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**An assessment of the views of level 4-9 employees on ethics and integrity of
their line managers: A case study of the Eastern Cape Department of
Education**

By



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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Public Administration, in the Faculty of Management and Commerce, at the
University of Fort Hare

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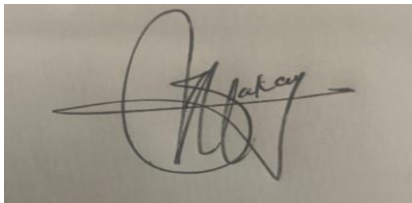
May 2024

Declaration on previous submission

I, Zandile Makayi, student number 201712296, declare that this mini-dissertation, titled “an assessment of the views of level 4-9 employees on ethics and integrity of their line managers: a case-study of the Eastern Cape Department Of Education”, submitted in fulfilment of the Degree of Master of Public Administration (MPA), in the Faculty of Management and Commerce at the University of Fort Hare, is my work and has never been submitted for any other degree at this university or any other university.

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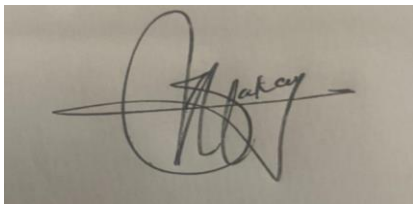
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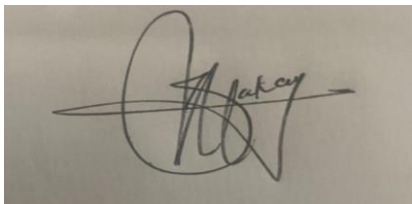
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Dedication

This research is dedicated to my family and friends who have been very supportive throughout my academic journey. My daughter, Milani Makayi whom I wish to inspire through my academic journey. My grandmother whose is my role model and pillar of my strength.



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Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge my family, who offered unwavering love and support throughout this academic quest. Your encouragement sustained me during the challenging instants, and I dedicate this research to every one of you with heartfelt gratitude.

To my supervisors, Prof Bayat, thank you for your expertise and guidance which were a compass guiding me through this difficult maze of research. Your involvement in my study was very valuable.

In loving memory of my dearest mother, Mandisa Makayi, your wisdom and guidance moulded my academic endeavours. Your legacy lives on in this research, a testament to the effect you had on my life.

To my husband, Raymond Radebe, your patience, understanding as well as encouragement were my pillars of strength. This research is an expression of our shared commitment to growth and success.

To my friends, who provided a continuous source of laughter, support and a much-required break from the academic demands, your camaraderie made this journey bearable and memorable.

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To the participants at ECDOE, without whom this research would not have been possible. Your willingness to share your perceptions, experiences and insights contributed significantly to the depth of this work, I appreciate you.

I also appreciate my university faculty and personnel who played a significant role in my academic experience. Your dedication to education has left an indelible mark on my intellectual development.

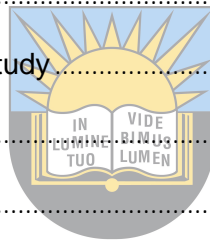
Abstract

This study set to investigate the views of level 4-9 employees on ethics and integrity of their line managers within a public sector institution, the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDOE). The study is largely premised on the prevalent conditions of lack of ethical and integrity in several government departments signified by issues such as corruption, nepotism, bribery and cronyism. The ECDOE like other government departments has been severely affected by the acts of unethical conduct which are undermining the department's performance. The ethics and integrity of leadership and management plays a significant role in the delivery of service within South African public institutions. Employees as the executors of duties and responsibilities within the departments depend on how management uphold ethics and integrity. Line managers as the first line of management plays a major role in enforcing ethics and integrity as they shape organisational culture within an organisation. However, line managers' capacity to enforce ethics and integrity comes from how the subordinates perceive their line managers' ethical and integrity practices. It is in this context that this study sought to understand perceptions that level 4-9 employees have on the ethics and integrity of line managers at the ECDOE, effect the ethical and integrity practices depicted by line managers has on the level 4-9 employees at the ECDOE, and determine what needs to be done to promote positive ethical and integrity practices at the ECDOE. Using a qualitative research methodology, the study utilised a sample of 20 participants who were purposively selected to participate in semi-structured interviews thereby providing insightful qualitative data. Thematically analysed, some of the data revealed that ECDOE employees perceive the application of ethics and integrity by their line managers as inconsistent. Data also shows that there is notable reduction in employee morale, employee engagement, job satisfaction and employee confidence due to incongruent and inconsistent ethical and integrity practices displayed by line managers. Therefore, the study recommends the use of ethics and integrity assessment and audit, ethics and integrity training, role modelling activities and structures, restructuring ethics and integrity guidelines and infrastructure as well as the prioritisation of ethics and integrity management.

Key words: Eastern Cape Department of Education, employee(s), ethics, integrity, line manager(s), perception, unethical

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ECDOE	Eastern Cape Department of Education
PAMA	Public Administration Management Act
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
PSC	Public Service Commission



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Appendices

Appendix 1	Ethical Clearance Certificate
Appendix 2	Permission Letter from the ECDOE
Appendix 3	Interview Guide
Appendix 4	Informed Consent Form
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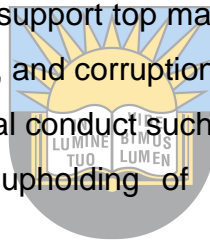
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Chapter One

Introduction and Background of the Study

1.1 Introduction

Ethics and integrity of leadership and management are important for service delivery in South African public entities. According to Shava and Mazenda (2021:317), the South African people are becoming gradually attentive to unethical habits in the governance of the public sector, which has resulted in a lack of trust in the general public. Cabinet reshuffles, reports of corruption, bribery, irregular expenditure, and tender frauds are now a norm in the South African public sector. Like other government departments, the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDOE) has been experiencing challenges associated with unethical practices resulting in substandard service delivery. Surajbali (2016:19) mentions several service challenges such as lack of accountability, unwillingness to support top management, loss of unspent funding, delays in project completion, fraud, and corruption among others. Due to poor service delivery and high levels of unethical conduct such as fraud, lack of accountability and corruption, the application and upholding of ethics and integrity has become increasingly imperative.



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Huberts, Kaptein and De Koning (2022:330) posit that integrity is a critical concept for comprehending governance because governance is about the choices, norms and moral values utilised when addressing issues of interest and problems faced by people. The behaviour and actions of officials in government depend on the choices, norms and moral values they choose to adopt. According to Huberts (2018:19), ethics and integrity are about completeness and coherence; moral reflection; professional behaviour; having values like incorruptibility; exemplary behaviour; and obeying laws and regulations. Therefore, having ethics and integrity implies that government officials will perform their duties in a professional, consistent, morally upright, exemplary, and incorruptible manner. Failure to uphold ethics and integrity in government departments results in poor service delivery, as noted in the ECDOE. Therefore, ethics and integrity are critical in bettering the performance of government departments.

More so, ethics and integrity are crucial in ensuring that an organisation achieves its organisational goals. Ethics are important in the process of decision-making which is why ethical guidelines are essential when establishing objectives for the success of an organisation (Zakizadeh, Dehghan Dehnavi, Rabbani & Sadeghian, 2023:5). Ethical conduct results in an organisation achieving its objectives effectively and efficiently. Ethical practice includes professionalism, and upholding principles and values which are all important in achieving the desired goals within an organisation. Cheteni and Shindika (2017:3) purport that in organisations that have demonstrated ethical leadership, there are noteworthy advantages for such organisations which include achieving optimal performance and reaching set targets. Ethics and integrity ensure that there is trust within the organisation as well as with other stakeholders that deal with an organisation.

Arnold and Ross (2023:11) argue that inside business settings, ethics and integrity are essential in establishing trust and relations among managers and financiers. If managers do not show integrity, association with financiers is dented and this results in them disinvesting, reducing customer base and staff turnover (Steyn and Van Staden, 2018:2). Same applies to the public sector, integrity plays a critical role in creating trust between government and the people. Phahlane (2021:3) posits that the issues of corruption, maladministration, and fraud among others which are encountered all over the public sector, raise the question of leadership ethics, integrity, honesty, and authenticity. Leadership that does not have comprehensive ethical behaviour is deemed threatening, damaging and unpleasant (Hetrick, Mitchell, Villarosa-Hurlocker & Sullivan, 2022:334). Huberts et al. (2022:331) argue that in governance, integrity is about the behaviour, process, and procedure, focusing on how government personnel handle themselves in providing the required services.

Furthermore, officials who uphold ethics and integrity will not indulge in activities that undermine or derail the performance capacity of the organisation. For instance, Huberts (2018:21) states that government officials who act with integrity and are ethical will not hire their friends into office without independent review, or cover up for their friends' misconduct. Johari, Shamsudin, Zainun, Yean and Yahya (2022:1041) also underscore that many managers who become valuable to any organisation in the long run portray values such as integrity, ethical conduct, trust, and justice. Vasudevan, Musaed, Sam, Nagaraj, Thinakaran, Ruiteng and Beleya (2023:1509)

also contend that integrity and ethical behaviour include the quality and traits of a person's behaviour or that of an organisation which characterizes the quality of performance in terms of the moral, values, standards, and rules that are accepted by the organisation and society. In contrast, when individuals do not uphold ethics and integrity, they engage in activities that are counterproductive to the organisation. Okpo (2023:93), as well as Hamisi, Philibert and Paul (2022:133), highlight that when there are individuals in a public office who act in their self-interest lacking ethics and integrity, they waste or diminish public resources.

There is an interconnection between ethics and integrity which is essential for management, especially for personnel in public offices. Ethics are about societal norms, concerns, external systems of rules, principles, and values that guide a person's moral conduct or action. Integrity is about personal values, rules, principles, beliefs and norms which guide the person's moral conduct and decision-making. Leaders and managers are supposed to influence and motivate, good ethical conduct, human resources practices and fairness in their treatment of people will inspire, influence and motivate other people to act in a like manner.

1.2 Background of the study

The government departments in the Eastern Cape have been performing poorly due to issues related to ethics and integrity such as corruption, mismanagement, maladministration, and lack of accountability. Ndlovu, Maramura and Enaifoghe (2020:22) state that the abysmal performance of government departments and agencies in the Eastern Cape due to several maladministration are based on ethical leadership which is misplaced to nepotism and cronyism, corruption, and mismanagement, lack of accountability and maladministration resulting in industrial actions and protests. One of the departments that is affected by issues relating to ethics and integrity is the ECDOE. For instance, the ECDOE had an unauthorised expenditure amounting to R280 million (Auditor General, 2019:100). The Auditor General (2020:61) indicated that there are high levels of unauthorised, irregular and wasteful expenditures by the ECDOE which have to be addressed to ensure that the department functions effectively and efficiently.

Additionally, a report by the Public Protector South Africa (2019:56) also pointed at challenges of improper conduct and maladministration by management in handling the

payment of contract educators as one of the integrity issues that needed immediate attention at the department. Unfortunately, when such issues occur there is little action taken by immediate managers. Surajbali (2016:111) found that there is no immediate remedial action that is taken when cases of corruption and fraud are reported to management. To deal with cases of unethical conduct such as fraud and corruption which affect the performance of the ECDOE, managers need to lead by example by being ethical and acting with integrity.

Improving ethics and integrity starts with managers as they are responsible for the conduct of government personnel in their respective units. Szczepanska-Woszczyna (2020:21) asserts that managers are leaders who can handle transformation and complexity by setting direction, aligning personnel, planning, controlling, budgeting, providing solutions, organising, motivating and inspiring. Additionally, Tompkins (2023:17) underscores that managers at the top are in charge of effecting big resolutions and ensuring that an organisation is a success. Therefore, managers are supposed to ensure that the performance in the government departments is satisfactory for the citizens, if not, they are supposed to look for solutions to improve the performance. One of the solutions lies in their conduct.

Managers lead through the influence and motivation of personnel to reach organisational goals (Girdwichai and Sriviboon, 2020:44). More so, managers in government departments have a primary role in ensuring better performance in public institutions through the implementation of the right policy. Moshel and Berkovich (2023:331) purport that managers are responsible for implementing policy. As policy implementers, managers are supposed to take responsibility of ensuring that their conduct leads to proper implementation of policy. Managers are supposed to be leaders and also be good decision-makers (Radke, 2022:23). The leadership role that is assumed by managers implies that they are supposed to propel the primary mandate of the government which is to provide basic services and ensure good governance. Huberts et al. (2022:332), mention that through good ethical conduct, managers can achieve good governance as there will be professionalism, moral reflection, accountability and transparency which lead to improvement in performance in public institutions. Accountability, responsibility, fairness and transparency reflect ethical conduct and a lack of corruption thereof (Fourie & Malan, 2022:13).

To try and deal with issues about ethics and integrity, the Public Service Commission (PSC) was set up in accordance with Chapter 10 of the Constitution. The PSC is obligated to endorse distinguished norms of ethics that are professional in the public sector and also to scrutinise, observe and appraise the establishment and conduct of staff in the public sector (Cheteni and Shindika, 2017:3). Additionally, Twum-Darko, Ncedo and Tengeh (2023:110) also note that there are specific policies in place to promote good ethics, such as the Batho Pele Principles and the Treasury Regulations. Furthermore, section 185 of the South African Constitution, Section 20 of the Public Service Act, Section 203 of Labour Relations Act, the Prevention and Combating of Corruption Act, the Protected and Disclosures Act and the Public Finance Management Act all provide managers guidelines on ethical conduct and acting with integrity.

Despite the presence of these different policies and legislation, some public sector managers especially from human resources management, finance, and supply chain management departments fail to behave professionally and in an ethical manner. Enaifoghe (2023:477) and Patso (2022:97) bemoan receiving presents or gifts in government as compromising ethics and integrity hence overshadowing the code of ethics. Cheteni and Shindika (2017:3) also mention how ethical concerns are a major challenge in the South African public sector citing the Chief Justice's remarks about the need for ethical leaders who are not corrupt. Shava and Mazenda (2021:306) purport that the disclosure of public sector matters to the public through the commissions and government reports indicates the desire to tackle the differences between the wanted and real levels of ethics and integrity. Based on this background, the research intends to assess the views of employees regarding the ethics and integrity of their line managers in the public sector focusing on the ECDOE.

1.3 Problem statement

The ECDOE has been facing challenges that are related to ethical conduct and integrity such as fraud, maladministration and corruption. ECDOE had an unauthorised expenditure amounting to R280 million (Auditor-General Report, 2019:100). Surajbali (2016:111) also found that there are cases of fraud and corruption that are not dealt with because no action is taken by line managers who are supposed to handle the cases. The author also revealed that some line managers who attempt

to deal with cases of unethical conduct such as fraud and corruption are threatened with physical harm (Surajbali, 2016:111). In the same vein Kota, Hendricks, Matambo and Naidoo (2017:13) provide a series of past events that have seen corrupt political leaders and departmental managers getting suspended and some resigning due to deaths over issues regarding corruption. The authors also depict a picture of the involvement of managers taking a significant role in the perpetuation of corruption to severe levels which saw at some point a former employee (Modidima Manny) being provided personal security in the form of bodyguards. Surajbali (2016:111) also purports that where cases of unethical conduct such as fraud and corruption have been detected and reported criminal investigation is launched, there are challenges of management interference, lack of cooperation between different units who are supposed to deal with the unethical conduct and some court cases being settled before a verdict is passed. Therefore, there is a glaring problem of lack of ethics and integrity in the ECDOE. Line managers have a leadership role to play to ensure that there is restoration of integrity and ethical conduct in the ECDOE.

According to Mowbray, Wilkinson and Tse (2022:1056), line managers are responsible for shaping organisational culture within an organisation. Therefore, line managers have to shape the culture at ECDOE in manner that upholds ethics and integrity. Their primary responsibility of making sure that there is integrity and ethical conduct in the department of education depends on how they influence and motivate the personnel at the department. Managers lead through the influence and motivation of personnel to reach organisational goals (Lees & Dhanpat, 2021:2). Masianoga and Govender (2023:537) also purport that leadership is a significant feature which influences ethics and integrity of workers. Kopicko (2018:7) mentions that unethical conduct is mainly caused by financial factors. As such managers from departments such as the department of management accounting, financial accounting, supply chain management and resourcing and school administration are prone to get involved in unethical conduct.

Furthermore, line managers are able to influence how employees behave when they are at work as such they can encourage accountability, transparency, moral reflection and responsibility while shunning corruption and fraud. Public sector managers are supposed to be exemplary by constantly and keenly upholding unquestionable ethical conduct on a daily basis, and in this way, they should set the tone from the top

(McMahon, 2021:43). Rossouw and Van Vuuren (2020:58) also assert that line managers have an obligation of making discernible the renowned Code of Ethics; making the code a standard of employment; adapting, where applicable, the code to their specific organisation; and making ethics a living matter by disseminating messages and encouraging ethical conduct concerning its significance to all concerned.

Clearly, line managers have a big role to play in addressing the problem of lack of ethical conduct and integrity being upheld at ECDOE. Kopicko (2018:18) mentions that when managers uphold integrity and are ethical, employees usually emulate them. However, Boudrias, Rousseau and Lajoie (2021:487) also highlight that if the manager's integrity is questionable, it can have detrimental effects on employees and the organisation as a whole. Vyas-Doorgapersad (2022:20) noted that unethical conduct by employees will not be revealed as long as a public line manager is not directly involved. Therefore, finding out about the practices of line managers at ECDOE is imperative in dealing with the problems related to ethics and integrity that are troubling the department. Furthermore, Metwally, Ruiz-Palomino, Metwally and Gartzia (2019:3) argue that some leaders are usually unaware of the effect, either positive or negative, some conduct can have on ethics and integrity within an organisation. Additionally, the authors also posit that integrity is a highly desired but less-understood aspect of organisations and the people they employ. In light of these concerns, the research is going to investigate the perceptions that personnel have on the ethics and integrity of their line managers in the public sector focusing on the ECDOE.

1.4 Research objectives

The study's main objective is to assess the views of level 4-9 employees on the ethics and integrity of their line managers focusing on the case of the ECDOE.

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- To investigate the perceptions that level 4-9 employees have on the ethics and integrity of line managers at the ECDOE.
- To find out what effect the ethical and integrity practices depicted by line managers have on the level 4-9 employees at the ECDOE.

- To determine what needs to be done to promote positive ethical and integrity practices at the ECDOE.

1.5 Research questions

The main study questions are as follows:

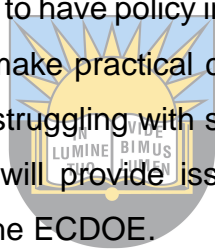
- What are the perceptions that level 4-9 employees have on the ethics and integrity of line managers at the ECDOE?
- What effect do the ethical and integrity practices depicted by line managers have on the level 4-9 employees at the ECDOE?
- What needs to be done to promote positive ethical and integrity practices at the ECDOE?

1.6 Significance of the study

The study will have an academic or knowledge contribution. The research is going to focus on the knowledge gap on issues about employees' perceptions of ethics and integrity concerning the line managers in the public sector. Most studies on ethics and integrity usually focus on senior management in the public sector but a few studies focus on the view of the employees and their line managers. One study that was almost similar was conducted by Motshwane (2018), however, the scope of the study did not cover aspects of integrity and also did not assess the views of employees only focused on senior management regarding the ethics and integrity of the line managers. Another akin study by Surajbali (2016) was limited to focusing on the conduct of managers in the process of contract management. The scope of this study was not specifically on ethics and integrity but process of contract management which meant that the aspects of ethics and integrity were not fully discussed. Asamoah (2017) carried out a study that is somewhat similar to the investigation of this study, however, the author primarily focused on how leadership can be used to combat corruption. In essence, part of the study only focused on ethics. Secondly, the study was conducted in Ghana which is a different setting from the South African context. Mdoda (2021) conducted a study that assessed the performance management at ECDOE assessing the views of the personnel in relation to the line manager. However, the study used mixed methodology and did not focus on ethics and integrity as the core areas of investigation. Therefore, this study is going to contribute to the literature about the

ethics and integrity of line managers and how it affects the subordinates' perceptions and their conduct.

The study is going to have a practical implication. The study is going to find out the employees' perceptions about the ethics and integrity of their line managers. The South African public sector is experiencing several challenges of unethical conduct such as fraud, corruption, and mismanagement of funds among others. The activities are taking place in the workplace and employees have a perception about these activities. Finding out about their perceptions can help to come up with strategies for both employees and line managers. The line managers or any management personnel start as general employees therefore employees' perceptions regarding the ethics and integrity of their line managers cannot be overlooked. The perceptions of the employees about the ethics and integrity of their line managers can also provide insight into the issues affecting the performance of public institutions in providing service delivery. The study is going to have policy implications and it is going to provide suggestions that can be used to make practical changes in the ECDOE. The public sector department under study is struggling with several issues of unethical conduct. As such insights from the study will provide issues to consider when formulating policies on ethics and integrity in the ECDOE.



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1.7 Theoretical framework primer

The study employs the social learning theory and McGregor's X and Y theory as theories that underpin this research.

1.7.1 Social learning theory

Albert Bandura devised the theory which is going to be used in the study and this theory is called the social learning theory. The theory explains that new behaviour can be learned by observing and imitating others (Bandura, 1971:3). The main assumptions of the theory were postulated by Bandura (1971:3) were aimed to explain the behaviour of people as they learn something within a particular context. The theory postulates that new behaviour can be learned by observing and imitating others (Schilling, Dougherty & Wood, 2024:6). In this regard, employees are always observing what their leaders do; therefore, they get to imitate what they do. Consequently, their cognitive process is shaped by what they see from their line managers.

Additionally, this theory can be used in understanding, explaining, predicting, and evaluating employees' conduct based on their perception of the ethics and integrity of their line managers. The theory also advances that learning can occur without change in behaviour (Hillberg Jarl, 2024:415). Accordingly, some learning among employees can happen without a change in their conduct at work. However, the theory concludes that cognition plays a significant role in learning (Bandura, 1971:2). Therefore, the theory guides and informs the study on how the views or perceptions that employees have about their line managers' ethics and integrity play a role in learning ethical conduct and acting with integrity.

The social learning theory has its limitations. One of the criticisms that have been raised against the social learning theory is that people do not only observe and mimic or imitate behaviour they also need engagement and motivation which helps to create new behaviour (Locklear, 2020:3). Therefore, the study looks at how line managers are helping to create integrity and new ethical behaviour through engagement and motivation. Due to the need for this kind of assessment this study used a complementary theory called McGregor's Theory of X and Y which includes how the manner of management affects employees.

1.7.2 McGregor's theory X and Y

This study is also underpinned by McGregor's theory X and Y. The theory is utilised in this study to address areas that are not covered by the social learning theory. The McGregor's theory X and Y looks at how different managers view what motivates different employees and influence their behaviour through different management styles (Manthema & Ravi, 2024:3362). The theory is useful to this study because it assists in examining the different aspects that shape the perceptions of employees on the fostering of ethics and integrity based on the management style exhibited by line managers. The theory is important in understanding what managers think regarding employees and base their conduct on their perception of employees. Therefore, their perception of employees shapes their management style including the need to promote ethics and integrity as leaders. The employees also respond to the manner in which their managers conduct themselves. Therefore, this theory offers good insight into assessing what shapes employees' and managers' conduct with managers

playing a key role in the creation of the desired conduct, especially with regard to ethics and integrity.

McGregor's theory X sums up a management style that has minimal engagement with employees. Nieminen (2024:178) argues that according to theory X a manager will have high control and autonomy, as the employees are assumed to be lazy and must be motivated through actions such as punishments and rewards. From these assumptions, employees are regarded as being uninterested in work which means they require certain actions to mould their behaviour. Therefore, this study assesses if there is a need for certain actions by managers that can motivate or demotivate employees based on their perceptions of ethics and integrity. On the other hand, McGregor's theory Y sums up management style based on adequate engagement with employees. Theory Y advances that employees are regarded as dependable, able to make good decisions and perceive rewards as surplus (Nieminen, 2024:178). In light of this view, the study assesses the perceptions of employees on how the conduct of their manager motivates them without the need for any extra incentive. McGregor's theory X and Y alludes to some line managers being able to form strong rapport with employees and some managers being unable to create a good rapport with employees due to their management style. This creation of strong rapport is important in reinforcing ethics and integrity. When the employees and manager have a common understanding, they are likely to share the same goals and values. This situation of shared values and goals through strong rapport benefits the organisation as organisational performance depends on the cordial functioning of management that controls operations and the employees that execute duties. Therefore, the theory can help examine how employees perceive their line managers' conduct with regard to their ethics and integrity when managing them.

McGregor's theory X and Y has its shortcomings. Touma (2021:24) mentions that McGregor's Theory X and Y assumes that all people are creative or at least desire to be creative but the concern is that people have diverse personalities. In this regard, people cannot be characterised as homogenous. The way they behave and respond to circumstances differ. This study looks at the different ways in which perceive and respond to ethical and integrity or lack of exhibit by the line managers. Abun et al. (2021:402) also underscore that McGregor's theory X and Y assumes that employees do not want to take responsibility as they are driven by managers. This assertion on

this shortcoming will help in analysing the responsibility being taken by level 4-9 employees in upholding ethics and integrity at their workplace.

1.8 Definition of key terms

Ethics are a group of principles of correct conduct and epitomise moral principles premised on cultural norms and values, some of which have been converted into laws or rules and regulations (Ruredzo, Chale-Matsau, Davison, Pillay & Erasmus, 2023:84). They are a series of guiding principles for a group or an individual (Kwao, Kanubala & Sonna, 2023:87). Therefore, this study takes ethics as set of guiding principles which form norms, values, rules and regulations which act as benchmarks for evaluating the integrity of a person's or group's conduct.

Employee is any person who sells their labour (Budd & Bhave, 2019:3). This study focuses on level 4 to 9 employees. Level 4 to 9 employees are non-management employees who work in the South African public sector. Borat, Naidoo, Oosthuizen and Pillay (2016:20) posit that level 4 to 9 employees are mainly made up of unskilled and medium-skilled employees who make up a large majority of employment in the public sector. The unskilled or elementary employees include sweepers, helpers, cleaners, maintenance labourers and garbage collectors. Medium-skilled employees consist of clerical support workers.

Integrity defines the conduct of an individual in accordance with the commonly recognized norms and values (Karsten & Jacobs, 2022:269). Integrity is about a person doing what they say they will do to nurture an atmosphere of openness, trust, credibility, and information sharing (Ashar & Setyanti, 2022:679).

Line managers can be described as direct supervisors who have a close relationship with employees as they are directly involved in the supervision of day-to-day tasks (Claeys, Van den Broeck, Houkes & de Rijk, 2023:2).

Management can be defined as both, the individuals running an organisation as well as the process of running the organisation by coordinating, integrating and utilising various resources (like personnel and machines) to achieve the organisational goals and objectives (Hurd, Barcelona & Zimmerman, 2023:3).

1.9 Outline of the research study

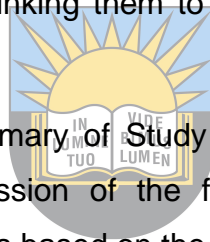
Chapter One – Introduces the study and its background. The chapter also presents the problem statement, study objectives, the significance of the study and key terms are defined here.

Chapter Two - Literature Review. Chapter two will present a review of literature on the ethics and integrity and how they are perceived in the workplace internationally, regionally and locally. The chapter will also discuss key issues about the employees and immediate managers in the public sector.

Chapter Three - Research Methodology. Chapter three focuses on outlining the research methodology. The data collection techniques and data techniques used for this study will be discussed in chapter three.

Chapter Four – Analysis of Research Findings, Presentation and Discussion. The chapter will present the findings linking them to literature reviewed in the previous chapters.

Chapter Five - Conclusion, Summary of Study and Recommendations. This final chapter will focus on the discussion of the findings the researcher will make conclusions, and recommendations based on the findings and conclusion.



