within this dynamic can have detrimental effects on the teachers.

1.6.3 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is one of the typologies prominent scholars have associated with approaches of qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Phenomenology has an interest in understanding human experiences within the world. It can be used as a methodology and an epistemology. As a methodology, it seeks to clarify the essential nature of a phenomenon by exploring it from the perspectives of individuals who have directly experienced it. (Teherani et

al., 2015). Its purpose is to articulate the significance of this encounter, encompassing both what and how it was experienced (Teherani et al., 2015).

As an epistemology, it also aims to examine and comprehend human experience from the perspective of those who have encountered it, through the description, analysis, and interpretation of their underlying structures and meanings. This approach places particular emphasis on the subjective and conscious dimensions of human experience. Cal and Tehmarn (2016) highlights various strands of phenomenological epistemology as transcendental (transformational or transformative), hermeneutic, perceptual, and sociological where each is rooted in distinct conceptualizations of the nature and mode of human experience, reflective of diverse philosophical traditions. This study employs transcendental phenomenology, which aims to describe human experiences from the participants' perspectives, minimizing the researcher's biases in the interpretation. A detailed explanation is provided in the methodology chapter.

1.6.4 School Principals

A school principal in the province of Ontario is a school professional who is expected to lead school staff and students for success. Qualifications of a principal range from academic training to professional background. The job of a principal requires at least 'an undergraduate degree, five years of teaching experience, certification in three divisions (primary, junior, intermediate, senior), two Specialist or Honour Specialist additional qualifications or a master's degree and completion of the principal's qualification program' [Ministry of Education Ontario (MEO), 2022, Becoming a principal section, para.2].

The most recent National occupational classification (Government of Canada [GoC], 2021) describes a school principal as that school professional who is responsible for planning,

coordinating, overseeing, managing, and assessing the activities of educators and other personnel within primary or secondary educational institutions. These professionals are employed at both public and private educational establishments. As GoC (202, main duties section, para.1) states, in their duties, school principals are expected to:

- Plan, organize, direct, control and evaluate, through department heads or supervisors, the activities of teachers and support staff,
- Review programs to ensure conformance to school board or provincial standards and develop programs within limits of authority,
- Co-ordinate teaching activities of the institution by making personnel assignments, determining class size, and preparing timetables,
- Organize and maintain procedures for the keeping of records,
- Prepare and administer institution or program budget,
- Direct and co-ordinate school maintenance services and the use of school facilities
- May recruit and hire teachers and other staff, and
- May teach.

In practice, Pollock and Wang's (2021) recent studies have hinted the job of school principals in Canada and in Ontario, requires an average of 58 hours per week. Additionally, the Canadian principals tend to spend their time on four major areas in Ontario: close to 29.2 percent on school management, 9.5 percent on instructional leadership, 8 percent on student affairs and 6.8 percent on professional development. Activities pertaining to professional growth, instruction, management, and students' affairs highlight the interaction of the principal with teachers.

1.6.5 School Teachers

In the Canadian educational context, schoolteachers are professionals who had satisfied the requirements and are appointed in schools to fulfil duties and responsibilities. These professionals must have undergone a rigorous training and certification process. For instance, according to the Ontario College of Teachers (2024), to work as a teacher in Ontario, one must first be certified after satisfying several requirements such as having:

- completed a minimum of a three-year postsecondary education from an accredited institution recognized by the Ontario College of Teachers,
- successfully completed a comprehensive four-semester teacher education program, which equips them with essential pedagogical knowledge and practical teaching skills, and
- successfully completed the sexual abuse prevention program as part of certification process.

The primary role then is in shaping the academic, intellectual, and personal development of students (GoC, 2021). GoC describes the job of a schoolteacher in terms of their responsibilities. He/she must prepare and deliver instruction in teaching subjects at schools. In particular, the job of a secondary school teacher in Canada encompasses a range of responsibilities aimed at facilitating student learning and success including curriculum preparation, instructional delivery, assessment, and evaluation, supporting special needs' students, and mentorship, advisory and supervisory role for student teachers.

In short, the job of a teacher in Canada, particularly within the secondary school setting, embodies a multifaceted professional who is dedicated to fostering student learning, growth, and success. Through their commitment to curriculum development, instructional delivery,

assessment, individualized support, professional development, advisory roles, and mentorship, teachers play an indispensable role in shaping the future of Canadian youth and contributing to the advancement of society. In the efforts to understand who a teacher is, it is pertinent to reaffirm that teachers are accountable to the authority of school principals, who remain tasked with the responsibility of planning, coordinating, directing, overseeing, and assessing the activities of school staff.

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into six different chapters, each addressing a specific purpose. The first chapter serves as an introduction, delineating the study's contextual background and significance, as well as articulating the research purpose and questions guiding the inquiry. Subsequently, the second chapter engages in a comprehensive review of prior research pertinent to the current study, thus laying a foundation for understanding its relationship with the existing scholarly discourse.

The third chapter presents the theoretical framework, providing a critical lens through which the study is analyzed. This framework underpins the entire research, guiding the methodological choices and interpretation of findings. In the ensuing fourth chapter, attention is devoted to methodological considerations, presenting the procedures that underpin both data collection and analysis. This section sheds light on the reasons behind the sampling methodology employed, elucidates the instruments implemented for data collection, and delineates the analysis procedures undertaken to achieve meaningful insights from the gathered data.

Chapter five constitutes the turning point of the study, wherein the findings emerging from the empirical investigation are presented and critically discussed. Here, the research

outcomes are examined, offering detailed interpretations and insights into the phenomena under investigation.

Finally, in chapter six, the final stage of the study is reached. This final chapter highlights the major findings discussed throughout the research, offering a thorough summary of the study's contributions to the field. Additionally, it presents the primary insights gained from the research process and concludes with recommendations for future studies and practical applications.

1.8 Chapter Summary and Conclusion

Chapter one provided an in-depth overview of the study's context within educational leadership, specifically focusing on destructive leadership behaviors in schools. It identified the research problem as being the limited focus on harmful leadership practices among school principals, emphasizing the need to understand how these behaviors impact teachers' professional and personal well-being and to explore strategies to minimize the occurrence of destructive leadership. The chapter outlined the study's purpose as a means to facilitate learning and encourage positive change to depart from negative leadership practices. Additionally, it defined key terms such as destructive leadership or phenomenology to establish a foundation for analysis.

This study advances the discourse on educational leadership by examining often-overlooked negative aspects of school leadership, specifically addressing destructive leadership's impact on teachers. Its key contributions include:

- **Understanding Principals' Destructive Leadership Behaviors:** This study clarifies specific behaviors within teacher-principal relationships that teachers perceive as harmful, showing how these behaviors undermine the schoolwork environment.

- **Impact of Destructive Leadership on Teachers:** It explores how destructive leadership affects teachers' well-being, with particular attention to job satisfaction, motivation, and both psychological and physical health, capturing immediate and long-term effects.
- **Teachers' Perspectives on Mitigation Strategies:** A major focus of the study is on teachers' views regarding strategies to counteract destructive leadership, providing insights for practical approaches to foster a healthier school environment.

Drawing on these findings, the study offers recommendations to inform educational practice and future research, aiming to foster positive school environments through structural changes in leadership and the promotion of constructive practices. Overall, this study enhances understanding of destructive leadership in schools, offering insights that support teachers' well-being and effectiveness, contributing to a more ethical and resilient educational setting.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

The literature related to destructive leadership reveals a number of key points about this research object. First, it highlights multiple ways in which the phenomenon of destructive leadership is perceived and explained through its manifestations (Chi & Liang, 2013; Thoroughgood et al., 2012). In the field of education, while the scarcity of empirical research cannot be denied, existing studies are consistent with those from other fields, indicating disturbing patterns of behavior (Blase & Blase, 2002; Fahie, 2014; Riley et al., 2011; Ryan et al., 2021), detrimental effects on the victims (Blase & Blase, 2002; Sam, 2021; Santor et al., 2021; Woestman & Wasonga, 2015), and what can be done to disrupt or prevent the occurrence of the phenomenon of DL in schooling settings (Krasikova et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2015). This chapter navigates and reports on empirical studies conducted in and outside the context of Canada to highlight the different behaviors and associated consequences of, and strategies to disrupt the occurrence of DL in schools.

As the chapter navigates across extant literature, it acknowledges the scarcity of empirical research addressing the emerging domain of destructive educational leadership (Ryan et al., 2021; Santor et al., 2021). Consequently, such a context raises three primary implications for the current chapter. Firstly, limitation of accessible literature may influence the discussion of the study results depending on the nature of their findings. Secondly, the sections of the chapter may not be equally elaborated given that most studies have mostly focused on elucidating the manifestations and effects of dysfunctional aspects of leadership on followers while relatively fewer have delved into the strategies aimed at mitigating its occurrence. Lastly, seminal works conducted in the field exemplified by Blase and Blase (2002) remain invaluable sources of academic reference for efforts seeking to comprehend the phenomenon DL.

2.1 Structure of the Chapter

Chapter two begins by elaborating on various forms of DL behaviors exhibited in school settings. It then transitions to discussing the adverse impacts of these behaviors on the targeted educators, including their health, professional performance, and well-being. Finally, the chapter concludes by exploring prevention strategies and ways to address destructive leadership.

Throughout the chapter, the focus remains on providing a comprehensive understanding of destructive leadership behaviors and their implications, as well as practical approaches for mitigating their negative effects in educational environments.

2.2 Destructive Leadership Behaviors as Perceived by Teachers

Organizational scholars have reported instances of leaders' behaviors that negatively affect employees (Santos & Tin, 2016; Snow et al., 2021). In school contexts in particular, a few scholars (Milley, 2017; Sam, 2021; Santor et al., 2021) have recently pointed to the existence of the destructive behaviors of school principals perpetrated against educators. This section aims to report on different forms of school principal behaviors perceived by educators as destructive. Further, it points to potential gaps that can be explored for more findings. Equally importantly, since this negative side of leadership is relatively infrequent in academic literature (Milley, 2017; Santor et al., 2021), it is important to reiterate that DL behaviors refer to repeated leader's harmful behaviors or practices embedded in the process of leading.

Such behaviors have been broadly described by negative adjectives such as abusive, unethical, toxic, or nouns such as mistreatment, workplace aggression, boss abuse, ... to reflect how adversely they are perceived by the victimized employees. Some scholars tend to describe DL behaviors as verbal, nonverbal or physical. A review of literature on abusive supervision by

Blase et al. (2008) provides a detailed description with examples for each category. Verbal forms include:

put downs, belittling, false accusations, swearing, yelling, angry outbursts, name calling, public humiliation, criticism (i.e. excessive and/or unfounded criticism about work abilities or personal life), gossiping, spreading false rumors, blaming, sexual harassment, racial harassment, deceit, dishonesty, favoritism, unfair evaluations, unwarranted reprimands, stonewalling, taking credit for another's accomplishments, unreasonable assignments, excessive monitoring and micromanagement, dismissing another's thoughts and feelings, implying a master-servant relationship, unfair job references, undermining advancement, imposing unreasonable deadlines, unfair reassignments or terminations, and obstructing opportunities for professional development (p.266).

Nonverbal manifestations of mistreatment or abuse may refer to “ignoring, snubbing, aggressive eye contact ..., spying, and physical gestures (e.g., foot stomping, finger pointing, throwing and slamming objects, and violations of physical space)” (p.277). Finally, for physical forms of subordinate mistreatment by a superior, Ashforth (1994) identified various destructive behaviors in organizational settings, including exclusion, isolation, and the deliberate restriction of essential resources. Additionally, he highlighted instances where individuals conspired to restrict access to resources, engaged in theft, or participated in the destruction of property.

Specifically, within the schooling context, empirical studies have made similar observations. For example, over twenty years ago, Blase and Blase (2002) conducted an outstanding enquiry to lay a foundation in understanding teachers' mistreatment by principals. The grounded theory study included 50 teachers who had experienced mistreatment by their principals for at least six months in both the United States (49 participants) and Canada (1 participant). These 50 participants represented a range of backgrounds, locations, and settings. The group included 45 females and 5 males, with a mix of marital statuses, including both married and single individuals. They were located in urban (14), suburban (25), and rural (11)

areas and taught at elementary (26), middle/junior high (10), and high school (14) levels. Additionally, they included both tenured (44) and non-tenured (6) teachers, with an average of 16 years of working experience. Their degree qualifications ranged from bachelor's (7) to master's (31), Educational Specialist (11), and PhD (1).

From such a rich sample, the scholars explored participants' answers to the following questions: What principal behavior/conduct do you define as mistreatment/abuse? and 'How did such behavior/conduct affect you, if at all? A participant was interviewed at least twice but not more than four times. In addition, the study checked the participants' documents such as diaries, journal entries and other official school documents such as minutes of faculty meeting, law briefs to corroborate interview responses. Participants' interview responses concerning verbal abuse, professional undermining, and intimidation were systematically coded and subjected to thematic analysis to identify distinct forms of destructive leadership behaviors. Concurrently, document analysis was conducted using qualitative content analysis. Building upon this analysis, Blase and Blase compiled a comprehensive database of principal mistreatment behaviors from the perspective of affected teachers, which then informed the development of a model of teacher mistreatment by school principals.

Specifically, the researchers categorized these behaviors into three levels based on the severity of aggression: indirect moderately aggressive behaviors, direct escalating aggression behaviors, and direct severely aggressive behaviors. The first category, indirect moderately aggressive behaviors, includes actions such as disregarding teachers' needs, isolating them, withholding resources, denying approval or opportunities, favoring certain teachers, and engaging in offensive personal conduct. The second category, direct escalating aggression behaviors, involves more overtly hostile actions such as spying, sabotaging, stealing or damaging

instructional materials, imposing unreasonable demands, and inappropriate criticism. The final category, direct severely aggressive behaviors, encompasses behaviors similar to those in the previous levels but with the intent to inflict greater harm, thereby intensifying the negative impact on victims.

Milley (2017) attempted to develop a typology of maladministration occurring in schooling system in the context of Canada. He explored 64 reports of disciplinary proceedings involving school leaders (46 principals, 14 vice principals and 4 superintendents) in the provinces of Ontario and British Columbia covering the period 1999-2014 alongside related news reported in the media. Milley's study noted that the types of maladministration committed during the studied period were incompetence or negligence, academic dishonesty, financial transgression, sexual misconduct towards staff and students, off-duty misconduct, mistreatment of staff/students.

The conceptualization, categorization, or typology of destructive leadership behaviors is an important step in understanding which behaviors educators perceive as harmful once exhibited by their principals. However, some important considerations must be highlighted with such categorizations. Blase and Blase (2002) have generated a substantial database regarding principal destructive behaviors but their classification into just three broad levels appears too simplistic to be used in a study aiming to understand individual teachers' experiences of destructive leadership behaviors. Additionally, the degree of aggression which remains a major factor in understanding the different levels of aggression by the bully (principals) can vary among the victims and depend on its frequency of occurrence. For instance, one teacher might perceive public criticism from the principal as moderate aggression, while another might experience the same behavior as severe and escalating aggression.

Milley's (2017) typology is equally valuable, but its limitations must be noted, regarding its data sources and the scope of behaviors identified. Milley's study relied on documents accessed from (availed by) regulatory and disciplinary hearing bodies in Ontario and British Columbia as well as related topics covered in the media. Such sources raise concern over whether all the victims are willing to report to such bodies. Blase and Blase (2002) highlighted that some victims prefer silence over reporting due to fears of damaging their reputation, losing their job, or not being heard, especially if their principals have strong connections with regulatory or disciplinary bodies. Furthermore, studies like Milley's could not capture experiences of destructive behaviors resolved through dialogue, thus potentially missing a significant portion of unreported cases.

Nevertheless, this study departs from Blase and Blase (2002) and Milley's (2017) understanding of mistreatment or maladministration to shed light on the destructive behaviors of principals. Particularly, Milley's study was conducted in Canada, in the province of Ontario, and this study shares similarities with other research findings (Blase & Blase, 2002; Sam, 2021). To enhance the richness of information, this section extends its reach to studies conducted in different contexts to report on empirical findings possibly not covered in these studies. Therefore, this study discusses eight behaviors identified in the extant literature on principals' misconduct within schooling contexts. The discussion begins with negligence and concludes with indiscreet information sharing.

2.2.1 Negligence/Incompetence

Negligence or incompetence as a form of supervisory destructive behavior refers to cases of inattentiveness, poor judgement, or lack of commitment in the execution of their

responsibilities that deviate from the normal running of school (Milley, 2017). This category includes but is not limited to an administrator's failure to report where necessary. It equally entails failure to properly investigate. The two manifestations of indifference remain destructive mainly because silence in reporting can obstruct the possibility of support, and guidance from competent authority while absence of investigation may lead to poor decisions and persistence of problems among organizational members.

Negligence, and/or incompetence as forms of DL conceptually differ from laissez-faire style of leadership (LSL) although they may occasionally yield similar outcomes in organizational settings. Laissez-faire leadership is a deliberate, non-interventionist approach, where leaders intentionally avoid making decisions, providing direction, or engaging in conflict resolution. This style is grounded in the leader's belief that subordinates possess the competence and autonomy to manage their tasks independently (Bass, 1990). That is, LSL aims to foster autonomy and trust, thereby empowering employees to take ownership of their responsibilities (Northouse, 2018). However, when misapplied, LSL can result in organizational inefficiencies, lack of accountability, and unresolved issues due to insufficient leadership oversight (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

In contrast, negligence and incompetence are typically outcomes arising from a lack of ability, effort, or concern or even poor judgement. Negligence refers to failure to fulfill one's duties due to disregard or indifference, such as neglecting to address critical issues or respond to misconduct (Goleman, 2000). Incompetence, on the other hand, pertains to a leader's lack of necessary skills, knowledge, or capability to perform their duties effectively (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Unlike LSL, which is a strategic choice intended to empower subordinates, negligence and incompetence arise from lack of interest or inability to meet the demands of leadership

(Goleman, 2000). Thus, while LSL can be effective when applied in contexts where autonomy is appropriate, negligence and incompetence represent failures in leadership due to lack of engagement or capability. The critical distinction lies in the intention and ability of the leader: LSL is intentional and can encourage independent problem-solving, whereas negligence and incompetence are unintentional and stem from deficiencies in concern, motivation, or skills (Bass, 1990; Goleman, 2000; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003).

School principals' behaviors related to negligence have been reported in education in Ontario in Canada. For example, a survey conducted among elementary school teachers in Ontario found that 62 percent of educators' cases of violence reported to principals received no feedback (Elementary Teachers Federation of Ontario [ETFO], 2018). The misbehavior tends to persist since it was documented almost twenty years ago as the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation (OSSTF) survey results from 2005 had noted that subsequent action was not taken in 39 percent of cases of violence against teachers reported to school principals.

Clearly both OSSTF and ETFO findings reaffirm the existence of school principals/administrators' negligence to perform some of their duties. Such negligence might be due, among other factors, to the lack of required knowledge about decision making or poor guidance on handling disciplinary cases involving educators. As highlighted in the study's theoretical framework, if the superior occasionally performs behaviors that harm subordinates, there is a need to address the ineffective leadership behaviors through training or further guidance. However, once the superior recurrently neglects or fails to meet deadlines or to report, it becomes destructive.

Furthermore, although more rigorous studies are needed to confirm the trend of negligence as form of DL, observable from OSSTF's (2005) and ETFO's (2018) findings, is that this malfeasance has persisted from 2005 to 2018 in Ontario. However, apart from failure to report a case, or failing to act where necessary, other possibilities of incidences of negligence/indifference such as delaying decisions, failure to convene faculty meetings have not been reported in literature. Perhaps this gap exists because ETFO and OSSTF's surveys or Milley's document analysis did not directly interact with the victims to unearth more qualitative data. In addition, since aspects of principal/administrator's negligence are indirect and less aggressive (Blase & Blase, 2004), there is a need to acknowledge the difficulty to stimulate study participants to share experiences during data collection. More clarity is also needed to distinguish between forms of negligence/indifference that are the results of human error or lack of knowledge from those that persist and are intentional.

2.2.2 Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty entails intentional and unauthorized behaviors that go against academic integrity (Milley, 2017). Examples include attempting or using unauthorized material in academic task (cheating), intentional and unauthorized falsification of information (fabrication), deliberate adoption or reproduction of words, statements, or ideas of another person without proper acknowledgement (plagiarism) and facilitating others to commit academic dishonesty (Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2001). Moreover, academic dishonesty includes sharing false information and failure to contribute to a collective academic project (Kaduce & Klug, 1986) and preventing others from completing an academic task (Stern & Havlicek, 1986).

Some of these aspects of academic dishonesty have been pointed out in literature on destructive leadership behaviors. Some principals have facilitated educators in committing

academic misconduct, for example. In a study conducted in Canada, Milley (2017) found out that one principal “against guidelines, allowed teachers to access and photocopy tests in advance, while reportedly suggesting they should do what they could to ensure good test scores” (p.12). The zeal for improved test scores is commendable but the use of unethical means is destructive. In other instances of academic transgression, educators have reported that some principals claimed credit for teachers’ work by submitting and presenting teachers’ proposals to apply for grants (Blase & Blase, 2004).

Although lack of academic integrity for school leaders remains questionable, it might be motivated by the desire to meet contextual factors such as criteria for funding and other pressures of accountability embedded in neoliberal ideologies. Studying the effect of neoliberal ideologies on education systems in Canada, Dionne and Milley (2019) noted that pressures of accountability have resulted in some shifts in educational practices. As they noted, schools face increasing pressure to meet funding requirements such as proving what they do through students’ test results. Thus, in conditions where accountability is tied to students’ test results, Dionne and Milley reiterate, cheating and manipulation are inevitable in the process of getting what they consider as better numerical scores. Moreover, such a conducive environment for academic misconduct is consistent with Levin’s (2008) acknowledgement of the difficulty of reconciling competing interests in educational decisions and choices in Canada.

In short, rather than failing to account for required academic benchmarks, rather than serving the purpose of academic assessments at the heart of which would be supporting students’ learning, and making informed instructional decisions, unethical academic behaviors step in to help perpetrators fraudulently meet demands of accountability in terms of academic outcomes. Notable for this form of academic dishonesty is complicit silence as well, which

casts doubt on professional judgement of some educators who cooperate to implement the destructive initiative. Perhaps, the neoliberal context of education is a heavy weight on school administrators' shoulders. However, this possibility of educator's complicity for the occurrence of academic misconduct has not been investigated.

There must be several actors who cooperate in the process of assessment to allow any form of cheating. For example, in the scenario where the school principal wanted to ensure better test scores by copying test content in advance, at least the examiner was contacted and requested to avail the content, and to remain silent in face of such unacceptable requests. This complicity renders the investigation of such behaviors difficult since it implicates both the superior and their subordinates. Perhaps studies like this involving victimized teachers as data sources will yield more experiences of academic misconduct involving the principal and a different teacher than those implicating the participant.

2.2.3 Lies/False Accusations/Unfair Criticism

Further to lack of academic integrity, educators have reported malicious lies from school principals/administrators. In the workplace, Lying refers to, according to Grover (2005), intentionally making false statement(s). In Grover's experience, managers may decide to avoid truth-telling to pursue their own interests when they are in bargaining situations or faced with conflicting expectations. For example, teachers who participated in Blase and Blase 's (2002) study testified that their principals repeatedly made statements that conflicted with their experiences. Blase and Blase (2002) noted that one principal intentionally lied in the conference with the parents about a targeted teacher. One participant in Blasé and Blasé' study reported that the the principal

... would say that you were the person with the problem and not the child . . . that you were making the child have low self-esteem and act out in class. It was your fault.

I wasn't even in the conference with the parent and the principal asked, "What exactly is it that you were doing to her child?" She accused me in front of the parents without even investigating. When the parents left, the principal said, "I know that you didn't do anything wrong" (p.688).

More similarly Santor et al.'s (2021) quantitative study that explored workplace harassment perpetrated against the teachers during the 2018-2019 academic year in Canadian schooling context, 10 percent of over thousand elementary school educators who participated in this study reported that they have experienced false accusations from their principals or administrators. Evidently, educators' experiences of lies, false accusations, and unfair criticisms made by their principals who would otherwise inspire them to commit to honesty, diverge from Sergiovanni's (2007) view of schools as moral enterprises and constitute grounds for educators to lose faith in their leaders.

Although a few studies from extant literature (Blase & Blase, 2002; OSSTF, 2005; Santor et al., 2021) that have documented lies and unfair criticisms as principal's misconduct, remain predominantly quantitative in Canada, they provide confirmation that the behavior exists in the principal-teacher interaction. What remains is for research efforts to directly attend to stories of the victimized teachers in schooling contexts to shed light on various circumstances under which lies, or unfair criticisms are directed towards educators and whether such destructive principals do not record lies in the official school files.

2.2.4 Undermining the Dignity of Persons

This dimension of negative behaviors refers to, as Sam (2021) argues, school administrators' practices and behaviors that in educators' experiences "reflect a lack of respect towards them as professionals or as people" (p.10). Put differently, these behaviors/practices encompass relational or interactional experiences resulting in the degradation of the victim's dignity in the workplace (Lindner, 2002). In a survey conducted among over 800 primary and secondary school teachers in Australia, Riley et al. (2011) investigated the extent to which behavioral patterns of 'diminished professional standing'. The study asked respondents to confirm whether they had experienced stated behaviors and found the following:

Table 1

Percentage of Confirmation of Diminished Professional Standing

Stated behavioral item	% of victims
Recognition, acknowledgement, and praise are withheld	46
Information is withheld, which affects your performance	43.6
Frozen out/ignored/excluded from decision making	40.3
Lack of opportunity for face-to-face discussions to take place	39.3
You are ignored or excluded	39.3
Areas of responsibility are removed or added without consultation	38.1

Note. The table above highlights key behavioral items that contributed to victims' feelings of diminished professional standing. The data reveal that the most frequently reported behavior was the withholding of recognition, acknowledgment, and praise, cited by 46% of

participants. This was closely followed by the withholding of information critical to job performance (43.6%). Being frozen out, ignored, or excluded from decision-making processes was also prominent (40.3%), along with a lack of opportunity for face-to-face discussions (39.3%) and general experiences of being ignored or excluded (39.3%). Additionally, 38.1% of victims reported that their areas of responsibility were removed or added without consultation. These behaviors collectively point to patterns of exclusion, lack of communication, and undermining of professional roles, significantly impacting the victims' sense of value and standing within their organizations.

Recently, Santor et al. (2021) investigated sources of violence perpetrated against elementary school teachers in Ontario in the 2017/2018 school year where the scholars sought to find out the prevalence and impact of harassment and violence against mental health, job performance, job satisfaction, and the learning environment of the classroom in that province. Among the forms of violence checked were jokes or innuendo that demean, and the teacher's authority or expertise being disrespected. Interestingly, the study noted that, among a thousand educators who participated in the study, an educator's authority was likely to be disrespected by their administrator 4.65 times (Standard deviation of 6.18), and to experience putdowns 4.21 times of putdowns (standard deviation: 5.86) from the administrator.

Besides Riley et al. and Santor et al.'s quantitative studies that investigated the extent and frequencies of teachers' experiences of disrespect, qualitative studies highlighted the experiences of how the participants' dignity were undermined. For instance, Sam (2021) interviewed forty teachers from both public and private grade-12 schools in the states of California, Illinois, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin in the United States. Sam's study sought to identify examples of ethical and unethical principal leadership behaviors and/or practices as perceived by teachers

in their own work experience. In the results, one teacher mentioned she felt undermined when an assistant principal “pulled me out of the class that I was teaching in order to like raise his voice at me and then sent me back to go finish the class” (p.12).

While the principal asked the teacher to move with the intent to belittle them, in Blase and Blase’s (2002) study, the principal thwarted targeted teachers’ efforts for professional growth. The mistreated teachers reported

I had this idea to initiate professional growth plans that focused on trying to discover ways in which teachers can help each other grow. It was meaningful professional growth. . . . I certainly was aware that people had been victimized by this principal, and I had observed people being embarrassed publicly. I had even cradled people who were crying and angry and disenfranchised . . . and damaged by this principal. . . . She said, “Forget it [professional development].” She hid behind saying that people were too burdened. She didn’t want to come out clearly as abusive. I felt that this was abusive because she is the one who told me to try it. She [also] criticized what I was doing [to other teachers] to make sure it became an unacceptable and undesirable thing for teachers to do (p.689).

Clearly, the studies (Blase& Blase, 2002; Riley et al., 2011; Sam, 2021; Santor et al., 2021) suggest that disrespectful behaviors were directed against educators (from their perspectives as victims) in their working experiences, despite different working contexts. Additionally, from Milley’s (2017) qualitative study conducted in Ontario and British Columbia, this form of misconduct “undermining the dignity of teachers” is missing among different

dimensions of maladministration retrieved from the media sources and records in the disciplinary hearings and regulatory bodies.

2.2.5 Prioritizing Personal Gain

Unlike what has been emphasized in literature that school administrators' priorities converge toward improving students' learning outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2019) for example, they are also capable of pursuing personal gain through decisions and choices they make and how they implement these. At the heart of such unethicity, administrators' needs take precedence over organizational needs. In Sam's (2021) findings, educators described some school administrators who

“have a desire for the title and the monetary need that comes with titles and the fame, so to speak, the accolades that come with having a certain title, making that the priority over actually doing something authentically good for the school community” (p.11).

Two main points arise from this explanation: material possessions and undeservedly taking credits for work they did not do. In Blase and Blase's (2002) findings, principals used proposals written by teachers to apply for grants. In an excerpt of the findings, one participant (victim) shed light on their conversation with the principal (offender). “Why did you sign the grant that I wrote?” He said, “Well, central office would question it. As long as you are my employee your work is my work and I get the recognition.” (p.689).

Further with pursuit of titles, some other administrators chose to keep a bright image of themselves rather than their organizational appearance. As educators who participated in Sam's study described the misconduct, their principal's priority was “bringing in programs that lack evidence of success, being image and publicity focused, and in some more severe cases, altering documents or choosing not to report incidences to keep up appearances” (p.1). The intention to

manage and keep the appearance resonates with Marsh, et al.'s (2017) findings in the implementation of new evaluation policies in 9 Orleans 'schools in Ontario.

Marsh et al. (2017) observed that some schools took the implementation of the new evaluation policy as an opportunity to inform and improve instruction mainly through reflexive practices, whereas others superficially took strategic actions to appear effective in relation to change or were interested in complying with technical requirements rather than embracing actual change in deep.

Besides titles and appearance, other school administrators engaged in monetary gains through unethical means. Analyzing records of disciplinary hearings reported to regulatory bodies responsible for governing, the professional and ethical conduct of school administrators in Ontario and Alberta, Milley (2017) reported cases where administrator's personal interests took precedence over school goals. While in one instance, a school administrator used a school board credit card to fill up the gas tank of their personal vehicle, another was convicted of "defrauding a school board and accepting bribes and eventually returned CDN\$127,000 to the board" (p.9).

In other flagrant cases of misappropriation of funds, a school administrator was found guilty of stealing "nearly \$200,000' from the federal government and her Catholic school board" in Brampton, Ontario (Mitchell, 2007). As Mitchell adds, the judge noted in passing that "The fraud engaged a high degree of planning, premeditation, and sophistication... The dishonest conduct was years in duration".

The greed for personal gain apparently is a complex phenomenon that requires more research attention. Perhaps some instances of funds mismanagement can fit in principals' poor judgement, lack of informed decision-making skills and the context under which school financial

or material resources are managed. More research inquiry into such dysfunctional practices should look beyond Blase and Blase's (2004) victims' responses and Milley's (2017) analysis of written records to uncover different hidden strategies under which personal interests are served through organizational means. Specifically, efforts towards fuller understanding of leaders' financial misconducts necessitate exploring multiple sources including educators. Such sources would consider the voices of those involved in the process of school budget planning, execution and/or auditing.

2.2.6 Abusive Monitoring/Supervision

Monitoring encompasses a variety of workplace practices that help to collect data on the performance of employees (Aiello, 1993). With a focus on performance, it is possible to assess different aspects of work that need support to improve organizational outcomes. However, the ability of the leader (supervisor) to moderate the effects of supervision on employees, how individual worker(s) react(s) to and implement gains from that supervision are important. Put another way, employees' response to monitoring matters because organizations have a significant interest in fostering both employee motivation and well-being (Stanton, 2000).

Specifically in schools, under the influences of neoliberal ideologies that insist on pressures of accountability in education (Dionne & Milley, 2019), monitoring is imperative for school administrators to ensure how educators' performance aligns with school targets and/or education standards in effect. Thus, an effective performance appraisal should conceive educators/teachers as evaluation subjects and contributors of the same evaluation process (Dandart & Brutus, 2020) especially in the management of feedback. However, aspects of disequilibrium often implicit in the monitoring process destroy the purpose that supervision aims

to serve. This is often the case of inappropriate feedback or follow-up which ends up with employees' dissatisfaction. As Stanton (2000) pointed out, dissatisfaction with feedback on monitored work leads to adverse effects on employees such as losing trust in supervisors. In case of excessive supervision in education, Blase and Blase (2004) noted that principals wrote unjustified reprimands to teachers for "going to a storage closet or a stolen camera or included false information in evaluation reports of teachers" (p.162).

Unsubstantiated letters and false evaluation reports resonate with Maharaj's (2014) remarks on teacher's performance appraisal (TPA) in Canada. Maharaj contends that TPA is not implemented fairly and is entangled by some challenges. Among other challenges, principals were not strongly prepared to conduct TPA and thus the TPA could not make a positive impact on professional growth of teachers. Similarly, Dandart & Brutus, pointed to the potential of principals' unconscious bias and ineffective communication due to the absence of textual reference for guidance. Clearly, lack of prior training of principals, absence of references for effective communication, and principals' biases may lead to ineffective supervision. Thus, educators' experiences are filled with dissatisfaction rather than expectation for support and professional growth. And this is confirmed in an all-member survey conducted among elementary school teachers in Ontario, where 46 percent of educators reported excessive monitoring or supervising of their work (ETFO, 2018) from their administrators.

In sum, school administrators should carry out TPA to foster professional growth and ensure public accountability. However, the process of monitoring/supervision/evaluation has the potential to become a destructive rather than constructive element of teacher growth when it relies on bureaucratic tendencies and disproportionate dialogue between the principal and educator. However, apart from ETFO's survey results, academic discussion in relation to

excessive supervision is infrequent in literature on destructive EL in Canada. Moreover, teachers' perceptions on different manifestations of school administrators' excessive supervision/monitoring of educators' work have not been documented in Canada.

2.2.7 Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment refers to specific behavior including acts such as sexual coercion, unwelcome sexual advances, and gender-based harassment. In the occurrence of sexual coercion to start with, explicit and/or implicit attempts at sexual cooperation between the employee and the employer/supervisor define conditions of employment (Cortina & Areguin, 2021). In this case, examples can be promises of professional rewards in exchange for sexual favors (job offer, promotion or a better evaluation) or potential of professional harm if sexual demands are not met. That harm can take the form of unfair evaluation reports, demotion, or transfer for example. Under unwanted sexual attention however, sexual harassment switches to uninvited or unreciprocated, and distressing behaviors. These may include inappropriate sexual remarks, nonconsensual physical contact, forced kissing, persistent pressure for dates or sexual activities, and sexual assault (Fitzgerald, 2019). In case of gender harassment, victims face degrading, belittling, or antagonistic behaviors based on gender or sex (Leskinen & Cortina, 2014). Gender harassment can include utterances with reference to the abilities of women (for example: female educators cannot head the department of mathematics/physics because they do not belong in science) or men cannot make a better career as nurse.

Two decades ago, in the Blase and Blase's study of teacher mistreatment by principal, a participant had pointed out to the existence of sexual harassment as a form of mistreatment they faced as in her story as below

I had problems with him calling me to his office. He would close the door and say, “Does this make you nervous to be in here with me by yourself?” Then he would tell me inappropriate jokes. He was very flirtatious and very controlling and he knew that he was making me nervous; the jokes were sexual. Once, he said, “I want you to come over here and stand behind the desk with me.” He tickled the backs of my legs and said, “I have been wanting to do that all day.” I got out of his office. The secretary was aware that he was harassing me and would look at me like, “I am so sorry.” Once, he came by my classroom and poked me right under my arm, not a very good place to be poking a female. He just kind of laughed (p.699).

In another study that conducted among 172 teachers from the United States and Canada who had experiences of workplace abuse by a superior, Blase et al. (2008) wanted to find out the frequency of occurrence of different forms of abuse and asked participants to rate 38 descriptors of abuse among which appeared ‘*Sexually harassed me.*’ In the results, 4.7 percent of participants rated the descriptor ‘sexually harassed’ me as a form of workplace abuse from a superior that occur several times in their experiences.

