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## **A ROLE OF MANAGING CHANGE IN THE RUNNING OF SCHOOLS IN LESOTHO**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper adopted a mixed-methods research approach consisting of qualitative and quantitative research representations. The aim of this study was to establish change management models adopted by the principals in the management of the school sector in Lesotho. The paper also sought to determine whether there is gender difference in the adopting of change management models. The population comprised 26 respondents while the sample was made up of 18 persons. Data were collected through a use of the questionnaire. The results of the qualitative study revealed that principals adopt both top-down and bottom-up change management models. On the other hand, a t-test analysis revealed that there is no gender difference in the use of change management models.

**Keywords:** Change, management, models, managers, principals

### **INTRODUCTION**

Change is important to the life of every organisation. It is a catalyst of development, improvement and innovation. Change is enviable because the world is constantly changing with time as a result workers and

managers face complex and challenging pressures as well as opportunities (Kaphale & Namalima, 2024). Factors such as competition and technological advances pace a rate of change both in the academic institutions and private companies (Al Balushi & Kohar, 2024). Change necessitates the organisations to exploit emerging opportunities as well as to deal with threats (Kaphale & Namalima, 2024). Effective ways of managing change are essential for not only enhancing organisational performance but also to promote employees' creativity, problem-solving, innovation, retention and productivity (Al Balushi & Kohar, 2024).

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The modern world is constantly changing. This calls for the academic institutions to effect, uphold and manage change effectively. For example, the problems which were brought by the COVID 19, forced the schools to adopt news of teaching and learning. The challenges of this pandemic also necessitated those who are in the leadership positions to seek better ways of managing the schools. However, it is difficult to implement change in the school sector in Lesotho, as its introduction causes discomfort among teachers. When showing the challenges of implementing change in the organisations, Suyuthi and Linggi (2025), argue as follows:

*Public attitude toward changes in the organisational environment, best viewed as adversarial at worst, continues to be a major issue for leaders and managers irrespective of the field.*

There are a number of reasons which urged me to conduct this investigation, the following are few of them:

- Schools encounter resistance whenever they attempt to introduce change and it is not yet clear whether this resistance is caused by the calibre of teachers in the schools or the principals' lack skills to introduce and manage change.
- I am not aware of the studies which are conducted about managing change in the school sector in Lesotho.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This paper seeks to answer the following research questions:

- Which change management models are used by the principals to run the schools?
- What are the causes of employees' resistance to organisational change?

### **RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

In this paper, the following statistical hypothesis was tested:

- There is no gender difference in the use of change management models.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

A review of literature focuses on the following areas:

- Models of change management employed by the principals in running the schools.
- Causes of employees' resistance to organisational change.

### **Top-down change management models adopted by principals**

In this section, literature review deals with change management models employed by the principals in running the schools. Scholars note that some principals adopt top-down change management models while others use bottom-up change management models (Altadonna, 2022). Kotter's change management model is one of the top-down change management models which is popular among the most principals and managers (Altadonna, 2022; Graves, Dalgarno, Van Hoorn, Hastings-Truelove, Mulder, Kolomitro, Kirby & van Wylick 2023; Mugambi & Matula, 2025). This model was developed in 1996 by the Harvard University professor named John Kotter (Altadonna, 2022, Graves et al., 2023; Mugambi & Matula, 2025). In this model or theory Kotter outlines an 8-step process for managing organisational change and according to Altadonna (2022), Mulder et al. (2023), Mugambi and Matula (2025) these steps are as follows:

