



Ethical Challenges in Tanzanian Public Elementary Schools: Understanding, Prevention, and Reporting Systems

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Abstract: *This article takes a look at the responsibility and work ethic of principals and teachers in Tanzanian public elementary schools. Perceptions of accountability and ethical concerns, ethical issues as a whole, preventative strategies, and methods for reporting unethical activity were the four components that the study aimed to evaluate. A total of 550 educators and school administrators from 279 randomly chosen primary schools in mainland Tanzania filled out questionnaires as part of the quantitative research technique used in the study. Results showed that school responses to reporting ethical problems and efforts to avoid unethical issues were well-received by both teachers and administrators. Teachers and administrators were reluctant to bring up ethical concerns with their superiors. However, a school climate that encourages responsibility and work ethic is one that promotes professionalism, which in turn improves students' academic performance and well-being. Teachers' and administrators' perspectives may vary, and different schools may have different challenges when it comes to staff responsibility and work ethic, as acknowledged in the research. Consequently, when contemplating more study, it is important to think on the local environment, cultural aspects, and particular obstacles.*

Keywords: *Ethics, accountability, good governance, leadership*

Introduction

Tanzania acknowledged that lack of responsibility, immoral conduct, and corrupt practices were major obstacles to socio-economic growth in the wake of its 1961 independence, when the country faced several post-independence issues including poverty, ignorance, and illnesses. Institutional and legal frameworks were among the many tactics developed and put into place in the early years after independence with the goal of reducing unethical behaviour and increasing responsibility in public service (Nyerere, 1967). According to URT (2020) and the CCM Manifesto (2020), corruption and the misuse of public office for private

benefit are detrimental to Tanzania's poor, weaken anti-poverty initiatives, and endanger national prosperity. They also make it harder for Tanzania to reach its development objectives.

Establishing the Prevention and Combating of Corruption Bureau (PCCB), endorsing the PCCB Act of 2007, developing and implementing the Public Service Code of Ethics and Conducts of 2005, and enforcing the Public Leadership Code of Ethics Act of 1995 are among the measures taken by Tanzania to combat corruption and abuses of public office. To combat corruption, unethical behaviour, and practices such as bribery, nepotism, embezzlement, and other abuses in public offices, additional measures include the establishment of administrative structures and processes with highly holistic and integrative approaches, the formation of the Warioba Commission in 1996, and the Commission for Human Rights and Good Governance (CHRGG) in 2001.

The Ministry of Vocational Training and Education has also instituted a number of internal programmes to encourage honesty and responsibility among its staff members working in the field of education. Implementing a variety of ethical policies and administrative procedures, such as codes of conduct, policies for reporting unethical behaviour, job rotations, transfers, terminations, training, and application screening based on integrity, is essential for strong leadership that is both committed and patriotic (Lasthuizen, 2008).

One of the many things the Tanzanian administration has promised is to crack down hard on abuses of power and corruption in government. Positive ethical reforms and accountability in public institutions, especially the education sector, are at the core of the sixth regime of its government's shown leadership. It has come to light that the president has said that there is a tremendous moral decline in the nation and that people should work together to determine what went wrong. According to Christopher and Sanga (2023), the president firmly believes that instilling moral principles in youngsters is crucial for society's development. Nevertheless, problems pertaining to ethics and integrity persist despite several ongoing initiatives and plans to address corruption and unethical conduct among public officials.

Throughout Tanzania's public service history, ethical dilemmas have persisted. Reports of unethical conduct by elementary school teachers in Tanzania have been on the rise in recent years. Many types of teacher misbehaviour are prevalent in Tanzanian schools, according to literature on moral and ethical issues among Tanzanian educators. Betweli (2020), Matete (2021), Boniface and Ngalawa (2021), Malabwa and Mnjokava (2022), and Paschal (2023) are only a few examples of the research that overwhelmingly found various types of

unethical behaviour prevalent in educational institutions during the 2020s. Some examples of such actions include being inebriated, showing favouritism, abusing sexually, not having enough supervision, giving out unfair grades, misusing money, being dishonest in the classroom, and not showing up to class.

