American Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Innovation (AJMRI)

ISSN: 2158-8155 (ONLINE), 2832-4854 (PRINT)

VOLUME 5 ISSUE 6 (2026)



PUBLISHED BY
E-PALLI PUBLISHERS, DELAWARE, USA

American Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Innovation (AJMRI)

Volume 5 Issue 6, Year 2026
ISSN: 2158-8155 (Online), 2832-4854 (Print)
DOI: https://doi.org/10.54536/ajmri.v5i6.8832
https://journals.e-palli.com/home/index.php/ajmri

Teachers' Methods for Promoting Moral Character among Pre-Primary Pupils: A Qualitative Exploration in Tanzania

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Article Information

Received: August 02, 2026

Accepted: Octoberv 15, 2026

Published: November 09, 2026

Keywords

Moral Character, Pre-Primary School, Pupils, Teachers

ABSTRACT

The study explored the methods used by teachers to promote pre-primary pupils' moral character. The study employed constructivism research paradigm and qualitative approach with a case study design. The study involved six preprimary schools with a sample size of thirty respondents; 10 males and 20 females. The study used simple random and purposive sampling techniques. Interview and observation data were analyzed through the use of an interpretative approach. The findings indicate that, regarding the methods used by teachers to promote pre-primary pupils' moral character, the most effective methods were collaboration, storytelling, teaching by example, rewards, punishment, parental involvement, counseling, and religion. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that promoting the moral character of pupils in pre-primary schools requires significant collaboration. This can be accomplished through the joint efforts of teachers, society, the community, and other educational stakeholders. In light of these conclusions, it is recommended that the government, through the Ministry of Education, ensure fair treatment of teachers regarding salaries and other incentives, allocate sufficient funds for school operations, hire qualified teachers, introduce a morality subject in the curriculum, and provide in-service training for teachers. Education officers, should work cooperatively with schools, seeking measures in solving problems, improving and strengthening leadership and management through seminars and workshop. Head teachers and teachers should wisely allocate sufficient resources in their schools, cooperate with parents and behaving morally in and outside the school.

INTRODUCTION

It appears futile to distinguish between the moral responsibilities of teachers as professionals who recognize their own ethical behavior and their function as moral teachers. Their actions convey, whether implicitly or explicitly, beliefs and values that are fundamentally ethical, as they embody their intrinsic capacity to serve as moral role models and exemplars (Birhan, *et al.,* 2021). Thus, teachers have a great role not only in developing learners' academic potential but also in promoting pupils' moral character, which is a very crucial role. Teachers have a role of transmitting good values and characters to the learners so as to enable them to become good people not only in school but in the society. The function of schools has primarily centered on imparting moral values, fostering moral characteristics and virtues, or cultivating a moral environment within the school. However, there has been relatively little comparative discourse regarding education itself as fundamentally a moral endeavor (Tretyak, *et al.*, 2022). Although the teaching of morality begins at home but a teacher has a great role in developing and promoting pupils moral character because a pupil spends a lot of time in school during his/her schooling age. Therefore, teachers to certain extent play a role in influencing pupils' moral character. Teachers have a role of guiding learners to follow good values which are acceptable. Teachers can stay committed and engaged even in a very high level of job stress, but stress has a negative impact on their well-being. For the promotion of moral character in pre-primary pupils, this means that, when the teacher is stressed, he or she may not always be able to consistently demonstrate values such as patience, care and respect. Therefore, steps to ease teacher stress and to improve school support can be taken to maintain effective character-promoting strategies (Reponte & Doble, 2025). Teachers act as moral exemplars to his/her pupils. In this light, the claim that teaching is a moral activity calls attention to teachers conduct, character, perceptions, judgment, understanding and more (Campbell, 2008).

Almost every action a teacher takes while interacting with pupils holds moral significance. Each answer to a question, every decision made in resolving a conflict, and every grade assigned to a pupil reflects the moral character of the teacher. Teaching is an endeavor that requires a profound understanding of the importance of one's decisions and the impact those decisions have on the growth and welfare of students and the community. Throughout history, moral education has played a significant role; it encompasses the teachings of renowned and ancient religions, philosophers, and educators. Consider for example the places of philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, and John Dewey. In South Africa, the great role of a teacher and schools is to develop pupils' moral character. Lucas & Yambao, (2025), pointed out that, envisioning the role of teachers in moral education is simpler than determining the methods by which it can

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be implemented (Lucas *et al.,* 2025). Educators must collaborate with parents on moral education.

