

A Mixed-Method Study on the Work Ethics of Pre-School Teachers in Public Schools: Insights from Digos City Division

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Abstract. The study's main objective is to assess the work ethics of preschool teachers in public schools in Digos City Division. This utilized the mixed method design, Phase 1 as Quantitative segment involved preschool teachers in the public schools in Digos City Division, while Phase 2 as Qualitative segment, performed in-depth interviews. The self-made questionnaire underwent pilot testing on 20 sample random respondents to test its reliability. The questionnaires were personally delivered to the respondents after passing the reliability test. Based on the data collected, the demographic profile of preschool teachers, in terms of age, mostly are within the 26 to 30-year age group; in terms of gender, females are dominant; in terms of length of service, most are within the 10 to 13-year service. In terms of educational attainment, I mainly obtained MA Units. Moreover, the level of work ethics of preschool teachers in the public schools in Digos City obtained a very high descriptive rating. Further, data showed no relationship between age, length of service, and work ethic. However, there is a strong association between gender, educational attainment, and work ethic. In the qualitative phase, the essential themes drawn from the transcripts on preschool teachers' perception of work ethics were: high degree of professionalism, inclusivity and equality, respect for diversity, and honesty and fairness. As a learning insight, the researcher concurs with the importance of work ethics and upholding high ethical standards in teaching.

Keywords: Work ethics; Teaching profession; Teaching ethics; Pre-school teachers.

1.0 Introduction

Global issues related to preschool teachers' work ethics comprise a wide range of challenges that can affect the quality of early childhood education worldwide. One prevalent problem is the lack of commitment and dedication to the job, leading to inconsistent teaching practices and methodologies. Additionally, undesirable habits, including tardiness, absences, cyberloafing, and misunderstanding among parents and guardians, are noted. Failure of preschool teachers to practice ethical standards may adversely affect preschool learners and lead to conflicts among varied stakeholders. Conversely, the UNICEF elaborated on the vital importance of early childhood care and development and emphasized the preschool teachers' adherence to ethical standards as their actions, behavior, and attitude significantly influence young children's motivation (Paschal, 2023). Further, several studies concurred on the importance of preschool teachers' positive work ethics as this fosters improved cognitive, affective, and psycho-social skills among young children (Henderson et al., 2022; Hosseini et al., 2022; Mead, 2015). Furthermore, according to Chowdhury (2018), when teachers neglect ethical practices, it can lead to

a lack of trust and respect in the classroom environment, hindering the establishment of a safe and nurturing space for young children to learn and grow. Hence, preschool teachers must prioritize ethical conduct to ensure a positive and conducive learning environment that supports the holistic development of young learners.

In the Philippines, Republic Act No. 7836, the Philippine Teachers Professionalization Act of 1994, accentuates the importance of teachers practicing ethical standards inside and outside the classroom. Moreover, Section 8 of the said Act calls explicitly for all educators in the Philippines to uphold high standards of professionalism, commitment to learners, respect for diversity, and integrity and honesty. It highlights the responsibility of teachers to demonstrate exemplary behavior and foster a positive learning environment. By adhering to these ethical principles, teachers contribute to the overall quality of education and the well-being of their students.

In a study conducted by Almagro and Flores (2023) entitled “Teacher’s Work Values in Public Schools: The Influence of Web-Based Professional Development on Self-Efficacy and Resilience in Davao Region”, the study highlights the importance of work values as this has a significant impact on teachers' self-efficacy and resilience. Similarly, this study endeavors to discover the work ethics of Preschool Teachers in the public schools in Digos City Division; the findings may serve as valuable information among DepEd Officials and can be a database source for Preschool Teachers’ Professional Development.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study used a mixed-methods research design, utilizing quantitative and qualitative tools to gather the desired data. In the quantitative segment, a survey questionnaire was used to gather the data needed in the study. In contrast, for the qualitative component of the study, a semi-structured questionnaire served as a guide in the interview. Moreover, the Narrative Analysis (Polkinghorne, 2018) was used in Phase 2 of this study. This flexible and inductive framework allowed the researcher to generate codes and themes from the available data transparently and credibly.

