THE CHALLENGES OF GATHERING DATA FOR A PH.D. PROGRAM: A NIGERIAN PERSPECTIVE

BY

Olutola Olujuwon

**Department of Educational Management, Lagos State University of Education
Email: olujuwonot@lasued.edu.ng
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0735-7462**

Abstract

It takes perseverance, devotion, commitment, and paying attention to the supervisor's remarks and suggestions to complete a Ph.D. degree. Doctoral degree holders are highly valued by society for their contributions to knowledge or for providing answers to issues, and this degree is considered crucial for the higher education industry. However, most Ph.D. students encounter numerous obstacles in achieving this outstanding academic feat. In this essay, I discussed the difficulties I faced while conducting fieldwork for my doctoral program at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) in South Africa (SA) between 2010 and 2015, as well as how I overcame each of those difficulties. Specifically, there were obstacles with getting the study approved, access to the participants and site, my fears, worries, and anxiety, as an international student, and restrictions and frustrations in conducting the research. Other difficulties included dealing with issues with school calendars, interview dates, locations, and the culture of secrecy in Nigerian public schools. Additionally, the 2011 general election violence in Nigeria, and the political altercations between Nigeria and SA. Above all, there was difficulty in adapting to the South African culture, weather, and food in comparison to Nigeria. I used several case studies to demonstrate how participants' narratives on the topic of the study interacted and connected with those of teachers, principals, vice-principals, and the district official using semi-structured interviews, and documentary analysis, to gather data and used content analysis to analyze the data. Students should be encouraged to pursue a Ph.D. to achieve this academic goal. To improve positive outcomes, these problems should be met with maturity, an open mind, patience, and adaptability. The knowledge I gained from my research experience improved my academic standing and gave me a better understanding of what it means to "hold a Ph.D." in the academic community.
Keywords: Doctoral program, challenges, electoral violence, challenges, case study, electoral violence

Introduction

This essay details the difficulties I faced while pursuing my doctorate at the Department of Education Leadership and Management (DELM) at UJ in South Africa between 2010 and 2015 on " Teacher leadership in public secondary school in Lagos, Nigeria"**.** It is documentation on how I navigated data collection and not the actual research. The essence of this narrative of my personal experience is to act as the harbinger of hope, motivation, and resilience for those interested in pursuing a Ph.D. program and not about the research methodology or the actual research itself. Bengry (2018), noted that the period between research design and data collection is hardly acknowledged, much less critically examined. This might deprive researchers of explicit guidance on how to enter field settings and establish and maintain the relationships that make data collecting easier. As a result, researchers frequently find themselves unprepared for the ethical dilemmas, real-world issues, and manoeuvres they may need to make to enter a fieldwork environment, carry out a research design, and collect data Cunliffe, Alcadipani da Silveira (2016); Calvey (2008). Therefore, I was employed in 2005 as a lecturer at Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education Nigeria (AOCOED), in the Department of Educational Foundations and Management and the desire to start a Ph.D. program really took off. Senior academics in the department told me that "publish or perish" and that the pursuit of personal and professional growth were the keys to academic success and promotion. This information inspired me to request permission from the College of Management to pursue a Ph.D. program which I gladly got from The Governing Council of the College in 2009. Therefore, I have learned from my experiences that leadership is about taking responsibility, being dependable, and being committed to society's well-being. Additionally, it is

about fostering relationships, inspiring others, and offering direction to achieve a goal. This relationship can help students attain academic objectives based on leadership styles if it is nurtured in a school environment. I now believe that leadership is about supporting others to reach their goals in a positive way due to the numerous theories of management and leadership in education. I comprehend and am aware of the roles and responsibilities of teachers in teaching, research, and community service as a lecturer in the state teacher preparation program with five years of experience, but I am not sufficiently familiar with the difficulties and identities of teacher leaders. I'm interested in learning more about how teacher leaders acquire and keep their positions of authority in schools, how their identities evolve, and how they talk about their connections to other important stakeholders. In addition, how school administrators engage in the use of authority when dealing with teachers and how they view teacher leadership. This encouraged me to apply to the UJ, Auckland Park campus in SA in 2010 for a doctoral program in educational leadership and management.