From these cases of sexual misconduct, what can be learned is that both female and male administrators have the potential to commit sexually harassment. Furthermore, sexual misconduct in the interactional space superior-subordinate exists but it might be surrounded by some silence. Phillips et al. (2019) reiterates that sexual harassment persists, and seems normalized because victims believe silence is safer than confrontation or official reporting. Perhaps, for research participants, sexual harassment as a topic, remains too sensitive to be discussed with the researcher. Therefore, in consideration of such silence, researchers need to achieve familiarity with sources of information over time. Familiarity with study participants can

be achieved by establishing and staying closer to the sources. Since Milley (2017) relied on secondary data, victims' direct voices need to be included in research processes aiming to capture complete understanding of sexual harassment as a form of destructive EL.

2.2.8 Indiscreet Information Sharing

Indiscreet information sharing entails breaches of confidentiality and/or gossiping in communication (Sam, 2021). Failure to honor confidentiality and fostering gossip are part of unethical manners because they negatively affect employer-employee openness. In Sam's (2021) study educators spoke about principals "talking about things that have gone on in the classrooms during observations, sharing the way that some teachers were rated, things about students, information in emails from parents". In the case of gossip, principals have spread gossip by "trying to get information on other teachers" (p.9). Trying to get information on others through fostering gossip, does not conflict with Blase and Blase's (2004) observation of principals spying on teachers. In Blase and Blase's findings, principals were 'soliciting the services of favored teachers and/or parents as informants' (p.161). The harm in this breach of confidentiality lies in the fact that it appears to interfere within the normal channel of communication through which guidance would be sought and provided and may further lead to absence of openness and transparency between staff.

Although studies (Blase & Blase, 2004; Sam, 2021) have confirmed the existence of breach of confidentiality among principals' abusive behaviors in the United States of America, this dimension is absent in literature on school leadership in Canada. The absence of some dimensions in scholarly discussion may/may not necessarily equate its absence in practices.

Instead, it highlights the need for further research to explore the negative aspects of educational leadership across various school contexts.

2.2.9 Section Summary and Conclusion

Destructive behaviors of school administrators perpetrated against educators discussed in literature constitute informative reference, but they are yet to paint a complete picture of instances under which destructive behaviors are directed against educators. This is mainly due to the limitation in scope, designs and samples of studies that led to the forms under which destructive EL occurs. Specifically, following Ryan et al.'s (2021) understanding of destructive EL as located in the interaction leader-follower, leader-wider school environment, and follower-school wider environment, one can argue that literature on forms of destructive EL scholars has been framed in the perspectives of the space leader-follower only. Therefore, the manifestations of the dark side of EL remain unknown in the interaction between destructive principal and school community as well as that between the victim and the wider organization excluding the offender.

Besides this gap in scope, existing research efforts have mainly focused on identifying the forms under which destructive behaviors occur in general but what constitutes (structure of) the forms is infrequent in literature. In particular, the context of literature on destructive educational leadership in Canada does not look different from other contexts. In fact, a handful of studies have only been conducted in Ontario (ETFO, 2018; OSSTF, 2005; Santor, et al. 2021; Milley, 2017) or Alberta (Milley, 2017). And these studies have mainly relied on surveys thereby failing to explore perceptions of the victim through other sources of data such as interviews.

2.3 Effects of Destructive Leadership Behaviors among Teachers

Most frequently discussed are empirical findings on how educational leadership behaviors yield positive academic outcomes. Typical examples have been documented through studies of how school leaders' behaviors impact students' academic outcomes (Day et al., 2020; Sebastian et al., 2019), or how leadership roles are enacted among organizational members (Hallinger & Heck, 2007) to achieve desired educational results. Such studies have predominantly contended that school leaders have the potential to enhance teachers' professional learning (Hallinger et al., 2015; Leithwood et al., 2019) and increase their motivation and commitment for work for work.

However, the influence of leaders on subordinates does not always align with organizational goals or support subordinates' performance. Instead, it can lead to detrimental outcomes for employees and the organization. This section discusses empirical findings on the impact of principals' negative leadership behaviors on teachers in both their professional and personal lives. The effects primarily extend to job attrition, as well as victims' health and finances.

2.3.1 Teacher Attrition

In their examination of factors contributing to attrition among educators in Ontario, Clark and Antonelli (2013) survey noted that negative relationship between early retirees/resignees and the principal was the predominant reason that led to teachers leaving their job, or retiring earlier than expected, between 2006 and 2008 in Ontario. Additionally, concerns regarding workload, mismatch between assignments assigned tasks and teachers' qualifications and relational difficulties with colleagues were cited as influential in prompting teacher's decision to resign or retire earlier than anticipated. Statistically, Clark and Antonelli (2013) noted that 36 percent of

respondents had left teaching but remained in the workforce whereas 29 percent retired earlier than officially expected in the 2006/2007 and the 2007/2008 academic years because of adverse interaction with the principals. Understandably, teachers subjected to such circumstances may find themselves disillusioned, reaching a level where they are no longer able to endure supervisory mistreatment.

Furthermore, the ramification of such adverse workplace dynamics extends beyond an early retirement and change of career. As indicated in the studies of de Wet (2010), and Snow et al. (2021), victims of destructive leadership behaviors resort to absenteeism, or prolonged breaks from work. Snow et al. (2021) sheds light on the profound impact of abusive supervision on teachers' well-being, with one interviewee quoted expressing how the stress led them to a two-year career break, "I did not enjoy coming to school. Due to stress, I was not doing a job and despised myself because of it. I eventually took a two-year career break" (p.14). In fact, dissatisfied with destructive environment, some of the victimized teachers moved away from the offender's location for a short or long time.

Similarly, literature has confirmed instances of absences and breaks among victims in Canada. While educators who took time off from duties in the 2007/2008 academic year stood at 10 percent (39/390) in OSSTF's (2005) survey results, they rose to 25 percent (249/989) in a different academic year of 2017/2018 in Santor et al.'s (2021) findings. In fact, the effects of destructive EL extend to different forms of teacher attrition such as early retirement, resignation or change of profession. Based on OSSTF and Santor and colleagues' surveys, it can be claimed that more victims have increasingly found relief in taking breaks from duties in Ontario. However, victims' experiences during retirement or breaks and afterwards have not been explored in previous studies.

2.3.2 *Deterioration of Health Conditions and its Ramifications*

Besides teacher attrition, other deleterious effects of emotional, social, psychological, and physiological dimensions have been documented among the victims. For example, one participant in Fahie and Devine's (2014) qualitative study of primary school teachers' experiences of leader bullying in Ireland, shared how they were affected and stated.

I don't know what I'm terrified of, but I'm terrified of everything now...I'm scared out of my wits. I'm jumping at everything. If someone came into my classroom and asked if they could see me, I'm terrified and I'm jumping... (p.3).

Clearly, this respondent attests to experiences of fear after having been subjected to mistreatment by the principal. Fear was equally mentioned among effects felt by teachers, victims of principal mistreatment in the studies of Blase and Blase (2004) and Snow et al. (2021). In fact, abused teachers experienced tense and chronic fear, and anxiety as primary long-term responses to threats. While some of the victims' primary fear was directly driven by experiences of harm, others developed secondary fear depending on different connections they drew. For instance, Blase and Blase noted that some of the mistreated teachers feared being mistreated again while others were not sure of what could happen for their future. Specifically, in cases of secondary fear, teachers were afraid of losing jobs, being known for bad behavior, being excluded from colleagues, lack of assistance from office, or failing their students instructionally, and receiving unfair evaluations. In a point, fear spread in and beyond the workplace and "... *dominated the entire sense of being*" (p.165).

The emotional and psychological deterioration caused by supervisory mistreatment significantly impacts their health, often translating into other serious health issues. A participant in Blase and Blase (2002) shared their experiences:

I couldn't understand what I had done to provoke this. I felt a loss of power, loss of center, loss of balance. I felt reduced, like when you have a parent who has turned on you. Our school was like a dysfunctional family, and I was the abused child. I lost my confidence. I was becoming dysfunctional in my personal life. I had bad dreams. It is very painful, devastating. I felt sad, betrayed, angry, indignant, outraged, disoriented (p.700).

This account vividly illustrates the profound impact of principal destructive behaviors on the teachers, as the victim experienced significant psychological distress that permeated both personal and professional realms. Moreover, with the Fahie and Devine's (2014) study, participants associated their experiences of such chronic stress and emotional turmoil to other severe physical health issues, including sleep disturbances, recurring nightmares, intrusive thoughts, persistent fatigue, gastrointestinal issues such as stomach aches and nausea, fluctuations in weight, neck and back discomfort (pain), and frequent headaches or migraines, exacerbating the overall decline in the victim's well-being. Similarly, Snow et al. (2021) observed that victimized teachers who participated in their study developed feelings of isolation, tearfulness, frustration, humiliation, disbelief, helplessness, embarrassment, and anger after exposure to supervisory mistreatment.

Typically, in Canada, such findings (Blase & Blase, 2002; Fahie & Devine, 2014; Snow et al., 2021) mirror results of survey conducted among secondary school teachers in Ontario about how teachers reacted when they were bullied by an administrator. Of 1515 elementary and secondary school teachers who were studied, 380 were victims of administrators' bullying and 242 of them reported they had reacted with extreme anger (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation [OSSTF], 2005) after exposure to supervisory bullying. Besides fear and anger as reaction to administrator bullying, OSSTF (2005) noted other stress related reactions among 54 percent of sampled teachers who reacted. These responses included loss of concentration, work withdrawal and disruption in family and social life.

The devastating effects of destructive leadership behaviors on the physiological or mental health of teachers cannot be overstated. However, it remains crucial to recognize that these repercussions extend far beyond the victims' level, ultimately affecting the very foundation of effective teaching and learning. When educators are subjected to chronic stress, fear, and emotional confusion due to abusive leadership, their ability to fulfill their roles as facilitators of learning is profoundly compromised. Victims' workday may become a space for personal struggles rather than concentration on the performance of their duties as professionals. In explicit terms, teachers who are grappling with the aftermath of principal mistreatment/abuse are less likely to provide the supportive and nurturing environments essential for student growth and development.

For example, as de Wet (2010) observed, victims of principals' abuse have constantly questioned their own professional abilities amidst lack of confidence and feeling of mediocrity. It can then be asserted that, at personal and institutional levels, pursuit of excellence or the potential for excellence is compromised in the environment characterized by fear and stress, and self-doubt. Specifically, a decline in the instructional performance might be inevitable among victims. Questionable, however, remains what the professional learning communities become in the face of broken emotions and lack of confidence. de Wet (2010) noted that "a creative teacher who had to endure criticism for her ideas to improve and reorganize a school function decided to distance herself from all school activities except teaching" as well as abstaining from sharing her own ideas (p.1457). In a word, negative emotions and stress related reactions seem to contribute to a decline of victims' professional performance among other factors at victim's level and they may impact interactional patterns of staff.

At institutional level, Mahlangu's (2014) study of effects of toxic leadership behaviors on teaching and learning process noted a disintegration on this process. In fact, Mahlangu observed that meetings and workshops that would inform teachers' professional development were poorly attended, and mutual trust was broken. The withdrawal from professional meetings was also related to taking distance from social events involving the principal. In other cases, teachers who sympathize with the toxic leader stay closer such that victims of destructive leadership are excluded or perceived as outsiders or troublemakers. In Fahie and Devine's (2014) interview results, a respondent illustrates this (self-) exclusion by stating "For two years, I became a recluse. I hardly left the house. That's what it [the bullying] did to me" (p.244). Whether by taking distance from interacting with the offender, or labeling outsiders, the outcome is that social patterns are negatively affected.

However, while Fahie and Devine evoked teachers taking leaders' side, their study remained silent about the possibility of some teachers taking side of the victim. Equally missing in literature is the discussion on how, in such an emotionally negative environment, untargeted teachers' emotions are affected by principals' destructive behaviors. Thus, towards a fuller picture of the extent to which teachers can be emotionally affected, research efforts would find it important to explore perceptions of both targeted and untargeted victims of destructive behaviors of EL.

More serious effects were reported in relation to teachers' mental and psychological health. Riley, et al. (2011) noted that among 44 teachers who participated in their study, 39 mentioned their mental and psychological health had been negatively affected after experiencing leader bullying. Starting with mental health, victimized teachers reported they considered suicide (Fahie & Devine, 2014; Snow et al., 2021) and experienced substance abuse, and nightmares

(Blase & Blase, 2004; Fahie & Devine, 2014) beyond experiences of depression and exhaustion. One interviewee in Fahie and Devine's (2014) study echoed how she was affected and stated, "In October time, I dreamt of suicide, very graphically...death would have been a release really. I'd had enough. It would have been a release" (p.242). In Canada, OSSTF's (2005) survey conducted among teachers, revealed incidences of increase of substances abuse in as much as 9 percent of the victims.

In fact, from a comparison of suicide and other responses, it can be argued that suicide appears to be the last option of the victims' responses to harmful effects of EL (because the victim loses life in case of suicide). Such a situation raises questions whether there are or are not responses preceding suicide or whether a sequence of responses exists prior to suicide. One can equally ask how factors such as severity and duration of exposure, amount of, or number of instances of harm suffered predict victims' responses. However, responses to these questions are yet to be undocumented in literature.

Equally importantly, victims of destructive EL have reported a variety of physiological problems that put their health under risks. For example, while participants in Blase and Blase's (2004) study of principal mistreatment mentioned issues such as vomiting, weight gain/loss, diarrhea, headaches, skin irritation, stomach cramps, disturbed sleep, those in Fahie and Devine's (2014) study spoke of loss of appetite for food. Similarly in Canada, OSSTF's (2005) survey results indicated that 25 percent of the participants, experienced loss of appetite for food. Although, victims' experiences of physiological difficulties reported in literature (Blase & Blase, 2004; Fahie & Devine, 2014; OSSTF, 2005) are credible, they all came from victims' own experiences, thus lacking a medical understanding in data collection and analysis. Perhaps, a combination of interview data with analysis of the victims' medical records could have added

more clarity on the findings on mental, psychological, or physiological dimension, thereby elucidating the relationship between destructive EL and victims' physiological responses.

2.3.3 Financial Effects

The occurrence of harassment impacts the work attendance of the victims and incurs financial losses, as evidenced by Santor et al. (2021) in the context of Canada. Santor et al. examined the relationship between incidents of harassment and violence and the subsequent days off work taken by affected individuals. Out of 989 participants who reported significant harassment incidents during the 2017–2018 academic year, 25.1% (249 individuals) took time off from work. The study found that the mean number of days off work for these individuals was 6.84 days, with a standard deviation of 7.54. The associated costs of this absenteeism were also analyzed, revealing an average cost of 1,652.31 CAD per incident for hiring replacements, calculated using a per diem rate of 240.74 CAD. Additionally, the analysis showed a positive and significant correlation between the number of days off work following specific harassment incidents and the overall amount of harassment experienced by the individual ($r = 0.32$, $p < .0001$), indicating a clear link between absenteeism and the severity of mistreatment endured.

Moreover, while replacement of a teacher directly incurs an economic cost at institutional level, financial impact on the victims cannot be negated. Factors such as resignations, unfair evaluations, and missed professional opportunities due to negative interactions with the destructive principals, directly affect the victim's own financial stability. For instance, echoing how they reacted, one interviewee in Fahie and Devine's (2014) expressed how repercussions of leaving their position affected them stating, "I had no money, but I didn't care. I just had to keep away from her. Anything to keep away from her" (p. 245). Consequently, taking time off from the job, or making the decision to leave the job before securing another position directly implies

that victims must live some period of financial strain without salary. Furthermore, victimized educators who opt for early retirement may lose job benefits associated with remaining years before normal retirement, while changing schools to save their jobs, may sacrifice benefits associated with seniority (Blase & Blase, 2004).

2.3.4 Conclusion

Above all, the adverse impact of destructive leadership behaviors enacted by principals have far-reaching consequences on the victims' health conditions, professional performance, and morale thus culminating in poor teaching and learning. Although research findings on the effect of negative leadership behaviors on teachers remain credible based on the victims' experiences, existing literature remains predominantly limited in regarding scope and designs. Specifically, a handful of qualitative enquiries (Blase & Blase, 2002; Fahie & Devine, 2014; Sam, 2021) that examined the effects of negative principal behaviors on teachers have been conducted outside the context of Canada, what is known in this regard has come to our understanding through quantitative studies (OSSTF, 2005; Santor et al., 2021). The adverse impacts of destructive leadership behaviors by principals have wide-ranging consequences, affecting the health and professional performance of individual teachers. Thus, our understanding of how the victims is negatively affected relies heavily on quantitative studies (OSSTF, 2005; Santor et al., 2021) in Canada.

Furthermore, although existing empirical research on destructive EL has mostly paid attention to how individual victims are affected, Ryan et al. (2021) argues that destructive dynamics create a disequilibrium at victim's personal level, but in turn that imbalance widens to disturb "the broader social system and, thus, the health and sustainability of that ecosystem" (p.18). In other words, effects of the dark side of EL have been exclusively studied and framed in

leader-follower relationship. Therefore, deterioration damages the spaces beyond leader-follower interaction, that is, the interaction between the school principal and the broad school environment, and that space between the teachers and the work environment.

Given the devastating effects of DL, it is essential that current selection processes for leadership roles be expanded beyond traditional assessments of academic qualifications, teaching experience, and leadership training, such as the Principal Qualification Program. These processes could be enhanced by incorporating psychometric components to assess candidates' behavioral or psychological predispositions. For instance, such assessments could screen for authoritarian tendencies, including a propensity for punitive discipline, which can detrimentally impact school climate by fostering fear rather than trust (Anderson & Prawat, 2019). Additionally, psychometric dimension to the selection process can identify personality traits, such as excessive self-importance, which can undermine collaborative leadership and hinder ethical decision-making by prioritizing personal gain over collective well-being (Roberts et al., 2014).

Furthermore, evaluating candidates' empathy and ethical decision-making abilities is crucial for ensuring that school leaders possess the interpersonal sensitivity and moral judgment necessary for fostering inclusive, supportive environments (Goleman, 2006). Finally, assessing key personality traits, such as Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, and Emotional Stability could provide valuable insights into how well candidates will manage stress, collaborate with colleagues, and navigate complex interpersonal dynamics in school settings (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Integrating such assessments would allow for a more comprehensive evaluation of leadership potential and help mitigate the risks associated with destructive leadership.

2.4 Disrupting/Addressing Destructive Leadership

The following section draws from literature on abusive supervision to make suggestions on how victims and institutions can counter/or prevent the occurrence of abusive leadership behaviors in the workplace. In the first place, the study agrees with scholars such as Harvey et al. (2007) who argue that prevention of all forms of abusive supervision from the workplaces should be the primary objective of organizational life. All the same, the study recognizes that prevention is possible when leaders themselves exhibit constructive behaviors in their enactment of their responsibilities alongside policy commitment to that prevention. Earlier in the definitional efforts of what destructive leadership is, I have highlighted that there must be at least intent to harm and the recurrence of harmful action/behavior to qualify as destructive. Intent and frequency highlight lack of supervisory commitment to protect subordinates from experiences of harm or implement preventive measures.

Pradhan and Jena (2018) claimed that researchers have failed to elaborate a comprehensive model that can be used to prevent the problem of abusive supervision. Pradhan and Jena proposed a prevention model consisting of three levels namely: primary, secondary, and tertiary. In their model, each level has a psychological aspect and socio-technical aspect. At primary level, the scholars argue that abuse/mistreatment should be prevented before it can occur. One way this can be done is to identify employees who are prone towards aggressive behaviors as well as conducting informational sessions on how to handle destructive behaviors/acts in the workplace for newly hired staff in the organization.

Whereas the primary level is preemptive, the secondary and tertiary remain reactionary as they are meant to minimize the effect of the occurrence of mistreatment. That is, once there are

instances of complaints about supervisory abuse/mistreatment, organizations might consider implementing training programs for both the abusive supervisors and the affected employees. Additionally, programs like *The Ethical Standards of Teaching Profession* which emphasize values of care, respect, trust, and integrity in Ontario' could be useful in restoring or fostering mutual trust and respect between principals and victimized teachers. At this junction, organizations should set up hotlines that enable victims to report supervisory abuse anonymously, ensuring they are protected from any potential retaliation by the supervisor.

The tertiary level of the proposed model can be utilized when the selection process and induction and in-service training do not deliver results. That is, organizations might try to encourage behavioral change in supervisors by providing counseling services and targeted training programs that help them to understand their subordinates' perspectives through role reversal exercises. If the supervisor's behavior does not improve, the organization should proceed with its disciplinary process, including the possibility of termination, to demonstrate that such behavior is unacceptable.

The existing literature generally supports the proposed model for preventing or addressing destructive leadership behaviors within educational contexts. However, the model's heavy reliance on institutional responses raises important considerations. Empirical evidence suggests that victims themselves can take proactive measures to disrupt the occurrence of such behaviors, such as seeking support from colleagues or friends or devising personal strategies. While Pradhan and Jena (2018) predominantly emphasize institutional interventions, this focus may overlook the proactive role that victims can play in finding solutions. Additionally, relying solely on institutional intervention, especially in institutions led by destructive leaders, the implementation of both preventive and responsive measures may be thwarted.

Moreover, the proposed model appears to neglect the expected actions or behaviors that leaders should demonstrate as professionals to prevent the occurrence of destructive leadership behaviors in the workplace. In addition to institutional responses, leaders within these institutions have a crucial role to fulfill. The scholars did not explicitly address the potential role of supervisors as potential sources of mistreatment, underscoring a gap in the proposed strategies. This section draws from empirical literature to address the gap inherent in this proposed model of prevention. We articulate our response around two levels, namely institutional and personal (victim).

By articulating the argument on these two levels, the primary reason is that both the institution and individual members must fulfill their own role in preventing the occurrence of negative leadership behaviors in their workplace. It is worth highlighting that such strategies to address destructive behaviors are likely to yield varying impact depending on the victim's own character and response, the nature of harmful experience, and the kind of intervention directed toward them. This dependence aligns with diversity of experiences of abuse and degree of vulnerability of the victims and possibility of changing approaches offenders use to inflict harm.

2.4.1 Individual Level

Victims themselves can take proactive measures to prevent or address destructive leadership behaviors in the workplace. For example, in response to experiences of mistreatment, victims can implement various strategies to avoid the experience repeating itself. Firstly, they mean to establish clear boundaries and assert their rights in professional interactions, thus signaling to potential perpetrators that destructive behaviors will not be tolerated. Fahie and Devine (2014) conducted a study with 24 self-identified elementary school teachers in Ireland to

understand the effects of mistreatment on them and coping strategies. They noted that experiences of abuse triggered different responses among the victims including overt strategies such as confronting the perpetrator, and taking legal action, embodied resistance such as wearing black, preparing for the battle, and covert strategies such as taking part in the study, contacting the union confidentially, taking notes/records of events and seeking support from family/friends.

Resistance took different forms such as expressing one's views or meeting the offender in person to discuss and settle the matter. For example, while one of the victims "deliberately wore black" to warn against the bully's negative behaviors occurring again, and to show peers that they opposed destructive behaviors, another put on "a metaphorical suite of armor, as if she were facing battle and would need protection" (p.246). Clearly such symbolic behaviors embody a message of resistance, and break the victim's own complicit silence, and/or constitute a rejection of docility in the face of oppression. Indeed, although mistreatment/abuse often aligns with the perpetrator's efforts to assert dominance and control over the targeted subordinate's behaviors/actions or identity, resistance strategies highlight that oppression doesn't render victims entirely powerless or passive.

As a moral and rational agent, some victims can take the initiative to approach the offender in the hope of settling differences. This process of coming together to discuss the relational difficulties between the victim and the offender offers parties the possibility of making an apology that is not necessarily obtainable under litigation. However, in some instances, either the offender or the victim may decline to be approached for dialogue. In this case, they can try an alternative in the quest of appeasing the tension. Among alternatives, Jackson et al. (2007) argue that some victims can consciously devise a plan to develop positive emotions, insights, and professional relationships. In so doing, they become reflective on their interactional behavior

with the offender and advance toward balance between work and life. As Jackson and colleagues argue, building positive interactions with colleagues allows them to reduce the effect destructive behaviors would have against them. Perhaps from this refusal to settle differences through bilateral dialogue, and/or failure of the initiative to build positive relationship, is borne the possibility for Fahie and Devine's (2014) articulation of litigation and intervention of teacher unions (Fahie & Devine, 2014) or regulatory bodies (Milley, 2017) to disrupt the occurrence of undesired behaviors with legislation.

Milley's (2017) analysis of records of disciplinary hearings and regulatory bodies responsible for governing professional and ethical conduct of school administrators, provides examples on how litigation has helped to address misconduct of school administrators in Ontario, and British Columbia. The records contain 39 cases of maladministration involving principals/vice principals in Ontario between 1999 and 2014, and 21 in British Columbia between 1993 and 2015. Where courts or disciplinary bodies, become important in the efforts to prevent from occurring again/address the occurrence of negative leadership behaviors, is that they illuminate the existence of those behaviors through their decisions, thereby raising awareness among the audience and victims. For example, in a court ruling in Brampton, Ontario, one administrator was "sentenced ...to 18 months in jail, time ... she'll use to reflect on her criminal wrongdoing." (Mitchell, 2007, np). However, what remains unknown in relation to litigation, is how the alleged victim's tendency for discretion (Milley, 2017) obstructs the scope of litigation. Put clearly, the extent to which a case is likely to be forwarded to regulatory bodies has not been documented in literature.

To sum up, various strategies are employed by victims to address destructive leadership behaviors at the individual level. These include setting clear boundaries, demonstrating

resistance, and seeking support from unions or legal avenues. Additionally, victims may attempt to dialogue with offenders or strive to foster positive relationships with colleagues to manage destructive behaviors effectively. In cases where informal measures fail to bring resolution, litigation or seeking intervention from unions or regulatory bodies may become necessary. In conclusion, victims possess an agency in addressing destructive leadership behaviors, utilizing a range of strategies to address mistreatment in the workplace.

2.4.2 Institutional Response

Further efforts to address destructive EL have been situated in the personality traits of educators. In their investigation on how personality traits impact victims' responses to abusive stimuli, Wang et al. (2015) conducted a correlational study on individual traits and argued that extraversion and agreeableness together influenced the relationship between perceived abusive supervision and interpersonal deviant behavior. In fact, Wang et al. (2015) contend that some of the victims are more likely to perceive abusive behavior with high emotional alert while others can manage stress easily without any emotional alert. Therefore, Wang et al. (2015) suggest that educational leaders be empowered with knowledge and skills to manage employees with dispositional vulnerability to stress. For the sake of intervention, the scholars advocate for some training sessions, or consultations with school administrators about how to treat subordinates with more vulnerable personality traits.

Further interventions to limit the emergence of destructive leadership in schooling would be, as Krasikova et al. (2013) suggest, putting in place mechanisms for complaints to allow teachers to report lived experiences without fear of revenge. Some of those mechanisms would be policy provisions that explicitly state reporting procedures and guarantee protection of the

victims. In addition, facts surrounding allegations of destructive experiences directed towards teachers would be thoroughly investigated by competent institutions and with support to the victims (Espelage & Holt, 2013). However, the role that is played by the school administrators in the implementation of such efforts aiming at disrupting destructive manifestations is yet to be clarified here. Additionally, Milley's (2017) twin concern for potential administrators' interference in litigation cases and victim's despair to be heard, remain unaddressed in practice and research.

Finally, the institutional efforts can be situated in the style of governance enacted in that very context. For example, Oplatka (2016) cautions that attention be paid to leaders' behaviors towards subordinates or organizations regarding leadership styles being exercised. Participative and value based as key solutions to efforts seeking to curb the occurrence of DL in schooling contexts. That is, under such governance of schools, stakeholders collectively agree on and participate in the implementation of school programs. Specifically, stakeholders (teachers) become involved in problem-solving, engaged in learning communities, dialogue sessions. Such interactive sessions can potentially restore and enhance trust among stakeholders where leaders are sensitive to teachers and stakeholders' needs. And that environment full of trust will contribute to teachers' commitment to work.

2.5 Chapter Summary and Conclusion

Empirical research on destructive leadership (DL) in educational contexts has identified various harmful behaviors exhibited by school principals that contribute to hostile work environments for teachers as well as adverse effects these behaviors make on the victims. Harmful behaviors/practices include negligence, academic dishonesty, undermining teachers' authority, sexual harassment, false accusations, breaches of confidentiality, excessive monitoring,

and financial mismanagement. Collectively, these actions erode the foundational trust and respect necessary for a productive school work environment, resulting in significant adverse consequences for targeted teachers.

This review of existing literature has revealed severe personal and professional impacts on teachers subjected to DL. Among victims' experiences of DL, is the deterioration of psychological nature such as increased anger, anxiety, and stress, or physiological effect such as insomnia, headaches, digestive issues, and unintended weight changes. These effects not only undermine teachers' well-being but also impose financial loss, as DL led some victims to take sick leave, and/ or engage in different forms of work turnover. Additionally, DL resulted in decreased work performance, reduced job satisfaction, and social isolation, as some of the victims distanced themselves from colleagues or from abusive principals to avoid further harm.

Empirical research on mitigating destructive leadership (DL) in educational settings remains limited; however, some studies suggest potential solutions for addressing DL in schools. Among these strategies, teachers affected by DL have sought external support from colleagues and unions or pursued legal actions, such as filing complaints. Additional approaches include implementing reporting mechanisms for harmful behaviors, adopting shared governance structures to promote balanced authority, and providing ethical leadership training for principals. These training programs aim to help principals recognize, prevent, and address destructive behaviors, ultimately fostering a healthier and more supportive work environment.

Although existing literature offers valuable insights into behaviors perceived by teachers as DL, challenges remain in fully understanding its dimensions, particularly within the context of Ontario, Canada. Studies conducted in Canada, have predominantly relied on surveys conducted by labor organizations, such as the Ontario Secondary School Teachers Federation, which limit

participants' responses to predetermined options. This restriction may prevent these studies from capturing the full range of harmful experiences that affected teachers face including insights that qualitative methods could more effectively reveal. While qualitative methods offer depth in exploring specific DL behaviors, they may have limitations in covering the full range of behaviors, underscoring the need for complementary approaches to provide more light on the dimensions of DL.

To address these concerns of depth and range of school principal destructive leadership behaviors perceived by teachers, this study adopts a mixed-methods approach to explore the dimensions of DL as experienced by teachers. This approach integrates both a survey and in-depth interviews. The questionnaire component allows participants to align their experiences with predefined descriptions of DL behaviors, thereby capturing a broader spectrum of potentially harmful behaviors exhibited by principals. The qualitative component focuses on in-depth interviews and open-ended responses, enabling participants to freely articulate their lived experiences, providing a deeper and more nuanced understanding of DL behaviors.

Moreover, while quantitative research has documented the negative effects of DL, there remains a lack of qualitative studies exploring the impacts on teachers in Canada. This gap suggests that the current literature does not fully capture the nuanced, long-term consequences of DL on teachers' well-being, job satisfaction, mental health, and professional performance. A qualitative exploration of teachers' narratives provides an opportunity to better understand these impacts, enabling teachers to articulate both the immediate and enduring effects of DL. This study, therefore, aims to investigate these consequences through a qualitative approach that captures the complexities of DL's impacts on victims.

Additionally, empirical studies on practical strategies to prevent and mitigate DL in educational settings are scarce. Although certain strategies such as resistance and training have been proposed to counter DL, most of these are based on theory rather than empirical evidence, highlighting the need to capture victims' voices on effective strategies for addressing DL. Understanding teachers' perspectives on prevention and intervention strategies is essential for developing effective measures to counter DL. By focusing on these perspectives, this study provides experience-based insights that may inform policy and practice, and it argues that qualitative data can offer detailed accounts of teachers' views on mitigating DL, insights that may be missed in quantitative research.

In conclusion, besides surveying the dimensions, this study addresses literature gaps by mostly providing deep understanding on the manifestations, impact, measures to address DL within Ontario's educational context. By enabling study participants to articulate their experiences and perspectives freely, this study offers a depth of insight beyond the reach of quantitative methods and amplifies voices that have been previously overlooked, laying a stronger foundation for understanding and addressing destructive leadership in educational settings.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

Academic research and practice depict education as a positive endeavor, with scholars highlighting its moral, ethical, and spiritual dimensions. According to Duignan (2006) and Sergiovanni (2007), education should always adhere to established standards of practice. Quick and Normore (2004) assert that the role of a school principal is to establish a moral community wherein students can thrive and reach their potential. Within such a community, leadership is perceived as guided by principles of integrity, authenticity, and a balance between the ethics of justice and care. This entails avoiding unilateral decisions to encourage collaborative problem-solving and inclusive decision-making processes.

Building on such views, scholars such as Klenke (2003) and Northouse (2004) advocate for spiritual or servant leadership paradigms in organizational settings. Klenke (2003) asserts that effective leadership aligns one's professional life with one's spiritual beliefs, emphasizing the integration of personal values into leadership practices. Similarly, Northouse (2004) posits that genuine leadership stems from a servant mentality, where leaders attend to the needs of their subordinates and lead by example. Servant leaders, as noted by Sokoll (2014), demonstrate empathy towards their followers, actively listen to their concerns, and provide the necessary guidance to facilitate their growth and autonomy.

In short, the portrayal of education as a moral, ethical, and spiritual undertaking underscores the importance of principled leadership in fostering positive working environments. By integrating principles of integrity, justice, care, and servant leadership into their practices, educational leaders are expected to create more inclusive communities where both students and staff can flourish. Furthermore, embracing collaborative decision-making processes and

prioritizing the needs of others contribute to the development of empowered and autonomous community members within organizational life.

Specifically in the context of the Province of Ontario, members of Ontario College of teachers including school principals are expected to be guided by the ethical standards for the teaching profession which aims at:

- Encouraging educators to engage in self-reflection and maintain the integrity and respect associated with the teaching profession.
- Emphasizing the importance of ethical decision-making and responsible conduct within educational practices.
- Fostering public trust and confidence in the teaching profession through professional behavior and accountability.

Looking at codes of practices, the Ontario College of Teachers (2024) asserts that practitioners of the teaching profession should uphold essential values reflected in the principles of care, trust, integrity, and respect. First by the virtue of care, members demonstrate compassion, acceptance, interest, and insight, as being integral to fostering students' potential for learning. Second, by embracing respect as a core workplace value, members of the teaching profession demonstrate qualities such as trustworthiness and impartiality, while also promoting human dignity and emotional well-being. Third, trust embodies fairness, openness, and honesty in members' professional relationships colleagues, parents, guardians, students, and the public. Last, integrity encompasses honesty, reliability, and moral action, and guides practitioners in upholding ethical standards.

Under such policy provisions, educational leadership is specifically expected to serve others in the form of attentiveness, to build trusting relationships and engagement of stakeholders, as it seeks to virtuously achieve desirable ends (Cameron, 2011). In explicit terms, effective educational leaders are concerned with ethics and morality, especially distinguishing between right and wrong practices or behaviors. They are therefore expected to be well-behaved servants as they act in accordance with those codes of practices and/or policies or related preservice or professional training.

However, Treviño et al. (2006) contend that there are leaders who deviate from the code of practices by violating organizational norms. Instances of such violation are but not limited to excessive monitoring of work, unrealistic deadlines, overloaded work schedules, and inappropriate tasks, verbal abuse, repetitive criticism, overt threats, social exclusion or isolation, gossiping or spreading rumors, jokes at the expense of a colleague (Agervold & Mikkelsen, 2004), stealing, spying, subordinates receiving unfair evaluation reports (Blase & Blase, 2002, 2004). In practical terms, such violations of acceptable organizational norms may range from overt to covert, direct to indirect and it divorces the constructive purpose of leadership, the very reason leadership exists. Broadly such divergence is framed as destructive leadership in this study before specially shedding light on what the undesired phenomenon is or is not in organizational life.

Einarsen et al. (2007) considered both harmful actions directed towards subordinates and those impacting the organization as a whole to suggest the comprehensive definition of destructive leadership as “The systematic and repeated behavior by a leader, supervisor or manager that violates the legitimate interest of the organization by undermining and/or sabotaging the organization’s goals, tasks, resources, and effectiveness and/or the motivation,

well-being or job satisfaction of subordinates” (p.208). Worth underlining from Einarsen et al.’s (2007) definition are key points: the repeated and systematic behavior, violation of legitimate interests of the organization and subordinates, and silence on the destructive leader’s intent to lead destructively.

First, what is clear is that Einarsen et al.’s (2007) conceptualization of DL identifies two victims of destructive leading. That is, the offender may direct his/her negative behaviors against subordinates or the organization itself. Such a conceptualization leaves room to include Buss’s (1961) categories of workplace aggression namely verbal/physical, direct/indirect, active/passive or a combination of some of these categories of negative leaders’ behaviors/practices provided they affect subordinates and organization itself.

Negative leader behaviors directed against employees may result in decreasing their motivation for task completion and/or job satisfaction as well as undermining employees’ wellbeing on the one hand. On the other hand, leaders may engage in sabotaging tasks, resources, and goals to harm the organization. Drawing attention to harming the organization, Krasikova et al. (2013) caution that, besides employing destructive methods to influence followers towards goals, the leader can equally set harmful goals and encourage followers to pursue them. These two manifestations of DL may operate independently from one another, they may also be employed concomitantly by destructive leaders.

