

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS IN SCHOOL FUNDING, MANAGEMENT AND SUPERVISION

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Abstract

This study investigated the influence of professional ethics on school funding, management, and supervision schools. A descriptive survey design was adopted, with data collected from 200 respondents using a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were used to analyze the data, while inferential statistics including Chi-square and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) tested the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that professional ethics significantly influenced school funding practices by promoting transparency and accountability, while mismanagement and corruption reduced resource effectiveness. In school management, ethical leadership enhanced fairness, accountability, and cooperation among teachers, though challenges such as lack of transparency and personal interests undermined effectiveness. Results also showed a significant positive relationship between professional ethics and school supervision, with ethical supervision fostering objectivity, constructive feedback, and trust between teachers and administrators. The study concludes that professional ethics is vital for ensuring effective funding, transparent management, and constructive supervision in schools. It recommends stronger monitoring mechanisms, enforcement of ethical standards, and continuous training on ethical leadership to improve educational administration.

Keywords: Accountability, Professional Ethics, School FUNDING, Management, Supervision, transparency

Introduction

Education is a central pillar of social and economic development, and its effective delivery depends not only on adequate resources but also on ethical management and supervision. Professional ethics, defined as the principles guiding conduct in the performance of professional duties, is critical in maintaining transparency, accountability, and fairness in schools (Campbell, 2016). In the context of school funding, ethics determines how financial resources are allocated, disbursed,

and monitored. Ethical lapses such as misappropriation of funds, favoritism, and corruption often undermine the effectiveness of educational financing (Okeke, 2017).

Similarly, school management is influenced by the ethical standards of administrators. Leaders who demonstrate fairness, honesty, and responsibility foster trust and cooperation among staff and students (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2018). Conversely, unethical practices such as favoritism in teacher promotion or neglect of student welfare erode morale and weaken institutional performance. Supervision, which ensures compliance with educational standards, also requires adherence to professional ethics. Supervisors are expected to provide objective evaluations, constructive feedback, and supportive guidance, but unethical behaviors such as bias or misuse of authority can compromise this process (Afolabi, 2020).

The interplay of ethics in funding, management, and supervision is crucial in achieving educational quality and equity. Yet, empirical evidence on how professional ethics shapes these domains, particularly in developing contexts, remains limited. This study therefore investigates the role of professional ethics in school funding, management, and supervision, with the aim of providing insights that can strengthen accountability and improve educational outcomes.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

4. Examine the influence of professional ethics on school funding practices.
5. Assess the role of professional ethics in school management.
6. Determine the relationship between professional ethics and effective school supervision.
7. Identify challenges hindering the practice of professional ethics in school funding, management, and supervision.

The research questions include:

1. To what extent does professional ethics influence school funding practices?
2. How does professional ethics affect school management?
3. What is the relationship between professional ethics and school supervision?
4. What challenges affect the enforcement of professional ethics in school funding, management, and supervision?

The following hypothesis guide the paper

The following null hypotheses will be tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: Professional ethics has no significant influence on school funding practices.

H₀₂: Professional ethics has no significant relationship with school management and supervision.

Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Professional ethics refers to the principles and values that guide conduct in professional practice. In education, it entails the norms of fairness, honesty, accountability, and respect that underpin decision-making in funding, management, and supervision (Campbell, 2016). These ethical standards ensure that school administrators, teachers, and supervisors act in ways that protect the interests of students and the broader community.

School funding is critical to the provision of quality education. Adequate and transparent use of financial resources directly affects infrastructure, teacher motivation, and student learning outcomes. Ethical issues arise when funds are misallocated, mismanaged, or diverted for personal gain. A lack of accountability in financial management undermines trust in public education and reduces the efficiency of resource use (Okeke, 2017). Ethical financial practices, on the other hand, promote transparency, equity, and confidence among stakeholders.