In East Africa, Kenya in particular, the role of teachers is to enable pupils to develop moral character in meeting the need of the society. Nyabuli, (2009), noting the role of teachers in promoting values transcending tribal or ethnic identity. Teachers are anticipated to motivate students to embed national values within their homes, workplaces, schools, and public interactions. In Tanzania, during the era of colonial rule, the moral upbringing of children was often overlooked. Formal education distinctly emphasized moral and religious teachings. According to the Christian belief, humans are born flawed (original sin), which necessitates salvation through religious practices such as teaching, guidance, and supernatural rituals. This perspective, initially held by Christian immigrants in Tanzania, fosters the notion that humans are fundamentally morally inadequate, requiring proactive efforts to nurture children into acceptable societal members, primarily through the church and educational systems. Beyond basic literacy, the curriculum was enriched with Biblical verses, prayers, catechism, and morally infused religious teachings. There were some quotes which promote moral character among pupils such as "good children must fear God all days, love Christ always, obey parents, no false thing say, make no delay in doing good" (Ying & Jackson, 2025).

For a long time after independence, Tanzania did not regard pre-primary education as a priority. Although there were licensed daycare centers and nursery schools overseen by the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Education, respectively, they operated without a defined national agenda or established policy. The 1995 Education and Training Policy marked a crucial turning point by initiating efforts aimed at positioning pre-primary education as a fundamental component and cornerstone of the nation's educational framework (United Republic of Tanzania, 2023). On Tanzania mainland, this level of education caters for children aged five and six. The cycle of pre-primary education is two years. Advancement to the next level does not require any exams. In essence, pre-primary education prepares children for their transition into primary schooling. However, its main purpose is to nurture the moral, mental, physical, emotional, and cultural development of children. The medium of instruction in these pre-primary institutions is officially Kiswahili, and the curriculum encompasses subjects such as Mathematics, Kiswahili, Environmental Studies, Arts, Religious Education, Sports and Games, and Handcraft. Conversely, certain private pre-primary schools utilize English as the language of instruction. This is also true for international and English medium schools. Due to financial limitations, these institutions are generally available only to children from wealthy families, mainly in urban settings (Suciati, *et al.*, 2023).

In general, the purpose of pre-primary education is to foster the comprehensive development of children in moral, mental, emotional, physical, and cultural aspects, while also preparing them for their future schooling. According to the United Republic of Tanzania (2023), the pre- primary school syllabus is centered on the following subjects: Mathematics, Kiswahili, eco-friendly studies, arts, religious education, games, sports, and handicraft. There is an abundance of concepts regarding strategies to foster moral maturity within educational institutions. They instruct pupils on the importance of adhering to the rightful guidance of teachers and other authority figures. Furthermore, they emphasize that collaborative efforts necessitate the regulation of personal impulses and behaviors. Pupils can understand from the school's established codes of conduct how broad moral principles, like "Respect others," are converted into particular rules of ethical behavior, such as "Do not vandalize school property;" "Do not use offensive or abusive language towards others," "Exhibit good sportsmanship during athletic events," and so forth. By articulating these rules clearly and applying them consistently, educators and administrators show that these moral standards are to be regarded with seriousness.

Children are fond of stories, as they create captivating images in their minds while they listen. Storytelling is regarded as one of the most effective teaching methods. These narratives play a significant role in shaping children's character, as they embody numerous social values. The teacher, especially in pre-primary education, is expected to fulfill this vital role of storytelling (González & Surikova, 2024). Moral awareness starts to develop at approximately 18 months, while formal education usually commences around the age of 5. Numerous obstacles exist in the execution of character education, which ultimately affects the intended influence on the growth of children's character (Mangiavacchi, *et al.,* 2021). Numerous challenges hinder the effective implementation of character education. These include the absence of an empirical foundation to support character education, inadequate distribution of information regarding character education to practitioners, and disagreements among supporters with differing views on the subject. (Berkowitz, 1998), and very limited training of pre-service teachers. A primary challenge we face is the lack of a well-defined, empirically-supported understanding of the actions teachers should take in early childhood classrooms (or any classroom, for that matter) to foster character development.

The innovative head teachers, build an environment of positive support with empathy, open communication and empower the teachers, which enables teachers to be more committed and act accordingly. The same values caring, empathy and consistency are key approaches that can be used to foster moral character in pre-primary children. Hence, effective early childhood character education can be indirectly fostered through the presence of strong leadership and teacher support (Tuang & Quintos, 2025). Although the teaching of morality begins at home but a teacher especially in pre- primary school has a great

role in developing and promoting pupils moral character because a pupil spends a lot of time in school during his/her schooling age.

Objective of the Study

The aim of this study is to explore the methods used by teachers to promote pre-primary pupils' moral characters. And the study is guided specifically how effective to those methods use.

Significance of the Study

The results of the study will benefit the community, government, policymakers, teachers and school administrators. Findings will uncover the methods for them to operate and foster moral values alongside the learners, as they will be made aware of the moral expectations set by their teachers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As stressed by Carr (2003), Values are intrinsic to the teaching profession. By virtue of their role, teachers serve as 'moral agents' who convey values through their interactions with students and colleagues, their attire, the language they employ, and the dedication they demonstrate in their work. Numerous effective strategies are utilized by pre-primary school teachers to foster moral character, impacting not just their individual schools but also the broader community (Carr, 2003). There is an abundance of concepts regarding strategies to foster moral maturity within educational institutions. In fact, a school that successfully educates for moral maturity employs a variety of ideas and structures to enhance moral development. (Snook, 2007). Therefore, when discussing the role of the teacher, we must also consider the responsibilities of administrators, and when we talk about the classroom community, we acknowledge the importance of a school-wide moral atmosphere. Below are several effective strategies employed by teachers to foster the moral development of pre-primary students.

