

# TEACHERS' PROFESSIONALISM: A CASE OF EASTERN ZONE OF TEGRAI - ETHIOPIA

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**ABSTRACT:** *The main objectives of this study were to assess the level of teachers' perceived professionalism and to investigate whether significant difference exists among teachers' professionalism on the basis of certain demographic variables. Therefore, to answer the raised research questions and objectives, a mixed research approach was considered. Through the multi stage sampling technique, 200 teacher respondents were selected for the questionnaire. After having the intended data, independent sample t-test and one way ANOVA were employed to see if there are differences based on gender, work place, work experience, and school level. The findings revealed that the overall attitude of teachers towards professionalism was positive, the finding of the study also showed that the "rural" group reported lower attitude of teaching professionalism than the "urban" group. The overall attitude of teachers towards their professionalism is inclined to positive. Therefore positive psychology of teachers shall be kept in order to maintain teaching as profession.*

**Key Words:** *Teachers' Professionalism, Districts, Psychosocial Correlates*

## INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a respected profession for it is the source of every other profession since old times. As a matter of fact, while living alive, either we are teaching or else learning from. Hence, being a teacher has dual purpose; on one hand, it makes you lifelong learner, on the other hand it enables you to teach and influence others in many ways (Davis & Andrzejewski, 2009), so that to create other professions and occupation which shape the society in knowledge and to earn money as the source of income too.

Thus, teaching is found to be integrated with all other human being activities. That is why Helen Caldicot, an Australian author and physician stated in her wonderful speech that teachers; *"are the most responsible and important members of society because their professional efforts affect the fate of the earth"*, Gruwell (2016).

However, teaching as profession is known by many as an occupation with lowest salary income. A profession is a type of job with its distinct characteristics where the word professionalism is derived from. Accordingly, Ilgan, Aslanargün, and Shaukat, (2015) tried to define Professionalism based on the attitudes and behaviors with in a particular organizational staff that refers in associations of the organizational philosophy which can be generalized for individual motivation and interaction among colleagues where teaching could be best example.

Creasy (2015) has confirmed that Knowledge, skill and attitude should be incorporated to teachers' professionalism so as to be an effective teacher. The research result of Tichenor & Tichenor (2005) conclude that the definition of teachers professionalism, refers to "professional" teacher as one who is resilient and keeps his/her composure at all times and under all circumstances; is caring, nurturing, friendly, patient with all, well-organized, flexible, displays confidence in the classroom; and remembers that he/she is a role model for students.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the above, professionalism was considered as a collection of attitudes, values, behaviors and relationships with society (Anon, 2005 in Klemenc-Ketis and Vrecko, 2014). Therefore, based on the above premises, it can be concluded that teachers are professional because all educational organizations staffed with professionally qualified staff.

Hence, the following section describes the need, objectives, findings and implication of the present study.

## Statement of the Problem

Modern teaching in Ethiopia has begun almost a century ago with the help of foreign missionary expatriate. Long time back being a teacher had graceful acceptance for it meant "a model" but these days if you say "I am a teacher" the society consider that you are paid less (Gemeda and Tynjälä, 2015), and have a low status in social order. On the other hand, in the last two decades, there is a vast expansion of schools

more than ever in the history of Ethiopia which indicates that a number of teachers are being employed. However, the quality of education in the country is deteriorating (Giertz, 2016) from time to time in which one of the factors could be high turnover of experienced teachers as it is a common problem all over the world (Lawrence, (1999) as cited in Suslu (2006)).

In Ethiopia, specifically Tigray regional state, if observed while talking on teacher's profession, it seems quite common to hear either to undermine teaching or everyone is leaving the profession for better income. The worst thing to hear is that taxi, commonly known as Bajaj, driving (not owning) becomes more attractive than staying in teaching which can be done with simple training how to drive. In some scenario, as interview made with teachers of diploma holders, doing something such that opening coffee house is becoming better than teaching, at worst case, it was being common issue to be heard that schools in eastern zone of Tegrai are being closed for teachers flew via illegal migration to Arab countries. With such a factor, however, teacher's professionalism didn't get good attention by the concerned bodies in bringing quality education.

In line with the above idea, for instance, Gameda and Tynjälä (2015) have concluded that being a teacher is considered as a punishment for it is becoming disrespectful profession, and so have lower job dissatisfaction. Although it is quite known that job motivation doesn't replace job satisfaction, but these two explanations found to be in similar scenarios. The results of a study using 300 participants indicated that teachers were significantly dissatisfied with most aspects of their work and intrinsic and extrinsic motivators such as low salary, the management style of the school leaders, and the poor interrelationships teachers were found to be the amotivating working environment. On the other hand, the finding of the study indicated that aged teachers of 50 and above years were significantly more satisfied in their schoolwork than the less experienced (Gedefaw, 2012).

