

Factors Affecting Teacher Professionalism and Ethical Considerations in West Cluster of Schools, Division of Santiago City, Philippines

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Abstract Teacher professionalism and ethical conduct are vital for effective education systems. This descriptive quantitative study examined factors influencing these aspects among elementary teachers in the West Cluster of Schools Division of Santiago City. The study involved 101 teachers from seven public elementary schools. Data were collected via a validated and reliable researcher-made questionnaire checklist (Cronbach's alpha = 0.981). Results showed no significant differences in professionalism levels based on demographic variables such as age, educational qualification, academic rank, years of teaching experience, and number of trainings attended. Key factors influencing professionalism were administrative support, collaborative work environment, resources and support for teaching, professional development opportunities, and workload management. The findings suggest that these factors are crucial for fostering teacher professionalism and ethical behavior. The study highlights the importance of tailored professional development programs that address teachers' unique needs, promoting continuous improvement and ethical integrity. These insights provide a basis for policy recommendations aimed at enhancing teacher professionalism through targeted interventions and resource allocation. Further research is needed to explore these dynamics in other educational contexts and extend the findings to different school clusters and levels.

Keywords: *teacher professionalism, ethical conduct, professional development, school climate*

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1. Introduction

Teacher professionalism and ethical considerations are fundamental components of the educational system, significantly influencing the quality of education and shaping the character and values of future citizens. Professionalism in teaching encompasses attributes such as subject-matter expertise, ethical conduct, continuous learning, and adherence to legal and moral standards. Ethical considerations guide teachers in their interactions with students, colleagues, parents, and the broader community, emphasizing integrity and moral conduct.

Ethical standards and considerations in the teaching profession involve actions that may affect students academically. Teachers who are aware of moral or ethical principles treat their students fairly and respectfully,

protect their students from harm, and develop professionally acceptable relationships with their students [1,2]. By contrast, teachers who are not aware of the moral principles required for teaching, do not behave as ethical professionals. Teachers of this category become unfit for influencing effective teaching and learning of universal related values such as integrity, honesty, civic education, and moral education [3,4,5,6].

Factors such as professional development, a supportive school environment, and effective administrative leadership are critical to maintaining high standards of teacher professionalism and ethics. Ubani [7] and Astuti and Arini [8] underscore the need for ongoing development and adherence to ethical behavior, highlighting the role of comprehensive ethical guidelines and supportive professional cultures. Ethical considerations are crucial in guiding teachers' interactions, emphasizing integrity and moral conduct [9].

The environment in which teachers operate significantly affects their ability to maintain professional standards and uphold ethical values. The school environment, administrative support, and access to professional development are critical in fostering teacher professionalism [10,11]. Additionally, workload and time management challenges are significant barriers to maintaining high levels of professionalism among teachers [12].

Demographic factors also play a significant role in shaping teacher attitudes and professional behaviors. Studies indicate that gender, education, age, and teaching experience influence teacher professionalism and ethical considerations [13]. Moreover, the school environment and administrative practices are pivotal in supporting or hindering teacher professionalism and ethical behavior [14,15].

Collaboration and peer support are essential for fostering a culture of professionalism and ethical behavior among teachers. Research indicates that collaborative environments and supportive peer networks enhance teacher performance, job satisfaction, and adherence to ethical standards [10,16].

The Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST) provides a framework for assessing teacher competence and performance across various domains, including content knowledge, pedagogy, learning environment, and professional development. According to Roberto and Madrigal [17], teachers in the Philippines are generally assessed as proficient and satisfactory in terms of teaching standards, competence, and performance. However, the implementation of these standards and the adherence to the Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers, which outlines the moral and professional responsibilities of educators, vary across different regions and schools.

DepEd Order 49 Series of 2022, signed by Vice President and Education Secretary Sara Duterte, aims to enhance professionalism within the Department of Education (DepEd) by implementing and enforcing policies for efficient and effective delivery of education services. It stresses the importance of professional conduct, adherence to ethical standards, and the responsible use of social media, prohibiting teachers from forming relationships with students outside of school and from using DepEd email addresses for non-work-related activities. The overarching goal is to ensure that all interactions and practices within the department uphold the integrity and professionalism essential for the fair provision of basic education.

In West Cluster of Schools Division of Santiago City, elementary teachers face various challenges that impact their professionalism and ethical behavior. These challenges include demographic factors, school environment, administrative support, workload, and opportunities for professional development. Despite the recognized importance of teacher professionalism and ethics, various factors can hinder the ability of teachers to maintain these standards. Factors such as intense workloads, insufficient administrative support, lack of professional development opportunities, and inadequate resources can negatively affect teacher morale, job satisfaction, and ethical behavior.