Role Modeling

The educator plays a crucial role in moral education; when designing and implementing the curriculum and instruction, teachers serve as ethical role models for their students. A significant portion of this teaching aspect is reflected in the everyday interactions between educators and learners, which is considered part of the "hidden curriculum." Modeling encompasses the methods by which teachers express moral principles and reasoning in their interactions with students, fellow educators, and parents. For instance, if we desire young individuals to exhibit dedication, commitment, and respect, these traits must be evident in the teacher's engagement with students. In the same way, if we wish for young individuals to engage in principled moral reasoning, educators ought to exemplify that process (Lickona, 1985).

Sternberg (1998), Concentrating on the ethical dimensions of various situations and highlighting the significance of ethical conduct. It also necessitates indirect teaching by immersing individuals in settings where they can thoroughly practice skills and procedures. (Sternberg, 1998). As stated by Zimmerman (2000), self-regulation develops in phases that mirror the scaffolded learning processes found within the zone of proximal development. Initially, the child learns the skill vicariously by watching a model. Next, the child replicates the model's actions with support. The child demonstrates the skill independently in a structured environment. Ultimately, the child can apply the skill in various situations and under different demands (Zimmerman, 2000).

Discipline Development

By setting, clarifying, and upholding rules, educators and school leaders impart essential moral values. They instruct students on the importance of adhering to the rightful guidance of teachers and other authority figures. Students can glean from the school's established codes of conduct how overarching moral principles, like "Respect others," are converted into specific moral actions, such as "Do not vandalize school property," "Refrain from using offensive or abusive language towards others," "Exhibit good sportsmanship during athletic events," and similar guidelines. By articulating these rules clearly and applying them consistently, educators and administrators illustrate that these moral standards are to be regarded with seriousness.

Research on child rearing sheds light on how conscience develops. When parents react to their children's misdeeds with indignation and moral reasoning, it instills in children a sense of duty to act according to what they understand to be right, prompting them to apologize and make amends. (Dobert, 1985). In a similar vein, educational research shows that how a school manages behavior has a significant impact on students' moral behavior. In the book Fifteen Thousand Hours, a contentious study of pre-primary education in England, Michael Rutter and his team (1979) tracked 2,700 students from the conclusion of pre-primary education through 12 different schools in London. By maintaining a constant social class, Rutter found that the school a student attends can significantly affect their moral conduct. For example, a 5-year-old child considered at risk of facing legal problems had a 48 percent likelihood of future delinquency if they were enrolled in school A, where student behavior was handled in a specific way, in contrast to just a 9 percent chance if they attended school B, where behavior management was approached differently.

Punishment

As Rutter (1979) stated, effective schools resemble supportive families. The particular types of punishment are less significant than the shared expectations that authority figures have for children, along with their overall fairness and consistency in administering consequences for misbehavior. Additionally, he discovered that there is a significant variation among schools regarding the rewards

they offer to their students (Rutter, 1979). Students achieve better behavioral outcomes in schools where teachers regularly commend their work and are readily accessible to discuss any issues with them. (Grant, 1988). Furthermore, research indicates that adolescents benefit the most from discipline when it incorporates reasoning that aids them in comprehending the impact of their actions on others (Hoffman, 1984). Utilizing discipline as a means for ethical development involves guiding behavior to enhance students' moral comprehension, appreciation for rightful authority, ownership of their actions, and responsibility towards the moral community within the classroom and school.

Caring Relationship

A school plays a vital role in helping pupils to live in a cooperative manner, pupils often benefit from working in pairs or help one another as a means of socialization. Caring relation is among the methods of character formation to pupils according to the research conducted by Jacinta (2003) on the moral life of school in Belgium. Character development starts with a nurturing relationship, initially within the home and subsequently in the school environment. Such a nurturing relationship serves as the connection between adult and child, facilitating mutual influence (Greenspan, 2004). A child who is nurtured is more likely to exhibit compassion towards others and engage as a responsible member of the community's ethical framework. The caliber of early interactions between teachers and students can significantly impact academic and social results that endure until the eighth grade (Hamre, 2001). In contrast, educators who were excessively critical and viewed as unjust had students who failed to behave responsibly regarding classroom regulations and academic objectives (Wentzel, 2002). On the other hand, the study conducted by Laxman & Shree, (2023), the results indicate that positive teacher student relationships based on love, care, responsibility, empowerment, and motivation improve students' learning, whereas humiliation and punishment negatively impact it. This relates to the development of moral values in pre-primary pupils as teachers should demonstrate and encourage the same values through warm, supportive and respectful interactions with pupils on a daily basis (Laxman *et al.,* 2023).