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1.10 Conclusion

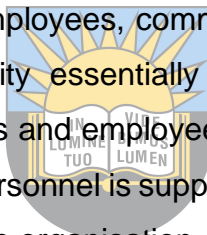
This chapter focused on introducing the research study. The chapter provides a background of the ethics and integrity challenges that are affecting the performance of ECDOE. Subsequently, the chapter highlights the research's statement problem. This section of the study also outlines the main research questions as well as the research objective. The chapter also presents the significance of conducting the research investigation. The theoretical framework employed by this study is also introduced in this chapter. The chapter offers definitions of key terms for this research. Lastly, this chapter provides a structure of the study.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Ethics and integrity are an important part of everyday living as they help create a moral climate in society. Having ways to uphold ethics and integrity has always been central to the efficient functioning of society. The work environment heavily relies on ethics and integrity to ensure that the organisation can perform in a manner that is acceptable for the community, state, partners, stakeholders, employees, and employers. Ethics and integrity always play a particular role in every activity within an organisation. In the sense that, these two are able to capacitate organisations to prevent negative issues such as employees stealing from the organisation or clients, taking unauthorized breaks, and employers lying to employees, communities, partners and stakeholders among others. Ethics and integrity essentially determine the conduct within an organisation by both the employers and employees. Management has a primary role of providing a clear path on how personnel is supposed to adopt conduct that is ethical and has integrity for the good of the organisation.



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Different academic work has been conducted regarding ethics and integrity in the workplace. Therefore, this chapter discusses literature review pertaining to ethics and integrity within the workplace. The chapter explains the concepts of ethics and integrity. Furthermore, this section of the study discusses the literature on the role of ethics and integrity in an organisation. The chapter also deliberates on ethics and integrity in the public sector. The discussion in this chapter also concentrates on the instruments of ethical and integrity guidelines in the South African public sector. Ethics and integrity among employees and managers are also discussed in this chapter. Another section explaining the theories underpinning this study is included in this chapter. The final section of the chapter focuses on the challenges that are associated with the lack of ethics and integrity in an organisation.

2.2 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework will serve as the foundation for this research on assessing the views of Level 4-9 employees on the ethics and integrity of their line managers within the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDOE). This framework focuses mainly on key variables and relationships guiding the study. This discussion provides a structured approach to understanding ethics and integrity within a work environment, particularly in the public sector.

2.2.1 Ethics

Ethics are about moral values or ideology of behaviour, actions, choices and relations on the part of an individual or organisation (Dladla, 2020:16). From this definition, ethics can be regarded as the moral elements that guide the conduct of an individual or establishment. Ethics are also described as a group of doctrines of correct conduct and epitomise moral ideologies premised on cultural norms and values, some of which have been converted into laws or rules and regulations (Ruredzo et al., 2023:84). The definition shows that ethics are about good positive elements that influence and guide individuals to be able to conform to acceptable behaviour. Additionally, according to Hamoudah, Othman, Rahman, Noor and Alamoudi (2021:3), ethics is the assortment of norms and values, operating as standards or benchmarks for assessing the integrity of individual conduct. Pantiru (2019:5) also provides a definition that is aligned with the public sector, stating that ethics can be described as shared values, standards as well as guiding principles to promote integrity in the public sector. Ethics are defined in various ways but from the definitions, it is notable that ethics are mainly centered on guiding principles on what is right or wrong shaping the behaviour of individuals or groups within a specific context.

Significantly, ethics in an organisational context permits an organisation to set standards of behaviour for all its personnel. Okanda, Mwinzi and Gunga (2021:117) postulate that ethical practices consist of moral principles that are perceived to direct subordinates within an organisation about work-connected issues and also control conflict of interest as well as misuse of offices by leaders. Within a work environment ethics are imperative in shaping and influencing processes of operations by employees and management. Pantiru (2019:5) asserts that ethics codes encompass the universal core values, particular standards of behaviour, activities for implementing

these standards, and approaches and processes to report integrity-connected offences. Ethics provide employees with a benchmark of what is acceptable and unacceptable within an organisation. Ethical practices also incorporate the respected standards of morality that assist in guiding individuals to adhere to stipulated standards of conduct when dealing with people within as well as outside the organization (Okanda et al., 2021:117). Ethical practices include integrity, discipline, moral decision making and commitment to duty (Okanda et al., 2021:117). Zahra (2021:2) indicates that a person who has ethics is usually expected to be responsible, respectful, have integrity, and be competitive. Ethics mark important elements for ethical conduct within an organisation.

Organisations and employees need clear ethics to be a part of the work system because without them the work environment might become chaotic and unbearable for its personnel. Ethics are essential because they allow compliance with stipulated regulations regarding measures that seek to promote the development of appropriate ethical values among the workforce (Andersson & Ekelund, 2022:1089). Regulations without compliance become worthless and not every circumstance can be catered for in law, regulations on their own cannot ensure acceptable conduct (Andersson & Ekelund, 2022:1089). More so, attempting to regulate each feature of administrative action, and eradicate administrative discretion, would result in lower personnel morale, inflexibility, and ineffectiveness (Andersson & Ekelund, 2022:1089). Therefore, ethics are important in producing and promoting acceptable conduct that minimises harm or damage to others.

A lack of ethics will probably cause unethical conduct which is detrimental and undesirable forcing the organisation and individuals to perform below optimal levels. Ngubane (2021:2) argues that unethical conduct occurs when ethics are their adverse state, for example, an individual's personality or behaviour is antagonistic to more acceptable or admirable characteristics or the code of conduct that is permitted by one's profession, organisation, community or society. In such a situation a person does not usually produce the desired results (Kamaludin & Ismail, 2021:15). What is ethical and unethical is usually determined by an individual's family, profession, organisation, community or society. The reasons behind the lack of ethics vary among persons, organisations or societies. Within an organisational setting, some of the reasons for unethical conduct include greed, pressure from shareholders for growth,

looming financial losses, senior leadership struggling to accomplish its targeted goals and quite frequently ignorance (Ngubane, 2021:1). More importantly, in the absence of ethics, it is difficult to attain professionalism. Bowman and West (2021:6) contend that a person who does not possess basic ethics skills is illiterate professionally. Therefore, it is important for individuals in a work setting to be ethical. It is also essential to understand what ethics mean to people within a workplace environment.

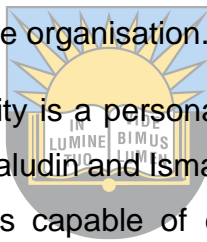
2.2.2 Integrity

Integrity is part of people's everyday lives. Integrity refers to the action of an individual in accordance with the commonly recognized norms and values (Karsten & Jacobs, 2022:269). Integrity is also about the concept of morality where morality encompasses being truthful, honest, and unprejudiced in all circumstances (Hanapiyah, Daud & Abdullah, 2019:38). Integrity allows individuals to act in an upright manner doing things sincerely. Hubert (2018:19) points out that the term integrity stems from the Latin entailing, wholeness, completeness, conscientious coherence, or committed responsibility. Integrity is about behaving consistently in accordance with certain values, morals, and beliefs, speaking the truth, doing what is right and keeping promises (Rahim, Omar & Kamaruddin, 2020:520). The element of integrity pushes people to do what is right even when no one is watching them.

Hanapiyah et al. (2019:38) assert that integrity can be categorised into two kinds which are: personal integrity and moral integrity. Integrity ensures that an individual will choose to do the right thing in whatever context they find themselves in. The moral integrity aspect results from the different aspects within an environment that help people to act within acceptable standards of conduct. Integrity entails an individual doing what they say they will do to promote an atmosphere of openness, trust, credibility, and revealing of information (Metwally et al., 2019:3). Integrity entails being able to be truthful, accountable, and responsible in their conduct. Ngubane (2021:4) mentions that integrity consists of prudence, honesty, trustworthiness, conscientiousness and fairness. Therefore, the trait of someone with integrity according to these foregoing definitions is an individual who is able to be transparent, trustworthy, honest and free from corruption and upholds good moral standards.

Integrity is learned and strengthened over a specific period (Rahim et al., 2020:518). More so, integrity has developed into an important topic internationally in the

safeguarding of an organisation's reputation (Hanapiyah et al., 2019:38). The presence of individuals with integrity within an organisation is crucial in protecting an organisation from competitors or intrusion into confidential material. Integrity entails the attitude of individuals which is very essential in preventing corruption and averting the loss of competent workers as well as ensuring the trustworthiness of the employee to preserve the business' trading secrets (Rahim et al., 2020:517). A culture of integrity produces a work environment that has high values that influence the quality of corporate governance and offers a basis for concrete long-term efficient performance (Rahim et al., 2020:517). Integrity is necessary to ensure that individuals in an organisation are able to add value and produce the work required by the organisation. Integrity is an influential double-edged sword for organisations today, which is essential for long-term productivity as well as corporate sustainability (Kamaludin & Ismail, 2021:15). Through having individuals with integrity an organisation can become more productive as the individuals within the organisation will be committed to producing the desired results for the organisation.



However, more importantly, integrity is a personal trait. As a personal trait, integrity varies from person to person. Kamaludin and Ismail (2021:15) state that integrity is an essential personal attribute that is capable of exerting powerful influence in any situation. The integrity of different individuals within an organisation influences the ability of the organisation to function efficiently and effectively. The individuals who are part of the conduct within an organisation are responsible for upholding the necessary values, norms, and commitment that drive the organisation. Therefore, integrity within an organisation entails workers having good conduct and being free from adverse counterproductive behaviour such as vandalism, stealing, skipping work and prolonging breaks without permission (Zainal, Som & Mohamed, 2019:124). It is imperative that an understanding of integrity becomes a vital component for any organisation.

There are numerous challenges that are associated with the absence of integrity in the work environment. Rahim et al. (2020:518) purport that challenges of integrity are usually a problematic issue in the private and public sectors. Some problems are common, these include time spent on lunch hour breaks as well as tea breaks, and skipping work hours to do personal errands. This problematic behaviour usually happens in employees' everyday working day. Hanapiyah et al. (2019:38) also add

that the lack of integrity will transform the conduct and culture in the organisation particularly with regard to decision-making. Integrity is defied when corporate governance guidelines and procedures are unheeded in pursuit of individual and corporate gain, as the desires of the wrongdoers are generally put before those of other stakeholders and the broader community. Any danger to the culture of integrity in the work environment can have a negative impact as it can result in a toxic or unethical working atmosphere that may be destructive and damaging (Kamaludin & Ismail, 2021:15). Therefore, successful leaders are expected to have integrity by being exemplary in their actions ensuring morally uprightness and doing things that promote openness, trust, credibility as well as clear and open communication.

2.2.3 Relationship between ethics and integrity

Ethics and integrity are interlinked as they are closely connected concepts that guide behaviour and decision-making, especially in professional and organisational settings. While ethics generally provide guidelines, integrity compels adherence to those guidelines (Stander, 2022:16). An employee might know ethical standards but integrity is crucial in determining whether they follow them in practice. The public sector workplace ethics dictates that employees avoid corruption by acting ethically and upholding integrity standards ensuring that they treat all stakeholders fairly (Tetti, Dimoso & Magaria, 2023:89). Integrity ensures that employees constantly apply these ethical principles in their daily duties, even when no person is watching (Zahari, Said & Arshad, 2021:11). Employees are expected to act ethically even when their supervisors or managers are not watching because they have integrity. The managers are also expected to set an example for the employees through ethical conduct as they are supposed to be driven by integrity. Therefore, ethics and integrity work in tandem to promote trust, accountability and fairness within an organisation. There is also a connection between ethics and integrity in eliminating unwanted or unethical conduct within a workplace.

2.3 Theoretical framework

The study employs the Social Learning theory and McGregor's Theory of X and Y as the main theories for the study's theoretical framework. These theories were selected because they are premised on the effect of observed, learned and produced behaviour being key in influencing a particular view of individuals. As such these theories can be

used to examine and explain the perceptions of employees regarding the ethics and integrity of their line managers.

2.3.1 Social learning theory

According to the social learning theory by Bandura (1971), a person can learn new conduct by observing other people (Le & Hancer, 2021:514). The premise of this theory's argument is in tandem with the main focus of the study which seeks to assess how employees are observing the ethics and integrity of their line managers. The assessment sought to understand if the observations by employees do translate into ethical conduct that is in line with the desired organisational goals. On the other hand, assessment has to also focus on understanding the observation by employees on the ethics and integrity of the line managers if it affects the employees in an adverse manner which has a negative impact on the ultimate performance of the organisation. The observing of other people plays a significant role in the conduct of the observer. As such of great interest is how employees apply themselves to ensuring that what they observe does or does not influence their conduct. Considering there could be a written code of ethics, understanding the role that code plays in relation to the observed ethics and integrity by line managers is also critical. Ete, Epitropaki, Zhou and Graham (2022:750) also posit that people learn beliefs, ethical values and pro-social conduct from the characteristics they observe in their role models. The employees deem their line managers as role models (Al Halbusi et al., 2020:161), therefore, it is important to understand what kind of ethical values they are learning from their immediate supervisors. Those ethical values are supposed to contribute towards better performance in the organisation. The assessment reviewed if those ethical values are being learnt from line managers as role models helping them to uphold ethics and integrity within the organisation in a manner that ensures improved productivity.

Furthermore, according to the social learning theory, an important aspect of learning is self-efficacy, or an individual's belief in their capability to accomplish specific objectives or tasks through certain actions within their surroundings (Locklear, 2020:3). This aspect of this theory underscores the desire of individuals to do more than just observing. This postulate highlights the choices of individuals are shaped by wanting to achieve certain goals and completing tasks. The implication in this regard

is the manner in which employees might make a choice to follow or not follow the conduct of their manager when it does not help them accomplish a particular task. If the conduct of their manager antagonises the ethics and integrity that allow the employees to achieve certain goals within the organisation, the employees might disregard learning from their line manager. The theory also mentions that the ability to monitor and control has a crucial part in learning, for example, self-observation, goals, self-judgement, and self-reaction (Bai & Li, 2024:7). This ability of individuals to monitor and control is critical in understanding how employees monitor and control their conduct after seeing their line managers' ethical conduct and their integrity within the workplace. Social learning theory also postulates that people change from their personal patterns to collective learning with other individuals (Sita & Alga, 2024). The individual employees are able to observe their line managers and act in accordance with the patterns that are being shaped by the managers in their working unit.

Social learning theory also assumes that learners take an active role in being part of the learning process (Chukhlomin, 2024:7). In trying to instil order, consistency and a sense of experience, individuals according to the theory are lively and investigative about certain conduct. In essence, employees observe and imitate ethical and moral behaviour as well, so an improvement in the line managers' ethics and integrity will also improve the employees' ethics and integrity which will result in an overall improvement in performance by the department. When managers behave in an ethical manner, which implies a higher level of shared objectives between employee and manager, the motivation of employees to work escalates, which results in improved learning and enhanced performance (Hillberg Jarl, 2024:415). Importantly, the social learning theory concludes that people observe and learn behaviour. In light of this, the theory informs the study with regards to how employees at ECDOE are learning ethical conduct and to act with integrity from their line managers.

The social learning theory suggests that prior to developing observational learning, a person undergoes a sequence of cognitive processes which include attention, retention, reproduction and motivation (Le & Hancer, 2021:514). Implying that a person pays attention, retains it and reproduces that particular behaviour. In this case, in the workplace, the employee gets to observe their line manager's conduct such as being punctual and they become aware of the importance of punctuality to their manager. This awareness means that employees retain the knowledge and use it to

improve their behaviour by placing importance on punctuality. When the employees notice the manner in which the manager adheres to ethics and integrity such as working time schedules by being punctual, they are likely to reproduce this kind of behaviour. The line manager then motivates the behaviour by repeating it.

More so, the theory also posits that humans are social by nature, therefore, people learn through social interactions, for example, talking to friends and action, trainee activities, support and reciprocal teaching (Yin, Li & Yu, 2024:1109). The employees start to interact about the behaviour of their line manager which will lead them to being punctual and adhering to the organisation's time schedules. The line manager gets to motivate the employees through their effort and willingness to behave in a manner that aligns with ethical conduct and upholds integrity. However, the willingness to be ethical and upholding does not happen automatically. Employees have to learn and make an effort to ensure that like their line manager, they have to be ethical and uphold integrity. The social learning theory shows that the foundation of embracing an ethical lifestyle and upholding integrity can be extrinsic and intrinsic influences (Ngubane, 2021:5). Therefore, based on these aforementioned different assumptions of the social learning theory discussed in this section, the theory is applicable for this study.

2.3.2 McGregor's theory of X and Y

The study also uses the McGregor theory of X and Y which consists of two theories (Y and X) coined by Douglas McGregor, a social psychologist at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the 1960s. In both theories X and Y, management has a fundamental role in drawing together dynamics of production to improve performance (Chikwariro, Bussin & De Braine, 2021:2). Theory X and Y assert that management across the globe is dominated by two opposing theories on the nature of humans (Younis & El-Farr, 2023:4). From this theory by McGregor, managers have different views about employees. Essentially, in theory, X, the assumption is that employees are negative and their behaviour is negative as they dislike work and will not perform unless they are obligated to do so (Chikwariro et al., 2021:2). Theory Y, on the other hand, assumes that employees are capable as well as motivated (McGregor, 1960:22). Yip and Walker (2022:2689) indicate that McGregor argued that managers and organisations were better functioning through optimistic assumptions of followership which are dubbed Theory Y. McGregor's theory advances that a manager

produces a favourable workplace culture for self-actualization by encouraging ethics, integrity and morality (Galani & Galanakis, 2022:785). The main argument in this regard is that managers cannot be blamed all the time for the actions of the employees because the employees inherently choose the way they want to behave. Therefore, the theory guides the study to assess the manner in which line managers engage and motivate employees to be ethical and act with integrity.

According to theory X, the manager hates their work and this assumption posits that people dislike working naturally therefore they are less motivated to work (Drayton, 2024). Such employees who hate their work are more likely to act without integrity and ethics because they are not motivated. The manager in this situation is bound to influence their actions through rewards or punishment. The second assumption of theory X is that people are forced to work, and as such people are unmotivated and ambitionless (Cavarretta, 2024:2). This view about employees advances that the employees might breach ethics and integrity because they are not motivated to do the right thing, therefore, there is a lot of effort required from the manager to influence their perception about ethics and integrity. Theory X exposes this view by postulating that employees tend to desire guidance, avoid responsibility, display low degrees of ambition, as well as prioritize security above other concerns (Fahem & Menad, 2024:143). The theory is stating that employees prefer to be told what to do as such people lack creativity and dislike responsibility. Through this theoretical lens, the manager has a duty to control the application of ethics and upholding of integrity if there is no effort from the manager the employees do not take responsibility.

The other assumption under theory X states that people are selfish and have no interest in the organisation. The manager therefore believes that people look after their own interests, individual goal oriented, less intelligent, very lazy and work just to get money (Igbokwe, 2024:59). Therefore, the managers under theory X employ an approach to management which is hard with restricted motivational value and engagement. The hard approach suggest that a manager uses force, command, controls, strict supervision and threatens people. This approach erodes respect and dignity of employees which impacts the trust between manager and employees leading to lies, disrespect, lack of transparency and manipulation. However, type X manager views the use of a hard approach as the only way that pushes the employees to conduct themselves in an ethical manner and uphold integrity. Contrary to that

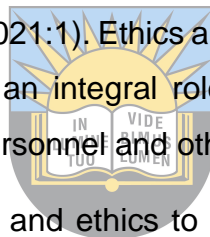
assumption, the manner in which the employees by are treated type X managers undermines the upholding of ethics and integrity (Oswald & Mascarenhas, 2019:204). Type X managers under McGregor's theory believe employees should coerce, control, direct and threaten employees with punishment to get them to do more work. Galani and Galanakis (2022:784) contend that managers utilising theory X rely predominantly on threats and intimidation to obtain the fulfilment of their workforce. Therefore, this theory guides the study to assess how the conduct of the line managers is discouraging ethics and integrity among employees at ECDOE.

Theory Y has a different managerial style. The theory assumes that people love work. The explanation of this theory is that employees are regarded as self-directed, dedicated, highly motivated, highly competent and capable of doing things in an inherent way so as to attain personal and organisational goals (Reisman, Keiser, Westphal & Hammrich, 2024:71). Through this theoretical lens, employees are bound to uphold ethics and integrity because they love their work, highly motivated, self-directed and capable of being responsible because their manager allows them a high degree of autonomy and mind freedom to do what is right. Touma (2021:26) also points out that the other assumption is that people drive themselves and work effectively. The managers are of the view that employees do not need control and supervision to meet their personal and organisational goals. Therefore, they are able to make ethical decisions and have integrity because they are driven towards doing what is good for their work and the organisation. The theory also has a conjecture that people will take the initiative given the opportunity. In light of this assumption, it can be presumed that employees are able to focus on being professional which means they are able to be ethical and uphold integrity if their line managers allow them to be responsible. The nature of management by line managers in the department can shape the perceptions of employees on ethical or unethical depending on the degree of autonomy, responsibility and engagement. Therefore, this theory is deemed useful in informing the study of how line managers influence the perceptions of employees on ethics and integrity within ECDOE.

2.4 Role of ethics and integrity in an organisation

Ethics and integrity play a role in every procedure or function within an organisation. Ethics and integrity are of high value in any kind of organisation. Strand (2020:28)

mentions that the high value of ethics and integrity is equally pertinent to the private sector, public sector as well as non-profit organisations. Hanapiyah et al. (2019:38) also add that integrity is considered a fundamental element as it is essential for the functioning of private and public organisations. The expression of work environment ethics and integrity relates to almost every issue in organisation, including the manufacturing, movement, advertising, deal as well as the use of products and undertakings (Malak & Hamas, 2021:24). The aim of every organisation is to have workers behave in a manner that is in accordance with the organisation's mission and goals, that is, synchronising with the central values, abiding by a code of ethics and matching conduct with beliefs across diverse circumstances (Hanapiyah et al., 2019:39). Ethics and integrity practices help an organisation to have workers that behave in a manner that is in line with its mission and goals. Therefore, all organisations are expected to have an ethical code that guides activities, conduct and decision-making to ensure effective productivity and the maintenance of the organisation's reputation (Zahra, 2021:1). Ethics and integrity can never be overlooked in the organisation as they have an integral role to play within an organisation in guiding general conduct among personnel and others attached to the organisation.



An organisation relies on integrity and ethics to ensure that there is consistency in processes and performance. Integrity plays an essential supporting role in ensuring that there is a pattern of alignment for workers with ethical principles, good morals, and productivity within the organisation (Hanapiyah et al., 2019:39). Kamaludin and Ismail (2021:16) purport that integrity is a function of an organisation that is consistent with the purpose and values for which it was established. Powers (2019:11) states that research depicts that when an organisation has an ethical atmosphere that prioritizes doing what is good, employees are inclined to be happier at work, more committed to their organisation, and lessen the chances of them leaving. Al Halbusi, Ruiz-Palomino, Morales-Sanchez, Muniem and Fattah (2021:1) mention that an ethical atmosphere within an organisation can influence workers' conduct. Powers (2019:11) also posits that a growing frequency of ethical conduct and the existence of an ethical environment will attach people to an organisation. Adding to this viewpoint, Teresi, Pietroni, Barattucci, Giannella and Pagliaro (2019:3) assert that people endeavour to be part of groups and organisations that are regarded as moral and honest, and this criticality of organisational morality results in them committing themselves to the

organisation. A positive ethical environment in an organisation generates an inclination to work ethically by employees (Borhani, Abbaszadeh, Bahrampour, Ameri & Aryaeenezhad, 2021:2). Through integrity and ethics an organisation ensures different conduct by individuals within the organisation aligns with expected functions.

The importance of ethics and integrity within an organisation cannot be overlooked because they not only affect the internal operations and functions, but they also affect compliance with rules and regulations outside the organisation. Relationships, conduct, values, criteria, beliefs, and general good behaviours within the organisation are derived from its ethics and integrity (Borhani et al., 2021:2). Borhani et al. (2021:5) argue that increased levels of ethical conduct have been witnessed in organisations where ethical standards are embraced and implemented, and these standards will eventually become part of the knowledge for the workers within organisation, influencing the workers' ethical decisions. Organisational policies influence a person's chances to be ethical and shape the ethical environment of the organisation (Borhani et al., 2021:5). Ethical or unethical nature of decisions emanate straight from organisational policies and goals (Borhani et al., 2021:5). Malak and Hamas (2021:25) emphasise on the impact of ethics and integrity on work fulfilment. The authors mention that there is a significant effect of ethics within a work environment on employment fulfilment. Countless organisations incorporate a commitment to ethical behaviour in their code of conduct (Zahra, 2021:4). The ethics and integrity of personnel shape the work environment.

Compliance with ethics and integrity conduct is important for any organisation. Compliance with ethics in a professional manner is one of the necessities for achieving goals in an organisation (Moghadam, 2021:21). Ethics in an organisation produces efficient communication, results in organisational productivity and job satisfaction in personnel, and eventually results in excellence and growth of the organisation (Zahra, 2021:5). Even though there is always need for compliance, Ngubane (2021:1) highlights that private sector organisations at times engage in unethical conduct to get profits at any lengths, however, corruption and greed are now contributing to unethical actions. Public service institutions are also not exempted from corruption and greed as the reason for unethical conduct with political patronage being another component that is also promoting unethical conduct in public sector organisations (Ngubane, 2021:1). Sometimes unethical conduct occurs due to unforeseen circumstances.

Therefore, organisations must review their ethics and integrity practices often so that they can maintain compliance.

Ethics and integrity practices will always benefit the organisation. Malak and Hamas (2021:25) purport that ethical practices can be a remarkable asset for upgrading an organisation, particularly when various approaches are employed to develop an ethical work culture for personnel. The code of ethics of an organisation has to be known by the entire personnel therefore it should be openly and unambiguously explained to the entire workforce (Moghadam, 2021:25). Unethical organisations are generally embodied with a disconnect between top management and the organisations' code of conduct (Ngubane, 2021:1). Undoubtedly, sets of standards, ethical training, the impact of the board/colleague, and widespread communication can strengthen individual and hierarchical responsibility to ethical work conduct (Malak and Hamas, 2021:25). Every organisation should set an ethics policy that is applies to everyone in the organisation, from the person in the highest management position to the least ranked employee such as mail clerk (Zahra, 2021:1). The application of ethics and integrity sets the tone with regards to how personnel handles situations of morality.

Promoting ethics and integrity has to be a priority for any good institution to thrive. Sometimes, managers are dedicated to initiating a culture of ethical conduct within the organisation, however, they might not know how to efficiently incorporate ethics (Martinez, Skeet & Sasia, 2021:85). Based on the findings of their study, the authors suggest that an organisation supports consistent culture examinations that take into account revising cultural components and evaluating the existence or absence of circumstances that might result in the introduction, utilisation as well as affirmation of ethics. Through these forms of examinations, organisations might identify circumstances and cultural components worth endorsing to inspire ethics (Martinez et al., 2021:89). Once the organisation has worked on its findings to instigate change towards a culture of ethics and integrity, a reassessment begins the process anew (Martinez et al., 2021:89). In essence, there is always a need to regularly check the implementation of ethics and integrity in an organisation. Training can also be used to incorporate ethics and integrity in organisations. Andersson and Ekelund (2022:1099) underscore training is a significant mechanism guiding toward integrity and ethics. Pantiru (2019:28) asserts that some public institutions utilise training that consists of open dialogue about what might become challenging, even if it is not a break of the

law because it impacts the credibility of the institution, might lessen the trust in public administration and has an adverse effect on the economy and the public administration workforce.

2.5 Ethics and integrity in the public sector

Ethics and integrity are important in the public sector because the public sector handles the public affairs of a country utilising public resources. Ethics guidelines are always intended to shape public sector organisations from within, through value-orientated provisions for recruitment and selection, performance management, workplace associations, avoidance of conflict of interests, management as well as leadership in public organisations (Pantiru, 2019:21). Bowman and West (2021:6) underscore that public sector employees have to not only do technical things correctly but also perform them in an ethically correct manner. Okanda et al. (2021:116) assert that there is an engrained public viewpoint of general pessimism and criticism towards organisational leaders in the public sector for giving little attention to ethical practices in their workplace. Workers in public sector positions who are motivated and engaged are highly likely to report ethical misdemeanours to management, advancing ethics and integrity in the public sector (Strand, 2020:11). Strand (2020:11) also mentions that workers in public service are highly likely to report misconduct within the workplace because they have a strong deep sense of commitment to serve in the public sector as well as loyalty to a sense of duty.

