

Professional Ethics and the Teacher Code of Ethics in Strengthening Educational Professionalism: A Literature Review

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Abstract

Professional ethics and the teacher code of ethics underpin educational relationships grounded in fairness, responsibility, and respect for students' dignity. Understanding their role in teacher professionalism requires attention to professional responsibility, student protection, educational practice, and ethical violations. This study analyzes the concept of teacher professional ethics, the principles and functions of the teacher code of ethics, its implementation, and the forms, causes, consequences, and prevention of ethical violations. A literature review employing a descriptive qualitative approach examined relevant books, scholarly journal articles, and educational documents. Information from the selected sources was analyzed through identification, classification, comparison, interpretation, and synthesis. The findings identify integrity, fairness, responsibility, exemplary conduct, respect for students' dignity, and continuous professional development as core dimensions of teacher professional ethics. The teacher code of ethics provides guidance for professional conduct, supports the protection of students' rights, and safeguards the dignity of the teaching profession. Ethical violations—including verbal abuse, discrimination, abuse of authority, unfair assessment, and neglect of professional responsibilities—can adversely affect students and undermine public trust in teachers. The review identifies stronger ethical understanding, professional development, supervision, and consistent implementation of the code as priorities for educational practice. By connecting ethical principles with

professional conduct, student protection, and the prevention of misconduct, the study provides a conceptual synthesis for strengthening teacher professionalism.

Keywords: Professional Ethics; Teacher Code of Ethics; Teacher Professionalism; Student Protection; Ethical Violations.

INTRODUCTION

Education plays a central role in developing individuals and society, while teachers occupy a strategic position in translating educational goals into everyday learning practices. Teachers are not merely responsible for transferring knowledge, but also for guiding students, developing their character, assessing learning, and creating an educational environment that supports students' intellectual, social, and moral development. Consequently, teaching is inherently a professional activity that involves not only pedagogical knowledge and technical competence but also ethical judgment and responsibility. The quality of teacher professionalism is therefore closely related to the knowledge, skills, professional practices, and relationships that teachers develop throughout their careers (OECD, 2016). In this context, professional ethics becomes an important foundation because teachers routinely make decisions that affect students' learning, dignity, rights, and well-being. The ethical dimension of teaching is particularly important because the professional role of teachers involves relationships of trust, authority, and responsibility toward students and other members of the educational community.

The importance of professional ethics is increasingly evident as teachers face increasingly complex educational demands. Professionalism cannot be reduced to compliance with administrative requirements, mastery of subject matter, or possession of formal qualifications. Rather, professionalism also involves the ability to exercise responsible judgment, maintain integrity, respect students, collaborate with colleagues and parents, and continuously improve professional practice. Hargreaves & Fullan (2012) conceptualize teacher professionalism through the development of professional capital, emphasizing the importance of teachers' knowledge, judgment, commitment, collaboration, and professional culture. Similarly, Webster & Whelen (2019) argue that reflection and ethics are essential attributes of professional teaching because educational practice involves ethical deliberation rather than merely technical procedures. Thus, professional ethics should be understood as an integral dimension of teacher professionalism that guides teachers in determining what

should be done, how it should be done, and how their decisions affect students and the wider educational community.

Previous studies have demonstrated that ethical considerations are closely connected with teachers' professional identity and practice. Maxwell and Schwimmer (2016), through an analysis of Canadian teacher codes of ethics, found that several core professional values were repeatedly emphasized, although existing codes did not provide a completely consistent account of teachers' ethical obligations. Their findings indicate that codes of ethics are important sources of professional guidance but may not fully capture the complexity of ethical decision-making in teaching. Shapira – Lishchinsky (2019) similarly identified several dimensions of ethics in teachers' practice, including concern for students' learning, interactions with colleagues, respect for professional rules, and teacher professionalism. Granjo et al. (2021) further demonstrated that ethical orientation is associated with teacher professional identity and has direct and indirect relationships with other dimensions such as perceived competence, commitment, and self-esteem. These studies suggest that teacher ethics should be considered not as an isolated set of formal rules but as a component of professional identity and everyday educational practice.