Teacher professionalism and ethical considerations directly impact the quality of education and student outcomes in West Cluster of Schools Division of Santiago City. A positive school environment, supportive administration, and access to professional development are essential for fostering teacher professionalism. Conversely, challenges such as heavy workloads, insufficient resources, and lack of administrative support can undermine ethical behavior and professional standards, leading to lower job satisfaction and potentially affecting student learning.

Despite the existing frameworks and standards, there are gaps in understanding the specific factors that influence teacher professionalism and ethical behavior in West Cluster of Schools Division of Santiago City. This study seeks to address these gaps by examining the unique challenges and opportunities within this locality. By focusing on the specific context of West Cluster, the research aims to provide insights that can inform the development of tailored professional development programs, refine ethical standards, and enhance collaboration among teachers. Ultimately, this study aspires to contribute to the broader knowledge base, supporting the creation of strategies that promote teacher professionalism and ethical conduct across diverse educational settings.

2. Methodology

Descriptive-survey design method of research was used in this study. The descriptive-quantitative approach focused on quantifying the data collected to provide a comprehensive overview of the factors affecting teacher professionalism and ethical considerations. This method involved the use of a structured survey to gather numerical data from the respondents, which were then analyzed statistically to identify patterns and trends. This approach was considered most appropriate for this study as it enabled a thorough examination and objective measurement of the specified variables.

This study was conducted in West Cluster of the Schools Division of Santiago City, which encompasses seven public elementary schools. This site was selected due to its diverse demographic of teachers, ensuring a representative sample that captures a broad range of experiences and perspectives in the educational context.

The respondents were teachers from these schools, and the study included their demographic profiles, covering age, educational qualifications, academic rank, years of teaching experience, and the number of related training sessions attended. This study did not extend to other clusters or educational levels, leaving those areas for potential future research.

The participants in this study consisted of public elementary school teachers from a cluster of elementary schools within the division for the school year 2023-2024. The target number of participants was determined to be 101 teachers, out of a total population of 135, based on the calculations made using the Raosoft sample size calculator. The parameters set for this calculation included a margin of error of 5% and a confidence level of 95%.

To ensure the sample's representativeness, a stratified random sampling method was employed. This method was selected to guarantee that various subgroups within the population were proportionally represented. The strata were defined by the individual schools to ensure that each school's unique characteristics and teacher demographics were adequately reflected in the sample.

The primary instrument for data collection was a researcher-made questionnaire checklist designed to assess various factors influencing teacher professionalism and ethical considerations. The questionnaire checklist included both closed-ended questions and a four-point Likert-scale.

To ensure the validity of the questionnaire checklist, it was reviewed by a master teacher, a research coordinator, and a school head to confirm that it adequately covers the intended constructs and measures what it purports to measure. Their feedback led to several revisions, ensuring clarity and relevance of the questions.

For reliability, the researcher personally administered the questionnaire to a pilot group of 30 teachers, representing various demographics. Completed forms were retrieved immediately to ensure high response rates and data integrity. Data were tallied and tabulated using MS Excel, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated at 0.981, indicating excellent internal consistency and ensuring the questionnaire consistently measures the same constructs.

The questionnaire checklist consisted of four parts: Part 1 collected data on age, educational qualifications, academic ranks, years of teaching experience, and the number of related trainings attended; Part 2 assessed the level of professionalism demonstrated by teachers, focusing on their commitment to responsibilities, professional development, relationships, ethical standards, and collaborative initiatives; Part 3 evaluated teachers' engagement with ethical considerations in teaching, including the role of ethics in instructional practices, awareness of standards, confidence in ethical dilemmas, and fostering ethical awareness among students; and Part 4 identified factors such as support from administration, collaborative environment, resources, professional development opportunities, and workload management.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Level of Professionalism among Elementary Teachers in West Cluster in Santiago City

Indicators	Mean	DI
1. The teachers consistently demonstrate a strong commitment to their professional responsibilities as a teacher.	3.87	High
2. The teachers actively engage in ongoing professional development activities to improve their teaching practice.	3.81	High
3. The teachers maintain professional relationships with students, colleagues, and parents/guardians.	3.89	High
4. The teachers adhere to ethical standards and codes of conduct established by their school and the teaching profession.	3.85	High
5. The teachers actively participate in collaborative initiatives and contribute to the professional growth of their colleagues.	3.82	High
Overall Mean	3.85	High

Table 1 presents the level of professionalism among elementary teachers in West Cluster of Schools Division of Santiago City, as measured by various indicators. The indicators include commitment to professional responsibilities, engagement in professional development, maintenance of professional relationships, adherence to ethical standards, and participation in collaborative initiatives.

