

# THE INFLUENCE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON WORK ETHICS OF PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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## ABSTRACT

In recent years, concerns have arisen regarding the declining work ethics of teachers which are attributed to insufficient psychological empowerment and professional development opportunities. Addressing these issues is crucial for enhancing the overall effectiveness and dedication of educators. Using descriptive-regression research method, this study aimed to determine the significant influence of psychological empowerment and professional development on the work ethics of teachers among public elementary schools in Malita West District, Division of Davao Occidental. Survey questionnaires were used that were tested using Cronbach Alpha and content validity. Data were collected from 139 public elementary school teachers determined by using Slovin's Formula and were analyzed using Mean, Pearson Product Moment Correlation, and Multiple Regression Analysis. Results from the quantitative analysis revealed that the level of psychological empowerment, professional development, and work ethics of teachers were very high. Also, psychological empowerment and professional development had positive significant relationship with the work ethics of teachers. Further, psychological empowerment and professional development significantly influenced the work ethics of teachers. Based on the findings, the Department of Education may enhance teachers' psychological empowerment through professional growth opportunities, decision-making autonomy, and recognition.

**Keywords:** *Elementary School Teachers, Psychological Empowerment, Professional Development, Quantitative Research, Philippines, Work Ethics*

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Highly empowered, skillful, and competent teachers are factors that would lead to the development of teachers' good work ethics. Teachers who possess higher psychological empowerment and are exposed to professional development tend to have strong belief about their knowledge and skills to perform their job well and consequently showcase good work ethics. However, many schools are confronted with problems related to teachers' lack of professional ethics such as teachers who come to school late, fail to prepare for classes, have inappropriate communication with students and colleagues, and neglect classroom management. Thus, teachers with poor work ethics usually display bad work habits, lack of productivity, lack of urgency to complete tasks, and poor quality of outputs.

Around the globe, it has been found from various studies that revealed issues on work ethics are influenced by psychological empowerment and professional development. According to Apgar (2018), many schools are facing challenges in the United States, including issues such as lack of accountability, low motivation among educators, and ethical dilemmas. Similarly, Guerrero-Dib et al. (2020) revealed similar concerns in many schools in Mexico, highlighting inconsistent standards of professional conduct and communication issues. Thus, it is imperative that programs should be instituted to address concerns on work ethics. In the study conducted by Çelik and Konan (2021) in Canada, they emphasized that empowering teachers has been described as giving teachers responsibility, choice, and autonomy that will not lead them to dishonesty, misconduct and other unethical works. To address bad work ethics, Alhammadi (2018) claimed that teachers in Saudi Arabia must maintain professional development for them to be reminded of their professional responsibilities and teaching roles.

In Asia, the issue on work ethics of teachers has been also an emerging concern in relation to psychological empowerment and professional development. For instance, teachers in China display unethical professional behaviors which affect students' physical and mental health (Wang et al., 2021). Another study highlighted that empowerment plays a significant role in shaping the work ethics of Chinese teachers (Liu et al., 2021). However, this empowerment is often constrained by the dominant norms and expectations within the education system, leading to ethical dilemmas and challenges in professional collaboration (Lijia et al., 2016). Aside from empowerment as factor of work ethics, the study of Sinambela et al. (2020) in Indonesia highlighted the significance of professional development in terms of professional skills and work competence in advancing with work ethics. In fact, Suprpto et al. (2021) stated that the professional work ethics of Indonesian teachers can be improved by investing on their professional development. Government and educational institutions need the allocation of financial resources towards the facilitation of professional development opportunities for teachers.

In the Philippines, many teachers tend to have strong professional ethics which can be attributed to both psychological empowerment and professional development. For example, this claim is supported by the study of Tindowen (2019) when he emphasized that Filipino teachers tend to have strong ethics at work when they feel being empowered as they share institutional decisions, visions, and missions. The research conducted by Ibanez (2022) revealed that there exists a direct and significant relationship between teachers' psychological empowerment and teachers' work ethics. By employing various empowerment tactics and approaches, administrators can foster a culture of innovation in teachers' professional conduct. Furthermore, the research conducted by Songcog and Guhao Jr. (2020) revealed a noteworthy correlation between psychological empowerment and work ethics in the context of private higher education institutions. Also, the study of Asio et al. (2019) revealed that a relationship exists between development of professional skills and the work ethics of teachers. The study further asserted the need to develop a teacher development program enhancing work ethics.

In Malita West District, Division of Davao Occidental, it is always a prime initiative of school administrators to ensure that teachers adhere to professional code of ethics for educators. However, issues like punctuality, late submission of documents, morality, and absenteeism are just few of the problems of teachers in maintaining professional competence and work ethics. In fact, in an article published by Evangelista (2022) in Mindanao News, he wrote about the professional conduct of educators within a specific educational institution in Malita West which revealed that teachers started their work week from Monday afternoon up to Friday morning. Further, in Malita West, the School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) sessions have been conducted to enhance educators' psychological empowerment, professional development, and work ethics. By fostering a collaborative environment, these sessions can facilitate the exchange of best practices, provide opportunities for continuous learning, and promote a sense of community among educators. Integrating activities that encourage self-reflection, goal setting, and discussions on ethical considerations in education can contribute to psychological empowerment and the cultivation

of strong work ethics. Periodic feedback mechanisms within SLAC sessions can further support educators' growth, making them integral forums for holistic professional development within the teachers' educational community.