Although previous studies have contributed substantially to understanding teacher professionalism, professional identity, and ethical practice, several aspects remain open for further synthesis. Existing literature has often examined teacher ethics from particular perspectives, such as professional codes, teacher identity, ethical decision-making, professional development, or specific forms of unethical conduct. Lawrent (2022), for example, showed that unethical teacher practices can affect teachers' professional positioning and highlighted the importance of teacher education in developing ethical professionalism. Meanwhile, Kirsten's (2020) systematic review emphasized the relationship between professional development, accountability, governance, and teacher professionalism. However, these strands of literature are not always integrated into a single conceptual discussion that connects the principles of teacher professional ethics and codes of ethics with their practical implementation, ethical violations, their consequences, and prevention mechanisms. This article therefore seeks to fill this gap by synthesizing these dimensions within a single literature-based analysis. The novelty of this article lies in its integrated examination of teacher professional ethics as both a moral foundation and a practical mechanism for strengthening professionalism, protecting students, maintaining professional dignity, and preventing ethical misconduct.

The theoretical foundation of this study is based on the understanding of teaching as an ethical and professional practice. Professional ethics provides moral principles that guide teachers' conduct, while the teacher code of ethics translates these principles into standards for professional behavior and relationships. Peterson & Arthur (2020) emphasize that the concept of a good teacher extends beyond technical competence and subject knowledge because teaching inherently contains an ethical dimension involving character and professional conduct. This perspective is complemented by the concept of teacher professionalism, which includes professional knowledge, autonomy, collaboration, continuous learning, and responsibility. The OECD (2016) identifies knowledge, professional autonomy, and peer networks as important dimensions of teacher professionalism, while Mezza (2022) highlights collaboration, continuing professional learning, professional autonomy, and teacher status as important areas for strengthening the profession. Professional identity is also relevant because ethical values become meaningful when they are internalized as part of how teachers understand and perform their professional roles (Granjo et al., 2021). Accordingly, this article positions professional ethics and the teacher code of ethics as interconnected elements that shape professional judgment, behavior, relationships, and accountability in educational practice.

In the Indonesian context, the professional position and responsibilities of teachers are also supported by a formal legal framework. Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers defines teachers as professional educators whose primary duties include educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students (Muliana et al., 2024; Sunarti, 2022). The law also provides a basis for the development of a teacher code of ethics and the establishment of mechanisms for maintaining the dignity and honor of the teaching profession. These provisions demonstrate that teacher professionalism is not solely an individual responsibility but is also connected to institutional and professional regulation. At the same time, the existence of regulations does not automatically guarantee ethical conduct in educational practice. Professional ethics must be internalized and consistently implemented through teachers' interactions with students, colleagues, parents, educational institutions, and society. This is particularly relevant in addressing conduct such as verbal humiliation, discrimination, abuse of authority, unfair assessment, and neglect of professional responsibilities, which may undermine students' well-being and public trust in the teaching profession.

Based on this background, this article aims to analyze teacher professional ethics and the teacher code of ethics as foundations for strengthening educational professionalism. Specifically, the study examines: (1) the concept and principles of teacher professional ethics; (2) the meaning, functions, and principles of the teacher code of ethics; (3) the implementation of ethical principles in educational practice; and (4) the forms, causes, impacts, and prevention of ethical violations committed by teachers. Through a literature review approach, the article seeks to synthesize theoretical and empirical perspectives in order to provide a comprehensive understanding of how professional ethics and codes of ethics can support responsible teacher conduct, protect students' rights and dignity, and strengthen public trust in the teaching profession.

METHODS

1. Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach using a literature review method to examine teacher professional ethics and the teacher code of ethics in strengthening educational professionalism. A literature review enables researchers to synthesize existing knowledge, compare different conceptual perspectives, and identify gaps that require further investigation (Snyder, 2019). The review was designed to integrate discussions of ethical principles, professional responsibilities, implementation practices, and ethical violations within the teaching profession. Rather than collecting primary data from participants, the study relied on secondary sources consisting of scholarly publications and relevant educational documents. This approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to develop a comprehensive conceptual understanding of teacher ethics and its implications for professional practice.