Among elementary teachers in the West Cluster of the Schools Division of Santiago City, the level of professionalism is notably high, as indicated by various indicators. Teachers maintain professional relationships with students, colleagues, and parents/guardians ($M=3.89$). They consistently demonstrate a strong commitment to their professional responsibilities ($M=3.87$) and adhere to ethical standards and codes of conduct established by their school and the teaching profession ($M=3.85$). Moreover, teachers actively participate in collaborative initiatives and contribute to the professional growth of their colleagues ($M=3.82$). Additionally, teachers actively engage in ongoing professional development activities to enhance teaching practices ($M=3.81$). The overall mean professionalism level across all indicators is 3.85, reflecting a consistently high level of professionalism among elementary teachers in the West Cluster of schools.

The results indicate a consistently high level of professionalism among elementary teachers in the West Cluster of Santiago City's Schools Division. Teachers exhibit strong commitment to professional responsibilities, engage in ongoing professional development, maintain ethical standards, and actively participate in collaborative initiatives. The overall mean score of 3.85 reflects this high level of professionalism.

It is emphasized that professional development, ethical conduct, and collaboration in enhancing teacher professionalism is very important. Continuous learning and a supportive professional environment are linked to improved teaching practices and better student outcomes.

However, some variability in responses suggests not all teachers experience the same level of support or professional development opportunities, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to ensure consistent growth across all teachers. Factors such as school environment, administrative support, and peer collaboration significantly influence a teacher's professional identity and ethical behavior.

The high mean score of 3.85 underscores the teachers' commitment to professional responsibilities and ethical standards, consistent with Kohlberg's Moral Growth Theory and the Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers in the Philippines. Kohlberg's theory suggests that teachers operating at Stage 4 ("Loyalty to Law and Order") and Stage 5 ("Justice and the Spirit of the Law") are more likely to exhibit high professionalism, driven by adherence to institutional policies and underlying principles.

The variability in responses further underscores the influence of contextual factors, reinforcing the importance of a supportive school environment. The adherence to the Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers under Republic Act 7836 is evident, with teachers in the West Cluster actively promoting a positive and ethical teaching environment. This is crucial for maintaining integrity and professionalism, as emphasized by DepEd Order 49 Series of 2022.

The engagement with ethical considerations among

elementary teachers in West Cluster of Schools Division of Santiago City which includes teachers' beliefs about the importance of ethics in decision-making, instructional practices, and their confidence in handling ethical dilemmas.

Table 2 presents data on teachers' engagement with ethical considerations in their professional practice. The indicators reflect teachers' beliefs about the importance of ethics in decision-making, instructional practices, and their confidence in handling ethical dilemmas.

Table 2. Engagement with Ethical Considerations among Teachers

Indicators	Mean	DI
1. Teachers believe it is important for them to consider ethical implications when making decisions in the classroom.	3.92	High
2. Ethical considerations play a significant role in shaping teachers' instructional practices and interactions with students.	3.90	High
3. Teachers are aware of the ethical standards and codes of conduct established by their school and the teaching profession.	3.87	High
4. Teachers feel confident in their ability to navigate ethical dilemmas that arise in the classroom setting.	3.76	High
5. Teachers believe fostering a culture of ethical awareness and responsibility among students is essential for their holistic development.	3.89	High
Overall Mean	3.87	High

The statistical data in Table 2, which pertains to engagement with ethical considerations among teachers, reveal consistently high ratings across all indicators. Specifically, for Indicator 1, teachers strongly believe in the importance of considering ethical implications when making decisions in the classroom, as indicated by a mean of 3.92. Similarly, Indicator 2 demonstrates that ethical considerations significantly influence teachers' instructional practices and interactions with students, with a mean of 3.90. Additionally, teachers express a strong belief in the importance of fostering a culture of ethical awareness and responsibility among students for their holistic development, as indicated by a mean of 3.89. Indicator 3 reflects a high level of awareness among teachers regarding the ethical standards and codes of conduct established by their school and the teaching profession, with a mean of 3.87. Indicator 4 suggests that teachers generally feel confident in navigating ethical dilemmas within the classroom, with a mean of 3.76. Overall, the mean score across all indicators is 3.87, reinforcing the high level of engagement regarding ethical considerations among teachers.