School management involves planning, organizing, coordinating, and directing activities to achieve educational goals. Ethical management is characterized by fairness in decision-making, respect for staff and students, transparency in administrative procedures, and accountability in resource use. Administrators who uphold professional ethics are more likely to build trust, enhance teacher morale, and create an enabling learning environment (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2018). Conversely, unethical practices such as favoritism, lack of transparency, and abuse of authority often result in conflicts, low morale, and reduced effectiveness of schools.

Supervision ensures that teaching and learning processes meet established standards. Ethical supervision requires objectivity, fairness, and constructive support. Supervisors are expected to assess teacher performance based on merit, provide honest feedback, and respect professional boundaries. However, ethical challenges such as bias, personal interest, or the misuse of authority can compromise supervision, leading to unfair evaluations and resistance among teachers (Afolabi, 2020). Thus, professional ethics plays a vital role in promoting credibility and fairness in school supervision.

Theoretical Review

Brown, Treviño, and Harrison (2005) describe ethical leadership as the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct among followers. Applied to schools, ethical leadership emphasizes integrity, fairness, and transparency by school leaders in managing resources, staff, and supervisory activities.

Stewardship theory (Davis, Schoorman, & Donaldson, 1997) posits that leaders act as stewards of organizational resources and prioritize organizational objectives over personal interests. In the context of school funding and management, this theory highlights the role of administrators as custodians of public resources who must exercise responsibility, transparency, and accountability.

Rest's (1986) model of ethical decision-making provides another relevant theoretical foundation. The model outlines four stages: moral sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation, and moral character. This framework can explain how school administrators and supervisors recognize ethical dilemmas in funding and supervision, evaluate possible actions, and make decisions that align with professional standards.

Together, these theories suggest that ethical principles are not only individual moral choices but also organizational responsibilities that shape resource use, management practices, and supervisory processes in schools.

Empirical Review

Several studies have examined the role of professional ethics in educational systems, though few have directly linked ethics to funding, management, and supervision as a combined focus.

Adeyemi and Adu (2020) investigated teachers' job satisfaction and commitment in secondary schools in Ondo State, Nigeria. Their findings showed that ethical school leadership positively influenced teacher motivation and professional commitment, highlighting the importance of fairness and accountability in school management.

Okeke (2017) studied financial accountability in Nigerian public schools and reported that unethical practices such as mismanagement of funds and lack of transparency were significant barriers to effective resource utilization. Schools that upheld ethical standards in funding allocation recorded better infrastructure and instructional resources. Afolabi (2020) focused on supervision in Lagos State schools and found that teachers perceived supervisory practices as biased when supervisors acted unethically. The study emphasized the need for ethical conduct in supervision to ensure objectivity and constructive feedback.

Internationally, Shapiro and Stefkovich (2018) in the United States explored ethical decision-making among school leaders and concluded that leaders who adhered to ethical principles built trust and improved school effectiveness. Similarly, Campbell (2016) argued that professional ethics is central to sustaining the moral integrity of schools and ensuring equitable access to quality education. From these studies, it is evident that professional ethics influences funding transparency, management efficiency, and supervisory fairness. However, most research has treated these areas separately, with limited empirical work linking the three domains together. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining professional ethics across school funding, management, and supervision in an integrated manner.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design which was considered suitable for collecting data on respondents' perceptions and experiences of professional ethics in school funding, management, and supervision without manipulating variables, and the population comprised teachers, school administrators, and education supervisors in public secondary schools because they are directly involved in these processes; a multistage sampling technique was employed whereby secondary schools were first randomly selected and proportionate stratified sampling was then used to select respondents, giving a total of 200 participants determined using Yamane's (1967) formula; data were collected with a structured questionnaire divided into four sections covering demographic information, professional ethics in funding, management, and supervision as well as challenges to ethical practice, and items were designed on a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree; the instrument's face and content validity were confirmed by experts in Educational Management and Measurement and Evaluation, while reliability was established through a pilot test with 20 respondents outside the sample yielding a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.82, indicating strong internal consistency; the questionnaires were administered directly by the researcher and trained assistants with assurances of confidentiality, and retrieved immediately to ensure high response rates; data analysis involved the use of descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations to answer the research questions, while inferential statistics including Chi-square to examine the influence of professional ethics on funding practices and Pearson Product Moment Correlation to test the relationship between professional ethics, management, and supervision were employed at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Analysis