Neuman and Baron (2005) note that DL behaviors are not necessarily overt, nor do they occur in single category. Destructive behaviors can take complex forms such as passive-physical-indirect, active-physical-direct, passive-verbal-indirect. An instance of passive-physical-indirect behavior could manifest when a leader neglects to ensure the safety and well-being of a subordinate, particularly in a workplace environment with potential safety risk (Neuman &

Baron, 2005). Similarly, an illustration of passive-verbal-indirect behavior might occur when a leader fails to provide important information or constructive feedback to a subordinate (Neuman & Baron, 2005).

Considering and in the agreement with the interplay existing between the organization, the leader, the subordinates, and the environment (Ryan et al., 2021), it is important to supplement Einarsen et al.'s understanding on the victims of destructive leading by making it clear that, although the destructive leader may target subordinates and organization separately or concomitantly, the effect of such negative leading has the potential to harm other members in the larger ecosystem. Taking the case of a school as an institution, consequences of principal's destructive leadership behaviors/actions have the potential to reach the students, their teachers, parents, physical environment, and other stakeholders of that school.

The second element to mention from the definition is that for a behavior to qualify as destructive it must be systematic and repeated. That is, it must occur regularly and repeatedly, that is for instance, on a weekly, or monthly basis, over a period such six months (Einarsen et al., 2007). Focusing on regularity and frequency of occurrences of destructive behavior or activity has an important implication. It distinguishes between aspects of ineffective leadership and those of destructive leadership. Einarsen et al. (2007) concedes that at some point, there might be simply a bad day at work, or leaders may occasionally make poor decisions. What is clear is that poor decisions affect the organizational larger ecosystem and may have detrimental effects on their performance, life but they do not satisfy the criteria for classification into destructive behaviors because they do not occur regularly nor are they systematic. Moreover, the effect of ineffective leader behaviors is less likely to persist for an extended period.

The third and last distinctive element of destructive leadership is the absence or presence of intent to harm. The debate whether intent should (or not) be considered for deliberations on leaders' behaviors as destructive remains undecided among scholars. For example, while organizational scholars such as Ashforth (1994), Ma et al. (2004) and Vredenburg and Brender (1998) do not explicitly address whether harm results from a leader's volitional acts, others such as Krasikova et al. (2013) and Ryan et al. (2021) argue that destructive behaviors must involve a deliberate intention to cause harm.

Einarsen et al. (2007) asserts that the conceptualization of DL should omit intentionality for two reasons. First, the destructiveness of leadership hinges more on the consequences of leaders' actions than their intentions. Second, any occasional behavior is disqualified as destructive, due to the emphasis on its failure to meet the criteria of being systematic and recurrent. In addition, and specifically in this study it can be argued that deliberations on what constitutes the offender's intentionality may not be always clear to tell since it is natural for the offender to conceal evidence on which victims can claim volitional character of destructive behaviors. And in particular, the intent to harm is not always conscious (Krasikova et al., 2013).

Consequently, the stance on the intentionality in this study is that destructive leadership behavior encompasses leaders' actions and/behaviors regardless of intent, that cause harm to organizational ecosystem in part or, in its entirety.

Ashforth (1994) model of petty tyranny in organizations describes antecedents, characteristics, and effects of tyrannical behaviors. Ashforth argues that emergence of tyranny in organization is the product of the interaction between leader's individual predispositions and situational factors. While leaders' individual predispositions include their beliefs about organizations, subordinates, and the self, situational factors suggest micro-level factors such as

power and stressors and macro level factors. Indeed, as Ashforth puts it, destructive leaders prioritize conformity and order but place less value on treating subordinates with necessary consideration. Key focus is placed on the strict identification of and adherence to rules and procedures. That is, destructive leader's beliefs about the organization suggest subordinates should comply with their authority.

On the other hand, destructive leaders are inspired by McGregor 's (1989) theory X, which assumes that employees are naturally lazy, unambitious, and averse to work. Therefore, according to such belief about subordinates, destructive leaders believe it is necessary to recourse to close supervision, coercion, and control to influence subordinates in their efforts to achieve organizational goals. It is evident that managers holding such beliefs tend to enforce strict rules and regulations and believe in a hierarchical structure where decisions are made at the top and passed down to subordinates.

At the origin of occurrence of negative leadership are equally contextual factors facilitating the recurrence of destructive behaviors. Ashforth points to institutionalized norms and values such as macro factors and power and stressors at micro level. To some extent, some institutional practices/routines may serve to legitimize the occurrence of destructive leadership. On the totality of institutions for example, Wallace (2017) asserts that a distinctive feature in an institution is the fact entering members are instructed on "the way we do things around here" (n.p). Perhaps, from the time newly hired members of an organization are instructed how things are done in that context, they tend to conform to the usual way of doing by themselves if they are not given a mentor. Other scholars have pointed to symbols and routines that maintain the status quo. Clear examples can be taken from inmates' uniforms that clearly tie them to their status, thereby subjecting them to close supervision by, or passive obedience in front of the superior.

Such factors serve to preserve hierarchical stratification, and centralization of responsibilities in organizations.

Furthermore, at micro-level, lack of necessary resources (to manage task demands or influence process) including skills, credibility of authority, autonomy or opportunity for participation can lead to leaders' perception of powerlessness on the one hand and this creates a distance between leader and subordinates. Meirovich and Goswami (2021) remind that such a distance between leaders and followers leads to conflict between them.

On the other hand, acquisition of excessive power leads to tyranny because, Kipnis (1976) argues, excess of power transforms into a self-serving objective, wherein the individual possessing power develops an elevated perception of their own importance. Consequently, the value of others is depreciated, and power gradually transitions from serving organizational objectives to primarily serving personal interests. Perhaps in terms of these factors, the question that remains is the extent to which individual or situational factors can trigger the occurrence of destructive behaviors. Ashforth (1994) argues that a single factor can account for sporadic instances of tyranny but that a configuration of factors is necessary for ongoing occurrence of DL behaviors.

The occurrence of DL is characterized by hostile working environment and engages parties with persistent power imbalance, that is the leader and the subordinate. Ashforth highlighted arbitrariness, belittling subordinates and leader's self-aggrandizement, non-contingent punishment, forcing conflict resolution, lack of consideration, and lack of initiative in this hostile environment. Empirical findings from organizational research have also pointed to explicit manifestations of leader's destructive practices or behaviors whether verbal and

nonverbal in the workplace. Nonverbal actions encompass aggressive eye contact such as staring, disdainful glances, deliberate disregard, as well as physical gestures like invading personal space, pointing fingers, forcefully handling objects, or throwing them. Verbal forms of abuse include instances of sexual harassment, expressions of anger through shouting or screaming, belittlement, public shaming, threats concerning job security or physical safety, derogatory name-calling, excessive or unjust criticism of professional competence or personal life, unreasonable work demands, appropriating credit for others' accomplishments, scapegoating, exclusion, spreading rumors, resource deprivation, or impeding professional opportunities, displays of favoritism, dismissing individuals' emotions or opinions, unfriendly demeanor, neglecting communication, and actions suggestive of an authoritarian hierarchy. These behaviors have been documented in various academic studies (Davenport et al., 1999; Einarsen et al., 2007; Namie, 2000; Namie & Namie, 2000; Neuman & Baron, 1998; Rayner et al., 2002).

In educational context, Oplatka's (2016) model of irresponsible leadership points to narcissistic and egocentric views, self-centered decisions, poor emotional regulation as characterizing irresponsible school leadership. Specifically school leaders holding narcissistic or ego-centric views are unwilling to compromise with teachers and to take criticism. Moreover, these leaders enjoy being surrounded by teachers who always flatter them and are motivated by self-image promotion. Self-centred decision making at school, absence of any moral compass, the creation of self-image and glorification of their leadership as exceptional managers within the professional environment are other key manifestations. Driven by emotional unawareness and poor emotional regulation, destructive leaders are generally not prepared to demonstrate sympathy and empathy toward stakeholders. They thus remain far from emotional aspects of

schooling, and express a variety of negative, negative emotions and behaviors towards subordinates such as teachers, students, and stakeholders.

Departing from the leader-member exchange theory articulated by scholars (Graen, 1976; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1991), it is easier to understand the impact of interpersonal relationship between a leader and their followers. The theory posits that leaders form different types of relationships with members of their organization, leading to varying levels of trust, respect, and support. These relationships are classified into two main categories: in-group and out-group. In-group members typically receive preferential treatment, higher levels of communication, and greater responsibilities, while out-group members have more limited interactions with the leader and receive fewer benefits (Sheer, 2015). In accordance with theory, victims of negative leaders' behaviors or acts are likely to belong to outgroup members. The consequences are understandably three-fold in dimension, that is, each of the interplay among the organization, the destructive leader, and the subordinate will be affected although the extent, the amount of effect may differ.

Organizational scholars have equally associated behaviors of destructive leaders with deleterious effects on subordinates. Zhang and Liao (2015) reviewed research on the consequences of abusive supervision and identified six key categories of negative outcomes for employees. These included detrimental effects on employees' attitudes, well-being, perceptions of organizational justice, workplace behaviors, performance, and family-related issues. Zhang and Liao's findings are congruent with Ashforth (1994), who frames the effect of tyranny management on employees, which can result in frustration and stress among employees, along with a sense of helplessness, alienation at work, and diminished self-esteem and performance.

While subordinates will be less satisfied with the leader who employs destructive behaviors or practices against them, practices such as deprivation of resources or opportunities for professional development will result in negative emotional reactions and a decrease of the leader acceptance among the subordinates. Blase and Blase (2002) and Sam (2021) pointed out that subordinates are at times denied participating in activities aimed at professional development or resources needed to perform their duties. No doubt that the outcome of this deprivation will negatively affect the performance of those who are denied resources and that these victims will develop negative emotions against the leader who deprives them of resources.

Moreover, according to the reactance theory which asserts that people value their freedom and autonomy highly such that any attempt to limit or control their freedom can lead to discomfort, which in turn prompts individuals to react in ways that aim to regain their perceived freedom (Fogarty, 1997), employee's commitment toward task performance will decrease as victims are likely to concentrate more on recovering or protecting their threatened autonomy. Ashforth (1994) argues that tyranny may drive subordinates to get together in the quest for a collective defense against the bully and support needed from one another. Reasonably, achieving this collective protection triggered by negative leadership is a cause for concern in face of the search for excellent performance because the employee's attention will be shared on both task completion and reaction to the threat posed by destructive leadership.

Abusive supervision in the workplace triggers hostile emotions among employees (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Tepper, 2007). Given its lasting repercussions, escaping the effects of abusive supervision can be challenging for employees (Tepper, 2007) because the interactional relationship between superiors and subordinates is inevitable. Consequently, subordinates may adopt a regulatory strategy, such as surface acting rather than deep acting, to navigate their

relationship with their managers to prevent future instances of supervisor abuse (Tepper, 2007). Surface acting enables employees to conform to professional norms while harboring negative feelings of resentment towards abusive supervisors. By doing so, employees keep their internal feelings towards an abusive supervisor without altering them but when abusive supervision intensifies and becomes unbearable, employees are unlikely to focus on connecting with job demands positively. Research has pointed out that some of the victims of destructive leadership developed negative emotional reactions such anger, stress, frustration, fear (Blase & Blase, 2002; de Wet, 2010; Sam, 2021).

Typically, in school settings, Oplatka's (2016) model of irresponsible educational leadership contends that negative leadership impedes moral development of subordinates, deters teacher-relations, and negatively affects their wellbeing. Teachers feel manipulated, exploited, and have no interest in initiating new programs or any improvement effort and some of them may quit the job. Clark and Antonelli (2013) found that among other factors, negative principal-teacher interaction accounted for early retirement, resignation and change of career.

In essence, the emergence of destructive leadership (DL) arises from the interplay between a leader's predispositions or traits, organizational factors, and interaction with subordinates within the workplace. This interplay manifests in various negative behaviors or actions exhibited by leaders, which can be verbal or nonverbal, direct or indirect, active, or passive in nature. The repercussions of these behaviors extend to the physical, psychological, social, and mental well-being of the victims, as well as to the overall proper functioning of the organization. The pervasive impact of DL can equally transcend the immediate effects on individual victims, potentially undermining the cohesion and functioning of the workplace community. There is a need to prevent this negative manifestation in organizational life.

As Oplatka (2016) and Einarsen, et al. (2007) propose the solution based on the leadership approach to prevent the emergence of DL in the schooling environment. Typically, much attention can be paid to leaders' behaviors towards subordinates or organizations. Accent is put on leadership styles namely shared, participative and value based as key solutions to efforts seeking to curb the occurrence of DL. That is, under such governance of schools, stakeholders collectively agree on and participate in the implementation of school programs. Examples are, stakeholders (teachers) are involved in problem-solving, engage in learning communities, dialogue sessions. Such interactive sessions can potentially restore and enhance trust among stakeholders where leaders are sensitive to teachers and stakeholders' needs. And that environment full of trust will contribute to teachers' commitment to work.

Similarly, Einarsen et al. (2007) advocates for a collaborative leadership approach, emphasizing the importance of leaders demonstrating constructive behavior toward both their subordinates and the organization. Constructive leaders ensure their actions remain in agreement with the organization's legitimate interests while actively supporting its goals, tasks, and strategic direction. They also ensure the efficient utilization of resources. By fostering engagement, encouraging participation in decision-making, and involving subordinates in organizational processes, such leaders enhance employee motivation, well-being, and job satisfaction. Their leadership approach balances concern for subordinates' welfare with a strong focus on goal achievement and resource optimization in service of the organization's objectives. Other ways to disrupt DL from occurring can be traced in the victims' own initiatives or interventions that can be put in place. Jackson, et al. (2007) points to instances of subordinates consciously initiating action plans to improve relations with colleagues including the offender. External interventions such as training leaders on how to manage subordinates with

predispositions to high stress alert (Wang et al., 2015) or putting in place mechanisms for subordinates' complaints or reporting (Krasikova et al., 2013).

This study conceives DL behaviors as those that violate teachers' and school interests thus negatively affecting them whether as individuals or professionals. At the same time, this study acknowledges that the prevention strategies discussed in existing literature are more inclined on what and/or how leaders can do to involve followers in the organization managerial processes thus less vocal on subordinates' initiatives to address or prevent the emergence of DL.

To conclude, educational theory, research, and practice predominantly conceptualize leadership as a positive, ethical pursuit, grounded in principles of servant-oriented approaches designed to cultivate environments conducive to the flourishing of subordinates. In Ontario, for instance, the ethical standards of care, respect, trust, and integrity put forward by the Ontario College of Teachers serve as guiding principles for educators to uphold values that strengthen public trust and foster healthy schooling environments. However, some leaders deviate from these standards, engaging in negative behaviors or actions that compromise staff well-being and obstruct organizational objectives. These malpractices are referred to as destructive.

Destructive leadership (DL) comprises repeated actions that negatively affect employees or the organization. Unlike ineffective leadership, DL is characterized by its systematic and harmful effects. These negative behaviors may manifest in various forms ranging from overt to subtle, and from verbal to physical which not only harm individuals but also have the potential to impact the broader school community, including students, parents, and other stakeholders. Ashforth's model of organizational tyranny posits that DL can arise from both individual leader factors, such as authoritarian tendencies, and organizational dynamics, such as power imbalances and stress. These factors foster environments in which hierarchical norms and stress perpetuate

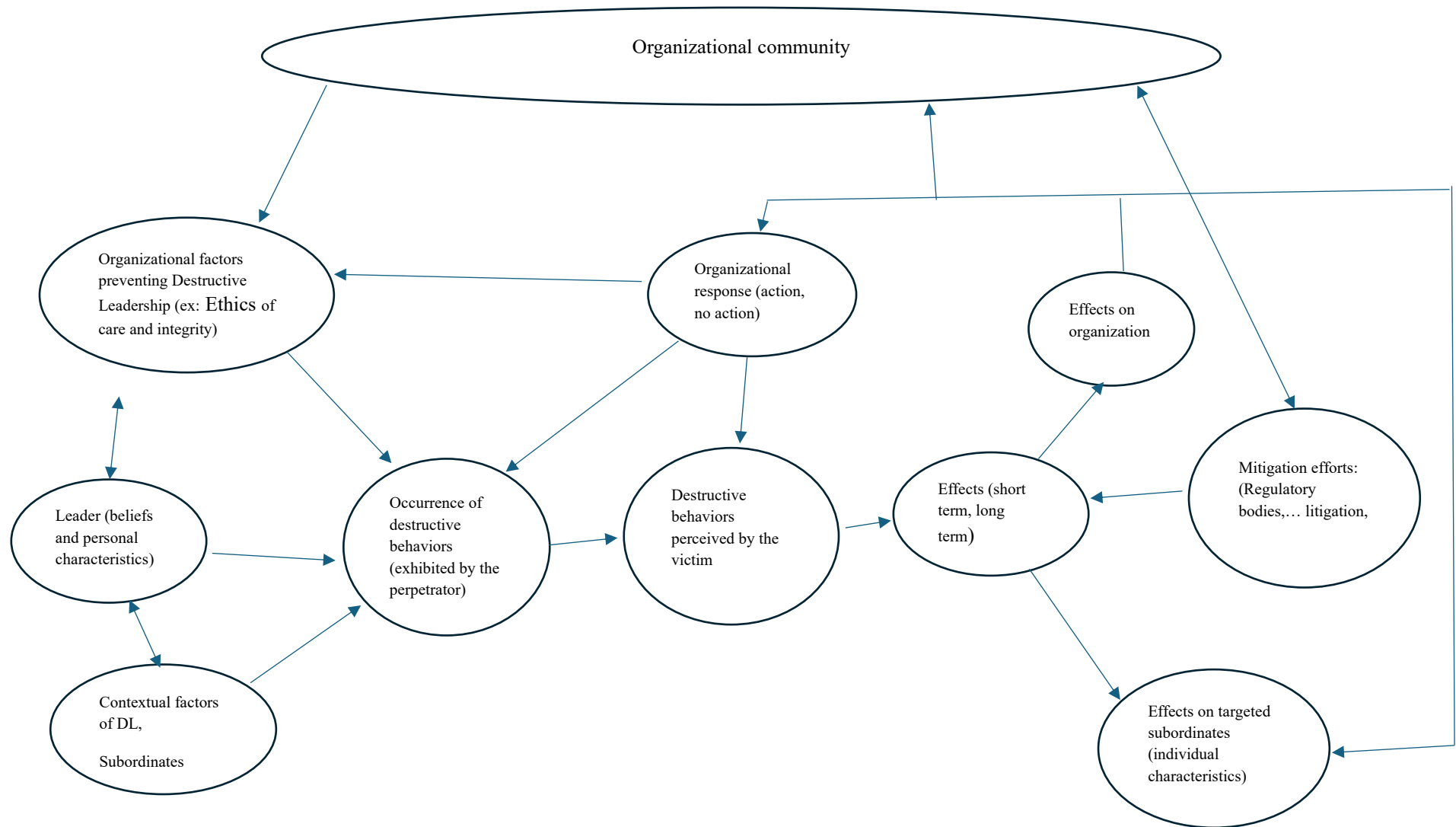
DL, reinforcing control and eroding staff well-being. That is individual traits, situational factors, and organizational structures interact to produce harmful leadership behaviors. Worth emphasis is that DL is not solely driven by malicious intent or personality traits (Padilla et al., 2007). Contextual conditions, including organizational ambiguity, lack of accountability, and pressure from high stakes performance demands also enable environments in which DL can emerge and persist. For example, Pelletier et al. (2019) argue that neoliberal educational reforms and accountability policies may pressure school leaders into authoritarian practices. These systemic pressures, in combination with leaders' dispositions and institutional cultures, contribute to behaviors perceived by teachers as damaging.

Therefore, DL should therefore be understood as the result of both individual predispositions such as authoritarian tendencies and systemic factors such as vague policies, weak reporting mechanisms. Padilla et al.'s (2007) Toxic Triangle Theory underscores this dynamic by identifying three interdependent factors: destructive leader traits, follower susceptibility, and enabling organizational contexts. Harmful leadership behaviors are more likely when followers either comply due to fear or dependence or fail to challenge authority. Furthermore, environments characterized by weak oversight, unclear ethical standards, or a culture of silence allow such behaviors to go unchecked. These converging conditions foster a climate wherein DL is normalized, amplifying its impact on the victims and institutions.

The consequences of DL are profound, resulting in diminished job satisfaction, psychological distress, and reduced autonomy among subordinates, who may respond by engaging in surface acting to manage interactions with abusive supervisors. Within educational settings, DL undermines teacher morale, suppresses innovation, and can contribute to increased turnover rates. Theories such as reactance suggest that DL further weakens employees'

commitment to their roles, as they become more focused on regaining autonomy than on maintaining professional performance. To mitigate destructive leadership (DL), scholars recommend participative leadership models that emphasize trust, inclusivity, and active employee involvement. Additional strategies include training leaders in stress management, developing structured reporting systems, and engaging staff in decision-making processes.

In short, while the theoretical insights presented in this chapter provide a broad conceptualization of the manifestations, impact, and prevention of destructive leadership (DL), empirical research focusing on specific DL behaviors, effects on the victims and effective measures to prevent DL in school settings remains limited. Most educational research has primarily concentrated on the functional aspects of principal leadership. Investigating these strategies could offer valuable insights into promoting positive leadership practices and enhancing well-being within school environments.

Figure 1:*Proposed Theoretical Framework of the Study*

Chapter 4: Methodological Perspectives

4.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by explaining the rationale for paradigm adopted in the study, including research instruments chosen methodology. It attempts to establish a link with existing literature, and the theoretical framework used to study the phenomenon as well as the purpose it seeks to achieve. The data collection process is outlined, focusing on semi-structured interviews with the teachers who experienced destructive leadership, and an online survey that helped to purposively select interview participants. The procedures for selecting the sample population are detailed, along with the methods for data collection and analysis.

Quality criteria such as validity, reliability, and generalizability are considered in the process, with emphasis on trustworthiness and its components: credibility, transferability, dependability and authenticity (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Ethical considerations, particularly the sensitivity of the subject matter and its impact on the research process, are also thoroughly addressed. Further, the chapter sheds light on the elements related to the study's ontology, epistemology, axiology, emphasizing its qualitative predominance and the instrumentation and analysis methods compatible with this approach.

4.2 Study Paradigm

In educational research, a research paradigm represents a researcher's worldview, shaping their approach to data collection, interpretation, and overall decision-making (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). It encompasses the underlying perspectives and beliefs that influence how researchers engage with their phenomenon under investigation. As Lather (1986) explains, a research paradigm reflects a researcher's understanding of the world and their role in shaping it.

This framework consists of fundamental assumptions and principles that inform methodological choices and analytical approaches.

Additionally, a research paradigm functions as the lens through which a researcher perceives and engages with their study process, guiding the selection of appropriate research methods and data analysis techniques. Guba and Lincoln (1994) define a paradigm as a foundational belief system or worldview that informs research practices and directs investigative efforts. Similarly, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) argue that paradigms are conceptual frameworks allowing us to engage with fundamental epistemological and ontological inquiries, thereby situating the researcher within the wider process of constructing knowledge and interpreting meaning.

Paradigms play a fundamental role in shaping the underlying assumptions and methodological approaches within a given discipline, as they define what should be studied, the appropriate methods for investigation, and how findings should be interpreted. In this study, the researcher adopts the perspective that objective and subjective realities can be integrated to provide both breadth and depth in understanding the phenomenon under investigation. For instance, while survey data yield quantifiable insights, interviews capture the nuanced meanings of participants' lived experiences. Consequently, this research is situated within a pragmatic paradigm, which emphasizes the practical application of knowledge and the integration of multiple methodologies to comprehensively address research questions (Morgan, 2007).

Clearly, espousing pragmatism in this study, the research rejects the binary opposition between positivist and constructivist paradigms, instead highlighting the relevance of selecting methods based on their suitability to answer specific research questions (Biesta, 2010). This

pragmatic stance is particularly suitable for mixed-methods research as it accommodates both the quantitative and qualitative components of the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

By integrating survey and interview data, the study has the potential to collect both generalizable findings and deep, context-rich understandings and espouses more than one epistemological stance. In the context of this study, the researcher then espouses a dualistic stance which accommodates post-positivist and interpretivist (subjectivist) stances at the same time.

For the subjective stance, the researcher believes that individual participants have personal and valid experiences that can be shared through a conversation. Each participant has a lived experience unique to them, influenced by associated meaning and impact on their lives. That is, once participants agree to share their experiences, the researcher will ask questions to help them recall those experiences. This approach acknowledges that the phenomenon of destructive leadership occurs independently of the researcher but that efforts to understand it may be influenced by the researcher's assumptions and how the researcher engages with data.

Following Jackson's (2013) caution that even positivist stances can be influenced by researchers' subjective experiences in their choice of methods and instruments for data collection and analysis, it is important to take measures to minimize the risk of bias. Specifically, caution must be exercised by selecting an appropriate methodology and enhancing research credibility. Researchers must carefully reflect on and explicitly define their ontological framework. Aligning the chosen methodology with this ontological stance and offering a clear justification for these decisions strengthens the credibility of both the methodology and the related data collection and analysis methods.

Since a paradigm determines a researcher's philosophical stance, significantly influencing each decision made in the study process, such as the choice of methodology and methods, it is essential to clearly state the paradigm underpinning research when writing an important scholarly piece (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Table 2 captures the philosophical and methodological perspectives underpinning this study whose detailed explanation comes with subsequent section.

Table 2

Majors Elements of Study Paradigm

Major element	Description	Additional comments
Ontology	Pluralistic, dialectical	Reality is multiple and shaped by social and historical contexts.
Epistemology	Post-positivist, Constructivist	Knowledge is partly objective but co-constructed with participants.
Axiology	Ethical, moral	Research is guided by ethical and moral principles
Methodology	Mixed methods with qualitative predominance	Emphasizes qualitative depth alongside quantitative data.

Instrumentation	Questionnaire, semi-structured interview	Data collected through structured and semi-structured for data collection.
Analysis	<i>Statistical, thematic</i>	Quantitative data analyzed using descriptive statistics while qualitative data analyzed through thematic identification of patterns and meanings

Note. Table 2 presents the major elements of the study's philosophical paradigm and how they manifest in the research design. The study adopts a pluralistic and dialectical ontology, acknowledging the existence of multiple realities shaped by individual experiences. Its epistemology combines post-positivist and constructivist assumptions, recognizing that knowledge is both measurable and socially constructed. The study's axiology emphasizes ethical and moral responsibility, guiding interactions with participants and the interpretation of findings. The methodology privileges qualitative inquiry within a mixed methods approach, ensuring both depth and breadth of understanding. Instrumentation includes structured questionnaires to capture measurable data and semi-structured interviews to elicit detailed personal narratives. For analysis, the study employs a combination of statistical techniques for quantitative data and thematic analysis for qualitative data, providing a comprehensive and nuanced interpretation of the research problem.

4.2.1 Justification of Research Paradigm

This study aimed to explore teachers' experiences of principals' destructive leadership behaviors within the schooling context. Espousing pragmatism as the guiding research paradigm, the study adopts a problem-solving orientation, emphasizing practical approaches to address the study major research questions (Morgan, 2007). Pragmatism enables the integration of subjective and objective perspectives, facilitating the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods to capture the multifaceted nature of human experiences (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

From a pragmatic perspective, the lived experiences of individual participants therefore become essential to understanding the phenomenon under investigation. Study participants' interpretations of their firsthand interactions with school principals are inherently subjective and hold practical relevance for addressing the research problem. This paradigm consisted in collecting data through surveys and interviews, allowing the researcher to explore both broad patterns across the survey data on the forms of destructive leadership behaviors and participants' narratives that not only supplement the survey data but also reveal the impacts of destructive leadership as well as victims' thoughts on the potential measures to counter the occurrence of DL.

Ontologically, pragmatism adopts a pluralistic stance, recognizing that reality can be both singular and multiple, contingent upon the context (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In this study, reality is conceptualized as a dynamic interplay between subjective experiences obtained through interview sessions and measurable patterns attainable via online survey. To illustrate, survey results provided a quantitative overview of the prevalence of destructive leadership behaviors, while interviews yielded rich, contextualized insights into individual participants'

lived experiences. This methodological integration aligns with pragmatism's epistemological commitment to generating meaningful insights that can inform educational practice.

Moreover, a pragmatic stance underscores methodological flexibility, advocating for the use of tools most suited to answering the research questions (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). In this study, the survey phase is important in quantifying the frequency of DL behaviors experienced by teachers, simultaneously identifying participants for the subsequent qualitative phase. Qualitative interviews then delve deeper into the subjective aspects of DL by shedding light on the form of behaviors as personally lived by individual participants, impacts of these behaviors to offer insights into potential emotional, physiological and professional consequences, and exploring potential strategies for prevention based on participants' understanding. By combining these approaches, the study attempts to address a range of behaviors both breadth and depth in subjective meaning participants have associated with lived experiences.

Although quantitative data collection through surveys is a component of this research design, qualitative methods play a prominent role in this inquiry. Pragmatism supports the use of qualitative interviews as they provide detailed insights into participants' experiences, which are suited for understanding the practical implications of destructive leadership in education. As Greco (2015) argues, qualitative research is particularly effective in uncovering latent meanings, exploring complex situations, and generating new insights. In this study, interviews illuminated not only specific destructive leadership behaviors but also their consequences and the participants' recommendations for mitigating such behaviors in educational contexts.

A key strength of pragmatism lies in its ability to bridge qualitative and quantitative methods, treating them as complementary rather than antagonistic (Morgan, 2007). In this study, quantitative surveys inform the qualitative phase by interacting with the participants to gather

data on their experiences. This sequential design ensured that the research questions are addressed comprehensively. The qualitative interviews subsequently built on the survey findings, enriching the quantitative data on the dimensionality of DL with depth and contextual understanding.

Consistent with the pragmatic paradigm, the findings of this study have the potential to produce insights that inform educational policy and practice. By combining an understanding of the prevalence of DL behaviors (quantitative data) with the lived experiences of affected teachers (qualitative data), the study offers a fuller perspective on the research problem.

In conclusion, this study adopted the pragmatic paradigm to investigate the complex phenomenon of DL among participants from public secondary schools in Ottawa. This paradigm facilitated flexibility and pluralism thereby allowing the integration of both qualitative and quantitative methods to address the multifaceted nature of DL behaviors and their impact on educators.

4.3 Epistemological Assumptions Underpinning the Study

Epistemology, as a theory of knowledge and its justification, explores what can be known, how it can be known, and why it is considered valid (Audi, 2003). Greco (2015) identifies three fundamental epistemological questions: What is knowledge? What can we know? How do we know what we do know? These questions underpin the philosophical considerations in this study, focusing on the interplay between the knower, the knowable object, and the processes through which knowledge is constructed and validated.

Therefore, the epistemological underpinning addresses the nature of knowledge it seeks to generate, the methods used to access this knowledge, and the rationale for its validity and

trustworthiness. Pragmatism, as the study paradigm, enables the integration of post-positivist and constructivist perspectives, ensuring methodological flexibility and alignment with the research objectives. Post-positivism underpins the quantitative phase of this study, guiding the use of structured surveys to identify the patterns of destructive leadership (DL) behaviors.

While acknowledging the inherent limitations of objectivity, post-positivism emphasizes empirical evidence and the identification of patterns and relationships (Phillips & Burbules, 2000). Post-positivist perspective aligns with the study aim to produce breadth of data about the behaviors under which DL occurs among secondary school teachers participating in this study. The survey data serves as a foundation for understanding broad trends such as perceived frequency of occurrence, providing necessary context for the qualitative phase.

Constructivism on the other hand informs the qualitative phase, emphasizing the co-construction of knowledge through participants' lived experiences and social interactions (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This perspective is operationalized through interviews, which explore participants' subjective experiences of DL behaviors and their perspectives on prevention strategies. A constructivist stance contends that knowledge is not discovered but constructed through human interaction with the environment, mediated by cultural and social contexts (Fosnot, 2013; Ültanır, 2012).

The constructivist positioning rejects the notion of universal truths, embracing instead the multiplicity of meanings constructed by individuals. Each teacher-participant in this study therefore shared unique interpretations of their experiences with DL, shaped by personal, professional, and contextual factors. As Pilarska (2021) notes, constructivist epistemology highlights that knowledge emerges through social and personal processes of meaning-making, enabling a nuanced understanding of complex phenomena.

Constructivist epistemology emphasizes the relational process of knowledge acquisition, wherein meaning is accessed through dialogue and interaction between the researcher and participants (Fosnot, 2013). In this study, the researcher engaged participants in one-on-one interviews, creating a space for open and reflective discussion. Harlow et al. (2007) assert that constructivist researchers access knowledge by critically engaging with participants in their natural social and cultural contexts. This approach allows for the exploration of subjective lived experiences while identifying common themes across participants' accounts (Mapp, 2008).

Through these interactions, the researcher aimed to uncover perceived dimensions of participants' experiences with DL, along with their perspectives on strategies for prevention. The resulting data reflects not only individual narratives but also shared patterns that contribute to a deeper understanding of DL behaviors in educational settings.

Phenomenology, as a methodological approach, aligns closely with constructivist epistemology and the goals of this study. It seeks to understand the lived experiences of individuals at the conscious level (Pilarska, 2021), offering insights into how participants perceive and interpret DL behaviors, their impacts, and potential solutions. Phenomenology facilitates an in-depth exploration of participants' subjective realities, making it particularly suitable for studies focusing on complex, human-centered phenomena like destructive leadership.

By combining post-positivism and constructivism, this study leverages the strengths of epistemological perspectives to achieve a nuanced understanding of the problem being studied. The quantitative component provides a broad, empirical foundation, while the qualitative phase offers rich, contextualized insights into participants' experiences. This integrative approach ensures that the study captures both the prevalence and the nuanced impacts of DL behaviors, aligning with pragmatism's emphasis on methodological flexibility and practical applicability.

4.4 Methods

This study employed a mixed-methods research approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis to comprehensively address the research questions. This design capitalized on the strengths of descriptive survey methodology in the quantitative phase and phenomenological inquiry in the qualitative phase, balancing the breadth of data collection with the depth of exploration into destructive leadership behaviors in educational contexts.

Specifically, the quantitative phase employs a survey to examine the prevalence and patterns of destructive leadership behaviors experienced by teachers, victims of principal destructive behaviors. Descriptive surveys are regarded as effective tools in educational research for their ability to collect insights from large populations and identify trends or relationships among variables (Bryman, 2016). By systematically gathering data from participants, this method enables the researcher to quantify the frequency and types of destructive leadership behaviors, establishing patterns that guide the subsequent qualitative phase.

Structured online questionnaires were used in this phase as they are effective in capturing standardized data from a broad range of participants. This approach enabled the study to provide a broad overview of destructive leadership behaviors present in schools, as well as serving as a foundational layer of understanding of who to recruit for interview portions of the study which in turn sought more nuanced exploration of subjective experiences of the participants.

In the subsequent qualitative phase, a phenomenological approach was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of teachers who had been affected by destructive leadership practices exhibited by school principals. This methodology is particularly appropriate for studying human-centered phenomena, as it aims to reveal the fundamental nature

of participants' experiences and the meanings, they ascribe to them (Moustakas, 1994).

Participants and researcher engaged in one-on-one interviews to share their narratives, offering firsthand accounts of their encounters with the phenomenon under investigation, destructive leadership in the context of this study. This phenomenological approach emphasizes the subjective and interconnected nature of participants' lived experiences, prioritizing personal meaning and perception over objective reality (Crotty, 1998). It aligns with the study's constructivist epistemological stance, which prioritizes the co-construction of knowledge through dialogue and interaction between the research and study participant.

It further provides a robust framework for understanding the diverse ways individuals perceive and experience a particular phenomenon. Thus, a phenomenological study enables researchers to explore participants' lived experiences, revealing shared meanings and the essential structures that underlie those experiences (Baker et al., 1992). Explicitly in the context of this study, phenomenology remains appropriate due to its focus on teachers' subjective experiences with destructive leadership behaviors. This method provides an in-depth understanding of these DL behaviors, advances the study process a step further by pointing out how these DL behaviors have impacted the victims, and the strategies participants propose for prevention. These insights are consistent with the study's aim to inform educational practices and policies with knowledge on DL behaviors, effect on the victims and correspondingly potential prevention strategies.

While phenomenology shares commonalities with other qualitative methodologies, such as grounded theory, narrative studies, and descriptive studies, its unique focus on exploring the essence of lived experiences sets it apart (Pilarska, 2021). Grounded theory emphasizes theory generation, narrative studies prioritize storytelling, and descriptive studies primarily

document phenomena without delving into their underlying essence (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). In contrast, phenomenology illuminates the core of a phenomenon as experienced by individuals, making it an excellent fit for this study.

To wit, by integrating both survey and interview, the study process employs mixed-methods approach. This approach remains beneficial for the study as it ensures complementarity between the quantitative and qualitative phases. The descriptive survey provides a broad understanding of the prevalence and patterns of destructive leadership behaviors surveyed, informing participant selection and guiding the focus areas for the qualitative phase. In turn, the phenomenological inquiry added depth and context to the quantitative findings, revealing personal dimensions of participants' experiences.