The high mean scores across all indicators suggest that teachers place significant importance on ethical implications in classroom decision-making, are guided by ethical standards, feel confident navigating ethical dilemmas, and prioritize fostering ethical awareness among students.

Ubani [7] and Astuti and Arini [8] underscored the necessity of ongoing professional development and adherence to ethical behavior, emphasizing that teachers' ethical conduct is vital for maintaining societal expectations and educational standards. Similarly, Shakour, Yamani, and Yousefi [9] reinforced the notion that ethical behavior is a cornerstone of teacher identity.

Ballesteros [18] also argued that teachers with strong ethical values are often recognized for their contributions, indicating that ethical behavior significantly impacts career progression and professional development. This connection suggests that schools should prioritize ethical training and create environments conducive to fostering ethical behavior, which aligns with the high confidence levels teachers expressed in their ability to handle ethical dilemmas.

However, contrasting findings by Kriel, Livingston, and Kwenda [19] noted that some educational institutions lack dedicated ethical codes of conduct, highlighting a potential risk for both educators and learners. This discrepancy underscores the importance of establishing comprehensive ethical guidelines to maintain high professional standards. The current study's context shows that teachers are aware of ethical standards and codes of conduct, addressing this need effectively.

The study's results affirm the necessity of ethical considerations in teaching, aligning with scholarly insights on the importance of ethical behavior and professional development in education. Continuous emphasis on ethical training and supportive school environments is essential to sustain high engagement.

The findings also support Kohlberg's stages of moral development, illustrating that many teachers operate at the conventional or post-conventional levels, characterized by adherence to ethical standards and a deeper understanding of justice and ethical principles. Teachers' high mean scores in navigating ethical dilemmas and fostering ethical awareness suggest they are guided by a profound commitment to ethical integrity and professional standards.

This commitment aligns with the Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers and DepEd Order 49 Series of 2022, emphasizing professional conduct and ethical behavior. The results indicate that the implementation of these standards has been effective in fostering a professional environment where ethical considerations are paramount.

The data presented in Table 3 indicate the extent to which various factors affect teachers' professionalism, ranked according to Mean Rank from highest to lowest. The factor with the highest influence is the collaborative work environment, with a category mean of 3.66. Specific aspects include supportive relationships with colleagues ($M = 3.71$), sharing lesson planning resources ($M = 3.68$), encouragement of interdisciplinary collaboration ($M = 3.64$), productive team meetings ($M = 3.63$), and opportunities for peer observation ($M = 3.62$).

Next, workload and time management also showed a high extent of influence on professionalism with a category mean of 3.61. This covers manageability of class sizes ($M = 3.66$), adequate preparation time ($M = 3.62$), support for grading and administrative tasks ($M = 3.61$), flexibility in scheduling ($M = 3.59$), and balance of extracurricular duties ($M = 3.54$).

Professional development opportunities were rated highly with a category mean of 3.58, including workshops and seminars on teaching methodologies ($M = 3.57$), accessibility of conferences ($M = 3.58$), opportunities for advanced degrees or certifications ($M = 3.59$), mentorship programs for new teachers ($M = 3.63$), and support for continuing education ($M = 3.53$).

Table 3. Factors Affecting Teacher Professionalism

A. Support from School Administration	Mean	DI
1. Open-door communication policy with administration.	3.55	High extent
2. Administration provides clear disciplinary action guidelines.	3.60	High extent
3. Regular performance feedback from administration.	3.55	High extent
4. Administration recognizes teacher achievements.	3.53	High extent
5. Accessibility of administrative staff.	3.59	High extent
Category Mean	3.57	High extent
B. Collaborative Work Environment	Mean	DI
1. Productive team meetings for planning and feedback.	3.63	High extent
2. Sharing of lesson planning resources among colleagues.	3.68	High extent
3. Opportunities for peer observation and feedback.	3.62	High extent
4. Encouragement of interdisciplinary collaboration.	3.64	High extent
5. Supportive relationships with colleagues.	3.71	High extent
Category Mean	3.66	High extent
C. Resources and Support for Teaching	Mean	DI
1. Availability of sufficient classroom materials and supplies.	3.31	Moderate extent
2. Ready access to technology and educational software.	3.40	Moderate extent
3. Adequacy of library resources and research materials.	3.22	Moderate extent
4. Sufficiency of support staff for special education needs.	3.35	Moderate extent
5. Availability of funding for professional development resources.	3.29	Moderate extent
Category Mean	3.31	Moderate extent
D. Professional Development Opportunities	Mean	DI
1. Availability of workshops and seminars on teaching methodologies.	3.57	High Extent
2. Accessibility of conferences related to subject matter or pedagogy.	3.58	High extent
3. Support for continuing education courses.	3.53	High extent
4. Existence of mentorship programs for new teachers.	3.63	High extent
5. Opportunities for pursuing advanced degrees or certifications.	3.59	High extent
Category Mean	3.58	High extent
E. Workload and Time Management	Mean	DI
1. Manageability of class sizes.	3.66	High extent
2. Adequate preparation time.	3.62	High extent
3. Sufficiency of support for grading and administrative tasks.	3.61	High extent
4. Balance of extracurricular duties with teaching responsibilities.	3.54	High extent
5. Flexibility in scheduling and planning.	3.59	High extent
Category Mean	3.61	High extent