Ethics and integrity in the public sector have to guide the proper conduct of public personnel when they are performing their duties. So, a lot of issues are taken into account when considering ethics and integrity in the public sector. Even though not exhaustive, Pantiru (2019:8) highlights some of the ethics guidelines for public administration personnel which include: professionalism, citizen focus, fairness and objectivity, independence (from political or business influence), prevention of conflict of interests, legality and rule of law, transparency, responsibility, non-discrimination, fair treatment, respect for human dignity, public interest, accountability, rights and duties of public administration employees, loyalty, protection of privacy, collaboration, disclosure of wrongdoing, harassment, consultation, public administration workers' participation in decision-making, citizens' involvement in decision-making, incompatibilities, professional discretion and professional secret, secularism,

innovation, efficiency, society wellbeing, use of technology/artificial intelligence in the public administration among other things. More so, in the public sector, the administration and handling of ethics might be done through ethics committees and integrity officials who are deemed to play a significant formal role in integrity systems (Karsten & Jacobs, 2022:268). There is a significant role that is played by ethics and integrity in the public sector which is of value to the beneficiary to the public.

2.5.1 Ethics and integrity in the South African public sector

Generally, ethics and integrity in the South African public sector are becoming an area of contention. Efficient public administration in South Africa is hindered by unethical behaviour, corruption, misapplication of authority, as well as general mismanagement and poor governance (Shava & Mazenda, 2021:310). Pillay (2022:1) also adds that unethical acts within the public sector are resulting in the relentless erosion of public institutions' integrity, and transparency as well as the lack of trust, towards the public administration institutes of the government. The issues of ethics and integrity are eroding the trust of the public in public institutions within the country. Therefore, the government is seeking to deal with challenges of corruption and unethical behaviour in the country which is why there has been a strong emphasis on fostering a culture of integrity, accountability, and transparency within the public sector (Shava & Mazenda, 2021:311; Chitimira, Sethunyane & Magau, 2023:70; Enaifoghe, Jili & Mthethwa, 2023:2). The conduct of public servants is guided by several measures and frameworks that have been put in place to promote ethical conduct and ensure that public officials act in the best interests of the citizens they serve. Some key elements of ethics and integrity conduct in the South African public sector include ethic training and awareness; establishment of the ethics committee and offices; whistleblower protection; accountability and oversight; code of ethics and conduct; establishment and application of legislation and policies as well as penalties for unethical conduct.

In all public institutions, ethics, and integrity are usually introduced and communicated to ensure that all public employees are aware of the requirements of ethics and integrity. The South African public sector places a strong emphasis on ethics training and awareness programs (Jarbandhan, 2022:28). Ethics training and awareness provide a platform for public employees to develop skills in ethics and integrity that are useful to their organisation. Vyas-Doorgapersad (2022:19) asserts that public servants

who participate in ethics training are aware of all the regulations, procedures, and ethical standards that relate to their organisation. The training and awareness initiatives aim to raise awareness about ethical issues and equip officials with the necessary knowledge to make ethical decisions. Therefore, when public officials are provided with training on ethical conduct, the code of conduct, and their responsibilities as custodians of public resources they are empowered to act ethically.

The monitoring and evaluation of ethics and integrity in public institutions is usually conducted by ethics committees and/or ethics offices. The Public Service Regulations, 2016, Section 23 (2) provides for the creation of an ethics committee and/or office in every department in the South African public sector (Public Service Commission [PSC], 2022:5). Many government departments and agencies in South Africa have established ethics committees or offices responsible for promoting and enforcing ethical standards. According to Dobie and Plant (2022:8), the ethics office is supposed to constantly monitor the ethics management programme in an organisation. This constant monitoring is done to keep a trail of ethics management programme implementation and also to monitor data that will provide a picture of the nature of ethics in the organisation (Dobie & Plant, 2022:8). Ethics officers and/or ethics committees are supposed to encourage awareness on ethics and to function as the departmental ethics ombudsman by preventing unethical conduct, behaviour as well as activities (PSC, 2022:24). The ethics committee and ethics office provide guidance, advice, and support to public officials, investigate allegations of misconduct, and recommend appropriate disciplinary action when necessary.

Ethics and integrity in the public service sector in South Africa are promoted by protecting whistleblowers. Whistleblowing is encouraged and protected in South Africa. Musiyarira (2020:1) mentions that to enhance the identification of unethical conduct, the government of South Africa has attempted to solidify ethics in the public sector by adopting whistleblowers and whistleblower protection. Baloyi (2020:179) also adds that ethics and integrity in the public sector are promoted by strengthening the multi-agency corruption mechanism; reinforcing the protection of whistle-blowers; making sure there is better central oversight over the granting of tenders; and building a transparent and accountable public service. The provision of legal statutes that protect individuals who report corrupt or unethical practices within the public sector

has been instrumental in the promotion of ethical conduct. This legislation safeguards whistleblowers from victimization and ensures their confidentiality.

The aspect of accountability and oversight in the South African public sector is enhancing ethics and integrity within government departments. Baloyi (2020:179) purports that the government aims to promote ethics and integrity in the public sector by strengthening accountability and oversight mechanisms. Various oversight mechanisms, such as auditing bodies like the Auditor-General of South Africa and parliamentary committees, play a crucial role in holding public officials accountable for their actions. Regular audits and investigations are conducted to identify and rectify any instances of mismanagement or unethical conduct.

Upholding ethics and integrity depends on the code of conduct introduced in the public sector departments. Public officials in South Africa are expected to adhere to a code of conduct that outlines the standards of behaviour. Maile and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2023:13) argue that the primary reason for unethical conduct in the public sector might be because of the work pressure, the shortage of not taking decisive actions against those who committed unethical deeds in the past, as well as the absence of a code of conduct. The code emphasizes integrity, honesty, accountability, and the avoidance of conflicts of interest. It sets out principles and values that guide public officials in their decision-making processes. However, Enaifoghe et al. (2023:7) posit that for an introduced appropriate codes of ethics and conduct to be efficient there is need for it to be supported by a series of other structures, training, and leadership by managers as well as political leaders alike.

Furthermore, legislation and policies are critical in ensuring that ethics and integrity are maintained in the South African public sector. South Africa has enacted several laws and policies to combat corruption and promote ethical behaviour. Shava and Mazenda (2021:310) underscore that the government's efforts to deal with corruption and unethical conduct in the public sector are through legislation and policies. There are several notable legislative frameworks that inform the public sector employees on conduct including guidelines for financial administration, management and accountability, prevention and combating of corrupt activities and unethical practices.

The South African government is embedding an ethical culture in the public sector so that ethics and integrity are upheld by ensuring that there are consequences for

misconduct. The South African public sector has been increasingly proactive in dealing with instances of misconduct. McIntyre, Aslett and Buitendag (2023:1080) assert that as a way of dealing with unethical conduct, there is a register that is supposed to be set aside to monitor the development of the referred cases and that any matters of unethical conduct should be reported in accordance to Section 15(5)(a) and (b) of Public Administration Management Act 11 of 2014. The government is ensuring that disciplinary procedures are in place to investigate allegations of unethical behaviour, and appropriate action is taken against those found guilty. This includes disciplinary measures, dismissal, criminal charges, and the recovery of misappropriated funds.

It is important to note that while significant progress has been made, challenges still exist in fully eradicating corruption and unethical behaviour in the South African public sector. Continued efforts, supported by a commitment from government officials, civil society, and citizens, are essential to strengthen the ethical foundations and integrity of the public sector.

2.5.2 Code of ethics

Codes of ethics are a set of guidelines and standards that function as regulatory norms for the behaviour of public employees (National School of Government, 2022:57). They usually encompass ethical values and principles that are the foundation of the institution they govern, suggest conduct, and generally have a juridical character lesser to that of the legislation (National School of Government, 2022:57). Additionally, according to Rossouw and Van Vuuren (2020:34), codes of ethics establishes principles for both the organisation's dealings with its non-contractual as well as contractual stakeholders. There is a need for clarity on the set of standards to be followed by all stakeholders that operate within or with an organisation. The code of ethics serves as the set of standards by the organisation which is supposed to provide clarity on what is acceptable and unacceptable within the work environment.

According to Maile and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2023:13), the government developed a mission to create a citizen-centred and people-driven public service characterised by quality, equity, timorousness, and a robust code of ethics. It is important to understand that a code of ethics is simply words written on paper (Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2020:35). Whether contracted stakeholders can abide with the set standards will be revealed by aspects such as making sure that contracted stakeholders are acquainted

with these standards, that they are encouraged to follow the standards, that leaders put into practice the code of ethics, and that there are penalties for adherence or non-adherence to these standards (Rossouw & Van Vuuren, 2020:36). This assertion forms a premise for this study, the study seeks to understand the perceptions that employees have on the ethics and integrity of their line managers in the public sector based on their adherence to code of ethics.

2.5.3 Legislative framework dealing with ethics in the public sector

There are several legislation that are focused on promoting ethics and integrity by public servants in the South African public sector. Some of the legislative prescripts dealing with issues regarding ethics and integrity within the South African public sector are discussed in this section.

i. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996

The first legislation that provides guidance and upholds the observance and utilisation of ethics and integrity within the South African public sector is the supreme law of the country which is the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996 (henceforth the Constitution). Lekubu and Sibanda (2021:7) point out that the lack or deficiency of ethics as well as accountability within the public sector in South Africa are the main cause of corruption in government departments, therefore, there is a need for professionalism as supported by Chapter 10 Section 195 of the Constitution. Section 195 of the Constitution`s guidelines on ethics include the following:

- a. Maintaining and promoting a high standard of ethical conduct among public professionals.
- b. Promoting the cost-effective and efficient utilisation of resources within the public sector.
- c. Being able to provide services without bias, prejudice, impartiality, unfairness and inequality.
- d. Fostering transparency by ensuring that the public is provided with accessible, timely and precise information.
- e. Public administration has to be focused on development.
- f. People`s needs have to be addressed and there must be encouragement of the public to be involved in policy making.

- g. Good human resources and human development procedures that help the public personnel to perform optimally.
- h. Ensuring accountability in public administration.
- i. The Public sector must be a wide representative of South African society with employment and management of workforce premised on the objectivity, competency, and equality and addressing the past imbalances.

Based on these stipulations of this Section, public institution must take into account the various aspects that are outlined above as a basis for creating an ethical environment that accommodates an efficient ethical culture within the organisation. Line managers who consider and act in accordance to the stipulation offered in Section 195 might help improve the perceptions of level 4-9 employees who are within their organisation. This study sets to understand if there is an alignment in the conduct of the line managers with the stipulations in legal regulations such that it influences the conduct of their subordinates.

ii. Prevention and Combating of Corruption Activities Act 12 Of 2004

The Prevention and combating of corruption activities Act is one of the legislative prescripts that assists to promote ethical behaviour by dealing with corruption within the South African public sector. Mhlauli (2022:4) asserts that the Act makes stipulations on the following: *Together in Excellence*

- a. procedures to avert and combat corruption be reinforced;
- b. handling corruption crimes and those crimes connected to corrupt activities;
- c. procedures to investigate corruption and associated activities;
- d. registers to be developed and endorsed to restrain people and businesses found guilty of corrupt activities relating to tenders and contracts;
- e. individuals occupying positions of authority be obligated to report corrupt transactions;
- f. extraterritorial jurisdiction in respect of the crimes of corruption and those associated with it; and
- g. any other issues associated with corruption.

The Act provides a basis for eliminating corruption which provides a conducive environment for the promotion of ethical conduct within the public sector institutions.

iii. Public Service Act 103 of 1994

The Public Service Act is instrumental in informing public servants about acceptable ethics and integrity during public administration and management in the public sector. The Public Service Act is a crucial legal instrument that stipulates guidelines regarding how public officials are supposed to obey sound ethical standards in their execution of public duties. The statute outlines the need for ethical conduct and the need for corrective measures when there is unethical conduct by any public official. The Act presents a legislative prescript that governs the conduct of public servants to adhere to ethical standards when carrying out their public duties (Shava & Mazenda, 2021:311). The Act aims to provide for the organisation and administration of the public service in South Africa, the governing of the conditions of employment, discipline, terms of office, retirement, and discharge of personnel in the public service, and issues associated therewith. Shabangu (2022:53) posits that the Act highlights unethical conduct acts such as absenteeism, subordination, stealing and corruption, involvement in party politics, and financial embarrassment that can draw disciplinary proceedings. The application of stipulations in the Public Service Act can help line managers instil ethical conduct within the organisation. The perceptions of employees can be influenced by the application of stipulations within this Act by their line manager. Therefore, this study examines such situations of the ethics and integrity of the line manager which includes adhering to the Public Service Act.

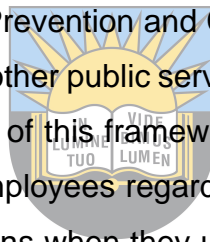
iv. Public Service Regulations 2016

The Public Service Regulations 2016 forms part of the framework that informs the ethics and integrity with regard to the public administration and management in the South African public sector. Chapter 2 of the Public Service Regulations stipulates the different issues that need to be considered when ethics and integrity are being considered within the public sector. Mokhomole (2023:20) mentions that the Public Service Regulations emphasises that the head of a department has to establish mechanisms that encourage and permits personnel and citizens to report violation accusations and other unethical conduct, and such system must provide (i) discretion of reporting; and (ii) the recording of all allegations of corruption and unethical behaviour receive through the system(s). The Public Service Regulations encourage the utilisation of ethics and integrity in conducting public administration and

management duties. The line managers are supposed to ensure stipulations in the Public Service Regulations are followed so that the perceptions and conduct of employees align with the required ethical conduct within the South African public sector.

v. Public Administration Management Act 11 of 2014 (PAMA)

The Public Administration Management Act 11 of 2014 is one of the significant legal frameworks that obliges public sector servants to observe ethics and act with integrity when performing public administration and management duties. McIntyre et al. (2023:1079) purport that the PAMA has mandates that are laid out in Section 3 which, inter alia, demands a high standard of professional ethics and avoidance of unethical conduct. Mokhomole (2023:19) remarks that Section 15 of PAMA demands that when management and/or organisation uncover any corruption practices, such corruption has to instantaneously be reported for investigations to the police in respect of any relevant regulation, including the Prevention and Combating of Corrupt Activities Act. Therefore, the line managers and other public servants are guided by the PAMA to act ethically and with integrity. In light of this framework stipulations, this study seeks to understand how perceptions of employees regarding ethics and integrity are likely to be shaped by line managers' actions when they unearth unethical conduct within the organisation.



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vi. Public Finance Management Act 1 of 1999 (PFMA)

The Public Finance Management Act is a significant legal statute that helps the public sector uphold ethics and integrity when carrying out responsibilities that encompass the management and administration of public funds. Mokhomole (2023:18) highlights that Section 85(b) of the PFMA stipulates the Minister of Finance develop guidelines specifying issues to be examined when investigating allegations of unethical conduct, particularly with regard to financial mismanagement. Therefore, the PFMA offers both management and employees guidance on how public funds are supposed to be handled ethically and with integrity. The line managers in public institutions are expected to be exemplary in any form whenever they are responsible for public funds so that they can influence the perceptions of their immediate subordinates to be ethical when managing and administrating public funds.

vii. Public Service Code of Conduct of 1997

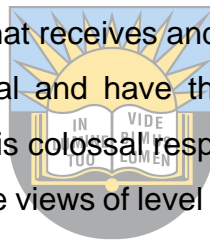
The Public Service Code of Conduct is also vital in the prevalence and application of ethics and integrity in the South African public sector. Sithomola (2022:23) argues that to conform to the public service's constitutional obligations, all public servants have to observe the Public Service Code of Conduct. The Code works as a guideline concerning what is expected from public servants. All personnel are expected to follow the Code of Conduct to reinforce professionalism within the public service, as defined in Section 195 of the Constitution. The Code of Conduct plainly specifies that public employees have to be committed to the Republic and respect the Constitution (Sithomola, 2022:23). The Code further stipulates that public servants have to prioritise the public's interests and encourage comprehensive, effective, accountable, transparent and ethical administration. The line managers and employees have to consider the stipulations of the Code of Conduct as a guide for ethics and integrity. When line managers do not regard the stipulations of the Code of Conduct they can influence their subordinates' perceptions of ethics and integrity within the organisation.

The organisation should produce an environment that is conducive for all employees to achieve strategic objectives in a manner that has integrity. To attain this behaviour that has integrity, ethics have to be promoted by the organisation. Ethics are promoted through setting at the grassroots level the organisation's shared expectations, values and beliefs to inspire ethical behaviour, reflection and decision-making (Martinez, Skeet & Sasia, 2021:84). Line managers are in close contact with employees whose role is to utilize policies and legislation prescripts to ensure that ethics and integrity are embedded at the grassroots level. Furthermore, the establishment and implementation of supporting mechanisms in the form of ethical codes, policies, practices, and systems is promoted and communicated by direct supervisors, mostly, line managers. These legal instruments discussed in this section describe how public office-bearers are supposed to perform their duties as well as the expectations regarding to ethical and integrity conduct.

2.6 The Eastern Cape provincial government

The Eastern Cape province is the second largest province out of the nine provinces in South Africa. Even though the province is one of the largest provinces in the country it is faced with a lot of socio-economic challenges. Roux, Viljoen, van Heerden, Horrell and Bertrand (2021:11) mention that the province has the lowest ranking out of the

nine provinces in South Africa in terms of economic, social and development indices. Consequentially, the province has high levels of poverty and more people on social grants. Roux et al. (2021:13) highlight that the Eastern Cape is the poorest province in the country. Ngumbela (2021:114) also posits that in comparison to the rest of the provinces, the Eastern Cape Province has the highest amount (95.4%) of poor, older people who are beneficiaries of old age grants. Additionally, the Eastern Cape Provincial Treasury (2024:5) indicates that the province has a very high unemployment rate of 41.9 percent with the youth being the worst affected. In an effort to reduce the socio-economic challenges faced by the province, the provincial government in line with complementing the national recovery efforts has prioritised allocating resources to the education sector. The Eastern Cape Provincial Treasury (2024:12) highlights that the largest share of the provincial budget was allocated to the education sector. This enormous allocation of financial resources requires high levels of ethical conduct and integrity to ensure that the resources are utilised efficiently and effectively. The ECDOE as the main department that receives and utilises these financial resources it requires personnel that are ethical and have the integrity to utilise the resources appropriately. Therefore, due to this colossal responsibility on the ECDOE, this study is centred on the assessment of the views of level 4-9 employees regarding ethics and integrity of their line managers focusing on the case of the ECDOE.



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2.6.1 Eastern Cape department of education

The ECDOE is the government institution tasked with the delivery of education services in the Eastern Cape. Mtebele (2021:5) avers that the delivery of education is premised on provincial competency, subject to norms and standards as stipulated by the Minister of Basic Education. Therefore, the administration and management of education occur through management structures that are situated in the provincial Head Offices (Mtebele, 2021:5). In line with the provincial government, the department recognizes the crucial role that quality education plays in ensuring economic development within the province and aims to connect the department's educational objectives with the requirements of the Eastern Cape economy (ECDOE, 2022:9). The mandate of the ECDOE is to offer a uniform system for the governance, organisation and funding of learning institutions (Mtebele, 2021:6). The department also makes sure that all learners are granted an opportunity to access quality education without discrimination (ECDOE, 2022:5). The education profession in ECDOE follows the

overall code of conduct for professionals in the education department. However, in its effort to deliver its mandate, the ECDOE is facing several challenges including ethics and integrity problems. The ethics and integrity problems in the ECDOE are both at an organisational as well as individual level (Ndlovu et al., 2020:36). Therefore, focused on the ECDOE to understand the perception of employees regarding the ethics and integrity of their managers within a public institution.

2.6.2 Code of professional ethics

The education professionals in the ECDOE are guided by the code of conduct known as the code of professional ethics as stipulated by the South African Council for Educators (SACE). This code of professional ethics for education professionals in South Africa is structured to make sure that all education professionals adhere to the highest standards of ethical conduct and professionalism. The South African Council for Educators (SACE) outlines these standards in the code of professional ethics which encompasses several key elements. SACE (2021:1) highlights that:

a. Professional conduct

The code of professional ethics expects all staff to be committed to their profession. In doing that the personnel are expected to maintain the dignity and respect of the teaching profession. The code also emphasises on the need to ensure continuous professional development. The promotion of a culture of teaching excellence and integrity is also highlighted by the code.

The code also indicates how professionals are supposed to conduct themselves towards learners. There is a clear emphasis on respecting the rights, dignity and individuality of every learner. Fostering a safe and supportive learning environment is also highlighted as key in the code of professional ethics. The code also mentions that there is a need to provide equal opportunities and evade any form of discrimination. Furthermore, the code also ensure the maintenance of a professional relationship with learners as well as avoiding there is no form of inappropriate behaviour or abuse. The education professionals both educators and non-educators have to ensure that these areas of conduct are adhered to when dealing with learners. The non-educators assess and monitor if learning institutions are enforcing such conduct to enable the delivery of quality education.

The code of professional ethics also stipulates the conduct expected towards parents and guardians. The primary emphasis is on communication being effective and respectful when dealing with parents and guardians. Additionally, there is a need to ensure the provision of correct and timely information about learners' progress. The code also highlights the need to respect the learners' privacy and confidentiality of certain information.

The code also concentrates on the conduct of education professionals towards colleagues. Collaboration and cooperation with colleagues in a spirit of mutual respect is regarded as imperative by the code of professional ethics. Additionally, avoiding the undermining or discrediting of colleagues is highlighted as crucial in professional conduct of education staff. There is also a directive in the code to report any professional misconduct observed among colleagues. These different aspects of conduct towards colleagues make it clear that there is a need for high levels of professionalism and any activity that is not professional has to be reported.

The code also highlights the expected conduct towards the employer among education personnel. The code indicates the need for education professionals to uphold the policies, regulations as well as rules within an organisation. The code also states the necessity of performing duties diligently and to the best of one's ability. Respecting contractual obligations and responsibilities is also a key element for all education professionals.

b. Ethical principles

Integrity is highlighted as important for education professionals. The code stipulates the need to demonstrate honesty, fairness, and transparency in all professional undertakings. The code also outlines that the education personnel are supposed to evade any kind of fraud, dishonesty or misrepresentation.

The code of professional ethics also stipulates the need for accountability among education professionals. The code encourages the employees within the education space to take responsibility for their conduct and decisions. The code also places emphasis on ensuring accountability in education practices and learner outcomes.

Respect is also a key aspect of the code of professional ethics. Education employees are expected to treat all individuals with respect, irrespective of their background,

characteristics, or beliefs. Additionally, there is an expectation within the code of professional ethics to foster an environment of mutual respect and understanding.

Confidentiality is another part of professional conduct that is prioritised by the code of professional ethics. This aspect encompasses protecting the confidentiality of learners' and colleagues' information. However, there is emphasis on disclosing information only when required by law or for the protection of individuals.

Professional competence is also highlighted as an integral aspect of professional conduct for the education labour force. Due to this stipulation, there is a need to continuously seek to advance the personnel's professional skills and knowledge through engaging in ongoing professional development and training.

c. Enforcement and compliance

The code of professional ethics stresses the importance of reporting misconduct. Education staff are encouraged to report any unethical conduct or professional misconduct to the appropriate authorities.

Disciplinary action is also underscored as a priority in ensuring professional conduct among education employees. The SACE has the responsibility for investigating reported cases of misconduct and can impose disciplinary measures which include suspension, reprimands, or deregistration.

Legal obligations are another component that is stressed as key in guiding the professional conduct within the education space. Education personnel are expected to comply with all legal obligations and regulations connected to their professional conduct and responsibilities.

The code of professional ethics forms a guide for all education employees in South Africa emphasizes the importance of professionalism, integrity, accountability, respect, confidentiality, and continuous professional development. The code also serves as a guideline to ensure that education professionals maintain high ethical standards in their encounters with learners, parents, colleagues as well as the wider community. The ECDOE is supposed to consider these different aspects that are enshrined in the code of professional ethics to guide their conduct. The ethics and integrity of employees are perceived within the stipulations of the code.

2.7 Ethics and integrity among employees

Individuals are responsible for their behaviour as such they are expected to have ethics and integrity. Malak and Hamas (2021:25) argue for an individual to progress within an organisation a good track record of ethics and integrity in the individual's conduct is essential. Zahra (2021:1) also maintains that ethical conduct ensures that employees complete their duties with honesty as well as integrity and meet the goals of the organisation by following the organisation's rules and policies. Al Halbusi et al. (2021:5) underscore that factors such as moral attentiveness, moral awareness, and moral sensitivity are part of individual factors that promote ethics and integrity by an individual within a work environment. In this case, moral attentiveness is about the experiences of an individual that are chronologically perceived and considered to be moral and have moral elements (Al Halbusi et al., 2021:5). Moral sensitivity is about the reaction to the ethical issues or concerns which forms the quintessence of moral decision-making (Borhani et al., 2021:5). Ethics and integrity which are critical in the moral uprightness of an employee provide a foundation for positive conduct within an organisation. Malak and Hamas (2021:25) highlight that an employee's ethics and integrity are part of the indispensable pillars in constructing a moral setting, and organisations will often reap added advantages, depending on the positive associations among the workforce. Ethics and integrity of employees are determining factors in how their performance develops. Rahim et al. (2020:517) mention that workers who have high levels of integrity and ethical intelligence are usually always alert about their performance. Workers with high integrity are usually more honest, rational, and independent in comparison with those with less integrity (Rahim et al., 2020:518).

Employees require the ethics and integrity clarity to stay motivated and committed. Strand (2020:11) argues that low levels of ethics and integrity often result in low levels of motivation and commitment among the personnel. To reinforce employees' deep affective emotional attachment to the organisation, organisations make use of ethical activities, improved standards of integrity as well as a compassionate environment (Guohao, Pervaiz & Qi, 2021:1449). Additionally, workers have to perceive decisions as ethically coherent with their values, so that they and the groups they take part in are dedicated to behaving in accordance to this shared ethical framework and to reviewing it as new responsibilities arise (Martinez et al., 2021:85). Quality personnel

usually depends on the integrity and ethics practices within an organisation (Hanapiyah et al., 2019:39). When ethics and integrity are part of the work atmosphere, employees can feel progressively secure and can focus on being effective and efficient (Malak & Hamas 2021:25). Strand (2020:31) argues that the perception of the employees regarding ethics and values of an organisation is largely depends on the influence by those in management positions. Therefore, it is important that the employees need ethics and integrity to be prevalent to ensure commitment and motivation.

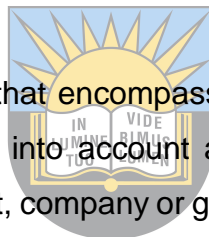
2.7.1 Different levels of employees

The public sector in South Africa consists of different levels of employees. The public sector employees are classified into different levels ranging from 1 to 14 based on different aspects. These levels correspond to various grades as well as roles within the public service, each with distinct qualifications, responsibilities, and salary scales (Granny & Idris, 2020:4; Malatjie & Montana, 2021:30). The Department of Labour (DOL) (2021:2) provides a breakdown of different occupation levels as follows:

- Level 1-3: categorised as unskilled personnel and decision-making defined. Under this level activities to achieve processes or work are plainly defined and understood. The tasks are often uncomplicated, repetitive, and it is a short work cycle.
- Level 4-9: This is categorised by semiskilled labour and decision-making is discretionary. The personnel under this category are responsible and account for direct service, process or product quality. Incremental enhancement of existing procedures and processes is in accordance with guidelines which are clear. The personnel select an appropriate action on the premise of set standards, training processes, and previous experience.
- Level 9-13: This category is generally made up of skilled technical and academically qualified junior management, supervisors, foremen, or superintendents. This classification applies extensive expertise and knowledge of techniques, processes services, and products. Appraise procedures and make use of experience. The personnel are responsible for coming up with

good solutions when organisation is faced with a challenge. These employees determine their priorities. Under this category, what needs to be carried out is specified; but may need initiative with regards to how it should be implemented.

- Level 14-18: this group consists of professional experts and mid-management personnel that are highly qualified, skilled as well as experienced. These employees have professional expertise of a particular sub-discipline or discipline; therefore, they provide input in the establishment of organisational or functional unit business plans. These employees lead the formulation and implementation of departmental/team plans that will support the organisation's strategic plan or business unit business plans. These personnel ensure the resources optimisation (such as people, information, finances, material and technology) to accomplish specific goals in most productive and cost-efficient manner.



- Level 18-22: is a category that encompasses senior management personnel. This labour category takes into account all aspects about the organisation, business area, business unit, company or group and have extensive knowledge of the entire entity. This personnel offer inputs for the development of the overall organisational strategy. Deciphers the overall strategy into organisational process or business plans for a particular department, business or functional unit, in so doing operationalising organisational strategy. Applies and directs the strategic plan or business plan making sure that goals and objectives are achieved. In this level, there is a responsibility to ensure that there is attainment of overall key department, business unit or functional outputs. The personnel also manage the formulation of innovation and transformation.
- Level 23-26: this last group is composed of top management and/or executives. These personnel control the functional integration of the organisation. These employees from this category are also responsible for determining the overall strategy and goals of the organisation. These executives direct the organisation into the future. Their type of work as well as focus is long-term, and they sign-off on strategy or policy.