Given the above foregoing issues, it is important to keep teachers' work ethics since they are expected to act as role models to their students. They should possess ethical, moral, and professional skills in relation to their practice (Park & Hill, 2021; Sudirman et al., 2020; Turk, & Vignjevic, 2016; Sherpa, 2018). Relative to this, the researcher reviewed various literatures, showing the variables which influence work ethics. These variables include psychological empowerment and professional development. It was demonstrated that the utility of psychological empowerment as an integrative and active-oriented motivational mechanism is linked to ethical aspects and performance of any organizational members (Dust et al., 2018; Maynard et al., 2012). In addition, professional development and work ethics go together in an organization (Brownlee, 2020; Harris, 2021).

However, there remains a significant gap in empirical research concerning the specific influence of psychological empowerment and professional development on the work ethics of teachers in the Malita West District. Existing studies primarily focus on bivariate relationships between these variables, without delving into their combined impact in educational settings. Moreover, the literature predominantly draws from diverse organizational contexts, leaving a knowledge gap regarding their application within the unique environment of Philippine public elementary schools, particularly in Malita West District, Division of Davao Occidental. Furthermore, there is a population gap as most studies have not specifically targeted teachers in this district, thus necessitating research that directly addresses the dynamics and influences of psychological empowerment and professional development on teacher work ethics within this specific geographical and administrative context. Moreover, this research has the potential to yield advantages for educators and school administrators by facilitating the formulation of strategies aimed at improving teachers' psychological empowerment, professional growth, and ethical conduct.

This study was anchored on the three theories, namely Virtue Ethics Theory of Brown (2009), Psychological Empowerment Theory of Spreitzer (1995), and Social Learning Theory of Bandura and Walters (1977).

The Virtue Ethics Theory of Brown (2009) provides a valuable framework for understanding and cultivating ethical behavior. Virtue ethics, rooted in the works of Aristotle, focuses on the development of virtuous character traits rather than adhering to a set of rules or consequential outcomes. In the context of elementary school teachers, virtue ethics emphasizes the importance of cultivating virtues such as honesty, integrity, compassion, and fairness. Teachers, through reflective practices and collaborative efforts within the professional development sessions, can deliberate on ethical dilemmas and aspire to embody virtuous traits in their interactions with students, colleagues, and the broader educational community. This theory encourages teachers to internalize ethical values, contributing to a positive school culture and the holistic development of educators who exemplify moral excellence in their professional roles. The integration of virtue ethics within the broader study can offer valuable insights into the ethical dimensions of the psychological empowerment and work ethics of elementary school teachers.

Moreover, the Psychological Empowerment Theory of Spreitzer (1995) posits that teachers' psychological empowerment is reflected in their perception of the meaningfulness of their work, confidence in their abilities, autonomy in decision-making, and belief in the impact they have on their students and the learning environment. This uncovers the nuanced ways in which psychological empowerment influences the work ethics of public elementary school teachers, shedding light on the factors that contribute to a positive and empowered teaching experience.

Further, Social Learning Theory of Bandura and Walters (1977) emphasizes the importance of observational learning, imitation, and modeling in the process of human development and behavior. According to this theory, individuals learn by observing others and imitating behaviors that they find rewarding or socially acceptable. The theory posits that learning is not only a result of direct experiences (rewards and punishments) but also through indirect experiences by observing and modeling the behaviors of others. Bandura introduced the concept of reciprocal determinism, highlighting the dynamic interplay between individuals, their behaviors, and the environment. In this study, Social Learning Theory could involve examining how teachers observe and model behaviors related to psychological empowerment, professional development, and work ethics within the school environment. It considers the influence of colleagues, administrators, and the overall school culture on shaping teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and practices, thereby contributing to their psychological empowerment and professional conduct.

## **Statement of the Problem**

This study aimed to determine the significant influence of psychological empowerment and professional development on the work ethics of teachers among public elementary schools in Malita West District, Division of Davao Occidental. This study was specifically guided with the following questions:

1. What is the level of psychological empowerment of teachers in terms of:
  - 1.1 Competence;
  - 1.2 Positive identity;
  - 1.3 Insight;
  - 1.4 Social work relationship; and
  - 1.5 Group orientation?
2. What is the level of professional development of teachers in terms of:
  - 2.1 Organizational support;
  - 2.2 Mentorship; and
  - 2.3 Sense of accomplishments?
3. What is the level of work ethics of teachers in terms of:
  - 3.1 Self-reliance;
  - 3.2 Morality/ethics;
  - 3.3 Leisure;
  - 3.4 Hard work;
  - 3.5 Centrality of work;
  - 3.6 Wasted time; and
  - 3.7 Delay of gratification?
4. Is there a significant relationship between:
  - 4.1 Psychological empowerment and work ethics of teachers; and
  - 4.2 Professional development and work ethics of teachers?
5. Can psychological empowerment and professional development influence work ethics of teachers?