Haberman (1995), discovered that effective educators possess characteristics similar to those of good parents. In fact, teachers who maintain a positive outlook towards their students are more inclined to promote their students' success and moral conduct (Haberman, 1995). Teachers like these embrace the mindset of doing everything possible to assist students in fulfilling their fundamental needs, which include autonomy, a sense of belonging, competence, purpose, understanding, and trust (Fiske, 2004). When students' fundamental needs are not satisfied, their attention to learning may be replaced by disruptive behavior and a lack of engagement (Battistich, 1997). Teachers can develop the ability to focus on the needs of their students during the day and guide challenging students on how to effectively address their own requirements (Watson, 2003).

A teacher as a 'moral agent' must set an example to pupils and the effort they put into their work. Thus, a teacher must teach the difference between rights and wrong (Judd, 2003). Teachers should understand their characters as initiators of pupils' self-development. Capable learners have decent self-regulatory skills for learning (Zimmerman, 2000). Educators have the opportunity to assist students in cultivating the mindsets and abilities essential for their path to mastery. For instance, if learners do not engage in supporting their peers, they are less inclined to do so on their own when the situation calls for it. (Youniss & Yates, 1997). Through adult coaching, every student is able to track their ethical skill growth and refine a specific skill set. After these virtues are cultivated, it is essential to sustain them by choosing suitable friends and environments (Aristostle, 1988).

Story telling

Children are captivated by stories, as they create vivid images in their minds while listening. Storytelling is one of the most effective teaching methods. The origins of storytelling can be traced back to the early days of society. The leaders of the smallest social units, like families, including parents, grandparents, or other vocal community figures, have always been seen as skilled storytellers. These narratives played a significant role in shaping children's characters, as they conveyed numerous social values. The pre-primary school teacher has assumed this important role of storytelling (Jacinta, 2003). Teachers in preprimary school always plays a great role in helping their learners to live in cooperative manner, such kind of life helps them to develop a spirit of togetherness in the community with high respect and cooperation.

Reward

In our daily lives, we commonly use the term "reward" to refer to an occurrence that results in a positive or enjoyable experience. In the field of behavioral science, however, the term reward is frequently employed to denote an event that enhances the likelihood or frequency of a behavior, provided that the event is dependent on that behavior (Gabarino, 1999). Rewards are the one among the methods which are very useful in promoting pupils moral character or behavior. This can be done by studying pupil's behavior and provide a reward to the pupil who makes the great progress, this help not only him/her to maintain his/her behavior but also help the other pupils to change their behavior for the sake of reward. Reward is not necessarily to be in physical form such as sweets, books, pencils etc., but it can be also a psychological kind of reward such as a teacher can give a pupil a reward of telling other pupils to clap for him/her or by just saying very well to the pupil who behave well in the class.

Religion

Although the theological beliefs of various religions vary significantly, there is considerable common ground in moral theologies, especially in their practical application. There are broad areas of agreement concerning compassion for others, integrity in our interactions, respect for others' property, and numerous other ethical matters. These issues are also essential to the principles our society has decided to uphold; in reality, the mandates of an individual's religious conscience and the tenets of democracy often support one another (Colby, 2003). On the other hand, some religious people are equally affronted by public schools to look outside their religious tradition for moral guidance (Berkowitz, 1998).

Religion define right and wrong by the laws and rules set forth by their respective scriptures and as interpreted by teachers or religious teachers within the respective faith. Religious subject is preemptive measures which aimed to develop children to be acceptable members of the society. In school it is filled with biblical quotes, prayers, catechism and religious songs which impart moral values. Religions offer various approaches for students to navigate moral dilemmas. For instance, there is a strict ban on cheating, stealing, selfishness, and other similar behaviors.

Theoretical Framework

This study employed two theories based on knowledge on Kohlberg's six stage sequence of moral development and Operant conditioning theory (B.F. Skinner). According to Gucci (1989), in Kohlberg's standard account, moral development progresses from initial stages where the understanding of fairness is closely linked to self-interest and tangible concerns regarding social authority (Gucci, 1989). This statement emphasizes that the foundation of morality is established in early childhood, concentrating on the concepts of harm to oneself and to others. Children in the pre-school age group exhibit a strong concern for their own safety and grasp the idea that it is inherently wrong to inflict pain on others. For instance, it is evident that even infants comprehend that hitting or hurting someone is unacceptable, regardless of the presence of rules or regulations, and they will express to an adult that such behavior is unusual and warrants punishment (Power & Kohlberg, 1989). According to Nucci & Hunt (1991), said the traditional level of oral comprehension, morality and fairness are closely linked with the need to uphold social order as defined by normative regulations (Nucci & Hunt, 1991). At this point, children begin to grasp the idea of fairness rooted in reciprocity (treating others in the manner they wish to be treated). Nevertheless, they find it challenging to reconcile their perception of fairness as equality with the notion of equity (Sapiro, 1991).