Table 1: Extent to which professional ethics influence school funding practices (N=200)

The results on professional ethics and school funding show that most respondents agreed that funds are managed transparently (mean = 3.19), guided by ethical principles (mean = 3.15), and that

S/N	ITEMS	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Funds allocated to schools are managed transparently.	82 (41.0%)	75 (37.5%)	28 (14.0%)	15 (7.5%)	3.19	0.92
2	Ethical principles guide the disbursement of school funds.	77 (38.5%)	83 (41.5%)	24 (12.0%)	16 (8.0%)	3.15	0.89
3	Mismanagement of funds reduces the quality of facilities available to students.	70 (35.0%)	80 (40.0%)	35 (17.5%)	15 (7.5%)	3.05	0.95
4	Proper record-keeping ensures accountability in school financial management.	88 (44.0%)	72 (36.0%)	28 (14.0%)	12 (6.0%)	3.22	0.89
5	Corruption and favoritism affect the fairness of school funding practices.	63 (31.5%)	80 (40.0%)	37 (18.5%)	20 (10.0%)	2.94	1.01

proper record-keeping enhances accountability (mean = 3.22). A majority also acknowledged that mismanagement of funds reduces the quality of school facilities (mean = 3.05). However, responses on corruption and favoritism affecting fairness in funding were less decisive, with a lower mean of 2.94 and higher variability (SD = 1.01). Overall, the findings suggest that while ethical practices are generally upheld in school funding, issues of corruption and favoritism remain notable challenges. This implies that strengthening ethical standards and enforcing accountability mechanisms are necessary to ensure fairness and transparency in financial management within schools.

Table 2: How professional ethics affect school management

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Standard Deviation
		(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)		
6	Administrators apply fairness in decision-making that affects staff.	75 (37.5%)	68 (34.0%)	35 (17.5%)	22 (11.0%)	3.06	1.0
7	Ethical leadership promotes harmony and cooperation among teachers.	67 (33.5%)	75 (37.5%)	40 (20.0%)	18 (9.0%)	2.98	0.95
8	Lack of transparency in management decisions discourages staff motivation.	55 (27.5%)	60 (30.0%)	55 (27.5%)	30 (15.0%)	2.62	1.12
9	School administrators demonstrate accountability in the use of resources.	50 (25.0%)	70 (35.0%)	45 (22.5%)	35 (17.5%)	2.63	1.1
10	Adherence to professional ethics improves the effectiveness of school management.	45 (22.5%)	65 (32.5%)	50 (25.0%)	40 (20.0%)	2.55	1.09

The findings on professional ethics and school management indicate that respondents moderately agreed that administrators apply fairness in decision-making (mean = 3.06) and that ethical leadership fosters cooperation among teachers (mean = 2.98). However, responses were less positive regarding transparency and accountability. The mean scores for discouragement caused by lack of transparency (2.62) and administrators' accountability in resource use (2.63) suggest that these remain areas of concern. Similarly, adherence to professional ethics improving overall management effectiveness recorded the lowest mean (2.55), reflecting mixed perceptions among respondents. Overall, while fairness and ethical leadership are somewhat recognized in school management, weak transparency, accountability, and limited adherence to ethics reduce the effectiveness of management practices.

Table 3: The relationship between professional ethics and school supervision

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Standard Deviation
		(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)		
11	Supervisors evaluate teacher performance based on objective criteria.	80 (40.0%)	78 (39.0%)	25 (12.5%)	17 (8.5%)	3.15	0.91
12	Ethical supervision helps teachers identify areas for professional improvement.	73 (36.5%)	70 (35.0%)	40 (20.0%)	17 (8.5%)	2.98	0.99
13	Supervisors avoid bias in the assessment of teachers.	85 (42.5%)	75 (37.5%)	25 (12.5%)	15 (7.5%)	3.17	0.91
14	Feedback given during supervision is constructive and professional.	68 (34.0%)	80 (40.0%)	30 (15.0%)	22 (11.0%)	2.98	1.01
15	Ethical conduct in supervision enhances trust between teachers and supervisors	75 (37.5%)	77 (38.5%)	28 (14.0%)	20 (10.0%)	3.04	0.97