This research aimed to evaluate how administrators and teachers in public primary schools understand ethical and accountability concerns, in light of the ongoing difficulties of corruption and unethical activity in public services. With a focus on prevention and reporting systems in Tanzania's public elementary schools, the research aimed to gather complaints from teachers and administrators about ethics and its practices.

Methodology

The researcher in this study used a quantitative methodology. It used a convenience sample to collect data from 780 educators working in 279 Tanzanian public elementary schools. It was a convenience sample that had the advantage of picking respondents who were easy to reach and who were accessible when needed. Consequently, students enrolled in the Diploma degrees provided by the Institute of Adult Education's Open and Distance Learning (ODL) centres and campuses were purposefully selected from a pool of public elementary teachers to serve as responders. The responders were further classified into four groups: teachers, school leaders, academic/discipline masters/mistresses, and administrators.

In order to assess the current state and future prospects of accountability and work ethics in public elementary schools, this research utilised a questionnaire that inquired about four key concepts. Ethical concerns, reporting mechanisms for unethical activity, preventative strategies, and views of responsibility for ethical problems were among the constructs. Every topic was evaluated using the Likert Scale; 6 indicates strong agreement, 5 agrees, 4 somewhat agrees, 3 somewhat disagrees, 2 disagrees, and 1 strongly disagrees.

The response rate was 71%, with 550 surveys totaling the results. After being informed about the survey, what it would include, and the rewards, respondents who volunteered to participate verbally agreed to participate. We sent out surveys and then got them back when people filled them out. Anonymity was maintained throughout.

Quantitative analysis was performed on the data obtained for this investigation. Tables showing frequency distributions and inferential statistics were both generated using descriptive statistics. The four constructs—teachers' perspectives, ethical problems, preventative strategies, and reporting systems—

were correlated pairwise in order to conduct inferential analyses.

The respondents' emotions on the application of ethical principles and accountability, particularly abuses that suggested the misuse of public office, were addressed in the perception construct. How respondents are likely to report any witnessed unethical activity, including abuses in public offices, is connected to the reporting construct, whereas the preventive construct is concerned with ways to identify and avoid unethical behaviour and practices.

The statistical significance of the means score of the dimensions of teachers' perspectives, preventions, abuses, and reporting by sex was examined using independent t-tests. The significance threshold for the correlation analysis and independent t-test was set at 5%. We used SPSS, or the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, Version 21, to analyse the quantitative data. The next section presents the results as an aggregate.

Results

Social and Demographic Data

From 296 elementary schools in mainland Tanzania, the majority of respondents were female (64%), and the dominating age group was below 35 (Table 1). Most of the participants were teachers (75%) and others were administrators (16%), school heads (7.5%), schools' academic/discipline masters/mistresses (0.5%) and others (1%).

Table 1 Respondents' Demographic Information

Respondents		
Sex	Frequency	Response percent
Female	350	64
Male	200	36
Total	550	100
Age-Category Distribution		
20-25	19	4
26-30	186	34
31-35	150	26
36-40	87	16
41-45	58	11
46+	50	9
Total	550	100
Working Experience in Years		
Less than One year	1	0.2
2-6 years	80	15
7-10 years	221	40
10+	248	45

Total	550	100
Teachers' titles		
Heads of schools	41	7.5
Teachers	414	75
Administrators	88	16
Academic /discipline masters/ mistresses	3	0.5
Others	4	1
Total	550	100

In contrast to the 51.9% reported in 2002, Tanzania's working-age population is growing rapidly, with 53.4% of the population falling between the 15–64 age bracket (URT, 2022). Managing and leading institutions effectively and becoming constructive, contributing citizens of the country are within the capabilities of this fraction of an enthusiastic group of individuals who are engaged in national leadership. Since women made up the vast majority of the study's participants, it follows that Tanzania's main teaching force is skewed towards female educators (Lin et al., 2017). The majority of respondents (85%) had been employed by the school sector for over seven years, according to this survey (Table 1). Educators, principals, and other school officials, as well as academics and disciplinary specialists, were among the many occupations represented among the respondents.