- Create a sense of urgency: As a result of evolving organisational needs and market demands, curriculum reforms are imperative which necessitate education administrators and managers to be constantly striving for change and to manage it effectively (Mugambi & Matula, 2025). Which means without effecting and managing change effectively it becomes difficult to achieve organisational development (Graves et al., 2023; Mugambi & Matula, 2025).
- Build a guiding coalition: This entails a situation in which principals form a coalition of influential stakeholders, such members of the school boards, heads of departments and external partners who are passionate to drive the change (Graves et al., 2023; Mugambi & Matula, 2025).
- Create a strategic vision: This involves a development of a structured strategic for implementing and managing change (Graves et al., 2023; Mugambi & Matula, 2025).
- Communicate the vision: This step entails communication about change and why this change is essential, consequently, consistency and transparency are crucial for the purposes of reducing employees' resistance and promoting buy-in (Altadonna, 2022; Graves et al., 2023; Mugambi & Matula, 2025).
- Enable action by removing barriers: In this phase, principals or administrators empower staff with an aim of encouraging them to take ownership of the changes (Altadonna, 2022; Graves et al., 2023; Mugambi & Matula, 2025). Furthermore, removal of barriers has to do with provision of sufficient resources to effect change and ignoring rigid policies rigid policies that could hinder the implementation of change (Altadonna, 2022; Graves et al., 2023; Mugambi & Matula, 2025).
- Generate short-term wins: This phase is characterised by principals' celebration of early successes in the processes of change process such as positive feedbacks on pilot programmes and staff trainings which resultantly accelerate change momentum (Altadonna, 2022; Graves et al., 2023; Mugambi & Matula, 2025).
- Sustain acceleration: Upon achievement of initial success, principals and education administrators constantly continue to address challenges which impede change and make necessary adjustments to ensure long-term sustainability of change (Altadonna, 2022; Graves et al., 2023; Mugambi & Matula, 2025).
- Anchor changes in corporate culture: This is the final phase which involves a launch of change (Altadonna, 2022; Graves et al., 2023; Mugambi & Matula, 2025). The other activities which are

of great importance include ongoing personnel development and a rigorous revision of institutional policies (Altadonna, 2022; Graves et al., 2023; Mugambi & Matula, 2025).

Kotter's change management model has particularly gained popularity among the principals and education managers because of its enormous potential of establishing a sense of urgency and explaining why organisational change is necessary (Altadonna, 2022). However, it goes without saying that it has some limitations as it falls short of providing feedback from employees all at levels (Altadonna, 2022). As such, it is imperative that principals should incorporate some ways of building grassroots momentum and soliciting feedback from frontline employees (Altadonna, 2022).

Kotter's change management model is particularly ideal for educational institutions that are facing inevitable and urgent institutional and structural changes (Graves et al., 2023; Mugambi & Matula, 2025). For the purposes of providing relevant examples, I would like to remind the readers of this empirical study of what academic institutions experienced during the COVID-19 era wherein these institutions had to adjust curricular, change modes of instructions and learning.

Satir change management model is the other top-down change management model which is adopted by the principals in effecting change in their schools (Altadonna, 2022; Ningjie, 2024). This model was developed by a family therapist called Virginia Satir (Key, 2020; Altadonna, 2022; Ningjie, 2024). It is designed to help workers and organisations to navigate through a complex process of change and successfully adapt to new work situations (Key, 2020; Altadonna, 2022). Satir change management model outlines the following five stages that workers experience as they undergo change:

- **Status quo:** This is the first stage which represents the current state of affairs prior to an introduction of change (Altadonna, 2022). In this stage, employees are comfortable with their routine work, relationships as well as ways of thinking (Key, 2020). Typically, they may feel a sense of stability, predictability, security and as a result they may be resistant to an idea of change (Key, 2020; Altadonna, 2022).
- **Resistance:** This is the second stage which occurs after an introduction of change (Careda, 2020). It is characterised by employees' resistance to change as a result of feelings of fear, anxiety, denial and confusion (Careda, 2020). Consequently, this resistance may decrease productivity (Careda, 2020).
- **Chaos:** This is the third stage which represents a period of uncertainty, confusion and disorientation that follows an introduction of change (Ningjie, 2024). During this stage, workers may be overwhelmed by the challenges of change and be unsure of how to proceed (Ningjie, 2024). They may experience a loss of control as well as sense of helplessness and may struggle to make sense of their new situation (Ningjie, 2024).
- **Integration:** This is the fourth stage which involves the gradual acceptance and internalisation of new ways of thinking and behaving (Key, 2020; Altadonna, 2022). In this stage, workers begin to make sense of their new situations, develop new work routines, relationships and adapt to their changed circumstances (Key, 2020; Altadonna, 2022).

- New status quo: This is the final stage which entails employees' readjustments to the new ways of executing their tasks (Ningjie, 2024). During this stage productivity increases as employees accept change and get used to new ways of doing work (Ningjie, 2024).