From these different occupation levels, this study focused on the level 4-9 because the personnel are responsible and accountable for the delivery of quality services. The main challenge that seeks to address is the lack of service delivery due to challenges of ethics and integrity, therefore understanding the perceptions of the employees that are tasked with ensuring the delivery and accountability for quality service.

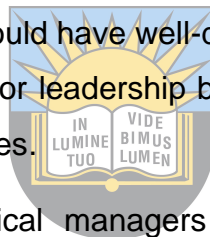
2.8 Ethics and integrity by management

Ethics and integrity are key components of good leadership. A Leader's ethical conduct shapes the ethical environment in an organisation (Al Halbusi et al., 2021:1). Okanda et al. (2021:116) also underscore that leadership is a complex occupation that provokes high expectations and demands morality, integrity, high levels of conduct, and ethical behavior because leaders' decision-making and conduct influence their subordinates' lives as well as their social welfare. Dladla (2020:25) mentions being a leader with ethics can be regarded as a leader's most important task. Leaders, by stipulating conditions regarding what is rewarded and accepted, denote a fundamental source of information about acceptable behaviours in the immediate work environment (Al Halbusi et al., 2021:3). Ethics and integrity are critical aspects in defining managers and leaders in a workplace.



Leaders with ethics usually have distinct traits that allow them to ensure that an organisation and its personnel function effectively. Some of the characteristics of a leader with ethics include being humble, concerned about the greater good, fulfilling commitments, and taking responsibility. Additionally, ethical leadership also strives for fairness, honest and straight forward, encouraging and developing others, allowing respect for all individuals, serving other people and displays courage to stand up for what is good (Ngubane, 2021:3). On the other hand, there are leaders that are unethical who narcissistic and self-serving, breaks agreements, whose personality extremely promotes egocentricity. Consequently this unethical leadership personality also involve shifting blames to others, disregarding follower development, undermining other's dignity, refusing to support others and lacks courage to confront amoral acts (Ngubane, 2021:3). The distinction between a good and bad manager is notable in their traits of ethics and integrity. Even, though the demarcations maybe unclear in practical situations, the ethical conduct remains as the main factor that distinguishes the managers in a manner that assists the organisation to be more productive.

Leaders are expected to have coherence and consistency. Throughout the globe, governments are trying to encourage the upholding of ethics because both politicians and public officials struggle to behave ethically such that they demonstrate integrity and honesty (Shava and Mazenda, 2021:307). The employees have their perceptions of the leaders based on the consistent and coherent behaviours that the leaders display. Mitonga-Monga, Mokhethi, Keswa, Lekoma, Mathebula, and Mbatha (2023:370) discovered that the association concerning career commitment and ethical leadership is positive and it is a crucial component of work commitment. This finding reveals that leaders with ethics and integrity are more committed to their work and help improve the work commitment of their subordinates. Ethics and integrity are influential on the actions an organisation, decisions, moral and choices and also management plays a vital part in influencing organisational integrity (Roszkowska and Mele, 2021:189). According to Prinsloo and De Klerk (2020:3), there is a common view that ethics and integrity should begin at the top and managers should set up an environment that is ethical and should have well-defined standards. Therefore, a lack of ethical behaviour reflects on poor leadership by management that is supposed to uphold ethical and integrity practices.



In public sector institutions, ethical managers are expected to be trustworthy, committed to civil service values and the objectives of the department, have integrity (including the inhibiting corruption), be socially responsible, have courage, be professional and efficient (Pantiru, 2019:25). Karsten and Jacobs (2022:269) mentions that a leader that has integrity is a person that is deemed to always act transparently as well as unambiguously in accord with normally recognized norms and values, and has a well-established moral compass. Zahra (2021:1) also comments that the principles which are utilised by a manager within an organisation will dictate everything from the workers' ethics to organisational productivity and morale. Pantiru (2019:25) also adds that a manager's responsibility concerning the adherence to ethics and integrity in public institutions is a fundamental portion of their role, regardless of whether public administrations apportion some obligations to ethical counsellors.

Integrity in behaviour by management can influence employees' confidence in management, affective dedication to the job, job satisfaction as well as intention to stay (Guohao et al., 2021:1447). The employees' turnover intentions lessen if the personnel have a strong sentimental attachment to an organisation in response to the

ethics and integrity displayed by management (Guohao et al., 2021:1447). The authors also add that integrity in leadership promotes a work atmosphere where personnel are valued (Guohao et al., 2021:1449). When managers have integrity, employees get motivated to enthusiastically contribute to the organisation as well as to their personal development as they are inspired by their leaders' integrity, ethical behavior and compassion which encourages them to go beyond their duties (Guohao et al., 2021:1449). Zhu, Zheng, He, Wang and Zhang (2019:549) underscore that managers who are ethical tend to intervene or act to thwart amoral behaviour and integrity complications within the organisation by instituting incentives and also using communication. An Ethical leader also gets to be involved in reflective intervention or action to deal with and correct amoral conduct and integrity complications through penalties (Zhu et al., 2019:550).

Managers depend on a good ethical atmosphere to nurture practices of ethics and integrity. Al Halbusi et al. (2021:3) purport that an ethical environment is not a just substitute for managers' ethical leadership but instead it is a mechanism on which ethical managers depend on to influence the ethical conduct of their subordinates. In an organisation where ethics and integrity are not upheld, the manager will fail to cultivate good ethics and integrity. If the management does not believe and adhere to its code of ethics, then there should be less expectation for the lower ranked subordinates to reliably practice consistent ethical behaviour (Ngubane, 2021:1). Strand (2020:30) highlights that actions and words of management are critical elements in motivating trust between the workers and organisation. Implying that the actions and words of the managers have to be exemplary in a manner that displays ethics and integrity. A manager's ethics and integrity can also considerably affect the legal standing of an organisation even if it is owned by someone with a big-name, mogul, like Steve Wynn and Harvey Weinstein, who have encountered noteworthy lawsuit and public relations challenges due to unethical issues such as sexual misconduct scandals (Zahra, 2021:1). Managers cultivate ethics and integrity by their conduct and help create and nurture an ethical environment through their ethical conduct as well.

Levels of performance and creativity of subordinates is influenced by behavioural integrity of managers towards them (Wen, Wu & Long, 2021:3). All managers, regardless of their management position, are supposed to possess particular

important ethical traits to do well in the positions of management (Huhtala, Fadjukoff & Kroger, 2021:641). Additionally, leaders are inspirational, since they look out for the interests of their followers and are always assisting them to grow their careers. This is particularly important in assisting the attainment of workplace objectives and develop the effectiveness of decision making of the followers (Albejaidi, Kundi & Mughal, 2020:2). The ethics and integrity of a manager play a crucial part in the workplace, therefore they cannot be overlooked.

Managers need to have high ethical standards to ensure that their ethics and integrity are very visible to all their subordinates. Guerrero-Dib, Portales, and Heredia-Escorza (2020:2) argue that individual ethical standards are one of the categories that assist in minimising corruption. Dladla (2020:25) supports this assertion, stating that significantly many leaders who are ethical have integrity and are often fair in the carrying out of their responsibilities, as well as in their decision-making. Al Halbusi, Williams, Ramayah, Aldieri and Vinci (2020:160) assert that leaders are supposed to display a high level of ethical conduct and have the highest integrity standards when it comes to their decision-making, deeds as well as behaviour. Leaders with ethics and integrity in traits motivate employees to reach their full potential, encourage them to take on extra organisational responsibilities, and encourage them to deal with difficulties (Guohao et al., 2021:1449). Employees view leaders with ethics and integrity as role models as such they are more likely to imitate and embrace the value-driven conduct of their role-model ethical leader (Al Halbusi et al., 2020:161).

Furthermore, workers who are satisfied with their managers display additional commitment and loyalty to the organisation (Guohao et al., 2021:1449). Leaders who are role models encourage ethical conduct and integrity by instituting the kind of activities they want to embed and reward (Al Halbulsi et al., 2020:161; Wibawa & Takahashi, 2021:2). Besides the integrity of a leader, the ethical level of a leader as perceived by the worker can also affect the worker's performance (Rahim et al., 2020:518). Ghanem and Castelli (2019:24) found that accountability and leadership that has ethics and integrity has a positive connection to moral competence within an organisation. More important is the role played by managers that are directly in contact with employees. Those types of managers present and set the tone on how employees are supposed and expected to behave when it comes to integrity and ethics.

Therefore, it is important to review the line managers' influence on the inception and application of ethics and integrity in an organisation.

2.8.1 Line managers

Line managers, also regarded as 'direct supervisors', are managers who are directly in contact with their personnel (Claeys, Van den Broeck, Houkes & de Rijk, 2023:2). Line managers are part of management that works directly with employees ensuring that daily duties are carried effectively and efficiently. Beatson (2023:2) argues that there is increasing evidence of the prominence of line management. Since line managers are important and are directly involved with employees, they are supposed to set a positive example by consistently demonstrating ethical behaviour and integrity in their own actions and decision-making processes. Beatson (2023:4) mentions that the quality of a line manager is usually assessed, among factors, through their behaviour as well as their characteristics. Therefore, since line managers are in constant close contact with personnel, line managers play a predominantly critical role in making ethics and integrity a reality in the workplace (Van Vuuren & Groenewald 2021:6). Guohao et al. (2021:1449) also purports that management styles have an influence on the ethics and integrity in conduct displayed by employees as behavioural integrity is learnt from immediate supervisors or line managers. Employees look up to their line managers as role models, and when they witness ethical behaviour at the managerial level, they are more likely to follow suit. Therefore, this study examines how this exemplary behaviour and image of line managers influence the perceptions that level 4-9 employees have on the ethics and integrity.

Line manager also promote ethics and integrity within an organisation through ensuring compliance to policies and regulations of an organisation. The policies and practices that line managers are likely to implement, and the workplace climate in which exchanges between the line manager and the employee took place affects the quality of line management (Beatson, 2023:4). In essence, line managers play a significant role in ensuring that there is implementation of policies and functions which enables the efficient functioning of the organisation. Kravariti, Tasoulis, Scullion and Alali (2023:1786) acknowledge the critical role of line managers in management especially in human resources activities and policy implementation which influence the behaviour of employees. Line managers also ensure that management and

employees are able to work in unison through coordinated efforts of right policies and work standards. The effectiveness of the line managers in implementing certain policies shapes the perception of employees on procedural fairness and general conduct within an organisation (Kravariti et al., 2023:1786). Fundamentally, line managers play a substantial role in ensuring that employees have a certain perception about conduct within a work environment. Therefore, line managers are crucial in influencing how compliance on ethics and integrity is upheld among level 4-9 employees within an organisation.

Line managers also provide leadership in their designated areas which helps to promote and deal ethical issues which may arise within the workplace. Line managers in many organisations spend a lot of their time on leadership (Ipsen, Kirchner, Andersone & Karanika-Murray, 2022:5). Essentially, line managers have to be able to address any ethical and integrity issues promptly and appropriately because their leadership position. The leadership role of line managers implies that they have influence on how the personnel they are responsible for behaves when providing services within the organisation. Van Vuuren and Groenewald (2021:6) purport that line managers are the forefront of managing ethics and integrity as well as helping the ethics office and ancillary functions to administer ethics management systems. Additionally, according to Ngobeni, Sauroombe and Joseph (2022:3), in order to promote required behaviour within an organisation, line managers are supposed to constantly reaffirm the worker's purpose and expectations. Consequently, in promoting ethics and integrity, priorities for line managers encompass being able to ethically efficient in their particular contexts and spheres of influence through awareness of organisational ethics, ethical boldness, ethical sensitivity, walking and talking ethics (leading by example) as well as making decisions that are ethical (Van Vuuren & Groenewald, 2021:6). Therefore, line managers use leadership to influence the conduct of personnel including their ethics and integrity within the workplace.

Line managers are supposed to provide support and guidance to employees who experience ethical and integrity dilemmas. For employees, line managers present the first line of communication with management which helps to establish trust between management and employees. The manager-employee relationship is constructed on integrity, sincerity as well as camaraderie, it inspires employees to engage in constructive conduct (Guohao et al., 2021:1447). Dlalala (2020:25) purport that

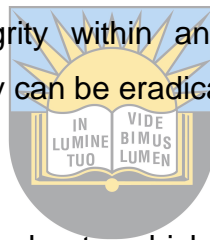
leaders that are considered to be caring in a work environment are leaders who adopt a moral standpoint, trustworthiness, good ethics and values of integrity. Therefore, line managers are expected to offer advice, help employees navigate challenging situations, and ensure that employees feel supported in making ethical choices, even in difficult circumstances. Additionally, Karsten and Jacobs (2022:270) assert that a leader with ethics has distinguishable traits which include displaying exemplary conduct to promote integrity, proactive behaviour to thwart (suspected) integrity contraventions, and assertive conduct against others as soon as a (suspected) infringement of integrity has risen. There is a substantial role played by line managers to promote ethics and integrity within an organisation. The study utilised a theoretical framework that takes into consideration the management styles that are utilised by managers in an organisation and have an impact on employees' perceptions and behaviour.

2.9 Challenges associated with lack of ethics and integrity in the workplace

The workplace requires ethics and integrity to function efficiently. The absence or ambiguity of ethics and integrity in an organisation present challenges for the organisation, management and employees. Pantiru (2019:28) underscores that challenges faced due to lack of ethics and integrity in the public sector workplace include difficulties in disclosing wrongdoing, promotion of trust, difficulties in getting stakeholders to be involved, interruptions from political or business influence, dealing with wellbeing concerns in the workplace and the utilisation of technology in administration of the public sector. Dladla (2020:26) mentions that in current era there are more leaders that are disappointing because they lack ethics and integrity. Okanda et al. (2021:116) posit that due to lack of ethics and integrity in the Kenyan public sector, issues of corruption have become common with the 2016 Global Economic Crime survey ranking Kenya as third most corrupt country after South Africa and France. It is difficult for organisations to operate with compromised or lack of ethics and integrity.

Furthermore, Guohao et al. (2021:1447) state that lack of integrity in the behaviour of managers has a significant impact as it leads to exploitation by leadership in the workplace. Mamokhere (2020:1) highlights that unethical behaviour and lack of integrity notable through corruption, lack of consistency in providing basic services,

nepotism, maladministration and political instability is causing poor service delivery in many public sector entities resulting in dissatisfaction among South African citizens. Hanapiyah et al. (2019:38) also underscore that without integrity and ethics, an organisation can lead to challenges such as the occurrence of misconduct, serious reputational damage, corruption and fraud which usually leads to massive financial losses, bankruptcy and even the collapse of the economic and political system which results in organisational performance challenges. Andersson and Ekelund (2022:1090) assert that integrity in public administration has its vulnerabilities which includes weak systems in handling of interest conflicts with regards to recruitment, public procurement as well as acquiring of goods and services. Several leaders are paying hefty fines, mandated to resign, or found guilty in courts as a result of quick instabilities in acceptable/unacceptable ethical behavior (Fuller, 2021:79). The challenges presented by the absence or lack of clear ethics and integrity have a negative impact on the organisation. The managers have a critical role to fully practice and implement ethics and integrity within an organisation so that challenges associated with ethics and integrity can be eradicated.



2.10 Conclusion

This chapter was a literature review chapter which mainly dealt with literature on ethics and integrity with the workplace. The initial section of literature review discussed the general overview of ethics. The subsequent section was based on the outlining integrity and its role. The chapter also discussed ethics and integrity in organisations. The discussion also focused on the ethics and integrity aspects within the public sector. The chapter also outlined the issues of ethics and integrity among employees and management. The theoretical framework which guides this study was also discussed in this chapter. Lastly, the review of literature focused on challenges associated with lack of ethics and integrity in the workplace. The next chapter is going to present the research methodology.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter discussed literature that was as reviewed in this study. This chapter provides a detailed discussion of the research methodology that was utilised by this research. The chapter presents a discussion on the research approach which was deemed suitable for this study and why the research approach was utilised. The subsequent section in the chapter deliberates that on the research design that is aligned to the main objectives of the study. The chapter also highlight the research site, target population, sampling procedure and sample size which are appropriate for the research. The chapter also outlines data collection method and how data were collected, as well as which method was used to analyse the data. The trustworthiness measures to ensure quality of data was also outlined. The chapter also discusses the limitations and delimitation as well as ethical considerations that were adhered to in this research. In essence this chapter presents how the research addressed the main objectives of the study which were to:

- investigate the perceptions that level 4-9 employees have on the ethics and integrity of line managers at the ECDOE;
- find out what effect the ethical and integrity practices depicted by line managers has on the level 4-9 employees at the ECDOE; and
- determine what needs to be done to promote positive ethical and integrity practices at the ECDOE.

Therefore, the chapter provides a clear picture of how the study's fieldwork was conducted to fully address these aforementioned research objectives.

3.2 Research paradigm

A paradigm can be described as a collection of beliefs, and prescriptions for researchers in a particular discipline regarding what has to be studied, how the study has to be carried out, and how the study is supposed to be interpreted (Smith, 2021:267). The study used the interpretivist paradigm. There are numerous paradigms

that shape the worldview of researchers, some of these paradigms include positivist, realism, postmodernism, pragmatism, and interpretivist among others (Coe, Waring, Hedges & Ashley, 2021:6) but this study made use of the interpretivist paradigm. According to Pope and Mays (2020:37), the interpretivist paradigm is commonly used in qualitative studies. This study was qualitative as such the interpretivist paradigm was appropriate for this study. The study utilised the interpretivist paradigm because it is a philosophical approach that asserts that individuals have a consciousness so they have a personal view about a certain phenomenon. Hennink, Hutter, and Bailey (2020:13) argue that the interpretivist paradigm concentrates on the emic viewpoints or the 'inside' point of view. The study focused on the views of participants regarding the conduct of the people they work with that are expected to be exemplary so it was important to understand their emic or inside perspectives.

Moreover, Flynn (2022:44) argues that the interpretivist paradigm focuses on the subjective meanings or views that people have about objects, situations, or things based on their experiences. This assertion highlighted by the authors made the paradigm appropriate for this study as the study sought to understand the views and meanings employees attach to the ethics and integrity depicted by their line manager. Additionally, the interpretivist paradigm focuses on comprehending the situation under study as essential to the interpretation of collected data (Ferreira & Sefotho, 2020:164). Therefore, the interpretivist paradigm allowed the researcher to focus on the situation as a whole regarding the ethics and integrity as practised within the department. The interpretivist paradigm asserts that researchers believe that there is no single approach to the empirical truth, each individual or group has their perspective or personal view of reality, and meaning is obtained from that individual's view of reality (Flynn, 2022:44). This implied that the researcher deemed the interpretivist paradigm as suitable for this study because it allowed the researcher to focus on each individual regarding their line manager and how that has an impact on their conduct or view about ethics and integrity within their work environment.

3.3 Definition of research

According to Thomas (2021:6), research is searching methodologically. A research process refers to the systematic and organized approach taken to investigate, gather, analyze, and interpret information to answer a specific research question or address

a particular problem (Day, 2023:39; Gibson & Buser, 2023:16; Hensel, 2023:17). It involves several steps that guide researchers in their quest to acquire reliable and valid knowledge. Doing research is about meticulously searching for knowledge. Thomas (2021:6) further explains that research can be described as a systematic search to provide answers for certain questions, collect information, or find solutions to a problem, particularly for academic work, projects, and cinema, or television series. Friesen and Brown (2022:10) argue that research refers to an investigation that systematically produces results and conclusions regarding a particular phenomenon that has been studied. In light of these descriptions of research, this current research focused on systematically investigating the views of level 4-9 employees on the ethics and integrity of their line managers focusing on the case of the ECDOE. The research focused on producing results and conclusions that provide more information on how employees in a public sector department view ethics and integrity and the implications of the perceptions.

3.4 Research methods and methodology

Research methods refer to the procedures and methods that the researcher employs to carry out an investigation (Thomas, 2021:29). Adu and Miles (2023:56) also add that research methods describe the research inquiry instruments that are utilised to carry out the research investigation stated in the problem or purpose statement and outlined in the research hypotheses or question(s). In essence, research methods provide a specific approach or technique that a researcher uses to collect and analyse data in a systematic and organised manner to answer their research question or achieve their research objectives. There are various research methods employed based on the nature of the study, the type of data required, and the research question(s) being investigated (Grove & Gray, 2022:134). The choice of research method is crucial as it determines the quality and validity of the research findings (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2022:48). Several research methods are used in research which include surveys, interviews, focus groups, experiments, observations, and case studies among others. Every research method has its strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, the choice of method depends on the research objectives, available resources, and the type of data needed to address the research question effectively. A well-designed research method is essential for producing valid and reliable results that contribute to the body of knowledge in a particular field (Gibson & Buser, 2023:61).

Research methods can be qualitative or quantitative or a combination of the two (Mustafa, 2023:3). This study selected qualitative research methods since it can adequately address the research questions.

Research methodology is regarded as the body of methods as well as guidelines followed in a discipline or science (Poedjiastutie, 2021:1). Research methodology is further explained as the particular techniques or procedures utilised to identify, choose, process as well as analyse information concerning an issue under investigation (Flapan, 2023:1). The methodology section permits the reader to analytically evaluate a research's overall reliability and validity (Yakkaldevi, 2022:133). Poedjiastutie (2021:1) also highlights that research methodology is about how research is carried out particularly how information is collected and analysed by employing a certain method chosen by the researcher. In doing research, the research methodology can be qualitative, quantitative, or a combination of both research methodologies. This study used the qualitative research methodology. The research methodology section in this study describes the qualitative strategies, techniques, instruments, and procedures employed by the researcher to conduct this study and gather relevant data to answer the research questions and achieve the research objectives. Yakkaldevi (2022:133) regards research methodology as a systematic way to deal with a research problem. The research methodology of this study presents a qualitative systematic way of addressing the research problem. In essence, the research methodology of this study provides approaches and rules which were followed to carry out this research investigation.

3.4.1 Choice of research methodology

The research methodology that was employed in this study is the qualitative research methodology. Liamputtong (2019:39) also mentions that qualitative research is about discovering and describing narratively what certain participants do in their everyday lives and what their experiences mean to them. The author also mentions that qualitative research is based on knowledge attained from direct experience through physical encounters. The qualitative research approach was suitable for assessing the views of the participants based on their lived experiences and direct encounters. According to Leavy (2022:173), qualitative research permits a researcher to unpack the meaning individuals assign to circumstances, activities, artifacts, events, or people

and also builds a deep understanding of certain aspects of social life; or investigates the meanings embedded in words. In this regard, the research employed the qualitative research approach as it helped the researcher to have a deep understanding of what meanings employees attach to the conduct of the line managers. The researcher was able to assess the activities and experiences that shape how individuals view and ascribe meaning to certain conduct. Leavy (2022:173) also argues that the qualitative research approach focuses on individuals' subjective experiences and the process of ascribing meaning. Therefore, the qualitative research approach permitted the researcher to understand the process of ascribing meaning to the experiences of employees and the conduct of line managers.

Bell et al. (2022:529) also state that the qualitative research approach concentrates on determining the truth through being process-oriented and, experiential and setting up a way for developing and comprehending a series of occurrences from the perceptions of those who are living it. Taking this assertion into account, the qualitative research approach was used to determine the truth about the views of the employees regarding the ethics and integrity of their line managers by focusing on experiential through a process-oriented approach on the various occurrences that shape the employees' daily perceptions regarding their line managers' conduct. Additionally, Yin (2018:3) argues that utilising qualitative research implies a comprehension of the research design as representing a craft, characterised by the challenge of conducting an original study and pursuing three essential objectives: transparency, methodicalness and relying on evidence. Using the qualitative research approach to conduct the study, the researcher made sure that there was transparency, methodicalness and adherence to empirical findings.

Furthermore, the qualitative research approach was selected as the suitable research approach for this study because it allowed the researcher to assess within the context of the issue under investigation. Flick (2022:12) asserts that qualitative research is focused on analysing concrete situations in their temporal as well as local particularity and beginning from individual's expressions and experiences in their local contexts. Therefore, using the qualitative research approach enabled the researcher to carry out the assessment of the problem under investigation within the context that the problem is occurring. This aspect of the qualitative research approach allowed the researcher to have a deeper understanding of the research experiences as the context provided

a picture of the work setting. The researcher was able to get more insight into work relations within the particularity providing more information on the employees and the immediate managers. The context plays a major role in how the participants view and experience certain issues. Additionally, Leedy and Ormrod (2021:45) state that qualitative research is a technique of asking questions and responding to the questions concerning the world in which we live. By employing the qualitative research approach, the researcher managed to have a close exchange with the participants asking them about their living experiences especially with regards to issues of ethics and integrity as such elicit their views on the issues.

Moreover, conducting qualitative research offers the researcher an in-depth understanding of the intricate issues; detecting and explaining social or cultural norms of a culture or a community; attempts to address the 'why' questions to give details and comprehend issues and 'how' questions that outline procedures or conduct (Neuman, 2021:34). Using the qualitative research approach, the study established norms within the department among the line managers and how those practices contribute to the perceptions of the employees concerning the ethics and integrity in the department. The qualitative research approach is employed in a case where information on a phenomenon is inadequate or can be utilised in gathering information that is new on matters which has some information already available (Gray, 2022:28). So, the qualitative research approach helps to add on information that is already available. Qualitative research is about investigation which, "utilizes words as data, collected and analysed", by various means (Braun & Clarke, 2021:34). The use of words will allow the participants to fully discuss their views regarding different behaviours that they observe from their workplace's line managers.

Qualitative and quantitative research is predicated on different forms of reasoning (Kara, 2022:18). The reasoning is associated with the nature of the study that is carried out and differs according to what is intended to be achieved. Kara (2022:18) highlights that quantitative research is premised on deductive reasoning, formulation of a hypothesis or hypotheses; conducting an experiment to test the hypothesis, and from the results deducing or reaching conclusions. However, with qualitative research, the approach differs, this is demonstrated by Flick (2022:114) who mentions that qualitative studies avoid the formulation of hypotheses at the beginning and from testing them. Kara (2022:18) purports that qualitative research is mainly premised on

inductive reasoning which is largely exploratory, drawing on various inputs and open to continuous review. Therefore, in line with the aspects of ethics and integrity that are under investigation in this study deemed to be highly desired but less understood (Metwally et al., 2019:3), the qualitative research approach is suitable as it is inductive and exploratory.

3.5 Characteristics of research design

This study utilised an exploratory research design. Babbie (2020:91) argues that an exploratory research design is concerned with exploring a topic to ensure that unanswered questions can be answered. The study sought to answer aspects of causes of unethical conduct and lack of conduct in public sector institutions to provide information that might improve the application of ethical conduct and integrity in the institution. In addition, according to Bobbert, Chtepen, Kumar, Vanderbeken and Verslegers (2021:267), the exploratory research design is a design utilised to investigate a problem that is not adequately understood or defined, so the study is carried out to get a better comprehension of the existing problem. The exploratory research design ensured a better understanding of the existing problem of unethical conduct and lack of integrity in public sector departments by examining the views of the participants. More so, Grove and Gray (2022:121) underscore that exploratory research design is premised on helping the researcher understand and clarify the nature of the problem under investigation. As such the use of the exploratory research design assisted the researcher in getting insight into the nature of the problem of ethics and integrity based on the views that level 4-9 employees have about the ethics and integrity of their line managers in their workplace. Furthermore, Malhotra and Malhotra (2021:302) posit that exploratory research focuses on understanding the different aspects of the subject being investigated. Therefore, the exploratory research design permitted the researcher to understand how the issue of ethics and integrity is being viewed, understood, and applied in an area of work that has been facing challenges related to ethics and integrity.

Additionally, Meletiadou (2022:5) purports that the exploratory research design is useful in gaining insightful information on a complicated phenomenon. The exploratory research design was therefore useful in obtaining insightful information regarding ethics and integrity in a public sector institution which can be very complicated

especially with issues of corruption being a concern. Singh (2022:151) also posits that exploratory research design involves a research project that is usually a small-scale study and is therefore generally conducted in a short space of time and there is little understanding of the underlying causes of the problem.

