The Role of Teaching Environment in Upholding Professional Ethics in Secondary Schools. The case of Morogoro Municipality

Benedicto W. Msangya

Department of Educational Foundation and Management

Sokoine University of Agriculture P. O. Box 3000, Morogoro, Tanzania

Abstract: This study explores the influence of the teaching environment on the promotion and maintenance of professional ethics among secondary school teachers in Morogoro Municipality. Recognizing the increasing concerns over ethical standards in the education sector, the research sought to understand how various environmental factors either support or hinder ethical conduct among educators. A purposive sample of fifty secondary school teachers was selected to participate in the study. Data were gathered through structured questionnaires that assessed teachers' knowledge of the professional code of conduct, their lived experiences in the classroom, and the integrity of recruitment and promotion practices within their schools. The findings revealed a multidimensional relationship between the teaching environment and ethical behaviour. Important factors identified as promoting professional ethics included strong administrative leadership, clear ethical guidelines, consistent policy enforcement, and access to professional development opportunities. The study emphasized on the role of parental involvement and teacher collaboration in cultivating a morally grounded school culture. Teachers also highlighted the importance of fair recruitment processes and supportive working conditions, such as manageable workloads, adequate teaching materials, and safe school infrastructure as essential components that reinforce ethical commitment and teaching effectiveness. This study reveals that creating a supportive and ethically conscious teaching environment is vital not only for maintaining professional integrity among teachers but also for enhancing overall educational outcomes. The research recommends that policymakers, education administrators, and community stakeholders invest in holistic strategies that address environmental, organizational, and individual dimensions of teacher ethics to ensure sustainable and high-quality education delivery.

Keywords: Teaching Environment Upholding Professional Ethics in Secondary Schools.

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Ethical standards in the teaching profession have become a central concern globally, with many regions grappling with how best to cultivate, support, and enforce professional ethics among educators. In Morogoro Region, Tanzania, ethical conduct among teachers is increasingly viewed as essential for maintaining the integrity of the education system and promoting quality learning. The region has witnessed various educational reforms, yet challenges related to teacher professionalism, administrative support, and community engagement remain persistent (Sumra & Katabaro, 2014).

In the African context, professional ethics in education are shaped by complex social, economic, and political realities. Many African countries, including Tanzania, face systemic issues such as limited resources, overcrowded classrooms, inadequate teacher training, and weak enforcement of ethical codes. According to Ngware, Wamukuru, and Odebero (2006), the lack of adequate infrastructure and support systems in many African schools can undermine ethical behavior, as teachers often work under stressful and demoralizing conditions. In Morogoro, these challenges are evident in under resourced public schools, inconsistent supervision mechanisms, and gaps in parental engagement, all of which compromise ethical standards and professional performance among educators.

Page | 101

ISSN 2394-9686

International Journal of Novel Research in Education and Learning
Vol. 12, Issue 3, pp: (101-108), Month: May - June 2025, Available at: www.noveltyjournals.com

Further, the Tanzanian government, through the Teachers' Service Commission and the Public Service Regulations, has attempted to institutionalize ethical conduct through codes of professional conduct, training workshops, and disciplinary measures. However, the actual implementation of these policies remains inconsistent at the school level, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas such as Morogoro (URT, 2018). Cultural factors, favoritism, and inadequate monitoring structures further complicate the enforcement of professional ethics.

In contrast, European countries also confronting ethical challenges in education benefit from more established institutional frameworks, strong teacher unions, and robust accountability systems. For instance, countries like Finland and Germany emphasize continuous professional development, autonomy paired with accountability, and collaborative school cultures, all of which contribute to higher ethical standards (Sahlberg, 2011; OECD, 2020). European schools tend to promote ethical leadership through transparent governance, structured induction programs for new teachers, and open communication between schools and communities. These mechanisms reinforce the professional identity of teachers and help mitigate unethical behavior.