Due to the above, I applied for admission to this university. On February 11, 2010, I received an invitation to a meeting by the admission committee along with an applicant from South Africa and Zimbabwe. When I arrived, I was nervous because the Department had invited experts, but one of them gave me some comforting words of wisdom: "Hey my brother, relax, we are not here to eat you up", this was a message of comfort and encouragement for me. After my presentation, questions were asked, and I could answer them based on my ability. I was later given a nod to proceed as a doctoral student. I was delighted, and I thanked them repeatedly because my dream of pursuing a doctoral program had now become a reality. In a similar vein, I was overjoyed to find that I would be able to study educational leadership. Therefore, I am interested in documenting my personal challenges on the doctoral journey, although, I have heard the challenges or rigors faced by those that have undergone the Ph.D. study. I believe that my story through, this documentation will serve as a guide and a pointer to those that may consider pursuing a Ph.D. study and thus add to existing knowledge about challenges individuals face during the doctoral journey. As a result, despite challenges in the research process, pressure from work and family obligations, and impediments, a researcher must remain optimistic, have the correct attitude, and have the motivation to keep working.

In my doctoral dissertation, I used qualitative multi-case research to assess teacher leadership behaviour in public secondary schools In Lagos. This gives me the chance to research and gather various types of empirical data from individuals in their natural settings. I decided to undertake a multiple case study, also known as a collective case study, to look at how the narratives of teacher leadership shared by participants interacted and were connected through tick-rich descriptions, I have a better insight into teacher leadership practices in schools. It permits participant participation in data analysis (Creswell, 2012:16). The benefits of qualitative research contribute to the credibility and trustworthiness of the study. This study, therefore, examined the attitudes and experiences of teacher leaders as well as how educational policies affected the adoption of teacher leadership approaches in senior secondary schools in Nigeria. It is important to look at how teachers see their environment in terms of school culture and how they explore their leadership responsibilities within the context of the school because this issue is still understudied in Nigerian classrooms. My observation as a lecturer in a teacher preparatory school shows that there are limitations on teachers' potential for leadership are bureaucracy, teacher perceptions, hierarchy, and insufficient teacher preparation. Also, up until the 1990s, teachers in Nigeria were respected in society as specialists that have the capacity to impart wisdom and information. However, when the military came into power and politicians started abusing their position, this attitude shifted.

Negotiating entrance into the research site

To gain access, the Provost of the AOCOED provided me with letters of introduction to the EDV. The Lagos State Government founded this pre-service teaching institution more than 50 years ago with the goal of producing qualified teachers for the educational industry every year for the country. After receiving approval from EDV and the Ethics Committee of the University to conduct the study in schools, I sent letters to school principals and teachers telling them about the study. After the letters were submitted, I called each principal to introduce myself to facilitate and forge relationships with the schools. In addition, I informed them that I was a Doctoral Student at the

UJ and gave them a summary of the objectives of my research. Similarly, I went to the schools with all the necessary documents needed for the research and I ensured that before the study interviews, all participants signed the consent forms.

Finally, nine teachers, three principals, three vice principals, and an education administrator were purposefully selected as study participants due to their willingness and research criteria. For the main research, I gathered data using semi-structured interviews and a document analysis of the National Policy on Education in Nigeria. The study's main finding showed how organizational politics affect teachers' capacities as leaders in schools. This study suggests that increasing teachers' critical leadership knowledge will help them to challenge the perception of teaching as a disadvantaged profession (Olujuwon, 2016).

Methodology

The use of qualitative methods helped me to record the participants' opinions for the study and better understand how they saw leadership in their everyday surroundings. In addition, it was beneficial for me to be aware of the regulations that govern leadership in public secondary schools and the most recent developments in teacher leadership theory and practice. This realization assisted me in developing techniques for fostering teacher leadership in schools. As mentioned earlier, the participants for the study were purposively selected based on their expertise, experience, and seniority in leadership and teaching roles. In the main study, I used data-gathering strategies such as semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. In addition, I conducted the study using a multiple case study, this made me examine how participants' accounts of teacher leadership interacted with one another and were interconnected (Creswell, 2012; Stake, 2005). This enabled me to comprehend the opinions, viewpoints, and knowledge of participants about teacher leadership using semi-structured interviews. It also gave me the chance to ask pre-planned questions and obtain more information about some of the participants' responses. Above all, it contributed to a fuller understanding of teachers as leaders in schools and the numerous causes or elements connected with leadership by helping contextualize other data, such as documentary evidence (Boyce & Neale, 2006). The semi-structured interviews were conducted in Nigeria's official language.