While the theory of B.F. Skinner is built upon the idea that learning is a role of change in overt behavior. Skinner (1957), claimed that alterations in behavior arise from a person's responses to environmental occurrences (stimuli). These reactions result in outcomes, which can involve defining a term, hitting a ball, or resolving a mathematical problem. When a particular Stimulus-Response (S-R) pattern is reinforced (rewarded), the individual becomes conditioned to react in that manner. This theory emphasizes the application of punishment and reward techniques to foster the moral development of students (Skinner, 1957).

Reinforcement serves as the fundamental component of Skinner's S-R theory. A reinforcer is defined as anything that enhances the desired response. This may encompass verbal commendations, excellent grades, or a feeling of enhanced accomplishment or contentment. The theory also considers negative reinforcers, which are stimuli that increase the likelihood of a response when they are eliminated (in contrast to aversive stimuli, which cause a reduction in responses). A considerable emphasis was placed on reinforcement schedules (like interval compared to ratio) and their influence on the formation and sustenance of behavior.

Relevance of the theories to the study

The theory of Kohlberg's six stage sequence of moral development relevant in this study because explain in details effective methods used by teachers to promote pre-primary pupils' moral characters from early stage of development. Kohlberg mentioned methods such as punishment, reward and teaching by examples as the effective methods of promoting pre-primary pupils' moral characters. Theory of Operant Conditioning is relevant because, it is based upon the idea that learning is a function of change in overt behavior. Skinner insists that, reinforcement is a good method of promoting morality to pupils. He also argued that, reinforcement can be either positive (reward) or negative (punishment). Therefore, reward and punishment are the effective methods of promoting pre-primary pupils' moral characters.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The study used constructivism research paradigm, as proved beneficial as the research was qualitative, focusing on a social phenomenon. This approach was advantageous since the study fundamentally addresses social phenomena, with the goal of assessing the methods for promoting moral behavior. A single case study design, as the chosen type of case study. Conducting studies within a limited timeframe in a specific area made the case study design the most suitable choice (Cohen, 2008). In this instance, several pre-primary schools were selected for examination concerning the methods teachers used to enhance the moral character of pre-primary pupils.

Research Site and Participants

The study was carried out in the Ruvuma region, particularly in Songea Municipal. Songea Municipal was selected because the Municipal have a large number of pre-primary schools where by teachers use various methods to promote pupils' moral characters. Study

involved 06 pre-primary schools. The population covered by the study include; Educational officer, head teachers, teachers and pupils. The study involved thirty (30) participants. The sample composition involved one educational officer, six (06) Heads of schools, seventeen (17) pre-primary teachers, among them, 10 females and 07 males were selected because they know the methods used to promote pupils moral character. Another group were six (06) pupils, made up of 03 females and 03 males.

Data Collection

This study used purposive and convenience sampling where interview and direct observation methods were useful. The study employed three methods in data collection; these were documentary review, interview, and observation. The study used all these methods to assure validity and trustworthiness of data.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is described as the process of making sense from research participants view and opinions of the situations, corresponding patterns, themes, categories and regularities (Sinokubekezela, *et al.*, 2024). Content analysis method was useful in analysing the collected data. Data were transcribed from interviews into form notes and then combined with data obtained from different documents and observations to form codes by relating to the research questions and literature review.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section ought to capture the different methods used by teachers to promote pre-primary pupils' moral characters. This was done through observations and interviews held with head teachers and teachers, who were asked to mention methods used to promote pupils' moral character. The findings on this aspect are presented in the subsequent subsection. Data obtained through interviews tally with those obtained through literature review, where it was revealed that the most methods used by teachers to promote pre-primary pupils' moral characters were as follows;

Collaboration

During interviews, respondents had the following to say about collaboration as the one of the effective methods used by teachers to promote pre-primary pupils' moral characters.

From this trend of affairs, a school plays a vital role in helping pupils to live in a very cooperative manner, pupils often benefit from working in pairs or small groups to build understanding or help one another as a means of socialization (interview, head teacher school C).

Also a teacher from school E insisted by saying:

Collaboration with pupils, helping each other when the problem occurs as well as advising is the one among the ways of promoting pupils moral character. All this forms of relationship help to mold the pupils' moral character at school and home (interview, teacher school E).

Findings show that, teachers in pre-primary school always plays a great role in helping their learners to live in cooperative manner, such kind of life helps them to develop a spirit of togetherness in the community with high respect and cooperation. All these are done by pre-primary teachers because teaching and morality are inseparable.

Religion education

Another method is religion. Religion and morality are not synonymous. Morality does not depend upon religion although this is an almost automatic assumption.