Teachers' and Administrators' Perceptions on Ethical Challenges and Accountability

Perception is a construct that was designed to address how respondents felt about their own knowledge and comprehension of ethical behaviours, as well as their own practices and responsibility at work (elementary schools). A rational educator's perspective on the importance of school and its ethical judgements and practices was sought out. The findings are shown in Table 2 in descending order.

Table 2: Teachers' and Administrators' Perceptions on Ethical Challenges and Accountability

Perceptions on Ethical Challenges and Accountability	% Some Form of Agreement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Satisfaction with how my school responds to matters related to harassment and discrimination.	85	4.6	1.3
School practices on what they preach when it comes to ethics	76	4.2	1.4
School's ethical rules and practices are effective	70	3.7	1.4

School leaders misuse their position for a personal benefit or others	43	2.5	1.5
School leaders care more about getting job done rather than ethical issues	35	2.8	1.5
You can ignore ethical issues and still get ahead in the schools	18	2.1	1.4

Here are the teachers' opinions, together with the mean and standard deviation: 6 for strong agreement, 5 for agreement, 4 for slight agreement, 3 for slight disagreement, 2 for disapproval, and 1 for strong disagreement, ordered ascendingly.

Seventy percent of students said their school's ethical policies and procedures worked well, and 85 percent said they were pleased with the school's response to ethical problems and abuses (Table 2). Table 2 shows that only a small percentage of respondents (18%) think that workers may make forward in the workplace without caring about ethical concerns. Just over a third of students said that their school administrators were more concerned with getting things done than with ethical considerations (Table 2). Table 2 shows that just over three-quarters of respondents (76%) think that their school and leadership model ethical behaviour.

Educators' and administrators' views on ethical dilemmas and responsibility seem to vary, with a range of 1.3 to 1.5 standard deviations and a mean score of 2.1 to 4.6. A substantial amount of variety in these impressions is shown by the standard deviation, and the range of mean scores implies varied degrees of agreement or optimism.

The majority of students felt that their institutions adequately addressed ethical concerns. The government's ongoing efforts to educate the public, hold public outreach events, and pass legislation to combat corruption and unethical workplace practices are all bolstered by this conclusion. Mabagala et al. (2012) and Mgaiwa and Hamis (2022) are only two examples of the publications that have offered similar findings.

Ethical Challenges and Public Office Abuses

Various elements connected to the ethical behaviour of school personnel and possible abuses of their positions were assessed within the framework of school administration when ethical concerns were constructed. Table 3 provides an overview of the main results that support this idea.

Table 3 Ethical Challenges and Public Office Abuses

Ethical Challenges and Public Office Abuses	% some form of agreement	M	SD
My school recognizes ethical issues when they arise	76	4.4	1.5

Employees in my school misuse official time	30	2.7	1.5
Employees misuse school properties	27	2.5	1.6
Leaders misuse their public positions for personal benefits or others	26		
Employees improperly accept gifts given to them because of their work and status.	24	2.6	1.6

Here are the teachers' opinions, together with the mean and standard deviation: 6 for strong agreement, 5 for agreement, 4 for slight agreement, 3 for slight disagreement, 2 for disapproval, and 1 for strong disagreement, ordered ascendingly.

The majority of respondents (76%) acknowledged the emergence of several ethical difficulties in their institutions when asked about office abuses (Table 3). Table 3 shows that slightly more than a quarter of the respondents (26%) felt that their school leaders took use of their public positions for private gain. In addition, only 30% of those who took the survey felt that coworkers utilised company time for personal affairs (Table 3). Furthermore, according to Table 3, just 8% of respondents did not think that their workers inappropriately take presents related to their job or position. Table 3 shows that about 80% of those who took the survey do not believe that leaders take advantage of their public positions for private gain. Conversely, according to Table 3, eight out of ten respondents felt that school staff members abused school property.

Other than the statement on the school's response to ethical challenges, which received an average score of 4.4, the other items on the Likert scale ranged from 2.5 to 2.7. This suggests that although most people were in agreement that the school does acknowledge ethical difficulties, their views were less unanimously favourable on other matters pertaining to ethical considerations at the institution.