Similarly, to this, the use of documentary analysis in the main study contributed to providing fundamental descriptions of the professional and administrative activity of teachers in assuring academic objectives as well as in the offering of answers to research inquiries. I held sensitization sessions with the participants to ensure honesty and transparency. This is done to build rapport with the participants and take the chance to emphasize the importance of open communication throughout the study process. During these sessions, I informed the participants of ethical issues of anonymity, by using pseudonyms to protect their school and names, informed consent, data management of the research's goals and methods, and guaranteed them that they would remain anonymous throughout the study.

I also discussed the significance of informed consent, their right to inquire about the study's purpose and the intended use of the data gathered, and the freedom to leave the study whenever they wanted. I reaffirmed the foregoing throughout the interview sessions and requested their consent to use an audio recorder. I tried minimizing prejudice by giving the participants free rein to express themselves and by refraining from critiquing their responses. To help the participants feel more at ease, I offered them complete control over the interview date, time, and venue. I thanked each interviewee for giving me the chance to hear their opinions on teacher leadership techniques in schools at the conclusion of each interview session. Furthermore, their contributions have broadened my horizons and boosted my creativity. Also, it has given me a better knowledge of and in the practice of teachers as leaders in public schools. I send each of them a calling card as a means of expressing the thank you once more. I immersed myself in the data by checking the transcribed data for potential inaccuracies and denoted the participant responses with a red marker.

According to Seidman (2006), transcription "is a vital stage since there is a risk of significant data loss, distortion, and complexity reduction" (p.281). I started coding and categorization right after transcription, which took an hour apiece, to minimize any potential data loss. To analyse data, I used content analysis and critical discourse analysis. This made it easier for me to comprehend how school leaders were using language and how they were interpreting

teacher leadership. The analysis also enabled me to comprehend the difficulties in managing schools, the power dynamics among school officials, the barriers to exploring teachers as leaders, and the necessary approaches to do so (Bloome, Carter, Christian, Otto & Shuart-Faris, 2005). The themes of this documentation are clear and open communication, tolerance, flexibility, and feedback. Pseudonyms were used in this study to protect the participants' and sites' identities. I provide details of the challenges under each of the themes.

Open communication

Open and sincere communication with research participants is the key to ensuring success in the research journey. In addition, how the researcher negotiates the use of the field as the main method of data collection plays a role in success. To conduct research in public secondary schools, one needed the Education District's pertinent approval as well as the participants' and principals' consent. To do this, I was given access to the study sites thanks to a letter of introduction I got as mentioned earlier made communication and interaction easy to enable the gathering of data. Similarly, I have taken into consideration the local realities of the research site due to poor infrastructure and poor road networks as some schools were only accessible by speedboats on water, whereas others were only accessible by road. Furthermore, the schools lack access to the Internet and adequate interview space.

Moreover, after the data collection and analysis, and based on the research findings, the title of the thesis was re-phrased to render it less wordy and to shift the focus from a redefinition of teacher leadership to an exploration of teacher leadership in general. On my second visit to the schools, based on my earlier attempt to obtain a date for research that was denied, which normally should have been on the website of this organization. I reflected on the undue culture of secrecy because of the oath of secrecy that the government has forced staff to swear to. The Government may have made this decision in response to a widely read newspaper article regarding the deplorable conditions of schools in the State. The newspaper noted a small improvement in school conditions despite large financial expenditures for education in the state and a 90 million US dollar World Bank loan for school improvement. The Government was not happy with the reportage, and it led to the suspension of this principal and eventually transferring her to another school for allowing the reporter to photograph the school.