2. Data Sources and Literature Selection

The data sources consisted of scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and relevant educational policy documents, particularly those addressing professional ethics, teacher professionalism, codes of ethics, student protection, and ethical conduct in educational settings. Literature was selected based on its relevance to the research objectives, the clarity of its conceptual or empirical contributions, and the availability of verifiable bibliographic information. Priority was given to peer-reviewed journal articles and recent publications, while established academic books and foundational studies were retained when

they provided essential theoretical perspectives. Relevant Indonesian educational legislation, particularly Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, was also considered to contextualize the discussion within the national education system. These selection principles reflect the importance of establishing clear boundaries and appropriate criteria when synthesizing literature (Snyder, 2019; Torraco, 2016).

3. Literature Search and Data Collection

Literature collection was conducted through the identification, retrieval, and examination of publications relevant to the study's central themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Search terms included teacher professional ethics, teacher code of ethics, teacher professionalism, ethical violations in education, and professional responsibility of teachers. Indonesian equivalents, including etika profesi guru, kode etik guru, and pelanggaran etika guru, were also considered to identify literature relevant to the national context. The collected materials were examined to identify definitions, theoretical arguments, research findings, regulatory provisions, and recommendations associated with the research objectives. Information from each source was organized according to its relevance to the conceptual framework and the main themes of the article. Document analysis provided a methodological basis for examining written materials systematically and interpreting their relevance to the research questions (G. Bowen, 2009).

4. Data Analysis

The collected literature was analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis through thematic categorization and synthesis. The analysis involved four stages. First, relevant information was identified by examining the content of the selected publications. Second, the information was classified into thematic categories covering the concept and principles of professional ethics, the functions of the teacher code of ethics, implementation in educational practice, forms and causes of ethical violations, their potential consequences, and prevention strategies. Third, findings and arguments from different sources were compared to identify recurring themes, complementary perspectives, and differences in emphasis. Fourth, the findings were interpreted and synthesized to formulate an integrated understanding of the relationship between professional ethics, ethical accountability, student protection, and teacher professionalism. This process followed the general principles of qualitative document analysis and literature synthesis described by (G. A. Bowen, 2009; Torraco, 2016; Xiao & Watson, 2019).

5. Analytical Rigor and Limitations

To strengthen the credibility of the analysis, interpretations were grounded in the content of the selected sources, and conceptual claims were examined against relevant scholarly literature and educational regulations. Differences between theoretical arguments, empirical findings, and normative provisions were considered when developing the synthesis. The review was intended to provide a conceptual and interpretive account rather than statistically generalizable conclusions. Its scope was therefore dependent on the relevance, accessibility, and quality of the literature examined. The methodological transparency of literature reviews is important for allowing readers to evaluate the appropriateness of source selection, analytical procedures, and the conclusions derived from the available evidence (Xiao & Watson, 2019).

RESULTS

This section presents the findings of the literature review concerning teacher professional ethics and the teacher code of ethics. The findings are organized into six themes covering the principles of professional ethics, the functions of the teacher code of ethics, its implementation in educational practice, ethical violations, their consequences, and prevention strategies. These themes provide a structured overview of the role of professional ethics in guiding teachers' conduct, protecting students' rights, and strengthening professionalism in educational settings.

1. Concept and Principles of Teacher Professional Ethics

Teacher professional ethics refers to the moral principles, professional values, and standards of conduct that guide teachers in fulfilling their educational responsibilities. It encompasses not only teachers' competence in delivering subject matter but also their ability to exercise sound judgment, demonstrate integrity, and maintain appropriate relationships with students, colleagues, parents, and the wider community. Based on the conceptual literature, the main principles of teacher professional ethics include integrity and honesty, professional responsibility, fairness and non-discrimination, exemplary conduct, respect for students' dignity, and continuous professional development. These principles establish expectations for teachers' behavior in instructional activities, student assessment, communication, and professional decision-making. Accordingly, ethical conduct represents

an integral dimension of teaching that guides teachers in exercising their authority responsibly and fulfilling their obligations toward students and educational institutions.