Awinia (2019), Transparency International (2020), Malabwa and Mnjokava (2022), Paschal (2023), and Wangamati et al. (2022) are among the studies that found that unethical practices, such as abuse, misuse of public positions, time, and property, and corruption, harm low-income people and impede the government's efforts to achieve sustainable development goals by 2030, including the right to quality education. Teachers' improved evaluations and favourable comments validate the government's efforts to foster moral character and optimistic outlooks among public servants.

Reporting on Ethical Challenges and Misuse of Public Offices

How likely were respondents to report any unethical conduct or practices they saw in their schools? This was connected to reporting on ethical challenges and

abuse of public offices.

Table 4: Reporting on Ethical Challenges and Misuse of Public Office

Reporting on Ethical Issues and Misuse of Public Office	% some form of agreement	M	SD
I would rather submit complaints or express ethical concerns anonymously	89	4.4	1.7
My school follows up seriously on ethical concerns that are reported by employees	77	4.4	1.5
I would feel comfortable to report ethics violations	75	4.5	2.1
Employees can talk with school leaders about ethical problems without fear of having their counts held against them	62	3.7	1.6
Employees are comfortable delivering bad news to their leaders	41	3.0	1.7
My school leaders retaliate for reporting or complaining about something illegal	30	2.6	1.6

Here are the teachers' opinions, together with the mean and standard deviation: 6 for strong agreement, 5 for agreement, 4 for slight agreement, 3 for slight disagreement, 2 for disapproval, and 1 for strong disagreement, ordered ascendingly.

Most respondents (77%) felt that their schools took employee reports of ethical issues seriously, and 62% said that they had a safe place to discuss these issues with their supervisors without fear of retaliation (Table 4). Table 4 shows that although 75% of respondents were comfortable reporting ethical violations and public office abuses, 59% of employees said they would not be comfortable openly delivering bad news to their leaders about ethics violations. This is disappointing. Table 4 shows that only 30% of students think their school administrators will punish them if they speak out about unethical behaviour. The majority of respondents (89%) felt at ease with the idea of being anonymous while submitting complaints or expressing ethical concerns (Table 4). A modest standard deviation of 1.3–1.5 indicates that there was a fair amount of diversity among the participants, while the average Likert scale scores ranged from 2.6–4.7, indicating support for the assertions.

In accordance with the provisions of the Public Service Code of Ethics and Conducts of 2005, the research found that respondents shown a great willingness, bravery, and patriotism to speak out against and fight against unethical conduct and misuse of public offices in the workplace. This factors in the equation of improving Tanzanians' lives via responsible patriotic leadership that is transparent and abides by the highest standards of honesty.

Prevention of Unethical Practices in Schools

Finding and avoiding unethical practices are linked with the prevention of such practices. Here are the main takeaways from this build, as seen in Table 5.

Table 5 Prevention of Unethical Practices in Schools

No	Prevention of Unethical Practices in Schools	% some form of agreement	M	SD
	My school makes a serious attempt to detect ethics violation	73	4.5	3.3
	Employees who are caught violating ethics are disciplined	73	4.7	2.9
	My school works hard to prevent harassment and discrimination	71	4.6	2.1
	My school follows up seriously on ethical concerns that are reported by employees/public	70	4.5	3.3
	Senior officials in my school are less likely to be disciplined for violating ethical standards than other employees	52	3.4	1.6

Here are the teachers' opinions, together with the mean and standard deviation: 6 for strong agreement, 5 for agreement, 4 for slight agreement, 3 for slight disagreement, 2 for disapproval, and 1 for strong disagreement, ordered ascendingly.

Table 5 shows that the majority of respondents (90%) thought that the measures taken to prevent abuses of public office were very successful. Table 5 shows that almost three quarters of the teachers surveyed (73%) felt their institution made significant efforts to combat harassment, discrimination, and other forms of ethical misconduct. Bettweli (2020) and Boniface (2019) include bullying, intoxication, favouritism, sexual abuse, unjust grading, financial mismanagement, and absenteeism as examples of unethical conduct in schools.

In addition, 73% of those who took the survey felt that their institutions took employee and public reports of ethical issues very seriously. (Range 5).