Incidentally, the exploratory research design was appropriate for this study because the study was a small-scale study and was supposed to be carried out in a short stipulated academic period. The exploratory research design also enables the researcher to understand the probable cause of certain conduct that might not be ethical and lacks integrity. Lamont and Boduszynski (2020:56) also argue that exploratory research design entails breaking 'new ground' and bringing out new knowledge. Therefore, the use of the exploratory research design helped to bring out additional knowledge about the perceptions that level 4-9 employees have on the ethics and integrity of line managers; the effect the ethical and integrity practices depicted by line managers have on the level 4-9 employees; and, determine what needs to be done to promote positive ethical and integrity practices at the ECDOE.

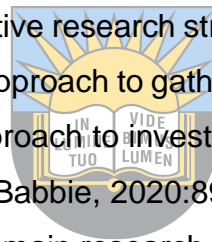
3.6 Research process

The research process comprises a sequence of systematic procedures that a researcher carries out to produce knowledge that will be regarded as valuable by the research investigation and concentrates on the relevant research problem (Potter, Perry, Stockert & Hall, 2021:71; Grove & Gray, 2022:398). A research process ensures that the researcher can transition from the significant steps when investigating a certain topic. According to Potter et al. (2021:71), this transition focuses on moving from the identification of the problem to the creation of research questions and research objectives. Parvin, Gangele, Sandhya, and Singh (2022:38) mention the need for reviewing relevant literature. The follow-up step is developing a research design that addresses research questions or hypotheses (Parvin et al., 2022:39). These steps are followed by data collection and analysis as well as attaining answers to the research question and then sharing the final research findings (Potter et al., 2021:71). This study follows these steps of the research process which were initiated in the first chapter by identifying the problem of ethics and integrity in the public sector particular the ECDOE. The researcher also reviewed and evaluated relevant literature as part of the research process. The subsequent step revealed the research questions

and objectives which are in line with the research problem. This research methodology chapter explains how data for this study was collected. The subsequent chapter will present the analysis and interpretation of the findings.

3.7 Research strategy

According to Bell et al. (2022:18), research strategy describes the overall approach that the researcher takes when conducting a research investigation which encompasses the philosophical assumptions that guide the research design, choice of research questions as well and also methods that are chosen to answer the research questions. Research strategy offers this research a plan that guides the researcher's actions and decisions to achieve the study's objectives. The research strategy also provides a high-level outline of how this research was conducted and encompasses the research design, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, and the general approach to be taken to address the research question or problem. A qualitative study employs a qualitative research strategy. Taking a field study strategy, this study uses a cross-sectional approach to gather data using interviews. A research strategy has to offer a general approach to investigate the specific research question that is intended to be addressed (Babbie, 2020:89). Therefore, the research strategy in this study sought to address the main research questions and achieve the research objectives.



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The research utilises a case study approach to examine the situation at ECDOE. Zhang (2022:50) mentions that a case study is a research approach that is utilised to precipitate an in-depth, multi-dimensional comprehension of complicated issues in a real-life situation. Yin (2018:43) also mentions that a case study is useful in explaining, describing, or exploring happenings or phenomena in the daily contexts in which they happen. Based on these assertions about a case study, this study explores the different perceptions of level 4-9 employees on the ethics and integrity of line managers. The focus on the ECDOE case allows the researcher to understand the effects of perceived ethics and integrity of line managers on the productivity of the level 4-9 employees and the delivery of services at the organisation. The differences in how ethics and integrity are perceived and portrayed by different actors within the organisation make it imperative to understand this complicated real-life problem. The

research utilises the case study to understand these different dynamics associated with ethics and integrity within a public institution.

3.8 Time horizon

Time horizon in research describes the period that a research is started and finished (Carrim, 2023:236). Furthermore, the time horizon in research can further be explained as the timeframe or duration over which data is collected and analyzed to address the research question or achieve the research objectives (Hamdan, Alareeni & Elgedawy, 2021:1501; Wilson, 2021:137; Uzir, Hamid, Latiff & Jerin, 2021:2086). Time horizon is a crucial aspect of research design as it helps researchers determine the scope and lengthiness of the research (Parvin et al., 2022:67). The time horizon is often classified into three main categories which are cross-sectional, longitudinal, and cross-sequential studies (Saliya, 2023:76).

Cross-sectional studies are studies whereby data is collected at a single point in time from a sample of participants or units (Hamdan et al., 2021:1501). Researchers observe and measure variables of interest at that specific moment (Singh, 2022:152). Cross-sectional studies provide a snapshot of the characteristics, behaviours, or relationships among variables at that particular time (Yim, Zhang & Byon, 2022:34). They are useful for studying prevalence, associations, and correlations but cannot establish cause-and-effect relationships or changes over time (Wolfer, 2021:45). The main facets of a cross-sectional study align with the main issues of this study sought to examine. The perceptions that level 4-9 employees associate with the line managers are crucial to the components of ethics and integrity within a public institution. This association of perception and prevalence of experiences of employees within ECDOE lays a premise by which the study examines the research problem using the cross-sectional time horizon.

In research, the other prominent time horizon is longitudinal studies. Longitudinal studies involve data collection from the same participants or units over an extended period (Wolfer, 2021:45). Researchers make repeated measurements at multiple time points to track changes, developments, or trends over time (Yim et al., 2022:34). Longitudinal studies allow researchers to study the trajectory of variables and establish cause-and-effect relationships by observing changes over time (Clark, Foster, Bryman & Sloan, 2021:54). A longitudinal study's main components of repeated

measurements and multiple time points do not match with the research aim, research questions and research design of this study. Therefore, the research did not employ the longitudinal time horizon.

Cross-sequential studies are studies that combine elements of both cross-sectional and longitudinal designs (Matanda, 2022:50). They involve studying multiple cohorts over time, and collecting data from different age groups or generations at different time points (Kuther, 2022:116). By combining the strengths of cross-sectional and longitudinal approaches, cross-sequential studies provide insights into both age-related and time-related effects (Matanda, 2022:50). However, the commonly utilized time horizons in most research are cross-sectional and longitudinal. Therefore, this study chose to make this study a cross-sectional study.

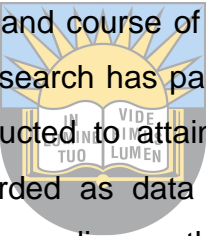
The choice of the time horizon depends on the research objectives, the nature of the research question, and the phenomena under investigation. Due to the research objectives and nature of the research question which do not depend on longitudinal investigation, this study employed a cross-sectional study. Cross-sectional studies are relatively quick and cost-effective, providing a snapshot of a population's characteristics (Hamdan et al., 2021:1501). Longitudinal studies, on the other hand, require more time and resources, but they offer valuable insights into the dynamics and changes in variables over time (Wolfer, 2021:45). Researchers need to consider the advantages and limitations of each approach and select the most appropriate time horizon to address their research objectives effectively (Singh, 2022:154). This study has limited resources, and time it therefore utilises a small sample of the population consequently the apt time horizon is cross-sectional. Furthermore, there must be clarity on the time horizon before the research commences (Zweck, Schulz-Montag, Neuhaus, Holtmannspotter, Schull, Steinmuller & Gerhold, 2022:47). This study makes use of the academic time frame which is stipulated by the university which is also another reason for using a cross-sectional study.

3.9 Research site

The traditional research setting refers to the cultural, social as well as physical location where the researcher will conduct their research investigation (Salmons, 2021:114). The study was carried out in the Eastern Cape Province, focusing on Zwelitsha where the ECDOE is located. The Eastern Cape is situated on the east coast of South Africa

between the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces (Yes Media, 2022:1). Inland, it shares borders with the Northern Cape and Free State provinces, as well as Lesotho (Yes Media, 2022:1). The province covers an area of approximately 168 966 km² and has an estimated population of 6 996 976 (InfoSA, 2022:1). The Eastern Cape Province is the second largest province in South Africa by surface area and has the third largest population (Yes Media, 2022:1). However, from the province the study only focused on Zwelitsha. Zwelitsha is in King William's Town. Most of the people in Zwelitsha speak isiXhosa. Ngcuka (2018:14) states that has a population of approximately 755 200 people. The ECDOE falls under Zone 6 in Zwelitsha.

3.10 Techniques and procedures

In research, techniques and procedures refer to the specific methods and steps used to collect, analyse, and interpret data to address the research question or achieve the research objectives (Ajimotokan, 2022:11; Singh, 2022:19). Research techniques and procedures are research methods and course of action taken to collect, analyse as well as to interpret data. Every research has particular techniques and procedures associated with it that are constructed to attain a certain type of information or knowledge which is usually regarded as data (Cheek & Oby, 2023:27). These techniques and procedures vary depending on the nature of the research, the data required and the research design.  *University of Fort Hare*
Together in Excellence **Mainly, techniques and procedures employ quantitative and qualitative as well as a combination of both approaches (Pandian, Muthulakshmi & Vijayakumar, 2022:vii). The techniques and procedures utilised in this study are aligned with the qualitative approach. Therefore, qualitative sampling techniques and qualitative data collection procedures were used for this study, which are, purposive sampling and semi-structured interviews (further explained in some sections of this chapter).**

3.11 Population

Purnima (2022:31) contends that a study population is the total number of subjects showing some common elements that meet the criteria for the research as desired by the researcher. The study population of the study consists of the ECDOE level 4-9 employees and line managers. The positions of the line managers were assistant directors and senior administration supervisors. The positions of the level 4-9 employees encompassed administrators, administration clerks, and data capturers.

Using the entire population is usually impossible due to aspects such as resource constraints.

3.11.1 Target population and sampling population

To carry out a study, the researcher will always require a population that is utilised for investigation. The study population is the entire number of participants or subjects that a researcher can utilise for research (Tuten, 2020:78). The study population also has to possess characteristics or attributes that are relevant to the research investigation (Flick, 2022:62). For the study the population is the entire number of elements or subjects that the researcher could use for study, which are all employees at ECDOE. However, within the study population, the researcher can select a target group. Grove and Gray (2022:322) state that a target population is the total set of study units that meet the criteria of sampling used. So, sampling is done to select the elements or subjects from a target group. The target group of the study is made up of line managers and non-educator employees at the ECDOE. The positions of the line managers were assistant directors and senior administration supervisors. The positions of the level 4-9 employees encompassed administrators, administration clerks, and data capturers. The total number of units that were examined was four units. Kopicko (2018:7) mentions that unethical conduct is mainly caused by financial factors. As such managers from units such as the unit of management accounting, financial accounting, supply chain management, resourcing and school administration are prone to get involved in unethical conduct. Therefore, the participants from this study were from the Zwelitsha offices from four directorates or units which implied that the total target population was 196. Taking into consideration, the assertion by Bell et al. (2022:58) that it is difficult to utilise the entire population for a study due to resource constraints like time and money, a sample was used for this study instead of the whole study population.

3.11.2 Sample

Lohr (2022:4) mentions that a sample is a meticulously selected subset of subjects or individuals in a study who signify the identified population. The research used a sample for this study which consisted of employees from the departments of management accounting, financial accounting, and supply chain management and resourcing and school administration at ECDOE. The sample was chosen through a

process known as sampling. Sampling is described as the selection of a collection of people, incidents, subjects or another element that is used to conduct research (Grove & Gray, 2022:31). Leavy (2022:40) argues that sampling is about addressing questions such as who or what is in the research and where is the researcher attaining the data or information. For this study, this researcher focused on line managers and employees, who are working at the main offices of the department particularly those in management accounting, financial accounting, supply chain management and resourcing, and school administration directorates at Zwelitsha. The positions of the line managers include assistant directors and senior administration supervisors. The positions of the level 4-9 employees encompass administrators, administration clerks, and data capturers. In essence, through sampling the study was able to select participants or elements that provided useful information or data that was used to accomplish the study's objectives.

3.11.3 Sampling technique

The sampling techniques utilised to choose participants of research are either probability or non-probability techniques. According to Babbie (2020:45), probability sampling is about selecting a random sample from a list with all the names of all the subjects of participants in the population under study. Furthermore, the author mentions that this sampling technique is usually used for selecting large representative samples which is mainly used for quantitative studies for inferential or parametric purposes. Therefore, the probability sampling technique was not suitable for this research because the findings will not be used for inferential or generalisation purposes. Therefore, the non-probability sampling method was utilised in this study.

Non-probability sampling is a sampling that is principally premised on the researcher's judgment and does not necessarily involve all participants in the population (Grove & Gray, 2022:35). The study only wanted employees who are responsible for financially linked resources. Furthermore, the research utilised non-probability sampling because as pointed out by Gray (2022:67) non-probability samples are utilised to achieve an understanding of certain issues or conduct that is obtainable in a certain period, setting and context. In this study the focus was on the conduct of line managers and how it is shaping the perceptions of the employees. According to Harvey and Land (2021:38), the non-probability sampling method purposely evades taking into consideration a

population that is large and tries to cater for a certain group, specifically a stated segment within the total population. In this case, the study sought to understand the perceptions of the employees within certain units in the department based on the experiences they have with their line managers.

The non-probability sampling technique that will be utilised for this research is purposive sampling. According to Stead, Elliott and Mavin (2021:62), purposive sampling refers to the subjects or participants being chosen based on the identified features (like being an employee at the department), which might be a socio-demographic element or any feature related to the research's objectives like experiences, understanding or relevant information. Purposive sampling enabled the researcher to choose participants who had relevant information due to their experiences with their line managers. Leavy (2022:23) underscores that purposive sampling is employed by the researcher to choose information-rich components or participants that have knowledge or experience about the specific issues under investigation. Using purposive sampling allowed the researcher to target specific participants who were able to provide detailed information regarding issues of ethics and integrity within ECDOE. Purposive sampling was also utilised in this study because a researcher purposively selects specific information-rich cases, which permits a greater understanding or in-depth understanding of phenomena and will clarify the question under study (Mahoney, 2022:46).

The use of purposive sampling aligned with the exploratory research design used in this study allowing understanding of the research problem as the participants were equipped with information regarding the different experiences on ethical conduct within the department. Leavy (2022:23) states that sampling is a fundamental component of research design as such purposive sampling is utilised when participants are positioned in relation to the topic resulting in richer data. The participants that were selected for this study were able to discuss the topic under investigation because they encounter issues under investigation as they are employed at the ECDOE, working at the main offices of the department from the four units that are management accounting, financial accounting, supply chain management and resourcing and school administration. Therefore, purposive sampling allowed the researcher to specifically select participants from these units implying that the researcher obtained

different views based on different experiences but relevant to issues of ethics and integrity which helped to achieve the objectives of this study.

3.11.4 Sample size (n=20)

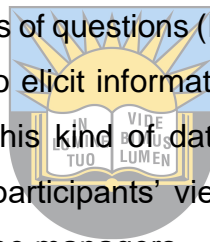
Qualitative research favours small, information-rich samples (Leavy, 2022:173). Skinner, Edwards and Smith (2021:37) also purport that a sample of 4-40 subjects is considered adequate for a qualitative study. Therefore, 20 participants (n=20) were purposively chosen for this research. From the 20 participants, four were line managers from the management accounting, financial accounting, supply chain management and resourcing and school administration units, under each of the four different units four participants (16 employees) were selected. The data were collected from the 20 participants until data saturation was reached. The line managers for these particular units were purposively selected because they deal with financial transactions which makes them more susceptible to unethical actions and misconduct such as irregular and wasteful expenditure. The employees that were purposively selected for this research consisted of employees who directly work with the line managers on a daily basis such as personal administrators, clerks, data capturers and resource coordinators. These employees get to engage with the line managers so they have views about the conduct of their line managers.

All the participants were selected from the Zwelitsha offices. The recruitment process entailed the researcher asking employees from the four targeted departments if they were working at the selected departments within the Zwelitsha offices. When the researcher had established if they were employed at the targeted units, the researcher explained every detail about the study and asked them to participate as they suited the needed attributes for this study. Therefore, the inclusion criteria comprised any employees working for the designated units. These are employees who are working with the line managers as such provided insightful information based on their experiences of working daily with these line managers. The inclusion sampling criteria, as purported by Grove and Gray (2022:34), are the characteristics that the research participant or subject must have. The exclusion criteria for this study will be employees who are employed by ECDOE but not working at the selected units who cannot provide information about the line managers within the four selected units, that is, management accounting, financial accounting, supply chain management, resourcing

and school administration. Grove and Gray (2022:34) state that exclusion sampling criteria comprise characteristics that can cause an individual not to be included or removed from the research.

3.12 Measuring instrument

This study made use of the qualitative research approach; therefore, the researcher employed a qualitative research technique to collect data. Nuttavuthisit (2019:29) argues that one of the methods utilised to gather qualitative data is the interview. This study used interviews. Roulston (2021:71) points out that interviews are classified into three vital setups which are structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Willig (2022:42) asserts that semi-structured interviews are the commonly utilised data collection instrument in qualitative studies. Therefore, the qualitative research technique that was utilised by the study was semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are a verbal interaction whereby the researcher extracts data from a participant by asking a series of questions (Flick, 2022:68). The semi-structured interviews permit the researcher to elicit information by asking questions in a verbal exchange with the participants. This kind of data collection technique allowed the researcher to find out about the participants' views and accounts on the nature of experiences they have with their line managers.



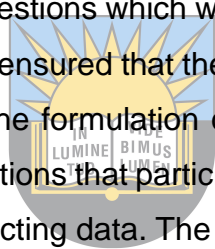
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3.12.1 Interviews

Interviews were chosen for this research because they allow an interactive way of collecting data. Ferreira and Sefotho (2020:164) argue that interviews allow topics to be discussed in detail with participants expressing themselves as different issues emerge during the conversation. Therefore, the semi-structured permitted the study subjects to express their perceptions in detail and provide insightful explanations on questions that were asked. The semi-structured interviews afforded the researcher a chance to probe for answers whenever there was a need for more explanation. Gray (2022:45) states that interviews allow the researcher to listen to other people's interpretations and perspectives. Therefore, using semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to listen to the participants' interpretations and perspectives on the conduct of their line managers especially in relation to ethics and integrity. Semi-structured interviews permit the researcher to gather in-depth information and details on a range of factors related to a topic (Roulston, 2021:73). As such semi-structured

interviews were employed to elicit information on different aspects pertaining the issue of ethics and integrity and how they are contributing to some of the challenges that are experienced in the department and the public sector at large as well as initiatives and recommendations which can assist to obviate the challenges.

An interview is conducted using an interview schedule. According to Bell et al. (2022:12), semi-structured interviews are made up of an interview schedule that is constructed in an open-ended way to allow content matters to be re-ordered, deviations and developments to be done, new items to be taken into consideration and more investigation to be conducted if need be. The researcher prepared an interview schedule that consisted of questions aligned to the main research questions (see Appendix 3). Gadwal (2022:156) suggests that the researcher should make a list of prearranged questions, hence semi-structured interviews are carried out in a casual way allowing study respondents to investigate matters they see as important. The formulation of the predetermine questions which were semi-structured was developed based on the study objectives and ensured that the participants were asked questions that were relevant to the study. The formulation of the predetermine questions also allowed the researcher to ask questions that participants can understand and it helped to create a methodical way of collecting data. The researcher sought permission from the department to conduct the interviews.



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The interviews were carried out within the department's premises. The researcher set appointments and met with the participants individually to permit one-on-one interactions with the participants. The study's participants were alerted that they were not obliged to contribute to the research and they were asked to sign a consent form as an indication of their informed consent. The researcher also sought permission to record the interviews and recorded all interviews. The researcher utilised an interview guide to ask relevant questions during the interviews. During the semi-structured interviews, the participants provided detailed explanations of the questions that were being asked. Each interview session took approximately about 20-25 minutes. The researcher followed all Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) safety protocols to ensure that there was no harm to the participants. The researcher ensured social distancing was observed, masks were worn throughout the interviews, hand sanitisers were applied by parties involved and the interviews were carried out in a well-ventilated room. When

the interviews were finished, the researcher thanked the participants and the recorded interviews were all stored safely for transcription.

The semi-structured interviews have their demerits as a data collection technique. Oliver (2021:94) mentions that interviews are time-consuming. The author also mentions that interviews involve some form of travelling and also need to be conducted in a relaxed environment. Bias might be developed or occur during interviews as interviewers might permit their feelings and perspectives to be part of the interview process (Singh, 2022:176). Lastly, interviews might entail interviewees intentionally or unintentionally providing responses that may look palatable for the interviewer (Oliver, 2021:94). To overcome, these shortcomings, the researcher made sure that appointments were set before meeting the participants and that there was adherence to time slots. Therefore, the researcher reduces time consumption. The researcher also drove to the working environment of the participants and made use of segregated spaces to conduct the interviews which made the participants more relaxed. The researcher made use of the interview schedule to eliminate potential biases. The researcher made use of probing and rephrasing questions to make sure that the answers provided by the participants were answering the main research questions and aligned with the objectives of the study.

3.12.2 Trustworthiness of the measuring instrument

Transferability is the ability to transfer the findings of research from a particular context to another (Leavy, 2022:169). This implies that transferability is about being able to make the study's findings useful in different contexts, in this manner extending the findings beyond the researcher's own data (Leavy, 2022:169). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2021:288), data trustworthiness is about the credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability of the study's findings. Therefore, as recommended by Ngulube (2021:303) and Olausson, Bowles, Lord and Williams (2022:71), the researcher ensured credibility through member checking by taking the compiled final study or certain descriptions or themes back to research respondents and finding out if they feel that the findings were accurate. Furthermore, to allow transferability, the researcher used a thick description of the participants, and the research process as well as when presenting the responses obtained during data collection as suggested by Silverman (2022:426). Additionally, to ensure confirmability and dependability, the

researcher utilised peer review and supervisor feedback to improve the trustworthiness of the study's findings. The researcher used the opinions of colleagues within the department to get feedback about any matters that need attention regarding the study and data collection (Leedy & Ormrod, 2021:106). These are the main steps that were taken by the researcher to ensure data trustworthiness.

3.12.3 Pilot study

The researcher carried out a pilot study before conducting the actual research investigation. Ngulube (2021:303) describes a pilot study as a small-scale preliminary research carried out to assess the feasibility, expense, time, possible obstacles, and enhance the research design before conducting the full-scale study investigation. Therefore, the researcher carried out the pilot study to make sure that they were aware of the feasibility, expenses, time, and adverse activities to make adjustments where necessary. Aidley and Fearon (2021:151) state that a pilot study is carried out to check if the method of investigation is well understood by the participants as well as the researcher and is collecting the data required in the study. So, the researcher conducted a data collection process that imitated the main data collection process with colleagues within the department to see if they understood the research questions being asked, how the data was being collected as well as to see if the data was the information needed for the study. The researcher also used the pilot study to understand the method that was being used to collect data.

Thomas (2021:67) indicates that a pilot study provides a practical analogue that gives essential information regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the research procedures and how to handle uncontrollable variables. Therefore, the researcher used the pilot study to find out about the questions that were in the interview schedule that were not properly structured. The researcher made amendments to the questions based on the feedback from the mock interviews conducted with colleagues. The researcher made sure that the supervisor's comments were included in all stages of the research process improving the strength of the research procedure.

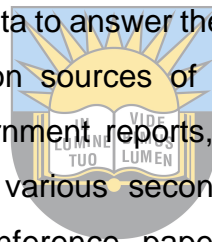
3.13 Types of data sources

Research data sources refer to the various places or methods from which researchers collect data for their studies (Muthukumar & Panimalar, 2022:220; Sharma, 2022:201). The gathering of data for research is usually divided into two parts, namely, primary

and secondary data sources. Researchers often use a combination of both primary and secondary data sources to enhance the comprehensiveness and validity of their research findings. This study used a combination of both primary and secondary data sources.

Primary data sources are sources of data that are collected from research elements, which can be people, objects, institutions or programmes (Sharma, 2022:201). These primary data sources consist of first-hand information gathered directly by the researcher from the participants or the situation(s) (Thomas, 2021:143). Primary data sources encompass observations, surveys, interviews, focus groups, experiments, and case studies. The research used interviews as the primary data source to address the research questions.

Secondary data sources involve the use of data that has already been collected by other researchers or organisations for different purposes (Sharma, 2022:201). Researchers utilise this existing data to answer their research questions (Muthukumar & Panimalar, 2022:220). Common sources of secondary data include published academic papers, journals, government reports, historical records, databases and repositories. This study utilised various secondary data sources which include published academic papers, conference papers, journals, government reports, policies, databases, and repositories.



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3.14 Data collection process

Data collection refers to the process of attaining information on a topic of interest in a standard systematic manner to validate, solve and deal with a research problem (Srujan, 2021:59). The data collection process is a crucial step in any research or study. The researcher ensured that there was a systematic way of gathering relevant information to answer specific research questions. The data collection process can vary depending on the research design, the type of data required, and the available resources (Grove & Gray, 2022:200). The choice of the data collection process is aligned with the main objectives of the study.

This study used a qualitative research method to collect data. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data for this study. The semi-structured interviews were conducted in a manner that achieved the main objectives of the study. The researcher

experienced challenges of participants constantly postponing interview meetings due to their work commitments. However, the researcher overcame the challenges by rescheduling to appropriate free time slots. The collected data were processed and analysed using a qualitative technique, thematic analysis. The data were presented using qualitative data (words) thematically.

3.15 Ethical considerations

The principles of research ethics demand that a researcher refrain from harming participants who are part of the research process by respecting as well as taking into consideration their interests and needs (Flick, 2022:120). Nuttavuthisit (2019:45) argues that research ethics are of vital importance especially in qualitative studies because qualitative studies generally involve engaging people, particularly in their private and social life. Therefore, the researcher will observe various research considerations.

Firstly, the researcher obtained Ethical Clearance from the University of Fort Hare Research Ethics Committee (UFHREC). Ethical procedures specified and expected by the UFHREC were adhered to during the entire research process.

Informed consent was sought and obtained from all participants before carrying out the data collection. Flick (2022:123) posits that informed consent is about participants knowing and understanding the risks and benefits of participating in a given study. Therefore, according to Flick (2022:124), the participants are supposed to be adequately informed, and understand that their participation is completely voluntary and the person must be able to voluntarily give their consent. Using recommendations by the author, to make sure that informed consent was rightfully obtained, the researcher explained to the participants all key aspects of the study. The researcher explained to the participants that the study was being conducted for academic purposes and their participation was completely voluntary. The researcher also explained that there are no risks that could potentially affect the participants because no names or personal information was going to be used in the study. After all explanations, the participants were given informed consent forms that carried information about the study which they signed as confirmation of consent regarding participating in the study.

The researcher also ensured that there was voluntary participation. Silverman (2022:39) argues that the participants should be made aware of their free choice to participate before giving consent. The researcher, therefore, informed the participants of their freedom of choice of participating or not, ensuring voluntary participation. The researcher told the participants that their participation was voluntary and they were free to withdraw their participation anytime.

The researcher also ensured there is confidentiality, anonymity and the right to privacy as ethical considerations that were observed in this study. Beins (2019:34) argues that participants should assured anonymity and confidentiality. Leavy (2022:26) also underscores that the researcher has to make sure participants' private information is not shared with other people and invading people's privacy must be averted. The researcher ensured that anonymity and confidentiality were upheld in this research by utilising pseudonyms and also not recording the participant's names. The researcher ensured confidentiality, by not disclosing any information about the participants to other people and safely keeping data collected and only utilised it for research purposes.

The researcher made sure that there was no harm to the participants. Babbie (2020:17) asserts that any research conducted runs the risk of injuring other people. The researcher ensured that no harm occurred as the interviews were conducted at the participants' premises which are generally safe environments, and at no stage were their lives placed at any risk.

The researcher also ensured that there is respect for intellectual property by not plagiarising. Lamont and Boduszynski (2020:35) highlight that plagiarism and academic dishonesty affect the aspect of intellectual property consisting of tampering with data from the research or manipulation of the research data and utilising other people's ideas with proper acknowledgement. The researcher did not manipulate data. The researcher also properly cited other people's work, thereby, respecting intellectual property.

Gaining entry is another ethical consideration that was observed by the researcher. The research gained entry by asking for permission from the ECDOE to conduct the study. Andoh-Arthur (2020:15) asserts to gain entry during data collection there is a need to utilise gatekeepers, individuals with invaluable knowledge on gaining access

to information because of their knowledge, connection with or membership in the study population. The researcher used a gatekeeper that helped the researcher with access to the participants needed for this study and also assisted with acceptance after gaining entry.

Data storage and disposal were also observed. The researcher made sure that the data collected from the participants was stored in a secure laptop which has a password that is known by the researcher only. After compiling and completing the research report and after reviews, the researcher will delete all the data as well as the backup information.