Similarly, the government prohibited interviews with school administrators or teachers. As a result, the relevant information may not be provided, or I may be told that the "person in charge" was not present when I arrived. In addition to my concerns that the principal may not be around the school (e.g., has gone to a meeting at the Education District or Ministry, or has gone to "attend to other official issues"). Furthermore, I may be requested to repeat the call because the principal is not there, or the gatekeepers are unpleasant. As I prepared to leave for the five schools, I meditated on this and decided that if I did not meet the officials "on the seat," I would leave the letters behind and discuss the research with the school's most senior officer. However, despite my fears, the culture of secrecy did not manifest nor have any negative impact on the research as the questions asked were not about government projects or finances but about teachers' perception of teacher leadership. Thus, researchers starting on the field to obtain the cooperation of the participants must ask questions relevant to the topic under study.

Hubbel (2003) stated that in society, researchers are frequently viewed as spies and occasionally mistreated due to misinformation, distrust, power relations, participant-researcher relations, or the culture of the school. I have provided the gatekeepers with explanations and truthful information because they are crucial for gaining access to research sites (Clark, 2011; Singh & Wassenaar 2016). According to Hoskin and Mariano (2004), qualitative research necessitates the researcher entering the field with an open mind. I approached this counsel with an open mind and the belief that, despite all odds, the research would be completed. The study examined the perspectives and understanding of teachers as a qualitative study because verbal interactions are unavoidable in teaching. The participants' explanations of their professional experiences throughout this interaction helped to clarify the conceptual connotations of teacher leadership (Hunzicker, 2017).

Transparency

The researcher must be transparent in all his or her dealings with the gatekeepers throughout the research process by ensuring that all approval letters are handy to offer an explanation to anyone that might want to raise a question. As a result, the research was carried out in accordance with the values of democracy, honesty, and respect for knowledge, as well as the standards of good educational research. The gatekeepers must trust that you are approaching them objectively and that the results of your research will potentially have a positive impact on the institution. Additionally, the data supplied were from the participants. In qualitative research, the researcher plays a critical role as the primary "research instrument" for data collection and a "active participant" in the research process (Creswell, 2014, p.187–189; Patton, 2014, p.700). Leavy (2017) emphasizes the importance of the researcher interacting socially or "human-to-human" with the research subjects (39–40). This must therefore determine the researchers' position and role within the organisation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). To better capture the participants' experiences and perspectives on teacher leadership in their school, I pushed aside any preconceived preconceptions and encouraged them to speak freely.

It was not my responsibility to make judgments as a researcher but rather to look for ways to enhance the teaching and learning procedures under teacher leadership. I tried building a rapport with the other participants in the study. As a participant in the process, I tried to respect their opinions and be sensitive to ethical issues. During the data collection process, I created a welcoming, positive, and non-threatening environment that made the participants willingly share their perceptions and feelings about teacher leadership in schools. Additionally, there is a willingness on their part to help me realize my doctoral project. Similarly, they believed a platform has been created to enable them to express themselves thereby having a voice on the issue of teacher leadership. Tracy (2013) advised that the personal prejudice, views, interests, and experiences of the researcher should not impact the research findings and procedures. According to Stake (2005), a researcher needs input from stakeholders and the research community to allay ethical worries.

Throughout the study process and interview sessions, I maintained my objectivity. I made no attempt to convey to the participants my surprise, agreement, or disagreement with their findings by words or nonverbal cues. According to Flick (2009), complete objectivity cannot be attained due to the nature of the data collected as this necessitates contact between the researcher and the participants. Thus, researchers are aware that they must respond to participants during interviews with empathy. The conversation was cordial and founded on mutual honesty and a desire to advance educational principles in Nigerian society. As a result, I employed an external audit for the research, checking, and triangulation.