There are various reasons which motivate managers and principals to employ Satir change management model (Winham, 2020; Buehring, 2023; Ningjie, 2024). According to Buehring (2023) principals use this model in deadline-driven environments, because a school environment is a workplace which is usually characterised by a strong emphasis on meeting predetermined time constraints for tasks and projects which consequently leads to a sense of urgency and pressure to complete work within specific timeframes (Buehring, 2023; Ningjie, 2024). The other reasons which influence principals to adopt Satir change management model in the administration of schools include the following:

- Satir change management model helps principals to predict and understand how teachers will respond to change at different stages, that is, from the first phase of an introduction of change which involves workers' resistance to a later stage wherein they become realistic and accept change (Buehring, 2023).
- This model enables managers to identify the root causes of employees' resistance which consequently helps them to develop strategies to address the concerns and build support structures for the change (Ningjie, 2024).
- The model provides a framework for taking teachers through the change process in a more efficient and effective manner (Winham, 2020).
- Satir model emphasises the emotional and psychological effects of change which is usually overlooked by the other models (Buehring, 2023).
- The starting point of Satir model is that organisational change is inevitable, leads to positive growth, innovation and improvement, even though things may get worse before they get better (Buehring, 2023; Ningjie, 2024).

### **Bottom-up change management models adopted by principals**

Principals do not only use top-down change management models in the running of the schools but they also adopt bottom-up change management models (Altadonna, 2022). To this end, Lewin process model is in the list of the most favoured bottom-up change management models (Kaphale & Namalima, 2024). The model was developed by Kurt Lewin in 1950 (Altadonna, 2022; Kaphale & Namalima, 2024). There are a number of assumptions that underlay this model (Kaphale & Namalima, 2024). For example, organisations should consider many factors when planning change which include learning new things, change of attitude, behaviour change, review of all the restraining forces at work, establishment of clear lines of communication and motivating workers (Kaphale & Namalima, 2024). It is also assumed that workers resist change when the goals of change are not clear (Kaphale & Namalima, 2024).

According to Altadonna (2022), Kaphale and Namalima (2024), Lewin process model is made up of the following three steps:

- Unfreeze: In this stage, preparations for change are made and a vision for change is communicated to the employees (Majka, 2024). Managers and workers engage in dialogues to address concerns, fears and the benefits of change are evaluated (Kaphale & Namalima, 2024).

- **Change:** This is a stage wherein change is implemented (Altadonna, 2022). Workers are trained for the purposes of promoting efficiency in the process of implementing change (Majka, 2024). Employees are empowered and encouraged to participate in the new ways of working (Majka, 2024). They are motivated to learn new values, attitudes and behaviours (Kaphale & Namalima, 2024). Work conditions are improved in order to enhance performance (Kaphale & Namalima, 2024).
- **Refreeze:** This stage involves internalisation and institutionalisation of change (Altadonna, 2022). During this phase, an organisation regains its sense of stability which termed refreeze and the benefits of the change are realised (Kaphale & Namalima, 2024). Refreeze is a phase in which new changes are solidified into the organisation's culture and operational frameworks (Majka, 2024). Furthermore, workers develop new work behaviours and their attitudes towards work become positive (Altadonna, 2022). Change is sustained and employees celebrate the successes (Kaphale & Namalima, 2024).

Nudge model is the other bottom-up change management theory which is adopted by the principals in effecting change in their schools (Rajendran, 2025; Singh, 2025). Principals employ this model to design interventions to address factors that enhance teacher performance (UNICEF, 2020). For example, these factors include, fostering positive teacher-learner relationships, introducing policies that reduce teacher absenteeism and creating supportive school environments that promote improved learning outcomes (Damgaard & Nielsen, 2018; UNICEF, 2020). Nudge theory is a framework that enables managers and principals to implement change through a use of non-coercive interventions and strategies, called 'nudges' (Singh, 2025). Thus, adoption of this model influence workers to make decisions that improve their welfare without restricting their freedom of choices (Singh, 2025). Academic institutions employ nudges to implement policies that remove behavioural barriers which impede teachers from participating in decision-making (Damgaard & Nielsen, 2018).

### **Causes of employees' resistance to organisational change**

There are a number of factors that influence workers to resist organisational change (Damawan & Azizah, 2019; Suyuthi & Linggi, 2025). In this regard, this resistance may emanate from individuals, groups and organisation (Damawan & Azizah, 2019; Suyuthi & Linggi, 2025).