In sum, the use of a mixed-methods approach in this study successfully leveraged the complementary strengths of both surveys and qualitative interviews to develop a comprehensive understanding of DL behaviors in schooling contexts. Through the integration of descriptive survey data and phenomenological insights, the study sought both breadth and depth in its examination of DL behaviors among Ottawa public secondary schools. The quantitative component identified measurable patterns and trends, offering a broad overview of the prevalence of DL behaviors, whereas the qualitative findings illuminated the lived experiences of victimized teachers, providing context and supplementary understanding of the survey results. As Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) emphasize, mixed-methods research strengthens the validity of findings by triangulating data sources and enabling a more holistic analysis of complex social phenomena. Accordingly, the integration of surveys and interviews not only reinforced the robustness of the study's conclusions but also generated new insights into the occurrence of DL within Ottawa's public secondary school context.

4.5 Participants and Instrumentation

4.5.1 Participants

This study employed purposive sampling to select participants with knowledge and direct experience of the phenomenon under investigation (Clifford, 1997) for both interview and survey. Purposive sampling was convenient to facilitate access to participants' lived experiences, which are essential for understanding and interpreting the phenomenon under investigation (Todres & Holloway, 2004). Participants included those currently experiencing the phenomenon of DL or those who have experienced it in the past (Cohen, 2002).

The sample size for qualitative component of this study was intentionally small to enable an in-depth examination of each case (Mapp, 2008) whereas the maximum survey responses submitted within four months period were accepted. Qualitative approach prioritized depth of information to serve the study's purpose rather than aiming for generalizability (Patton, 2014).

In this study, the participants are public secondary school teachers who have been victimized by destructive leadership (DL) behaviors exhibited by principals and who have served for at least five years at the time of data collection. A minimum of five years of teaching experience was chosen as it generally marks the end of early-career service for teachers (Kutsyuruba et al., 2022).

While survey participants needed to first confirm having experiences of destructive leadership from their school principal before they could proceed with the survey, interview participants were identified based on their responses to the last question of the survey, which asked if they were willing to be contacted for interview. This survey asked participants to rate 28 descriptors of DL behaviors on a scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very often) based on their experiences with principals. From these responses, participants who expressed willingness to

participate in interviews, and at the same time had at least rated two behaviors to occur sometimes, were selected for interview.

Out of 11 participants who initially expressed a willingness to participate, six met the pre-established selection criteria for interviews. Qualitative studies do not adhere to strict rules for determining sample size (Patton, 2014); instead, the sample size is often refined as the study progresses and findings emerge (Mapp, 2008). For this study, the six participants were included for the sample size and produced information relevant to the research questions.

To ensure a supportive and accessible research environment, the data collection process was intentionally designed to be flexible in response to the sensitive nature of DL. The study prioritized participants' preferences regarding the timing and venue of both questionnaire and interview sessions, whether in-person or remote. This flexibility aimed to address potential barriers to participation, such as fear of retaliation from perpetrators (Blase & Blase, 2002) or reluctance to discuss sensitive experiences (Milley, 2017). Regarding qualitative data collection, interview schedules were negotiated to include evenings, afternoons, weekends, and holidays in order to align with participants' availability and convenience. Initial contacts for interview arrangements were usually made through the contact information provided by participants during the questionnaire phase.

4.5.2 Instruments for Data Collection

4.5.2.1 Questionnaire for survey. The survey phase of this study employed the 28-item questionnaire developed by Thoroughgood et al. (2012) to shed light on frequency of destructive leadership behaviors (DLBs) exhibited by school principals. This instrument was selected due to its rigorous development process and its empirical validation, which ensured its

relevance and reliability for the study's purpose, particularly in addressing Research Question 1 which sought to identify the dimensions in terms of perceived occurrence of both follower- and organization-directed DLB exhibited by school principals.

In the process that led to 28 behavioral items, Thoroughgood et al. (2012) designed their study to empirically define and measure DLB through a series of well-structured steps. Drawing from Bennett and Robinson's (2000) work on workplace deviance, they sought to identify the dimensional structure of DLBs and create a comprehensive, validated measure of the construct. Their study employed a four-phase research process with 230 participants from a diverse set of occupations, including a significant proportion from education professionals. The diverse sample, coupled with rigorous sampling techniques like heterogeneity and snowball sampling, contributed to the robustness of their findings. These participants, with extensive professional experience averaging to 9.10 years, were asked to recall instances of harmful or deviant behaviors exhibited by leaders in their workplace, providing rich data set used to identifying key dimensions of DLB.

In the initial phases of the study, Thoroughgood et al. (2012) used varied research methods to identify the range of behaviors associated with DLB from subordinates' perspectives. Study 1 employed both inductive (critical incident) and deductive (relevant literature) approaches to generate an inventory of DLB. Study 2 further refined this inventory using Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) analysis to identify the distinct dimensions of DLB. These exploratory methods laid the groundwork for the development of a validated measurement tool.

The subsequent studies Study 3 and Study 4 shifted to a confirmatory approach. Study 3 used Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to verify the structure of DLB identified in previous studies. This analysis ensured that the dimensions of DLB were statistically valid and distinct. In

Study 4, the researchers provided empirical evidence for the construct and criterion-related validity of the measure. Furthermore, they demonstrated the incremental validity of their tool over previous measures, such as Tepper's (2000) abusive supervision scale, highlighting the tool's strengths and applicability in measuring destructive leadership behaviors.

The validation process was comprehensive, involving both exploratory and confirmatory analyses. The researchers used EFA (Exploratory Factor Analysis) to refine the initial list of 92 behaviors, ultimately reducing it to a statistically valid set of 28 items representing distinct aspects of DLB. Thoroughgood et al. (2012) utilized Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency, with reported values showing strong reliability ($\alpha = .96$ for the overall measure). Additionally, CFA models with fit indices such as RMSEA, CFI, and SRMR demonstrated acceptable model fit, strengthening the construct validity of the developed scales. These rigorous statistical techniques ensured that the identified dimensions were both meaningful and consistent with theoretical expectations.

Additionally, convergent and discriminant validity were assessed by comparing the new measure to existing leadership and workplace behavior instruments. These validations demonstrated that the 28-item measure reliably captures the complexity of DLB and its relationship with various organizational outcomes, such as employee satisfaction, turnover intentions, and psychological well-being.

Given the methodological rigor and empirical richness of Thoroughgood et al.'s (2012) tool, their measure of destructive leadership behaviors is relevant to this study. The 28 items, which encompass a wide range of leader-follower behaviors, are well-suited for identifying the dimensional structure of DLB as exhibited by school principals. In this study, participants were asked to rate these 28 items on a 1-5 Likert scale based on their experiences with the principal(s),

providing a valuable means of capturing the frequency of destructive leadership behaviors in educational contexts.

The selection of this measure reflects the study's commitment to employing a validated and reliable instrument to address the research question on the dimension of DL. By using an empirically developed and rigorously validated tool, the study ensures that its findings on the dimensionality of destructive leadership behaviors are grounded in academically sound methodological practices, increasing the validity and applicability of the results.

4.5.2.2 Interview Guide. The individual in-depth interview (face-to-face or remote) is a semi-structured questionnaire developed to meaningfully explore participants' lived experiences about DL behaviors, their effects and what they believe can help to address or minimize the occurrence of DL.

Methodologically, these interview sessions included open-ended questions that elicited participants' lived experiences in relation to the research questions. The session commenced with a broad and introductory question designed to establish a foundation for the discussion. Then followed, the main interview questions. Each main interview question corresponded to a research question and was supplemented with follow-up questions (Kallio et al., 2016).

To further clarify the structure of the interview design, Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) differentiate between main and follow-up interview questions within qualitative research. Main questions are characterized as the core inquiries that align with primary themes and/or objectives of the study. Typically, open-ended and formulated in advance within an interview guide, these questions are designed to initiate dialogue, direct participants' focus on central topics and ensure that the data collected remains consistent with the research aims. Moreover, the main questions

are instrumental in maintaining consistency and comparability across interviews, particularly in studies involving multiple participants.

Conversely, follow-up questions are regarded as dynamic tools for delving more deeply into participants' initial responses to the main questions. As Kvale and Brinkmann (2015) highlight, follow-up questions can be improvised during the interview, shaped by the interviewee's answers and the progression of the conversation. Rubin and Rubin (2011) further observe that follow-up questions are employed to clarify ambiguous statements, explore emotionally charged or complex topics, and encourage further elaboration. Through the strategic use of follow-up questions, researchers can elicit richer, more detailed narratives and sustain the dialogical nature that is fundamental to qualitative interviewing.

Example of the main question is 'what behaviors have you experienced?' Some of the follow-up questions to this main question were: what is your particular story? Do you recall specific incidents? The prompt was not exclusively limited to itself. It rather left room for additional questions intended to clarify participants' responses. The development of the interview guide was informed by existing literature with a particular attention to the theoretical framework, while ensuring the tool addressed the research questions and purpose of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Turner, 2010).

The first phase in the development of the interview questions involved identifying its broad categories of the phenomenon under investigation, with the aim of evaluating the suitability of interview approach which seemed like a data collection method in addressing the study's research questions. According to Turner (2010), it is important for the researcher to develop a foundational understanding of certain aspects of the phenomenon based on prior knowledge before conducting the interviews. At this stage of the development of the interview

guide, key concepts described in the theoretical framework were identified to guide the formulation of the interview questions. The process ensured that the categories were aligned with research questions to ensure a methodologically sound approach to data collection.

Specifically, since the theoretical foundation integrates multiple perspectives on destructive leadership behaviors, its effects on the victims and potential ways to address it (see Ashforth's (1994) model of organizational tyranny and/or Oplatka's (2016) conceptualization of irresponsible leadership), these concepts converged towards negative behavioral manifestations exhibited by the school leader, its effects and potential ways to counter them. Hence, these perspectives provided a basis for exploring the behaviors through which school principals may exhibit negative leadership practices that harm subordinates and undermine organizational well-being.

To explore these behaviors, questions were formulated in a way that participants were asked to recount their personal experiences of mistreatment by their principal. Thus, the questions were designed to elicit detailed accounts that would reveal patterns of participants' experiences of DL behaviors in school settings. Furthermore, since it was theoretically established in the theoretical framework that leadership is not inherently positive, rather, that certain leader behaviors can have detrimental effects on individuals and the wider institutional environment (Krasikova et al., 2013; Ryan, 2018), the interview guide sought to find out the impacts DL experiences had on interviewed victims. Correspondingly, a main interview question was formulated to encourage participants to describe the effects they experienced as a result of exposure to destructive leadership.

In addition to examining these effects, the study sought to identify potential strategies for addressing destructive leadership. Considering that existing research efforts that sought to

understand mitigation strategies were mostly leader-centred (see Oplatka's (2016) call for shared governance in schools) or institution-centered (putting in place mechanisms for reporting suggested by Krasikova et al., 2013), or Wang et al.'s (2015) emphasis on providing knowledge pertaining to addressing and preventing DL, it was evident the very victim's thought was theoretically and empirically rarely included.

To fill this gap, the study did not assume that the responsibility for addressing or resolving destructive leadership should rest solely with the victims. Instead, it sought to complement institution- and leadership-oriented approaches by including the perspectives of those directly affected. Therefore, the development of interview guide invited participants to share their personal thoughts on strategies that could help mitigate or prevent DL behaviors from occurring in their roles as teachers. Follow-up questions hinted on such strategies theorized in literature while ensuring space for the emergence of diverse thoughts from participants' responses. This interview question not only drew insights from the participants' lived experiences but also facilitated the exploration of participants' views on practical solutions to improve workplace conditions from the victims' perspectives.

In sum, the initial stage of the interview guide development process focused on reviewing existing knowledge to obtain a more complete understanding of DL, the subject under investigation. This required critical consideration of prior research, necessary for the researcher to fully grasp the core of the study being conducted (Rabionet, 2011). An extensive literature review was conducted to evaluate previous knowledge (Barriball & While, 1994; Krauss et al., 2009), aligning with the study's aim (Krauss et al., 2009). This prior knowledge provided the conceptual foundation for the interviews (Åstedt-Kurki & Heikkinen, 1994). Specifically, the

researcher developed the main interview questions based on established methodological practices and empirical findings in the field.

Methodologically, semi-structured interviews were deemed appropriate for exploring individuals' views, beliefs, or topics that are complex or emotionally sensitive topics (Åstedt-Kurki & Heikkinen, 1994; Barriball & While, 1994). As a result, semi-structured interviews enabled a focus on topics meaningful to participants, allowing for the expression of diverse perspectives (Cridland et al., 2015).

After establishing the interview guide format as semi-structured, the next step involved developing a preliminary semi-structured interview guide. The goal at this stage was to design a guide that would facilitate data collection, drawing on prior knowledge in a logical and coherent manner. An interview guide is essentially a list of questions (Krauss et al., 2009; Whiting, 2008) that helps direct the conversation towards the study's focus (Åstedt-Kurki & Heikkinen, 1994; Cridland et al., 2015). The quality of the interview guide influences the nature and quality of the data collected and its subsequent analysis (Barriball & While, 1994; Cridland et al., 2015; Krauss et al., 2009; Rabionet, 2011). To ensure rich and reliable data, key aspects were considered in its development including flexibility, sequence, flow, order of complexity and clarity.

The semi-structured interview guide was designed in a way to allow flexibility (Dearnley, 2005; Turner, 2010), allowing for open dialogue (Cridland et al., 2015; Whiting, 2008), the reordering of questions (Dearnley, 2005), and smooth transitions between questions (Åstedt-Kurki & Heikkinen, 1994). Questions were participant-centered (Barriball & While, 1994), worded with clarity (Åstedt-Kurki & Heikkinen, 1994; Turner, 2010), and open-ended (Chenail, 2011; Dearnley, 2005; Krauss et al., 2009; Turner III, 2010), aiming to encourage spontaneous, in-depth, and vivid responses (Baumbusch, 2010; Dearnley, 2005; Krauss et al., 2009). The

questions were crafted to elicit personal experiences and emotions (Rabionet, 2011; Whiting, 2008) while allowing new concepts to emerge from the data (Dearnley, 2005; Krauss et al., 2009).

Descriptive responses were equally encouraged by appropriately starting questions with ‘what,’ ‘who,’ ‘where,’ ‘when,’ or ‘how’ (Chenail, 2011), and occasionally ‘why’ (Turner III, 2010). The guide included two types of questions: main themes and follow-up questions. The main themes addressed core areas of the research and allowed participants to speak freely about their perceptions and experiences (Åstedt-Kurki & Heikkinen, 1994). These questions were often structured to begin with lighter topics and progress to more emotionally complex issues, before concluding with lighter themes again (Baumbusch, 2010; Cridland et al., 2015). This approach helped create a relaxed environment (Krauss et al., 2009; Rabionet, 2011; Whiting, 2008).

Follow-up questions clarified the main themes (Turner III, 2010) and guided the conversation toward the study’s focus (Baumbusch, 2010), maintaining the interview’s flow (Whiting, 2008) and ensuring accurate and detailed responses (Barriball & While 1994; Baumbusch, 2010; Rabionet, 2011; Whiting, 2008). Follow-up questions were pre-designed (Rabionet, 2011; Whiting, 2008) or spontaneous, depending on the participant’s responses (Chenail, 2011; Turner III, 2010; Whiting, 2008). Pre-designed follow-up questions were useful for ensuring consistency across interview responses (Krauss et al., 2009) whereas spontaneous follow-up questions invited participants to expand on specific points by providing more information or examples (Dearnley, 2005; Whiting, 2008). Verbal probing techniques, such as repeating a point or showing interest (Turner III, 2010; Whiting, 2008), and non-verbal cues like silence, encouraging participants to think aloud, were also employed (Whiting, 2008) to smooth the interview process.

The fourth stage of the study involved piloting the semi-structured interview guide to assess its coverage, clarity, and relevance, as well as its practical implementation. Three teachers with contextual knowledge of the study area were invited from the researcher's network to participate in the pilot. Following each interview, participants were asked to provide feedback on the overall interview experience to inform potential improvements. Their input helped identify ambiguities, refine the wording of questions, and ensure consistency with the study's purpose and research questions (Barriball & While, 1994; Chenail, 2011). Particular attention was given to the clarity and sequencing of questions, participants' ease of engagement, and the avoidance of leading or overly complex prompts (Doody & Noonan, 2013). Observations of both verbal and non-verbal cues also contributed to adjustments aimed at encouraging deeper reflection and enhancing participant comfort.

As a result of the pilot findings, the interview guide was revised from three main questions and twenty-one follow-up prompts to a more focused version with three main questions and sixteen follow-ups. This refinement improved the coherence and usability of the guide while preserving the potential for rich, detailed responses (Chenail, 2011). The pilot also allowed for evaluation of key logistical aspects, including interview length, topic transitions, and the efficiency of recording and transcription procedures. Moreover, the process supported ethical reflection and increased the researcher's awareness of their own interview style, which are critical components of qualitative rigour (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015; Turner, 2010). Overall, the pilot phase strengthened the methodological robustness and trustworthiness of the study's data collection process.

4.6 Recruitment and Sampling Procedures

Participants were recruited from publicly funded secondary school teachers in the City of Ottawa through online advertisement posted and promoted on the researcher's facebook page. The choice of Ontario was based on the fact that previous studies (Milley, 2017) indicated the presence of destructive leadership (DL) in the province, while Ottawa was selected due to its proximity to the researcher.

An introductory message was published online and shared on the researcher's facebook page. This message included a participant recruitment letter and a questionnaire detailing the study's purpose, expected outcomes, and participant information. The letter also clarified the nature and process of the research, guaranteed participants of confidentiality, and stated that their decision to participate or not would not impact on them.

To reach the maximum number of participants, the call for participation was posted over four months, including two months during the teachers' summer vacation and one month after the beginning of the 2024-2025 academic year. This timing was chosen to allow teachers ample opportunity to participate according to their preference of participation whether during or outside school teaching schedules. Approximately 80 percent of survey responses were received during the vacation period. Participants completed the questionnaires within the four-month period. The results were used to select potential interview participants based on their responses.

Among the responses, those who answered "yes" or "maybe" to the last question, "Would you like to be selected for an interview?" were considered for interview. Eight participants who responded 'yes' and four who responded 'maybe' were identified for potential interviews and a final list of 6 interviewees was finalized.

Data collection for the interviews involved conducting one-on-one in-depth interviews with two potential participation formats: in-person and remote, based on the participant's preference. All the interviews were conducted online with selected secondary school teachers. The purpose of these in-depth interviews was to provide a detailed account of the participants' experiences with DL, revealing the various behaviors they have encountered and the impact of these behaviors on them (Sorrell & Redmond, 1995). The study aimed to explore these experiences and gather insights on potential preventive measures for DL in schools.

Each interview began with a social conversation to create a comfortable and trusting environment, followed by a brief reflection on the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). While the preferred interview length was between 45 and 60 minutes, the duration was flexible and adjusted according to data saturation, which was reached when participants' responses become repetitive and no new information was emerging (Mapp, 2008). Interviews were audio-recorded to ensure a rich dataset for later analysis. All participants agreed to be recorded.

To address potential concerns about confidentiality, especially given the sensitive nature of DL (Blase & Blase, 2002, 2004; Milley, 2017), the researcher made it clear about options for participation whether remote or in-person. This included submitting questionnaires via an online google link and conducting one-on-one interviews remotely, ensuring that respondents could participate anonymously and comfortably.

4.7 Analysis Procedures

The study's analysis involves distinct but complementary approaches for the quantitative (survey) and qualitative data. The survey data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, which consisted in calculating means and standard deviations of the items to identify

the patterns of commonly experienced behaviors among respondents. These analyses, conducted using SPSS software, provided insights that set the context for the subsequent qualitative phase.

Building on the quantitative findings, the qualitative data analysis followed a systematic framework. Clearly, if one agrees with Creswell (2013), an academic enquiry involves an implicit analysis before, during and after data collection process, and explicit analysis that essentially takes place after data collection. This section sheds light on the steps taken for the explicit analysis ensuing data collection.

In qualitative data analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006) note a six-phase framework for thematic analysis, a suited approach for systematically identifying, examining, and interpreting patterns within qualitative data. This method was employed to analyze qualitative data and allowed for an in-depth exploration of participants' narratives, uncovering key themes related to destructive leadership behaviors, their impacts, and potential solutions. From familiarization to reporting phase, each of the six was rigorously applied to ensure thoroughness and alignment with the study's primary ad described below:

Phase 1: Familiarization

The first phase involved deeply immersing in the data. This included transcribing interviews verbatim and repeatedly reading the transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences. Careful attention was paid to explicit statements and underlying nuances, ensuring no detail was overlooked.

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

Next, meaningful data segments were systematically coded to capture key elements of destructive leadership behaviors. Codes such as 'micromanagement,' 'public humiliation' and

‘favoritism’ were created alongside impacts like ‘psychological distress’ and ‘loss of professional confidence.’ Coding was both data-driven and informed by prior research to enhance relevance.

Phase 3: Developing Themes

In this phase, related codes were merged to form broader themes that expressed significant patterns in the data. For instance, codes like isolation, loneliness, anxiety, anger and stress were grouped under the theme psychological impacts. Similarly, codes related to diminished job satisfaction and integrity were categorized as ‘professional identity erosion’. Themes were continuously refined to ensure they reflected the core of participants’ experiences.

Phase 4: Reviewing and Refining Themes

Themes were reviewed against the coded data and original transcripts to ensure accuracy and alignment. Redundant or overlapping themes were merged, and others were clarified to enhance their specificity. This iterative process ensured that the themes become meaningful and reflective of the data.

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

Each identified theme was carefully defined and assigned a descriptive name that accurately captures its core meaning. For instance, psychological impacts encapsulated the emotional toll of destructive leadership, while ‘erosion of professional identity’ highlighted the negative effects on participants’ self-perception and professional trajectory. The themes then were directly linked to the research questions to ensure coherence.

Phase 6: Producing the Report

The final phase consisted in integrating the findings into a unified narrative that directly addressed the research questions. The themes were systematically organized and substantiated with direct participant quotes to strengthen authenticity and credibility. This narrative framework emphasized recurring patterns, offering valuable insights into the nature and impact of DL behaviors, as well as potential strategies for their prevention and mitigation.

4.8 Ethics Considerations

Ethical considerations were an important consideration throughout the research process, ensuring that the study adhered to the standards of integrity and respect for participants. Recognizing the potential for ethical concerns, the researcher implemented a proactive approach to address these issues comprehensively. The principle was to protect participants from any form of physical, mental, or social, professional harm that could arise during or because of their involvement in sensitive study like this one.

Central to the ethical framework was the principle of informed consent, which was rigorously maintained. Participants received a written consent form that explicitly detailed the study's purpose, scope, and potential implications. This form was carefully explained to each participant, who then had ample time to review it, ask questions, and make an informed decision about their participation in the study. The consent form was only signed after participants fully read and understood the content and voluntarily agreed to participate. This process ensured that participants' autonomy and right to self-determination were respected.

Privacy and confidentiality were upheld at every stage of the research. Participant identities and personal information were protected, and strict protocols were followed to

anonymize data. Any identifying details were removed from the research records, and the data were stored securely to prevent unauthorized access. To be explicit, the study did not collect any identifiers such as names or schools nor did the researcher conduct any interview in the public venues. This commitment to privacy extended to the reporting of findings, where caution was exercised to ensure that individual participants could not be identified, even indirectly. At no point was privacy compromised, even in cases doing so might have appeared to benefit the research.

The study explicitly avoided any form of deception. Participants were provided with transparent and honest information about the study's purpose, methods, and intended outcomes. This openness ensured that they understood the significance of their contributions and fostered trust between the researcher and the participants. Transparency also enabled participants to engage meaningfully in the research process, which was crucial for generating valid and reliable findings.

To uphold these ethical principles, the researcher sought and obtained approval from the University of Ottawa's Ethics Committee before engaging in any fieldwork activity. The approval process consisted in a thorough review of the study process including methods, and ethical safeguards to ensure compliance with institutional ethical guidelines. This step underscored the study commitment to conducting the study in an ethically responsible manner and provided an additional layer of oversight to protect participants' rights and well-being.

By implementing these measures, the study ensured that ethical integrity was maintained throughout the process. The researcher's dedication to protecting participants' dignity, privacy, and autonomy not only safeguarded the ethical standards of the research but also enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the study's findings.

4.9 Researcher's Positionality

Reflecting on my positionality, I acknowledge the potential for bias in my study, particularly given my background and professional experiences in educational administration. Over a nine-year service as an education officer in Rwanda, I worked closely with school principals and teachers, overseeing school activities, providing pieces of advice, and supporting them in their professional responsibilities. Such an experience has shaped my understanding of the dynamics between principals and teachers in the workplace, allowing me to witness both the aspects of positive leadership and instances of destructive behaviors exhibited by school principals.

My professional background has led me to recognize that school principals, like any leaders, can fail in their efforts to deliver. While they would often strive to uphold ethical standards and appeal to the public as exemplary leaders, they are not immune to making questionable decisions or engaging in undesirable behaviors falling outside of the acceptable practices of conduct or organizational norms. These behaviors, however, are frequently left unreported or unchallenged, as principals may seek to protect their reputation and preserve a positive legacy. Perhaps there are systemic structures that connive to harbor unwanted school principals' negative leadership behaviors.

In my understanding, victims of such behaviors, on the other hand, may hesitate to report mistreatment, fearing retaliation, worsening relationships, or skepticism about whether their concerns will be addressed. Blase and Blase (2004) highlighted this dynamic, noting that victims often experience fear of repeated harm and apprehension about the potential consequences of confronting their mistreatment.

Despite my previous professional experience and understanding of the educational leadership context, I approached this research without any professional affiliation to the study sites or relationships with potential participants other than being a researcher. While such a background has provided me with some insights into the complexities of principal-teacher interactions, I believe that minimizing biases throughout the study process is an important commitment to collecting more credible data. To ensure that my values, beliefs, and past experiences do not interfere with the research, I engaged in reflective practices as the research process evolved.

According to Wall et al. (2004), reflexivity involves examining one's assumptions, judgments, and emotions to clarify and contextualize one's position in relation to the research process, participants, and outputs. I employed a reflective framework to bracket my personal beliefs, ensuring that they do not interfere with the objective collection and analysis of data. This approach required careful preparation of the mind to identify specific issues and beliefs that could potentially influence the study. Throughout the process, I continuously revisited and critically examined my thoughts, interpretations and decisions to remain aware of potential biases and to enhance the credibility of the research.

As a researcher specifically, my primary responsibility was to collect, analyze, and report data with integrity while safeguarding the privacy and well-being of participants. My efforts here sought to create a safer and respectful research environment where teachers-victims of principals' destructive leadership behaviors could feel comfortable sharing their lived experiences. By fostering trust and prioritizing ethical research practices, I aimed to give voice to those who had been silenced, enabling a deeper understanding of this phenomenon and its consequences.

In doing so, I intend to contribute to the efforts seeking to break the silence surrounding destructive leadership behaviors in schooling context, offering insights that may inform policies and practices to enhance a healthier school environment. My reflexive and ethical approach will ensure that the study remains objective, rigorous, and grounded in the experiences of participants.

4.10 Bracketing

Employed in qualitative research, bracketing is a technique that helps to mitigate the influence of a researcher's personal experiences, biases, or preconceived beliefs on the collection, and analysis of data (Tufford & Newman, 2012). This process involves consciously setting aside assumptions and prior knowledge to engage with the data in an open and neutral manner. By utilizing bracketing, researchers ensure that participants' experiences and perspectives are authentically reported, free from external influence or subjective interpretation. Typically grounded in the phenomenological research tradition, bracketing seeks to understand lived experiences by exploring how individuals perceive and make sense of their realities (Giorgi, 2009).

Such a deliberate researcher's endeavor of bracketing, as Tufford and Newman (2012) emphasize, requires researchers to identify and suspend preconceived notions throughout the research process, whether in data collection or analysis. This suspension enables the researcher to approach the data without fixed judgments thereby preserving the authenticity of participants' accounts. Giorgi (2009) underscores the importance of bracketing in phenomenological research, by asserting that it involves the suspension of all preconceptions to fully grasp the phenomenon under investigation.

One way to bracket researchers' preconceptions is to engage in the process of reflexivity. Ahern (1999) highlights the value of reflexivity as a process whereby researchers maintain a journal to document their thoughts, feelings, and assumptions. Reflexive journaling allows for the continual recognition and management of biases, minimizing their potential influence on data interpretation. Applied in this study, bracketing was implemented during data collection and analysis processes. The study focused on identifying destructive leadership behaviors and their impacts on victimized teachers as well as the participants' perspectives on strategies to counter the occurrence of DL. Qualitative data collection involved six semi-structured interviews conducted at strategically spaced intervals. The interval between consecutive interviews was deliberately set to a minimum of two days. Each interview schedule was designed to ensure the consistent application of bracketing techniques. The study participants, teachers with firsthand experiences of destructive leadership, were encouraged to share their perceptions, experiences, and ideas in such behaviors an open and unrestricting manner.

Prior to each interview, reflexive journaling was employed to document any preconceptions or biases that could unwittingly influence the research process. The researcher reviewed the preconceived ideas and committed to avoid them during the conversations. This reflexive practice helped clarify the researcher's stance, ensuring a neutral approach to the interviews. During the interviews, care was taken to remain neutral while asking questions thereby enabling participants to articulate their thoughts and experiences authentically. This approach minimized the risk of researcher's influence, rather enabling participants' voices to emerge as the object of the study was to explore participants' lived experiences.

The data analysis phase adopted Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis process, which offered a structured yet adaptable method for identifying and analyzing patterns within the

data. The bracketing techniques established during data collection were consistently applied throughout the analysis process. This involved a conscious effort to engage with the data without preconceived ideas, focusing solely on the emergence of themes from participants' narratives.

By bracketing personal assumptions and beliefs, the researcher was able to delve into the depth of these emotional experiences without allowing his personal interpretations to overshadow the data. However, the researcher acknowledges that completely separating preconceptions and existing knowledge from the qualitative research process is not entirely achievable due to the interpretive and subjective nature of such research (Berger, 2015; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Maxwell, 2013). Thus, bracketing efforts undertaken in this study minimized potential biases or any distortions to maintain rigor and credibility. This practice ensured that the findings were rooted in participants' lived realities, enhancing the authenticity and credibility of the study.

In sum, bracketing was essential for the integrity of this research. Techniques such as reflexive journaling, neutral questioning, and the application of a thematic analysis process were crucial in minimizing bias and centering the voices of participants. These practices enabled an authentic understanding of destructive leadership behaviors among study participants, their impacts on teachers, and the strategies proposed to mitigate such behaviors.

4.11 Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

Although this study was conducted using survey and interview data, it remains predominantly qualitative and is inherently subject to several limitations associated with this methodological approach. Qualitative research places significant reliance on researchers' interpretations, which introduces a degree of subjectivity. Such reliance can potentially result in

bias, reducing the objectivity of findings compared to quantitative approaches (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Additionally, qualitative research takes a significant amount of time and resources, here it necessitates smaller sample sizes (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

These constraints limit the study's capacity for generalization, as qualitative research is typically context-specific and does not aim for the broad applicability of findings to other populations or settings (Yin, 2018). Therefore, the present study does not claim the generalizability of its findings but instead seeks to provide rich, detailed insight into the experiences of the selected participants, focusing on their specific contexts and lived realities.

First, the limited sample size used in the process of the study presents a notable limitation. This study included six participants, all drawn from public secondary school teachers in Ottawa with a minimum of five years of experience and direct exposure to destructive principal leadership. Such purposeful sampling excluded individuals who may have encountered destructive leadership but did not meet selection criteria or did not participate in the study due to any reason. Participants were recruited through an online survey posted on researcher's Facebook page, promoted to reach maximum number of audiences. Self-selection was a determinant factor indicating personal decision to engage with the research. Of the 90 survey participants, only six were interviewed.

This could reflect reluctance among participants to discuss sensitive topics such as destructive leadership from a staff in supervisory position. While measures were taken to encourage broader participation, such as extending the survey collection period from June to October, these efforts yielded only a modest increase in responses, highlighting the difficulty of

recruiting for research on sensitive research topics like the phenomenon of principal destructive leadership behaviors.

The reliance on self-selection and survey data to identify interview candidates also shaped the study's sample. Participants had to explicitly indicate their willingness to be contacted. Despite efforts to ensure a diverse and representative sample in terms of gender, professional experience, and depth of perspectives, the final sample was inevitably influenced by participants' own decisions to engage with the research. This reliance on self-selection may have inadvertently excluded valuable perspectives from individuals unwilling to participate.

The interpretive nature of qualitative analysis further complicates the generalizability of the findings. As noted by Creswell and Poth (2018), qualitative data analysis involves subjective interpretation, making it possible for different researchers to identify varying themes or derive distinct conclusions from the same data. This inherent variability limits the study's ability to claim universal applicability of its findings. Nevertheless, efforts were made to mitigate these limitations through a rigorous six-step thematic analysis process as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Additionally, combining qualitative interviews with survey data provided a complementary perspective, enabling triangulation and enhancing the robustness of the findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2014).

To preserve authenticity and foreground the lived experiences of participants, the study incorporated direct quotations from their narratives. This approach aligns with the principles of qualitative inquiry, emphasizing the need to represent participants' voices faithfully and provide a nuanced understanding of their emotions and experiences (Charmaz, 2014). While the study acknowledges the limitations inherent in its methodology, it prioritized rigor and depth over

breadth, offering a detailed exploration of destructive leadership within the specific context of secondary public schools in Ottawa. Although claims of generalizability or transferability are not made, the findings are intended to illuminate the phenomena studied and lay a foundation for future research on destructive leadership in educational settings.

4.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the research methodology utilized to examine manifestations of DL among teachers in public secondary schools in Ottawa. Given the complexity and multidimensional nature of DL, the study employed a mixed-methods approach, prioritizing qualitative data. The adoption of a pragmatic paradigm facilitated the integration of both qualitative and quantitative methods, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of teachers' perceptions and experiences of DL.

The ontological stance of the study was pluralistic, acknowledging the existence of multiple realities shaped by the varied experiences and perceptions of participants. This perspective facilitated a deeper understanding of DL as a phenomenon embedded in diverse contexts and personal interpretations. Epistemologically, the study combined post-positivist and constructivist elements, creating a balance between objective data derived from surveys and subjective insights obtained through qualitative interviews.

The research employed two primary methods of data collection. Structured questionnaire surveys generated complete 72 responses, offering quantitative information about the prevalence of 28 behavioral items studied. Six participants took part in semi-structured interviews to explore in greater depth individual experiences with DL pertaining to its dimensions, impacts and

potential strategies to counter it. The flexibility of the semi-structured format allowed for consistency in questioning while accommodating the unique perspectives of each participant.

Although the survey participants constituted a smaller sample size, the study values the information obtained from the 72 responses and enhances it with the depth and quality of qualitative interviews. Despite this limitation, the participants shared a diverse range of experiences that contributed to a richer analysis and deeper understanding of destructive leadership (DL). To ensure validity and reliability, the researchers employed bracketing to mitigate the influence of their own preconceptions and biases. Reflexivity was a critical aspect of the research process, as the researchers continuously engaged in self-reflection to maintain the integrity of the findings.

By adopting a pragmatic paradigm, the study was able to capture the multifaceted nature of DL behaviors and their impacts. The integration of quantitative data with rich, contextual qualitative insights provided a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. While the small sample size posed limitations, the rigorous methodological framework ensured the credibility and relevance of the findings.

Chapter 5: Results of the Study

Chapter 5 presents a detailed analysis of the findings from this study, focusing on DL behaviors exhibited by school principals as perceived by the victimized teachers. It also explores the impact of these behaviors on study participants and considers potential strategies to mitigate their occurrence. Organized into three main sections, the chapter directly addresses the research questions guiding the study: the manifestations of principal leadership behaviors perceived by teachers as destructive in their professional environment, the impact of these behaviors on victims' professional and personal lives, and the victims' perspectives on strategies to address DL in schools.

The first section investigates the dimensions of destructive leadership, offering an analysis of the principal behaviors identified as harmful by teachers. It begins with survey results, providing an overview of participants' experiences with specified DL behaviors, followed by a presentation of interview findings. While the survey results point to variation in perceived frequency of occurrence, based on participants' ratings of the 28 descriptors, the interview results provide a deeper understanding of the destructive behaviors, pertaining to abuse of authority, mishandling of incidents, or disregard for teachers' needs. Specific behaviors such as discrimination, gaslighting, or public displays of anger illustrate the varied forms of school principals' misconduct that disrupt the schoolwork environment. Participant's quotes are used to underscore how these behaviors were perceived and experienced, offering a substantiated understanding of DL in their schools.