However, none of the studies given above have said anything about teachers' professionalism. Therefore, the present study was conducted to see the extent of teachers' professionalism in teacher of Tegrai region along with assessing differences in teaching professionalism across various demographic variables. Based on the aforementioned premises some research objectives were prepared.

### ***Objectives of the Study***

1. To assess the extent of teachers perceived professionalism in teachers of Tegrai.
2. To examine the effect of demographic variables (gender, school level, years of experience, educational level, marital status & work place) on teachers' professionalism.

### ***Significance of the Study***

Understandings developed from this study can add to the information of teachers' professionalism based on the psychosocial variables, which enables to contribute in giving recommendations for improving teachers' positive psychology towards their work. Further, the knowledge gained from this study can help in improving teachers' attitude by enhancing their skills and developing an understanding of life skills which can help in handling problems they face in a better way. Most of all, it will help to educational policy makers and educational office administrations decisions that can bring quality education.

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

According to Epstein and Hundert (2002) professionalism is explained as a set of attitudes and behaviors of a particular staff that has inferences for individual motivations, cooperation and professional interaction among colleagues<sup>11</sup>. Hence, Professional as a terminology is comprised of particular information, combined culture, healthy service ethic and self-regulation to a person who is working in specific context (Carr, 2005; Larson, 1977; Etzioni, 1969). As a societal strategy, professionalism increases the interests of an occupation group in which individuals' beliefs and actions within a specified group can be expressed.<sup>15</sup>

Every profession requires well-trained individuals related to the profession. Similarly, teachers' professionalism refers to a quality and action in the teaching process, and describes the better personality of a professional teacher which can go with professional growth. Hence, a professional growth is defined as changes over time in the behavior, knowledge, images, beliefs, or perceptions of novice teachers (Kagan, 1992).

Well, as a matter of fact, teaching as a profession is debatable for some scholar, from sociological perspective, categorized it under the semi-profession group, however, teaching is considered as a profession because every educational institute and schools are organized with professionally trained individuals. In this regard, who trained professionals of other sector? Aren't they product of teachers? Such questions

could seem to be a general but very fundamental to the debate. Therefore, it is teachers' effort to shape every trainer who would be the professional in various streams. For instance, in the view of teachers as reflective practitioners, Englund (1996) in Hargreaves, and Goodson (1996) argued that teachers with a high level of professionalism demonstrate more work satisfaction, less job stress and high self-esteem. Teachers can bring a quality education and change in their students' learning whom have low interest in studies (Pearson & Hall, 1993).

## METHOD

**Sample:** the sample for the present study comprised 200 teachers working in rural and urban areas of Tegraï regional state, Ethiopia. The age range of the participants was 20-59. Prior consent of the participants and their respective school principals was sought.

**Design:** cross sectional design has been used where a quantitative and qualitative method were employed to collect and analyze data. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed as a strategy to reach on the final study participants. An independent t test and one way ANOVA have been used to examine the dependent and independent variables of the study.

**Tool:** "Teacher Professionalism Scale<sup>3</sup>" was employed to determine level of teachers' perception: This scale is a multi-dimensional 46 item self-report instrument designed to measure nine dimension regarding teachers' professionalism with over all Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the instrument was 0.93.

## RESULTS

### *Demographic Variables*

The study has been undertaken in eastern zone of Tigray by considering equal number of teachers in two districts (n= 200), and the response rate was 95.5% in which teachers whom lived in rural district were (n=94) that accounts 49.2 percent and teachers from urban were (n=97) 50.8 percent of the total study participants. From the total study respondents, 103 (53.9%) were male and 88 (46.1%) were female participants. Regarding their education level, only five (2.6%) were certificate holder while nearly half of the participant (n=92, 48.2%) have said that they secured bachelor degree, followed by teachers (n=74, 38.7%) whom have diploma which is less than degree and better than certificate in rank order, and 20 (10.5%) have reported that they hold master degree.

There has been equal number of questionnaire given to each level of school in the two districts where the response rate shows similar statistics that is 24.1%, 26.2%, 25.7% and 24.1% from elementary first cycle, elementary second cycle, general secondary school and preparatory school respectively. If referred to the marital status of the respondents on the other hand, most of the teachers (n=130, 68.1%) are married followed by teachers whom are single (n=35, 18.3%) while (n=23) 12% out of the respondents are divorced and 3 of them are widowed. Concerning their teaching experience, (n=119) 62.3% have less than 20 years of experience while (n=72) 37.7% have 20 and above years of experience.