In Europe, concerns over declining ethical standards have raised, particularly in the face of rising workloads, multicultural classroom dynamics, and accountability pressures (Tirri, 2010). This suggests that maintaining ethical standards is a universal challenge that requires context-specific interventions.

In Morogoro, localized efforts to strengthen ethical behavior among teachers should consider both the resource constraints of the African context and the structural best practices observed in Europe. Integrating ethical education in teacher training colleges, improving school environments, and enhancing collaboration between administrators, teachers, parents, and the wider community are crucial steps forward. Addressing these issues holistically can help ensure that professional ethics remain at the core of educational delivery in the region.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing professional ethics among teachers in secondary schools. The descriptive cross-sectional design was adopted to capture data at a single point in time from a diverse group of respondents. This approach was appropriate for examining perceptions on school administration, parental involvement, teacher collaboration, and the teaching environment as they relate to ethical conduct.

2.2 Research Approach

A convergent mixed-methods approach was utilized, where both quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently, analyzed separately, and then merged during interpretation. This approach allowed the researcher to compare and contrast findings, thereby enhancing the depth and validity of the results.

2.3 Study Area and Population

The study was conducted in selected secondary schools within [insert region, e.g., Morogoro Region]. The target population included secondary school teachers, school administrators, and other key stakeholders such as parents where relevant.

2.4 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

A purposive sampling technique was used to select schools and school heads that were deemed information, rich and relevant to the study. A stratified random sampling method was employed to ensure proportional representation of teachers based on their schools. The final sample consisted of 50 respondents, including teachers and administrators.

2.5 Data Collection Methods

2.5.1 Quantitative Data Collection

Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires containing closed-ended questions, primarily in the form of Likert scales. These questionnaires assessed participants' views on: Administrative support for professional ethics, parental involvement in school discipline, collaboration among school stakeholders and the conduciveness of the teaching environment.

Page | 102

2.5.2 Qualitative Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected school heads. These interviews provided deeper insights into the contextual realities faced by teachers and administrators, especially concerning environmental conditions and ethical challenges in schools. Responses were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed thematically.

2.6 Data Analysis Procedures

2.6.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, which were presented in tables and figures. This analysis helped to identify trends and patterns in respondents' perceptions.

2.6.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed using thematic content analysis. Emerging themes were identified and linked to existing literature to provide a contextual understanding of the challenges and practices related to professional ethics in schools.

2.7 Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts in educational research and piloted in a non-sampled school to test for clarity and relevance. Reliability was ensured through consistent data collection procedures and internal consistency checks using Cronbach's Alpha for questionnaire items.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical research standards. Participants were informed about the purpose of the research, and their consent was obtained prior to data collection. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed, and participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any point without penalty.

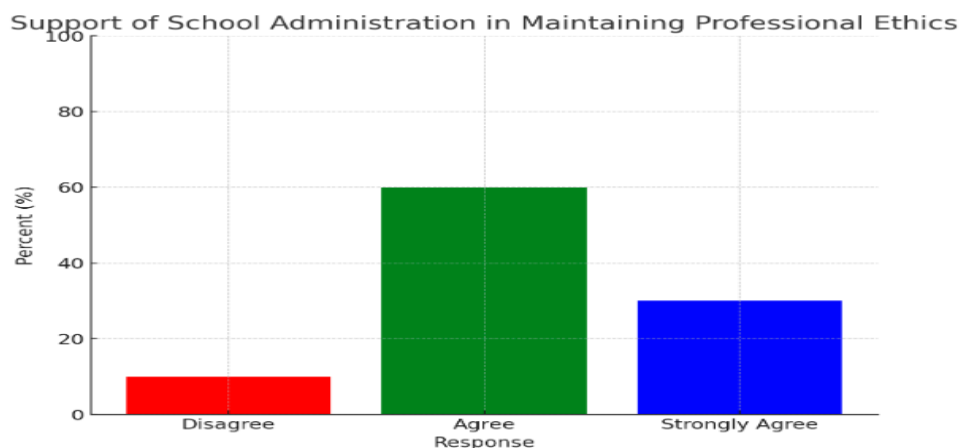## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1: The School Administration Support