2.2 Research Participants

The respondents of this study were all the seventy-seven (77) public preschool teachers from the thirty-six (36) public elementary schools in the entire Digos City Division, the school year 2024-2025. There were 12 teachers purposively selected for the qualitative study. Hence, three preschool teachers from each district in Digos Oriental District, Digos Occidental, Digos South, and Mt. Apo District of Digos City Division were chosen. The FDG comprises four teachers and one preschool coordinator from each district.

2.3 Research Instrument

The instrument used in this study was adapted from “Development and Validation of Preschool Teachers' Caring Behavior Questionnaire” by Han et al. (2021). This research instrument was modified to fit into the context of the study respondents. It underwent content validation from a panel of experts comprising three members who checked the items for good internal consistency reliability. The self-made questionnaire underwent Pre-Test Reliability by administering pilot testing to a small sample of random respondents to test its reliability before full deployment.

For the qualitative part of the study, the researcher developed an interview guide to gather the preschool teachers’ perceptions on work ethics. This was subjected to content validation from the panel of experts, particularly those from the Institute of Graduate Education of Davao del Sur State College faculty members. A semi-structured questionnaire was used in the Semi-Structured Interview, which served as a tool to explore the following question: How does the public preschool teacher perceive work ethics?

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

The following steps were undertaken to gather the pertinent data for the study. First, a letter of permission was sent to the Schools Division Superintendent to conduct and gather primary data for the study. Upon approval, letters of permission were also sent to the school heads of the elementary schools in the four districts of Digos City Division. Second, validation of Research Instruments. The data gathering tools, the survey for work ethics, and the interview guide were subjected to validation from the panel of experts in the field. Third, ethical considerations were applied before primary data gathering. Preschool teachers who became the respondents

and participants of the study were informed, their consent was sought, and conditions like confidentiality and anonymity were ensured. Lastly, for the data gathering, the researcher conducted the quantitative, face-to-face survey. The researcher conducted the key informant interviews personally.

2.5 Data Analysis

The numerical data underwent the following statistical tools: (1) the mean and the standard deviation were used to analyze Sub-problems 1 and 2; (2) Pearson r was used to determine the degree of relationship between the demographic profile, in terms of age and length of service of preschool teachers, and their level of work ethics and (3) Chi-square was used to determine the degree of association between the demographic profile, in terms of gender and educational attainment of preschool teachers, and their level of work ethics.