The auditor looked at the original transcripts, data analysis records, participant comments, and the study's findings. Along with my supervisor, I double-checked transcriptions and coding for any potential mistakes before the study analysis. To provide trustworthy results, I triangulated all the information gathered throughout the data collection strategies to identify repeated themes emanating from the study. After the interview was recorded and transcribed, I gave the participants access to the transcriptions so they could check the accuracy of what they had stated. This gave the participants the chance to edit the typed interview transcripts by adding or removing any information. Similarly, I explain participants' experiences as they "experienced and perceived" them. I kept track of the development, setbacks, benefits, and drawbacks of the research process in my field journal. This enabled me to provide detailed explanations of the participants' perspectives on teacher leadership as well as detailed descriptions of the surroundings in which they live and work in order to assist other researchers in conducting a similar study in a country with political and religious instability like Nigeria. I ensured validity by giving in-depth explanations of the difficulties and interactions faced by teachers and integrating these with information obtained from the school environment. The participants validated the study's findings after I accurately presented the findings to them. Several data elicitation techniques, including semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis, were used to determine the reliability of the research (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). This improves triangulated and compared chains of evidence for data enrichment and credibility. I ensured dependability in the research through the development of the research questions and design, thoroughness in the sourcing of pertinent literature, as well as the sampling technique, interview guide, research timetable, raw data, and other descriptive materials that could be reviewed by

other researchers. I retained the transcription's complete verbatim recordings along with my field notes. To avoid bias, I ensure that the study's findings are reported using the participants' exact words. I also kept going through the exact transcript and thought about my data analysis.

Adaptability

In ensuring success, the researcher must be ready to adjust to new conditions, circumstances, or knowledge to pull through the research journey. Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, and Steinmetz (2003) advised that because of unanticipated obstacles, the researcher's optimism may be dashed, but must be ready to adapt to current realities. The degree that is the result of the research, along with a great deal of focus and effort, should therefore act as motivation to succeed. As I have mentioned earlier, adaptation to the local realities of the research site is essential for successful data gathering. This realization made me wake up at 6:00 am to avoid traffic and arrive at the Highway Senior Secondary School. Access to this school required taking a local boat, which was preferred over traveling on land. Due to the excessive traffic on this date in this area of Lagos, the transport fares were raised, forcing the buses to use alternate routes. I did not mind paying the higher bus fares, though. But we got stuck in traffic, so I had to take Okada (a commercial motorbike) once again. We were eventually transported to Highway Senior secondary school by this quick mode of transportation on the road, which also allows drivers to maneuver through traffic. As we described our goal to the principal's secretary in this case, she was kind. While we waited for the principal to arrive, I was immediately led into her office and given the opportunity to explain the circumstances of my visit before she agreed to view the letters. She insisted that before I could use any images I had taken, I had to send them to her through email first. I informed her of the ethical issues. The principal of White and Blue Senior Secondary School was absent, but the VP of Administration gave us permission to take the pictures as long as the name of the school would not be visible.

After my data gathering was complete, on November 14, 2012, I visited the South African High Commission (SAHC) in Lagos more than six times between late December 2012 and February 20, 2013, when I finally obtain a visa. In other words, I had to adjust to the delays brought on by the 2011 post-election violence in Nigeria, the prolonged summer break for students from July to September, the October school closing due to a teachers' strike, and the little period I spent waiting to pick up visas at the SAHC in Lagos had an impact on the early, noticeable progress in my research. A researcher on the research journey must be ready for any eventuality. As was seen at the White and Blue Senior Secondary School, where a participant, after I described the study's methodology, ethical considerations, and the use of audio recording. This made her consent to be interviewed but when we started the interview, she declined to be interviewed again without providing a valid justification and I thanked her for that. I did not allow her departure to derail the research process but continued with another participant that was ready to be interviewed. Her departure led me to the conclusion that she was terrified of being branded a "critic" of the government and its policies, which might result in the loss of her job. Additionally, studies have proposed various causes for this type of behavior, such as anti-authoritarian attitudes, ignorance, feelings of embarrassment, "dislike of the issue under evaluation," fear of the consequences of participation, or feeling "inadequate" or like they can provide the correct answers, among others (Cooper & Schindler, 2001, p.300).