## **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 alpha level of significance:

Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between psychological empowerment and work ethics of teachers, and professional development and work ethics of teachers.

Ho<sub>2</sub>: Psychological empowerment and professional development cannot influence work ethics of teachers.

## **Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study would hold significant implications for various stakeholders in the education sector. For Department of Education officials, the results would serve as a basis for formulating additional programs aimed at enhancing the psychological empowerment and professional development of teachers, which would, in turn, improve their work ethics in schools. These officials would be encouraged to initiate in-service programs that support teachers' professional growth, particularly for those who are new to the field. Collaboration between school heads and teachers would also be vital in establishing a work culture characterized by high competence, positive identity, insight, social relationships, and group orientation. By doing so, teachers would be more ethical and productive in their professional roles. Moreover, the study's findings would serve as a guide and measure for enhancing these three key aspects within school organizations.

For school principals and heads, the results would emphasize the importance of establishing effective intervention and enhancement programs that would encourage teachers to strengthen their psychological empowerment, professional development, and work ethics. School leaders would be in a position to provide necessary support and provisions, particularly in competency appraisal and continuous professional development. Through these efforts, they would help create a working environment that promotes ethical and moral behavior among educators.

Teachers themselves would benefit from the study by gaining a better understanding of their own levels of psychological empowerment, professional development, and work ethics as public elementary school educators. This awareness would guide them in recognizing the significance of these areas in their daily practice. Consequently, they would be more likely to participate in relevant programs and activities geared toward improving these aspects. Additionally, as future school leaders, teachers would become more aware of their role in fostering psychological empowerment, professional growth, and ethical conduct within their respective institutions.

Lastly, future researchers would find this study a valuable springboard for conducting further investigations into the psychological empowerment, professional development, and work ethics of teachers. They would also have the opportunity to replicate the study in other educational contexts to determine whether the findings would hold true across different settings.

### ***Scope and Limitations***

The study started from the moment the researcher gathered the data up to the moment of sharing back the findings of the study to the respondents. In this study, it focused only to the two independent variables namely psychological empowerment and professional development assumed to have an influence towards work ethics. Specifically, psychological empowerment was measured by competence, positive identity, insight, social work relationships, and group orientation, while professional development was assessed through organizational support, mentorship, and sense of accomplishment. Work ethics was operationalized using indicators such as self-reliance, morality/ethics, leisure, hard work, centrality of work, wasted time, and delay of gratification. There are other predictors that influence work ethics but in the context of the study these were not included. The study was conducted in Malita West District, Division of Davao Occidental. Elementary teachers from Malita West District were included while secondary teachers were excluded. In terms of the statistical tools, it was limited to multiple linear regression analysis. The study's reliance on multiple linear regression analysis as the sole statistical tool limits its ability to capture non-linear relationships and interactions among variables influencing work ethics. This approach may constrain the depth of understanding regarding the impacts of psychological empowerment and professional development on teacher work ethics in the Malita West District.

## **2.0 METHODS**

### ***Research Design***

This research study used quantitative design employing descriptive-regression research method. According to Fathoni et al. (2016), descriptive research design is a scientific method that involves observing and describing the characteristics of a phenomenon or group without manipulating variables. This type of research aims to provide a detailed account of the subject under study and is often used to answer questions related to who, what, when, where, and how. Descriptive research helps researchers gain a better understanding of the existing state of affairs, relationships between variables, and patterns of behavior. In addition, regression research refers to a type of statistical analysis used in research to examine the relationship between one dependent variable and one or more independent variables. The primary goal of regression analysis is to model and understand the relationship between variables, predict the value of the dependent variable based on the values of independent variables, and assess the statistical significance of the observed relationships (Sarstedt, Mooi, Sarstedt, & Mooi, 2019). Also, this study applied correlational technique, a non-experimental design, where the researcher examines the relationship between two or more variables in a natural setting without manipulation or control. In correlational studies, the researchers examine the strength of associations between variables by looking how change in one variable was correlated with change in the other variable (Cresswell, 2013). Thus, the descriptive-regression research design was suitable in the present study since it aimed to test the significant relationship and the influence of psychological empowerment and professional development to the work ethics among teachers in public elementary schools.

### ***Respondents***

The respondents of this study were the 139 public elementary school teachers in Malita West District, Division of Davao Occidental for school year 2023-2024. The sample size of 139 was determined by using Slovin's Formula. In the selection of the respondents of the study, inclusion and exclusion criteria were considered. The teacher respondents were regular teachers among public elementary schools in Malita West District, Division of Davao Occidental whose plantilla numbers were in the Department of Education.



For the exclusion criteria, elementary teachers from Malita West District were included while secondary teachers were excluded. Teachers outside Malita West District were excluded because the researcher has limited resources including time. Non-teaching and school heads were not included since the study focused on teachers teaching in the classrooms. Only those teachers who focus on classroom teaching and have at least five (5) years of teaching experience were included. Those teachers who only have four (4) years of experience and less were excluded because of their limited working experience.