Concerning religion, a teacher from school A had the following to say:

Morality define right and wrong by the laws and rules set forth by their respective scriptures and as interpreted by teachers or religious teachers within the respective faith. Religious subject is preemptive measures which aimed to develop children to be acceptable members of the society. In school it is filled with biblical quotes, prayers, catechism and religious songs which impart moral values. There are some quotes taught to pupil which promote moral character (interview, teacher school A).

This argument also was supported by interviewed teacher from school C by saying:

Religions provide different ways of dealing with moral dilemmas to the pupils. For example, there is absolute prohibition on cheating, stealing, selfishness and other related behavior (interview, teacher school F).

Religious morality refers to a human being in relation to a supernatural being or beings. For example, In the Christianity the first three of the Ten Commandments pertains to this kind of morality. (The English Standard Version Bible, Exodus, 20:1-17).

Therefore, teacher required to prohibit bad behaviors to the pupils. This has been accepted by all respondents from those three schools by saying, there is a great moral difference between the pupils who attend religion period and those who don't attend these periods. By saying that, it is in doubtable to say morality especially to pre- primary pupils depend much upon religion to a large extent.

Reward

Findings revealed reward as the one among the effective methods used by teachers to promote pre-primary pupils' moral character. She said:

Gift/rewards giving, can be done by studying pupil's behavior and provide a reward to the pupil who makes the great progress in the virtue, this help not only him/her to maintain his/her behavior but also help the other pupils to change their behavior for the sake of reward (interview, teacher school E).

Head teacher from school B also insisted on the role of reward towards pupil's moral character.

Reward is not necessarily to be in physical form such as sweets, books, pencils etc, but it can be also a psychological kind of reward such as a teacher can give a

student a reward of telling other pupils to clap for him/her or by just saying very well to the pupil who behave well in the class (interview, head teacher school B).

The issue was different in school A where a teacher argued that:

Reward/gift is common to those who misbehaving, for example during break time, a teacher calls a pupil who misbehaved and give him/her a gift and saying "if tomorrow you will repeat to do so and so I'll not give you a gift again.". By doing that a pupil will automatic change his/her behavior (interview, teacher school A).

The above quotations indicate that there are different ways to give your pupils positive reinforcement. It could be by rewarding him with items he can touch (for example, sweets or chocolate) or rewarding him with something you say or do (like praise or a hug). A gift is a good method of shaping pupil's behavior and can work well. Pupils especially children under-stand them and want them. But they can be a problem too; it can be expensive to give "things" all the time. The pupils might learn to do things only when he gets "paid" for it. And he may want bigger and bigger rewards.

Punishment

Participants insist on the role of punishment as the one among the effective methods of promoting pre-primary pupils' moral characters in her school and had the following to say:

Types of immoral behaviors for which punishment may be administered are truancy, stealing, misbehaving to teachers, disturbing teaching and learning process and the use of immoral language. He also said that, even though human rights try to prohibit corporal punishment in schools but in Tanzania punishment specifically caning pupils has been allowed by the ministry of education and vocational training (interview, head teacher school B).

This statement backed up by teacher from school D, who said that:

Caning is the main method of punishing pupils in our school. Although, teachers cane the undisciplined students, caning is a form of corporal punishments that seeks to educate the child through pain. However, this form of punishment had policy limitations, but still corporal punishments are still common in our school as a means of transforming the morals of the child (interview, head teacher school D).

Based on the above findings, the purpose of punishment is to stop a pupil from doing what you don't want and using a painful or unpleasant method to stop him/her.

Counseling

Respondents mentioned counseling as the one among the effective methods used by teachers to promote pupils' moral character in her school. She had the following to say about counseling in her school:

Counseling services are therefore required for pupils having developmental problems because of the handicap they suffer in any area of emotional either because of hereditary factors or environmental factors. School counselor work in collaboration with the entire school community and are committed to the education and moral development of all pupils in the school. Also a school counselor communicates with families on an ongoing basis to provide updates on pupil behavior, attendance, as well as to recognize pupil successes (interview, teacher school C).

Respondent from school A also argued that:

When we found a pupil with serious behavioral problem, we direct him/her to school counselors who use various counseling techniques such as active listening, emphatic understanding, releasing the pent up feelings, confronting the pupil and so on. Therefore, counseling in this school most of the time is offered to only those pupils who are in serious moral problem and need extra help to overcome it (interview, teacher school A).

In some schools, counseling is not common, since there is no professional counselor in the schools. But head teachers in all schools insisted on the need of school counselor in those schools but they had nothing to do because those are the government schools. Thus, a counselor can use his/her profession to build pupils moral character through counseling the pupil direct or by counseling the parents to ensure their children succeed in school not only academically but morally, as well as in their future endeavors.

Creation of good relationship

The study also revealed that, creation of good relationship is the one among the effective methods of promoting pre-primary pupils' moral character.