Bailey (2007) also pointed out that in a volatile context, logical problems and access are frequently the cause of fieldwork frustrations, concerns, and anxieties. Additionally, "fieldwork can be organized, adaptable, fun and unpleasant, chaotic, emotional, and dangerous" (Bailey, 2007:37). According to Mukeredzi (2012), similar sentiments are intensified in a politically ambiguous environment. In such circumstances, fears and preconceptions are likely to prevent having an unbiased viewpoint. By overcoming this worry or obstruction, I was inspired to keep gathering data. Mukeredzi (2012) asserts that as a result, when participants are finally permitted in, they are frequently uncomfortable and reluctant to have a meaningful conversation with the researcher. I did have a meaningful conversation because we saw each other as colleagues in the same profession. Note that when I got to SA, I experienced cultural shock because it was at the beginning of winter when I resumed and there was no winter in Nigeria. I had to learn how to use a duvet and a hot water bottle and bought winter clothes too. Similarly, I had to learn how to cook and eat pap and Chakalaka the common food in South Africa as this becomes new to me.

Patience

This is the ability to accept or tolerate delays, difficulties, or suffering without growing impatient or nervous, as well as the capacity to wait for an extended period without becoming bored or angry. Patience, therefore, is a virtue of life in ensuring success. This is an attribute of life that a Ph.D. student must inculcate in the research journey. I had to imbibe patience in a way based on the challenges I encountered and highlighted below when negotiating entrance into the research site. The principal of one school refused to participate in the study because she was "under order from the ministry" and "will retire in two months," making it difficult for me to enter the school and would not allow me to take pictures of the pupils. The new principal didn't want to either, so she recommended the vice-principal, who then suggested the year tutor. The government's ban on conducting interviews in schools, which I previously mentioned, might be to blame for this.

Another school experienced a similar situation because of the principal's retirement. As a result, I could only speak with the principals of three of the five schools. The goals and objectives of the research were made clear to the participants at the various schools. To make the participants comfortable, I established a conducive environment for dialogue and engagement with them. I reintroduced myself and repeated the study's objectives, the guarantee of anonymity, and other ethical concerns on the day of the interview (Kvale, 1996). I also discussed with them what is required from them, the import of the data, and the anticipated length of the interviews. I believe that patience is a golden virtue as a school approved for study by the Education District, a public secondary school was established or sited in a military formation by the government, which was an experience I will never forget.

This school has a big indigenous Nigerian population and enrolled children from military families, all of whom contributed to the large student body. Passing through a security checkpoint manned by security officers is required for anyone traveling to this school or military unit. The individual is asked a series of questions, and if necessary, automobiles, baggage, and bodies will be searched. The day before I left for a sensitization session with teachers in this school, the Islamic terrorist organization Boko Haram attacked three police stations in Nigeria's northern region. The security guards at the gate of this military formation bombarded me with inquiries, including "Who are you," "Where are you going," "What purpose," "Where do you work," and many others. I showed them a letter from the Education District, which stated that I am a lecturer at AOCOED and a Ph.D. student in UJ. I then explained the reasons for going to this school. I supplied my national ID and my employment cards as confirmation of this, among other documents, but the officer still refused.

But before I was allowed to enter this military formation, a superior officer who was observing from a distance came and looked over all the evidence and listened to my justification. I actually breathed a sigh of relief as I passed past this gate, and after entering, I took a "Okada" (commercial motorcycle) to the school. Due to the swampy terrain, a small bridge was constructed to connect the path to this school and the school entrance. The principal of Egun Awori Senior Secondary School, a pseudonym name for a school, was absent, moreover, the office secretary resisted giving any fundamental details about the school, saying, "I have just been posted here." Later, I was directed to the vice principal of administration, where the office assistant bluntly informed me that only the principal could provide details like the date the school was founded, its most notable accomplishments, the total number of students, and the total number of staff members, both male, and female.

I told the officer that the school's contact information should be readily available on its website or newsletter. I was called back to the office of the VP of Administration after departing for the principal's office. I provided her with the specifics of my role at the school and told her that I had tried to call the principal on the phone but had been unsuccessful. I later met the principal, spoke with him about my goals and the study, and he agreed to read the approval letter and the description of the research. Similarly, the Nigeria Senior Secondary School's principal was also attending a meeting at the ministry, but we could still chat on the phone. She refused to allow me to take photos and refused to supply me with any information on the institution. She asserted that the ministry had issued a circular banning all interviews. This highlights the secrecy mentality that exists in governmental organizations, as most staff

fear losing their jobs or being tagged as "anti-government." Information about the school would have been on the internet or in any publication in an open society to defend the school's reputation.