3.16 Data analysis procedure

Data analysis can be defined as the process of converting raw data to a form that is beneficial for a researcher to make conclusions and decisions (Madondo, 2021:142). The data analysis was conducted in a manner that allowed the collected data to be useful information for the researcher as the readers. Data analysis is the technique involving three synchronised action flows data reduction, data display, and conclusions and verification (Wilson, 2021:390). Data analysis was carried out in a manner that ensured that there was an arrangement of information to be aligned with what was required to address the research problem. Data analysis can further be described as the process of categorising, sorting, altering, and summarizing raw data to ensure that the research questions are answered (Pope & Mays, 2020:127). The study used data analysis to transform raw data into beneficial information that answers research questions. The study employed the qualitative research approach which meant that the research was addressing research questions and research objectives that were qualitative in nature. Predominantly, the data that were gathered were made up of words from the participants. Generally, qualitative studies employ thematic analysis to analyse raw data (Flick, 2022:81). Therefore, this study utilised thematic analysis to analyse data for this study.

3.16.1 Thematic analysis

The qualitative data which was collected for this study were analysed using thematic analysis. According to Liamputtong (2019:68), thematic analysis is a procedure of, identifying, analysing, and reporting themes inside the data. Thematic analysis involves the categorisation of the data into themes as well as the assessment of all

the cases in the study to make sure that all the manifestations of each theme have been accounted for and compared. The researcher followed the guideline by Braun and Clarke (2021:29) which outlines step-by-step thematic analysis of data. The authors mention that a researcher is supposed to familiarize with the collected data, generate initial codes, search for themes, review potential themes, define and name themes, and then produce the final findings.

The researcher familiarized with the data after transcribing the data. Wilson (2021:396) argues that when the researcher is transcribing data, they have to identify the main themes. The recorded interviews were played and transcribed onto a Word document and put into categories which formed the codes for the foundation of the themes. After generating codes, the researcher looked for the recurring themes within the datasets. The researcher then started defining and naming the themes in line with the main research objectives and research questions of this study. The researcher therefore made sure that the data was categorised into themes. The researcher then used those themes to integrate the discussion with the reviewed literature presenting a coherent discussion that was in line with the research objectives. Therefore, the findings of this study were presented thematically.



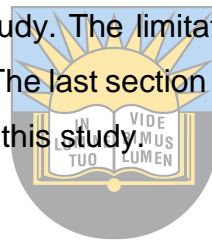
3.17 Limitations and delimitations of the study

Delimitation is about establishing boundaries when conducting a study. This study was focused on gathering data from the East Cape Department of Education. The study was conducted in Zwelitsha, which was the research site that was used to conduct data collection for this study. The study only focused on eliciting the perceptions of employees through interviews, no observations or questionnaires were used for this study. The study only utilised semi-structured interviews to collect data. The sampling technique that was used to choose participants is purposive sampling and only 20 participants were utilised as a sample for this study. Therefore, the findings of this research were not generalized to all public sector departments in the country. Even though other issues in the public administration domain have an influence on the efficiency of good public service delivery and governance, the research only concentrated on perceptions of issues regarding ethics and integrity. Additionally, the researcher only reviewed recent literature implying that it was not exhaustive as the

review was limited to the period in the modern literature, and reviewed principally to meet the objectives of this research.

3.18 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the research methodology used in this study. The chapter discusses the research approach that was used for this study which is the qualitative research approach. The subsequent section outlined the research design which was the exploratory research design. In alignment with the qualitative research approach of this study, the interpretivist research paradigm was also utilised and its suitability was discussed. The chapter also highlights the research site which is Zwelitsha in the Eastern Cape. The chapter outlined the target population, sampling, sample and sample size. The main participants of the study were employees from ECDOE. The chapter described how semi-structured interviews as the data collection instrument was utilised in this study. The chapter also discussed the utilisation of thematic analysis to analyse data in this study. The limitations and delimitations of the study were also outlined in this chapter. The last section of the chapter explained how ethical considerations were adhered to in this study.



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Chapter Four

Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on discussing the research methodology that was employed by this study. This chapter presents, discusses and interprets the study's findings. The main discussions in this chapter presents study data which were gathered during fieldwork through semi-structured interviews at the ECDOE. The analysis, presentation and discussion of data is done thematically. This whole analysis and discussion is in line with the primary objectives of the study which were to:

- investigate the perceptions that level 4-9 employees have on the ethics and integrity of line managers at the ECDOE;
- find out what effect the ethical and integrity practices depicted by line managers has on the level 4-9 employees at the ECDOE; and,
- determine what needs to be done to promote positive ethical and integrity practices at the ECDOE.

The researcher collected data using a semi-structured interview guide (see Appendix 3) which was constructed using the study's main objectives. Gathering of data was done mainly to elicit qualitative data which provides insight into the perceptions of the level 4-9 employees regarding the ethics and integrity of their line managers. A purposively selected sample of 20 (n=20) participants was adequate for this study as data saturation was achieved. The researcher noticed that after the 20th participant no new information was being provided. Therefore, this chapter serves to present, analyse and discuss the different perceptions of the participants in tandem with the literature reviewed in the foregoing sections of the study.

4.2 Demographic profile of participants

The main demographic features of the sample that were collected in this study were age, gender, years of experience and educational qualification. Due to the nature of the study and for the purposes of anonymity and confidentiality, the researcher does

not link the specific demographic to a specific participant. This section of chapter only presents information that provides an overview on the demography of the participants. It is essential to provide demographic profile of the sample to ensure that the reader is able to understand that the study obtained information from various participants with different demographic qualities which increases trustworthiness of the data.

4.2.1 Age

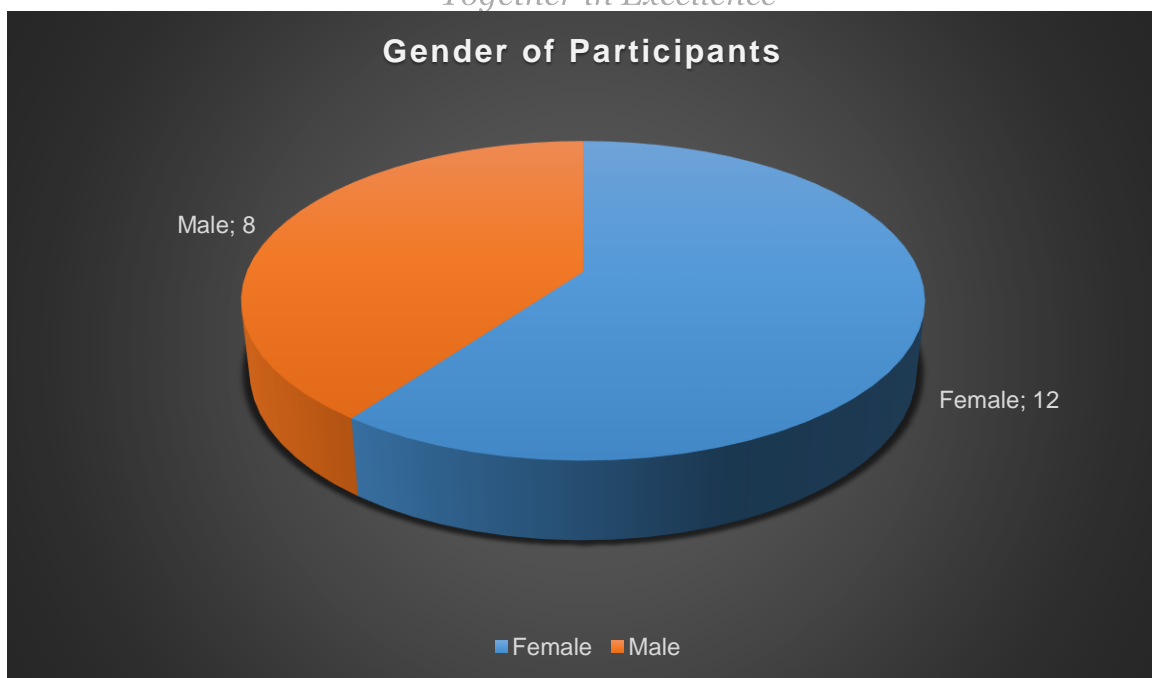
The study collected information from participants that were between the ages of 23 to 48. The participants' variation in age was crucial as it offers different perceptions on how they view ethics and integrity of line managers based on their ages.

4.2.2 Gender

The study gathered information from both male and female participants. The researcher managed to get more (12) females who were ready to participate in the study. The remaining (8) participants were male. Figure 1 shows the gender composition of the sample.



Figure 1: Gender of participants University of Fort Hare
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Source: Researcher (2023)

Figure 1 presents a summary of the gender composition of the participants. By having both genders participating in the study, the researcher was able to attain different perceptions based on different gender experiences on the ethics and integrity of their line managers within the organisation.

4.2.3 Years of experience

The sample consisted of participants who had different years of working experience within the organisation. Figure 2 depicts the different variations in the work experience of the study's sample.

Figure 2: Work experience of participants



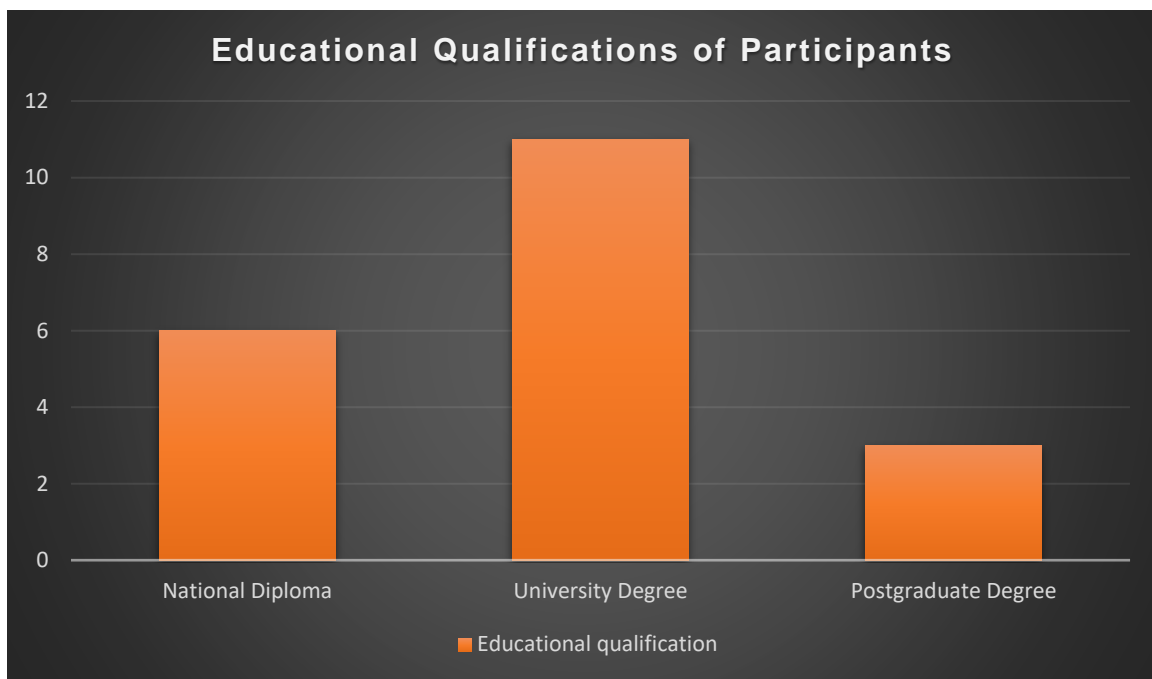
Source: Researcher (2023)

Figure 2 shows that a few (3) of the participants had five years or less of working experience. Some (4) of the participants had more than five years but less than ten years of working experience. While other (7) participants had more than ten years working experience but less than fifteen years of working experience. The remaining (6) participants had more than fifteen years working experience at ECDOE. The work experience of the participants was important as some of the views of the participants varied according to their years of work experience.

4.2.4 Educational qualification

Educational qualification was also a demographic aspect in this study that was regarded as a key feature that contributes to the variation of the sample. Figure 3 displays the variation in the educational qualifications of the participants.

Figure 3: Educational qualifications of the participants



Source: *Researcher (2023)* University of Fort Hare
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Figure 3 shows that the participants had different levels of educational qualification which was significant in their opinion about ethics and integrity at the organisation. From the sample of this study none of the participants had no tertiary qualification. Some (6) of the participants had a national diploma qualification. Many (11) of the participants had a university degree qualification. A few (3) had a postgraduate degree qualification.

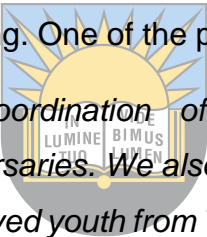
4.3 Data presentation and discussion

The study used a qualitative research approach which meant that qualitative data were collected and analysed thematically. Thematic analysis entails the structuring of data into themes that emerge from processing the raw data. Accordingly, the main themes that emerged in this study were predominantly explaining the perceptions of level 4-9

employees on the ethics and integrity of line managers at the ECDOE. The discussion of the findings employs selected excerpts to present the main themes while providing the perceptions of the employees and depicting their perspectives in a verbatim manner.

4.3.1 Work responsibilities of the employees

To establish the principal roles and responsibilities of the participants, the researcher asked them to explain their primary responsibility in the organisation. By asking this question, the study was exploring which roles and responsibilities within the organisation that are potentially affected by poor ethical and integrity conduct of line managers. The participants that took part in this research mainly carried out duties such as organisation of training, report compilation and evaluation, data collection and capturing, programmes coordination, administration, supply chain inventory management, and strategic planning. One of the participants said this:



“We assist with the coordination of the unemployed youth programmes especially bursaries. We also help with the coordination and placement of unemployed youth from TVET colleges. We are also responsible for the implementation of the Skills Development Levy Budget for all programmes. We also assist with compiling quarterly reports for strategic planning, Office of the Premier, Provincial Treasury, Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority, financial and parliamentary reports”
(Participant 1, Male, 04/05/23).

Another participant quipped that:

“We assist with contract management issues. We also help with supply chain inventory administration and management. Assist with administration and management of acquisitions by supply chain management. We also handle administration of logistics in terms of transportation of different resources. Check all details on procurement documents, quotations, terms of references and bidding procedures.

Collect data that helps with clarity on needs analysis” (Participant 3, Female, 08/05/23).

An additional from another participant stated that:

“We collect and capture all information for all internships and Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) projects. We make sure there is collection of data within the 12 districts of the department. Our jobs also entail organising all trainings for the head office and all districts and capturing of all data collected after these different programmes. We also do quarterly reports and evaluation reports. We ensure that there administration of bursaries for unemployed youth and the department’s permanent employees. Our administration work includes assisting with administration duties in the monitoring and evaluation of all department projects” (Participant 13, Female, 17/05/23).



A participant emphasizing on accounting and financial payments retorted that:


“I am primarily assist with expenditure administration, financial payments and reconciliation of general and creditor payments. We also assist with the capturing of payments, allocations and misallocations. We help to compile financial reports” (Participant 8, Female, 12/05/23).

From the excerpts above the primary responsibilities of the participants were predominantly administration, management, distribution, allocation, inventory administration, monitoring, and evaluation. These responsibilities are critical to ECDOE’s capacity to effectively and efficiently deliver education services. Inevitably, there is a need for proper ethical and integrity practices from the management in these units because they are responsible for functions that deals with resources that are utilised by the department to ensure service delivery. The staff’s adherence to ethical and integrity practices depends on the line managers that are in charge of the main functions in the organisation’s operations. This argument is in line with the assertion of Kravariti et al., (2023:1786) that the effectiveness of line managers in implementing

certain functions and policies shapes the perception of employees on procedural fairness and general conduct within an organisation. When ethics and integrity application are inadequate, issues such as lack of commitment, respect, and low productivity become prevalent. Therefore, with the responsibilities of the participants outlined, it is important to understand the application of ethics by line managers to ensure that all these responsibilities assigned to level 4-9 employees are executed effectively and efficiently.

4.3.2 Perceptions on the application of ethics

The researcher asked the participants about their perceptions of the application of ethics by their line manager. The results of this study show that there is no consistency in the application of ethics by line managers in the organisation. The participants revealed that some line manager's neglect or do not adhere to proper ethical and integrity conduct. However, some line managers are applying ethics in their conduct. A participant who has more than ten years of working experience was concerned about deteriorating conditions regarding the lack of ethics application by their line manager and mentioned this:



"I think over the years there has been concern over conduct of people in the organisation including our managers. There is lack of open line of communication when it comes to implementation of strategy and tasks. Although some ethics are not met by lower-level employees, line managers have to do better. The application of ethics has been very poor because they don't treat us equally, they have favourites in the working place... and also when you have done something wrong our managers don't address that in a proper way. They sometimes deal with you in manner that is not appropriate in my opinion because it will be like they are showing off or try to embarrass you. That makes some of the junior staff not to have self-confidence. That behaviour make us to be unmotivated" (Participant 2, Female, 05/05/23).

Another participant who has been working at the organisation for less than five years had a different positive view about their line manager on the application of ethics answered this:

“Firstly, I should say that no one is perfect. I think the line manager tries to ensure that they follow proper protocols in the organisation. I think there is high sense of respect, integrity, honesty, dedication and transparency within this departmental unit because the manager tries to ensure that there is good working environment by upholding ethics. The manager also acknowledges hard work and ethical conduct”
(Participant 9, Male, 15/05/23).

The results of this study depict that there are areas of concern with regard to the application of ethics at the organisation. Lack of respect has been raised as a concern in terms of the application of ethics. The other issue that affects the application of ethics by line managers is poor communication on important matters that are useful in upholding ethics and also for the efficiency of operations within the organisation. Additionally, nepotism, cronyism, and favouritism are also other negative components that are affecting the application of ethical conduct by line managers. This finding supports the findings of Ndlovu et al. (2020:22) who state that the abysmal performance of government departments and agencies in the Eastern Cape due to several maladies are based on ethical leadership which is misplaced to nepotism and cronyism, corruption, mismanagement, lack of accountability and maladministration resulting in industrial actions and protests. In this study, the majority of concerns regarding the lack of ethics application were raised by participants who had more years of working experience than those that with fewer years. The reason could be that the employees that have been working for longer periods have been experiencing these issues of ethics for several years. Fundamentally, the perceptions of some employees is some line managers are failing to consistently apply ethics in their conduct. The adverse outcome raised in this study about the application of ethics suggests that there is a need for interventions that can help improve the application of ethics by line managers in the organisation.

The study also found that some line managers are positively applying ethics in their conduct. The participants pointed to aspects such as respect, commitment, integrity, transparency, acknowledgment of ethical behavior and hard work. This finding aligns with what Okanda et al. (2021:117) regard as ethical conduct. The application of ethics by line managers serves as a foundation for ethical culture in the organisation as they are the frontline of management that ensures the application of ethics becomes a

norm. This study found that through the positive application of ethics, the line managers are engraining ethical culture in the organisation. Additionally, from data of this study it is clear that the positive application of ethics by the line manager serves as a motivating factor for employees to perform better. This outcome explains the assertion by the social learning theory that a person undergoes a sequence of cognitive processes which include attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Le & Hancer, 2021:514). This study shows that by having a positive perception of their line managers applying ethics, employees tend to learn and emulate that good conduct therefore positively contributing to the organisation's overall performance. This study's findings, by applying ethics, line managers nurture intrinsic integrity aspects of work such as motivation, commitment to work and positive perception about work as well as the organisation which are important for the performance of employees and the organisation.

4.3.3 Perceptions on integrity standards

Closely associated with ethics application is upholding integrity standards. The researcher asked about the participants' views on integrity standards presented by their line manager. The responses demonstrated that there are differing integrity standards presented by line managers in different departmental units at ECDOE. A participant who was responding to this question revealed that:

"I think with regards to integrity standards, our line manager has a few shortcomings. One that comes to mind is workplace diversity. Diversity in the workplace is essential. It ensures that we junior staff get to learn more about different perspectives and backgrounds, improving our working relationships, knowledge and way of thinking. That's where our managers fails because they focus on certain individuals not to the whole team. They are always undermining work done by junior staff and they feel discourage and they won't even correct their staff in appropriate way" (Participant 6, Female, 11/05/23).

A similar discontentment view by another participant remarked that:

“They are really not honest about an employees’ behaviour; they always talk behind their backs and you sometimes here about your unethical behaviour from other employees or in the corridors. They do not communicate with junior staff members, they undermine their work and the ability to produce results when requested to do so, they show lack of faith to their subordinates. They do not motivate their junior staff to want to do more and better (Participant 11, Male, 16/05/23).

There was also a divergent opinion by a participant who claimed that:

“The line manager tries to motivate and acknowledge good conduct. There is also the issues of meeting targets. I admire that as it shows commitment. The manager tries to communicate and be reliable such that we are able to rely on his guidance when carrying out duties. There is however the issue of reserving some disciplinary measures when employees are behaving in a manner that undermines their colleagues” (Participant 5, Male, 10/05/2023).

The indications from the participants’ views show that the poor integrity standards include impartiality, preferential treatment as well as lack of communication and engagement. The research found that the line managers in some department units treat other workers better than others which is against the stipulation of Section 195 of the Constitution. The section mandates the management of workforce premised on objectivity, competency and equality. There is a need for some line managers to change their conduct and ensure that they treat their subordinates with objectivity and equality. The other concern regarding integrity is failure to ensure openness and good communication which is resulting in dissatisfaction and demotivation among the personnel. These aspects are important for the overall performance of ECDOE which has been underperforming in the past few years.

However, it is also notable that some employees perceive their line managers to have decent integrity standards. The employees are happy with strategies that are used by the line managers that have decent integrity strategies which include recognition of positive conduct, moral and work commitment. The results show that integrity standards are important in role modelling action by line managers. The action of line

managers impacts the employees' motivation and performance. McGregor in the X and Y theory points out that management has a fundamental role in the improvement of an organisation's performance (Chikwariro et al., 2021:2). This study's empirical findings support the postulation of McGregor's theory that workers look up to their managers and depend on them. In this study, findings reveal that public employees observe their line managers and when they perceive them as not upholding integrity standards it reduces employee morale, lowers motivation, and results in poor performance. While those public employees that view their line managers as upholding integrity standards have high employee morale, motivated and perform as required within a particular departmental unit.

4.3.4 Role modelling conduct

The research also enquired about how line managers ensure that their conduct aligns with proper ethical and integrity practices. By ensuring that their conduct aligns with the required ethical and integrity practices, line managers will be producing role modelling behaviour that positively shapes the employees' perception about their management. The study data indicated that several practices by line managers do not align with ethical and integrity practices. The application of ethical and integrity practices is supposed to be inherently embedded in management practices. The participants of this study highlighted that the alignment of conduct with ethical and integrity practices is irregular, disjointed and requires improvement. Therefore some of the line managers are not exhibiting role modelling behaviour. One of the participants who responded to this question stressed that:

“There is no alignment between the conduct of line managers with ethical and integrity practices. The line managers need to be trained on different aspects of ethical and integrity practices such as openness, communication, consistency, impartiality, commitment, corruption, accountability and respect. I feel there is room for improvement in the alignment of their conduct with ethical and integrity practices. But that's not to say all of them are all struggling with having proper conduct that aligns with ethical and integrity practices” (Participant 4, Male, 09/05/23).

A slightly different opinion by another participant talk about this:

“The alignment has been improving. I think the training on ethics and integrity by the department has been helping the line managers to improve their conduct such that it is now aligning with the necessary ethical and integrity practices. I am not saying that there are no issues in the ethical and integrity practices, we all know them they are well documented, but I am just saying there has been a notable improvement in the alignment of conduct with ethical and integrity practices. You can see the way that line managers engage with subordinates it has improved. Maybe it is because I have been here for more than 10 years now” (Participant 14, Female, 17/05/23)

The excerpts above represent some of the perceptions that employees at ECDOE have about the alignment of the line managers’ conduct with ethical and integrity practices. Some of the employees feel that there is a negative disjointed alignment between their line managers’ conduct and expected ethical and integrity practices. The employees feel that line managers are not doing enough to ensure that their conduct aligns with the ethical and integrity practices required by the organisation. The persistent issues of nepotism, poor communication, lack of respect for subordinates, lack of commitment and consistency seem to be highlighted as the main issues that are making it difficult for the conduct of managers to align with ethical and integrity practices. Corruption and lack of accountability were also brought up as concerning elements in the practice of some line managers that cause the misalignment between their conduct and ethical as well as integrity practices. Therefore, some line managers are not exhibiting role modelling behaviour.

Despite the negative concern over the alignment of ethical and integrity practices among some line managers’ conduct, some employees are noting an improvement in their line managers’ conduct. These employees are of the view that their line managers are committed to align their conduct with ethical and integrity practices. This positive alignment is evident in which manner the managers communicate with their subordinates. Additionally, these line managers have become open to engagement with their subordinates. The participants attribute the change in ethical conduct to training that the personnel at ECDOE receiving. This finding affirms the assertion of

Vyas-Doorgapersad (2022:19) that public servants that participate in ethics training are aware of all the regulations, procedures and ethical standards that relate to their organisation. It is evident from this study that the current situation is improving but there is need for better alignment between the ethical and practices and the line managers' conduct. This improvement can be achieved through improved training programmes that help line managers to be more aware of the ethical and integrity practices required by the organisation. Additionally, according to the data from this study, in some cases, line managers are heading toward the desired role modelling conduct.

4.3.5 Perceptions on issues undermining ethical work climate

The study also asked about issues that affect the ethical work climate within ECDOE. The study found that issues such as lack of moral values, ageism, gender prejudice, education and work experience bias affect the ethical work climate. These issues raised by participants affect employees and responses to their line managers because they are the main components of the work environment. Additionally, the issues undermine the ethical work climate and integrity practices influencing the perceptions of employees about their line managers because they are responsible for controlling and managing of work environment. Explaining some of these issues to the researcher one participant commented that:

“I think generally people are now lacking moral values throughout the globe. As a Christian I think people need Jesus because we have lost our moral values. I also see this in the way we apply ourselves on issues of ethics and integrity. Leaders are becoming unethical because they do not have morals uprightness. There is little regard on accountability and sometimes transparency. So, I can say lack of moral values is one issue affecting ethics and integrity practices in our department” (Participant 12, Male, 16/05/23).

An additional view from another participant indicated that:

“For me four things are affecting ethical and integrity practices, one who do you know, how old are you, how long have you worked here

and your education. Those that know someone are likely to get some preferential treatment sometimes. As a young person I am treated with little respect. I feel that a lot of work is given to young people because we are the youngest in the department. Sometimes because you are a female you find yourself being sent to do all the things in your unit. Especially if you are new there is no respect. Sometimes you feel like not coming to work. Those that have better education are treated better. Those that went to better schools are also treated in some way. So yah for me those are issues that affect the application of ethical and integrity practices” (Participant 7, Female, 11/05/23).

Data from this study depicts that the issues that mainly affect the ethical work climate at ECDOE include lack of moral values, ageism, gender, education and work experience prejudice. The study reveals the challenge of the increasing lack of moral value within the contemporary work space. The participant indicates how the lack of moral values has become a significant factor in eroding ethical culture not only in their immediate work environment but in the general global work environment. However, there is a complexity associated with moral values as it is based on ideology, beliefs and norms which vary from person to person. Some individuals might regard certain norms and beliefs as acceptable even though some individuals may view the same norms and beliefs as unacceptable. Within the work environment line managers have to ensure a good ethical work climate by outlining moral values that are stipulated as integral to the organisation. Line managers have to consistently promote those moral values to ensure that they become a daily practice for the entire personnel within the organisation. The perception of employees is shaped by how a manager consistently works on ethical workplace culture. Al Halbusi et al. (2021:5) suggest that focusing on factors such as moral attentiveness, moral awareness and moral sensitivity can promote the ethics and integrity of individuals within a work environment. Therefore, in order to influence an ethical work climate, line managers are supposed to ensure that they promote the right moral values for the organisation through moral awareness, moral attentiveness and moral sensitivity.