At an individual level, the main reason for resistance may be a fear of the unknown (Damawan & Azizah, 2019; Suyuthi & Linggi, 2025). When change is implemented, individual employees tend to develop defence mechanisms as a result of not knowing what will happen to them in the future (Küçükatalay, Vardarlier, Vayvay & Özsürünç, 2023). This is the case, specifically, if the vision is unclear (Damawan & Azizah, 2019). Normally, the employees may perceive threat in the change process, particularly, if they feel that they lack the capacity to handle new changes such as the new technologies (Küçükatalay et al., 2023). Every time when organisational change is proposed, workers weigh the required costs for change against the benefits of that change, then, if they feel that the costs for change are greater than the benefits of change, they resist that change (Küçükatalay et al., 2023). Individual resistance to organisational change

is classified into emotional, frustration, negative attitudes, behavioural, intentional, unwillingness and negative thoughts about change (Suyuthi & Linggi, 2025).

At the group level, resistance to organisational change is often boosted by peers, particularly, this happens when those who do not support change are more than those who support it (Küçükatalay et al., 2023). In this case, it becomes easy for the leading group to influence the rest of the workers (Küçükatalay et al., 2023). At times, some groups in the organisation may be threatened by a change process, new policies, new organisational goals and values which may consequently result in employees' resistance to organisational change (Suyuthi & Linggi, 2025). Common forms of resistance carried out by employees, include boycotting, reduced interest, blocking, opposing views, strikes, negative perceptions and attitudes (Damawan & Azizah, 2019).

At the organisational level, resistance is caused by structural and procedural constraints, for example, lack of communication on advocacy of change (Küçükatalay et al., 2023). Other factors, include lack of adequate training and development of contingency mechanisms to support change which is a result of the employees feeling that they are inadequately prepared for the proposed change (Suyuthi & Linggi, 2025). At this level, resistance leads to problems such as lack of organisational sustainability, reduced organisational effectiveness and reduced job satisfaction which consequently obstruct organisational change initiatives (Suyuthi & Linggi, 2025).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This section outlines the methodological procedures which the researcher had adapted in this investigation. These procedures are dealt with in detail in the subsequent sections.

### **Research approach**

In this study, I adopted a mixed-methods approach comprising qualitative and quantitative research representations. This approach was appropriate for this particular investigation because it enabled me to answer the research questions and to test the hypothesis in a single study.

### **Population and sample**

The population for this study was made up of 26 teachers who were pursuing a Bachelor of Education in Management, Leadership and Policy Studies at the National University of Lesotho. The sample comprised 18 teachers.

### **Data collection**

Data were collected through a use of interviews and questionnaires. The reliability and validity of these instruments were ascertained through conducting a pilot study.

### **Data analysis and results**

This section focuses on the analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. Thematic approach was used to analyse qualitative while a t-test was employed to handle quantitative data.

### **Qualitative data analysis**

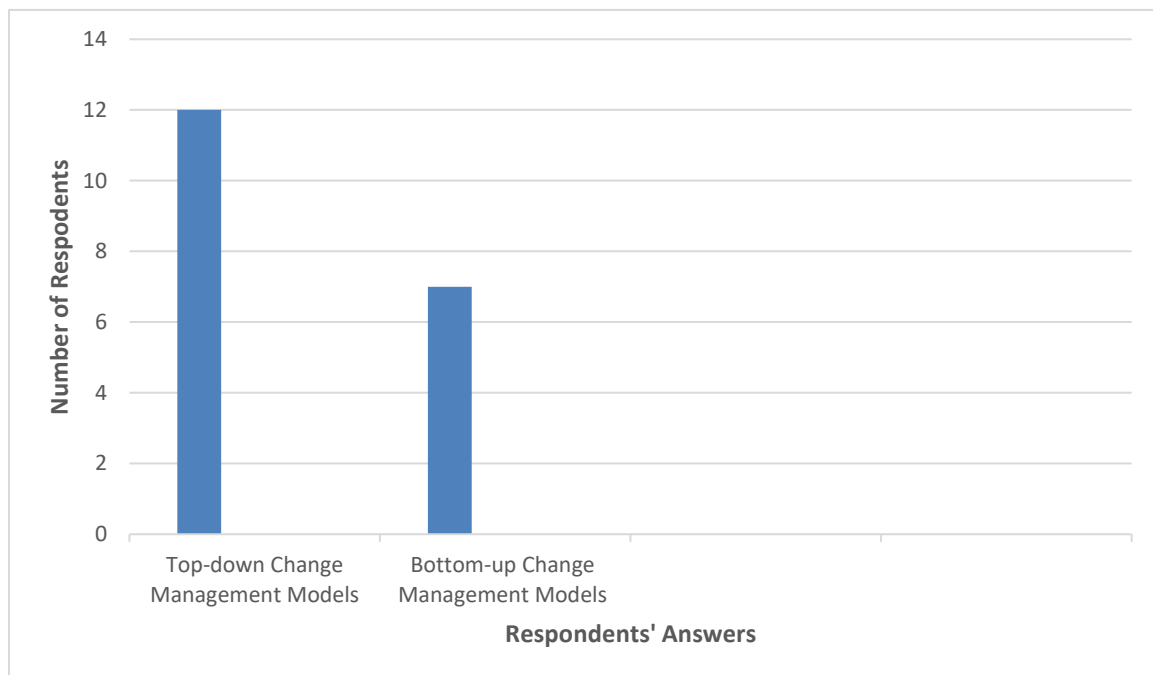
Qualitative data are analysed on the basis of the research questions. In which case, the following research