### ***Sampling Technique***

The 139 respondents in this study were chosen using Simple Random Sampling technique. Simple random sampling was considered appropriate to use in this study because the intention of the researcher was to give every possible or qualified study respondent a fair and equal chance of joining the study, thus, removing bias in selecting the respondents (Saunders et al., 2012). This was done by writing each name of public elementary school teachers in a piece of paper, placed the pieces of paper in the box and drew one name after the other until the required number is met.

### ***Measures***

The study utilized three standardized questionnaires to assess psychological empowerment, professional development, and work ethics among public elementary school teachers. The instrument for psychological empowerment, adapted from Van Dop et al. (2016), included 25 items categorized into five indicators: competence, positive identity, insight, social work relationship, and group orientation. The professional development questionnaire, based on the works of Hirschi et al. (2018) and Chong and Thi (2020), consisted of 32 items covering organizational support, mentorship, and sense of accomplishment. Lastly, the work ethics questionnaire, adapted from Miller et al. (2002), comprised 65 items measuring self-reliance, morality/ethics, leisure, hard work, centrality of work, wasted time, and delay of gratification.

In evaluating the psychological empowerment of teachers, five descriptive categories were employed based on the computed mean scores. A mean score ranging from 4.20 to 5.00 was interpreted as Very High, indicating that psychological empowerment in all five dimensions was always manifested. A mean score between 3.40 and 4.19 was classified as High, suggesting it was oftentimes manifested. Scores from 2.60 to 3.39 indicated a Moderate level, meaning it was sometimes manifested. Scores from 1.80 to 2.59 were described as Low, representing very seldom manifestation, while scores from 1.00 to 1.79 were interpreted as Very Low, indicating that psychological empowerment was not manifested at all.

Similarly, the interpretation of professional development of teachers also followed the five-category scheme. A Very High mean indicated that professional development was always practiced, while High suggested it was oftentimes practiced. A Moderate mean reflected occasional practice, Low indicated rare practice, and Very Low suggested that professional development activities were not practiced at all.

Lastly, for work ethics, a Very High mean score denoted that work ethics were consistently manifested, while High indicated frequent manifestation. A Moderate score showed occasional presence of ethical behavior. Low scores implied such traits were rarely demonstrated, and Very Low scores indicated they were not demonstrated at all.

The first draft of the research instrument was submitted to the research adviser for comments, suggestions, and recommendations to improve its presentation with the corrections to be included and integrated. The final copies were submitted to a panel of three experts for refinement. The final revision was made by incorporating the corrections, comments and suggestions given by the expert validators before the gathering of data. Further, before the administration of the research instrument, a pilot testing was done to selected teachers who were not the respondents of the study. The survey questionnaire for the pilot test was subjected to the reliability testing using Internal Consistency Method. This was the most appropriate method to use since the test contains dichotomously scored items which the examinee either passes or fails in an item. The computed reliability of the instrument was  $> 0.70$  using Cronbach alpha (Mohamad et al., 2015).

### ***Data Gathering Procedure***

The following steps were undertaken by the researcher in the conduct of the study. First, a permission letter for the conduct of the study was sent to the Dean of the Graduate School of Cor Jesu College, Inc. Additionally, the researcher underwent an evaluation conducted by the members of the Review Ethics Committee (REC). After the review process, the study was approved by the CJC-REC.

Then, a letter of permission was sent to the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS) for approval. Similarly, permission letters were sent to the District Supervisor and all the school heads included in the research for their approval. Upon the approval of the SDS, District Supervisor, and school heads, the researcher personally collected the data through surveys.

During the administration of the survey questionnaire, the researcher ensured that the work and classes of teachers were not interrupted. Furthermore, the researcher personally addressed possible questions and clarifications raised by the respondents. To uphold ethical standards, the researcher reviewed the appropriateness of identified recruiting parties and conducted a risk assessment, including measures to mitigate psychological risks. Any discomfort experienced by respondents during the survey was managed by the recruiting parties, particularly the researcher, who had prepared a referral agency for psychological support. After the respondents had fully completed the questionnaires, the researcher retrieved all the administered instruments.

Consequently, after the survey, a Certificate of Appearance was secured from the concerned School Head to confirm that the researcher honestly collected the data from the research respondents. Following the successful retrieval of the questionnaires, the data were collated and tabulated. Appropriate statistical tools were then employed to derive the necessary data for interpretation and further analysis.

Finally, the results of this study were disseminated through various channels, including academic conferences, peer-reviewed journal, and professional networks within the field.