The findings reveal a high level of approval (90%) for the school administration's efforts in promoting and upholding professional ethics among teachers. This strong consensus suggests that the administration is perceived as effective in enforcing ethical guidelines and fostering a culture of professionalism within the institution. Such effectiveness is likely rooted in deliberate strategies such as conducting regular staff meetings, organizing ongoing professional development workshops, implementing clear codes of conduct, and ensuring adherence to school policies and national regulations. These actions align with the notion that school leadership plays a central role in shaping the ethical climate of an educational institution.

According to Normore (2011), effective school administrators model ethical behavior themselves and establish institutional norms that prioritize professional integrity, transparency, and fairness. By doing so, they create a framework where ethical

behavior is not only expected but consistently reinforced. Ethical leadership entails setting high standards, ensuring equitable treatment of all staff, and responding promptly to breaches in conduct. When such leadership is present, it encourages teachers to emulate professional behavior and fosters trust within the school environment.

Maphosa, Bhebhe, and Dziva (2015) emphasize that ethics are at the core of every profession, and the teaching profession is no exception. As educators play a pivotal role in shaping future generations, it is crucial that they uphold ethical values in both their conduct and instructional practice. Ethical concerns in education range from fairness in student assessment and respect for diversity, to the maintenance of confidentiality and avoidance of favoritism. Thus, improving ethical education programs that inform and guide teachers on acceptable professional conduct is essential for institutional integrity and societal trust in the education system.

Furthermore, professional ethics encompass various dimensions of teacher behavior, including appearance, communication, interpersonal relationships, and discipline (Staffing, 2013). Teachers are expected to demonstrate decorum, respect, and professionalism in their interactions with students, colleagues, and parents. When these standards are clearly communicated and monitored by school administrators, it results in a cohesive and ethically grounded teaching force.

However, the 10% of respondents who expressed dissatisfaction point to potential areas where administrative efforts may be falling short. This dissatisfaction may stem from inconsistent enforcement of rules, favoritism, lack of transparent disciplinary procedures, or inadequate communication of ethical expectations. As argued by Shapiro and Stefkovich (2016), ethical leadership requires consistency, clarity, and responsiveness to ethical dilemmas. When these qualities are lacking, even a small proportion of staff can feel marginalized or unsupported, undermining the administration's broader efforts.

Therefore, while the overall perception is positive, the findings underscore the need for continuous reflection, feedback, and enhancement of ethical leadership practices. This includes expanding ethical training programs, ensuring equal treatment of all staff, improving communication strategies, and fostering an open environment where ethical concerns can be raised and addressed constructively. By doing so, school administrations can further strengthen professional integrity and ensure that ethical principles are embedded in every aspect of educational practice.
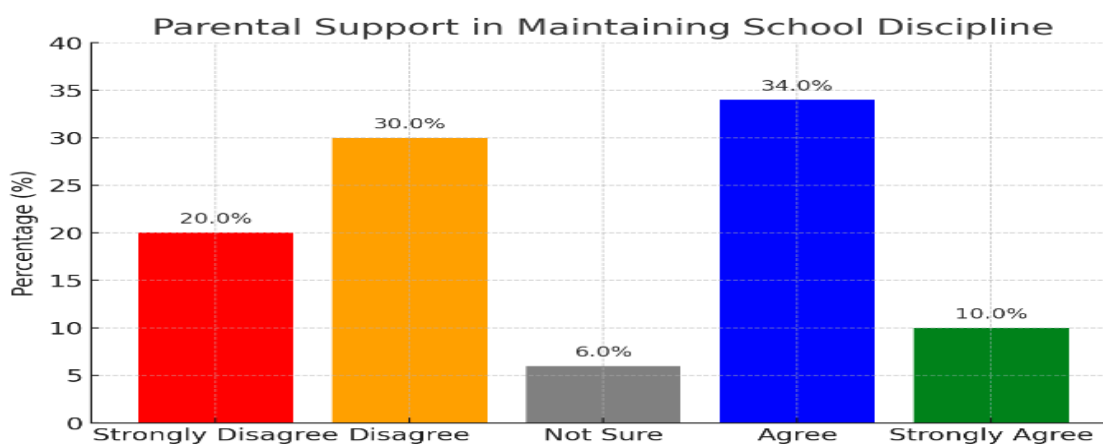