The principles of professional ethics can also be understood through their application to everyday educational situations. Integrity requires teachers to communicate information honestly and evaluate student performance objectively, while professional responsibility involves preparing lessons, conducting learning activities, and evaluating educational outcomes appropriately. Fairness requires teachers to provide equal educational opportunities without discrimination based on students' backgrounds, economic circumstances, or academic abilities. Exemplary conduct involves demonstrating discipline, respect, and appropriate behavior, whereas respect for students' dignity requires protecting their privacy and avoiding humiliating or harmful treatment. Continuous professional development further encourages teachers to improve their knowledge, pedagogical skills, and ethical awareness in response to changing educational needs. These principles collectively provide a conceptual basis for identifying appropriate professional behavior and establishing expectations for responsible teaching practice.

2. Meaning, Functions, and Principles of the Teacher Code of Ethics

The teacher code of ethics constitutes a set of professional norms and moral standards that guides teachers' conduct and relationships within the educational environment. It provides direction for teachers when interacting with students, colleagues, parents, educational institutions, and society, while establishing expectations concerning professional integrity, responsibility, fairness, and respect. The literature identifies several principal functions of the code of ethics: guiding professional behavior, maintaining the dignity and credibility of the teaching profession, protecting students' rights, supporting professional accountability, and providing a basis for evaluating conduct in accordance with applicable standards. In this regard, the code of ethics extends beyond classroom instruction because teachers' professional responsibilities also involve communication, assessment, confidentiality, collaboration, and the appropriate exercise of professional authority.

In Indonesia, the legal framework for teacher professionalism is established, among other provisions, by Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers. The law defines teachers as professional educators whose primary duties include educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students. Articles 43 and 44 address the development and enforcement of professional ethics

through teacher professional organizations and mechanisms for maintaining professional dignity. Within this framework, the teacher code of ethics serves as a professional reference for ensuring that educational responsibilities are exercised appropriately. Its implementation involves adherence to ethical standards, respect for students' dignity, objective decision-making, and accountability for professional conduct. The code therefore provides a normative foundation for maintaining professional standards and supporting responsible relationships throughout the educational community.

3. Implementation of Professional Ethics in Educational Practice

The implementation of professional ethics begins with teachers' interactions with students during teaching and learning activities. Ethical classroom practice requires teachers to communicate respectfully, explain learning materials responsibly, recognize differences in students' abilities, and provide constructive guidance when students encounter difficulties. Fair and objective assessment is another important component because learning outcomes should be evaluated according to transparent criteria rather than personal preferences or relationships. Teachers are also expected to maintain appropriate professional boundaries, protect students' personal information, and avoid discriminatory treatment or conduct that may undermine students' confidence and dignity. These practices demonstrate how principles such as integrity, fairness, responsibility, and respect can be translated into observable professional behavior in everyday educational settings.

Professional ethics also applies to teachers' relationships with colleagues, parents, educational institutions, and the wider community. Effective professional communication requires teachers to convey information about students' progress honestly, collaborate respectfully with colleagues, and engage with parents in ways that support students' educational development. In digital learning environments, ethical responsibilities include protecting students' personal data, exercising care when sharing photographs or information, and using educational technology appropriately. Schools and professional organizations also contribute to implementation by providing ethical guidance, professional development, supervision, and fair procedures for addressing complaints. These institutional measures can help clarify professional expectations and support consistent application of ethical standards. Consequently, implementing the teacher code of ethics involves both individual commitment and institutional support to maintain a safe, respectful, and accountable educational environment.

4. Ethical Violations and Their Consequences

Ethical violations in the teaching profession include verbal abuse and student humiliation, discrimination, abuse of professional authority, unfair assessment, and neglect of professional responsibilities. These violations may arise from inadequate understanding of professional codes, insufficient emotional self-regulation, misuse of authority, and weak institutional supervision. Such conduct can negatively affect students' psychological well-being, confidence, learning motivation, and trust in teachers (Rizza, Azizah, et al., 2026). At the institutional level, unresolved ethical violations may undermine professional relationships, weaken public confidence, and damage the dignity of the teaching profession.

5. Strategies for Preventing and Addressing Ethical Violations

Preventing and addressing ethical violations requires both individual commitment and institutional support. Teachers need continuous professional development in ethical decision-making, student protection, fair assessment, professional boundaries, and responsible classroom management. Educational institutions should establish clear ethical standards, provide accessible complaint mechanisms, conduct objective investigations, and apply appropriate corrective measures in accordance with applicable regulations. In Indonesia, these efforts should be aligned with Law No. 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers and relevant regulations on preventing and addressing violence in educational settings. Consistent implementation of these measures can help protect students' rights, strengthen professional accountability, and maintain public trust in the teaching profession.