Phase 2 - Qualitative Segment

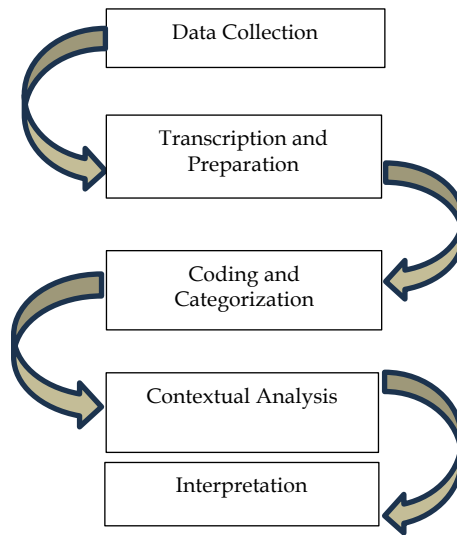


Figure 1. Narrative Data Analysis

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were given prime focus in this study. This means that the researcher's utmost concern is the well-being of the individual research participants. This paper tediously underwent an informed consent process for the researcher to evaluate the practical measures and ensure that the rights and safety of the participants are well-protected. Complete voluntary participation was ensured, and the respondents and participants of the study were made anonymous to protect their privacy. Each participant was given an individual code to ensure anonymity. In adherence to the Data Privacy Act of 2012, the researcher ensured that the study participants were unidentifiable to avoid unauthorized processing of their private or identifiable information. The records of this study were treated with utmost confidentiality as far as permitted by law. Any identifiable information from this study remained confidential to protect the participants' rights or welfare. Finally, to protect the study participants' rights, all the information gathered from this study was kept private and confidential. Informed consent was secured from all the participants involved in the study. The researcher conducted a detailed and comprehensive explanation regarding the purpose of the study to the participants. The researcher ensured that the condition of the consent was purely voluntary. In complying with his ethical policy, the researcher made sure of the appropriateness of identified recruiting parties and reviewed the level of risks and measures to mitigate risks that included physical, psychological, and socio-economic. The school heads assisted the researcher in meeting the number of participants in the study. To avoid plagiarism, the researcher used Turnitin software to ensure that there was no trace/evidence of misrepresentation of someone else's work as her own. The researcher ensured that the correct and accurate way of citing ideas from other writers and scholars was fully observed. The researcher paraphrased or quoted the sources, credited the original author in an in-text citation and reference list, and used a plagiarism checker to avoid plagiarism. The researcher ensured that no conflict of interest existed during the study process.

Moreover, it ensured that no set of conditions existed in which a professional judgment concerning primary interest, such as the participants' welfare or the validity of the research, was influenced by a secondary interest, such as financial or academic gains or recognition. Proper protocols were observed so as not to include an element of deceit that can mislead the participants' way of thinking, which may result in potential harm to them. The researcher, together with the help and guidance of the research adviser, collaborated to adequately contribute to the conception, design, or acquisition of data, analysis, and interpretation. The researcher and adviser's combined efforts were undertaken to be able to tediously draft the manuscript and revise it critically for important intellectual content. Together, the shared efforts of the mentor and mentee of the study are hoped to lead to the publication of the research.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Profile of Preschool Teachers

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of preschool teachers. Regarding Age, several respondents fall within the age categories of 26-30 (23.4%) and 31-35 and 36-40 (20.8%). Few of the respondents in the study are reported to be in the age range of 21-25 (2.6%), 56 and above (3.9%), and 51-55 (5.2%). In terms of gender, the preschool teachers are predominantly female (98.7%). Further, regarding length of service, most respondents are within the range of 10-13 years (32.5%). Few respondents were in the range of 1-3 years (10.4%). The Pre-school curriculum was implemented through the K to 12 Program stipulated in RA 10533, 2012. Hence, the highest length of service among the preschool teachers is 13 years in educational attainment, with the most obtained MA Units (48.1%). Few obtained the Complete Academic Requirement (CAR) in the Master's Degree (3.9%). In congruence with the study of (Yurttas & Turker, 2022) entitled Opinions of the Teachers of Pre-School Education on Ethics, published in the International Journal of Psychology and Educational Studies, it indicated that the socio-demographic profile of preschool teachers can significantly influence their work ethics. Various factors such as age, gender, educational background, and years of experience can shape their attitudes and work ethics in the workplace.

Table 1. Profile of Preschool Teachers in Public Schools of Digos City Division (SY 2024-2025)

Profile	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Age Category			
21 to 25 yrs	2	2.60%	20.80 %
26 to 30 yrs	18	23.40 %	41.60 %
31 to 35 yrs	16	20.80 %	64.90 %
36 to 40 yrs	16	20.80 %	75.30 %
41 to 45 yrs	8	10.40 %	88.30 %
46 to 50 yrs	10	13.00 %	90.90 %
51 to 55 yrs	4	5.20 %	96.10 %
56 yrs and above	3	3.90 %	100.0 %
Gender Category			
Female	76	98.70 %	98.70 %
Male	1	1.30 %	100.0 %
Length of Service Category			
1 to 3 years	8	10.40%	10.40%
4 to 6 years	21	27.20%	37.60%
7 to 9 years	23	29.90%	67.50%
10 to 13 years	25	32.50%	100%
Educational Attainment			
Baccalaureate	24	31.20%	31.20%
MA Units	37	48.10%	79.30%
MA-CAR	3	3.90%	83.20%
MA Graduate	13	16.80%	100%

3.2 Work Ethics of Preschool Teachers

Figure 2 highlights the work ethics of preschool teachers in the public schools in Digos City, showcasing a grand overall mean rating of 4.74 and a standard deviation of 0.387. Further, the numerical data shows that in terms of professionalism, an overall mean rating of 4.68 was obtained, with a standard deviation of 0.460, which is described as very high. Regarding commitment, an overall mean rating of 4.78 was obtained with a standard deviation of 0.358, which is described as very high. Regarding respect for diversity, an overall mean rating of 4.72 was obtained with a standard deviation of 0.401, which is described as very high. Regarding integrity and

honesty, an overall mean rating of 4.79 was obtained with a standard deviation of 0.330, which is described as very high.