questions were answered:

- Which change management models are used by the principals to run the schools?
- What are the causes of employees' resistance to organisational change?

### Research results on the first research question

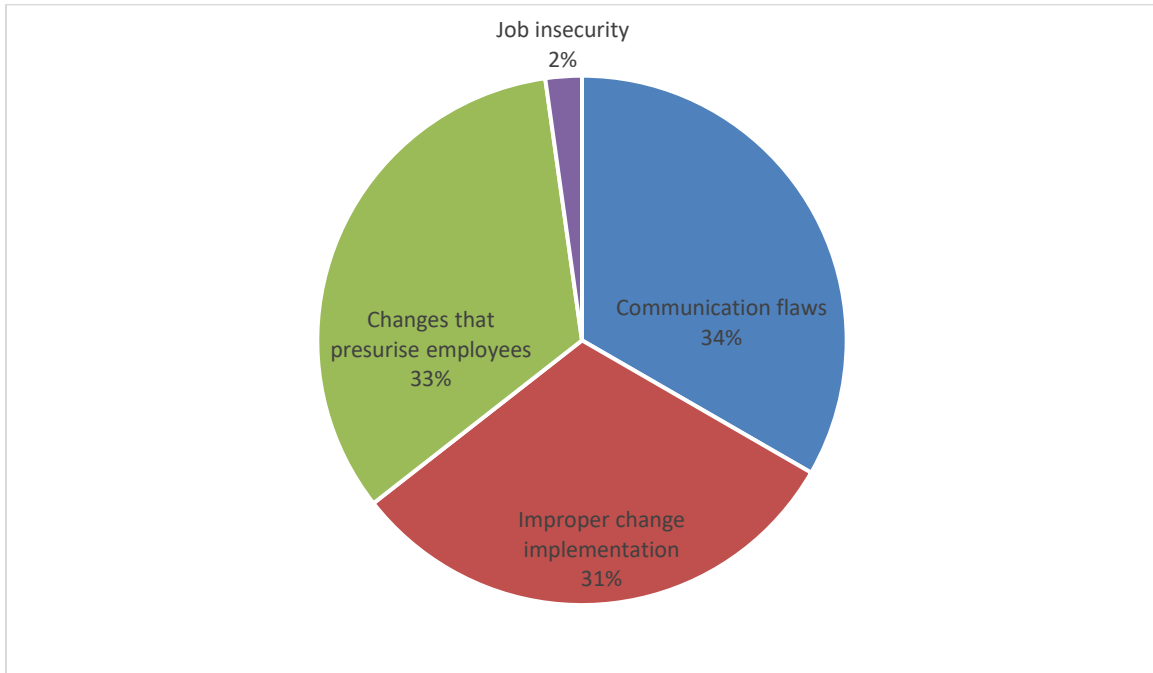
Data pertaining to the first research question, are presented in Figure 1. As depicted in this Figure, top-down and bottom-up change management models are the most commonly adopted models by the principals in implementing change in their schools. In closely analysing the data presented in Figure 1, it seems that principals are more inclined towards using top-down change management models.



**Figure 1: Change management models used by principals**

### Research results on the second research question

Data in relation to the second research question are presented in Figure 2. This research question is about the causes of employees' resistance to organisational change. The respondents suggested four main factors which influence teachers to resist change. Communication flaws seem to be a main problem which contributes to teachers' resistance to change. This is proven by the fact that the majority (34%) of the respondents attested to this point. Changes which pressurise employees is the second ranking problem which influence teachers to resist change. This is reiterated by 33% of the respondents. Furthermore, 31% of the respondents noted that teachers' resistance to organisational change is caused by the principals' failure to implement organisational change.