Support from the school administration was also rated highly with an overall category mean of 3.57. Specific aspects such as clear disciplinary action guidelines ($M = 3.60$), accessibility of administrative staff ($M = 3.59$), open-door communication policy ($M = 3.55$), regular performance feedback ($M = 3.55$), and recognition of teacher achievements ($M = 3.53$) all scored high.

Conversely, resources and support for teaching were perceived to affect professionalism to a moderate extent with a category mean of 3.31. This includes the availability of classroom materials ($M = 3.31$), access to technology and educational software ($M = 3.40$), adequacy of library resources ($M = 3.22$), sufficiency of support staff for special education ($M = 3.35$), and availability of funding for professional development ($M = 3.29$).

Results of the study show that the factors, support from school administration, collaborative work environments, resources and support for teaching, professional development opportunities, and workload and time management show varying levels of impact, with most indicating a high extent of influence.

Support from school administration is crucial, receiving high ratings across all items. This aligns with Tehseen and Hadi [10] who found that administrative support significantly contributes to teacher professionalism and

ethical conduct. Open communication, clear guidelines, performance feedback, recognition of achievements, and administrative accessibility foster professional growth and ethical behavior.

A collaborative work environment also shows a high extent of influence. The positive impact of productive team meetings, resource sharing, peer feedback, interdisciplinary collaboration, and supportive colleague relationships highlights the importance of a collaborative culture. Sancar Atal and Deryakulu [11] and Reut Chen Gamliel and Orly Shapira-Lishchinsky [16] emphasized peer support networks and collaborative workgroups in enhancing school effectiveness and teacher morale.

Resources and support for teaching received a moderate extent of influence. While sufficient classroom materials, technology, library resources, support staff for special needs, and funding for professional development are vital, the moderate ratings suggest room for improvement. Zein [20] highlighted the impact of resource shortages on professional development. Ensuring adequate resources is essential for maintaining high teaching standards and supporting continuous professional growth.

Professional development opportunities were rated highly, reflecting the importance of workshops, seminars, conferences, support for continuing education, mentorship

programs, and opportunities for advanced degrees or certifications. This supports Ballesteros [18] who emphasized the significance of tailored professional development programs in promoting ongoing learning and ethical conduct.

Workload and time management also received high ratings, indicating that manageable class sizes, adequate preparation time, support for administrative tasks, balance of extracurricular duties, and flexible scheduling are crucial for teacher professionalism. Ricaplaza and Quines [21] similarly highlighted the connection between effective time management and the ability to maintain professionalism despite high workloads.

The study's findings align with Kohlberg's Moral Growth Theory, which states that teachers' progression through various stages of moral development influences their professional behavior. Support from school administration and collaborative work environments can facilitate the transition from pre-conventional to conventional and post-conventional levels of moral reasoning. The implementation of DepEd Order 49 Series of 2022 reinforces the need for ethical conduct and professional behavior in the educational sector by prohibiting inappropriate relationships and enforcing the responsible use of social media.

4. Conclusion

The respondents exhibit a high level of professionalism, as reflected in their commitment to responsibilities, continuous professional growth, adherence to ethical standards, and active participation in collaborative initiatives. Their strong engagement with ethical considerations is evident in their ability to uphold standards and navigate dilemmas confidently. However, variability in responses highlights the need for targeted support, particularly in areas influenced by school administration, collaborative environments, resource availability, professional development opportunities, and effective workload and time management.

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