The literature review examines ethical violations in the teaching profession and the strategies available to prevent and address them. The findings are organized into two major themes: the forms, contributing factors, and consequences of ethical violations, and the strategies for prevention and response. This classification provides a concise overview of the challenges associated with teacher professional ethics and the measures needed to strengthen accountability in educational settings.

Table 1. Synthesis of Literature on Teacher Professional Ethics and the Code of Ethics

No.	Analytical Theme	Key Findings
1	Forms, Contributing Factors, and Consequences of Ethical Violations	Ethical violations include verbal abuse, discrimination, abuse of authority, unfair assessment, and neglect of professional responsibilities. Contributing factors may include limited ethical awareness, inadequate emotional regulation, and weak institutional supervision. These violations may affect students' well-being, learning experiences, trust, and the professional credibility of educational institutions.

No.	Analytical Theme	Key Findings
2	Strategies for Preventing and Addressing Ethical Violations	Prevention requires ethical education, continuous professional development, clear standards of conduct, effective supervision, accessible complaint mechanisms, and fair accountability procedures. Institutional support and compliance with applicable regulations are essential to protecting students' rights and maintaining professional integrity.

The first theme identifies several forms of ethical violations, including verbal abuse, discrimination, abuse of authority, unfair assessment, and neglect of professional responsibilities. These violations may arise from individual and institutional factors and can negatively affect students' well-being, educational experiences, and public trust in the teaching profession. The second theme highlights the importance of professional development, ethical guidance, institutional supervision, and transparent procedures for handling complaints. Taken together, these themes emphasize that preventing ethical violations requires both individual commitment to professional ethics and consistent institutional accountability.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that teacher personality development is a complex process involving psychological awareness, behavioral adaptation, interpersonal competence, and continuous personal growth (Rizza, Faiz, et al., 2026a). The integration of psychoanalytic, behavioristic, and humanistic perspectives provides a broader understanding of how different psychological mechanisms contribute to the formation of teacher characteristics and professional identity. This section further discusses the meaning of these findings by relating them to relevant theories, previous studies, and their implications for teacher development.

1. Teacher Professional Ethics as a Foundation of Educational Professionalism

Teacher professional ethics constitutes a fundamental dimension of educational professionalism because teaching involves not only the transmission of knowledge but also moral judgment, interpersonal relationships, and responsibility for students' development. Professional teachers are expected to demonstrate integrity, fairness, accountability, respect, and commitment to educational goals in their daily practice (Rizza, Azahra, et al., 2026). Hargreaves & Fullan (2012) emphasize the importance of teachers' professional capital,

which encompasses human, social, and decisional capital in strengthening the teaching profession. From this perspective, professional competence cannot be separated from the capacity to make responsible decisions and collaborate effectively within educational communities. Similarly, OECD (2016) identifies professional knowledge, autonomy, and peer collaboration as important dimensions of teacher professionalism. These perspectives suggest that professional ethics provides the moral foundation through which teachers exercise their expertise and authority responsibly, ensuring that educational decisions remain oriented toward students' learning and well-being.

The relationship between professional ethics and educational professionalism is also reflected in the development of teachers' professional identities. Clarke (2009) conceptualizes teacher identity formation as an ethical process involving how teachers understand themselves, exercise agency, and negotiate their professional responsibilities. Granjo et al. (2021) further demonstrate that teachers' ethical orientation is associated with professional identity and dimensions of professional functioning, including perceived competence and commitment. These perspectives indicate that ethical principles become meaningful when they are internalized and consistently reflected in teachers' decisions and interactions rather than merely acknowledged as formal standards. Moreover, Maxwell and Schwimmer (2016), in their analysis of Canadian teacher codes of ethics, highlight the challenges involved in establishing a coherent ethical foundation for teacher professionalism. Their analysis supports the need to understand ethical standards as part of an ongoing professional process that requires interpretation and judgment in different educational contexts.