Figure 2: Parental Support in Maintaining School Discipline

The findings reveal a divided perception of parental involvement in school discipline among respondents. While 44% of participants believe that parents actively assist teachers in maintaining discipline, a slightly larger proportion (50%) disagrees, indicating a notable disparity in how parental engagement is perceived or practiced. An additional 6% remain undecided, reflecting uncertainty or variability in parental roles across different contexts. This division suggests a significant gap in parental support for discipline management within schools, which may hinder the overall effectiveness of behavioral control mechanisms.

Parental involvement in education, particularly in matters of discipline, is widely recognized as a critical factor influencing student outcomes and school climate. According to Jeynes (2007), parental involvement encompasses parents' participation in their children's educational processes and experiences, emphasizing regular, meaningful, and mutual communication between home and school. This involvement includes attending school functions, assisting with homework, and engaging

in disciplinary reinforcement at home. Similarly, Epstein (2009) conceptualized parental involvement as a shared responsibility between families, schools, and communities to support children's academic and social development. Her framework includes six types of involvement: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community, all of which are relevant to effective discipline.

Despite its importance, several studies have pointed out key barriers to effective parental involvement. Socioeconomic status is often a critical determinant, with families from lower-income backgrounds facing structural challenges that limit their ability to engage with schools (Erdener, 2014; Erdener & Knoeppel, 2017; Lee & Bowen, 2006). These barriers may include inflexible work schedules, lack of transportation, lower levels of education, and limited understanding of school expectations. Additionally, cultural beliefs and communication gaps between parents and educators can further exacerbate disengagement, particularly in diverse or marginalized communities (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011).

Moreover, research by Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) highlighted that parents' perceptions of their roles, self-efficacy, and invitations from schools are essential motivators for their involvement. If parents do not feel welcomed or empowered to contribute to school disciplinary frameworks, they may remain passive, thereby widening the gap noted in the study's findings. In contrast, schools that actively reach out to parents with clear expectations and inclusive communication strategies tend to experience stronger family engagement and better student behavior outcomes (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002).

Therefore, the results underscore the need for schools to adopt more proactive and inclusive strategies to foster effective partnerships with parents. Strengthening communication channels, creating culturally responsive engagement practices, and addressing socio-economic barriers can contribute to improved collaboration between educators and families. This, in turn, can enhance the overall effectiveness of discipline management and promote a more supportive educational environment.
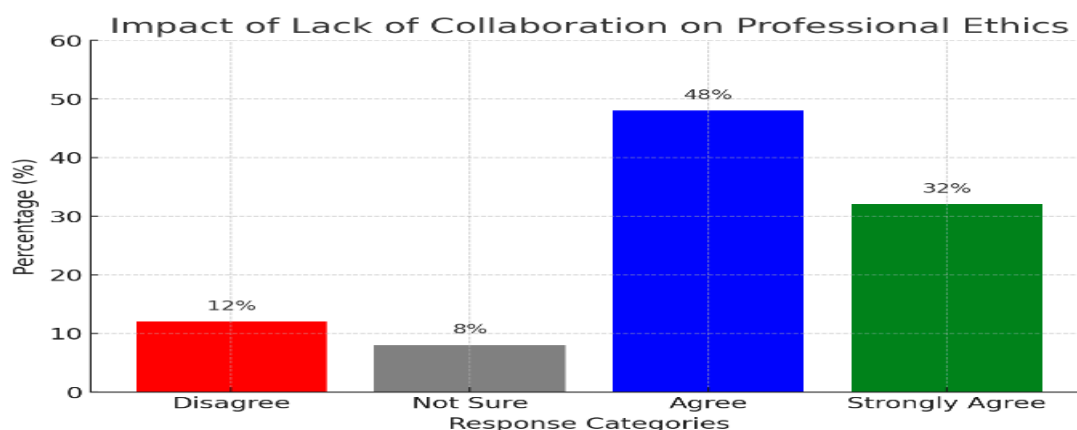