### *Teachers Attitude Towards Their Professionalism Quantitative Result*

To assess the level of teachers perceived professionalism using its dimensions, percentage was employed, hence, (n=122) 63.9% of the respondent inclined to positive attitude or high attitude of towards their teaching professionalism. Besides, an independent t test has been used to see if there is a difference between gender (male and female); work place (rural and urban); school level (elementary and high school); educational background (less than first degree and first degree and above); working experience (less than 20 years and 20 and above years of service). Thus, the following results are showing if there is difference sex wise, work place, school level, education level, and work experience respectively.

An independent t test was used to compare the average teachers perceived professionalism reported by male participants (n=103) to the average teachers perceived professionalism reported by female participants (n=88). Neither Shapiro-wilk statistics was significant, indicating that the assumption of normality was not violated. Levene's test was also non-significant, thus equal variance can be assumed. As shown in table 1 below, the t test was statistically significant, with the "female" group (M=160.31, SD=27.04) reporting some 23.5 mean difference higher attitudes of teaching professionalism, 95% CI [-31.14, -15.87] than the "male" group (M=136.81, SD=26.34),  $t(189)=-6.07$ ,  $p<0.001$ , two-tailed,  $d=-0.88$

**Table 1: Independent t-test results of teachers' professionalism, based on gender difference**

		Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% CI	
									Lower	Upper
Teachers' professionalism	Equal variances assumed	.026	.873	-6.07	189	.000	-23.501	3.871	-31.137	-15.865
	Equal variances not assumed			-6.06	182.8	.000	-23.501	3.879	-31.155	-15.847

Likewise an independent t test was used to compare the average teachers perceived professionalism reported by participants who lived in "rural" (n=94) to the average teachers perceived professionalism reported by participants who lived in "urban" (n=97). The Levene's test was non-significant, which means equal variance can be assumed. As depicted in table 2 below, the t test was not statistically significant, with the "Rural" group (M=142.95, SD=26.07) reporting lower attitudes of teaching professionalism, than the "Urban" group (M=152.18, SD=31.18), but there was substantially more variance in the urban group. Thus, the t test was significant,  $t(189) = -2.22, p = 0.028$ , two-tailed,  $d = -0.32$ , 95% CI[-17.45, -1.01].

**Table 2: Independent t-test results of teachers' professionalism, based work place**

		Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% CI	
									Lower	Upper
Teachers' professionalism	Equal variances assumed	2.828	.094	-2.215	189	.028	-9.228	4.165	-17.445	-1.012
	Equal variances not assumed			-2.222	185.049	.028	-9.228	4.154	-17.423	-1.034

Regarding the school level, an independent t test was also used to compare the average teachers perceived professionalism reported by participants who work in "elementary" (n=96) to the average teachers perceived professionalism reported by participants who worked in "high school" (n=95). Preliminary assumption testing indicated that both the elementary school teachers' (M=157.29, SD=30.62) and high school teachers' (M=137.87, SD=23.87) score of teaching professionalism were normally distribute, but that there was substantially more variance in the elementary school teachers' score. Hence, Levene's test was also statistically significant ( $F = 4.379, sig = .038$ ), thus equal variance is not assumed. Consequently, welch's t test was used to compare the elementary school average score to that of high school teachers. Thus, as can be seen from table 3 below the t test was statistically significant,  $t(189) = 4.89, p < 0.001$ , two-tailed,  $d = 0.71$ , 95% CI[11.58, 27.25].

**Table 3: Independent t-test results of teachers' professionalism, based school level**

		Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	(2-Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% CI	
									Lower	Upper
Teachers' professionalism	Equal variances assumed	4.379	.038	4.885	189	.000	19.418	3.975	11.576	27.259
	Equal variances not assumed			4.891	179.191	.000	19.418	3.970	11.584	27.252

Moreover, an independent t test was also used to compare the average teachers perceived professionalism reported by participants who had less than first degree (n=79) to the average teachers perceived professionalism reported by participants who had first degree and above (n=112). Neither Shapiro-Wilk statistics was significant, indicating that the assumption of normality was not violated, thus equal variance

can be assumed. As it is indicated in table 4, the t test was statistically significant, with the “certificate and diploma” group (M=157.24, SD=30.25) reporting some 16.38 mean difference higher attitudes of teaching professionalism, 95% CI[8.27, 24.49] than the “first degree and second degree” group (M=140.86, SD=26.31), but there was substantially more variance in the “certificate and diploma” group never the less the t test was significant,  $t(189)=3.98, p<0.001$ , two-tailed,  $d=0.58$