Figure 2. *Work Ethics of Preschool Teachers in Different Areas*

The findings of this study on the level of work ethics of preschool teachers in the public schools in Digos City indicated that integrity and honesty obtained the highest mean rating, followed by commitment, third was respect for diversity, and last was professionalism. However, all the parameters have a descriptive rating of very high, which means that the work ethics of preschool teachers are outstanding. This result has a semblance to the study of (Arda Tuncdemir et al., 2022) entitled “Effects of Philosophical Ethics in Early Childhood on Preschool Children's Social-Emotional Competence and Theory of Mind,” which investigated the impact of ethics education on preschool children's social-emotional skills. Both studies highlight the importance of teachers' ethical practices and their broader implications for preschool students' welfare and development. Preschool teachers with strong work ethics were likely more dedicated and effective, leading to better educational outcomes for young preschoolers.

Table 2 featured the breakdown of work ethics of Preschool teachers specifically on Professionalism. As shown in the data, ranked first, was engaged in teamwork in the school organization and voluntarily offered support and assistance to group undertakings, with a mean rating of 4.79; second, is valued the importance of attendance and participation in all school programs, with a mean rating of 4.75; ranked third, observed proper decorum as shown in the manner they dress up and behave in the classroom, with a mean rating of 4.71. The overall descriptive rating was very high. Hence, the preschool teachers' work ethic and professionalism are outstanding and always manifested. The data is in congruence to the mandate of the Philippines Teachers Professionalization Act of 1994, cited by (Malm, 2020) that as professionals, teachers are expected to ingrain the professional qualities, model positive behavior, act in proper decorum, show competence, and engage in teamwork in the school organization by providing high-quality care and education for young children.

Table 2. *Level of Work Ethics of Preschool Teachers in terms of Professionalism*

Indicators	Mean	SD
Professionalism		
1. I am always on time in attending conferences, scheduled classes and meetings.	4.65	0.64
2. I value the importance of attendance and participation in all school programs, school activities and seminars.	4.75	0.54
3. I practice proper decorum and is shown in the manner I dress up and behave in the classroom and among other stakeholders.	4.71	0.53
4. I observe tact and diplomacy and I demonstrate it regularly in the way I communicate with others.	4.57	0.65
5. I practice ethical decision making and take actions that align with the ethical standards and values of the teaching profession.	4.60	0.59
6. I engage in teamwork in the school organization and I voluntarily offer support and assistance to group undertakings.	4.79	0.46
Overall Mean	4.68	0.46

Table 3 details the work ethics of preschool teachers in terms of Commitment to Learners. An overall mean rating of 4.78 was obtained with a standard deviation of 0.358, which is very high. Ranked first, was demonstrated high degree dedication and continually encouraged positive behavior, with a mean rating of 4.82; second, was model good behavior and inculcated the value of respect, with a mean rating of 4.81; and third, recognized accountability over the preschool children's behavior, with a mean rating of 4.78. The overall descriptive rating was very high, which implied that preschool teachers' level of work ethic in terms of commitment was outstanding and always manifested. The data on the work ethics of preschool teachers, specifically on Commitment to learners, aligned with the viewpoint of (Paschal, 2020), who elaborated that the commitment of teachers is essential in promoting a genuine caring and nurturing relationship with each preschool learner. This means understanding the individual child's interest and personality and creating a safe and welcoming space where preschoolers feel valued and respected. Moreover, highly committed teachers consistently demonstrate a high degree of dedication and continually encourage positive behavior among young children.