Additionally, the findings of the study show that aspects such as ageism, gender, education and work experience preferential treatment is affecting ethical work climate. The complexity of these issues is that are embedded in cultural norms and unwritten sets of conduct. As noted by the response of the Participant 7 that the youngest person is generally 'expected' within the cultural norms to carry out more duties due to their age. This kind of unfairness becomes difficult to uproot because those that might be responsible for this conduct do not perceive it as an unethical practice. These negative practices have an adverse impact on the ethical work climate and affects work morale and motivation. The statement by Participant 7 that "*sometimes you feel like not coming to work*" highlights the demoralization among some of the workers. Employees who deal with the public have to be motivated in order to ensure efficient management and administration of basic services. This situation is having an impact on ECDOE which has not been performing well the past few years. Therefore, line managers have a role to play to ensure that the ethical work climate has improved by dealing with conventional cultural norms and unwritten sets of conduct that perpetuate unethical practices.



4.3.6 Perceptions on positive and negative encounters shaping ethical practices

The study also asked about the positive and negative ethical and integrity practices that the participants have noticed being portrayed by their line manager. The findings of this study showed that there are positive ethical and integrity practices that are portrayed by line managers at ECDOE which are mainly rewarding, openness, fostering trust, reliability, taking responsibility, and being accommodative. One participant who provided a response that showed positive ethical and integrity practices by line managers said this:

"I think one thing our manager is good at is acknowledging good work. They make sure that we feel appreciated whenever we do something good. I always see this as good thing and its rewarding. The managers also encourages us to talk to them about anything that affects us at work. For example when you don't understand a certain task they explain or assign someone to help if they are busy. You can

always rely on them to make decisions that help to make our work better and organised” (Participant 10, Female, 15/05/23).

Sharing their view on positive ethical and integrity practices another participant commented that:

“Our manager always ensure that there is good communication between her and the rest of the team. She is always keen to hear what people are suggesting with regards to certain aspects that might be affecting our work. She is strict but accommodates genuine concerns. She is also flexible and takes responsibility. When we have tight deadlines we work even extra hours but in times that we have less work people are allowed to take at a 15 minute break when they are done with their work assignment for that period. You are able to approach her with issues that are affecting you at work and sometimes at home. She listens and assists in a manner that helps the organisation and you as an individual. So yah we feel encouraged to work better when she assigns you a task just to make her proud” (Participant 17, Male, 19/05/23).

The responses of these participants depicted the positive ethical and integrity practices portrayed by some of the line managers at ECDOE. These positive practices such as being accommodative are helping to improve performance as the employees feel motivated to do their work. The positive practices also ensure effective and efficient communication which is needed to promote optimal performance within the organisation. From the findings of this study, it is evident that some of the line managers are displaying role modelling ethical conduct which is empowering to the subordinates within their units. The data also reveals that due to the line managers' positive ethical and integrity practices the employees are more willing to comply with performing extra duties. In the same vein, Andersson and Ekelund (2022:1089) highlight that positive ethical and integrity practices improve compliance with regulations and the performance of duties. The findings of this study showing positive ethics and integrity as exemplary, endorses the postulation of the social learning theory that people learn beliefs, ethical values, and pro-social conduct from the characteristics they observe in their role models.

However, there are some negative ethical and integrity practices portrayed by some line managers at the organisation. The predominant negative practices that were pointed out in this study were lack of respect, lack of transparency, dishonesty, nepotism and inappropriate use of working hours. One participant who shared a view on the negative ethical and integrity practices had this to say:

“There is something that I find very unethical and lacks integrity, when someone takes your work and copy then someone use it with other words without acknowledging the original source. They don’t acknowledge your contribution they just use your work and not even say to you that they are going to use your work. Claiming credit for someone else’s work is unfair. Also disregarding your feelings and making a joke out of everything when you complain. Then there is the part of humiliation in front of everyone in the office, instead of having a proper private meeting with you. It makes me feel embarrassed that I find it difficult to come to work the next day or interact with colleagues” (Participant 13, Female, 17/05/23).

A supporting view from another participant vented that:

“Some negative practices that I have seen are using power or authority to manipulate or control subordinates; being dishonest or misleading with employees; creating a culture of fear or intimidation; favouritism and not leading by example. There is no transparency in some situation whether when dealing with a disciplinary issue or allocation of resources. I think sometimes the managers do not entirely enforce ethical and integrity standards in a manner that is required by the organisation. Some disappear then come back when we are about to knockoff and they start making some tasks which were supposed to be done during the day” (Participant 11, Male, 16/05/23).

The foregoing views depict some of the negative ethical and integrity practices exhibited by some line managers at ECDOE. Lack of respect is one of the main practices by line managers that is affecting employees. The inability of a leader to respect subordinates can affect performance as employees will become less

motivated to do their work. The employees may also feel the need to disrespect their managers if they do not respect them. Zahra (2021:2) indicates that a person that has ethics is usually expected to be responsible and respectful. Therefore, the behaviour of some line managers is not ethical and lacks integrity because they are not respectful.

Furthermore, the research showed that lack of transparency and dishonesty are other ethical and integrity practices that are negative. Considering that ECDOE like many public sectors is facing challenges of corruption and wasteful expenditure, transparency must become a priority in the department. Section 195 of the Constitution encourages the promotion of transparency in the public sector to ensure effective and efficient service delivery. Dishonesty which is closely associated with transparency is also hindering the optimal performance in ECODE as some employees are demotivated by the dishonesty of their line managers. Therefore, the line managers have to promote transparency and honesty in their designated department units to ensure that the performance of the organisation improves.

The misuse of work time is another concerning ethical and integrity practice that seems to be significantly having an adverse impact on the performance of the organisation. When line managers misuse work time they reduce productivity as the amount of time that is supposed to be used completing certain tasks is minimised. The overall output for the day is usually affected by the misuse of work time. More so, it disrupts workflow as some things that need the input of the line manager have to be put aside because they are not available. The findings of this study show that like positive ethical and integrity practices, negative practices also affect employees and the organisation. McGregor's X and Y theory advances the dichotomy of managerial styles and their effect on employees and the organisation. Underpinned by the postulations of McGregor's theory, this study proves the dichotomy of managerial ethical practices and their effect on the performance of employees and the organisation.

4.3.7 Effects of ethical and integrity practices on employees

This section asked about how the ethical and integrity practices affect employees as individuals. Data from this study shows that the main effects of the ethical and integrity

practices are a decrease or increase in morale, distrust or trust, low job satisfaction, stress and confidence problems. One participant commented on this question by saying that:

As one of the person with the low education qualification, the workload is overwhelming, I am always afraid to say no when I am being given a task because it would look like I do not want to work, and prioritisation is really not working at this point because everyone wants their task on time whether you are busy or not. I feel that being reliable and hardworking is a weakness because everyone ends up asking for help forgetting that I also have tasks that have been delegated to me and I have to prioritise their work. We have some people who are also on the same level with me but do not get as much work as I do. I don't know whether it's my educational qualification or just that I am a man. I am starting to lose interest in work because sometimes I am not being appreciated and it is stressful (Participant 4, Male, 09/05/23).



Another participant expressed that:

Always be on guard and be defensive even when the comment being said is not meant to be negative. Workwise, performance starts to drastically drop as well as the confidence you possess, starts dropping and seeing one's self in a negative light. Having self-esteem because of being criticized and humiliated. Having no interest of being at work because of the toxic work environment. The happiness or pleasure that you are supposed to feel when go to work disappears. But when managers follow ethical conduct and become fair, trustworthy, reliable and communicate well you get the desire to go to work and work better when at work (Participant 16, Female, 18/05/23).

The excerpts above depict the effects of ethical and integrity practices when they are not followed and followed. The response of Participant 4 show possible unethical practices of unfair treatment based on gender or educational qualification. The excerpts shows that negative ethical and integrity practices can have a demoralizing

effect on employees. The erosion of morale implies that employees get disengaged, less committed to do their work, demotivated, and disillusioned when their line managers are unethical and lack integrity. This study's finding confirms the finding of Andersson and Ekelund (2022:1089) that unethical conduct could result in lower personnel morale, inflexibility and ineffectiveness. The situation where the employees are demoralized presents a challenge for line managers and the organisation. The findings of this study show that morale of employees can be increased by ensuring that line managers follow ethical and integrity practices.

The study also found that when line managers are not adhering to ethical and integrity practices it leads to mistrust and distrust. The employees start mistrusting their managers if their actions do not match the ethical requirements of the organisation. As managers become unreliable, employees get skeptical about the managers' decisions, questioning their integrity and fairness in managing activities in the organisation. On the other hand as data from this study reveals, employees increase their trust in line managers when they show consistency in the application of ethical and integrity practices. This study's outcome is in tandem with the argument by Strand (2020:30) that actions and words of management are the most critical element in motivating trust between the workers and organisation. Therefore, one critical effect of ethical and integrity practices is the growth of trust or lack of when practices are neglected.

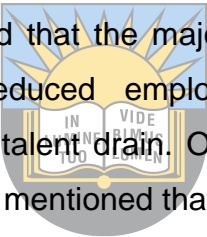
The study also unearthed that the ethical and integrity practices of line managers have an effect on job satisfaction. The statement by Participant 16 that "*the happiness or pleasure that you are supposed to feel when go to work disappears*" show the job dissatisfaction among some of the employees. The participant pins this dissatisfaction to the ethical and integrity practices by some line managers. The participant also highlights how a change in ethical and integrity practices can also have a positive effect on job satisfaction. Employees who experience or perceive unethical practices are likely to become dissatisfied with their jobs. This finding on decreased job dissatisfaction among some workers at ECDOE can be used to explain the poor performance of the organisation.

The results of this study also depict that the other effect of inconsistent ethical and integrity practices by line managers is stress and confidence problems. The

employees find the work environment stressful when they are humiliated, disrespected or unfairly treated by other employees. Additionally, some of the employees experience a decrease in confidence with a drop in self-esteem due to unethical and lack of integrity practices by line managers. This situation results in a stressful working environment and productivity decreases in such conditions. The employees eventually experience burnout due to increased stress from the negative ethical and integrity practices of their line managers.

4.3.8 Challenges connected to ethical and integrity issues

The preceding section shows there are effects caused by inconsistencies in the application of ethical and integrity practices which are presenting challenges that affect employees and the organisation. The research asked about the challenges that employees encounter due to ethical and integrity practices issues. Some of the responses to this question showed that the major challenges are low productivity, unhealthy work environment, reduced employment engagement, compliance problems, as well as attrition and talent drain. One reply by the participants which highlighted some of the challenges mentioned that:



“Unhealthy environments, toxic work environment. Bad attitude among employees resulting to poor service to clients. Constant bringing down of employees, and looking down on them. Mental issues, mental breakdown. Disrespect among employees. Conflict among employees” (Participant 6, Female, 11/05/23).

Another participant said this:

No work production, gossiping, conflicting, disagreements. Some employees end up leaving because the work environment becomes toxic with no proper application of ethic and integrity practices. There are compliance issues that also become a problem legally or otherwise (Participant 18, Female, 22/05/23).

The foregoing perceptions reveal that inconsistencies in applying ethical and integrity practices is presenting several challenges for ECDOE. One of the main challenge pointed out is low productivity which provides a possible explanation for the

organisation's low performance. This result corroborates the assertion by Zahra (2021:5) that ethics play a significant role in an organisation's productivity as well as job satisfaction among personnel. This study also found that another major challenge associated with the ethical and integrity issues is the unhealthy work environment. The challenge stems from the failure of some line managers to appropriately deal with work related issues such as discipline, preferential treatment, bullying and gossip. The research also unearthed that due to the unhealthy environment created by neglecting the application of ethical and integrity practices, employee engagement becomes minimal. The communication within the organisation becomes disintegrated. This situation of disintegrated communication leaves some employees frustrated. Frustrated employees provide bad service delivery to customers. This finding possibly explains the reason for the bad reputation in some public sector institutions that are known for bad service delivery.

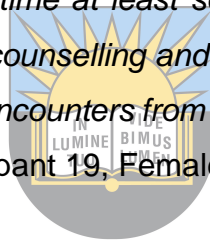
Data from this study also that there is a compliance problem that spreads throughout the organisation due to the poor application of ethical and integrity practices. Effective ethical culture depends on how line managers can make sure that they are exemplary. A similar argument is raised by Guohao et al. (2021:1449) who purport that management styles have an influence on the ethics and integrity on conduct displayed by employees as behavioural integrity is learned from immediate supervisors or line managers. Therefore, the concern of lack of compliance can be minimized by line managers who ensure the consistent use of ethical and integrity practices. Furthermore, the research also found that one of the challenges of not applying ethical and integrity practices properly results in attrition and talent drain. The erosion of ethical culture in the department leads to some of the employees leaving the organisation. Considering that the public sector is already facing challenges of inadequate skills among personnel, losing more personnel due to ethical and integrity issues is detrimental. Therefore, there is a need to deal with challenges associated with ethical and integrity issues.

4.3.9 Dealing with ethical and integrity challenges

The study sought to determine what is done by the line manager to help with dealing with challenges arising from ethical and integrity practices. The research findings show

that there are different measures being taken to ensure that the challenges that experienced due to ethical and integrity issues are being addressed. These measures include being exemplary, promoting openness and efficient communication, clarity on ethical culture, training, improving discipline on ethics and integrity practices, maintaining the confidentiality and getting counselling and support sometimes. One participant who provided a response to this question remarked that:

“I think some of our managers have been trying to lead by example. Some also promote openness. There is also provision of clear expectations on the ethical culture practices. The other thing has been the training on ethics and stuff. The other managers also try to handle disciplinary matters using the right channels as stipulated by ethics code. The maintenance of confidentiality is also another thing that managers use to ensure challenges of ethics are eliminated. Even though the changes take time at least something is happening. On rare occasions, ensuring counselling and support for employees that experience any negative encounters from those breaching ethical and integrity practices” (Participant 19, Female, 23/05/23).



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Another participant said this: *Together in Excellence*

“Nothing because we are afraid of talking about what is happening in the office as there is no line of communication” (Participant 11, Male, 16/05/23).

The above quotations reveal what has been done by line managers to ensure that challenges are associated with ethical and integrity issues. One challenge that is faced by individuals due to ethical issues is low productivity, line managers are dealing with this challenge by ensuring that their subordinates getting training on ethics and integrity issues. Solving the challenge of unhealthy work environment, some line managers have ensure are promoting openness and better communication. The problem of a toxic work environment requires the line manager to constantly engage with employees and allow open communication to deal with any communication challenges. The other challenge that was raised in this study is the compliance problem dealing with entails reemphasizing the stipulations of ethical culture within the

organisation. The challenge of compliance is a major concern especially with issues of fraud and corruption being prominent in most public sector institutions. In tandem with the findings of this study, Shava and Mazenda (2021:310) opine on how lack of compliance is problematic in the public sector highlighting the issues of fraud, corruption and mismanagement. The last challenge that was unearthed by this study was attrition and talent drain, dealing with this challenge entails improving employment engagement, job satisfaction, and work environment. The use of open communication, training, and clarity on ethical requirements can help reduce the challenge of attrition and talent drain caused by inconsistencies in ethical and integrity practices.

Additionally, the responses from this study also reveal that there is a health and wellness feature in the form of counselling and support which is sometimes utilised to deal with ethical and integrity practices. Even though the feature is available it is hardly utilised to help deal with challenges associated with ethical and integrity practices. Counselling and support can assist employees with line managers that are doing “*nothing*” to deal with challenges of ethical and integrity practices. The counselling and support option can be essential in dealing with stress, burnout, unhealthy work environment, job dissatisfaction, communication problems, work overload and several other challenges. It is concerning that counselling and support are underutilised in work environment that has several ethics and integrity challenges.

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4.3.10 Promoting positive ethical and integrity practices

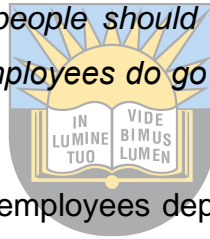
The research further asked about the manner in which the line managers and employees are promoting positive ethical and integrity practices in the organisation. Findings from this study reveal that modelling ethical behaviour, adhering to the ethics code, taking responsibility, reporting unethical conduct, participate in ethics training, and seeking guidance. This view by one participant highlights some of the ways of promoting positive ethical and integrity practices:

Subordinates are always fighting in the office because of the toxicity and favouritism in the workplace. It is never dealt with hence the infighting with the subordinates and toxic workplace. Managers have act in manner that is ethical with integrity and as employees we have to emulate that behaviour. We have been and need to continue

respecting the Public Service Code of Conduct. It is important that we continue taking responsibility for our actions. Treat other people as you would like to be treated. Always be welcoming especially to new employees and clients so that they can freely ask for help if they need it and ensuring that they are happy. Always doing what is right (Participant 20, Female, 24/05/23).

Another participant who had a comparable perception about the promoting positive ethical and integrity practices shared that:

“Our managers always encourage us to report incidences that might be affecting us. I guess to avoid toxic situation we should find a way to report incidences that involve violation of ethics and integrity. I also believe and always attend trainings that have equip us with knowledge on dealing with ethics issues. We also seek guidance from the ethics office. I think people should also go for counselling on issues of ethics. Some employees do go but I have not” (Participant 15, Male, 18/05/23).



The foregoing perceptions of the employees depict the different ways that they are using to promote ethical and integrity practices. The first aspect notable in the findings is correcting behaviour to ensure that it promotes ethical and integrity practices. The role modelling conduct by employees especially line managers in the organisation is crucial in promoting ethical and integrity practices. In the social learning theory, Bandura (1977:34) postulates that observation and modelling are critical in shaping the way people learn and act thereafter. Therefore, based on the findings, it is important not only for line managers but the entire personnel to be exemplary in terms of acting ethically and with ethics.

The data from this study also shows that adhering to code of ethics is being used to promote ethical and integrity practices. The public sector in South Africa has a legal framework that is aimed at ensuring that there are ethical and integrity practices. The legal framework includes the Constitution and the Public Service Code of Conduct. The implication of utilising this framework in the workplace is the reduction of unethical conduct that affects service delivery and an unhealthy work environment. Line managers are supposed to ensure that there is familiarization with the ethical code

and policy in the organisation. The use of ethical guidelines will enable the organisation to improve the ethical culture. Therefore, it is encouraging to discover that the employees at ECDOE are promoting the adherence of stipulations in the code of ethics.

The study also found that the employees at ECDOE are also taking responsibility for their actions to promote ethical and integrity practices. The critical step to addressing a problem is taking responsibility. The line managers are supposed to be the first to take responsibility for their conduct. Collaborating on this argument, Ngubane (2021:3) mentions that leaders with ethics take responsibility. The study found that some of the line managers and employees are taking responsibility for their conduct promoting the necessary conditions to build an ethical environment. However, this situation of having a segment of the personnel taking responsibility is not enough to ensure the efficient and effective ethical and integrity practices.

Reporting unethical conduct is a necessary measure in promoting ethical and integrity practices within the organisation. Data from this research depicts that some of the line managers and employees report cases of ethical violation. The subsequent action after reporting were not necessarily disclosed. It is encouraging to note that there are some employees that are willing to take necessary steps to curb unethical practices by reporting those incidences of misconduct. However, the effect of reporting incidences of unethical practices can only be fruitful if it becomes a widespread and accepted practice throughout the organisation. The success of reporting unethical practices hinges on eliminating any form of victimization of employees who have reported incidences they have experienced or witnessed. Whistleblowing can be beneficial when handled properly but can cause division in the organisation which is an undesirable outcome that lowers productivity. Training on how to handle dealing and reporting incidences of unethical practices is important for the organisation.

The study also found that some line managers and employees attend ethics and integrity practices trainings to promote ethical and integrity practices. Issues of ethics might appear to be standard practice that requires general knowledge without much need for training. However, data from this study has revealed that it is necessary that personnel in a public institution like ECDOE attend compulsory ethics and integrity training. Training help both management and employees understand the ethical and

integrity practices that affect performance and productivity. The high frequency of incidences such as disrespect, nepotism, lack of transparency, failed communication and corruption highlights how employees are not well equipped to deal with and correctly apply ethical and integrity practices.

The research also found that seeking guidance is one of the ways that employees are promoting ethical and integrity practices. The seeking of guidance on ethical and integrity practices does not necessarily have to be from employees only but also from line managers. In the contemporary work environment, there are a lot of ethical dilemmas and issues that are uncertain. From one of the foregoing sections in this study's findings, it was noted that due to the conventional norms which usually expect the youngest person to be tasked with most duties, can be an ethical violation. Furthermore, there are issues of conflict of interest which are usually very complex. Therefore, such situations require the personnel to seek guidance on ethical and integrity practices.



4.3.11 Recommendations on ethical and integrity practices

The final section of the analysis focused on what can be done to improve ethical and integrity practices. The researcher asked the participants what they suggested should be done to promote positive ethical and integrity practices in the organisation. Numerous suggestions were presented as valuable in improving ethical and integrity practices. These suggestions include creating daily routines that promote ethical and integrity practices, ethical awareness workshops and campaigns, establishing an ethical decision-making framework, team building activities that help with ethics and integrity practices, engagement between management and employees, ethics audit and ethical performance evaluation, and safety and confidentiality of employees that report ethical related issues. Expressing their preferred suggestions, one participant quipped that:

"I think there should be a quarterly one on one meeting with our immediate directors or supervisors which will look at challenges we are facing at work so that we can find ways to resolve the problems amicable together. I also think there should be one on one sessions to evaluate employees' mental wellness in the workplace especially

when there are issues of conflict, humiliation, disrespect and gossip. Counselling sessions have to increase and every year all employees must have some form of counselling including the line managers because people are going through a lot and sometimes it's not easy talk about those things. Team building should be done as well. During team building initiatives that is where we learn new things that are important in the workplace including issues of ethics and integrity. Team building also helps to improve and relearn some of the things that assist us to handle the stress at our workplace. Also working on proper communication between lower level personnel and the top level personnel is important in improving ethical and integrity practices at our department” (Participant 8, Female, 12/05/23).

Another participant suggested this:

“I suggest there must be daily routines that remind people on important ethical practices such as reminders on dishonesty, theft, lying, gossip, bullying, discrimination and many other issues. Maybe if we can have posters that are read daily by all employees. I think they something like that in China. Ethics awareness workshop and campaigns are important. There is need to organized team build activities that allow more engagement between staff and management. Supporting speak-up culture. Encourage counselling. Setting up ethical decision-making frameworks. There also need to do ethics audit, performance evaluation must include ethics and also recognition of ethical employees. The protection and confidentiality of employees when they report ethical and integrity issues” (Participant 19, Female, 23/05/23).

The above views by the employees provide significant suggestions that can be utilized by ECDOE to improve the application of ethical and integrity practices by both line managers and employees. One of the main findings in this section is the establishment of daily routines that help employees to remind and improve the entire personnel about ethical and integrity practices. The employees will be required to recite ethical stipulations so that they become memorable. Through this daily routine process

employees will become sensitive, attentive and aware of the ethical and integrity practices. Notably, these daily routines will be carried out by management as well.

The study's findings also show that employees think regular ethics and integrity awareness workshops and campaigns can help improve ethical and integrity practices in the organisation. The workshops and campaigns will be carried out within the organisation's premises. These workshops can be vital in knowledge sharing and dissemination of vital practical information that can be used by employees when they are faced with work situations that require upholding ethical and integrity practices. The hosting of workshops can be predominantly conducted by in-house ethical office personnel, however, in some cases, external consultants can be hired to promote openness and free expression by employees who might fear being victimized from their line managers. The workshops and campaigns can also help with the recognition role modelling conduct which is needed to shape the perception of employees. The McGregor X and Y theory emphasizes the importance of how the behaviour of two managers with different management styles can affect the performance of an organisation. Taking this assertion into consideration, the ethics workshops can help line managers understand how their management activities related to their ethics and integrity are affecting employees' performance. The line managers can use the information they get from workshops to get help through training or, in some cases, via counselling.

The study also found that there is a need for an ethical standards framework that guides line managers and employees. The study's participants acknowledged there is a legal framework that guides the organisation and the entire public sector but the participants feel that there must be a context-specific ethical standards framework tailor made to accommodate some issues that are not included in the already existing code of ethics instruments. This framework must guide training and individuals through the process of evaluating ethical dilemmas and making decisions that align with organisational values. The framework also provides measures that help deal with transparency and accountability within the organisation.

The data from this research also suggests the need for management and employee engagement to ensure proper communication and openness to promote ethical conduct from the top in a manner that allows cohesion within the organisation. Even

though the suggestion is probably not feasible for management to have one on one sessions with individuals, there is a need for a system that ensures that the employees can access management in a manner that allows problems to be viewed from an individual basis. The participants feel that some ethical and integrity issues affect people differently. Therefore, there must be ways to ensure engagement between management and individual employees.

The other suggestion that was indicated in this research was the use of team building initiatives. The team building activities can and sometimes should include management personnel. The team building activities can assist in lessening ethical unhealthy or toxic elements within the organisation. There is a belief that issues such as gossiping and disrespect can be eliminated through team building activities. These team building activities have to be designed in a manner that emphasises on improving comprehension and application of ethics and integrity components.

The study's findings also reveal that employees feel that there must be regular ethics audits and ethics evaluation performance. The ethics audit can be useful in understanding areas that are lacking regarding ethical and integrity practices. Ethics performance evaluation can be integrated in the normal job performance evaluation. The employee's ethical and integrity are also assessed to understand how their practices are exemplary or an impediment to the required ethical conduct. The use of ethics audit and ethics performance evaluation can be utilized in the recognition of ethical employees. Training programmes on ethics and integrity can make use of data that is obtained from ethics audits and ethics performance evaluation.

The last suggestion that was recorded in this study was the protection of employees that report unethical issues in the organisation. Employees fear to report incidences of ethical misconduct because of victimization and harassment after reporting. Therefore, in order to ensure that more employees can report issues of ethical and integrity misconduct the organisation must have a system that offers confidentiality, anonymity, privacy and protection from harm. This system can be designed internally or externally so that the employees can have confidence in the system being useful in addressing any ethical and integrity related grievances.

4.4 Conclusion

The chapter provides a presentation on the analysis study's findings. The findings of this research were discussed thematically. The research results showed that there are several ethical and integrity issues that are affecting the performance of ECDOE. The general perceptions of employees regarding their line managers' ethical and integrity conduct is mainly negative. The study showed that there is poor application of ethical and integrity practices in the organisation. Line managers are failing to align their conduct with the required ethical and integrity practices. However, the study also shows some line managers are working on improving their ethical conduct which is improving the perception of their subordinates regarding their ethics and integrity. Furthermore, the study collected and discussed suggestions that can be used to improve ethics and integrity at ECDOE so that the department can improve its overall performance. The subsequent chapter is going to present a summary of the main findings, conclusions, recommendations, limitations of the study and areas of further research.



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Chapter Five

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The foregoing chapter focused on the presentation, interpretation, analysis and discussion of research data that were collected during fieldwork. The gathering of data was done through semi-structured interviews from a research sample that was selected purposively. The data were presented and discussed using themes that are aligned with the main objectives of this study. This final chapter of this research provides a summary of the main findings, conclusions and suggestions on what can be done to improve issues around ethics and integrity within the ECDOE. The study's main objectives which guide the study's conclusions and recommendations were to investigate the perceptions that level 4-9 employees have on the ethics and integrity of line managers; find out what effect the ethical and integrity practices depicted by line managers have on the level 4-9 employees; and determine what needs to be done to promote positive ethical and integrity practices at the ECDOE. Therefore, this concluding chapter targets to highlight a summarised compilation of the salient elements of the study, offer recommendations premised on the empirical findings of this study, and outline limitations of the research while suggesting areas of further research. The final section of this chapter presents the study's conclusion.

5.2 Summary of the study

Chapter one of this study provides a discussion on the introductory background regarding ethics and integrity within the public sector specifically focusing on the ECDOE. The chapter also deliberates on the research problem which is premised on the ethics and integrity concerns within the ECDOE. The introductory chapter also lists the main research questions as well as the objectives. The significance of the study is also outlined in the first chapter. The research's second chapter covered literature review. The literature review discussed concepts of ethics and integrity. The chapter also elucidates the role of ethics and integrity in an organisation. The review of

literature also focused on ethics and integrity in the public sector in South Africa. The section explains the codes of ethics and legislative framework in the South African public sector. The literature review chapter also concentrated on reviewing literature pertaining to ethics and integrity among employees and managers. The theoretical framework is also a part of chapter two's discussion. The chapter also deliberates on the challenges associated with ethics and integrity inadequacies.