**Table 4:Independent t-test results of teachers’ professionalism, based educational level**

		Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means		Std. Error	95% CI		
		F	Sig.	t	df		Sig. (2-tailed)	(2-Mean Difference)	Lower Upper
Teachers' professionalism	Equal variances assumed	1.657	.200	3.982	189	.000	16.383	4.114	8.268 24.498
	Equal variances not assumed			3.888	152.876	0.000	16.383	4.214	8.058 24.709

Concerning the working experience, an independent t test has been employed to compare the average teachers perceived professionalism reported by participants who had less than 20 years of experience (n=119) to the average teachers perceived professionalism reported by participants who had more than 20 years of experience (n=72). Levene’s test was non-significant, thus equal variance can be assumed. As can be viewed in table 5 the t test was statistically significant, with the “less than 20 years of experience” group (M=140.98, SD=27.03) reporting lower attitudes of teaching professionalism, 95% CI[-25.85, -9.44] than the “more than 20 years of experience” group (M=158.63, SD=29.18), therefore the t test was significant,  $t(189)=-4.24, p<0.001$ , two-tailed,  $d=-0.097$ .

**Table 5: Independent Samples Test for working experience in teaching**

		Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means		Std. Error	95% CI		
		F	Sig.	t	df		Sig. (2-tailed)	(2-Mean Difference)	Lower Upper
Teachers' professionalism	Equal variances assumed	.090	.765	-4.24	189	.000	-17.642	4.159	-25.82 -9.44
	Equal variances not assumed			-4.16	141.01	0.000	-17.642	4.238	-26.02 -9.26

Thus, working experience, sex, educational level, school level, and work place have significantly difference on teachers attitude towards their professionalism in teaching.

To investigate whether significant difference exists among teachers’ demographic variables (gender, therefore, one-way between group ANOVA was employed. Thus, a one-way between groups analysis of variance result indicted the impact that school level had on the attitudes of teachers towards the professionalism in teaching. The inspection of the skewness, kurtosis and Shapiro-Wilk statistics depicted that the assumption of normality was supported for each of the four conditions. Levene’s statistics was non-significant,  $F(3,187)=2.03, p=.111$ , and thus the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated.

As shown in table 6 below, the ANOVA was statistically significant, indicating that the teachers attitude towards their professionalism in teaching was influenced by the level of school they joined,  $F(3,187)=7.978, p<0.0001, n^2=.1135$  that is 11.35% of variability teachers attitude is contributed by level of school.

Post hoc analysis with Tukey’s HSD (using and alpha of 0.05) revealed that the teachers in preparatory school (M=136.39, SD=22.01) had significantly lower attitude scores followed by teachers in high school (M=139.27, SD=25.63) than the teachers in elementary school of first cycle (M=157.80, SD=32.91) followed by the teachers in elementary school of second cycle (M=156.82, SD=28.685).

**Table 6: Result of the one-way ANOVA Summary for the effect of school level**

School level	N	M	SD	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.
elementary first cycle (1-4 grade)	46	157.832	32.91	Between Groups 18223.219	6074.4067	3.978	.000
elementary second cycle (5-8 grade)	50	156.828	28.69				
High school (9-10 grade)	49	139.325	25.63	Within Groups 142389.127	187761.439		
Preparatory school (11-12 grade)	46	136.422	22.01	Total 160612.346	190		
Total	191	147.629	0.08				

On the other hand educational level of the teachers was measured using a one-way between groups analysis of variance to investigate its impact on the attitudes of teachers towards the professionalism in teaching, and to identify which type of educational level is significantly different. The inspection of the skewness, kurtosis and Shapiro-Wilk statistics indicated that the assumption of normality was supported for each of the four conditions. Levene's statistics was non-significant,  $F(3,187) = 1.12, p = .342$ , and thus the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated.

Hence, the ANOVA was statistically significant, table 7, which shows the teachers attitude towards their professionalism in teaching was influenced by their educational level,  $F(3,187) = 6.286, p < 0.0001, n^2 = .0916$  that is 9.16% of variability of teachers attitude is contributed by educational level.

The post hoc analysis with Tukey's HSD (using an alpha of 0.05) revealed, table 7, that the teachers with master degree ( $M = 133.35, SD = 22.79$ ) had significantly lower attitude scores followed by teachers who had first degree ( $M = 142.49, SD = 26.85$ ) and teachers who have certificate ( $M = 144.20, SD = 36.22$ ) than the teachers who have diploma ( $M = 158.12, SD = 29.89$ ).