Table 3. *Level of Work Ethics of Preschool Teachers in terms of Commitment*

Indicators	Mean	SD
1. I recognize accountability over my preschool children's behavior, hence, model appropriateness in the way I speak, act and do.	4.78	0.47
2. I value the importance of preparing and delivering engaging age-appropriate lessons to meet the needs of my preschool learners.	4.73	0.50
3. I demonstrate empathy among the young children in my care, and endeavor to provide utmost attention to each one of them.	4.79	0.43
4. I exercise fairness in all dealings and I actively reinforce positive behavior and social skills among my preschoolers regardless of their socio-demographic profile.	4.77	0.45
5. I demonstrate high degree dedication by continually encouraging positive behavior and providing rewards and incentives to deserving preschoolers.	4.82	0.45
6. I model good behavior and I am committed to inculcate the value of respect, courtesy, kindness, and empathy among each of my preschoolers.	4.81	0.43
Overall Mean	4.78	0.35

Table 4 shows the work ethics of preschool teachers regarding Respect for diversity. An overall mean rating of 4.72 was obtained with a standard deviation of 0.401, which was described as very high. Ranked first, established rapport with young learners, demonstrated empathy, and created a safe and inclusive classroom environment; second, utilized developmentally appropriate instructional materials and employed differentiated instruction to meet individual needs; and ensured equal treatment of diverse learners in support of each child's interest and preferences. The overall descriptive rating was very high, further described as the preschool teachers' level of work ethics in Respect for Diversity, which was outstanding and always manifested. The finding was in congruence with the perspective of Adnan et al. (2022), who interpolated that respect for diversity of learners is a fundamental indicator of a strong work ethic. The teacher strengthened the foundation of an inclusive and equitable learning environment by recognizing and valuing the unique experiences, backgrounds, cultures, learning styles, and abilities of each child in their care.

Table 4. *Level of Work Ethics of Preschool Teachers in terms of Respect for Diversity*

Indicators	Mean	SD
1. I practice fairness by providing differentiated teaching methods that accommodate the diverse cultural backgrounds, languages, and learning styles of the learners.	4.71	0.50
2. I provide engaging, value-enriched stories among preschoolers to emulate good behavior and proper attitude, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds.	4.66	0.55
3. I utilize localized, developmentally appropriate instructional materials, incorporating young learners' home languages, and employing differentiated instruction to meet individual needs.	4.74	0.49
4. I establish rapport with young learners, demonstrating empathy and create a safe and inclusive classroom environment where all learners feel valued and respected.	4.78	0.44
5. I ensure equal dealing with diverse learners by providing play-based interactive games that is supportive of their interests and preferences.	4.74	0.49
6. I use equitably, developmentally suitable assessment methods that pays respect to all learners' abilities, disabilities, or ethnicity.	4.71	0.50
Overall Mean	4.72	0.40

Table 5 highlighted the work ethics of preschool teachers in terms of Integrity and Honesty. An overall mean rating of 4.79 was obtained with a standard deviation of 0.330, which was described as very high. Ranked first, was observed self-discipline and endeavoured to model always pleasing and appropriate behaviour; second, maintained confidential information about children and their families; third, showed courteous dealings; and practiced truthfulness and transparent interactions with parents and colleagues. The overall descriptive rating was very high, further described as the preschool teachers' level of work ethics regarding integrity and honesty, which was outstanding and always manifested. The finding is aligned with the perspective of (Patil & Karad, 2020) on the utmost importance of teachers upholding the highest degree of integrity and honesty. This fostered trust and strengthened the partnership between home and school. Setting a positive example in the learning community enables the stakeholders to provide their full support and cooperate with the teacher in all programs, projects, and activities. Ultimately, this led to the attainment of Preschool goals. As a synthesis, the work ethic of preschool teachers is the fuel that has driven the preschoolers' good behavior, positive attitude, and emotional efficacy, which enables them to live harmoniously with their peers and others. According to the authentic data, it implied that the Digos City preschool teachers have upheld high standards of professional ethics based on their numerical ratings. The grand overall descriptive rating is very high, meaning Digos City's Preschool teachers' exemplary work ethic may be a benchmark for other divisions to emulate.