**Figure 2: Causes of employees' resistance to organisational change**

### Quantitative data analysis

The aim of analysing quantitative data was to establish whether there is gender difference in the use of change management models. Specifically, I want to answer questions such as, do male principals adopt top-down or bottom-up change management models to run the schools or do female principals use top-down or bottom-up change management models to implement change in their schools? In regard, the following statistical hypothesis was tested:

- $H_0$ : There is no gender difference in the use of change management models.

Data were analysed using a t-test (t). The following t-test formula was used to test the hypothesis mentioned above:

$$t = \frac{\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{S^2_1 + S^2_2}{N_1 + N_2}}}$$

In analysing data using a t-test, I handled data in which:

t was a t-test statistic.

$\bar{x}_1$  was the mean score of male respondents.

$\bar{x}_2$  was the mean score of female respondents.

$N_1$  was a number of cases in a male sample.

$N_2$  was a number of cases in a female sample.

$S^2$  was a variance of a male sample.

$S^2$  was a variance of a female sample.

A t-test analysis yielded the calculated t value (a t-test statistic) of 0.91. A t-test statistic (0.91) was then used with a degree of freedom (df) in the research problem where  $df = (n_1 + n_2 - 2)$ ,  $n_1$  being a number of respondents in the frequency distribution of male group and  $n_2$  being the number of respondents in the frequency distribution of female group. In this regard,  $df = 7 + 6 - 2 = 11$ . For a one-tailed t-test, using .05 as the level of significance ( $\alpha$ ), a critical t value of 1.796 was located in the t distribution. Since the calculated t value of 0.91 is less than the critical/table t value of 1.796, it was concluded that there is no gender difference in the use of change management models. This means that both male or female principals adopt either top-down or bottom-up change management models to implement change in their schools. Thus, the research hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) which states that is gender difference in the use of change management models, was rejected and the null or statistical hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) which states that there is no gender difference in the use of change management models was retained.

## DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This study reveals that the principals in Lesotho, adopt both top-down and bottom-up change management models to implement and manage change in their schools. However, in closely analysing the data presented in Figure 1, it is concluded that the principals are more inclined towards using top-down change management models to run the schools. The main reason for this state of affairs may be that the principals are predominantly autocratic in this country.

In responding to the second research question, which is about the causes of employees' resistance to organisational change, the respondents suggested a number of factors which influence teachers to resist change. In which case, my conclusion is that the main factor which contributes to workers' resistance to organisational change is communication flaws.

The other finding of this study indicates that there is no gender difference in the use of change management models. This means that both male or female principals adopt either top-down or bottom-up change management models to implement and manage change in their schools. In my view this finding makes sense. It is consistent with the results of the study which was conducted by Munir, Sial, Faheem, Siddiqui and Asghar (2023). Their study which was carried out at the public secondary schools in Lahore, revealed that there was no significant difference between the practices of leadership style of both male and female principals (Munir et al., 2023). According to the finding of their study, male or female principals use both top-down or bottom-up change management models to enhance the achievement of learners at the public-school level (Munir et al., 2023).

## ETHICAL STATEMENTS

Observance of ethics is crucial in a process of conducting empirical studies, since it plays a great role to guiding researchers in making decisions that uphold both the human and societal aspects of scientific explorations (Ali, Mohamed, Abdullah & Khairuddin, 2025). Thus, when conducting research,

investigators need to abide by research ethics (Ali et al., 2025). In the course of conducting this study, I abided by and was guided by the following ethical guidelines:

- Informed consent: I solicited the consent of the respondents by stating the purpose of the study from the outset (Islam, 2024; Ali et al., 2025). I requested the consent of the respondents as way of ensuring that their autonomy is respected, their participation is voluntary and also that they are fully informed about the nature, purpose and potential implications of this research (Ali et al., 2025).
- Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity: I considered the respondents' entitlement to their privacy, confidentiality and anonymity (Islam, 2024). The confidential and anonymous treatment of the respondents and the data collected from them were maintained as the principal rule during the course of this study (Ali et al., 2025).
- Beneficence: I adhered to an ethical principle of beneficence by conducting this investigation in a professional and effective manner for the purpose of serving and promoting the welfare of the respondents in the quest of understanding the researched phenomenon clearly. The welfare of the participants relates to respondents' understanding the potential benefits of the study (Ali et al., 2025).

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