**Table 7: Result of the one-way ANOVA Summary for the effect of educational level**

School level	N	M	SD		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Certificate	5	144.23621		Between Groups	14714.101	3	4904.700	6.286	.000
Diploma	74	158.12989		Within Groups	145898.245	187	7780.205		
Bachelor Degree	92	142.52684		Total	160612.346	190			
Masters Degree	20	133.42279							
Total	191	147.62908							

Similarly as indicated in table 8, one-way ANOVA was considered to look into the impact that marital status had in addition to see if there are differences among various marital status of teachers towards their professionalism of teaching. Hence, the inspection of Levene's statistics was non-significant,  $f(3,187) = 1.30, p = .277$ , and thus the assumption of homogeneity of variance was not violated.

The ANOVA, table 8 was statistically significant, indicating that the teachers attitude towards their professionalism was influenced by marital status,  $F(3,187) = 3.229, p = 0.024, n^2 = .0492$  that is 4.92% of variability of teachers attitude is contributed by marital status.

Thus, the post hoc analysis with Tukey's HSD (using an alpha of 0.05) revealed, in table 8, that the teachers who rate themselves as a singled ( $M = 140.54, SD = 30.88$ ) had significantly lower attitude scores than the teachers who are widowed, divorced, and married respectively.

**Table 8: Result of the one-way ANOVA Summary for the effect of marital status**

School level	N	M	SD		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Single	35	140.53088		Between Groups	7909.656	3	2636.552	3.229	.024
Married	130	147.42768		Within Groups	152702.690	187	816.592		
Divorced	23	154.33106		Total	160612.346	190			
Widowed	3	189.01039							
Total	191	147.62908							

### **Qualitative Result of Teachers Professionalism**

Interview has been conducted with six Woreda educational officials such as vice head office and school supervisor. The result of the interview shows that teaching as a profession has no different problem than other profession. Some of the interviewee stated that the question and need of teachers couldn't be answered in an overnight. Teachers are the look alike the country, teachers will get betterment with prosperity of the country. Therefore, we teachers must do a lot in order to get change of economic development. On the other hand, the result of FGD, of two team, indicated that teachers turnover is becoming higher and higher than ever due to dissatisfaction of monthly salary and hopelessness. Besides, teaching has been and is thankless job while the government is being graceful in front of its people and other friendly country because of teachers. Teachers don't know the capacity they had; things are becoming hard due to load of economic need. Hence, teachers are searching other job like taxi driving and working or owning coffee house in towns by being forgetting what the degree they had. According document review of Woreda education office, the turnover is almost equal in every school of both rural and urban areas. The qualitative data result depicted that female teachers have more positive attitude than their counterpart male teachers. Besides, teachers have underlined that they are working just till they get an opportunity of

other jobs. Some of the informants say “I must not worry of food if the government and people want me to teach the citizen”.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that teachers have positive attitude towards their professionalism of teaching which indicates teachers in high-professionalism schools tend to have more positive job attitudes and feelings. However, there are differences upon their demographic characteristics. For instance, comparing teachers' gender female teachers tend to have positive attitude to their profession than male, as shown in table 1, where the result goes with what Beck (2008) argued that school teaching was feminised occupation. This might be due to male teachers are searching another job to get better salary (Gedefaw, 2012).

Regarding the work place, however, there seem to be statistically significant difference as shown in table 2. Never the less, as can be seen from the mean difference, all teachers found in rural and urban inclined more to positive than negative attitude. The result shows that, teachers in rural district are not satisfied in a way they lived in which can be in line with idea that there is higher migration from rural to urban. Most of the teachers who got higher degree tend to show lower attitude than those who have diploma and certificate, as shown in table 4 and 8. In addition to this, table 3 also show high school in which teachers with higher degree tends to show negative attitude to their profession than their counterpart where most of the young generations are being shaped. Finally, the finding of this study shows experience of teaching has of great factor to have positive attitude though it could also indicate that there is no other choice than keeping teaching there.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

It is being heard that being a teacher is like a punishment for it is being perceived high work load but less payment. However, from the finding of this study, teachers have positive attitude to their profession. The other factors like salary, societal attitude to teaching and peer influence makes teachers to flee. This can be supported that as teachers getting higher degree like first degree and second degree, they start comparing with other similar degree but in different organization that leads their attitude to incline into negative. This statement can also be supported by the finding of work experience, teachers who have less than 20 years shows lower attitude which can indicate that they wish to go to other better job.

Therefore, positive psychology of teachers shall be kept in order to maintain teaching as profession. Otherwise positive attitude of professionalism doesn't mean satisfied and work motivated. Government shall implement what has been promised years ago, for instance housing service and other benefits should be implemented in order to attract experts or other novice trainee to join this profession.

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