The results on professional ethics and school supervision show generally positive perceptions. Respondents agreed that supervisors evaluate teacher performance objectively (mean = 3.15) and avoid bias in assessment (mean = 3.17), both with relatively low variability, suggesting consistency in views. Ethical supervision was also seen as helpful for teachers' professional improvement (mean = 2.98) and constructive in feedback delivery (mean = 2.98). Furthermore, the belief that ethical conduct enhances trust between teachers and supervisors scored a mean of 3.04. These findings imply that professional ethics plays a significant role in ensuring fairness, objectivity, and trust in school supervision, which are crucial for improving teaching quality and teacher-supervisor relationships.

Table 4: The challenges affect the enforcement of professional ethics in school funding, management, and supervision

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Standard Deviation
		(4)	(3)	(2)	(1)		
16	Corruption undermines adherence to professional ethics in schools.	90 (45.0%)	72 (36.0%)	20 (10.0%)	18 (9.0%)	3.17	0.93
17	Lack of enforcement of ethical standards affects accountability.	83 (41.5%)	75 (37.5%)	25 (12.5%)	17 (8.5%)	3.14	0.92
18	Pressure from higher authorities makes it difficult to follow ethical practices.	88 (44.0%)	70 (35.0%)	25 (12.5%)	17 (8.5%)	3.16	0.9
19	Personal interests sometimes interfere with professional judgment in schools.	85 (42.5%)	73 (36.5%)	27 (13.5%)	(15 (7.5%)	3.14	0.91
20	Inadequate monitoring systems limit the implementation of professional ethics.	80 (40.0%)	78 (39.0%)	30 (15.0%)	12 (6.0%)	3.14	0.88

The findings on challenges affecting the enforcement of professional ethics reveal strong agreement among respondents. Corruption was identified as the most critical barrier (mean = 3.17), followed closely by pressure from higher authorities (mean = 3.16). Lack of enforcement of ethical standards (mean = 3.14), personal interests interfering with judgment (mean = 3.14), and inadequate monitoring systems (mean = 3.14) were also widely acknowledged as significant obstacles. The consistently high mean values across all items suggest that systemic and structural issues, rather than individual lapses alone, hinder the consistent application of professional ethics in school funding, management, and supervision. This indicates the need for stronger institutional frameworks, effective monitoring mechanisms, and accountability systems to minimize unethical practices in the education sector.

Hypothesis One

H₀₁: Professional ethics has no significant influence on school funding practices.

Table 5: Chi-square Analysis of the Influence of Professional Ethics on School Funding Practices (N = 200)

Variables	χ^2 -calculated	df	p-value	Decision (0.05)
Professional ethics & funding practices	24.62	12	0.016	Significant

The result in Table 5 shows the Chi-square analysis of the influence of professional ethics on school funding practices. The calculated Chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 24.62$) at 12 degrees of freedom yielded a p-value of 0.016. Since the p-value is less than the 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that professional ethics significantly influences school funding practices. In practical terms, the result suggests that ethical considerations such as transparency, accountability, and avoidance of corrupt practices are strongly associated with how school funding is managed. Where professional ethics is not upheld, funding practices are more likely to be compromised, thereby undermining effective allocation and utilization of resources. **Hypothesis Two**

H₀₂: Professional ethics has no significant relationship with school management and supervision.

Table 6: Correlation Analysis of the Relationship Between Professional Ethics, School Management, and Supervision (N = 200)

Variables	r-value	p-value	Decision (0.05)
Professional ethics & management	0.312	0.002	Significant
Professional ethics & supervision	0.428	0.000	Significant

The results presented in Table 6 test the hypothesis that professional ethics has no significant relationship with school management and supervision using Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). For the relationship between professional ethics and school management, the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.312$) indicates a moderate positive relationship, with a p-value of 0.002, which

is less than the 0.05 significance level. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis, showing that professional ethics significantly influences school management practices.