Furthermore, professional ethics should be understood as a dynamic component of teaching that develops through reflection, professional learning, and engagement with changing educational conditions. Miller et al. (2017) discussion of language teacher identity emphasizes the role of ethical self-formation in understanding teachers' professional agency and identity development. Similarly, Rushton et al. (2023), through a systematic review of teacher identity research, demonstrate the breadth of scholarship examining teachers' professional lives, including the influence of professional communities, contexts, and transitions. Clarke (2023) also highlights ethical risks associated with the subordination of teacher identity, drawing attention to the importance of preserving teachers' professional agency. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that strengthening educational professionalism requires more than technical training or regulatory compliance. It requires an ethical professional culture in which teachers can exercise sound judgment, reflect

critically on their practices, and maintain accountability toward students and educational communities.

2. The Role of the Teacher Code of Ethics in Professional Accountability and Student Protection

The teacher code of ethics plays an important role in establishing professional standards, guiding ethical decision-making, and maintaining accountability within educational practice. Beyond serving as a formal set of rules, a code of ethics provides a shared framework for teachers to evaluate their conduct and exercise professional judgment when facing ethical dilemmas. Maxwell & Schwimmer (2016) found that teacher codes of ethics contain important professional values but may not fully represent the complexity of teachers' ethical obligations. Similarly, Schwimmer and Maxwell (2017) argued that codes of ethics should support professional autonomy rather than encourage unquestioning compliance with predetermined rules. These findings suggest that an effective code of ethics should provide clear professional expectations while allowing teachers to interpret ethical principles responsibly in different educational contexts. Therefore, the effectiveness of a code of ethics depends not only on its formal existence but also on teachers' understanding of its principles and their ability to apply them in practice.

Student protection represents another fundamental function of the teacher code of ethics. Because teachers exercise authority in instructional activities, classroom management, and student assessment, their professional decisions must respect students' dignity, rights, and educational interests (Rizza, Faiz, et al., 2026b). Ethical standards can help establish appropriate professional boundaries, discourage discriminatory treatment, and promote fairness in teacher-student relationships. In Indonesia, Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers provides a legal foundation for professional ethics. Article 43 stipulates that teacher professional organizations establish a code of ethics to maintain and enhance teachers' honor and dignity, while Article 44 provides for a teachers' honor council to oversee implementation and recommend sanctions for violations. These provisions establish a formal connection between professional ethics and accountability, although their practical effectiveness also depends on consistent implementation and fair procedures.

Nevertheless, the existence of a formal code does not automatically guarantee ethical behavior or adequate protection for students. Professional accountability requires the

integration of clear ethical standards, continuing professional education, institutional supervision, and fair mechanisms for addressing complaints. Maxwell and Schwimmer's (2016) analysis the limitations of relying on written codes alone, while Schwimmer and Maxwell (2017) emphasize the importance of preserving teachers' capacity for independent ethical judgment. Taken together, these perspectives indicate that codes of ethics are most useful when supported by professional dialogue, practical guidance, and transparent accountability procedures. Educational institutions and professional organizations therefore need to ensure that teachers understand not only the rules governing their conduct but also the ethical reasons underlying those rules. Such an approach can strengthen the protective function of professional ethics while maintaining fairness, professional autonomy, and public trust in the teaching profession.

3. Ethical Violations, Their Consequences, and Institutional Challenges

Ethical violations in teaching should be understood not merely as individual misconduct but also as challenges to the professional relationships, responsibilities, and institutional standards that sustain educational environments. Such violations may include verbal abuse, discrimination, inappropriate use of authority, unfair assessment, and violations of professional boundaries. Yusri et al. (2025), in a study involving elementary school students and teachers in Indonesia, identified several forms of teacher verbal abuse, including shouting, scolding, name-calling, and statements that undermine students' perceived abilities. Their findings also indicated that teachers may interpret abuse narrowly as physical aggression, potentially overlooking the harmful nature of verbal interactions. Similarly, Barrett et al. (2006) identified student-teacher boundary violations, carelessness in professional conduct, and subjectivity in grading and instruction as distinct categories of ethical concern among school professionals. These findings suggest that ethical misconduct can take different forms, ranging from explicit harmful behavior to inappropriate professional decisions that compromise fairness and trust. Consequently, professional ethics requires teachers to recognize both the obvious and less visible ways in which their conduct can affect students and the integrity of educational practice.