### ***Analysis and Interpretation***

The following statistical tools were used in analyzing the data and testing the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance: Mean was utilized to determine the level of psychological empowerment, professional development, and work ethics of teachers among public elementary schools. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was employed to determine the significant relationship between psychological empowerment and work ethics of teachers, as well as between professional development and work ethics of teachers. Lastly, Multiple Linear Regression Analysis was used to determine the combined influence of psychological empowerment and professional development on the work ethics of teachers.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

Anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent were strictly upheld in the conduct of this research. Anonymity refers to the protection of participants' identities so that their personal information cannot be traced back to them, ensuring they remain unidentifiable in any part of the study (Saunders et al., 2025). In this research, the anonymity of public elementary school teachers was maintained by using numerical codes instead of names in all data records, transcripts, and reports, and by avoiding any mention of identifying information such as school names or positions. Meanwhile, confidentiality involves safeguarding all data provided by participants so that only the researcher and authorized personnel can access the information (Wiles et al., 2008). This was observed by securely storing all data in password-protected files and ensuring that the responses were used solely for academic purposes, without being shared with school administrators or third parties. Lastly, informed consent, which refers to ensuring participants are fully aware of the nature, purpose, procedures, and potential risks of the study before agreeing to participate (Creswell & Poth, 2018), was obtained through a clear and comprehensive consent form. Participants were given sufficient time to review the form, ask questions, and voluntarily sign it, with the assurance that they could withdraw from the study at any point without consequence.

### 3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Level of Psychological Empowerment of Teachers

The first objective of this study was to determine the level of psychological empowerment of teachers in terms of competence, positive identity, insight, social work relationship, and group orientation. Shown in Table 1 are the data on the level of psychological empowerment of teachers.

Table 1.

*Level of Psychological Empowerment of Teachers*

Indicator	Mean Score	Descriptive Rating	Interpretation
Competence	4.45	Very High	The psychological empowerment of teachers in terms of competence is always manifested.
Positive Identity	4.14	High	The psychological empowerment of teachers in terms of positive identity is oftentimes manifested.
Insight	4.49	Very High	The psychological empowerment of teachers in terms of insight is always manifested.
Social Work Relationship	4.36	Very High	The psychological empowerment of teachers in terms of social work relationship is always manifested.
Group Orientation	4.45	Very High	The psychological empowerment of teachers in terms of group orientation is always manifested.
Overall	4.38	Very High	The psychological empowerment of teachers is always manifested in terms of competence, positive identity, insight, social work relationship, and group orientation.

Data show that the level of psychological empowerment of teachers gets an overall mean of 4.38 or very high which means that the psychological empowerment of teachers is always manifested. This further implies that teachers demonstrate confidence in their abilities, maintain a positive self-concept, and exhibit self-awareness, fostering positive relationships and a collaborative approach to teamwork. This affirms the study of Singh and Kaur (2019) stating that in educational setting, highly psychologically empowered teachers are more confident about their abilities to perform their assigned duties effectively, more confident their teaching skills, feel more autonomy or determination to do their work, capable to think and can produce new valuable ideas and believe that their work have more impact on their organizational performance. In addition, it expands the idea of Xiong (2022) indicating that psychologically empowered teachers are more resourceful in dealing with many challenges of the profession. Hence, they are resilient and optimistic about the coming events of their job. As they are mentally powerful, they see the positive sides of their job and feel a sense of belonging and loyalty to teaching.

Among the five indicators of the psychological empowerment of teachers, insight got the highest mean rating of 4.49 or very high. This suggests that teachers feel a strong sense of self-awareness and fulfillment. They recognize their rights, understand their life experiences, find satisfaction in their achievements, and believe in the importance of connections and contribution to others. This aligns with the findings of Kušnere (2021) which emphasize the role of self-awareness in improving teachers' emotional responsiveness. Also, it affirms the statement of Galiakberova et al. (2020) which highlights the need for professional self-awareness among teachers.



Also, this finding is in consonance with avowal of several authors (White & Fry, 2014; Leo et al., 2022) stating that in teaching, higher levels of psychological need fulfillment is important as manifested through positive emotions and quality perceptions about teaching.

On the other hand, the lowest indicator, albeit very high, is the positive identity with a mean rating of 4.14. This indicates that teachers feel optimistic about the future, confident in expressing their true selves, and comfortable sharing their experiences with others. This is similar to the findings of the study of Akhtar and Saleem (2020) which revealed that teachers working in public schools had higher level of optimism.

### **Level of Professional Development of Teachers**

The second objective of this study was to determine the level of professional development of teachers in terms of organizational support, mentorship, and sense of accomplishments. Shown in Table 2 are the data on the level of professional development of teachers.

Table 2.

*Level of Professional Development of Teachers*

Indicator	Mean Score	Descriptive Rating	Interpretation
Organizational Support	4.39	Very High	Professional development of teachers in terms of organizational support is always practiced.
Mentorship	4.40	Very High	Professional development of teachers in terms of mentorship is always practiced.
Sense of Accomplishment	4.35	Very High	Professional development of teachers in terms of sense of accomplishment is always practiced.
Overall	4.38	Very High	Professional development of teachers is always practiced.

Data show that the level of professional development of teachers gets an overall mean of 4.38 or very high which means that the professional development of teachers is always manifested. This result indicates that the professional development of teachers is greatly influenced by the support they receive from their organization, the guidance provided through mentorship programs, and the recognition they feel for their achievements. These elements collectively shape teachers' growth, confidence, and effectiveness in the classroom. This is similar to the findings of the study conducted by Quines and Monteza (2023) in Davao del Sur which revealed very high level of professional development of teachers. Also, it aligns with the idea of Sario and Villocino (2023) which highlights the importance of professional interaction at work, which resonates with the idea that mentorship and organizational support play crucial roles.