Table 5. *Level of Work Ethics of Preschool Teachers in terms of Integrity and Honesty*

Indicators	Mean	SD
1. I practice truthful and transparent interactions with parents and colleagues.	4.79	0.43
2. I show courteous, polite, and tactful dealings especially among children and other stakeholders.	4.79	0.46
3. I maintain confidentiality regarding information about children and their families.	4.81	0.46
4. I observe self-discipline and endeavor to model pleasing and appropriate behavior at all times.	4.88	0.36
5. I uphold the value of establishing teamwork, by offering support and assistance in community outreach programs.	4.74	0.52
6. I engage in continued professional development by enrolling in graduate degree programs that would uplift my knowledge and skills in handling preschool children.	4.75	0.49
Overall Mean	4.79	0.33

3.3 Relationship between Demographic Profile and Work Ethics

Table 6 revealed the correlations between preschool teachers' demographic profiles and work ethics. As detailed in the numerical data, the result of the correlation analysis between Age and Work Ethics Overall showed that $r = -0.004$ is the correlation coefficient. The p-value is 0.974, indicating the statistical significance of the correlation. The numerical data "failed to reject the null hypothesis", which in this context showed no relationship between Age and Work Ethics Overall.

Table 6. *Correlations between Age and Work Ethics of Preschool Teachers*

Profile	R	p	Interpretation
Age vs Work Ethics	-0.004	.974	Failed to reject Ho.

Table 7 revealed the correlations between preschool teachers' demographic profiles and work ethics. As detailed in the numerical data, the result of the chi-square (χ^2) test, to determine if there is a significant association between Gender and Work Ethics Overall, has the following data: $\chi^2 = 150$, the chi-square statistic. The higher the value, the greater the difference between the observed and expected frequencies. The p-value < .001 is less than 0.001, indicating that the observed results are statistically significant. In this context, data showed a strong association between Gender and Work Ethics. "Reject the null hypothesis" implies a significant association between the two variables.

Table 7. *Correlations between Gender and Work Ethics of Preschool Teachers*

Profile	χ^2	p	Interpretation
Gender vs Work Ethics	150	< .001	Reject Ho.

Table 8 shows the correlation analysis between the length of service and overall work ethics. Data showed a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.012$, suggesting an extremely weak positive relationship between Length of Service and Work Ethics Overall. The $p = 0.917$ indicates that the result is not statistically significant. Hence, data “failed to reject the null hypothesis,” implying no relationship between Length of Service and Work Ethics Overall.

Table 8. Correlations between Length of Service and Work Ethics of Preschool Teachers			
Profile	r	p	Interpretation
Length of Service vs Work Ethics	0.012	.917	Failed to reject Ho.

Table 9 shows the result of the chi-square (χ^2) test between Educational Attainment and Work Ethics Overall. Data showed a chi-square statistic of $\chi^2 = 165$. The higher the value, the greater the difference between the observed and expected frequencies. The p-value of 0.001 indicates that the observed result suggests an extreme statistical significance. In this context, there is a strong association between Educational Attainment and Work Ethics Overall. “Reject Ho” means the null hypothesis is rejected, implying a significant association between the two variables.

Table 9. Correlations between Educational Attainment and Work Ethics of Preschool Teachers			
Profile	χ^2	p	Interpretation
Educational Attainment vs Work Ethics	165	< .001	Reject Ho.

3.4 Perception of Work Ethics

In Figure 3, the general opinions, comments, and insights of the 12 participants from the four districts in Digos City Division during the conduct of the Semi-Structured Interview, regarding work ethics, revealed the following essential themes:

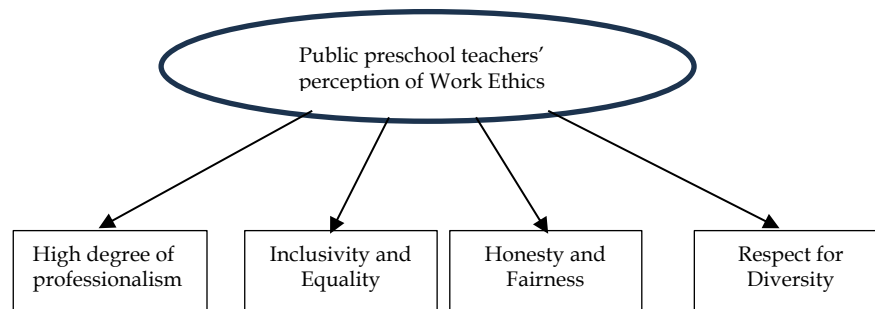


Figure 3. How Public Preschool Teachers Perceive Work Ethics

High Degree of Professionalism

Based on authentic narrative opinions of most preschool teacher-participants, the researcher obtained a unanimous perspective that a *high degree of professionalism* is a crucial element of their work ethic, which shapes their daily interactions with the young learners they are charged with. Participants #1, #5, and #8 shared their respective opinions when interviewed. (All teachers should demonstrate that work ethic by being tactful, polite, and courteous towards others. Preschoolers and other students may follow their teacher's example and adopt good behavior by exhibiting a high level of professionalism, whether inside or outside the school premises.)

The preschool teachers unanimously believed that high professionalism is an important element of their work ethic. In alignment with these perspectives, Oliva (2020) elaborated that part and parcel of teachers’ professionalism is exhibited through their ability to create a positive and supportive atmosphere where the preschool learners feel safe, respected, and valued, promoting active engagement in learning. Further, as responsible professionals, preschool teachers are expected to model appropriate behavior for children, teaching them about respect, responsibility, and positive social interactions.

Inclusivity and Equality

A common theme that emerged during the one-on-one interview on the preschool teachers' perception of work ethics is inclusivity and equality. Most participants expressed that connecting with the young learners personally and facilitating inclusivity and equality inside the classroom makes the learning ambiance more inviting and invigorating. Participants #2, 10, and 12 shared their ideas from this viewpoint. *(I believe a high degree of dedication is needed to encourage positive behavior among the young learners. This is demonstrated by facilitating inclusivity and equality inside the classroom. Sincere appreciation for good behavior, and providing rewards and incentives to deserving preschoolers, fuels their enthusiasm always to do good.)*

In congruence with preschool teachers' perspectives regarding work ethics, one common theme that emerged was facilitating inclusivity and equality inside the classroom. In alignment with the varied viewpoints (Romi et al., 2020), they elaborated that the best way to address learning gaps among preschool children is to facilitate inclusivity and equality by respecting each learner, regardless of ethnicity and socio-economic backgrounds. This can be made possible by providing differentiated instructional pedagogies and delivering engaging, age-appropriate lessons to meet the respective needs of preschool learners.

Respect for Diversity

General comments of preschool teacher-participants affirmed that *respecting diversity* regardless of learners' socio-demographic profile is essential to their work ethic. Moreover, as opined by the teachers, the learners need to be provided with developmentally appropriate instructional activities to ensure their holistic growth. In congruence with this, Participants #3, #4, and #11 shared their opinions. *(Respecting each person's background means recognizing and valuing different cultures, beliefs, and experiences. I agree that embracing the diversity of learners helps strengthen their talents and skills while boosting their self-confidence. In my interactions with children, I show respect through appropriate words and tone and by being open to their thoughts and feelings.)*

In congruence with the perspectives of preschool teacher-participants, work ethics entail *respect for diversity*. As elaborated by (Warman et al., 2021), when children feel respected and valued for who they are, it builds their self-esteem and confidence. They are more likely to engage in learning, take risks, and reach their full potential. Respect for diversity helps children develop empathy and understanding for others. They learn to appreciate different perspectives and build positive relationships with individuals from diverse backgrounds. A teacher who respects diversity understands the importance of culturally responsive teaching. They adapt their curriculum and teaching methods to reflect their students' diverse needs and experiences, making learning more relevant and engaging.