The second section examines the effects of such destructive behaviors on the victims, emphasizing the professional, emotional, and psychological toll these behaviors had on

victimized teachers. Key issues detailed in this section include job attrition, diminished self-esteem, reduced job satisfaction, and career instability. The discussion extends to effects on mental health alluding to anxiety, depression, and psychological distress, highlighting the detrimental impact of DL behaviors on both professional performance and overall well-being of the victims.

The final section elaborates on the strategies proposed by victimized teachers as effective in preventing or mitigating DL behaviors. Drawing on participants' perspectives, this section outlines organizational and individual-level dimensions of these measures. These include enhancing professional development opportunities for school principals and strengthening support systems for teachers. Additionally, the strategies such as peer support, self-advocacy, and union involvement are explored as mechanisms to resist and counteract DL behaviors.

Overall, chapter 5 provides an evidence-based understanding of the manifestation of school principal DL within schooling context, its impact on the victimized teachers, and the range of strategies that may help address these behaviors. This chapter not only responds to the study's research questions but also offers a foundation for developing practical solutions aimed at improving leadership practices in school settings.

5.1 Dimensions of Principal Destructive Leadership

The study aimed to explore the various manifestations of DL) behaviors as perceived by victims in the schoolwork environment. The objective was to examine these behaviors comprehensively, pointing out the perceived rates of occurrence as well as an in-depth explanation of instances. To achieve this, an online survey was conducted, allowing participants to rate specific DL behavioral descriptors based on their personal experiences. This survey

complemented qualitative insights obtained from interviews. Additionally, the survey results served to identify individuals willing to participate in interviews, as indicated by their responses to the questionnaire items. The findings are presented in two distinct subsections. That is, the survey results which provide an overview of the range of DL behaviors are followed by interview findings, which offer a deeper understanding of these behaviors.

5.1.1 Survey Results

The survey examined 28 descriptors of DL, capturing perceived occurrence of both follower-directed and organization-directed behaviors among secondary school teachers in Ottawa. Participants rated each behavior on a scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (Very Often). The results revealed clear patterns in the frequency of DL behaviors, with varying levels of occurrence. Each of the 28 descriptors was rated as occurring at least occasionally, underscoring the pervasive presence of these behaviors in the schooling work environment.

5.1.1.1 Demographic characteristics. The majority of participants (71.6%) were aged 35–50, with at least five years of teaching experience, reflecting life and professional maturity. This group likely possesses established careers and extensive experience, shaping their perceptions of leadership behaviors.

Regarding gender distribution, 34.7% of participants identified as male, while the majority (58.3%) identified as female. A smaller percentage (2.7%) selected the option “you do not have the option that applies to me,” reflecting the study’s acknowledgment of diverse gender identities, and 4.2 % chose not to disclose their gender. This distribution reflects broader trends in educational settings, where women often comprise a significant proportion of the teaching workforce. Moreover, all participants had a minimum of five years of teaching experience,

ensuring that their assessments were shaped by meaningful exposure to diverse leadership practices and organizational cultures. Collectively, the demographic characteristics of the sample such as maturity, gender diversity, and extensive professional experience enhance the credibility of the study's findings.

5.1.1.2 Questionnaire Reliability. Although the study utilized a validated questionnaire, the researcher believed it was necessary to assess the instrument's reliability within the specific context of this research. This approach acknowledges that reliability is not an inherent property of a measurement tool but can be influenced by factors such as the sample, cultural context, and research conditions (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Consequently, a scale demonstrating strong reliability in one context may not necessarily exhibit the same consistency in another. Calculating Cronbach's alpha was therefore crucial for confirming the internal consistency of the 28 questionnaire items in this study, ensuring they collectively measured the intended construct (Gliem & Gliem, 2003). Furthermore, reporting Cronbach's alpha enhances methodological transparency and rigor, thereby strengthening the study's credibility.

As demonstrated below, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, calculated using SPSS (version 25), yielded a value of 0.956. This result indicates a high degree of internal consistency, confirming that the 28 items effectively measured the underlying construct of destructive leadership behaviors within the study's context. Cronbach's alpha was particularly valuable in ensuring that all survey items designed to assess DL behaviors consistently captured the intended phenomenon.

Mathematically, Cronbach's alpha (α) is defined as follows (Cronbach, 1951):

$$\alpha = \left(\frac{k}{k-1} \right) \left(1 - \sum_{i=1}^k \frac{\sigma_i^2}{\sigma_s^2} \right) \quad (1)$$

Where:

- k is the number of items in the scale,
- σ_i^2 refers to the variance of item
- σ_s^2 indicate the variance of the total scale score.

A higher Cronbach's alpha value (typically exceeding 0.70) indicates greater internal reliability (Cho & Kim, 2015). In this study, the obtained Cronbach's alpha of 0.956 demonstrates excellent internal consistency among the 28 items designed to measure destructive leadership (DL) behaviors. This finding suggests that the behavioral items adapted from Thoroughgood et al.'s (2012) questionnaire exhibit a high degree of intercorrelation and effectively captured the intended DL construct. Furthermore, such a higher alpha value indicates that participants responded consistently across items, thereby reinforcing the reliability of the instrument (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Tables 2 and 3 summarize the calculation process and interpretation of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient in this study.

Table 3*Case Processing Summary*

Description	n	%
Valid cases	72	100
Excluded cases (listwise deletion)	0	0
Total cases	72	100

Note. Table 3 provides a case processing summary, highlighting the number and percentage of valid and excluded cases considered in the analysis.

Table 3 provides a case processing summary, indicating that all 72 cases in the dataset were valid, with no cases excluded due to missing data. This ensures that the reliability analysis, including the calculation of Cronbach's alpha, was conducted on a full dataset, thereby enhancing the robustness and validity of the study's findings.

5.1.1.2.1 Reliability Statistics Summary. The reliability of the 28-item scale used to assess destructive leadership behaviors is reflected in the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which was calculated to be 0.956. This value indicates excellent internal consistency, meaning that the items on the scale are strongly interrelated and measure the same underlying construct effectively. With such a high coefficient, the scale demonstrates robust reliability, suggesting that it can consistently produce dependable results when used to assess DLBs. This level of

internal consistency supports the validity of the instrument in capturing the relevant dimensions of the phenomenon under study.

5.1.1.3 Perceived Occurrence of DLB Descriptors. The 28 DLB descriptors surveyed were experienced differently by participants, resulting in varied responses. To analyze each DLB, the study examines them individually, presenting participants' responses in tables accompanied by brief explanations. Tables 3 to 31 report the perceived frequency of each DLB, offering insights into how often participants encountered these behaviors. This analysis seeks to identify patterns in destructive behaviors commonly observed in interactions between school principals and teachers.

Table 4

Frequency Distribution of DLB: Avoiding Important Issues

Response Category	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Never	24	33.3	33.3
Rarely	19	26.4	59.7
Sometimes	15	20.8	80.6
Often	12	16.7	97.2
Very Often	2	2.8	100.0

Note. Table 4 displays the frequency distribution of responses regarding the DLB of avoiding important issues. The majority of respondents (59.7%) reported that this behavior occurs 'Rarely' or 'Never', while 20.8% indicated it occurs 'Sometimes.' A smaller proportion (19.5%) observed this behavior 'Often' or 'Very Often.'

Table 5

Frequency Distribution of DLB: Denying Subordinates of Entitlements

Response Category	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Never	32	44.4	44.4
Rarely	18	25.0	69.4
Sometimes	18	25.0	94.4
Often	3	4.2	98.6
Very Often	1	1.4	100.0
Total	72	100.0	100.0

Note. Table 5 presents the frequency distribution of responses regarding the DLB of denying subordinates their entitlements (e.g., lunch breaks, vacation time). The most common response was ‘Never,’ reported by 44.4% of participants. A combined 50% of respondents indicated this behavior occurs ‘Rarely’ or ‘Sometimes,’ while only 5.6% observed it ‘Often’ or ‘Very Often.’ The cumulative percentages highlight the progression of responses, with all responses accounted for by the very often category.

Table 6

Frequency Distribution of DLB: Delayed Discipline of Subordinates

Response Category	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Never	41	56.9	56.9
Rarely	12	16.7	73.6
Sometimes	13	18.1	91.7
Often	4	5.6	97.2
Very Often	2	2.8	100.0
Total	72	100.0	100.0

Note. Table 6 outlines the distribution of responses regarding delayed discipline of subordinates as a DLB. Over half of the participants (56.9%) indicated this behavior "Never" occurs, while 34.8% observed it to varying degrees, from "Rarely" to "Sometimes." A small minority (8.4%) reported it happens "Often" or "Very Often." The cumulative percentages illustrate the progression of responses across categories, summing to 100%.

Table 7

Frequency Distribution of DLB: Discounting Feedback or Advice from Subordinates

Response Category	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Never	19	26.4	26.4
Rarely	14	19.4	45.8
Sometimes	26	36.1	81.9
Often	12	16.7	98.6
Very Often	1	1.4	100.0
Total	72	100.0	100.0

Note. Table 7 summarizes the frequency distribution of destructive leader behavior (DLB) related to discounting feedback or advice from subordinates. The most frequent response was sometimes (36.1%), followed by never (26.4%). A smaller proportion of participants reported this behavior Rarely (19.4%) or Often (16.7%), while only 1.4% observed it Very Often. The cumulative percentages show the gradual accumulation of responses, reaching 100% with the Very Often category.

Table 8

Frequency Distribution of DLB: Failing to Defend Subordinates from Attacks by Others

Response Category	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Never	19	26.4	26.4
Rarely	9	12.5	38.9
Sometimes	25	34.7	73.6
Often	12	16.7	90.3
Very Often	7	9.7	100.0

Note. Table 8 highlights the frequency distribution of DLB involving the failure to defend subordinates from attacks by others. The most common response was sometimes (34.7%), followed by never (26.4%). A smaller percentage of participants indicated this behavior occurs rarely (12.5%) or often (16.7%), while 9.7% reported it happens Very Often.

Table 9

Frequency Distribution of DLB: Failing to Give Subordinates Credit for Effortful Jobs

Response Category	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Never	29	40.3	40.3
Rarely	18	25.0	65.3
Sometimes	16	22.2	87.5
Often	8	11.1	98.6

Response Category	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Very Often	1	1.4	100.0

Note. Table9 displays the frequency distribution of DLB related to failing to give subordinates credit for effortful jobs. Most participants reported that this behavior never occurs (40.3%), while 25.0% observed it rarely. Approximately 22.2% noted it happens sometimes, and smaller percentages indicated it occurs often (11.1%) or very often (1.4%).

Table 10

Frequency Distribution of DLB: Falsely accuses or punishes subordinates for something they were not responsible for

Response Category	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Never	29	40.3	40.3
Rarely	26	36.1	76.4
Sometimes	8	11.1	87.5
Often	5	6.9	94.4
Very Often	4	5.6	100.0

Note. Table10 presents the frequency distribution of destructive leader behavior (DLB) involving falsely accusing or punishing subordinates for something they were not responsible for. The majority of participants reported that this behavior never occurs (40.3%), while 36.1% indicated it happens rarely. Smaller proportions observed it sometimes (11.1%), often (6.9%), or very often (5.6%).

Table 11

Frequency Distribution of DLB: Ignores Phone Calls and/or Emails

Response Category	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Never	26	36.1	36.1
Rarely	10	13.9	50.0
Sometimes	26	36.1	86.1
Often	6	8.3	94.4
Very Often	4	5.6	100.0

Note. Table 11 outlines the frequency distribution of DLB regarding ignoring phone calls and/or emails. Responses indicate that 36.1% of participants observed this behavior never and an equal percentage noted it occurs sometimes. A smaller portion reported it occurs rarely (13.9%), often (8.3%), or very often (5.6%).

Table 12

Frequency distribution of DLB: Inadequately Explains Performance Reviews

Response	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Never	30	41.7	41.7
Rarely	12	16.7	58.3
Sometimes	22	30.6	88.9
Often	5	6.9	95.8
Very often	3	4.2	100.0

Note. Table 12 illustrates the frequency distribution of destructive leader behavior (DLB) related to inadequately explaining performance reviews. A significant portion of participants indicated this behavior never occurs (41.7%), while 30.6% reported it happens sometimes. Fewer respondents noted it occurs rarely (16.7%), often (6.9%), or very often (4.2%).

Table 13

DLB at the Workplace: Insults or Criticizes Subordinates in Front of Others

Response	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Never	29	40.3	40.3
Rarely	27	37.5	77.8
Sometimes	9	12.5	90.3
Often	5	6.9	97.2
Very often	2	2.8	100.0

Note. Table 13 displays the frequency distribution of destructive leader behavior (DLB)

involving insulting or criticizing subordinates in front of others. Most participants reported that this behavior never occurs (40.3%), followed by rarely (37.5%). Smaller proportions observed this behavior sometimes (12.5%), often (6.9%), or very often (2.8%).

Table 14

DLB at the Workplace: Invades Subordinates' Privacy

Response	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Never	30	41.7	41.7
Rarely	22	30.6	72.2

Response	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Sometimes	15	20.8	93.1
Often	5	6.9	100.0

Note. Table 14 presents the frequency distribution of destructive leader behavior (DLB) concerning the invasion of subordinates' privacy. The majority of participants indicated this behavior never occurs (41.7%), while 30.6% reported it happens rarely. Fewer respondents observed it sometimes (20.8%) or often (6.9%).

Table 15

DLB at the Workplace: Is Confrontational When Interacting with Subordinates

Response	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Never	29	40.3	40.3
Rarely	14	19.4	59.7
Sometimes	21	29.2	88.9
Often	5	6.9	95.8
Very often	3	4.2	100.0

Note. Table 15 outlines the frequency distribution of destructive leader behavior (DLB) related to being confrontational when interacting with subordinates. The data show that 40.3% of participants reported this behavior Never occurs, while 29.2% observed it Sometimes. Smaller proportions indicated it happens rarely (19.4%), often (6.9%), or very often (4.2%).

Table 16

DLB at the Workplace: Says One Thing and Does Another

Response	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Never	35	48.6	48.6
Rarely	15	20.8	69.4
Sometimes	12	16.7	86.1
Often	7	9.7	95.8
Very often	3	4.2	100.0

Note. Table16 illustrates the frequency distribution of DLB involving saying one thing and doing another. Nearly half of the participants (48.6%) reported that this behavior Never occurs, while 20.8% indicated it happens Rarely. Smaller proportions observed it sometimes (16.7%), Often (9.7%), or Very Often (4.2%).

Table 17

DLB at the Workplace: Shows No Clear Standards for Administering Rewards and Punishments

Response	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Never	38	52.8	52.8
Rarely	15	20.8	73.6
Sometimes	12	16.7	90.3
Often	5	6.9	97.2
Very often	2	2.8	100.0

Note. Table17 highlights the frequency distribution of destructive leader behavior (DLB) related to the absence of clear standards for administering rewards and punishments. Over half of the respondents (52.8%) indicated this behavior Never occurs, while 20.8% observed it Rarely. Smaller percentages reported it happening sometimes (16.7%), often (6.9%), or very often (2.8%).

Table 18

DLB at the Workplace: Accepts Financial Kickbacks

Response	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Never	53	73.6	73.6
Rarely	10	13.9	87.5
Sometimes	5	6.9	94.4
Often	4	5.6	100.0

Note. Table 18 illustrates the frequency distribution of destructive leader behavior (DLB) concerning accepting financial kickbacks. A significant majority (73.6%) of respondents indicated that this behavior never occurs, while 13.9% observed it rarely. Smaller proportions reported it happening sometimes (6.9%) or often (5.6%).

Table 19

DLB at the Workplace: At Times Appears to Be Under the Influence of Alcohol or Recreational Drugs While at Work

Response	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Never	53	73.6	73.6

Response	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative Percent (%)
Rarely	13	18.1	91.7
Sometimes	3	4.2	95.8
Often	2	2.8	98.6
Very often	1	1.4	100.0

Note. Table 19 presents the frequency distribution of destructive leader behavior (DLB) related to appearing under the influence of alcohol or recreational drugs while at work. Most respondents (73.6%) indicated that this behavior never occurs, while 18.1% reported it happening rarely. A smaller proportion observed this behavior sometimes (4.2%), often (2.8%), or very Often (1.4%), reflecting a low prevalence of such incidents.

Table 20

DLB at the Workplace: Breaks the law while at work

Response Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	50	69.4	69.4
Rarely	14	19.4	88.9
Sometimes	4	5.6	94.4
Often	3	4.2	98.6
Very Often	1	1.4	100.0

Note. Table 20 highlights the frequency distribution of DLB involving breaking the law while at work. The majority of respondents (69.4%) reported that this behavior never occurs, while 19.4% indicated it happens rarely. A smaller proportion observed this behavior sometimes (5.6%), often

(4.2%), or very Often (1.4%), suggesting that while infrequent, such actions are not entirely absent in the workplace.

Table 21

DLB at the Workplace: Falsifies Documents

Response Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	52	72.2	72.2
Rarely	9	12.5	84.7
Sometimes	6	8.3	93.1
Often	2	2.8	95.8
Very Often	3	4.2	100.0

Note. Table 21 outlines the frequency distribution of destructive leader behavior (DLB) related to falsifying documents in the workplace. A significant majority of respondents (72.2%) indicated that this behavior never occurs, while 12.5% reported it happens rarely. Additionally, 8.3% observed it sometimes, and smaller proportions indicated occurrences often (2.8%) or very often (4.2%). These findings suggest that document falsification is relatively rare but still present in some workplace contexts.

Table 22

DLB at the Workplace: Lets Violations of Company Policy Slide

Response Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	38	52.8	52.8
Rarely	20	27.8	80.6
Sometimes	4	5.6	86.1
Often	6	8.3	94.4
Very Often	4	5.6	100.0

Note. Table 22 presents the frequency distribution of destructive leader behavior (DLB) regarding allowing violations of company policy to go unaddressed. Over half of the respondents (52.8%) indicated that this behavior never occurs, while 27.8% reported it happens rarely. A smaller percentage observed this behavior sometimes (5.6%), often (8.3%), or very often (5.6%). These results highlight that while this behavior is not widespread, it occurs occasionally in some workplaces.

Table 23*DLB at the Workplace: Littering the Work Environment*

Response Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	46	63.9	63.9
Rarely	14	19.4	83.3
Sometimes	6	8.3	91.7
Often	5	6.9	98.6
Very Often	1	1.4	100.0

Note. Table 23 illustrates the frequency distribution of destructive leader behavior (DLB) regarding littering the work environment. A significant majority of respondents (63.9%) reported that this behavior never occurs, and 19.4% indicated it happens rarely. However, a smaller percentage observed this behavior sometimes (8.3%), often (6.9%), or very often (1.4%). These findings suggest that while littering is not a common issue in most workplaces, it is occasionally present in some environments.

Table 24*DLB at the Workplace: Steals Company Funds*

Response Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	54	75.0	75.0
Rarely	13	18.1	93.1
Sometimes	1	1.4	94.4
Often	2	2.8	97.2
Very Often	2	2.8	100.0

Note. Table 24 highlights the frequency distribution of DLB related to stealing company funds. A substantial majority of respondents (75.0%) indicated that this behavior never occurs, while 18.1% reported it happens rarely. Only a small proportion observed this behavior sometimes (1.4%), often (2.8%), or very often (2.8%). These findings indicate that stealing company funds is a rare occurrence in most workplaces but is not entirely absent.

Table 25

DLB at the Workplace: Stealing Company Property and Resources

Response Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	54	75.0	75.0
Rarely	10	13.9	88.9
Sometimes	4	5.6	94.4
Often	3	4.2	98.6
Very Often	1	1.4	100.0

Note. Table 25 presents the frequency distribution of destructive leader behavior (DLB) regarding stealing company property and resources. The majority of respondents (75.0%) reported that this behavior never occurs, while 13.9% indicated it happens rarely. A smaller portion observed it sometimes (5.6%), often (4.2%), or very often (1.4%). These results suggest that while the act of stealing company property and resources is uncommon, it is not entirely absent in some schools.

Table 26

DLB at work place: Tells People Outside the Job What a Lousy Place he or she Works for

Response Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	46	63.9	63.9
Rarely	14	19.4	83.3
Sometimes	7	9.7	93.1
Often	2	2.8	95.8
Very Often	3	4.2	100.0

Note. Table 26 illustrates the frequency distribution of destructive leader behavior (DLB) related to speaking negatively about the workplace to outsiders. The majority of respondents (63.9%) reported that this behavior never occurs, while 19.4% indicated it happens rarely. Smaller proportions noted this behavior occurs sometimes (9.7%), often (2.8%), or very often (4.2%). These findings highlight that while such behavior is uncommon, it is occasionally observed.

Table 27

DLB at the Workplace: Uses company Property for Personal Use

Response Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	48	66.7	66.7
Rarely	8	11.1	77.8
Sometimes	11	15.3	93.1
Often	4	5.6	98.6
Very Often	1	1.4	100.0

Note. According to table 27, a significant majority of participants (66.7%, $n = 48$) reported that this behavior was never observed in their workplace. Additionally, 11.1% ($n = 8$) stated it occurred rarely, and 15.3% ($n = 11$) reported observing it sometimes.

Fewer participants perceived this behavior as frequent, with 5.6% ($n = 4$) indicating it occurred often and 1.4% ($n = 1$) reporting it happened very often. Overall, 93.1% of participants rated this behavior as occurring sometimes or less frequently, suggesting that the misuse of company property for personal purposes by leaders is generally an uncommon occurrence in the workplace.

Table 28

DLB at the Workplace: Violates Company Policy/Rules

Response Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	39	54.2	54.2
Rarely	19	26.4	80.6
Sometimes	9	12.5	93.1
Often	4	5.6	98.6
Very Often	1	1.4	100.0

Note. According to table 28, more than half of the participants (54.2%, $n = 39$) reported that violating institutional rules was never observed in their workplace. Additionally, 26.4% ($n = 19$) indicated it occurred rarely, while 12.5% ($n = 9$) observed it sometimes. A smaller proportion of participants noted this behavior as frequent, with 5.6% ($n = 4$) reporting it occurred often and 1.4% ($n = 1$) indicating it happened very often. In total, 93.1% of participants rated this behavior as occurring sometimes or less frequently, suggesting that violations of company policies or rules by leaders are relatively uncommon.

Table 29*3DLB at the Workplace: Brings Inappropriate Material to Work*

Response Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	55	76.4	76.4
Rarely	6	8.3	84.7
Sometimes	8	11.1	95.8
Often	2	2.8	98.6
Very Often	1	1.4	100.0

Note. Table 29 illustrates the frequency distribution of participants' perceptions regarding specific destructive leadership behavior. Most participants (76.4%, $n = 55$) reported that this behavior was never observed in their workplace. A smaller percentage (8.3%, $n = 6$) indicated it occurred rarely, while 11.1% ($n = 8$) reported observing it sometimes. Only a few participants noted this behavior as frequent, with 2.8% ($n = 2$) stating it occurred often and 1.4% ($n = 1$) reporting it happened very often. Overall, 95.8% of participants rated this behavior as occurring sometimes or less frequently, suggesting that this destructive leadership behavior is infrequent in schools where participants worked as teachers.

Table 30

DLB at the Workplace: Engaging in Romantic and/or Sexual Relationships with Coworkers

Response Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	55	76.4	76.4
Rarely	7	9.7	86.1
Sometimes	6	8.3	94.4
Often	3	4.2	98.6
Very Often	1	1.4	100.0

Note. Table 30 displays the frequency distribution of participants' perceptions regarding the destructive leadership behavior of engaging in romantic and/or sexual relationships with coworkers. The majority of participants (76.4%, $n = 55$) reported that this behavior was never observed in their workplace. A smaller proportion (9.7%, $n = 7$) indicated it occurred rarely, and 8.3% ($n = 6$) observed it sometimes.

Few participants noted this behavior as frequent, with 4.2% ($n = 3$) stating it occurred often and 1.4% ($n = 1$) reporting it happened very often. Cumulatively, 94.4% of participants rated this behavior as occurring sometimes or less frequently, indicating that such behavior is generally uncommon in the workplace.

Table 31

DLB at the Workplace: Hints That Sexual Favors Will Result in Preferential Treatment

Response Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	57	79.2	79.2
Rarely	6	8.3	87.5
Sometimes	6	8.3	95.8
Often	1	1.4	97.2
Very Often	2	2.8	100.0

Note. Table 31 presents the frequency distribution of participants' perceptions regarding the destructive leadership behavior of hinting that sexual favors could result in preferential treatment. The majority of participants (79.2%, $n = 57$) reported that this behavior was never observed in their workplace. Additionally, 8.3% ($n = 6$) indicated it occurred rarely, and another 8.3% ($n = 6$) observed it sometimes. Instances of this behavior being more frequent were less common, with 1.4% ($n = 1$) reporting it occurred often and 2.8% ($n = 2$) indicating it happened very often. Overall, 95.8% of participants rated this behavior as occurring sometimes or less frequently, suggesting that this type of destructive behavior is rare in the workplace.

5.1.1 4 Key Observations from the Perceived Frequency of 28 DLB Descriptor in the Workplace. The theoretical framework discussed in chapter three, introduced Einarsen et al.'s (2007) conceptualization of DLBs, categorizable into two broad types: organization-directed and follower-directed behaviors. Survey results reveal distinct patterns in participants' perceptions of these behaviors. Organization-directed behaviors, such as littering the work environment or using company property for personal gain, were reported as never experienced by 52% to 75% of

respondents. In contrast, except one follower-directed descriptor reported as never experienced by 57% of respondents, follower-directed descriptors, such as being confrontational while interacting with subordinates, were reported as experienced by 74% and 52% of participants.

Descriptors related to sexual harassment, namely engages in romantic or sexual relationships with others and hints that sexual favors will result in preferential treatment, were reported as never experienced by 79% and 76% of respondents respectively. While these figures suggest relatively low rates of perceived sexual harassment, it is important to acknowledge that such behaviors remain a highly sensitive issue. Research by Blase et al. (2008) found that only 4.7% of 172 teachers in Canada and the United States reported experiencing sexual harassment, as indicated by the descriptor “sexually harassed me”. Although the prevalence of sexual harassment appears low in this study, caution must be exercised in interpreting these findings. Phillips et al. (2019) emphasize that sexual harassment often persists and appears normalized, mainly because victims may perceive silence as safer than confrontation or formal reporting.

In the specific context of schooling, even minimal occurrences of any DL behavior are unacceptable, as they can significantly impair affected teachers’ ability to effectively perform their professional responsibilities. The subsequent section provides an analysis of the mean and standard deviation for each descriptor to offer a more understanding of the data.

5.1.1.5 Mean and Standard deviation of perceived occurrences of 28 descriptors. To examine the frequency and variability of participants’ perceptions of DL descriptors, the mean and standard deviation of responses were calculated for each descriptor. These statistical measures provide insights into the central tendencies and dispersion of participant ratings. Table 3 presents a detailed summary of the frequency and variability associated with each of the 28 DL descriptors as reported by participants.

Table 32*Mean and Standard Deviation of DLB Descriptors*

No. DLB Descriptor	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1 Fails to defend subordinates from attacks by others	72	2.71	1.287
2 Discounts feedback or advice from subordinates	72	2.47	1.086
3 Ignores phone calls and/or e-mails	72	2.33	1.201
4 Avoids addressing important issues	72	2.30	1.184
5 Is confrontational when interacting with subordinates	72	2.16	1.171
6 Inadequately explains performance reviews	72	2.16	1.175
7 Fails to give subordinates credit for jobs requiring a lot of effort	72	2.09	1.100
8 Falsely accuses or punishes subordinates for something they were not responsible for	72	2.03	1.154

No. DLB Descriptor	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
9 Says one thing and does another	72	2.00	1.204
10 Insults or criticizes subordinates in front of others	72	1.94	1.034
11 Denies subordinates of things they are entitled to (e.g., lunch breaks, vacation time)	72	1.93	0.997
12 Invades subordinates' privacy	72	1.93	0.953
13 Lets violations of company policy slide	72	1.87	1.203
14 Shows no clear standards for administering rewards and punishments	72	1.86	1.107
15 Disciplines subordinates a long time after the rule infraction occurs	72	1.80	1.098
16 Violates company policy/rules	72	1.74	0.988
17 Tells people outside the job what a lousy place he or she works for	72	1.64	1.057

No. DLB Descriptor	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
18 Uses company property for personal use	72	1.63	1.024
19 Litters the work environment	72	1.60	0.969
20 Falsifies documents	72	1.56	1.058
21 Breaks the law while at work	72	1.50	0.897
22 Engages in romantic and/or sexual relationships with others from work	72	1.44	0.927
23 Accepts financial kickbacks	72	1.44	0.862
24 Steals company property and resources	72	1.43	0.894
25 Brings inappropriate material to work (e.g., pornography)	72	1.43	0.894
26 At times appears to be under the influence of alcohol or recreational drugs while at work	72	1.40	0.824

No. DLB Descriptor	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
27 Steals company funds	72	1.40	0.891
28 Hints that sexual favors will result in preferential treatment	72	1.39	0.906

Note. The table presents the mean and standard deviation for each destructive leader behavior (DLB) descriptor. Percentages and descriptors are based on survey responses from 72 participants.

5.1.1.6 Discussion of the Survey Findings. Based on participants' ratings of perceived experiences on a 1-5 scale, 28 destructive leadership (DL) behaviors surveyed were rated differently. These ratings can be classified into distinct patterns: frequent behaviors, moderately frequent, least frequent but still concerning behaviors. The most frequently reported behaviors tend to be subtler. For instance, 61.1% of participants noted leaders' failure to defend subordinates (Mean = 2.71, SD = 1.287), reflecting insufficient supportive leadership. Similarly, leaders' discounting of feedback or advice was rated by 54% (Mean = 2.47, SD = 1.086) as experienced sometimes. Additional behaviors, such as ignoring communications (Mean = 2.33, SD = 1.201) and avoiding critical issues were reported among 50% (Mean = 2.30, SD = 1.184), highlight communication deficiencies and a reluctance to address responsibility.

These findings are consistent with prior research by Einarsen et al. (2007) and Tepper (2000), who emphasized passive-destructive leadership behaviors, such as neglect of subordinate

needs, as recurring issues in organizational contexts. Non-supportive leadership reflects persistent gaps in fostering a collaborative and accountable environment.

Moderately frequent behaviors (Mean scores 2.00–2.16) raise concerns despite their lesser prevalence. Examples include confrontational leadership (Mean = 2.16, SD = 1.171) and insufficient performance feedback (Mean = 2.16, SD = 1.175), which may indicate weaknesses in communication and evaluation processes. Behaviors such as falsely accusing subordinates (Mean = 2.03, SD = 1.154) and inconsistency in communication (Mean = 2.00, SD = 1.204) undermine fairness and organizational trust. These findings are consistent with Skogstad et al. (2007), who identified inconsistent enforcement of rules as characteristic of passive-aggressive leadership. Furthermore, confrontational behaviors align with Blase and Blase's (2003) study which found that such interactions are emotionally abusive. Perception of leaders' accusatory behaviors, though less frequent, parallel Nielsen et al. (2013) who recognized them as elements of destructive leadership in some schools.

Behaviors categorized as least frequent (69.4–76.4% rated as "Never") have in common direct severe ethical, and legal violations, such as falsifying documents (Mean = 1.56, SD = 1.058), stealing funds (Mean = 1.40, SD = 0.891), and engaging in inappropriate relationships (Mean = 1.44, SD = 0.927). Although rare, these behaviors pose significant risks to organizational integrity. Isolated incidents of such actions, as highlighted by Einarsen et al. (2007) and Schyns and Schilling (2013), can erode ethical climates, damage morale, and lead to organizational dysfunction.

These behaviors tend to be infrequent but call for high attention considering the disproportionate impact they can potentially inflict on the victims. Tepper (2000) is explicit by

arguing that the frequency of abusive supervision does not necessarily correlate with its consequences, as isolated severe incidents can have substantial organizational repercussions. Specifically, as Nielsen et al. (2013) point out, such acts in educational contexts have far-reaching effects, undermining institutional trust and governance.

The survey findings indicate that overt DL behaviors are relatively infrequent, whereas more subtle forms of destructive leadership such as dismissing feedback, avoiding critical issues, and failing to support subordinates are notably more prevalent. These subtle behaviors are often more difficult to identify and challenge, largely due to their ambiguous and normalized nature within organizational contexts. In contrast, explicit destructive actions, although less common, are more readily recognized and addressed. These results underscore the importance of developing nuanced approaches capable of detecting and addressing both overt and covert manifestations of destructive leadership.

5.1.2 Qualitative Findings

Interview participants were purposefully selected for the interview phase of this study based on their readiness to share their experiences. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned to each participant: Ann, Chantal, Jasmine, Robinson, Jacques, and Peterson. Eligibility for participation required a minimum of five years of teaching experience, resulting in a sample characterized by substantial professional maturity. The average teaching experience among the participants was approximately 15.17 years, reflecting significant exposure to leadership dynamics within schools.

The interviews were conducted online using video functionality, fostering a more interactive and engaging discussion environment. All participants consented to being recorded,

ensuring precise documentation and facilitating detailed analysis of their perspectives. The interviews lasted an average of 42 minutes, providing adequate time to explore the participants' perceptions and experiences comprehensively.

The demographic profile of the interviewees showed an average age of approximately 44.67 years, indicating a group likely in the mid-career stage of their teaching profession. This combination of extensive professional experience and demographic characteristics provided a valuable foundation for gathering nuanced insights into destructive leadership behaviors within educational settings.

The findings from these interviews are presented in the following section, highlighting key themes related to the dimensions of destructive leadership, its impacts, and strategies for mitigating these behaviors within school contexts. A total of eight themes depicting destructive leadership behaviors emerged from the qualitative data. This section begins by discussing abusive monitoring and concludes with unfair criticism as far as DL behaviors are concerned.

5.1.2.1 Abusive Monitoring. Abusive monitoring reflects instances of abuse of authority and/or autocratic leadership in the study findings. These actions/behaviors demonstrate the supervisor's intention to control and to oppress subordinates through exercising excessive power, malicious techniques that result in targeted subordinates being deprived of their autonomy. Further, these behaviors/acts exhibit reliance on punitive measures rather than supportive or collaborative leadership practices. The study findings noted scapegoating, unwarranted disciplinary actions and public display of anger as improper occurrences of school principal leadership as instances of abusive monitoring.

5.1.2.1.1 Scapegoating and unfair treatment. Scapegoating, as described by Robinson, reflects an unjust shifting of blame onto teachers for incidents or shortcomings, often with the intention to deflect responsibility away from the principal. This behavior may erode trust between the perpetrator and the victim. In Robinson's account his school principal, instead of providing constructive feedback on the incident or addressing it professionally, often sought to find fault without facts, without telling him how to properly handle such a situation. Robinson described a scenario where the school principal observed how Robinson addressed an incident of students fighting but the school principal did not tell him anything on the ground, nor provide any subsequent feedback, what led Robinson to believe that his case handling was right and satisfactory.

However, the principal waited and raised the observation as a negative point during a different meeting that took place later at the school. As Robinson mentioned,

When he came, I was happy that he was going to help me as I was trying to address the case of two students of my class who were fighting but he just stood and said nothing. He later mentioned the incident when we were in another meeting.

This experience left Robinson feeling targeted, suggesting that the school principal deliberately withheld feedback and later used the situation to pin blame on him. Scapegoating is a failure of ethical leadership. It reflects poor management and communication practices that avoid accountability by targeting individual teachers for systemic or administrative failures. Robinson's account underscores the need for transparent, and consistent feedback from school leaders to prevent destructive patterns like scapegoating from taking root.

Recent studies discourage scapegoating and call for ethical leadership to promote trust and accountability within schools. According to Thornton et al. (2022), ethical leaders demonstrate integrity, offer constructive feedback, and address issues collaboratively rather than isolating individuals for blame. When leaders engage in scapegoating, they fail to fulfill their role as facilitators of growth and problem-solving, instead perpetuating a culture of avoidance and defensiveness. In Robinson's case, the principal's choice to withhold feedback and later criticize him in an unrelated meeting exemplifies a lack of transparency and professional accountability.

Furthermore, Le Fevre et al. (2023) emphasizes the importance of effective feedback in the dynamic follower- leader. From the scholars' understanding, feedback is immediate, specific, and aimed at fostering professional development. Leaders who fail to provide such feedback miss opportunities to guide teachers constructively. Robinson's experience, in which the principal observed the incident without offering real-time support or subsequent guidance, illustrates leadership failure that undermines both trust and professional development.

Robinson's experience underscores the need for school leaders to engage in ethical, transparent practices. By prioritizing open communication and constructive feedback, educational leaders can foster a supportive environment that avoids destructive patterns like scapegoating. Addressing systemic challenges collaboratively, rather than shifting blame, is essential for cultivating a positive and trusting school culture.

5.1.2.1.2 Unwarranted Disciplinary Action. In an interview, Jacques articulated several instances of perceived abuse of power by his school principal, with a particular focus on their interactions and the disciplinary processes within the staff. A notable example of this abuse is

evident where Jacques recounts a conflict with a student, followed by the principal's administrative response. Jacques described a situation in which he confiscated a disruptive student's cell phone, after which the student reported the incident to the principal. Instead of addressing the situation comprehensively, the principal escalated the matter to the school disciplinary committee based solely on the student's account, and without seeking Jacques' perspective. As Jacques expressed, "I was surprised that the principal reported the matter to the disciplinary committee... without investigating, hearing, or asking me anything."