Among the three indicators of professional development of teachers, mentorship got the highest mean rating of 4.40 or very high. This indicates that teachers feel strongly supported by school administrators in achieving their academic aspirations, exploring educational opportunities, and performing to the best of their abilities. This suggests that administrators play a crucial role in guiding teachers through realistic appraisals of their skills and encouraging open discussions about their professional goals. This aligns with the idea of Hastuti et al. (2022) which indicates that mentoring by principals is very important because it helps teachers who have difficulty in carrying out

their tasks. The principal needs to do mentoring program to help teachers who are struggling in the managing learning process. Mentoring can improve teachers' competencies in managing the learning process.

Moreover, the findings of the study support the ideas of several authors (Abetang et al., 2020; Ewing, 2021; Pandey & Sharma, 2022) stating that the professional development of teachers is significantly influenced by the support they receive from their organization, the guidance provided through mentorship programs, and the recognition they feel for their achievements. Mentorship, in particular, plays a crucial role in the development of novice teachers, with external mentors being particularly effective due to their ability to overcome time constraints and role ambiguity. The impact of mentorship on teachers' work is evident in the development of confidence, leadership and communication skills, and a sense of value and belonging in the profession.

In the same vein, the indicator sense of accomplishment got the lowest but still very high with a mean rating of 4.35. This suggests that teachers perceive themselves as experts in their profession, possessing profound knowledge, and a high level of expertise and skill. This is reinforced by their commitment to continuously expanding and updating their work-related abilities and knowledge, reflecting a strong sense of professional fulfillment and competence. This is similar to the findings of the study of Forde et al. (2019) which revealed that teachers perceive themselves as experts in their profession.

### Level of Work Ethics of Teachers

The third objective of this study was to determine the level of work ethics of teachers in terms of self-reliance, morality/ethics, leisure, hard work, centrality of work, wasted time, and delay of gratification. Shown in Table 3 are the data on the level of work ethics of teachers.

Table 3.

#### *Level of Work Ethics of Teachers*

Indicator	Mean Score	Descriptive Rating	Interpretation
Self-reliance	4.27	Very High	The work ethics of teachers in terms of self-reliance is always manifested.
Morality/Ethics	4.60	Very High	The work ethics of teachers in terms of morality/ethics is always manifested.
Leisure	4.33	Very High	The work ethics of teachers in terms of hard work is always manifested.
Hard Work	4.50	Very High	The work ethics of teachers in terms of hard work is always manifested.
Centrality of work	4.15	High	The work ethics of teachers in terms of centrality of work is oftentimes manifested.
Wasted Time	4.45	Very High	The work ethics of teachers in terms of wasted time is always manifested.
Delay of Gratification	4.45	Very High	The work ethics of teachers in terms of delay of gratification is always manifested.
Overall	4.39	Very High	The work ethics of teachers is always manifested.

Data show that the level of work ethics of teachers gets an overall mean of 4.39 or very high which means that the work ethics of teachers is always manifested. This means teachers exhibit traits like taking initiative, adhering to ethical standards, putting in considerable effort, and sacrificing immediate rewards for long-term goals. Such a strong work ethic not only reflects the dedication and professionalism of teachers but also implies a positive impact on the learning environment and student outcomes. This is consistent with the perspective of Swan (2016) stating that work ethics is exhibited by the teaching staff as they focus on the importance of work as manifested by their determination to work diligently and productively.

Also, it is in parallel to the findings of Cerne et al. (2017) which revealed that the teaching staff are expected to maximize their working hours, productive in the workplace and exhibit professionalism in all dealings. Further, it is concurred by Cheng et al. (2020) which states that teachers who demonstrate moral uprightness in the workplace are cautious and tactful in all dealings and are accountable and responsible in setting appropriate decorum in the workplace.

Among the seven indicators of work ethics of teachers, morality/ethics got the highest mean rating of 4.60 or very high. This reflects a strong commitment among teachers to upholding principles of responsibility, fairness, and ethical behavior in both personal and professional contexts. This suggests a deeply ingrained belief in doing what is right and just, treating others with respect, and adhering to ethical standards in all aspects of their work. This substantiates the idea of Popovska, Nalevska, and Popovski (2019) stating that the moral and ethical responsibilities of teachers are a central aspect of their profession, with a focus on promoting general moral norms and creating a positive learning environment.

On the other hand, the indicator centrality of work got the lowest mean rating of 4.15, albeit high. This indicates that teachers derive significant contentment, fulfillment, and a sense of accomplishment from their work. They view work as an essential and satisfying part of their lives, feeling uneasy when idle and valuing the importance of continuous engagement in work activities. This is consistent with the research of Crossman and Harris (2018) which showed that teachers generally experience high levels of engagement and contentment in teaching.