Figure 3: Lack of collaboration between teachers and school community

The findings of this study reveal a concerning trend: 80% of respondents acknowledge that poor collaboration between teachers and the school community adversely affects professional ethics. This significant majority underscores the crucial role that collaborative relationships play in promoting ethical behavior within educational settings. When there is a lack of cooperation and communication among teachers, parents, and the broader school community, it may result in diminished accountability, decreased motivation among educators, and potential ethical lapses.

3.1 Impact of Collaboration on Accountability and Motivation

Research consistently emphasizes the link between collaboration and accountability among teachers. Effective collaboration fosters a sense of shared responsibility for student outcomes and professional conduct. According to Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), collaborative cultures in schools enhance collective accountability and improve teaching practices. When teachers work together, they can support one another in adhering to ethical standards and navigating challenging situations. Conversely, a fragmented approach can lead to isolated practices where individuals may prioritize personal beliefs over collective ethical guidelines.

Additionally, motivation is significantly influenced by collaboration. As Leithwood et al. (2004) highlight, supportive collaborative environments can lead to increased teacher engagement and job satisfaction. Without collaboration, teachers

may feel unsupported and undervalued, which can lead to burnout and disillusionment. This lack of motivation can further erode professional ethics, as educators may become less committed to upholding high standards of conduct when they feel isolated or disengaged from the school community.

3.2 Ethics as a Shared Responsibility

The data also indicates that 12% of respondents believe ethics are solely a personal responsibility, while 8% remain uncertain about the relationship between collaboration and ethical standards. This perspective aligns with the notion that individual accountability plays a role in ethics; however, it is essential to recognize that ethics in education cannot be relegated to mere personal responsibility. As noted by Ryan and Bohlin (2000), ethical behavior in educational institutions is a collective obligation that involves all stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, parents, and the community.

The ambiguity expressed by the 8% of respondents regarding the connection between collaboration and ethics highlights a potential area for further exploration. Educational leaders must work to clarify and communicate the value of collaboration in maintaining ethical standards. Professional development programs focused on ethics should incorporate discussions on communal responsibilities and the importance of teamwork in addressing ethical dilemmas (Crow, 2011).

Table 1: Support for the Teaching Environment in Secondary Schools

Environment	Frequency	Percent
Strongly disagree	12	24.0
Disagree	20	40.0
Agree	13	26.0
Strongly agree	5	10.0
Total	**50**	**100.0**

The findings reveal that a significant majority (64%) of respondents perceive the teaching environment in secondary schools as unconducive to effective teaching, while only 36% view it as supportive. This disparity underscores widespread dissatisfaction with the current state of the teaching environment and signals a potential threat to teachers' motivation, ethical conduct, and overall professional performance. Poor teaching environments are not only detrimental to instructional quality but also to teachers' psychological well-being, which in turn influences their ethical standards and dedication to the profession.

Kyriacou (2001) asserts that stress in the teaching profession—often triggered by adverse working conditions—can lead to burnout. Burnout manifests in emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced professional efficacy, which can compromise not only job performance but also ethical decision-making and conduct. Teachers who are overwhelmed by environmental stressors may struggle to uphold professional standards, leading to absenteeism, reduced enthusiasm for teaching, and, in some cases, unethical practices such as neglecting responsibilities or engaging in misconduct.