This response highlights a misuse of authority, as the principal appeared to prioritize the student's version of events without considering the teacher's explanation, undermining fairness in the process. Jacques further questioned the principal's judgment, noting, "Does he know what the realities of the classroom are?" This statement underscores a disconnect between administrative decisions and the practical challenges faced by this teacher, which may foster a sense of disappointment and alienation for educators like Jacques.

While prioritizing the student's voice in disciplinary matters is important, a balanced approach that also provides support for teachers is essential. In this case, the failure to do so created power imbalance, leaving Jacques to feel that the process was unjust and that his concerns were disregarded.

Jacques' experience aligns with findings in recent educational leadership literature, which emphasizes the importance of fairness, inclusivity, and balance in addressing disciplinary processes. Burke and Collinson (2022) argue that leaders who fail to ensure equitable consideration of all parties in conflict resolution risk fostering a culture of discontent and mistrust. They argue that administrative decisions should account for the perspectives of both

students and teachers, ensuring that procedures are seen as just and transparent. The principal's prioritization of the student's account over Jacques' perspective, without conducting a thorough investigation, represents a failure to adhere to these principles and highlights the adverse effects of one-sided leadership practices.

Moreover, Daniels and Hayes (2023) underscore the role of leaders in addressing the complex dynamics within educational environments. The scholars assert that leaders should recognize the practical challenges faced by teachers and provide support that aligns with classroom realities. When leaders fail to bridge the gap between administrative decisions and classroom dynamics, they risk fostering alienation among teachers, as demonstrated in Jacques' experience. Jacques' rhetorical question, "Does he know what the realities of the classroom are?" reflects this disconnection, highlighting how the principal's lack of engagement with his perspective amplified feelings of isolation and disempowerment.

This disconnect, as Daniels and Hayes note, can be destructive in a way that leads to decreased job satisfaction, diminished teacher morale, and ultimately a decline in overall school performance. Teachers who perceive a lack of support and fairness are less likely to feel motivated and engaged in their roles, which can adversely affect their performance and commitment to the school community. By failing to address Jacques' concerns and excluding him from the disciplinary process, the principal not only undermined his professional standing but also jeopardized the collaborative culture essential for a thriving work environment. Such leadership practices underscore the need for school leaders to embrace empathetic and inclusive approaches that recognize and value the voices of educators.

5.1.2.1.3 Public Display of Anger. One instance reported in the interview results is the public display of anger by Chantal's principal. Chantal recounted a specific incident where she arrived late to school and subsequently faced a disproportionate reaction from her principal. She stated, "I explained the reasons why I was late... but she became furious, raising her voice in front of other staff members." This reaction not only highlights the principal's inability to manage her emotions but also raises questions about her professionalism and leadership capabilities.

Chantal felt that the principal's anger was excessive and personal, hinting at underlying biases when she remarked, "I'm not sure if it was because of where I'm from or ..." Such displays of anger, particularly in a public setting, can create a hostile work environment and undermine the emotional well-being of staff members. Although the principal did not make overtly discriminatory remarks, the intensity and public nature of the reprimand may have led Chantal to suspect that aspects of her identity may have influenced the principal's anger. In such experiences where a leader's intent remains ambiguous, but the emotional impact is significant can leave victims feeling uncertain, and vulnerable.

Public displays of anger by leaders have been documented in the literature as particularly damaging, often being perceived as humiliating and demeaning by subordinates (Einarsen et al., 2007). Such outbursts, especially in front of others, tend to amplify feelings of shame and vulnerability, prompting victims to question both the intent behind the behavior and their own standing within the organization. Victims may equally interpret these incidents as targeted and personal, particularly when reactions appear disproportionate to the situation (Kipnis et al., 1980). In Chantal's case, the public nature of the principal's anger intensified her perception of the event as potentially driven by biases. This interpretation aligns with findings from workplace

aggression studies, which indicate that when disciplinary actions lack transparency and are delivered publicly, they are more likely to be perceived as expressions of power, hostility, or discrimination rather than constructive feedback (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010).

5.1.2.1.4 Manipulations and false accusations. The study participants reported experiences of false accusations within their professional environments that significantly impacted on their well-being and reputation. Such experiences highlight a toxic dynamic in which certain principals use unfounded allegations, opaque decision-making, and authority misuse to marginalize and damage the standing of targeted teachers. This exemplifies how institutional power can be weaponized against those perceived as noncompliant or as outsiders.

One detailed case involves Peterson, who describes repeated efforts by his principal to undermine his reputation. His narrative reveals not only a lack of cooperation but also a seemingly deliberate campaign to discredit him through unwarranted accusations and confrontations with the school principal in the meeting. For instance, Peterson was accused of unprofessional behavior, including alleged misuse of his telephone during a meeting, refusal to collaborate with female colleagues, examples that underscore how manipulation and misrepresentation can be utilized by the abusive principal to damage teacher's credibility.

Peterson's testimony underscores the principal's reliance on fabrications to substantiate his accusations, coupled with an apparent unwillingness to address issues directly. Reflecting on the incident, Peterson shared, "The first [accusation], he said that one day during a staff meeting, I was using my phone all the time. The second...that I don't work with female teachers... only male teachers." His frustration was further compounded by the baseless claim of misogyny, which he categorically denied, stating, "That's not true... I collaborated with two female

colleagues in my department.” This accusation of misogyny, rooted in stereotypes, appeared intended to misrepresent his interactions with female colleagues and mischaracterize his professional demeanor.

Empirical literature supports these findings, revealing that such patterns of manipulation and false accusations are not uncommon. For instance, in the United States, Blase and Blase (2004) documented instances of lies used by principals to control teachers, while more recent data by Santor et al. (2021) found that approximately 10 percent of teachers reported experiencing lies or false accusations from their superiors in 2018/2019 academic year in Canada. These findings illustrate how the misuse of authority by principals can create a hostile work environment that harms a teacher’s professional reputation and well-being.

In particular, Peterson’s experience and prior empirical findings (Blase & Blase, 2004; Santor et al., 2021) challenge us to consider the broader implications of unchecked principal authority. The need for protective measures that safeguard teachers from wrongful accusations and manipulation within educational institutions is clear. This form of misconduct also contradicts Sergiovanni’s (2007) conceptualization of schools as moral communities. When trust in leadership is eroded through dishonest practices, it deviates from the ideals of ethical integrity and commitment that should inspire educators and foster a healthy professional environment.

5.1.2.2 Negligence and Indifference. Negligence and indifference in school leadership, as outlined by Milley (2017), often stem from inattentiveness, poor judgment, or a lack of commitment to responsibilities, ultimately disrupting the effective functioning of schools. Such behaviors may include a failure to report incidents when necessary or to conduct thorough investigations. This study corroborates Milley’s findings, revealing significant inconsistencies in

the enforcement of rules, failure to address student misbehavior, and a lack of communication and feedback from school principal.

A striking case from the study is that of Peterson, who highlighted a persistent lack of action from his principal in addressing critical issues. Despite numerous reports, the principal repeatedly failed to intervene in matters such as student misbehavior and classroom management. For instance, Peterson sought the principal's support in enforcing a rule requiring students to hand in their phones before the lesson starts. As Peterson recounted, "I thought the principal was going to say that anyone who didn't drop them off couldn't do the lesson, because the principal has the right to say that, but the teacher doesn't." However, the principal's inaction allowed students to continue using their phones during lessons, causing disruptions and undermining Peterson's ability to manage the classroom effectively.

In another instance, Robinson's experience further underscores this issue of negligence. He reported that, after being observed by the principal, he received no feedback, a violation of professional standards. "When you observe someone working, you must provide feedback... but I didn't get the chance to get that feedback," Robinson stated. This lack of feedback left him uncertain about his performance and deprived him of opportunities for professional growth and improvement.

The experiences of both Peterson and Robinson align with previous research, such as that of the ETFO (2018) and OSSTO (2005), which found that many requests from teachers to school principals were routinely ignored. This persistent pattern of negligence reflects a broader, systemic issue within school leadership. While Milley (2017) highlights the potential for such

negligence to disrupt the proper functioning of schools, the study findings indicate that these disruptions have a direct impact on both teachers and students.

To wit, instances of negligence demonstrated by school principals erode teacher morale and hinder ability to perform their duties. This pattern, consistently documented in the study findings and supported by prior research, suggests that negligence in school leadership is not an isolated issue but a pervasive form of DL that requires attention. Schools cannot function effectively if their leaders are indifferent to the needs of followers. Therefore, addressing these leadership deficiencies is crucial for improving school environments and supporting educational outcomes.

5.1.2.3 Displays of Favoritism. The results of this study highlight the detrimental effects of favoritism within school environments, illustrated by the individual experiences of both Peterson and Chantal. Their accounts reveal how preferential treatment from school principals can significantly impact teachers' workloads, emotional well-being, and overall job satisfaction.

Peterson's experience with his school principal exposes significant favoritism toward certain teachers, particularly a female colleague, which directly affected the workload and morale of other staff members. He notes that the principal "...took a part of the course that was usually taught by the lady and gave it to another teacher to make the work easy for the lady but difficult for the other teacher without any clear reason". This redistribution of responsibilities illustrates a disregard for equitable treatment among staff, potentially creating an environment of resentment and dissatisfaction.

Peterson clearly qualifies this treatment by stating, "It's absolutely favoritism when you make it difficult for one teacher to make it easy for another". Such manipulation can negatively

affect the morale of those like Peterson and disrupt the collaborative efforts that are essential for a conducive professional environment.

Chantal's experiences echo Peterson's, revealing a different yet equally concerning form of favoritism that she suspects is rooted in bias against her identity. She recounts an instance where her tardiness was met with undue severity from the principal, while a colleague in a similar situation faced no repercussions. Chantal reflects,

I felt like she was very harsh with me ... We were both late, but I was the only one treated with severity while the other one was not told anything.

This selective treatment highlights Chantal's awareness of unequal treatment and signals a broader issue within the school where personal biases can influence administrative decisions.

The parallels between Peterson's and Chantal's experiences underscore a finding that favoritism can manifest in various forms, whether through inequitable treatment based on differing biases. Both experiences reveal how such practices can foster an environment of unfairness, contributing to teacher dissatisfaction and a sense of isolation within the school community.

In particular, the findings regarding favoritism corroborate previous research conducted in the U.S. (Blase & Blase, 2002; Sam, 2021) on DL. Sam noted that some principals hold teachers to different standards regarding tardiness, workload assignments, and responses to parental requests. Blase and Blase previously pointed out inequitable treatment among teachers in their study, where in cases where preferred teachers were exempt from attending meetings,

given better students and classrooms, or received positive evaluations and support from the principal.

Moreover, favoritism aligns with the formation of two distinct groups of subordinates depending on the treatment they receive from their supervisor, namely in-group and out-group members as highlighted earlier in the theoretical framework. Typically, in-group members benefit from higher levels of communication, greater responsibilities, and preferential treatment. In contrast, out-group members, as illustrated in Chantal's perceived experiences, have more limited interactions with the leader and receive fewer benefits (Sheer, 2015).

In sum, all manifestations of favoritism can lead to a toxic school climate where teachers feel undervalued and unsupported, adversely affecting their ability to perform. Specifically, Sam (2021) noted that favored teachers tend to side with destructive principals, exacerbating feelings of isolation among their colleagues. Together, these studies underscore the occurrence of favoritism as a form of detrimental leadership among study participants, although in various instances and educational contexts.

5.1.2.4 Undermining the Dignity of Certain Staff. Prior studies conducted outside Canada such as Riley et al. (2011) in Australia, and Sam (2021) in US) mentioned school administrators' practices and behaviors that in educators' views were perceived as disrespectful. These experiences included ignoring teachers, refusing to meet targeted and excluding them from some school processes. Similarly, Santor et al. (2021) in Canada observed that instances of teachers being disrespected by a school administrator were 4.65 times in 2018/2019 academic year.

Similarly in the context of this study, one participant Jacques experienced public humiliation and saw his concerns dismissed by the principal. His experience is congruent with such findings and adds to findings that the behavior occurred among interviewed teachers. In Jacques's interview, two points regarding his experiences with the public emerge as humiliation and the dismissal of his concerns and highlight the significant emotional and professional dimension that treatment can take on teachers in the educational environment.

Jacques recounts an incident where he faced public humiliation from the principal, an experience that left a lasting impact on him. He explains, "when I arrived it was like she was waiting for me at the main entrance. And so, in front of everyone, she started shouting 'where do you think you are?' 'this isn't your home'". This public reprimand not only embarrassed Jacques in front of his colleagues but also created a hostile work environment where he felt belittled. He further reflects on this incident, stating, "It affects, ...it affects you". ...it always makes you ask questions that keep coming back, 'Why did I get into this? Who sent me into this work?'. This humiliation not only diminished his confidence but also contributed to a sense of alienation from his colleagues and the school community. Jacques' experience, in which the perpetrator is a female principal and the victim a male teacher, challenges the common assumption that males are typically the oppressors and females the victims. This case highlights that individuals in supervisory positions can engage in harmful behaviors toward subordinates, regardless of their gender identity.

In addition to public humiliation, Jacques's concerns were frequently dismissed, leading to further frustration and feelings of isolation. He describes a situation in which he tried to seek the principal's support in addressing a disciplinary issue with a student, saying,

Whenever reported the case to the principal, he refused to help...I wanted a camera to be put in my classroom to tell you exactly what was going on. I almost resigned because the principal was telling me a lot of things, like these are the students, ... and everything I told him was like nothing to her.

This dismissal of his concerns not only undermined his authority as a teacher but also made him feel unheard and invalidated. He continues to express his discontent, stating, “When I came out of the meeting, I wanted to resign, but it was the union representative who encouraged me, ...”. This further illustrates the lack of consideration he perceived from the school administration, leaving him questioning his value within the school system.

In further illustration of disrespect, Peterson describes a dynamic with the principal following his resignation, where grievances were filed against him. He explains, “He never talked to me.... I was working with the deputy principal... I felt he didn’t exist in the school because if he did, he’d have come to see me in class”. This statement highlights his perception that the principal alienated the victim (Peterson) by taking a professional distance from his classes, leading Peterson to feel undervalued within the teaching staff.

Both Peterson and Jacques’s experiences of public humiliation and alienation of concerns highlight significant feelings of being diminished faced by educators. These experiences may degrade targeted subordinates, contribute to creating a distance in interaction between the victim and the principal although the behavior may be sometime difficult to prove as it operates in a subtle way. Finally, Peterson and Jacques’ experiences underscore the pervasiveness of the misbehavior earlier highlighted in empirical research conducted before.

5.1.2.5 Sexual Harassment. This study highlights incidents of sexual harassment through Jasmine's experience, which exemplifies behaviors that contribute to a hostile work environment. These behaviors become particularly concerning because the perpetrator is in a position of authority, as in the case of Jasmine's school principal. Two key forms of harassment emerge from Jasmine's account: persistent unwanted attention and nonconsensual physical contact.

Jasmine's account shows how sexual harassment can manifest through subtle, ongoing behaviors that gradually undermine a person's sense of safety and comfort. She recalls how her school principal repeatedly made advances, such as inviting her for drinks, despite her clear attempts to avoid him. Even after fabricating a story about having a boyfriend to discourage him, the principal's behavior persisted. As Jasmine explains, he kept insisting, insisting on engaging me in personal matters". This illustrates a type of harassment that, while not overtly aggressive, repeatedly crosses personal boundaries, causing discomfort and tension. Jasmine describes the oppressive atmosphere this behavior created, stating, "It's not so much harassment, but it's like when you really don't respond to it... it makes a really bad atmosphere". This highlights how even minor actions, when persistent, can significantly affect a person's well-being over time.

In addition to verbal advances, Jasmine's experience underscores the role of nonconsensual physical contact in creating discomfort. Although physical contact was not explicitly sexual, it crossed personal boundaries and made her uneasy. She recalls how the principal would touch her shoulder and lower back, often standing too close. As Jasmine describes, "He was just like touching your shoulder and holding a bit too close and touching the little lower back". Though not overtly aggressive, this physical interaction constitutes harassment when it occurs without consent and causes discomfort. Jasmine's experience demonstrates that

harassment does not need to involve explicit sexual acts to be harmful; even seemingly harmless gestures can become problematic when they are unwelcome or repeated.

Jasmine's testimony reveals the pervasive and insidious nature of sexual harassment, especially in professional settings where power imbalances exist. Her experience emphasizes that harassment is not always direct or aggressive but often manifests through subtle, persistent behaviors such as unwanted attention and physical overreach that create a hostile environment over time. This case highlights the importance of addressing both overt and covert forms of harassment, as both can significantly impact individuals' well-being and professional lives.

Previous research in Canada (Milley, 2017) documented instances of sexual abuse involving school principals and students, including a case where a principal inappropriately asked a female student to bend over to demonstrate improper attire. Building on these findings, Jasmine's account expands the understanding of sexual harassment to include interactions between male principals and female teachers. Additionally, Phillips et al. (2019) emphasize the persistence of sexual harassment, noting that it is often normalized because victims believe remaining silent is safer than confronting or reporting the behavior. Jasmine's experience aligns with this view, highlighting the need to address both blatant and subtle forms of harassment to protect individuals in professional environments.

5.1.2.6 Budgetary Misconduct and Financial Improprieties. This study identified two major instances of financial misconduct: suspicion of personal gain and lack of transparency in financial decisions related to school funds. Jasmine, the interviewee, reported similar concerns, particularly regarding mismanagement of the school budget. This created an uncomfortable atmosphere, where teachers suspected the wrongdoing but felt powerless to intervene.

In Jasmine's experiences, a female principal was manipulating the school budget for personal benefit. This alleged misconduct contributed to a tense environment, where staff perceived mismanagement of funds but lacked evidence to confront the principal directly. Jasmine explained,

We did notice that she seems to be cutting some parts of the budget, you know, that of playing with the budget... So it would be hard to prove that she took maybe like a thousand or two thousand from the budget.

The suspicion of financial misconduct fostered an atmosphere of distrust, leaving staff hesitant to take action without solid proof.

In addition to concerns about personal gain, Jasmine emphasized the principal's lack of transparency in financial matters. The principal's actions were concealed in a way that made it difficult for staff to challenge or investigate potential wrongdoing. As Jasmine noted, "She was really careful about it, so it would be hard to prove anything". This lack of openness further eroded trust within the school community, leaving staff feeling helpless in addressing potential corruption. The mismanagement of school funds, even when suspected but not definitively proven, undermines trust in leadership and fosters an environment of suspicion and discomfort. The financial irregularities observed by Jasmine illustrate the ethical dilemmas faced by staff members, who, though affected by the lack of transparency, feel powerless to take action.

In previous cases, such as those documented in Milley's 2017 study, more egregious examples of financial misconduct were uncovered, where principals were found guilty of using school credit cards for personal expenses, accepting bribes, or defrauding schools (Milley, 2017). These cases involved clear evidence and legal consequences, unlike the current findings, which

reflect the participant's suspicions of a principal's pursuit of personal gain. As noted in previous reports, "The fraud engaged a high degree of planning, premeditation, and sophistication... The dishonest conduct was years in duration."

Greed for personal gain is a complex issue that warrants further research. Some instances of mismanagement may stem from poor judgment, while others may involve deliberate strategies to exploit school resources. Understanding the context in which financial misconduct occurs, including the pressures and opportunities that school administrators face, is crucial for addressing this persistent issue.

5.1.2.7 Perceived Discrimination and Biases. Canada's identity as a multicultural nation is deeply rooted in policies that celebrate and protect the diverse languages, religions, and cultural practices of its residents. According to Statistics Canada (2017a), over 250 ethnic origins are represented in the population. The 2016 census revealed that approximately 20% of Canadians are foreign-born, and 40% of children have immigrant backgrounds. Furthermore, one in four Canadians speaks a language other than English or French (Statistics Canada, 2017a, 2017b). Despite these multicultural frameworks aiming for full inclusion in Canadian society, they often clash with the realities of persistent racism in workplaces, revealing a significant gap between policy and practice.

This tension is illustrated in the experiences of Ann, a female teacher who has identified religious biases and selective punishment of Black students at her school. Ann's observations highlight the covert racism exhibited by her new principal, who contrasts sharply with the previous principal's inclusive approach. The new principal demonstrates patterns of implicit bias and discriminatory behavior that specifically target immigrant and minority staff and students.

For instance, Ann describes how a colleague of Arabic descent is frequently reprimanded in ways that seem excessive and unwarranted. She suspects that this treatment is motivated by the colleague's occasional use of Arabic and visible religious identity, as she wears a hijab. Ann reflects, "This is this kind of attitude, like he seems to discriminate, discriminate, discriminate immigrants and he just doesn't have any respect for them." The principal's dismissive attitude towards cultural diversity is further evidenced by his frequent remarks praising "Western culture" as superior, often made in the presence of the Arabic teacher. As Ann notes, "He does love talking about Western culture and how better it is in front of immigrants".

Ann also observes a pattern of selective punishment directed toward Black students. She recounts instances where Black students have been unjustly singled out for discipline, stating, "Some Black students have been sent to see him, although they didn't do anything wrong, and he seems to be always on their back." This observation points to a troubling double standard in disciplinary measures, fostering a tense and uncomfortable atmosphere in the school. Ann describes this environment as a "passive dictatorship," where the principal covertly asserts his biases without overt acknowledgment.

Moreover, Ann's concern for her colleague illustrates an understanding of the harmful effects of such perceived racism on professional morale and mental well-being. Despite recognizing the damaging nature of the principal's behavior, Ann feels constrained in her ability to speak out, noting, "I would be compromising myself if I speak out when I don't have evidence." This sentiment underscores the insidiousness of covert racism, which isolates and marginalizes minority teachers and students without clear, actionable proof, thereby perpetuating institutional bias in subtle yet powerful ways.

The impact of perceived racism can be more psychologically harmful than overt discrimination. It fosters a workplace culture where individuals feel undervalued without tangible proof of prejudice, leaving victims with limited recourse and ongoing feelings of vulnerability and alienation. Ann poignantly captures this pervasive discomfort, sharing, “Going to work every day in an environment that can be toxic... you always feel like this creeping on the back of your neck.”

The issues Ann raises regarding selective punishment resonate with existing literature on anti-Black racism in Ontario public schools. For instance, Radebe (2024) notes that arbitrary punishment of Black students is often informed by stereotypes that portray them as inherently violent and a threat to order. This pattern not only stigmatizes Black students but also imposes an undue psychological burden, forcing them to live in anticipation of discriminatory treatment. Radebe advocates for educators to challenge these damaging narratives and to view Black students as individuals rather than stereotypes.

Additionally, Ann’s experiences of stigmatization based on religious perceptions further support prior findings. Fleras (2017) evokes increasing trend of biases against immigrants, particularly Muslim immigrants in Canada, while Ertorer et al. (2022) noted that religious prejudices often manifest through intrusive questions about clothing and appearance, as well as doubts regarding the skills of non-European Canadian-born immigrants.

To sum, the school principal’s double standards in student punishment and religious biases highlight a significant disparity between Canada’s multicultural policies and the persistence of racism in educational settings. This situation challenges the country’s commitment to inclusivity and the Ontario College of Teachers’ (OCT) codes of practice, which call on all

members of the teaching profession to uphold the essential values of care, trust, integrity, and respect. Ann's experiences underscore the urgent need to address and mitigate these implicit biases, promoting workplaces that truly reflect Canada's multicultural ideals. By recognizing and dismantling these biases, it becomes possible to foster an educational atmosphere where diversity is genuinely celebrated and respected.

5.1.3 Integrating Survey and Interview Findings on the Dimensions of DL

The survey findings primarily highlighted which of the 28 destructive leadership (DL) behaviors were perceived as most, moderately, or least frequent among teachers who had experienced abusive school principals. Complementing this, the interview findings provided in-depth insights into key dimensions of these behaviors, expressed as themes and subthemes based on participants' lived experiences. Together, these findings offer both breadth and depth in understanding the phenomenon of DL behaviors within the schooling context.

A central aspect of the survey findings was the prevalence of passive or indirect behaviors, which were perceived as pervasive. All the 28 behaviors were rated as occurring at least occasionally, with a mean of 1.39 (SD: 0.906). This underscores the diverse forms in which DL behaviors are manifested. The interviews further elaborated on some of these behaviors, identifying eight qualitative dimensions, including favoritism, bias and discrimination, financial impropriety, abusive monitoring, undermining teachers' dignity, sexual harassment, displays of favoritism, and false accusations or lies. These dimensions revealed the nuanced ways in which destructive leadership impacted the professional and personal lives of the victimized teachers.

The survey and interview findings were complimentary throughout the process thereby enriching the understanding of DL behaviors. For instance, while the survey highlighted most

recurring behaviors such as avoidance of addressing important issues or Discounting feedback or advice from subordinates, the interviews provided vivid examples that contextualized these findings. Typically, during interviews, victims described cases where principals withheld feedback or overtly enacted preferential treatment, illustrating the tangible harm caused to teachers.

The congruence between the survey and interview data in this study is particularly evident in the nuanced understanding of specific behaviors. For instance, 5.6% of participants in the survey perceived that the school leader steals company funds “sometimes. Interviewee further illustrated that the leader seemed ...to be cutting some parts of the budget, you know, ...playing with the budget” and added that such action undermined trust toward that school principal. All the behaviors identified by interviewees were earlier directly or indirectly mentioned in the survey responses, strengthening the validity and interconnectedness of both data sources.

Interestingly, the study did not identify academic dishonesty as a form of destructive leadership, a behavior that was previously emphasized in qualitative research conducted in Ontario and British Columbia (Milley, 2017). One reason may explain this discrepancy, particularly the emerging survey patterns indicating that overt practices are infrequent. This makes it unlikely that a single study participant experiences all the forms of destructive leadership behaviors, just as it is uncommon for a single school principal (perpetrator) to display all these negative behaviors with a particular targeted teacher. Additionally, academic dishonesty, such as the manipulation of student test scores mentioned in Milley’s (2017) study, may require complicity between teachers and principals, making it less likely to be openly mentioned in interview, even if it occurred.

In conclusion, the survey and interview findings together provide a nuanced understanding of DL behaviors. The survey offers a quantifiable basis for understanding the prevalence in perceptions of DL behaviors across 72 participants' responses, while the interviews illuminate the lived experiences that bring these statistics to life. This methodological combination underscores the value of mixed methods in capturing the complexity of school leadership dynamics. By balancing statistical reach with narrative depth, the study advances a more comprehensive understanding of how destructive leadership manifests within the schooling context.

5.1.4 Section Summary

Analysis of the results reveals eight key dimensions of destructive leadership exhibited by school principals as perceived by teachers as well as which of these are perceived as likely to occur. While passive misbehaviors are most likely to occur, thematic analysis highlighted forms of DL as sexual harassment, negligence, favoritism, undermining the dignity of subordinates, bias and discrimination, unfair criticism, financial impropriety, and abusive monitoring. Results provided vivid illustrations of these behaviors, reporting instances where perpetrators demonstrated overt favoritism, failed to offer needed professional support, and neglected to address essential classroom issues.

The pervasiveness of passive behaviors observed in survey results was equally pointed at in qualitative findings. For example, subtle acts of discrimination and bias, which compromised inclusivity and fairness within the school environment were mentioned by interviewees. These findings address the first research question, identifying the different manifestations of destructive leadership as they occur in principal-teacher interactions in school settings.

These behaviors carry substantial implications for functionalist perspectives on school leadership, which typically emphasize the principal's role in fostering positive school outcomes through constructive channels. The study findings suggest caution with traditional views that often highlight school principals as key drivers of success, as seen in popular frameworks like school effectiveness, transformational, instructional, servant, participative, and distributed leadership styles. The results of this study underscore the need for a nuanced understanding of principal leadership, especially regarding its influence on teacher relations. Key values of trust, support, and equity should be critically examined to ensure they genuinely promote a balanced work environment.

Destructive leadership, as reported by participants, directly conflicts with views of schools as cohesive entities where each part contributes harmoniously to the collective good. Policies and programs such as Ontario's *Ethical Standards of the Teaching Profession*, which emphasize care, respect, trust, and integrity, aim to foster mutual respect and a positive educational environment. However, these values are fundamentally jeopardized in the occurrence of destructive leadership. Therefore, while principals are instrumental in promoting organizational success, their behaviors can also threaten it when misused.

The documented behaviors point to a significant deviation from core leadership values like integrity and respect, which are critical for maintaining teachers' morale and operational efficiency. Rather than cultivating a collaborative and supportive school culture, these destructive actions disrupt school functioning, endangering the institution's ability to meet educational objectives effectively. Beyond organizational impacts, these behaviors can profoundly harm the teaching profession itself. Persistent exposure to DL may lead to teacher dissatisfaction, job attrition, thereby destabilizing school communities. These adverse experiences can erode

teachers' sense of professional identity and dedication to their roles, which is vital for effective teaching and student success. The following section will examine participants' accounts of the impact of destructive leadership on their professional lives, highlighting the significant personal and organizational consequences of these behaviors.

5.2 Effects of Destructive Leadership Behaviors on Victims

In the previous section, study participants identified various damaging misbehaviors, including indifference, disrespect from school leadership, sexual harassment, attempted financial impropriety, discrimination, perceived favoritism, and unsubstantiated accusations. According to the participants, these actions are harmful and have serious consequences for victims' health, professional performance, and social roles within and outside the workplace. As Ryan et al. (2021) note, such destructive behaviors not only harm direct victims but also negatively impact the broader work environment, undermining morale and workplace environment.

This section delves into participants' personal narratives to illuminate the specific impacts of these behaviors on those subjected to them. By organizing the analysis into three primary categories: professional effects, emotional effects, and psychological and health implications, the section highlights how these misbehaviors permeate various aspects of victims' lives. The discussion underscores that while similar misbehaviors may affect multiple individuals, the resulting impacts can vary based on personal factors such as resilience levels and coping mechanisms.

Within the professional effects category, the analysis addresses significant outcomes, including forced resignations, erosion of self-esteem, job relocations, and ongoing job insecurity, reflecting how destructive behaviors can derail careers. The emotional consequences follow, with

insights into heightened anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and a pervasive sense of worthlessness. Finally, the discussion explores health impacts, such as sleep disturbances, stress, and considerable mental strain.

5.2.1 Psychological Health Issues

Theorists in organizational studies (Ashforth, 1994; Fogarty, 1997; Oplatka, 2016) suggest that destructive leadership styles lead to discomfort and can provoke a range of negative psychological effects. Similarly empirical research supports these claims, highlighting the widespread impacts of abusive supervision on employees' mental health and well-being (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007; Tepper, 2007). For instance, research findings have shown that employees under abusive supervision may experience social isolation (Sam, 2021), heightened stress and anxiety (Blase & Blase, 2004; Fahie & Devine, 2014), feelings of frustration, humiliation, disbelief, helplessness, embarrassment, and anger (Snow et al., 2021).

Some scholars even point to extreme reactions, such as suicide (Fahie & Devine, 2014; Snow et al., 2021), substance abuse, and recurring nightmares (Blase & Blase, 2004; Fahie & Devine, 2014), all of which underscore the profound toll that destructive leadership can take on individual subordinates. Building on such existing findings, this section attempts to understand a variety of psychological consequences reported by participants in our study starting with stress and anxiety.

5.2.1.1 Increased Anxiety and Stress. The increase in anxiety and stress among educators is clearly demonstrated through the experiences of study participants Ann, Robinson, Jacques, and Peterson. Each participant's account reveals both shared and unique sources of stress, illustrating how destructive leadership behaviors by school principals negatively impact teachers' mental health, job performance, and professional outlooks.

Ann's experience underscores the effects of an authoritarian leadership style that replaced a previously supportive environment, resulting in a pervasive sense of insecurity. Robinson encountered continuous stress stemming from a lack of transparency within his administration, while Jacques faced discriminatory treatment that eroded his confidence and motivation. Similarly, Peterson's experience underscores the damaging effects of an unsupportive and, at times, accusatory administrative approach. Collectively, these accounts illuminate the profound impact that adverse administrative practices have on educators' mental health and well-being.

Ann's account captures the unsettling transition she experienced when the leadership style of her new principal sharply diverged from the supportive environment she had known. She described this shift as creating a "toxic" atmosphere, sharing that it felt like "going to work every day in an environment that can be toxic... you always feel like this creeping on the back of your neck." The principal's behavior, which Ann described as a "passive dictatorship," involved gaslighting and subtle undermining, leading her to feel "diminished" without overt aggression. This ongoing tension led her to adopt a vigilant and cautious attitude, preoccupied with potential conflicts and the need to gather evidence in case issues arose. Her concerns extended to colleagues and immigrant or minority students, which added to her anxiety as she observed these groups becoming increasingly vulnerable under the abusive principal's leadership.

Similarly, Robinson's account reveals the intense stress he endured due to his principal's lack of transparency and unprofessional conduct. During his first year, he noted that his principal ignored him with regard to classroom visits and feedback, which deviated from the expected standards at the school. This inconsistency led to uncertainty and frustration, as Robinson found himself questioning why he "...didn't get the chance to have that feedback." His anxiety was further heightened by perceived unfair treatment and dishonesty, leaving him feeling "...like

you're looking for a scapegoat somewhere." The stress of this experience peaked when he realized that, despite his best efforts, the principal was consistently seeking reasons to accuse him. As he described, "when you think everything is fine, that's when everything is actually bad." This persistent feeling of uncertainty ultimately led Robinson to leave the school in order to avoid further conflict with what he perceived as punitive administration.

Jacques also experienced significant stress due to perceived discriminatory treatment by his principal. Following a public reprimand over what he believed to be "a minor infraction," Jacques felt deeply affected, frequently questioning, "What did I do wrong to deserve this treatment?" Although he received a private apology, his principal refused to address the matter publicly. This incident left him feeling undervalued, and he noted that "It always plays on my mind, it plays on my motivation," underscoring how these experiences eroded his emotional well-being and confidence. The cumulative stressors created an environment of constant anxiety, weakening his trust in the school administration and leading him to consider resignation on multiple occasions.

Peterson's experience further illustrates the harmful effects of an unsupportive and potentially discriminatory leadership style. His stress intensified when he was summoned to face his principal's allegations in a formal meeting. Recalling this experience, he described, "On those three days, I had diarrhea because I was so stressed," reflecting the physical toll of his anxiety. Peterson also reported feeling excluded, as his principal frequently avoided him, noting that "the principal never talked to me... he operated in the shadows."

Increased stress among educators facing supervisory mistreatment is not an isolated occurrence. For instance, findings from a survey conducted among secondary school teachers in

Ontario revealed similar outcomes, particularly regarding how teachers reacted to administrator bullying. Of the 380 teachers who responded after exposure to administrator bullying, 242 reported reacting with extreme anger (Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation [OSSTF], 2005). In addition to anger, OSSTF (2005) noted other stress-related reactions among 54 percent of the sample, which included loss of concentration, withdrawal from work, and disruptions in family and social life.

The devastating impact of DL behaviors on teachers' health and well-being cannot be overstated. However, it is critical to recognize that these repercussions extend beyond the individual, potentially undermining the very foundations of effective teaching and learning. When educators endure chronic stress, fear, and emotional turmoil due to abusive leadership, their ability to serve as facilitators of learning can be compromised. Their workday may shift from a focus on professional responsibilities to a space dominated by personal struggles. Explicitly, teachers who are grappling with the aftermath of principal mistreatment are less able to provide the supportive and nurturing environments essential for student growth and development.

The study findings on stress and anxiety align with previous studies, though a key distinction should be noted: while participants in this study report increased stress and anxiety from destructive leadership, their reactions have not escalated to extremes, such as suicidal, documented in prior research (Fahie & Devine, 2014; OSSTF, 2005; Snow et al., 2021). This difference might suggest that participants have not yet been pushed to their limits or may possess a greater degree of resilience compared to those in earlier studies who considered suicide as a response.

Regardless of the intensity of psychological effects experienced, these accounts highlight the serious impact of destructive leadership on educators' mental health, job satisfaction, and professional stability. These findings emphasize the need for supportive and transparent administrative practices that create a respectful and inclusive school culture, an environment essential for maintaining teachers' mental health and reinforcing their commitment to the profession.

5.2.1.2 Feelings of Worthlessness and Isolation. Feelings of worthlessness and isolation are prevalent in the experiences of educators facing negative administrative behaviors. These feelings deeply affected their emotional well-being and professional performance, as illustrated by the narratives of participants like Chantal, Peterson, and Jasmine.

Chantal reported a profound sense of worthlessness arising from her principal's harsh response to a single instance of tardiness. Although Chantal had valid reasons for being late, including challenges with young children, and occasional illness, she perceived the principal's reaction as disproportionately severe. As Chantal suggested, such repetitive reaction from the principal led her to believe that she was being treated differently because of biases against her. As she explained in her words, she was "not sure if it was because of where I'm from or ..., but I felt like she was harsher with me than necessary." This experience led her to question her own value and standing within the school community, illustrating the principal's significant emotional impact on her beyond the initial incident of lateness.