In addition to the preceding difficulties, I was informed when I visited Red High Senior Secondary School that the principal had left for a district meeting and might return later in the afternoon. I gave him a call and introduced myself, along with the letters I had prepared. I also mentioned that I would love to take pictures of the school, and he agreed. He subsequently spoke on the phone with his secretary about it. I found it amusing when the secretary took me to the VP Administration's office but refused to admit to receiving the letters. When I arrived, the VP told me that she would need to read the letters before acknowledging their receipt and that I would need to return the following day. I refused to concede that she could confirm from the principal's secretary that I had spoken with her on the phone, and the secretary confirmed that she had. She looked over the Education District's approval before signing the copies of the approval letters. She also declined to answer my questions regarding the school's origins, major successes, the proportion of male and female staff members, and the overall number of pupils, saying that "such information may only be disclosed by the principal." After obtaining the necessary permission, I departed to take pictures of the school after necessary permission, but only the school's structure was taken due to ethical considerations.

Life itself is full of uncertainties, which necessitates patience and schedule adjustments. It took me 13 months (from October 2011 to October 2012) to inform the participants about the research before beginning to gather data, and the violence after the general election in 2011 in Nigeria, also played a part in my decision to take a break from my study (Human Right Watch, HRW,2011). Additionally, the diplomatic feud between Nigeria and South Africa also caused a delay in my application for the renewal of a temporary residency permit at the South African High Commission in Lagos because renewing visas there was so bureaucratic and challenging. Newspaper headlines on this issue included "Diplomatic fever grips Nigeria, South Africa over the deportation crisis," or "South Africa apologizes to Nigeria over the yellow fever row," according to BBC News. As the power struggle between these two regional superpowers has continued, tensions and fears have also persisted because of this uncalled-for, never-ending conflict. For these two close-knit nations to advance the continent's stability, prosperity, and advancement, they must work together to grow.

I was optimistic that I would proceed as predicted and that I would finish the fieldwork on time, which was impossible. The political tension caused unease in the polity. The participants were in Lagos, Nigeria, so I had to fly from Johannesburg to conduct fieldwork there because public secondary school teachers were crucial to my study, and these schools were on a third-term holiday from July to September 2012. As a result, data collecting was put on hold until when the schools resumed. All the names used, and schools mentioned in the study were pseudonyms. After the school's resumption, there was a labor disagreement between the government and the teachers that resulted in an ongoing strike, which was widely reported in the media under numerous headlines. "' Teachers are planning a large-scale walkout for the upcoming school year, and the Lagos State Chapter of the ''Nigerian Union of Teachers has begun an indefinite strike''. High, a teacher who was interviewed for the study also corroborated this strike:

I remember we went on a not-too-good strike when we were meant to resume on the 24th of September 2012, to press for TSA 27.5% (enhanced teacher's salary scale) which was promised last year by the government. We had to call off the strike and we are here. So, if the government refused to pay in January 2013, ah…ah there is nothing much some of us can do (Extracted from the thesis). I recall that we went on a not-so-good strike when we were supposed to restart on September 24, 2012, to demand the TSA 27.5% (increased teacher compensation scale), which the government had promised the previous year. We had to end the strike, and now we're here. So, if the government failed to pay in January 2013, some of us would not have much to do about it (Extracted from the thesis).

Conclusion

I was pleased that I could complete the research, which added to the body of knowledge about teacher leadership in public secondary schools. My research experience has taught me that conducting research in a politically violent context necessitates a complete grasp of the environment as well as the problems that may arise unexpectedly. During the investigation, I discovered that patience, open communication, adaptability, and transparency, on the topic, are all necessary before making judgments. The challenges encountered should not deter the study process because the stories of the participants helped me to have a better understanding of the practice of teachers as leaders in schools. I concluded that no matter the obstacles I faced in the research journey, I was determined to succeed. I believe that the researcher should focus on the result of graduation and the addition to knowledge rather than the current challenges. The participants have broadened my knowledge and given me a better appreciation of and application of better leadership practice in public schools.

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