Table 5 shows that a majority of respondents agree that employees who are found to be violating ethical standards are disciplined, while a small percentage believe that school leaders are less likely to face disciplinary action than other employees. In addition, 71% of students said their schools made a concerted effort to reduce the occurrence of infractions (Table 5).

With mean ratings ranging from 3.4 to 4.7, it's clear that most respondents agree or have a good attitude towards the idea of preventing unethical behaviours in

schools. Standard deviations ranging from 1.6 to 3.3% show that replies are spaced out somewhat, suggesting that respondents' views are variable.

Analysis of Correlation of Scale of Constructs

To find out how closely the construct means were to one another, we also ran a pairwise correlation analysis. The correlation coefficients for both correlations were less than 0.5, indicating that they were weak yet positive (Table 6). The only pair that did not show statistical significance at the 5% alpha level was the link between prevention and ethical concerns, with a p-value of greater than 0.05.

Table 6: Correlation Analysis between Constructs

	Perception	Reporting	Abuses	Preventing
Perception	1.0000			
Reporting	0.3035*	1.0000		
Ethical Issues	0.3510*	0.1749*	1.0000	
Preventing	0.1969*	0.1739*	0.0351	1.0000

Independent Sample t-Tests

The researcher compared the means of four constructs by sex and by school using an independent t-test. Only the reporting construct was found to be statistically significant at the 5% level (p-value= 0.001), according to the school, as indicated in Table 7(a). That is to say, their reporting styles are different. There was no statistical significance at the 5% alpha level for other concept perceptions (p=0.702), ethical considerations (p=0.054), or prevention (p=0.833) (Table 7a). This indicates that there is no school-based variation in attitudes, ethical difficulties, or prevention.

Table 7(a): Equality of Means for Constructs by Schools

t-test for Equality of Means by Schools							
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% CI of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Perceptions	-.386	36.893	.702	-.05097	.13203	-.31851	.21656
Reporting	-3.623	43.815	.001	-.39757	.10973	-.61875	-.17640

Ethical Issues	-1.986	38.432	.054	-.40492	.20391	-.81757	.00772
Preventing	-.212	39.447	.833	-.03849	.18119	-.40484	.32786

Table 7(b) displays the findings of an additional comparison that was conducted to see if the mean constructions vary according to the respondents' sex. In order to verify this, we compared the means of four constructs by sex using the independent t-test. Perceptions ($p=0.637$), reporting ($p=0.362$), ethical problems ($p=0.537$), and prevention ($p=0.236$) were all not statistically significant at the 5% alpha level when examined by sex (Table 7b). Therefore, there is no difference between the sexes in relation to any of the four constructions.

Table 7(b): Equality of Means for Constructs by Sex

	t-test for Equality of Means by sex (Male & female)						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% CI of the Difference	
						Lower	Upper
Perceptions	-.472	362.203	.637	-.03063	.06489	-.15825	.09698
Reporting	-.912	482.135	.362	-.06855	.07513	-.21618	.07907
Ethical Challenges	-.618	489.947	.537	-.06468	.10458	-.27015	.14080
Preventing	1.187	273.960	.236	.14453	.12173	-.09512	.38418

Discussion

As professionals, educators must uphold high standards of work ethics and take responsibility for their actions in the classroom and administration. Both are important for students' personal growth, the success of their school, and the quality of education they get. The results showed that when asked about their school's policy on ethical concerns and the abuse of public office, the majority of respondents were quite pleased. This suggests that they were pleased with the professional and responsible behaviour of the schools and their members. This contentment may result from a number of things connected to the school's honesty, openness, and responsibility of its employees, particularly its leadership.

There is little information available on recent efforts to enhance accountability and work ethics in Tanzania's public elementary schools, which

contradicts the responses given by respondents. However, there are some common strategies that schools can use to improve work ethics. These include providing teachers with ongoing professional development opportunities to improve their skills and professionalism, creating a clear and comprehensive code of conduct for students and teachers, involving parents and communities in educational initiatives, improving leadership at both the school and district levels, and making sure schools have enough resources and infrastructure. The Education and Training Policy of 2014 (URT, 2014) and the National Five-Year Development Plan [2020/2021 to 2024/2025 (URT, 2021)] both include these initiatives, as does the 2020 election platform of the governing party (CCM platform, 2020).