The consequences of ethical violations extend beyond individual incidents because teacher behavior influences students' experiences of dignity, fairness, safety, and belonging. Research on ethical practices in schools has identified positive relationships, student voice, equality, and inclusive treatment as important elements of student safety and well-being.

Conversely, teacher bias, discrimination, and inappropriate use of classroom authority can constrain the development of safe and supportive learning environments. These findings indicate that ethical misconduct may weaken students' trust in teachers and reduce their willingness to participate openly in educational activities. At the institutional level, inadequate responses to complaints may further undermine confidence in school leadership and professional accountability. Nevertheless, the consequences of particular violations should be distinguished from outcomes directly established by empirical research. The literature supports the importance of respectful and equitable educational practices, but the severity and duration of harm may vary according to the nature of the incident, the student's circumstances, and the institutional response.

Institutional conditions are therefore essential to understanding and addressing ethical violations in the teaching profession. Although individual factors such as ethical awareness, emotional regulation, and professional judgment may influence teachers' behavior, organizational practices can either support or constrain responsible conduct. Oberg (2026), examining ethical conflict among Australian educators, highlights how institutional pressures, limited resources, and insufficient leadership support can contribute to teachers' experiences of moral injury. Although moral injury is distinct from misconduct committed by teachers, this research illustrates the broader importance of institutional conditions in shaping ethical experiences within education. Schools consequently need clear professional standards, accessible complaint mechanisms, impartial investigations, and proportionate responses to substantiated violations. These measures should be accompanied by professional development that helps teachers recognize ethical dilemmas and respond appropriately. Taken together, the literature indicates that addressing ethical violations requires a balanced approach that combines individual responsibility with institutional accountability, protecting students while strengthening professional integrity and public trust in education.

4. Strengthening Ethical Practice Through Professional Development and Institutional Accountability

Strengthening ethical practice in teaching requires professional development that goes beyond communicating formal regulations and instead equips teachers to recognize, analyze, and respond to ethical dilemmas. Warnick & Silverman (2011) proposed a case-analysis framework for ethics education in teacher preparation, emphasizing structured

consideration of the moral issues involved in professional decisions. Similarly, Shapira-Lishchinsky (2016) examined teachers' ethical decision-making and highlighted the importance of integrating care and justice into professional development, particularly when teachers face dilemmas involving democratic education and social justice. These perspectives suggest that ethics education should incorporate realistic classroom scenarios, reflective discussion, and opportunities to evaluate alternative courses of action. By engaging with practical ethical dilemmas, teachers can develop the professional judgment needed to balance students' interests, institutional expectations, and their responsibilities as educators.

Continuous professional development should also be supported by collaborative learning and institutional practices that encourage reflection and responsible decision-making. Snyder (2019) emphasizes the importance of examining professional learning within broader organizational and policy contexts, while Gore et al. (2023) demonstrate how collaborative professional development can provide teachers with opportunities to exercise professional judgment rather than simply respond to external performance demands. In practice, schools can integrate ethical case discussions into teacher meetings, mentoring programs, peer reflection, and professional learning communities. Such activities should address issues including fair assessment, respectful communication, student confidentiality, professional boundaries, and the responsible use of authority. However, professional development should not be treated as a stand-alone solution. Its effectiveness depends on whether teachers have sufficient time, leadership support, and opportunities to apply ethical principles within their everyday work.

Institutional accountability is equally important because individual ethical commitment must be supported by clear procedures and a fair organizational culture. Schools and professional organizations should establish accessible reporting channels, impartial complaint assessment, confidentiality safeguards, and proportionate responses to substantiated violations. A code of ethics becomes more meaningful when teachers understand how its principles apply to specific situations and when institutions consistently address misconduct without arbitrary or discriminatory treatment (Maxwell, 2020). Stárek (2020) examining the use of a school code of ethics and an ethical decision-making model, reported that teachers considered these tools useful in professional communication with students, colleagues, and parents. This finding supports the value of combining written standards with practical decision-making guidance. Accordingly, an effective approach to ethical practice should integrate teacher education, reflective professional learning,

supportive leadership, and transparent accountability mechanisms. Such integration can help schools protect students' rights while maintaining teachers' professional dignity and public confidence in education