Chantal's feelings of worthlessness were further amplified when she sought understanding from her principal, only to be met with hostility. Rather than offering support, her principal advised her to "quit the job if you think your family is more important than the job."

This public reprimand not only embarrassed her but also sent a message that her personal challenges and her role within the school were worthless. Feeling unsupported and ostracized, Chantal eventually required therapy to address the emotional toll, stating, “This affected me deeply ...I had to go to therapy for over a month just to recover from the emotional toll it took on me.” Her principal’s words underscored the depth of her distress, as the encounter seemed to undermine her sense of professional worth and stability.

Chantal’s sense of worthlessness was further intensified by her belief that the principal’s actions may have been motivated by biases. She observed, “I believe it had something to do with my skin color because her relationship with other teachers seemed different.” This perception of discrimination increased her feelings of isolation and unfair treatment, as she struggled to comprehend why she was singled out for such harsh treatment when others were not subjected to similar scrutiny. Reflecting on her experience, Chantal expressed ongoing confusion and pain, sharing, “I don’t know what I did wrong to deserve that treatment,” which captured her internal conflict and distress resulting from the incident.

Peterson, another participant, shared a similar experience of feeling belittled after an incident with his school principal, describing it as a “professional downgrade.” He recounted, “I felt embarrassed, humiliated and belittled... It raised my physical blood pressure. I stopped and went to the hospital for a consultation.” It ultimately became a source of additional psychological and physical strain for him. Peterson found himself struggling to reconcile the treatment he was receiving with his sense of self-worth and professional dignity.

Another participant, Jasmine, described how the principal’s actions left her feeling isolated and emotionally exhausted, leading to mild depression. Balancing this discomfort

alongside her teaching responsibilities became overwhelming. She explained, “It made me feel a little bit depressed, having to face that every day.” Jasmine also expressed feelings of isolation, which exacerbated her distress. As a new teacher, she felt unable to confide in colleagues, fearing that her issues might disrupt workplace harmony. She stated, “I thought the colleagues had all been with him longer. I didn’t feel I could confide in them and ask them what to do. And they all seem to enjoy the principal’s presence. So I must be the outsider.” This lack of social support left Jasmine feeling uncomfortable and hesitant to seek help, intensifying her sense of isolation.

Chantal’s mental state was evidently affected by these experiences, as she recalled how her ability to teach suffered on some challenging days: “I wasn’t able to teach effectively, I was shaky and angry, and I didn’t want to accidentally vent my frustration on the students.” This statement underscores how the emotional toll of feeling undervalued impacted her work, further emphasizing her vulnerability and instability within the school environment.

Chantal’s narrative highlights how perceptions of bias and unfair treatment from authority figures, such as school principals, can lead to feelings of worthlessness among educators. Her experiences suggest that without inclusive and equitable leadership practices, educators may feel isolated, undervalued, and unsupported. Chantal’s story underscores the importance of professional development focused on inclusivity and regular appraisals for school leadership, aiming to foster a more supportive and equitable environment for educators.

5.2.2 Professional Effects

A significant effect identified in this study is the detrimental impact on employee motivation and job satisfaction, particularly as the principal-teacher relationship becomes increasingly strained and unhealthy. This decline in enthusiasm and commitment can lead to

further victimization, prompting teachers to seek relief from a negative working environment. Clark and Antonelli (2013) found that negative interactions between principals and teachers in Ontario school settings contributed to early retirement, resignations, and career changes.

The testimonies of the participants in this study align with Clark and Antonelli's findings on job attrition, as they reported substantial changes in job status, relocation, and diminished motivation and job satisfaction as direct consequences of adverse interactions with their school principal. These outcomes highlight the profound impact of unhealthy workplace relationships on teachers' professional stability and overall morale, emphasizing the need for supportive and constructive leadership in educational settings. This section discusses resignation, relocation, and decrease of motivation and satisfaction for job as related to professional effects of DL.

5.2.2.1 Resignation due to Unbearable Conditions. The theme of resignation and changes in job status is illustrated in Peterson's account, which underscores the emotional toll and professional strain caused by inadequate institutional support. Peterson's experiences highlight how persistent conflicts with his principal gradually eroded his job satisfaction, ultimately driving him to resign and shift to a part-time, lower-responsibility role.

He describes his frustration, explaining, "When I saw that I didn't have the support I needed to carry out my work, I wrote a letter of resignation. And when I submitted that letter of resignation to the principal, he accepted." Despite repeated appeals for assistance, Peterson's needs remained unmet, compelling him to step down from his position, a decision reflecting the profound impact of insufficient institutional support on educators' commitment and motivation.

Following his resignation, Peterson opted for a part-time teaching role as a protective measure, choosing a lower-responsibility position to reduce stress and safeguard his well-being.

He shares, “I put myself in a safe position by only doing part-time teaching because I don’t have a full workload, whether at the school or in the classroom.” This transition not only reduced his workload but also signaled a significant shift in his professional aspirations, as he moved away from the roles he once valued in education. This new arrangement also required him to adjust financially and emotionally to a reduced income, illustrating the impact on his career.

Peterson’s narrative captures the cumulative effects of resignation and changes in job status as a response to unaddressed institutional challenges. His move from a full-time to part-time role reveals both the psychological and economic dimensions of his professional transition, emphasizing the resilience required to adapt under difficult circumstances. Through his story, Peterson exemplifies the pressures educators face when ineffective leadership undermines their work environment, ultimately forcing them to seek alternative roles to preserve their well-being. His experience underscores the critical importance of supportive, responsive leadership in sustaining teacher motivation and job satisfaction.

5.2.2.2 Job Relocation. Jasmine’s decision to relocate underscores the significant impact of destructive leadership on professional choices, particularly when issues with leadership create an environment that employees feel compelled to leave. Her experience reveals how persistent discomfort and blurs professional boundaries with her principal led her to seek employment in another city, affecting both her personal and professional life. She describes the atmosphere as one where “the thought of going to work made me feel a little bit depressed” and ultimately led her to “quit and go for trying another city.” The principal’s behavior fostered ongoing discomfort, leaving Jasmine feeling isolated and unable to seek support from colleagues.

Jasmine’s relocation illustrates how a hostile or unprofessional work environment can directly impact an individual’s decision to seek employment elsewhere, often at substantial

personal and professional cost. By moving, Jasmine avoided daily stress but encountered new challenges associated with relocation. Reflecting on her choice, she states, “I decided I would quit... get back closer to my parents...so that was the kind of spare me this.” Her experience highlights a severe, negative consequence of leadership that lacks respect for professional boundaries. It shows that such environments not only impact job satisfaction but may also drive skilled professionals to leave positions entirely, disrupting their career paths and personal lives.

5.2.2.3 Decreased Job Satisfaction and Motivation. All participants reported a noticeable decline in motivation and increased job dissatisfaction following exposure to destructive behaviors by the school principal. The narratives of participants like Jasmine, Jacques, and Chantal reveal the significant impact of persistent challenges and perceived mistreatment on their professional enthusiasm and commitment. Their accounts illustrate how key issues, such as inadequate support and ambiguous communication from the principal, contribute to psychological stress, which in turn undermines their motivation and commitment to their roles. In effect, these factors create a workplace environment that erodes both individual well-being and collective morale, emphasizing the need for supportive and transparent leadership practices to sustain teacher motivation and job satisfaction.

Jasmine’s account illustrates how prolonged discomfort and boundary-crossing behaviors by her supervisor led to a pervasive sense of unease. She felt that her supervisor’s inappropriate behaviors, including “sitting on my desk and going through my things” and engaging in “too many innuendos”, created an unsafe and paranoid work environment. Her perception of isolation was compounded by the lack of support from colleagues and limited resources, leaving her with “no one to talk to” and “no real way to exert power” over her circumstances. This atmosphere

not only decreased her motivation but also drove her to eventually seek employment elsewhere, underscoring the detrimental impact of a toxic work environment on job satisfaction.

Similarly, Jacques experienced a substantial decrease in job satisfaction due to recurring conflicts with the administration and a lack of support. He described feeling targeted over minor infractions, such as slight delays in arrival, which his school principal treated with disproportionate severity. Jacques reflected on the frustration this treatment caused, noting how it made him question his career choices and whether he belonged in the teaching profession, saying, “Why did I get into this? Who sent me into this work? What did I do wrong to deserve this treatment? ”. His account reveals the emotional toll of feeling unsupported, especially when the school administration seemed more inclined to discipline than to back him up during conflicts with students. This perceived injustice, combined with a sense of cultural misunderstanding, left Jacques feeling isolated and eroded his motivation to continue teaching.

Chantal’s narrative adds another dimension to the theme of decreased motivation, highlighting the emotional impact of a hostile interaction with her principal. After a single incident of lateness due to childcare and transportation issues, Chantal’s principal publicly reprimanded her, suggesting that if her family was more important than her job, she should quit. Chantal recounted how the principal raised her voice in front of other staff members and ignored her explanations, creating a hostile and humiliating environment that affected her deeply. She noted, “I question why I apologized or why I didn’t report her”, a reflection of her regret over a situation that diminished her confidence and ultimately made her question her place in the profession. This emotional strain left her feeling unsupported and apprehensive, further eroding her motivation to perform her duties effectively.

The findings of this study on declining motivation and job dissatisfaction highlight the significant impact of workplace mistreatment on teachers' professional commitment and job satisfaction. When teachers experience isolation, unfair targeting, or inadequate support, the repercussions extend beyond individual well-being, often impairing their ability to teach effectively and fulfill other educational responsibilities. These supervisory misbehaviors, as previously discussed, contribute to demoralizing the targeted teachers, underscoring the urgent need for educational institutions to adopt inclusive and empathetic leadership practices.

The participants' experiences of diminishing motivation and declining job satisfaction align with Ashforth's (1994) assertion that negative leadership can result in low leader endorsement, as well as Oplatka's (2016) observations regarding reduced teacher morale in environments with irresponsible leadership. Specifically, low endorsement and weakened employee morale reflect decreased motivation and job dissatisfaction, which can lead to various organizational challenges, including diminished team motivation, weakened trust, and reduced cohesion. As team members increasingly question the leader's capabilities or intentions, commitment to organizational goals may waver. For teachers, the absence of supportive leadership can make it challenging to sustain their dedication to the profession, with potential negative effects on student outcomes and the broader educational environment.

5.2.3 Physiological Effects

One participant's experiences with his principal illustrate the negative impact of unsupportive leadership on physical health and sleep, reflecting a toll often linked to prolonged stress and powerlessness in professional contexts. Peterson's account exemplifies how such adverse leadership can extend beyond emotional consequences, affecting physical well-being and sleep patterns. This aligns with findings in studies on teacher mistreatment by principals, which

highlight similar outcomes (Blase & Blase, 2004; Riley et al., 2011). Peterson's symptoms offer a case study in the broader consequences of destructive leadership within school settings.

Peterson reported significant health issues directly tied to his interactions with the principal, particularly during a period when he was summoned to a disciplinary committee meeting. He explained, "...it raised my physical blood pressure. I stopped and went to the hospital for a consultation," revealing that his principal's handling of classroom management issues and subsequent accusations had severe physical consequences. The elevated blood pressure and need for medical consultation highlight the extreme stress Peterson experienced, suggesting that prolonged negative interactions with his principal had a direct impact on his cardiovascular health. His account demonstrates that in constructive leadership scenarios, such health impacts might have been preventable.

Disrupted sleep emerged as another major consequence of the unresolved issues and increased stress Peterson faced. He noted, "My sleep was disturbed, especially the day I was told that the disciplinary committee was going to summon me because of my bad behavior at school." This fear of disciplinary action and perception of unjust treatment translated into sleeplessness, an effect often associated with anxiety and psychological distress in teacher-principal relationships (Sam, 2021). Further, he described ongoing worry with physical symptoms such as "diarrhea because I was so stressed," underscoring the intensity of his physiological response to these stressful situations. The symptoms Peterson reported align with prior findings on teacher mistreatment, where insomnia is commonly documented among educators exposed to hostile or unsupportive supervisory environments (Blase & Blase, 2004; Fahie & Devine, 2014; Snow et al., 2021).

Research on workplace abuse within schooling contexts has identified a range of physiological effects associated with destructive leadership. These include substance abuse, digestive problems, weight fluctuation, fatigue, headaches, stomach cramps, and skin irritation (Blase & Blase, 2002, 2004; Fahie & Devine, 2014; OSSTF, 2005; Snow et al., 2021). In this study, Peterson reported experiencing only diarrhea, sleep disturbances, and high blood pressure. This more limited range of symptoms might suggest that destructive leadership triggers physiological responses that vary based on individual factors, including metabolism and personal resilience. A larger sample might provide more insight into the range of physiological responses to destructive leadership.

In conclusion, this study provides a compelling example of how destructive leadership can extend beyond psychological effects to impact physical health. Peterson's symptoms underscore the critical need for constructive support and effective classroom management tools, which, if provided, could have mitigated the severe health consequences he experienced. These findings highlight the broader need for institutional support within educational settings to promote both the well-being of educators and the sustainability of their careers.

5.2.4 Section Summary and Conclusion

The findings reveal that destructive leadership in educational settings significantly impacts teachers' psychological, and physiological well-being, manifesting in stress, anxiety, frustration, and feelings of worthlessness. The participants shared a variety of troubling experiences, such as a teacher who developed stress and anxiety in response to a sudden authoritarian shift in leadership, another who faced constant uncertainty due to inconsistent feedback, and others who endured isolation, humiliation, and unsupported accusations. In response to these challenging conditions, some teachers sought coping mechanisms, with several

ultimately choosing to resign, relocate, or reduce their workload to safeguard their health.

Additionally, teachers reported physiological symptoms such as sleep disturbances, high blood pressure, and digestive issues, which underscore the extensive impact of DL on victims' health.

These findings highlight that abusive leadership not only negatively impacts teachers' well-being but also undermines their professional motivation and commitment. Teachers subjected to these conditions report reduced job satisfaction and often feel alienated within their work environment, limiting their capacity to create effective learning/teaching spaces. Those targeted by abusive practices may feel unsupported, leading them to disengage from their responsibilities or leave the profession altogether, which can have wider implications for educational quality and student learning outcomes. The psychological toll also diminishes teachers' confidence and morale, reducing their ability to contribute meaningfully to the school community and hampering the development of positive student-teacher relationships.

These findings highlight the urgent need for educational institutions to cultivate inclusive and empathetic leadership practices to mitigate the harm caused by destructive leadership. Although the qualitative portion of this study is limited to six participants, the narratives underscore the severe psychological and physiological toll that abusive leadership can exact on educators. Such experiences highlight a broader issue that warrants further exploration within the field.

Given the small sample size and the specific context of the participants, the study's findings are not exhaustive. Future research with larger and more diverse samples could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the various impacts of destructive leadership on educators' mental and physical health. Expanding research on this issue would provide deeper

insights into the broader consequences of abusive leadership, informing more effective responses and reforms.

Addressing these dynamics requires a focus on interventions that promote supportive leadership and resilience training for educators. Such strategies could help reduce the adverse effects by fostering a respectful school environment that prioritizes teachers' well-being, thereby enhancing their professional success and supporting student learning outcomes. This research provides a basis for guiding policy development and implementing best practices within schools, contributing to a healthier, more respectful educational environment. The next section delves into the participants' responses to the last main research question which seeks to address thoughts on strategies to mitigate and or prevent the occurrence of DL in schooling context.

5.3 Addressing Destructive Leadership Behaviors in Schooling Contexts

Preventing destructive leadership in school environments poses challenges due to its often subtle nature. Nevertheless, addressing these issues is essential for cultivating a supportive and effective educational setting. Leadership that emphasizes respect, inclusion, and collaboration can strengthen the functionality and morale of the school community, creating a climate in which teachers can perform their roles without fear of mistreatment. This, in turn, enhances student learning and bolsters institutional stability. Constructive leadership also fosters educators' professional growth, encourages cohesiveness, and promotes values such as trust, fairness, and integrity, aligning with policies aimed at a respectful and equitable workplace.

Research outlines strategies for addressing and disrupting the occurrence of destructive leadership in schools. On an individual level, some victims may employ resistance tactics or pursue legal action to address experiences of mistreatment by their principal. Fahie and Devine (2014) note that some targeted teachers resist through direct confrontation or symbolic actions,

such as wearing black to express disapproval, while others opt for dialogue to resolve conflicts. Building positive professional relationships has also been found effective in countering the occurrence of destructive behaviors (Jackson et al., 2007). At an institutional level, responses include formal interventions like litigation and support from teacher unions, which can curb destructive practices through disciplinary actions.

Additionally, personality traits such as extraversion and resilience moderate teachers' responses to supervisory mistreatment, underscoring the need for training leaders to manage diverse personalities and stress triggers (Wang et al., 2015). Establishing safe reporting mechanisms without fear of retaliation further empowers victims to report abuse (Krasikova et al., 2013).

Theoretical perspectives on preventing destructive leadership focus on leadership styles that prioritize constructive interactions and collaboration among school stakeholders. Oplatka (2016) and Einarsen et al. (2007) advocate for shared, participative, and value-based leadership approaches that foster stakeholder engagement and trust. Involving teachers in problem-solving and creating forums for dialogue and learning communities builds a collaborative foundation, aligning stakeholders with school objectives and promoting trust and respect. This collaborative environment strengthens teachers' commitment, reducing the likelihood of destructive behaviors. Einarsen et al. (2007) also argue that constructive leaders support organizational goals while enhancing subordinates' motivation, well-being, and job satisfaction by inviting their engagement in decision-making processes.

The following section examines study participants' reflections on strategies to minimize or prevent destructive leadership within the principal-teacher interactional space, providing insights into both practical approaches and preventive measures at individual and institutional

levels. Rather than framing our analysis along a victim-institution response axis, we present each participant's perspectives organized by emerging themes.

5.3.1 Advocacy and Support

5.3.1.1 Self-advocacy. Three participants mentioned advocacy and support as one of the strategies to address the occurrence of destructive leadership behaviors in schoolworking contexts in varied ways. Robinson's understanding of advocacy reflects having the courage to defend yourself as a victim to bring up light where necessary. In his interview, Robinson emphasized the importance of self-advocacy, particularly in response to what he perceived as procedural failings and a lack of transparency from his school principal. He described how the administration conducted fewer classroom observations than outlined by the guidelines and failed to provide him with constructive feedback, leading him to assume his performance was satisfactory. When the administration later used his lack of feedback as a basis for criticism, Robinson directly challenged this, stating, "you should have given me feedback because if you didn't, I assume everything is fine." This direct confrontation exemplifies his commitment to holding the administration accountable for adhering to professional standards and for clarifying his own performance standing.

Further demonstrating his self-advocacy, Robinson requested that the inconsistencies in his evaluation record be addressed, including instances where the administration's recommendations were inconsistent with their prior promises. He explained how he actively defended himself during a meeting with the school administration and union representatives, noting, "When I explained my situation, I said what needed to be said," underscoring his determination to ensure that his side of the story was heard. Robinson's persistent advocacy also exposed a recurring issue of administrative inconsistencies, where actions promised to be

omitted from his file were later included without his knowledge. He reflected on this discrepancy as evidence of deeper issues in the school administration's handling of records and transparency, saying, "It shows that sometimes what is said is not respected. If they say a report won't be in your file and it ends up being there, you understand there's a problem somewhere."

Through Robinson's efforts to advocate for himself, Robinson reveals a crucial strategy for educators facing destructive leadership: standing firm on procedural fairness and transparency. His narrative highlights the importance of self-advocacy in establishing professional boundaries and defending one's reputation against administrative misrepresentation. Robinson's experiences and responses underscore how self-advocacy can serve as a proactive tool for individuals facing challenges in hierarchical and potentially unsupportive institutional settings.

5.3.1.2 Collective Advocacy. In Ann's interview, the theme of *collective advocacy* emerges as a key response to ongoing workplace discrimination and a lack of institutional support. Ann's experience with her new principal, who she describes as using tactics of "gaslighting" and "passive dictatorship," illustrates how those in positions of power can subtly undermine and degrade others, especially those from marginalized communities, while avoiding direct accountability. Despite this, Ann expresses a sense of solidarity with colleagues who face similar treatment, including an Arabic teacher who experiences discriminatory remarks.

Ann's support for her Arabic colleague is a clear example of how she navigates collective advocacy. She mentions giving her colleague "words of encouragement" to counteract the principal's belittling comments and to reaffirm her value in the school. This encouragement, while subtle, becomes a form of quiet resistance against a principal who consistently enforces a

hostile environment under the guise of professionalism. This reflects a belief that supporting one another, even if only through verbal reassurance, is essential in such a challenging environment.

Furthermore, Ann highlights the challenge of “acting on” the principal’s behavior due to a lack of “concrete evidence” against him. Despite this limitation, she emphasizes the importance of “watching out” for her fellow teachers and students, especially those more vulnerable to discrimination. Ann’s reluctance to take legal action without solid evidence, paired with her ongoing support for affected colleagues, underscores a commitment to solidarity even within an oppressive system.

Finally, Ann’s acknowledgment of her “delicate position” reveals the careful balance she strikes between advocating for others and protecting her own job security. She notes the importance of standing by others in challenging circumstances, despite an awareness that “people only think for themselves” when they fear job loss or reputation damage. Her advocacy is thus tempered by the reality of institutional constraints, yet she continues to offer moral support to those around her as a means of countering isolation and validating shared experiences. Ann’s experience is a testament to the power of collective advocacy, even when formal avenues of justice seem difficult.

5.3.1.3 Seeking Support. In exploring the experiences of Ann, Robinson, and Jacques, a clear theme emerges: union support and family encouragement are indispensable in helping educators navigate challenging school environments. Their perspectives illustrate a complex interplay of solidarity and resilience, revealing how these support systems not only mitigate the effects of difficult leadership but also empower educators to persevere and advocate for their rights and well-being.

5.3.1.3.1 Support from the Union. Both Ann and Jacques express a strong awareness of the union's role as a protective and guiding layer in their professional lives. Ann articulates a nuanced understanding of the union's advocacy for teachers' rights, viewing it as a vital ally in confronting workplace challenges. She states, "I feel like we need some concrete evidence to call the union or get someone involved," reflecting her strategic approach to gathering support before taking formal action. This underscores her recognition of the union as a collective body that provides solidarity and serves as a safety net during difficult times.

Jacques echoes this sentiment by highlighting the significance of union representation in his own experiences with classroom conflicts. He recalls, "It was the union leader who told me that it's like that, that the pupils are our customers, that they'd had other similar experiences before." This validation reassures him that he is part of a larger community and not alone in facing administrative challenges. Jacques further emphasizes the importance of understanding his rights, stating, "I have to know my limits, my obligations, and my rights." This awareness underscores how the union equips teachers with the knowledge necessary to advocate for themselves and navigate the complexities of their roles.

Robinson's account reveals a pivotal moment in which the union's involvement became essential for support. He recounts, "I called the union and they came. There was a union representative." This proactive step highlights Robinson's understanding of the union as an essential resource during troubling times. Moreover, the resolution of an incident involving a student where the union's intervention led to clarification that the incident would not be mentioned in his professional documents demonstrates the potential of union support to alleviate immediate concerns. Robinson notes, "They said it wasn't an issue; this incident wouldn't be mentioned in my documents."

Additionally, Robinson points out that the union has attempted to address systemic issues by advocating for professional development and training aimed at minimizing conflicts between teachers and school administration. He states, “I believe that at that time, the union asked ... to provide training to minimize conflicts between the school administration and teachers.” This initiative suggests that the union recognizes the need for systemic change, advocating for processes that can foster a more supportive environment for educators. However, Robinson admits, “But since I left the board, I wouldn’t know if there was follow-up or improvement,” indicating that while the union may initiate advocacy efforts, the implementation and effectiveness of such strategies remain uncertain.

5.3.1.3.2 Support from Family and Colleagues. In addition to union support, both Ann and Jacques emphasize the vital role of familial and collegial relationships in fostering resilience. Ann reflects on the contrast between her supportive previous principal and her current toxic environment, reminiscing, “We were actually friends or family... it was kind of actually friends with the old principal.” Her statement underscores how a nurturing workplace significantly impacts her well-being. In her current situation, she actively seeks to build a support network among colleagues, demonstrating her commitment to fostering community. She explains, “I went in and talked with this teacher... that your work here is valued and all of us, we appreciate her,” illustrating how affirming her colleagues’ contributions is essential for collective resilience, particularly in an environment marked by discrimination.

Jacques also shares how family support helps him to manage the emotional toll of his professional challenges. He describes a sense of relief and comfort from discussing his experiences with loved ones, noting, “I’ve told my family everything; I talk to my children and

my wife.” This open dialogue helps him process frustrations and reinforces his sense of belonging.

In summary, the interviews with Ann, Robinson, and Jacques illuminate the essential nature of union support alongside familial and collegial encouragement in navigating the adversities educators faced. All three participants demonstrate a deep appreciation for the solidarity the union offers, as well as the emotional support provided by their families and colleagues. Ann’s proactive approach to supporting her peers and Jacques’s acknowledgment of his family’s role in his resilience underscore the critical importance of a robust support network. Together, their narratives reveal that effective support, whether through professional organizations or personal relationships, is fundamental in fostering resilience and maintaining motivation amidst challenges within the educational landscape.

5.3.2 Developing Personal Coping Strategies

5.3.2.1 Verbal Deterrence. In the interview, Jasmine described a form of verbal deterrence she employed to discourage her principal’s persistent, inappropriate behavior, despite her discomfort and the subtlety of his advances. She explained, “He kept insisting, insisting and finally, I, I did tell him like I had a boyfriend. I, I was pretending that, you know, which was not the truth at the time.” By verbally introducing a fake boyfriend, Jasmine hoped to establish a boundary and signal her disinterest without openly confronting her principal challenging decision due to her status as a new teacher under his authority. This approach reflects an attempt at deterring unwanted attention through indirect communication, highlighting her struggle to assert personal boundaries in a hierarchical workplace.

5.3.2.2 Physical and Emotional Withdrawal. Jasmine’s experience of physical and emotional withdrawal as a strategy to address mistreatment in her work environment exemplifies a form of coping often used to protect one’s well-being in response to discomfort or harassment. Withdrawal, in this context, involves a combination of physical avoidance and emotional detachment to create distance from a distressing person or situation. In her case, she wanted to emotionally and physically distance herself from the overly friendly principal, by “...quitting and trying somewhere else,” thereby removing herself from the persistent discomfort of unwanted closeness and implicit demands for attention. Emotional withdrawal, meanwhile, involved Jasmine mentally distancing herself from her principal’s advances, despite her internal struggle to assert her boundaries. This detachment can serve as a protective barrier, mitigating the emotional toll associated with experiencing mistreatment.

Withdrawal strategies such as these reflect the challenges employees, particularly women, may face in navigating hierarchical and sometimes ambiguous social dynamics in the workplace. Research highlights how physical and emotional withdrawal serves as a coping mechanism, reducing immediate distress while allowing individuals to seek alternative, healthier environments (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

5.3.2.3 Faith and Reflection. Jacques used two main strategies such as faith and self-control to navigate difficult situations with his principal and minimize unhealthy experiences. His approach reveals a conscious reliance on inner resources to manage stress and avoid escalation.

First, Jacques’ faith appears to be a cornerstone of his coping mechanism. He notes, “Every day before going to class, I entrust my classes, my pupils, and my colleagues to God.”

Prayers provide him with a sense of peace and strength, allowing him to face each day with resilience despite the challenges he anticipates. Faith, for him, is a way to ground himself emotionally and spiritually before entering an environment where he feels scrutinized and occasionally misunderstood.

In addition to faith, Jacques exercises self-control as a preventive strategy. He mentions the importance of maintaining a calm demeanor, saying, “I always try to stay calm so as not to provoke,” and he consciously avoids impulsive reactions. This approach is crucial for him, especially in light of experiences where misunderstandings with students and supervisors have led to accusations and disciplinary meetings. Jacques is mindful of his actions, aware that he operates in an environment where any behavior could potentially be used against him. He explains his approach by saying, “I have to know my limits, my obligations, and my rights,” which demonstrates his commitment to composure even under pressure.

Thus, Jacques leans on faith to fortify his resolve and relies on self-control as a way to navigate workplace conflicts carefully. These two strategies help him manage his experiences, providing him with an emotional buffer against a sometimes-hostile work environment.

5.3.3 Provision of Resources

In Jasmine’s interview, she reflects on how mental resources, such as access to information, support systems, and awareness initiatives, could serve as crucial buffers for teachers facing abusive or boundary-blurring behaviors from supervisors. Her perspective on accessing resource person points to the need for mechanisms in school environments that allow teachers to address uncomfortable or potentially harmful situations with greater confidence and less fear of repercussions.

Jasmine mentions the importance of informational resources, such as posters on harassment and mental health, which can serve as reminders and potential aids to those who might otherwise feel isolated or uncertain in situations of discomfort. She says, “nowadays there seems to be kind more posters everywhere in all our common rooms, cafeteria, our lounge, so talking about harassment at work, things like that the importance of mental health.” These resources, she notes, can be crucial in “making you realize there are things you can do or people you can talk to.” This increased visibility of support resources creates a safety layer, potentially empowering teachers to consider speaking up or seeking help.

Jasmine also suggests more proactive approaches, such as the distribution of pamphlets and even training sessions from school psychologists or outside experts. She envisions a scenario where new teachers, in particular, could be made aware of what constitutes acceptable behavior in the workplace. Jasmine mentions,

I think just having kind of the sight of more resources and maybe hand over pamphlets about all the resources to especially new teachers, but all teachers really to make them aware of what they should or should not handle in a work environment.

By equipping staff with the knowledge of appropriate boundaries and available channels of support, the school system could help teachers navigate potentially problematic relationships with less fear of reprisal.

Furthermore, Jasmine stresses the need for anonymous channels through which teachers can voice concerns or ask questions about their experiences. She imagines an anonymous complaint system or hotline, where teachers could receive nonjudgmental guidance without fearing direct consequences. In her words,

Maybe more education to make us all aware of how mental stress is about damaging as physical stuff. What would be a nice thing? So maybe the school psychologists giving resources out for enhancements or apps... so someone answering you? Pointing to what you wrote, but then in kind of nonjudgmental way.”

This idea underscores her desire for a safe space to explore and validate her feelings before taking formal steps, given her fears about potentially overreacting.

Jasmine’s reflections illustrate the importance of resources as tools to combat the stress and uncertainty caused by abusive supervisory behavior. Such resources foster a supportive school culture that encourages staff to seek help and empowers them to navigate workplace challenges more confidently.

5.3.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) represent a potentially effective strategy to counteract abusive supervision in educational settings by promoting accountability and professionalism among school principals. Chantal, a teacher who reported experiencing differential and harsh treatment from her principal, advocates for routine assessments of principals’ performance, suggesting that such practices could foster a more respectful and inclusive approach in school leadership. According to Chantal, monitoring school principals could involve appraisals and continuous feedback mechanisms, equipping school administrators with tools to identify and address issues such as favoritism or racial discrimination.

Drawing from her experience, Chantal recommends implementing regular workshops on inclusivity and professional conduct for both principals and teachers, supplemented by ongoing

appraisals of principals' behavior. She posits that such measures could encourage principals to "be more mindful of their actions" particularly if they are aware of active monitoring. This M&E approach may empower teachers, providing them with a safeguard against abusive supervisory practices, while fostering a school culture centered on support and respect.

The role of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) in promoting accountability and reducing abusive supervisory practices has been documented in organizational literature. Scholars like Harris et al. (2016) argue that regular appraisals and performance reviews can identify problematic leadership behaviors, such as favoritism and discrimination, and identifies areas for corrective action. Similarly, Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) contend that professional development and structured feedback fosters equitable and respectful school environments, aligning closely with Chantal's recommendations.

Additionally, existing research supports the integration of workshops and professional development programs as tools to enhance leadership inclusivity. For example, Hallinger and Heck (2010) note that continuous learning opportunities for school leaders significantly improve their ability to navigate diversity and foster inclusive cultures. M&E frameworks that combine routine evaluations with developmental interventions can be particularly essential in maintaining high ethical standards while ensuring leadership accountability. Chantal's emphasis on inclusive practices training and transparent feedback mechanisms reflects these evidence-based strategies for creating equitable school cultures.

In conclusion, M&E offers a critical framework for ensuring school leadership accountability, emphasizing transparency and cultivating a respectful school environment. By formalizing the observation and evaluation of principals' conduct, educational institutions can

better promote equitable treatment of all staff members and contribute to a safer, more inclusive learning environment for both educators and students.

5.3.5 Anonymous Reporting Systems

Jasmine's interview further reveals her hesitation in reporting her experiences with the principal, largely due to the power imbalance and the subtlety of his behavior. She reflects that the absence of overt misconduct made it difficult to come forward, a sentiment she believes others in similar positions may share. In response to this, she advocates for the establishment of an anonymous complaint system that would allow teachers to report concerns without fear of retribution or harm to their careers. Jasmine suggests, "an anonymous complaint...and then the school board would receive an anonymous complaint". She believes that such a system could help initiate an investigation or at least a conversation without requiring individual teachers to openly challenge a superior.

Moreover, Jasmine emphasizes the importance of clear communication and accessible resources, particularly for educators new to the profession or schools. She notes that an increased availability of resources such as pamphlets detailing acceptable conduct and protocols for reporting issues could assist teachers in navigating complex workplace dynamics. Jasmine also envisions a system in which teachers can anonymously describe their situations and receive guidance on whether the behavior they are experiencing crosses professional boundaries. She suggests this system could provide "a staff that would be dedicated to answering these kinds of anonymous queries about whether something is ...wrong or not or to determine if someone is exaggerating or not in a kind of a description of it".

Jasmine's insights align with existing literature that emphasizes the challenges of addressing subtle workplace misconduct and power imbalances in hierarchical settings. Research by Namie and Namie (2011) highlights the psychological and professional risks associated with reporting abusive behaviors, particularly when the misconduct is covert. Anonymous reporting systems, as Jasmine advocates, are supported by studies such as Harris et al. (2016), which demonstrate that such mechanisms encourage disclosure while mitigating fear of retaliation. These systems create opportunities to address concerns while preserving the anonymity and dignity of affected individuals.

Furthermore, Jasmine's emphasis on clear communication and accessible resources resonates with the work of Keashly and Jagatic (2011), who stress the importance of visible policies and preventive training programs to combat workplace mistreatment. Literature on workplace harassment underlines the necessity of proactive support structures, including anonymous advisory services and informational resources, to help employees navigate ambiguous situations. Jasmine's recommendations complement these findings, underscoring the role of structured systems in fostering safe, inclusive, and supportive educational environments.

In summary, Jasmine's interview underscores her view that oversight and transparency are essential for fostering a supportive and safe work environment for educators. She contends that accessible and anonymous reporting systems, visible resources on mental health and harassment, and consistent communication about professional boundaries could help to address instances of subtle misconduct that might otherwise go unreported. Her experiences highlight the need for structured oversight that empowers teachers, particularly those new to the profession, to feel secure in their workplace, supported by a transparent system committed to their well-being and safety.

5.3.6 Training and Workshops

Chantal and Jasmine advocate for awareness mechanisms, specifically through training and workshops, as vital steps in addressing destructive behaviors in school environments. Their views illustrate the complexities of workplace interactions between principals and teachers and underscore the need for structured oversight and professional development to foster an inclusive, respectful, and safe environment for all staff.

Specifically, Chantal's understanding draws from the impact of unchecked authority and lack of accountability in leadership roles within schools. She noted that without structured oversight, principals may inadvertently contribute to a negative atmosphere that can affect teachers' mental well-being and job performance. Her observations led her to become a strong proponent of systematic professional development, particularly for school leaders. She suggests that "schools should have regular workshops for principals and teaching staff to enhance learning opportunities on inclusivity and professionalism," advocating for continuous professional growth to ensure that principals remain accountable for their interactions with staff.

Through these workshops, Chantal emphasizes the importance of fostering a respectful and fair approach in school leadership. She believes that such training would help principals better understand the diverse backgrounds and unique challenges that teachers face, cultivating a more empathetic and supportive work environment. This proposal highlights the critical need for principals to lead by example, setting the tone for a positive workplace culture. By advocating for ongoing professional development and accountability measures, Chantal aims to promote an environment where teachers feel valued and respected, free from the detrimental effects of arbitrary or biased leadership.

Advocacy for awareness mechanisms such as training and workshops, are recommended in research on professional development. Studies suggest that regular training coupled with oversight can significantly reduce destructive leadership behaviors and improve workplace relationships. For example, Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) maintain that professional development for school leaders fosters a more inclusive environment by equipping them with the tools to handle diverse teacher needs empathetically.

Moreover, workshops and regular training can promote fairness in schools. Harris et al. (2016) emphasize the role of professional learning communities in fostering collaboration and equity among educators. Collaboration and equity also align with Chantal's proposal for educating principals on inclusivity to promote respectful interactions.