Supporting this view, Billett (2008) emphasizes that a teacher's professional identity is significantly shaped by the socio-cultural and institutional contexts in which they work. A supportive environment fosters professional pride, engagement, and ethical practice, whereas a demoralizing setting can erode teachers' sense of purpose and commitment. When teachers operate in environments characterized by physical discomfort, resource scarcity, and administrative neglect, their professional identities weaken, often resulting in disengagement and ethical lapses.

Interviews with the heads of Mjimpya and Tushikamane secondary schools vividly illustrate these concerns. They reported that teachers are routinely subjected to harsh working conditions, such as dusty and poorly ventilated offices, broken or insufficient furniture, and a lack of basic teaching and office facilities. These conditions, they noted, are not merely inconvenient but are deeply demotivating, contributing to a loss of morale and increased frustration among staff. These frustrations often find expression in professional misconduct or declining work ethic, further exacerbating the challenges of educational delivery.

Moreover, the heads emphasized that teachers' needs go beyond salary enhancements. They pointed to the pressing need for non-monetary benefits such as housing, transport allowances, and access to psychosocial support services. These are especially critical for teachers in urban and peri-urban areas, where the cost of living is high, and commuting is often a challenge. The lack of such support structures contributes to high turnover rates, absenteeism, and a general lack of job satisfaction, all of which undermine ethical conduct and professionalism.

In line with these findings, research by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) identifies that a poor school climate, including lack of leadership support and inadequate facilities, directly contributes to teacher attrition and low job satisfaction. Likewise, Day and Gu (2009) contend that sustainable teacher commitment and moral integrity are deeply rooted in positive school cultures that validate teachers' efforts, provide adequate resources, and nurture their professional growth.

In conclusion, the results point to a pressing need for systemic improvement in the physical and psychosocial work environments of secondary schools. Addressing environmental and motivational challenges through infrastructural development, improved working conditions, and holistic support systems is essential to maintaining teacher professionalism and ethical standards.

4. CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that while there is general approval of the school administration's efforts in upholding professional ethics, highlighted by a significant 90% of respondents expressing satisfaction, there remain areas for concern. Notably, the 10% who reported dissatisfaction point to issues such as inconsistent enforcement of ethical guidelines and communication gaps. Furthermore, a divided perception of parental involvement in maintaining school discipline reveals a crucial gap, with only 44% positive feedback compared to 50% negativity. This indicates a need for better collaboration between parents and schools. Additionally, the findings underscore a significant concern regarding the lack of collaboration between teachers and the school community, as 80% of respondents believe this affects professional ethics. Finally, the results from the teaching environment survey indicate that 64% find the conditions unsatisfactory, which could adversely affect teacher motivation and professionalism.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

School administrations should establish more regular training sessions and clearer communication channels to ensure that all staff understand ethical guidelines and feel supported in their roles. Addressing the concerns of the 10% of dissatisfied respondents should be a priority.

Schools should actively engage parents in their children's educational processes by organizing workshops or meetings aimed at improving communication and collaboration. This can include initiatives that inform parents about their role in supporting discipline and educational ethics.

Strategies must be implemented to promote teamwork among teachers and between teachers and the school community. Regular collaborative meetings and team-building activities could enhance cohesion and a sense of shared responsibility for upholding ethics.

It is crucial to address the poor working conditions reported by teachers. Investing in adequate facilities, improving infrastructure, and providing essential resources can create a more conducive environment for teaching. Additionally, addressing issues like housing and transport allowances, especially for teachers in urban areas, could improve job satisfaction.

Continuous monitoring and evaluation of policies related to ethics, parental involvement, and the teaching environment should be conducted to ensure improvements are being made. Feedback mechanisms can help gauge effectiveness and highlight areas needing further action.

REFERENCES

[1] Billett, S. (2008). Socio-cultural and cognitive perspectives on workplace learning: Seeking to integrate them. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 20(7/8), 413–425.

[2] Crow, G. M. (2011). The role of collaboration in fostering ethical leadership in education. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 47(5), 719-760.

[3] Day, C., & Gu, Q. (2009). *Teacher emotions: Well-being and effectiveness*. Cambridge University Press.