5. Theoretical and Practical Implications, Limitations, and Future Research

This study contributes to the understanding of teacher professional ethics by bringing together ethical principles, professional codes, educational practices, and responses to ethical violations within a single conceptual framework. The synthesis highlights that professional ethics should not be viewed solely as a set of formal rules but as an integral dimension of teacher professionalism that guides decision-making, professional relationships, and accountability. Maxwell and Schwimmer (2016) identified limitations in the existing literature on professional ethics education for future teachers, including gaps in how ethical education is incorporated into teacher preparation. Similarly, Decker et al. (2022), in their systematic review of professional ethics and teacher preparation literature, found that empirical research in this area remained limited and that relatively few reviewed articles explicitly referred to professional codes of ethics. These findings reinforce the need to examine how ethical principles are translated into professional practice rather than assuming that the existence of ethical standards automatically produces ethical behavior. The present article contributes a conceptual synthesis that connects ethical foundations with student protection, professional accountability, and institutional responsibility.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that teacher education institutions, schools, and professional organizations should integrate ethical reflection into professional development and institutional governance. Teacher preparation programs can incorporate case-based discussions, ethical decision-making exercises, and reflection on professional dilemmas, while schools can strengthen implementation through clear conduct standards, supportive supervision, and fair complaint-handling procedures. These measures should address practical concerns such as respectful communication, objective assessment, discrimination, confidentiality, and appropriate professional boundaries. However, this study has limitations. As a descriptive qualitative literature review, its conclusions depend on the scope, accessibility, and quality of the literature selected. Because the review has not been conducted through a fully documented systematic search and screening protocol, it cannot claim exhaustive coverage of all relevant studies or establish the prevalence and causal effects of particular ethical violations. Snyder (2019) emphasizes that transparent reporting of

literature identification, selection, and analysis is essential for evaluating the rigor and trustworthiness of a review.

Future research should investigate how teacher codes of ethics are understood and implemented in different educational contexts, particularly within Indonesian schools. Empirical studies could examine teachers' experiences of ethical dilemmas, students' perceptions of professional conduct, and school leaders' approaches to addressing complaints and alleged violations. Comparative research involving public and private schools, different educational levels, or different regional contexts could also clarify how institutional conditions influence ethical practice. In addition, intervention studies could evaluate whether case-based ethics education, mentoring, and professional learning programs improve teachers' ethical reasoning and decision-making. Future literature reviews could strengthen methodological rigor by specifying databases, search dates, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and transparent screening procedures. Such research would extend the present conceptual synthesis by providing empirical evidence about the conditions under which professional ethics and codes of ethics contribute most effectively to teacher professionalism and student protection.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that teacher professional ethics and the teacher code of ethics are essential foundations for strengthening educational professionalism. Professional ethics encompasses integrity, fairness, responsibility, exemplary conduct, respect for students' dignity, and continuous professional development. Meanwhile, the teacher code of ethics provides guidance for professional behavior, supports accountability, and helps protect students' rights. Its significance extends beyond formal compliance, as ethical principles must be reflected consistently in teachers' decisions, classroom interactions, assessment practices, and professional relationships.

The literature synthesis also identifies several forms of ethical violations, including verbal abuse, discrimination, abuse of authority, unfair assessment, and neglect of professional responsibilities. These violations may affect students' well-being, learning experiences, and trust in teachers, while inadequate institutional responses may weaken public confidence in the teaching profession. Addressing these challenges requires a combination of individual ethical commitment and institutional accountability. Professional

development, ethical reflection, clear standards of conduct, effective supervision, and fair complaint-handling procedures are important measures for supporting responsible professional practice and maintaining a safe, respectful educational environment.

This article contributes a conceptual synthesis connecting teacher professional ethics, the implementation of codes of ethics, student protection, and institutional accountability. However, as a descriptive qualitative literature review, its conclusions are limited by the scope and quality of the literature examined and should not be interpreted as establishing the prevalence or causal effects of ethical violations. Future research should investigate how teachers understand and implement ethical standards in different educational settings, particularly in Indonesia, and evaluate the effectiveness of professional development and institutional accountability mechanisms. Such research could provide empirical evidence to support more effective strategies for strengthening teacher professionalism and protecting students' rights and dignity.

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