A respondent from school B recommended that:

In order the pupil to develop morally there must be a good relationship between them (teacher and pupil). A teacher who uses a lot of time with his/her pupils has great impacts towards their learners' behavior. Also our actions and words have great impacts towards pupils' behavior; how we word and deliver our comments to others when we are in front of pupils determine the outcome. Our delivery of the message will have an enormous impact on our effectiveness and relationship with our pupils (interview, teacher school B).

This also backed up by a teacher from school C who asked question:

It is possible to teach kids to make good behavior choices, when you are not around?

Researcher replied:

…it is impossible…

Then a teacher proceeded by saying:

Therefore, improving relationship with pupils helps much to teach your pupils to make good behavior choices. The pupils build behavior when they have a good relation with their teacher or parents. Pupils have to take the limited amount of information that you provide to them and figure out why you said it to them. So, this helps promoting pupils moral character (interview, teacher school C).

In fact, the quotation above indicates that pupils may learn more if they have a good relationship with their teachers. Hence there is a possibility of developing moral character when they use a lot of time with their teachers.

Teaching by examples

From the study, respondents show that teaching by examples is also the effective method used by teachers to promote pre-primary pupils' moral character. Teachers are argued to set moral example for children.

Education officer said that:

Teaching by example is also a good method of promoting pupils moral character especially to young pupils. Teacher as a builder of pupils' moral character can do different activities which can make the students to learn. Example a teacher can sweep the floor after taking lunch or do any kind of cleanliness in front of the students, by doing this; the students will note that cleaning the floor after eating is a good behavior. So, after reaching home the pupil will do the same by cleaning the floor after a meal. As we know teacher's words and actions has a great impact towards pupil's behavior may be direct or indirectly (interview, MEO).

This also stressed by a respondent from school C, who said that:

She used to clean a blackboard after her period out of respect for next teacher, then pupils after observing that, they adopting that habit of cleaning a board after each period (interview, head teacher school C).

Therefore, teachers are required to demonstrate good qualities not only in schools but whatever they are seen by their pupils because pupils assume that good things are from teachers hence they can easily imitate. By saying that, a teacher should make sure that everything he/she does while in conduct with pupils carry moral weight.

Parental involvements

The findings suggest that Parental involvement in pupils' progress is another effective method used by teachers to promote pre-primary pupils' moral character. Parents and teachers are the source of good or bad character of the pupils. This happen because teachers and parents stay long time with pupils.

A teacher from school E said that:

Parental involvement in pupils' behavior especially those who misbehave are very crucial in changing pupils' moral character. They are always used to call parents and share on how to restructure the pupils' behavior. Involvement allows parents to monitor their children school and classroom behavior and to coordinate their effects with teachers to encourage acceptable behavior and ensure the child live good life in school and home. The teachers of pupils with highly involvement of parents tend to give greater attention to those pupils and they are more likely to identify at earlier stages problems that might inhibit pupils' moral and intellectual development (interview, teacher school E).

This also insisted by a teacher from school C by saying that:

Parental involvement in school, and positive parent teacher interactions, have also been found to positively affect teacher's self-perception and job satisfaction which increase the morally of a teacher in promoting child's moral character. Respondents also insist that, pupils behave morally if their parents are involved, regardless whether the father lives with the pupil or not. Sometimes they involve parents in their children misbehavior through letter and calls. By doing so, it helps to shape pupil's behavior at school and home, also increase teacher's parent's relation (interview, teacher school C).

The finding shows that parental involvement in child moral behavior is the one among the effective methods used by teachers to promote pupils' moral character in various pre- primary schools.

Story telling

Story telling is the original form of teaching and has the potential of fostering emotional intelligence and helps the child gain insight into human behavior. Storytelling also promotes language learning by enriching learners' vocabulary and acquires new language structures.

According to the teacher from school A said that:

Together with developing speaking and listening skills also many stories have a lesson inside. For example, there are short stories about animals which have some lessons to the pupils such as the effects of selfish and stealing. So, those stories can help to promote pupil's behavior (interview, teacher school A).

Also the respondents from school C back up the point by insisting that:

Short story especially concerned with behavior or moral characters have direct impacts toward pupils' moral character. Thus, storytelling especially those concerned with moral behavior help to promote pupils moral character in preprimary school (interview, teacher school C).

According to the discussion, storytelling has a great impact toward pupil behavior because it contains a lot of examples. Also, it is better to use short story in advising young pupils rather than punishment. Also, the findings from observation in school C shows that, pupils love story and they are very happy when teacher tell story. This can support the previous information obtained through interview with teachers.