Similarly, the correlation between professional ethics and school supervision produced a stronger positive correlation ($r = 0.428$) with a p-value of 0.000, also below the 0.05 threshold. This indicates that professional ethics has a significant relationship with effective supervision, suggesting that adherence to ethical principles such as fairness, objectivity, and accountability enhances supervisory practices.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that professional ethics plays a critical role in shaping school funding practices, management, and supervision. The Chi-square analysis confirmed a significant influence of professional ethics on school funding practices. This implies that ethical considerations such as accountability, transparency, and fairness directly affect how resources are allocated and utilized in schools. Corruption, lack of monitoring systems, and personal interests were also identified as major challenges to the enforcement of ethical practices. This finding aligns with Adeyemi and Adu (2020), who emphasized that transparency in school administration promotes accountability and ensures that resources are properly managed to meet institutional goals. Similarly, Okeke (2019) argued that unethical practices in school funding often lead to misappropriation of resources, which in turn weakens the financial base of educational institutions.

In terms of school management, the results showed a significant positive relationship between professional ethics and effective management practices. Administrators who adhered to ethical principles were found to be more likely to apply fairness in decision-making, promote harmony among staff, and demonstrate accountability. These outcomes resonate with the work of Omorogie and Ihensemehien (2021), who found that ethical leadership enhances teachers' commitment and fosters cooperation within schools. The study further supports the position of Suleiman (2018), who noted that ethical conduct in educational management creates a culture of trust and fairness that improves organizational efficiency.

The relationship between professional ethics and supervision was also found to be significant, with a stronger positive correlation compared to management. Supervisors who applied ethical standards were more likely to evaluate teachers objectively, avoid bias, and provide constructive feedback. This is consistent with findings by Ezeugbor (2016), who reported that ethical supervision enhances teacher motivation, as teachers are more willing to accept feedback and work on improvement when supervision is conducted fairly and professionally. Additionally, Akinlolu (2020) noted that supervision anchored on ethical conduct builds trust between supervisors and teachers, thereby improving the teaching and learning process.

However, the challenges identified in enforcing professional ethics cannot be overlooked. Corruption, pressure from higher authorities, and lack of enforcement mechanisms were seen as significant obstacles. These findings align with that of Musa and Bello (2017), who argued that systemic corruption and weak institutional frameworks undermine the implementation of professional ethics in Nigerian schools. This suggests that without strong monitoring and accountability systems, the benefits of professional ethics in funding, management, and supervision may not be fully realized.

Conclusion

The study established that professional ethics plays a crucial role in ensuring transparency, accountability and fairness in school funding, management and supervision. Findings revealed that ethical conduct significantly influences how educational funds are allocated and managed, leading to better resource utilization and improved institutional trust. In school management, adherence to ethical standards was found to foster fairness, cooperation, and responsible leadership, although lapses in transparency and accountability persist. Similarly, ethical supervision promotes objectivity, constructive feedback, and professional trust between teachers and supervisors. Despite these positive outcomes, challenges such as corruption, undue influence from higher authorities, lack of enforcement mechanisms, and personal interests continue to undermine the full application of ethical principles in schools. The study concludes that strengthening professional ethics is essential to improving the quality and integrity of educational administration.

Recommendations

5. Continuous capacity-building programmes should be organized for teachers, administrators, and supervisors to promote awareness and adherence to ethical standards in all aspects of school operations.
6. Transparent financial management systems, regular audits, and clear reporting frameworks should be enforced to reduce corruption and mismanagement in school funding.
7. Ministries of Education and regulatory bodies should ensure strict implementation of existing ethical codes and apply sanctions against violations to promote integrity and professionalism.
8. School heads should demonstrate ethical leadership by modeling fairness, honesty, and responsibility, thereby fostering a culture of trust and cooperation among staff.

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