At the same time, various institutions responsible for overseeing the primary education sub-sector are constantly educating, preventing, and sanctioning corrupt behaviour and practices among the teaching force (Mabagala et al., 2012; Kabarata, 2023). So far, the enforcement of the professional code of conduct, laws, and regulations, as well as the rebranding of the School Inspectorate Department as the School Quality Assurance Department, are some of the measures put in place to penalise public sector instructors. Various initiatives are being spearheaded by the Teachers' Service Commission (TSC). According to Lawrent (2022) and Kabarata (2023), the TSC is responsible for establishing the code of ethics and disciplinary measures for instructors, as well as handling any ethical problems that may arise.

When asked about their school's policy on reporting instances of unethical behaviour or abuse of public office, the majority of respondents said that their institution took the matter seriously, provided a safe environment for reporting, and encouraged anonymous reporting. But being really honest with their bosses would be too much for them. A number of factors may make employees reluctant to bring up ethical concerns with their supervisors or managers face-to-face, as stated by Kelsall et al., (2005). A lack of effective reporting procedures, a power imbalance between them and their bosses, a culture that does not value open communication or transparency, and a fear of retaliation are all factors that might contribute to these issues. Additional factors mentioned were an absence of safeguards for whistleblowers, an extreme power disparity between them and their superiors, distrust, and a fear of confrontation or emotional pain.

Schools did their best to avoid infractions of ethical standards, and respondents generally believed that the tactics used to combat unethical activity were very successful. All members of the educational community—teachers, students, and support staff—are expected to adhere to a set of principles and behavioural norms outlined in these plans and initiatives. Nonetheless, conflicting

research has shown that a large portion of Tanzania's primary school teaching staff engages in widespread unethical and corrupt behaviours. Sexual relations with students or coworkers, bullying, unfair grading, failing to listen or provide adequate advice, chronic absenteeism, embezzlement of funds, and dishonesty towards authorities are among the unethical behaviours that have been documented (Youze et al., 2014; Betweli, 2020; Matete, 2021; Paschal, 2023).

Instilling strong leadership qualities in school administrators is likely to have far-reaching effects, including better support for teachers' careers, stronger relationships between administrators and teachers, and improved work ethics and accountability (Matete, 2021). If Tanzania is serious about reaching the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 (SDG-2030), it will have to scrimp and save on public sector excellence. Now is the time for the country's top brass to train a new generation of educators by instituting policies that make it easy for educators to stay current in their fields, providing ample opportunities for professional growth, and putting an emphasis on instilling strong moral principles and ethical practices in the next generation of educators.

Conclusion

An effective and long-lasting educational system must inculcate work ethics and personal responsibility. Professional growth, student achievement, and school efficacy are all positively impacted when educators uphold ethical standards and face consequences for their conduct. Similarly, this study lends credence to the argument because school administrators and teachers were highly impressed by the school's response to ethical issues, such as the prevention of unethical behaviour, the availability of clear channels for reporting such concerns, and the handling of cases involving the abuse of public office. Teachers and administrators were hesitant to bring up ethical concerns with their superiors for a number of reasons, including a lack of established protocols and apprehension about potential consequences. In order to alleviate these fears and uncertainties, schools must promote an atmosphere of open communication and work together. Conversely, in order to cultivate a productive learning atmosphere that promotes a culture that regards professionalism, ethical conduct, and responsibility—which in turn leads to better educational results and the general welfare of students—it is crucial to encourage strong work ethics and responsibility among administrators and teachers in Tanzania's public primary schools.

Recommendations

Teachers and administrators may have different perspectives on some problems because of their varied backgrounds and experiences in urban and rural settings, as well as the inherent complexity and subjectivity of these topics. The work ethic and responsibility of school employees may also be affected by specific institutional factors. Prior to delving deeper into this research field, it is important to analyse the local context, cultural aspects, and special obstacles.

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