[4] Epstein, J. L. (2009). In School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action (3rd Ed.). USA: Corwin Press.

[5] Epstein, J. L. (2009). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools*. Routledge.

[6] Erdener, M. A. (2014). Turkish parents' perceptions of their involvement in schooling. *Yayınlanmamış Doktora Tezi, University of Kentucky*.

[7] Erdener, M. A., & Knoeppel, R. C. (2017). Parents' perceptions of their involvement in schooling. *International Journal of Research in Education and Science (IJRES)*, 3(1), 1–13.

[8] Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2012). *Professional Capital: Transforming Teaching in Every School*. Teachers College Press.

[9] Hoover-Dempsey, K. V., et al. (2005). Why do parents become involved? Research findings and implications. *The Elementary School Journal*, 106(2), 105–130.

[10] Hornby, G., & Lafaele, R. (2011). Barriers to parental involvement in education: An explanatory model. *Educational Review*, 63(1), 37–52.

[11] Jeynes, W. H. (2007). *The relationship between parental involvement and urban secondary school student academic achievement:* A meta-analysis. Urban Education, 42(1): 82-110.

[12] Jeynes, W. H. (2007). The relationship between parental involvement and urban secondary school student academic achievement: A meta-analysis. *Urban Education*, 42(1), 82–110.

[13] Kyriacou, C. (2001). Teacher stress: Directions for future research. *Educational Review*, 53(1), 27–35.

[14] Lee, J. S., & Bowen, N. K. (2006). Parent involvement, cultural capital, and the achievement gap among elementary school children. *American Educational Research Journal*, 43(2), 193–218.

[15] Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2004). Leading school turnaround: How successful leaders use transformative leadership to improve schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 40(1), 1-37.

[16] Maphosa, C., Bhebhe, S., & Dziva, M. (2015). Interrogating the significance of professionalism and professional ethics in the teaching profession. Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology, 6(2): 263-272.

[17] Ngware, M. W., Wamukuru, D. K., & Odebero, S. O. (2006). Total quality management in secondary schools in Kenya: Extent of practice. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 14(4), 339-362.

[18] Normore, A. H. (2011). *Global perspectives on educational leadership reform: The development and preparation of leaders of learning and learners of leadership*. Emerald Group Publishing.

[19] Normore, A.H. (2011), "Ethical Decision Making in School Administration: Leadership as Moral Architecture", Journal of Educational Administration, Vol. 49 No. 1, pp. 95-97.

[20] OECD. (2020). *Teachers and School Leaders as Valued Professionals*. OECD Publishing.

[21] Ryan, K., & Bohlin, K. (2000). *Integrity in Education: A Guide to Teacher Ethics*. Corwin Press.

[22] Sahlberg, P. (2011). *Finnish Lessons: What Can the World Learn from Educational Change in Finland?* Teachers College Press.

[23] Shapiro, J. P., & Stefkovich, J. A. (2016). *Ethical leadership and decision making in education: Applying theoretical perspectives to complex dilemmas* (4th ed.). Routledge.

[24] Sheldon, S. B., & Epstein, J. L. (2002). Improving student behavior and school discipline with family and community involvement. *Education and Urban Society*, 35(1), 4–26.

[25] Skaalvik, E. M., & Skaalvik, S. (2011). Teacher job satisfaction and motivation to leave the teaching profession: Relations with school context, feeling of belonging, and emotional exhaustion. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(6), 1029–1038.

[26] Staffing. (2013). Teachers' professional ethics and the teaching profession. *Teaching Service Commission Report*.

[27] Sumra, S., & Katabaro, J. (2014). *Tanzania: Education Performance Report 2013*. Haki-Elimu.

[28] Tirri, K. (2010). Teacher values underlying professional ethics. *In Education in Finland*. Sense Publishers.

[29] United Republic of Tanzania (URT). (2018). *Public Service Regulations*. Dar es Salaam: Government Printer.