Honesty and Fairness

The general comments of preschool teachers showed that honesty and fairness in everything foster trust and favorable support from varied stakeholders. Moreover, the participants concur that teachers should communicate openly and truthfully with parents and guardians about their child's progress and well-being, which builds trust and professionalism. In consonance with this, Participants #6, #7, and #9 shared their perspectives. *(As a preschool teacher, I believe all students should be treated equally. In my class, I do not show favoritism or discrimination based on race, gender, or any personal characteristic of my preschoolers. I demonstrate honesty and fairness by maintaining transparency in my daily instructional activities.)*

The collaborative opinions of preschool teachers showed that honesty *and fairness* in everything foster trust and favorable support from varied stakeholders. This was concurred by (Arsenal et al., 2021), that one of preschool teachers' most desirable traits is honesty *and fairness* in all dealings. This quality forms the foundation of a trusting and nurturing learning environment for young children, who are highly impressionable and rely heavily on their teachers for guidance and support. Integrity and honesty are paramount in preschool teaching, as stakeholders build trust and willingly provide full support and cooperate with the teacher in all programs, projects, and activities.

These themes highlight the importance of strong work ethics in preschool education and their impact on creating a positive and effective learning environment. By embodying these principles, preschool teachers can inspire and motivate their students to succeed academically and personally. As a learning insight, the researcher concurs with the importance of work ethics and of adhering to the Philippine Teachers Professionalization Act

of 1994, stipulating the vital role of teachers in upholding very high ethical standards in the teaching profession. The researcher expected to foster quality work ethics and provide preschool learners accurate information, fair assessments, and a positive learning experience. Part of the professional commitment is to actively provide the highest quality of care and education to the learners. The preschool teachers collaborate with parents to ensure a smooth transition, providing support and guidance to help children feel confident and ready for the next chapter in their educational journey.

The quantitative findings revealed that preschool teachers in public schools in Digos City exhibited a very high level of work ethic, demonstrating their dedication to professionalism and integrity in their roles. Furthermore, the statistical analysis showed no significant relationship between age and work ethics, nor between length of service and work ethics, suggesting that ethical standards remain consistent regardless of experience or age. However, a strong association between gender and work ethics emerged, indicating that gender-related factors may influence perceptions or behaviors tied to professional ethics. Additionally, the results highlighted an association between educational attainment and work ethics, underscoring the potential role of formal training and academic background in shaping ethical work practices.

The qualitative findings add depth to these statistical trends by capturing teachers' perspectives on essential qualities for fostering a positive learning environment. The preschool teachers emphasized four key attributes: high professionalism, inclusivity and equality, respect for diversity, and honesty and fairness—values that collectively support the integrity and ethical standards reflected in the quantitative assessment. Their views affirm the importance of education and ethical commitment, complementing the association between educational attainment and work ethics. Moreover, their emphasis on inclusivity and equality may provide insights into the gender-related associations observed in the quantitative results. This suggests that societal expectations or cultural influences may shape ethical practices differently across genders.

4.0 Conclusion

This mixed study reinforced a strong alignment between *numerical data* and *experiential insights*. Overall, integrating quantitative and qualitative findings solidifies the conclusion that strong ethical work standards among preschool teachers are driven by structural factors, such as education, and deeply held professional values. This corroboration highlights the critical role of professional ethics in creating a nurturing and equitable learning environment for young learners.

The quantitative findings revealed that preschool teachers in public schools in Digos City exhibited a very high level of work ethic, demonstrating their dedication to professionalism and integrity in their roles. Furthermore, the statistical analysis showed no significant relationship between age and work ethics, nor between length of service and work ethics, suggesting that ethical standards remain consistent regardless of experience or age. However, a strong association between gender and work ethics emerged, as well as between educational attainment and work ethics, underscoring the potential role of formal training and academic background in shaping ethical work practices.

The qualitative findings add depth to these statistical trends by capturing teachers' perspectives on essential qualities for fostering a positive learning environment. The preschool teachers emphasized four key attributes: high professionalism, inclusivity and equality, respect for diversity, and honesty and fairness—values that collectively support the integrity and ethical standards reflected in the quantitative assessment. Their views affirm the importance of education and ethical commitment, complementing the association between educational attainment and work ethics. Moreover, their emphasis on inclusivity and equality may provide insights into the gender-related associations observed in the quantitative results. This suggests that societal expectations or cultural influences may shape ethical practices differently across genders.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

The authors collaborated on the study. They completed a series of reviews and revisions before approving the final work.

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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