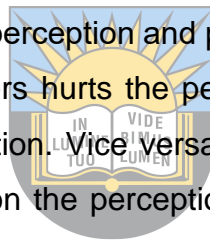
The study's third chapter focuses on the research methodology. The research methodology chapter outlines the concept of research, research methods and characteristics of research design. The chapter also discusses the research process, research strategy and research paradigm. The section also highlights the choice of research methodology, time horizon, research site, techniques and procedures. The study used a particular group of participants, the third chapter explains the research population, target population, sample, sampling technique and sample size. The chapter also discusses the measuring instrument, trustworthiness of the data, pilot study process, types of data sources as well as data collection process. The final sections of the chapter explain the ethical considerations and data analysis used in this study.

The fourth chapter focuses on data presentation, interpretation, and discussion. The presentation and discussion of data in this chapter are done using themes that are in tandem with the main research questions and objectives. The first section of the analysis outlines the demographic profile of the research participants. The second part of the analysis offers the different themes which were discovered from the research data. The chapter discusses eleven themes which are discussed together with empirical findings from other reviewed studies. The final chapter of this study is about summary of the study, summary of the findings, conclusions and recommendations. Chapter five also provide the study's limitations and areas of further research. The final section of chapter five focuses on the research's conclusion.

5.3 Summary of research findings and conclusions

The study results showed that based on the perceptions of staff at ECDOE the application of ethics by some line managers has been inconsistent. This inconsistency

in the application of ethics within the organisation has significance on how the employees perceive their line managers. Inconsistencies in the application of ethics lead to negative perceptions about line managers' management and credibility. Fundamentally, the study's findings explain the discrepancy between what is expected from line managers and what they do with regard to the application of ethics. There is a gap in the application of ethics which affects not only the employees' perceptions of their line manager but also the employee's work conduct. This study also showed that by having a positive perception of their line managers applying ethics, employees tend to learn and emulate that good conduct consequently positively contributing to the organisation's overall performance. Even though there are employees who are learning and emulating good conduct by observing the good application of ethics by line managers, some employees are also adversely affected by the inconsistency in the application of ethics and integrity by some line managers. Therefore, this study concludes that the application of ethics and integrity is largely inconsistent and incongruent affecting employees' perception and performance. In some cases, unmet expected conduct by line managers hurts the perceptions of employees as well as their performance in the organisation. Vice versa, fulfilled expected conduct by line managers has a positive impact on the perception and subsequent performance of employees. Essentially, there is a need to ensure that the line managers' application of ethics is consistent and congruent with required or expected conduct.



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The study data also revealed that there is variation in the upholding of integrity standards. The upholding of integrity standards by some line managers is poor. There is also evidence that there is decent adherence to integrity standards. The finding offers a possible reason of the poor performance by ECDOE being directly linked to integrity standards affecting work morale, reducing motivation and employee performance. The study showed that integrity is an essential enabler of positive behaviour and has an impact on leadership within ECDOE and the resultant overall performance. This finding explains the role of integrity in influencing the performance of employees and the organisation. When line managers uphold integrity standards employees perceive them as capable leaders promoting high employee morale, high motivation, and optimal employee performance. Therefore, the research concludes that the decent upholding of integrity standards promotes good performance among employees. However, poor upholding of integrity standards is creating a weak ethical

basis negatively affecting the performance of some employees within some units in ECDOE. The study also concludes that for ECDOE to improve performance, it is essential to ensure that every function within the organisation's operations is integrated by coherent integrity principles fostered by line managers. Even subtle actions that do not uphold integrity standards affect employees' perceptions regarding ethics and integrity in the organisation. The perceptions of employees about their line managers' integrity standards serve as a critical component in the organisation's performance.

Findings from this study also underline the importance of line managers in setting required behaviour through role modelling conduct. The public sector serves a large number of end users or beneficiaries in the form of citizens, therefore, there is always a need for public personnel to behaviour in a manner that is ethical and exemplary. However, this study found that some of the line managers are displaying ethical and integrity practices that are irregular, disjointed and lacking strong ethical orientation. The persistent issues of nepotism, cronyism, corruption, lack of accountability, poor communication, lack of respect for subordinates, lack of commitment, and consistency are some elements that are negative workplace behaviour by some line managers that undermine organisational performance. In such situations, role modelling imitation is difficult for some of the employees in the workplace as they regard the conduct as antagonistic to the expected ethical and integrity practices.

The findings of the study also showed that some employees perceive their line managers as portraying acceptable role modelling conduct which is useful in shaping their conduct in the organisation. In such situations, employees are more open to communicate with their line managers and getting effective assistance with regards to their work responsibilities. Therefore, this study concludes that through role modelling conduct some line managers are ensuring that they portray the required ethical and integrity practices thereby assisting with better employee engagement and optimal work performance. While other line managers are not exhibiting role modelling conduct leading to ethical and integrity concerns which negatively affect employee engagement and work performance. Evidently, role modelling conduct by line manager, as noted in this study, can play a significant role in enhancing required performance within the organisation.

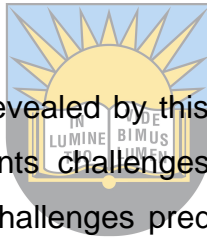
The study also revealed several aspects that are undermining ethical and integrity practices by line managers within the organisation. The aspects are mainly lack of moral values, ageism, gender, education and work experience bias. These aspects affect ethical culture and ethical work climate at ECDOE. Some line managers violate ethical and integrity practices because there are some unwritten ethical components which create ethical dilemmas. These ethical concerns are part of unwritten expectations in the work environment and society as a whole. According to the views of some of the employees, some of the line managers do not know or notice that these issues undermine ethical and integrity practices. Some of the issues that undermine ethical and integrity practices are embedded in daily practices and activities. Due to this embedment of some of these elements in the daily practices, it is difficult for the line managers to deal with such issues that violate ethical and integrity practices. Some of the noticeable incidences are ageism and gender issues where young or female employees are expected to normally do unwritten duties such clearing up a work space.



These issues are promoted or worsened by things like nepotism, favouritism or lack of accountability. The prevalence of such issues increases disrespect and miscommunication within the workplace. Line managers are failing to deal with these ethical work climate dilemmas created because they are embedded in conventional cultural norms and practices. These issues undermine the ethical work climate and integrity practices. Additionally, these issues negatively influence the perceptions of employees about their line managers. In this regard, the study concludes that there is a need to make sure that line managers understand and deal with ethical and integrity practices that seem to be conventional norms and practices that perpetuate unethical practices.

Furthermore, the main findings of this study also outlined that the violation of ethics and integrity by line managers has effects which include a decline in morale, distrust, and low job satisfaction, stress and confidence problems. There are notable negative effects of violating ethical and integrity practices affecting overall performance of employees. Low employee morale has an impact on the employee and the organisation's performance. When employees perceive their managers to be violating ethics and integrity they feel disheartened and less motivated to perform to their required standard reducing productivity thereby lowering quality of service delivery.

There is also an increase in deliberate absenteeism and reduced enthusiasm among these public personnel when they observe some of their line managers violating ethical and integrity practices. In addition, one related aspect is also an increase in distrust among public servants when they perceive their line managers as failing to meet the expected ethical conduct within the organisation. This distrust becomes a source of reduced employee engagement which is detrimental in the public sector environment as it largely depends on different work units coherently functioning together to deliver quality services. The ripple effect is low job satisfaction, as the public employees perceive their line manager to be breaching ethical and integrity practices which also cause a decline in their commitment to duties. Employees become stressed and less happy with their work as they are treated unfairly by some line managers. Therefore, this study concludes that there are several adverse effects caused by violation of ethics and integrity practices. Due to these adverse effects the employees there is notable employee disengagement, demotivation, reduced work commitment and poor employee development.



The other significant conclusion revealed by this study is that breach of ethics and integrity by line managers presents challenges which affect the performance of employees and ECDOE. These challenges predominantly include low productivity, unhealthy work environment, reduced employment engagement, compliance problems, as well as attrition and talent drain. The findings of this study show that the identified challenges are contributing towards the poor service delivery by the department. The line managers are directly or indirectly contributing to the poor performance in the organisation by depicting conduct that do not align with expected ethical and integrity practices. These challenges have a far-reaching consequences which are mainly on the employees, organisational culture and the entire department. Therefore, there is need to implement corrective measures that assist with preventing the violation of ethical and integrity practices.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the primary findings of this research, the following recommendations can be implemented at ECDOE to assist line managers in upholding ethical and integrity practices thereby ensuring role modelling conduct:

5.4.1 Recommendation one

The study found that the application of ethics by line managers is inconsistent. The study also revealed that some of the line managers are not upholding integrity standards. Based on these findings this research recommends that the department needs an ethics assessment and audit among all employees within ECDOE. The department should also carry out performance reviews and appraisals to identify any patterns or trends connected to the application of ethics and integrity. These assessments will help to identify areas of inconsistency such as the expected ethical and integrity practices; the conduct of the employees after assessments; and knowledge on ethical regime within the organisation; among other things. After carrying out ethics and integrity assessments, the department should then compare the survey results against organisation benchmarks or the best ethical and integrity practices. This ethics and integrity assessment data can provide context for understanding whether the perceptions and practices is within the organisation's broader ethics and integrity standards. Ultimately, the application of ethics can be aligned and become consistent based on data obtained from ethics and integrity assessments conducted within the organisation.

5.4.2 Recommendation two

The research results also revealed that the role modelling conduct of some line managers is not acceptable as some of their ethical and integrity practices are irregular, disjointed and lacking strong ethical orientation. Therefore, this study suggests that all employees receive training, coaching and mentoring on ethical and integrity practices. The training for line managers can be customized in a manner that allows the line managers to act out role modelling activities and conduct during training. The situated learning will allow the line managers to adapt to specific conditions thereby applying their acquire knowledge to different situations they get exposed to. The social learning theory advocates for learning through observation,

imitation and modelling. Therefore, putting line managers in situations that help them apply positive ethical and integrity practices. Line managers will be able to observe, imitate, and copy from trainers and colleagues. In addition, to this training, establishing an anonymous feedback mechanism can improve the results of training. When employees have completed training, the employees can provide anonymous feedback on the conduct of line managers. Similarly, line managers can also provide anonymous feedback on trained employees and fellow line managers. This kind of reporting system will encourage employees to engage and share their thoughts without fear of reprisal. The anonymous feedback mechanisms can include online forms, suggestion boxes or third-party platforms.

5.4.3 Recommendation three

The study also found that there are several components that are undermining ethical and integrity practices among line managers. The conventional norms which have been perpetuating negative ethical and integrity practices have to be uprooted from the organisation. Consequently, this study suggests the reviewing and restructuring ethics and integrity guidelines and infrastructure by focusing advancement of ethical imperatives, ethical regime and integrity system. The organisation has to highlight why ethical imperatives are necessary. There is a glaring problem of poor communication in terms of clear ethical imperatives at ECDOE. Therefore, ethical imperatives must be clarified and emphasis must be on issues that cause ethical dilemmas such as ageism, gender, religion, bullying, education and work experience bias. In public administration and management there is always a need to ensure that ethical imperatives are clear and upheld by public personnel especially by management personnel. Therefore, the ethical policies have to be effectively communicated and all employees have to be aware of the processes for reporting ethical concerns. The ethical standard setting has to ensure there is clarity on ethical imperatives, ethical regime and integrity system. The communication which help with clarity on ethical imperatives, ethical regime and integrity can be carried out using ethics and integrity awareness campaigns, digital messaging among other mechanisms.

5.4.4 Recommendation four

The study also concluded that there are several effects of breaching ethical and integrity practices which affect the performance of organisation. Accordingly, this research recommends the use of employee engagement, positive ethical culture and action plan. Employee engagement has been affected by the negative perception that some employees have about their line managers' ethical and integrity conduct. Team building activities aimed at promoting ethical and integrity perceptions and practices have to be conducted regularly. The department can also allow the use of focus group discussions which helps with employee engagement as they get to discuss different topics that are affecting them with regards to ethics and integrity. Additionally, the promotion of ethical culture is necessary to help improve trust and employee morale. The code of conduct, ethics and integrity protocols as advised by the public sector legal framework has to be applied with better buy in through proper communication. All employees that adhere to ethical culture within the department must be acknowledged and rewarded. An action plan should also be utilized to address issues of concern regarding any ethics and integrity challenges. The action plan includes how ethical and integrity issues are reported, addressed and filed. The data on how the incidences of ethical and integrity practices are being experienced and dealt with will be used in applying training and education on ethics and integrity within the organisation.

5.4.5 Recommendation five

The final significant finding of this study highlighted on the challenges that are caused by the violation of ethical and integrity practices. Therefore, the research advances that ECDOE prioritise ethics and integrity management. In the public sector, ethics and integrity are part of performance, therefore, line managers have to work together with their subordinates to ensure the reinforcement ethical and integrity ethos, practices and standards. The reinforcement can be through good behaviour, repeating desired behavior and appreciating ethical and integrity practices. The challenges on ethics and integrity can be assessed through ethics monitoring and evaluation. Monitoring can be done through manual or digital exercises which focuses on key performance indicators in ethics and integrity. Evaluation will focus on appraisals of

ethical and integrity practices. Analysing trends and making follow ups on data collected is also valuable in tackling the challenges encountered due to breach of ethical and integrity practices. The dealing of challenges due to violation of ethics and integrity also involves promoting reporting of unethical conduct and protecting whistle-blowers where necessary.

5.5 Limitations of the research

This study primarily utilised a qualitative research approach because it was focused on attaining insightful detailed perceptions of level 4-9 employees on their line managers' ethics and integrity. However, the qualitative research methodology has inherent limitations. One of the limitations of a qualitative study is the utilization of a small sample which implies that the study only focuses on a limited number of participants. This study used a small sample of 20 participants. The use of a small sample allowed the research to collect an in-depth, unique, and insightful and information rich data on the perceptions of the participants regarding the research problem. Therefore, it was necessary for such a study which focused on perceptions of participants to utilise a manageable sample. The study also had a geographical limitation as it only focused on one province and one government department, ECDOE. By using a single case study, the research was only able to learn about unique aspects regarding the experiences of the participants within a specific institution. Furthermore, the scope of the study was only limited to line managers and level 4-9 employees. The limitation of the study to line managers was necessary because line managers have a direct daily or almost daily contact with the level 4-9 employees which make them to have a significant impact on the day-to-day conduct of the employees.

5.6 Areas of further research

In consistent with the study's findings which show that there is a gap in the evaluation and monitoring of ethics and integrity, an investigation can be carried out to find out the correlation between the consistent monitoring of ethics and integrity and employee performance. The study also noted that the unwritten ethical conduct is a grey area which needs to be addressed. Therefore, a study can be conducted to explore how to

handle unwritten ethical conduct in the contemporary work environment within a public sector organisation. Additionally, a quantitative study which will use a larger sample can be conducted focusing on the quantitative impact of ethics and integrity in a public organisation which does not focus profits. Further studies can be conducted in other provinces in different government departments so as to compare results based on ethical perceptions and practices in different locations. Further research can also be carried out with senior management to understand the trickling down effect of ethical and integrity practices among three different bureaucratic levels within a public institution.

5.7 Chapter and research conclusion

In conclusion, this study was primarily intended at exploring the perceptions of level 4-9 employees regarding the ethics and integrity of line managers at ECDOE. The study managed to achieve its main goal as it elicited different perceptions of level 4-9 employees regarding the ethics and integrity of line managers at ECDOE. The main perceptions from the employees that were obtained in this study outlined that some line managers at the organisation lack consistency when it comes to ethics and integrity. This inconsistency is notable in their application of ethics, upholding of integrity standards and the failure to depict role modelling conduct. Furthermore, the inconsistency in ethics and integrity by some line managers has an effect on the employees' perceptions and their work experience reducing employee morale, causing distrust, lowering job satisfaction, lowering productivity and resulting in high stress levels. The ethics and integrity challenges are leading to ECDOE underperforming as employees are dealing with antagonistic circumstances of several ethical and integrity inconsistencies. Essentially, this ethics and integrity situation presents a significant challenge for the organisation as it negatively affects employee performance and overall organisational performance.

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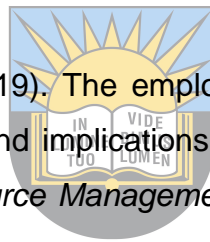
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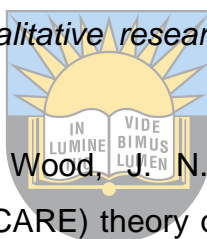
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Appendix 1: Ethical Clearance Certificate



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ETHICS CLEARANCE REC-270710-028-RA Level 01

Project Number: BAY011SMAK01

Project title: **An assessment of the views of level 4-9 employees on ethics and integrity of their line managers: A case-study of the Eastern Cape Department of Education.**

Qualification: Master of Public Administration

Student name: Zandile Makayi

Registration number: 201712296

Supervisor: Prof M.S. Bayat

Department: Public Administration

Co-supervisor: Dr M Sibanda

On behalf of the University of Fort Hare's Research Ethics Committee (UREC) I hereby grant ethics approval for BAY011SMAK01. This approval is valid for 12 months from the date of approval. Renewal of approval must be applied for BEFORE termination of this approval period. Renewal is subject to receipt of a satisfactory progress report. The approval covers the undertakings contained in the above-mentioned project and research instrument(s). The research may commence as from the 01/06/22, using the reference number indicated above.

Note that should any other instruments be required or amendments become necessary, these require separate authorisation.

Please note that UREC must be informed immediately of

- Any material changes in the conditions or undertakings mentioned in the document;
- Any material breaches of ethical undertakings or events that impact upon the ethical conduct of the research.

The student must report to the UREC in the prescribed format, where applicable, annually, and at the end of the project, in respect of ethical compliance.

UREC retains the right to

- Withdraw or amend this approval if
 - Any unethical principal or practices are revealed or suspected;
 - Relevant information has been withheld or misrepresented;
 - Regulatory changes of whatsoever nature so require;
 - The conditions contained in the Certificate have not been adhered to.
- Request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project.

Your compliance with Department of Health 2015 guidelines and any other applicable regulatory instruments and with UREC ethics requirements as contained in UREC policies and standard operating procedures, is implied.

UREC wishes you well in your research.

Yours sincerely



Dr N Taole-Mjimba

Chairperson: University Research Ethics Committee

31 May 2022

Appendix 2: Permission Letter from ECDOE



CORPORATE STRATEGY MANAGEMENT

Steve Vukile Tshwete Education Complex* Zone 6* Zwelitsha * Private Bag X0032 * Bhisho* 5605* REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA * Website: www.ecdoe.gov.za * Tel: +27 (040) 608 4537 Fax: 086 602 2024
Enquiries: F. Pakade Email: fundiswa.pakade@ecdoe.gov.za

30 June 2022

1001 NU 15
Mdantsane
5219

Dear Ms. Zandile Makayi

PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE AN INDEPENDENT RESEARCH: RESEARCH TOPIC: AN ASSESSMENT OF THE VIEWS OF LEVEL 4-9 EMPLOYEES ON ETHICS AND INTEGRITY OF THEIR LINE MANAGERS: A CASE-STUDY FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION IN THE EASTERN CAPE.

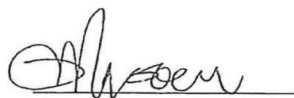
1. Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research involving the views of level 4-9 employees on ethics and integrity of their line managers: under the jurisdiction of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) is hereby approved based on the following conditions:
 - a. there will be no financial implications for the Department;
 - b. institutions and respondents must not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation;
 - c. no minors will participate without the consent from their parent/guardian;
 - d. it is not going to interrupt educators' time and task;
 - e. the research may not be conducted during official contact time;
 - f. Physical contact with educators and learners is not encouraged due to COVID-19, but mainly virtual means of communication are encouraged and that should be arranged and agreed upon in writing with the Principal and the affected teacher/s. Only in exceptional cases will physical contact with educators and learners is allowed and there must be strict adherence to COVID-19 protocols;
 - g. you present a copy of the written approval letter of the Eastern Cape Department of Education (ECDoE) to the Cluster and District Directors before any research is undertaken at any institutions within that particular district;



Customer care line: 086 063 8636
Website: www.ecdoe.gov.za



- h. you will make all the arrangements concerning your research;
 - i. should you wish to extend the period of research after approval has been granted, an application to do this must be directed to Chief Director: Corporate Strategy Management;
 - j. you present the Department with a copy of your final paper/report/dissertation/thesis free of charge in hard copy and electronic format. This must be accompanied by a separate synopsis (maximum 2–3 typed pages) of the most important findings and recommendations if it does not already contain a synopsis;
 - k. you present the findings to the Research Committee and/or Senior Management of the Department when and/or where necessary;
 - l. you are requested to provide the above to the Chief Director: Corporate Strategy Management upon completion of your research;
 - m. you comply with all the requirements as completed in the Terms and Conditions to conduct Research in the ECDoE document duly completed by you;
 - n. you comply with your ethical undertaking (commitment form);
 - o. You submit on a six-monthly basis, from the date of permission of the research, concise reports to the Chief Director: Corporate Strategy Management.
2. The Department reserves a right to withdraw the permission should there be non-compliance to the approval letter and contract signed in the Terms and Conditions to conduct Research in the ECDoE and/or legal requirements to do so.
 3. The Department will publish the completed Research on its website.
 4. The Department wishes you well in your undertaking. You can contact the Mrs. Fundiswa Pakade on the numbers indicated in the letterhead or email fundiswa.pakade@ecdoe.gov.za should you need any assistance.



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CHIEF DIRECTOR: CORPORATE STRATEGY MANAGEMENT
FOR SUPERINTENDENT-GENERAL: EDUCATION

Appendix 3: Interview Guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Name of interviewer: -----

Date of interview: -----

Position of respondent: -----

Gender: -----

Age: -----

Highest Level of Education: -----

Years Working at the Organisation: -----

1. What are the perceptions that level 4-9 employees have on the ethics and integrity of line managers at the ECDOE?

- i. Please can you explain your primary responsibility in the organisation?
- ii. What is your view on the application of ethics by your manager?
- iii. What is your view with integrity standards presented by the manager?
- iv. How does your manager ensures that their conduct aligns with proper ethical and integrity practices?
- v. Are there issues that concern you regarding the application of ethical and integrity practices in the organisation?

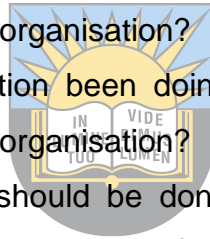
2. What effect do the ethical and integrity practices depicted by line managers has on the level 4-9 employees at the ECDOE?

- i. What are the positive and negative ethical and integrity practices that you have noticed being portrayed by your manager?
- ii. How are the ethical and integrity practices having an effect on you as an individual?

- iii. What are some of the challenges that you encounter due to ethical and integrity practices issues?
- iv. How do these challenges caused by ethical and integrity practices affect your work?
- v. How does your manager help with dealing with challenges arising from ethical and integrity practices?

3. What needs to be done to promote positive ethical and integrity practices at the ECDOE?

- i. What do you think about the manner in which your manager is promoting positive ethical and integrity practices in the organisation?
- ii. What are you as employees doing to promote positive ethical and integrity practices in the organisation?
- iii. What do you think impedes the ability to promote positive ethical and integrity practices in the organisation?
- iv. What has the organisation been doing to promote positive ethical and integrity practices in the organisation?
- v. What do you suggest should be done to promote positive ethical and integrity practices in the organisation?



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Appendix 4: Informed Consent Form



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INDIVIDUAL INFORMATION SHEET AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM¹

(AGES 18 YEARS AND ABOVE)

Please note:

This form is to be completed by the researcher(s) as well as by the interviewee before the commencement of the research. Copies of the signed form must be filed and kept on record

(To be adapted for individual circumstances/needs)

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Title of Study:

An assessment of the views of level 4-9 employees on ethics and integrity of their line managers: A case-study of the Eastern Cape Department of Education.

Dear participant,

My name is Zandile Makayi and I am studying at the University of Fort Hare.

I am conducting an assessment of the views of level 4-9 employees on ethics and integrity of their line managers focusing on a case-study of the Eastern Cape Department of Education.

¹ Approved by UREC (13 November 2019)

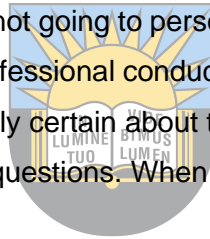
Purpose of Study

The study I am conducting seeks to assess the views that employees have on ethics and integrity of their line managers within the Eastern Cape Department of Education. The research desires to understand the ethical and integrity conduct of line managers as viewed by employees and how that has an effect on them employees. Further, the study also wants to understand what can be done to improve conduct that is not aligning with good ethical and integrity practices.

We would like you to allow us to conduct a brief (20-25 minutes) interview with you about an assessment of the views that employees have on ethics and integrity of their line managers within the Eastern Cape Department of Education.

Study Procedure

During this interview session, I am going to ask issues regarding ethics and integrity practices by line managers. The questions are not going to personal, there are going to be focus on the academic study to understand the professional conduct of employees within the organisation. We know that you cannot be absolutely certain about the answers to these questions, but we ask that you try to think about these questions. When it comes to answering questions there are no right and wrong answers.



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Please understand that **your participation is voluntary** and you are not being forced to take part in this study. The choice of whether to participate or not, is yours. However, we would really appreciate it if you do share your thoughts with us. If you choose not to take part, you will not be affected in any way whatsoever. If you agree to participate, you may stop me at any time and tell me that you don't want to go on with the interview. If you do this there will also be no penalties and you will NOT be prejudiced in ANY way.

The information will remain confidential. This means that your name and address will not be linked in any way to the answers you give. We study and report on the answers given by all the people we interview and not on an individual basis. The research data will be anonymous – with all personal respondent information removed and will be archived at the University.

At the present time, we do not see any risks in your participation. The risks associated with participation in this study are no greater than those encountered in daily life.

There are no immediate benefits to you from participating in this study. However, this study will be helpful in finding out about the views that level 4-9 employees have on ethics and integrity of their line managers at this organisation.

Risk-Benefit Ratio:

Presently, we do not see any potential risks of participating in this study and there will probably not be any. There are no immediate benefits of participant in this study but the findings will help with information that can help improve ethics and integrity practices at this organisation.

Who to contact if you have been harmed or have any concerns

This research has been approved by the Inter-Faculties Research Ethics Committee (IFREC) as per delegated authority of the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC). If you have any complaints about ethical aspects of the research or feel that you have been harmed in any way by participating in this study, please call the IFREC Administrator Aphiwe Jadezweni on 040 602 2561 and ajadezweni@ufh.ac.za; IFREC Chairperson, Dr. A. Nyika on 040 602 2516 and [ANYika@ufh.ac.za](mailto:ANyika@ufh.ac.za) or the UREC Chairperson, Dr. N. Taole-Mjimba on 043 704 7507 and nTaole-Mjimba@ufh.ac.za.  *Together in Excellence*

Reporting and Complaints

If you have questions at any time about this study, or if you have concerns/questions you may contact the researcher/project leader whose contact information is provided on the first page. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, or if problems arise which you do not feel you can discuss with the researcher/project leader, please contact the IFREC Chairperson, IFREC Chairperson, Dr. A. Nyika on ANYika@ufh.ac.za or the UREC Chairperson, Dr Taole-Mjimba on nTaole-Mjimba@ufh.ac.za.

If you have concerns or questions about this study please feel free to contact the project coordinators: **Researcher/Project Leader:**

Name:Zandile...Makayi.....

Department:Management...and...Commerce.....

Address:

Phone: ...0789704879.....

Email:201712296@ufh.ac.za.....



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Appendix 5: Signed Consent Form

I (*name of participant*)
have been informed about the study by (*provide name of researcher/ project leader/ fieldworker*)

I understand the purpose, procedures, and risk-benefit ratio of the study.

I have been given opportunity to ask questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any procedurals that I would usually be entitled to.

I have been informed about any available compensation or medical treatment if injury occurs to me as result of study-related procedures

I understand that I will be given a copy of this informed consent.

I understand that if I have any questions or complaints about my rights as a study participant, or if I may have concerns about any aspect of the study or the researcher/s then I may contact the Chairperson of the Inter-Faculty Research Ethics Committee, Dr. A. Nyika on ANyika@ufh.ac.za or Chairperson of University Research Ethics Committee, Dr Taole-Mjimba on nTaole-Mjimba@ufh.ac.za (further details available from the Researcher or by contacting the University of Fort Hare or Website www.ufh.ac.za).

Participant signature:

Consenting for Audio Recording– when necessary

YES / OR

Participant signature:

Witness signature:

(to be altered according to the study)

Translator signature:

(to be altered according to the study)

Data curation – I understand that the information that I provide will be stored electronically and will be used for research purposes now or at a later stage (to be altered according to the study)

Participant signature:

Date:



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