### Relationship Between Psychological Empowerment and Work Ethics and Professional Development and Work Ethics of Teachers

One of the aims of this study was to determine if there was a significant relationship between psychological empowerment and work ethics and professional development and work ethics of teachers. In order to provide an answer to the problem, data were gathered and processed using Pearson Product Moment Correlation test. Results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4.

*Relationship Between Psychological Empowerment and Work Ethics and Professional Development and Work Ethics of Teachers.*

Variables	Significance (Probability) Value	Pearson (r) Value	Interpretation	Decision
Psychological Empowerment and Work Ethics	.000	.520	Significant	Reject the null hypothesis
Professional Development and Work Ethics	.000	.520	Significant	Reject the null hypothesis

In terms of the correlation between psychological empowerment and work ethics of teachers, results in Table 4 reveal that the significance (probability) value at 2-tailed is equal to .000 which is computed to be lower than the .05 level of significance set for this study. Notably, the same sig. value of .000 came out with regard to the correlation between professional development and work ethics of teachers. These findings imply that respondents' level of psychological empowerment and level of professional development were found to be significantly correlated with the level of their work ethics.

Interestingly, the results of the Pearson (r) for both sets of variables being studied were found to be the same ( $r=.520$ ) which indicate a moderately high positive degree of relationship. The findings further indicate that the relationship between psychological empowerment and work ethics and professional development and work ethics of teachers tend to move in the same direction. That is, as the respondents' level of psychological empowerment increases, there is a moderately high positive probability that the level of their work ethics would also increase. Comparably, as the respondents' level of professional development increases, there is a moderately high positive probability that the level of their work ethics would also increase. Thus, the findings lead the study to reject the null hypothesis.

The significant relationship between psychological empowerment and work ethics further implies that when teachers feel psychologically empowered, they may be more likely to demonstrate strong work ethics, such as taking ownership of their responsibilities, maintaining high moral standards and persisting in the face of challenges. This confirms the proposition of Liu et al. (2021) stating that empowerment plays a significant role in shaping the work ethics of teachers. In addition, it affirms the statement of Tindowen (2019) which avowed those Filipino teachers tend to have strong ethics at work when they feel being empowered as they share institutional decisions, visions, and missions. Likewise, it proves the finding of the study of Ibanez (2022) which revealed that there exists a direct and significant relationship between teachers' psychological empowerment and teachers' work ethics. By employing various empowerment tactics and approaches, administrators can foster a culture of innovation in teachers' professional conduct. Also, it is in parallel with the study of Songcog and Guhao Jr. (2020) which revealed a noteworthy correlation between psychological empowerment and work ethics in schools.

On the other hand, the significant relationship between professional development and work ethics of teachers further indicates that when teachers participate in professional development opportunities, they may gain a deeper understanding of ethical standards, develop a stronger commitment to their profession, and adopt strategies for maintaining high work standards. This is in line with the findings of Sinambela et al. (2020) which exposed the significance of professional development and work competence in advancing with work ethics. This also supports the idea of Suprpto et al. (2021) stating that professional work ethics of teachers will be improved by investing on their professional development. Similarly, it expands the result of the study of Asio et al. (2019) which revealed that there exists a relationship between development of professional skills and the work ethics of teachers, highlighting the need to develop a teacher development program enhancing work ethics.

### **The Influence of Psychological Empowerment and Professional Development towards Work Ethics**

Data show that when regression equation  $WE$  (Work Ethics) =  $\beta_0 + \beta_1PE$  (Psychological Empowerment) +  $\beta_2PD$  (Professional Development) +  $\epsilon_1$  was tested using Multiple Linear Regression Analysis, results from the ANOVA table show that the sig-value is .000 which is found to be below the .05 level of significance set for this study. This implies that overall, the model is considered to be significant and that the model fits the data.

When looking at the regression coefficient of each of the independent variables, results reveal that both variables were found to be significant predictors of work ethics as indicated by sig values all lower than .05 level of significance set for the study. Psychological empowerment has a sig value of .003 while professional development has a sig value of .004. Thus, the estimated regression model can be mathematically presented as:

$$WE = 2.127 \text{ (constant)} + .287 \text{ (Psychological Empowerment)} + .230 \text{ (Professional Development)} + \epsilon_i$$

The value of the beta coefficient for Psychological Empowerment implies that holding all other variables in the regression constant, its coefficient indicates that for every 1-unit change in the teachers' level of Psychological Empowerment would give a corresponding .287 unit increase in the teachers' level of work ethics. This implies that the higher the teachers' level of psychological empowerment, the higher it would be for the level of their work ethics. The high positive beta coefficient with p-value of .003 for psychological empowerment confirms the empirical findings which claimed that there is a significant relationship between teachers' psychological empowerment and their work ethics. This finding incorporates the propositions of several authors (Ibanez, 2022; Liu et al., 2021; Songcog & Guhao Jr., 2020; Tindowen, 2019), which collectively affirm the crucial link between empowerment and the work ethics of teachers. Additionally, findings from other studies such as those by Bowman et al. (2022) exploring similar themes could further enrich the understanding of how empowerment influences professional conduct among educators.