5.3.7 Call for Awareness Resources

Jasmine's experience brings to light the nuanced challenges of addressing sexual harassment in schooling settings. Her reflections reveal that harassment can often manifest in subtle forms, which may not be overtly aggressive but nonetheless create discomfort and unease. Jasmine describes instances where her principal's overly friendly and physical gestures left her feeling uncomfortable, yet she hesitated to label these actions as harassment since they were not explicitly inappropriate. This hesitation underscores the need for more comprehensive training to help staff recognize and understand such subtle forms of misconduct.

For Jasmine, awareness efforts such as informational resources, workshops, and support mechanisms are essential in preventing harassment and building a culture of safety and respect. She notes that schools should provide resources like pamphlets and workshops to educate staff on recognizing inappropriate behavior, especially in situations that may blur professional

boundaries. Jasmine believes that awareness mechanisms could empower teachers, particularly those new to the profession, to identify and respond to subtle forms of harassment. She equally highlights the importance of mental health resources, such as school psychologists, who could offer support to staff without fear of retaliation.

As Jasmine explains, “Maybe more education... to make us all aware of how mental stress is as damaging as physical stuff,” she underscores the need to recognize and address both physical and mental harm caused by workplace harassment. Her perspective reinforces the idea that schools must not only focus on preventing physical harassment but also acknowledge the psychological toll of a hostile work environment. Jasmine suggests that by providing resources and clearly defined avenues for addressing concerns, schools could foster a supportive culture where teachers feel empowered to voice their discomfort.

The value of accessible resources, including anonymous mental health support, is well-documented in recent literature. Cortina et al. (2023) and Restubog et al. (2020) reveal that such mechanisms empower employees to confront misconduct while reducing stress and fostering safer environments. Jasmine’s experiences underscore the necessity of addressing subtle harassment in educational settings, reflecting findings in recent workplace harassment research. Particular attention must be paid to subtle behaviors, such as overly friendly gestures, since they can create discomfort while remaining ambiguous or invisible, making them challenging to report and address. McDonald et al. (2021) emphasize that such actions often go unrecognized or unreported, leading to prolonged psychological harm for victims. Therefore, there is an urgent need for specialized training programs designed to equip educators with the necessary skills to recognize and effectively respond to subtle manifestations of harassment.

In summary, the importance of in-service training sessions such as those on enhancing a more inclusive work environment for school principals remain essential tools for creating a more inclusive, non-discriminatory, and supportive work environment. Moreover, advocacy for professional development highlights the role of leadership in shaping a positive school culture. Jasmine's insights emphasize the need for comprehensive awareness resources to help staff recognize and address subtle forms of harassment. Together, their experiences underscore the need for commitment to inclusive leadership practices, where principals are consistently supported in their efforts to foster a safe and equitable workplace.

Chapter 6: Summary, Implication and Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Research Purpose and Findings

The primary objective of this study was to develop an in-depth understanding of destructive principal leadership by examining its behaviors, and impact on those affected, and potential strategies for prevention as perceived by the study participants. Participants' narratives revealed the negative dimensions of school leadership, highlighting the presence of harmful practices and their detrimental effects on both subordinates and the possible ramifications on organizational environment within schools.

This study also addressed a gap in literature, which largely tends to emphasize positive conceptions of school leadership while often neglecting its potentially negative and harmful aspects. Such an omission can inadvertently allow destructive practices to remain unchecked. By examining and making visible these pathologies of school principal leadership (Ryan et al., 2021), much like the approach taken in medical studies, this research sought to enhance the understanding of harmful leadership dynamics and thus improve the ability to address them. Ultimately, the study aimed to use such knowledge to foster new learning opportunities and encourage positive social change within schooling institutions.

The findings indicated that some targeted teachers have suffered a variety of negative consequences due to negative behaviors or practices enacted by their principals. This highlights a potential disconnect between the assumptions of school leadership as a moral and supportive role and the disturbing reality faced by victims of destructive leadership. The educational leadership domain, often rooted in a caring perspective, thus reveals an additional, complex dimension when these destructive behaviors come to light.

Data revealed that victims experience a range of professional, psychological, financial, physiological, and social consequences. Such harmful manifestations tend to persist in silence, as victims are often reluctant to report them, fearing disbelief, lack of support, or potential retaliation from their principals. The hierarchical nature of school settings further compounds this fear, as victims worry about possible career repercussions.

The study findings also highlighted strategies to prevent and respond to destructive leadership (DL), emphasizing participants' perspectives on effective measures. Key recommendations included advocacy and support systems, institutional interventions such as accessible reporting mechanisms, and the provision of awareness and educational resources. Additionally, professional development opportunities were noted as essential for growth. Victim-initiated strategies, such as self-reflection, fostering positive relationships, or creating distance from the perpetrator, were also suggested. The implementation of these measures can potentially mitigate the impact of DL and promote a supportive work environment.

In sum, the study revelations contribute to a body of knowledge on how destructive leadership behaviors manifest among school principals and the detrimental effects on the victims' professional and personal lives. The researcher believes that by incorporating participants' perspectives, the study illustrates the damage caused by these behaviors. Furthermore, it contributes to the field by addressing the often-overlooked phenomenon of destructive leadership, shedding light on its behaviors, impacts, and prevention strategies within the educational context.

6.2 Conclusions about the Research Questions

This study was undertaken to address three research questions, with the overarching aim of shedding light on the phenomenon of destructive leadership (DL) in the schooling context. Specifically, the study sought to explore the forms in which DL manifests, the deleterious effects it imposes on victims, and strategies for addressing and mitigating its occurrence. By combining insights from these questions, the study intended to provide a deep understanding of DL as directly experienced by participants, while also highlighting its instructive potential in shaping responses to and strategies for surviving such experiences. Ultimately, the research aimed to enhance awareness of destructive school leadership behaviors, enabling their identification and avoidance to foster healthier, more ethical schoolwork environments.

The first research question investigated which school principal leadership behaviors were perceived by teachers as destructive in Ottawa, Ontario schooling context. The findings revealed a range of harmful practices exhibited by school principals, including indifference to teachers' concerns, sexual harassment, financial improprieties, undermining teachers' dignity, abusive monitoring, disrespect toward subordinates, perceived discrimination and biases, dishonesty, and unfair criticism. These behaviors, as described by participants, illustrated the diverse ways in which destructive leadership has manifested in their experiences. To further understand these observations, a complementary survey component was employed, which assessed behavioral descriptors of principal misconduct directed against subordinates or the organization.

This quantitative component corroborated the qualitative findings, confirming a wide range of and more detailing perceived harmful behaviors among educators. Together, the qualitative and quantitative data underscored the multifaceted nature of DL, highlighting both

depth in and range of manifestations of DL. The convergence of these methods reinforced the need for heightened recognition and attention to the diverse forms of destructive leadership that can undermine school environments. While the study does not claim to have exhaustively identified DL behaviors due to limitations in sample size, it provides valuable insights drawn from participants' lived experiences. These perspectives directly address the research question, revealing DL behaviors perceived as destructive by victimized teachers. By capturing these personal accounts, the study offers a meaningful contribution to understanding the dynamics of DL in educational settings, even while recognizing the potential for further exploration with broader samples.

In response to the second research question, which examined the effects of DL on victimized teachers, the study identified negative impacts on their professional and personal lives. Victims reported experiencing psychological symptoms, including anxiety, stress, feelings of worthlessness, and isolation. Professionally, victims described a decline in motivation and commitment to their work, with some resorting to career disruptions such as resignations, relocations, or temporary breaks. These outcomes often stemmed from an environment of persistent mistreatment, which eroded their sense of self-worth and professional identity.

Furthermore, the study revealed that the physiological health of victims was significantly impacted, with participants reporting conditions such as sleep disturbances, diarrhea, and elevated blood pressure. These findings highlight the profound and multifaceted effects of DL, which extend beyond weakening professional performance to compromising overall well-being of the victims. While these results address the study research question investigating the impact of DL on teachers, further research including participants from diverse educational contexts could confirm and enrich the understanding and generalizability of this observation.

The remaining research question explored strategies perceived by victims to prevent or mitigate the occurrence of DL in secondary schools. Participants identified a variety of mechanisms that could address this phenomenon at both individual and institutional levels. On an individual level, victims emphasized the importance of developing coping strategies such as verbal deterrence, emotional or physical withdrawal, faith-based practices, and reflection. These personal approaches perhaps signal the absence of institutional support, thereby reflecting the resilience of those affected.

Participants highlighted the need for comprehensive measures, including the provision of mental health resources, anonymous reporting systems, and regular monitoring and evaluation of leadership behaviors. Training and workshops for school leaders were also emphasized as critical strategies for raising awareness about DL and fostering ethical leadership practices. These suggestions highlighted the dual importance of empowering staff and implementing systemic reforms to address the root causes of destructive leadership.

To wit, this study demonstrated that destructive leadership is a significant and multifaceted challenge within the schooling context. Its manifestations are diverse, ranging from overt misconduct to subtle, insidious behaviors, and its impacts on victims are profound, affecting their psychological, professional, and physical well-being. The findings emphasized the urgent need for both individual coping mechanisms and interventions to address and mitigate the occurrence of DL. By offering insights into its forms, effects, and prevention strategies, the study lays a foundation for further research and action to create healthier, more supportive educational environments

6.3 Conclusions about the Research Problem

The study sought to explore a relatively underexplored topic in academic literature on school leadership, particularly the phenomenon of destructive leadership (DL), within secondary schools in Ottawa. Central to this research was the premise that the persistent silence in academic discourse on DL enables its continuation, thereby exacerbating its detrimental effects on school systems. By addressing this gap, the study aimed to illuminate the manifestations and impacts of DL, fostering a deeper understanding of its occurrence and consequences.

The findings highlighted eight distinct ways in which DL was perceived by participants, as well as its negative consequences on victims. This contribution breaks the existing silence surrounding the phenomenon. Additionally, the study addressed gaps in literature, notably the scarcity of empirical investigations into DL and the limited scope of surveys conducted primarily by labor organizations. By presenting findings derived from an original study set in the Ontario schooling context, the research provided insights into the forms and effects of DL, while also highlighting perspectives on strategies that participants believe are crucial for countering such leadership.

Furthermore, one of the unique aspects of the study was its focus on the strategies that victims identified as effective in addressing DL. While exiting a harmful situation may provide temporary relief for an individual subordinate, the study recognized the potential for ongoing harm persistence within the schools or the transfer of destructive behaviors to new environments if the destructive school leader relocates. Thus, the research emphasized the need to address DL as an existential reality, generating knowledge about its manifestations, impacts, and potential

preventive measures. This understanding can inform efforts to enhance organizational health by promoting positive behavioral changes among school principals and schools.

The study underscored that learning from experiences of DL whether directly or indirectly can catalyze action, empower staff, and inspire institutional change. Despite the complexities and challenges associated with addressing DL, the findings concluded that intervention is both possible and necessary at multiple levels. Efforts to confront DL would require active engagement from individual teachers, school leaders, and institutions collectively. Such measures are essential for strengthening the educators and the schools to which they belong.

Given the subtle, insidious nature of DL and its damaging impact on subordinates, the phenomenon warrants further research, particularly within the schooling context. Although the present study was small in scale and relied on self-selected participants, it represents an initial step toward addressing this critical issue. Further large-scale, empirical investigations are necessary to build on these findings and advance solutions to mitigate the prevalence and effects of destructive leadership in educational environments.

6.4 Comparison with Previous Research

This study investigated destructive leadership (DL) in school settings, with a specific focus on its manifestations, impacts on teachers, and strategies for prevention or mitigation within the context of Ottawa secondary schools in Ontario. By addressing gaps in literature, the research aimed to provide a nuanced understanding of DL behaviors and their consequences while amplifying the voices of affected teachers. Consequently, it shed light on this underexplored issue within the inherently caring profession of education.

To begin with, extant empirical studies have identified harmful school principal behaviors associated with DL, as well as their negative impacts on the victims. Identified DL behaviors include negligence, academic dishonesty, harassment, false accusations, excessive monitoring, and financial misconduct. Research observations were that these behaviors undermine trust and respect in school environments, resulting in hostile workplaces with profound implications for teachers. Specifically, the psychological effects of DL including stress, anxiety, and anger often coincide with physical symptoms such as insomnia and digestive issues. Professionally, DL diminishes job satisfaction, performance, and career stability, with some victims resorting to resignation or relocation.

However, significant gaps remain in existing literature. Firstly, most research on DL within Canadian educational contexts relies heavily on quantitative methods, which often limit participants' ability to articulate their lived experiences. While these methods effectively identify patterns, they fail to capture the depth and complexity of DL's impacts. Secondly, the effects of DL on the victims including psychological, social, and professional ramifications for victims are insufficiently explored. Moreover, evidence-based strategies for prevention are scarce, leaving a critical gap in understanding what victims believe can disrupt the occurrence of DL.

To address these gaps, this study employed a mixed-methods approach. A quantitative survey was used to provide insights into the perceived occurrence of DL behaviors, offering a broad overview of the phenomenon. This was complemented by in-depth qualitative interviews, which provided richer, context-specific insights into participants' lived experiences. By integrating these methods, the study ensured a richer understanding, balancing the quantitative breadth of findings with the qualitative depth necessary to uncover the behaviors and practices perceived by teachers as destructive.

The findings revealed a diverse range of destructive behaviors, from overt misconduct such as harassment and financial mismanagement to more subtle practices like excessive monitoring and indifference. These behaviors inflicted significant harm on teachers, including psychological distress, professional setbacks, and social isolation. Additionally, participants cited barriers to reporting DL, such as fears of retaliation, disbelief, and institutional inaction.

This study makes significant contributions to the discourse on DL. It challenges the conventional emphasis on positive leadership experiences by focusing on the adverse impacts of DL. The integration of survey and interview methods provided robust and corroborated insights into DL manifestations, ensuring the reliability of the findings. Contextually, the research fills a notable gap in the empirical exploration of DL in secondary schooling context, an area previously constrained by limited empirical research.

Practically, the study offers recommendations to inform policies aimed at addressing DL and fostering positive change in schools. Participants emphasized the importance of strategies such as ethical leadership training, anonymous reporting mechanisms, shared governance, and mental health support. These findings align with the concept of the “instructive negative” which posits that negative experiences can provide valuable lessons by enhancing learning from failure or criticism (Kolb, 2015). Negative experiences or outcomes often point out flaws, inform improvements, and guide better decision-making. Constructively approached negative feedback has been shown to enhance resilience and drive personal and organizational growth (Ashford et al., 2018). This perspective underscores the transformative potential of adversity in promoting reflective learning and development.

In conclusion, this research provides an examination of destructive leadership in schools, highlighting its adverse effects and proposing solutions for prevention and mitigation. By combining quantitative and qualitative methods, the study offers a balanced perspective that amplifies the voices of teachers who have experienced DL. Ultimately, it lays the groundwork for future research, policy development, and actionable change, promoting healthier and more ethical leadership practices in educational institutions.

6.5 Implication for Practice and Policy

This research underscores the importance of implementing strategies to counter destructive leadership (DL) behaviors exhibited by school principals. Victims of DL behaviors identified key interventions, including raising awareness, monitoring and evaluating principals' practices, providing mental health resources, and establishing systems for reporting, advocacy, and support. These strategies emphasize the need for institutional responses and interventions, which can be addressed at various levels of education administration: micro (school), meso (organizational), and macro (system-wide). Each level might offer distinct yet complementary approaches to addressing DL, thereby promoting healthier school environments.

At the school, the micro level, two key implications regarding the school principals (perpetrator) and teachers (victims) emerge. First, school principals should take note of which behaviors are perceived by the teachers as destructive and change them as they aim to enhance a more positive workplace. Examples of such behaviors that principals need to avoid any behavioral manifestation related to lying, indifference, or preferential treatment. This is learning to change their behaviors from negative to positive ones. Principals' efforts to learn to change would cultivate healthier relationships with staff, create positive workplace environments, and

promote the well-being of their teams. Moreover, school principals should equip, strategize to handle interpersonal challenges, support their teachers, and seek help from higher authorities when necessary.

Secondly, teachers need to break the silence by recognizing and responding to DL behaviors in a timely manner. Some of the victims' silence in face of the occurrence of DL, constitutes a hinderance on their ability to counteract the occurrence of principal's negative behaviors in professional context. Perhaps self-education for teachers to raise awareness could address this gap, offering practical strategies to deter, mitigate, or minimize the impact of DL.

At the meso level, the role of School Boards and/or Professional Associations can be crucial in establishing frameworks for transparency, accountability, and proactive support. These organizations are responsible for fostering open and equitable decision-making processes, facilitating the elimination of silence that often surrounds the phenomenon, and creating robust mechanisms for addressing inappropriate behaviors. They should maintain systems that enable timely reporting and resolution of DL cases, thereby preventing escalation and prolonged exposure to harmful leadership. Additionally, boards and associations should provide resources for teachers and principal well-being and conduct regular monitoring to ensure healthy relationships between staff and leadership. These organizational interventions not only address DL directly but also lay the groundwork for sustained, positive institutional cultures.

At the macro level, two important bodies can play a significant role in policy and practice. The Ministry of Education can equally play a pivotal role in shaping systemic responses to DL. It could promote sophisticated understandings of the best leadership practices and ensure that the appointment of school principals aligns with the specific contexts of their schools. This

includes avoiding rigid hierarchical selection processes and applying thorough evaluation filters during the appointment and transfer process of leaders across schools.

Furthermore, the Ministry should provide continuous professional development for both principals and teachers, emphasizing strategies to prevent and address DL. Such policies must balance compliance routines with a commitment to fostering healthy workplace relationships, supported by accountability measures and clear implementation procedures. Access to guidance and resources for school leaders should also be prioritized to facilitate timely and effective responses to challenges.

The Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) might play a critical role in fostering positive interactions between principals and teachers. Ensuring that the program of *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* is properly implemented is the foundation of this role. The OCT can enhance this by regularly monitoring principal-teacher interactions and providing constructive feedback collected from the teachers (subordinate) to reinforce constructive leadership behaviors. Targeted training programs, such as workshops on best leadership practices, recognizing and reporting DL, and supporting affected teachers, would further equip school staff with the skills necessary for productive collaboration. Transparency is another key area, that can be promoted by publishing any case of DL to discourage DL and highlight the benefits of ethical leadership.

OCT could strengthen grievance reporting mechanisms and incorporate teacher feedback into regular leadership assessments. Furthermore, OCT could initiate regular collaborative sessions such as teacher-principal forums and joint professional development sessions, to create opportunities for dialogue and mutual understanding. Encouraging reflective practices through

leadership self-assessments and recognition programs can further support continuous improvement. The OCT could also advocate policy changes that prioritize staff well-being and introduce restorative approaches to conflict resolution, fostering a more supportive school culture.

Together, these interventions across different administrative levels establish a comprehensive framework for addressing DL in schools. By prioritizing awareness, transparency, and collaboration, education systems can cultivate healthier principal-teacher relationships, ultimately enhancing the broader school community's well-being and effectiveness.

6.6 Recommendation for Further Research

Given the limitations outlined in this study, several directions for future research can address these constraints and expand the understanding of destructive leadership in school settings. Expanding sample size and increasing its diversity would enhance the generalizability of findings from the survey. While the qualitative section included six participants from public secondary schools in Ottawa, future research could broaden the demographic scope by including participants from different geographical school types such as private, or rural institutions, and educational levels such as preschool, or elementary in the efforts to achieve a fuller understanding of behavioral manifestations of DL.

Additionally, for surveys, larger sample sizes would allow for more statistically robust data, enabling greater confidence in identifying patterns of prevalence of DL behaviors. Researchers could also consider alternative recruitment strategies, such as combining online approach with professional networks, educational conferences, or partnerships with institutions

where they can reach potential participants in person, in addition to social media, to reach a wider pool of participants.

Incorporating quantitative approaches alongside qualitative methods could be further maintained to enrich future research efforts seeking to explore the impact of DL on educators. Such mixed-methods studies could use standardized instruments, such as surveys with Likert-scale questions, to objectively measure perceptions of destructive leadership and its impacts. This would facilitate statistical analysis, enabling the identification of correlations or causal relationships between destructive leadership behaviors and outcomes like decreased job satisfaction, or student performance. Moreover, quantitative data from larger samples could validate and contextualize qualitative findings, supporting broader generalizability across schools in a given such as Ontario or across jurisdictions.

Longitudinal research designs could equally address the dynamic nature of leadership and organizational contexts. These studies could track changes over time to examine how destructive leadership behaviors evolve and their long-term effects on teachers and school environments. Additionally, longitudinal studies could assess the impact of professional development programs, leadership training, or policy changes aimed at mitigating destructive leadership. Such research would provide deeper insights into causality by distinguishing between immediate and delayed effects of destructive leadership behaviors.

Exploring sensitive topics like destructive leadership may require alternative methodologies to ensure participant comfort and engagement. Future research could maintain the use of online platforms to encourage candid responses while ensuring participant privacy.

Research methods that facilitate shared dialogue and collective storytelling may help uncover group dynamics related to destructive leadership. However, caution is warranted when employing approaches involving participant interaction, as they introduce additional complexities in managing group dynamics and ensuring data quality.

Investigating organizational and cultural contexts could further illuminate how these factors influence perceptions and impacts of destructive leadership. Comparative studies across different cultural contexts could analyze how organizational norms and values promote the occurrence of DL or shape responses to it. Research could also examine the role of institutional policies, reporting mechanisms, and support systems in addressing leadership challenges. Moreover, systemic factors such as funding disparities or policy compliance could be studied to understand how they exacerbate or mitigate destructive leadership behaviors.

Developing and evaluating interventions to address destructive leadership is another promising area for future research. This could involve designing leadership training programs that foster positive behaviors and mitigate destructive tendencies. Studies could also explore the effectiveness of peer-support groups, counseling, or mentoring programs in helping teachers cope with the effects of destructive leadership.

Interdisciplinary research efforts could further enrich the study of destructive leadership by integrating perspectives from education researchers, organizational psychologists, and sociologists. Perhaps from these partnerships would emerge a holistic understanding of the interplay between individual, organizational, and societal factors driving DL or moderating its effects. They could also lead to innovative methodologies and practical strategies for addressing destructive leadership in educational settings.

To conclude, while this study provides valuable insights into destructive leadership in Ottawa's public secondary schools, addressing its limitations through future research can significantly advance the field. Expanding sample sizes, incorporating quantitative methods, exploring cultural and organizational contexts, and developing interventions would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of destructive leadership and its impacts. Such efforts will not only enhance academic knowledge but also support the creation of healthier and more effective educational environments.

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Appendices

A. Certificate of Ethics Approval

Université d'Ottawa

Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa

Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

29/05/2024

CERTIFICAT D'APPROBATION ÉTHIQUE | CERTIFICATE OF ETHICS APPROVAL

Numéro du dossier / Ethics File Number

Titre du projet / Project Title

Type de projet / Project Type

Statut du projet / Project Status

Date d'approbation (jj/mm/aaaa) / Approval Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

Date d'expiration (jj/mm/aaaa) / Expiry Date (dd/mm/yyyy)

S-02-24-9975

Teachers' Perceptions of
Principals' Destructive Behaviors
in Ontario: Forms, Impacts, and
Mitigation

Thèse de doctorat / Doctoral
thesis

Approuvé / Approved

29/05/2024

28/05/2025

Équipe de recherche / Research Team

Chercheur / Researcher

Affiliation

Role

Emmanuel UKWIZAGIRA

Faculté d'éducation / Faculty of Education

Chercheur Principal / Principal Investigator

Carole SÉNÉCHAL

Faculté d'éducation / Faculty of Education

Superviseur / Supervisor

Conditions spéciales ou commentaires / Special conditions or comments

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29/05/2024

Université d'Ottawa

Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa

Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

Le Comité d'éthique de la recherche (CÉR) de l'Université d'Ottawa, opérant conformément à l'*Énoncé de politique des Trois conseils* (2014) et toutes autres lois et tous règlements applicables, a examiné et approuvé la demande d'éthique du projet de recherche ci-nommé.

L'approbation est valide pour la durée indiquée plus haut et est sujette aux conditions énumérées dans la section intitulée "Conditions Spéciales ou Commentaires". Le formulaire « Renouvellement ou Fermeture de Projet » doit être complété quatre semaines avant la date d'échéance indiquée ci-haut afin de demander un renouvellement de cette approbation éthique ou afin de fermer le dossier.

Toutes modifications apportées au projet doivent être approuvées par le CÉR avant leur mise en place, sauf si le participant doit être retiré en raison d'un danger immédiat ou s'il s'agit d'un changement ayant trait à des éléments administratifs ou logistiques du projet. Les chercheurs doivent aviser le CÉR dans les plus brefs délais de tout changement pouvant augmenter le niveau de risque aux participants ou pouvant affecter considérablement le déroulement du projet, rapporter tout événement imprévu ou indésirable et soumettre toute nouvelle information pouvant nuire à la conduite du projet ou à la sécurité des participants.

The University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board, which operates in accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* (2014) and other applicable laws and regulations, has examined and approved the ethics application for the above-named research project.

Ethics approval is valid for the period indicated above and is subject to the conditions listed in the section entitled "Special Conditions or Comments". The "Renewal/Project Closure" form must be completed four weeks before the above-referenced expiry date to request a renewal of this ethics approval or closure of the file.

Any changes made to the project must be approved by the REB before being implemented, except when necessary to remove participants from immediate endangerment or when the modification(s) only pertain to administrative or logistical components of the project. Investigators must also promptly alert the REB of any changes that increase the risk to participant(s), any changes that considerably affect the conduct of the project, all unanticipated and harmful events that occur, and new information that may negatively affect the conduct of the project or the safety of the participant(s).

Riana MARCOTTE

Responsable d'éthique en recherche / Protocol Officer

Pour/For **Barbara GRAVES** Président(e) du/ Chair of the **Comité d'éthique de la recherche en sciences sociales et humanités / Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Board**

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B. Consent for Participation in the Survey

You are kindly invited to participate in this research project titled: Teachers' perceptions of principals' destructive behaviors in Ontario: forms, impacts, and mitigation. Its purpose is to explore teachers' experiences of destructive behaviors exhibited by principals in school contexts in Ottawa, Ontario. By participating in this, you will contribute significantly to shedding light on such negative aspects of leadership in education.

During the survey, you will be asked to rate various described principal behaviors on a scale of 1 to 5 based on your own experiences. The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. It's possible that some questions may evoke discomfort as they may remind you of negative experiences. If you find yourself feeling uncomfortable, you are free to pause, stop, continue, or withdraw from the survey at any time.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to refuse to answer any questions without fear of consequences. All information collected in this study will be used solely for research purposes, and no identifying information will be disclosed. The researcher guarantees strict confidentiality, and no third party will have access to the data collected.

For any clarification regarding this online survey, do not hesitate to reach out to the researcher via email (removed) or telephone (removed). For any complaint, contact the Research Ethics Board of the University of Ottawa at email: ethics@uottawa.ca, telephone: 613-562-5387, fax: 613-562-5338, or their office address: Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland St, Room 154, Ottawa, ON, Canada, K1N 6N5.

Please note that the results of this study will be published, but no identifiable information about you will be included. Data is submitted anonymously, so you do not need to provide any identifiers, such as your name or email address, unless you agree to be contacted for the next phase of

‘interview’. However, if you agree to participate in the interview section, which will be conducted shortly after the survey results are collected, please include your contact information. By proceeding to the next section, you are giving your consent to participate in the survey.

Researcher

.....

Emmanuel Ukwizagira

PhD student, Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

institutional email address

Participants

.....(signature)

Supervisor

Professor Carole Sénéchal

Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

Phone: 613-562-5800 ext. removed

Email: institutional email address

C. Consent for Participation in Interview

You are kindly invited to participate in this research project titled: Teachers' perceptions of principals' destructive behaviors in Ontario: forms, impacts, and mitigation. Its purpose is to explore teachers' experiences of destructive behaviors exhibited by principals in school contexts in Ottawa, Ontario. By participating in this, you will contribute significantly to shedding light on such negative aspects of leadership in education. Additionally, you will have the opportunity to share your insights on potential strategies for addressing these issues.

During the interview, you will be asked open ended questions that will help you recall your lived experience. The interview will take approximately 45-60 minutes to complete. It's possible that some questions may evoke discomfort as they may remind you of negative experiences. If you find yourself feeling uncomfortable, you are free to pause, stop, continue, or withdraw from the interview at any time.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to refuse to answer any questions without fear of any consequences. All information collected in this study will be used solely for research purposes, and no identifying information will be disclosed. The researcher guarantees strict confidentiality, and no third party will have access to the data collected.

For any clarification regarding this interview, do not hesitate to reach out to the researcher via institutional email (removed) or telephone (removed). For any complaint, contact the Research Ethics Board of the University of Ottawa at email: ethics@uottawa.ca, telephone: 613-562-5387, fax: 613-562-5338, their office address: Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland St, Room 154, Ottawa, ON, Canada, K1N 6N5.

Please note that the results of this study will be published, but your name or any identifiable information about you will not be included in the publication. Specifically, upon reception of this signed consent, the researcher will attribute a pseudocode and delete correspondence email to hide participants' identity. By signing this form, or simply attaching it to the researcher's email address, you are giving your consent to participate in the interview.

Researcher

.....

Emmanuel Ukwizagira

PhD student, Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

Institutional email address

Participants

.....(signature)

Supervisor

Professor Carole Sénéchal

Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa

Phone: 613-562-5800 ext. (removed)

Email: institutional email address

D. Interview Prompt

Title: Teachers' perceptions of principals' destructive behaviors in Ontario: forms, impacts, and mitigation

Participants: Teachers: 8-15

Section I: Basic Information of Interviewee

1. Assigned code:.....
2. Date of interview...../...../2024
3. Duration: from.....to.....
4. Venue:..... Gender:
5. Grades taught :.....
6. Years working experience as a teacher at the end of this school year:.....
7. Working experience with current principal at the end of this school year

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview which should normally take between 45–60 minutes or more time if needed. At the end of this interview, you will be paid CAD100 as compensation for your time spent. Please be assured that neither you nor anyone else will be identified in the project and that anything you say will be held under strict confidentiality. While I may include in my project excerpts from what we discuss, all data will be de-identified and all reporting will be anonymous. I understand this topic may have some sensitivities so if you need to take a break or stop at any stage, please let me know. **I have contact details to access counselling if you would like those and should you wish, I can also provide references to some of the policies that might be relevant to your situation.** This is your interview. My interest is in

listening to your thoughts and my role will be to ask clarifying questions or to suggest where you might elaborate. There are, however, just a few opening questions to gather some background information.

1. Let's begin with the background information:

- What is your current position and how long have you been in this position?
- What was your position at the time of the experience we're about to discuss?
- Did you remain at the same place (of work), between then and now?

2. Now for your story

As someone participating in this study you've indicated you've had direct personal experience of destructive leadership. Do you need some time to briefly reflect on that experience? **(If yes)**

Please take a few minutes to reflect on your experience and let me know once you think you are done.

Could you describe what destructive leadership means from your perspective and how you have encountered it in your career as a teacher? If needed, additional clarifying prompts may be used to facilitate deeper reflection or provide further context:

1. What behaviors have you experienced?

What is your particular story?

Do you recall specific incidents?

What were the circumstances?

Who else was involved?

What did you observe of other teachers' experiences?

Do you recall certain conversations; use of language? 3. (If this data has not already emerged)

2. Can you focus on your responses and reactions? Possible additional clarifying prompts, only as or if appropriate:

- Were you personally affected? If so, how?
- What comments would you make about your health and well-being at this time?
- How did you respond to the leader in question?
- How did you respond in relation to others? Any other changes in your daily activities?
- What was the short-term impact?
- What was the long-term impact?
- What if anything did you learn through the experience?

3. How do you think such a negative experience of DL would have been avoided or at least addressed to de-escalate the situation?

- If you do, what do you think should have been done to prevent the occurrence of destructive leadership in schools? How about the future?
- Do you think institutions such as school boards or, teacher unions can play a role in addressing negative leaders' behaviors? If yes, what can they do?
- Is there anything else you think can help?

Closing remarks

- Is there anything else you would like to say?
- Do you have any questions for me?

I appreciate that this is important to you, as it is to me. Thank you for your participation.

Information Circulated on Social Media

Dear Teacher,

I hope this message finds you well. I am Emmanuel Ukwizagira, a doctoral student at the University of Ottawa, Faculty of Education. I am conducting a research study as part of my doctoral thesis and would like to invite you to participate.

The focus of my research is on understanding teachers' experiences of destructive leadership behaviors exhibited by principals in public secondary schools, particularly in Ottawa, Ontario. Further, this study sheds explores strategies to address and mitigate these behaviors within the schooling context.

Your participation is crucial as it will provide valuable insights for better understanding the negative side of principal leadership and suggest potential solutions. The survey will take a maximum of 30 minutes and involves rating described behaviors based on your past experiences with your principal. Rest assured that your participation is entirely anonymous. To be eligible, you must be a full-time teacher in a public secondary school in Ottawa and have at least five years of teaching experience.

Your involvement in this study will not only contribute to academic research but also benefit the educational community by raising awareness and advocating for positive change. Based on the results of this survey, 8-15 participants will be selected for interview will be compensated **\$100** for their participation. If you are willing to participate in the interview, leave your email address in the provided space or, please contact me at (institutional email address). Your consideration and contribution to this research are greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

E. Survey Questionnaire

**Title of the study: Teachers' perceptions of principals' destructive behaviors in Ontario:
forms, impacts, and mitigation**

A. Introduction

This study aims to illuminate teachers' experiences of destructive leadership and views on how to address/disrupt its occurrence in schooling contexts in Ontario, Canada. Therefore, the purpose of the questionnaire is to identify teachers/educators who have experienced negative leadership behaviors in the workplace and at some extent have been affected by such negative phenomenon.

Behavioral items listed in this questionnaire correspond to Thoroughgood et al.'s (2012) follower-focused behavioural items used to measure destructive leader behaviour in workplace. Based on your answer, you might be one of fifteen winners of a gift card worth between CAD\$ 100 once they are selected for interview. Should you accept to be contacted for interview, contact the researcher's email address. Please be assured that your identity and answers will be held under strict confidentiality and will only be used in this research project, all data will be de-identified and all reporting will be anonymous.

RESPONDENT INFORMATION

Gender : Female ☐

Male ☐

You don't have an option that applies to me. I identify as (please specify).....

Prefer not to say ☐

Work experience (As a teacher):a) with current principal :.....

Age :.....

Level : Elementary ☐ Secondary ☐

School board name :

City/Town :

The purpose of this section is to check whether you have experienced negative behaviors from your current/previous school principal at work. For each statement, please indicate the frequency of your supervisor's behaviour by circling the number corresponding to your answer:

Questionnaire items

Thoroughgood, C. N., Tate, B. W., Sawyer, K. B., & Jacobs, R. (2012). Bad to the bone: Empirically defining and measuring destructive leader behavior. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 19(2), 230-255.

Circle the number that you believe matches your experience with your school principal

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often

My principal (vice principal)...

1	Avoids addressing important issues	1	2	3	4	5
2	Denies subordinates of things they are entitled to (e.g., lunch breaks, vacation time)	1	2	3	4	5
3	Disciplines subordinates a long time after the rule infraction occurs	1	2	3	4	5

4	Discounts feedback or advice from subordinates	1	2	3	4	5
5	Fails to defend subordinates from attacks by others	1	2	3	4	5
6	Fails to give subordinates credit for jobs requiring a lot of effort	1	2	3	4	5
7	Falsely accuses or punishes subordinates for something they were not responsible for	1	2	3	4	5
8	Ignores phone calls and/or e-mails	1	2	3	4	5
9	Inadequately explains performance reviews	1	2	3	4	5
10	Insults or criticizes subordinates in front of others	1	2	3	4	5
11	Invades subordinates' privacy	1	2	3	4	5
12	Is confrontational when interacting with subordinates	1	2	3	4	5
13	Says one thing and does another	1	2	3	4	5
14	Shows no clear standards for administering rewards and punishments	1	2	3	4	5
15	Accepts financial kickbacks	1	2	3	4	5
16	At times appears to be under the influence of alcohol or recreational drugs while at work	1	2	3	4	5
17	Breaks the law while at work	1	2	3	4	5
18	Falsifies documents	1	2	3	4	5
19	Lets violations of company policy slide	1	2	3	4	5

20	Litters the work environment	1	2	3	4	5
21	Steals company funds	1	2	3	4	5
22	Steals company property and resources	1	2	3	4	5
23	Tells people outside the job what a lousy place he or she works for	1	2	3	4	5
24	Uses company property for personal use	1	2	3	4	5
25	Violates company policy/rules	1	2	3	4	5
26	Brings inappropriate material to work (e.g., pornography)	1	2	3	4	5
27	Engages in romantic and/or sexual relationships with others from work	1	2	3	4	5
28	Hints that sexual favors will result in preferential treatment	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for your kind participation in this study.

Would you like to be contacted for a short interview? Yes ☐

No ☐

If you answered **yes**, how would you like to be contacted ? Via

email :

Telephone :

Other : specify by writing your user name :