With regard to professional development, holding all other variables in the regression constant, its beta coefficient indicates that for every 1-unit change in the teachers' level of professional development would give a corresponding 0.230 unit increase in the level of their work ethics. This implies that the higher the teachers' level of professional development, the higher it would be for the level of their work ethics. The high positive beta coefficient with p-value of .004 for professional development confirms the empirical findings which claimed that there is a significant relationship between teachers' professional development and teachers' work ethics. This supports the propositions of some researchers (Asio et al., 2019; Sinambela et al., 2020; Suprpto et al., 2021) which further underscore the importance of professional development in enhancing work ethics among teachers. These studies suggest that investments in professional development programs can lead to improved work ethics among educators.

In its entirety, however, the combined explanatory and predictive power of the two significant independent variables is considered to be moderately low because it could only account about 30.50 percent of the variation in the teachers' level of work ethics. This is manifested in the model summary table which shows that the value of the Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> is .305 which implies that about 30.50 percent of the variations in teachers' level of work ethics can be explained by the two significant variables. The remaining 69.50 percent unexplained variation could be accounted for by other variables not included in the model.

The study's findings underscore the alignment with the theoretical frameworks of virtue ethics, psychological empowerment theory, and social learning theory in explaining the influences on teachers' work ethics. Psychological Empowerment Theory, as posited by Spreitzer (1995), emphasizes teachers' perceptions of meaningful work, confidence in their abilities, and autonomy in decision-making, all of which were found to positively influence work ethics. This supports Spreitzer's theory by demonstrating how these factors contribute to a more ethical approach to teaching, where empowered teachers feel more engaged and committed to ethical conduct.

Additionally, the integration of virtue ethics, inspired by Brown (2009), highlights how teachers embody virtues such as honesty and fairness through reflective practices fostered by professional development initiatives. This suggests that nurturing virtuous character traits through collaborative learning can enhance ethical behavior among teachers, supporting Brown's framework within the context of school environments. Furthermore, the study aligns with Bandura and Walters' (1977) Social Learning Theory by showing how observational learning and modeling behaviors related to psychological empowerment and professional development can shape teachers' ethical beliefs and practices. This reinforces the idea that teachers learn ethical behavior not only through direct experiences but also by observing and imitating positive models in their professional communities. Thus, the study's findings provide empirical support for these theories, illustrating their relevance in understanding and promoting ethical conduct among elementary school teachers.

## Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn from the findings of the study:



1. Teachers exhibit very high levels of psychological empowerment, with competence, insight, social work relationships, and group orientation being the strongest dimensions, while positive identity, although high, was the lowest indicator.
2. Teachers demonstrate very high levels of professional development, strongly supported by organizational resources and mentorship, which contribute to their high sense of accomplishment.
3. Teachers possess very high work ethics, particularly in self-reliance, morality/ethics, hard work, avoidance of wasted time, and delay of gratification, while centrality of work was the lowest dimension.
4. There is a significant positive correlation between psychological empowerment and work ethics, indicating that empowered teachers are more likely to exhibit strong ethical conduct.
5. There is a significant positive correlation between professional development and work ethics, showing that teachers who engage in professional growth tend to demonstrate higher work ethics.
6. Both psychological empowerment and professional development are significant predictors of work ethics, suggesting that fostering these aspects can enhance ethical behavior and strengthen organizational culture.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance the psychological empowerment, professional development, and work ethics of teachers.

1. The Department of Education (DepEd) should formulate additional programs aimed at enhancing the psychological empowerment and professional development of teachers to improve their work ethics in schools.
2. DepEd should initiate in-service programs that specifically support the professional growth of teachers, with particular attention to those who are new to the field.
3. School heads and teachers should collaborate to establish a work culture characterized by high competence, positive identity, insight, social relationships, and group orientation.
4. School principals and heads should establish effective intervention and enhancement programs that encourage teachers to strengthen their psychological empowerment, professional development, and work ethics.
5. School leaders should provide necessary support and provisions, particularly in competency appraisal and continuous professional development.
6. Teachers should actively participate in programs and activities that improve their psychological empowerment, professional development, and work ethics.
7. Teachers, as future school leaders, should be aware of their role in fostering psychological empowerment, professional growth, and ethical conduct within their institutions.
8. Future researchers should conduct further studies on psychological empowerment, professional development, and work ethics of teachers to expand the body of knowledge. Additionally, they should consider replicating this study in other educational contexts to examine whether the findings apply across different settings.

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### **5.0 COMPETING INTERESTS**

The author confirms that there were no known competing interests or personal relationships that could have influenced this research.

## **6.0 AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION**

The researcher is the main author of this study; thus, all of the contents of this research are attributed to her.

## **7.0 CONSENT**

Informed consent/assent forms were provided to all respondents, ensuring that their voluntary participation was prioritized and their rights and confidentiality were safeguarded throughout the research process. Further, a copy of the signed consent is available for review by the Editorial office, Chief Editor, or Editorial Board members of this journal.

## **8.0 ETHICAL APPROVAL**

This research underwent a process of getting ethics clearance from the Research Ethics Committee of Cor Jesu College to make sure that all respondents were not harmed in any aspect.

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