Discussion

The findings show the methods used by teachers to promote pupils' moral characters in pre-primary schools which included: collaboration, teaching by examples, parental involvement, presence of reward, punishment, storytelling, counseling, religion and good relationship. The findings show that; When teachers provide their learners with group works such as games and sport creates the spirit of cooperation and moral conduct after completing their education. This finding is in line with that of Piaget, (2004), who said, collaboration enables pupils

to engage actively in the learning process by conversing with one another and considering different perspectives. It fosters personal connection between pupils and the subject matter, aiding them in thinking in a more objective manner (Piaget, 2004). Religion plays a significant role in the personal growth and well-being of students, as well as in fostering community unity by encouraging mutual respect and tolerance in a multicultural environment. According to Chowdhury *et al.* (2019), Religion plays a crucial role as it helps students cultivate respect and sensitivity towards others, especially those whose beliefs and faiths differ from their own. Therefore, at every stage of religious education, pupils should be encouraged to develop: self-awareness, respect for everyone, open-mindedness, and a sense of appreciation and wonder (Chowdhury, *et al.,* 2019). Likewise, Fullard, (2016), stressed that religion helps a pupil to recognize and valuing the worth of each individual, developing a sense of community, the ability to build up relationships with others. Also religion to great extent helps pupil to ignore bullying, cheating, deceit, cruelty, irresponsibility, dishonesty and presentation abilities.

Gooderhamr (2002), emphasized that, it is preferable for pupils to learn to do the right thing based on what feels right or what brings happiness to others. For instance, you might commend your students for tidying up the classroom. In this way, they learn that to clean classroom is appreciated by others. Conversely, you could offer her an ice cream cone as a reward for cleaning her classroom. While this may motivate her to complete the task, she might only do it to receive the ice cream, without grasping the importance of maintaining a clean classroom. Positive reinforcement encourages your pupil to behave well in order to gain your approval. It will only spoil your pupil if you offer rewards or praise that they have not earned (Gooderhamr, 2002). According to Yusof, *et al.*. (2018), a reward is something that you give your child after a behavior is completed. Rewards are part of a plan to help a pupil learn new behaviors. Therefore, the behavior which is rewarded tends to be repeated, behavior which is not rewarded tends to be weak (Yusof *et al.,* 2018). The findings are consistent with that of Hamdi *et al.* (2022), who asserted that there are fundamentally four types of punishment: physical punishment, which includes slapping, spanking, switching, paddling, and the use of a belt or hairbrush; verbal punishment, characterized by shaming, ridiculing, employing harsh words, and uttering phrases like "I don't love you"; withholding rewards, exemplified by statements such as "You can't watch television if you don't complete your homework"; and penalties, which might involve consequences like "You broke the window, so you will need to compensate for it using money from your parents." (Hamdi *et al.,* 2022).

Educators occasionally perceive punishment as a useful strategy for managing classroom behavior, particularly in the short run. Since punishment often swiftly curtails problematic behaviors, teachers are consequently positively reinforced for employing it (Hafizi & Wiyono, 2023). Consequently, based on the findings, it is evident that school counselors offer individuals and groups guidance in career, personal, social, and educational matters. Vriez, (1999), also said, school counselors assist pupils, from elementary school to post-secondary education. They support pupils with various individuals and organizations to enhance academic, career, personal, and social growth. Counsellors employ interviews, counselling sessions, interest and aptitude assessment tests, and additional techniques to assess and guide students. They also manage career information centers and career education initiatives. Frequently, counsellors assist students facing academic and social development challenges or other specific needs (Vriez, 1999).

Moreover, findings revealed that counseling is also the effective method used by teachers to promote pre-primary pupils' moral characters. Such conception about counseling is also reflected by Kim *et al.* (2019), who said that, school counsellors across all levels assist students in comprehending and managing social, behavioral, and personal issues. These counsellors focus on preventive and developmental counselling to promote students' personal, social, and academic development, equipping them with essential life skills to address challenges before they escalate. According to Kim *et al.* (2019), working alongside teachers and administrators, they ensure that the curriculum meets the academic and developmental requirements of the students. In contrast, elementary school counsellors engage less in vocational and academic counselling compared to their high school counterparts (Kim, *et al.,* 2019).

Birhan *et al.* (2021), stressed that, a teacher as a 'moral agent' must set an example by the way they speak to pupils and the effort they put into their work. Thus, a teacher must teach by examples the difference between rights and wrong. Children observe your behavior constantly. They notice the way you interact with both peers and adults. They witness how you manage feelings of anger or frustration. They pay attention to how you handle moments of sadness and happiness (Birhan *et al.,* 2021). They pay attention to the way you express "I'm sorry." Your approach to navigating life's highs and lows imparts valuable lessons to children about appropriate behavior and interpersonal relationships. Also Johnson, (2000), stated that, "Teachers serve as significant role models for the youth. A key principle in encouraging positive behavior is to set a good example. For example, when a teacher raises their voice, students are likely to respond by becoming louder." The actions of teachers can occasionally trigger negative behavior in young students (Johnson, 2000).

According to González, *et al.* (2024), within an ecological framework, the home and school settings are characterized as separate microsystems, whereas parental involvement is regarded as a mesosystem that arises from the interactions between these essential microsystems. While each environment can affect a child on its own, the combined effect of home and school settings creates a

distinct influence. This study views parental involvement as a consequence of the interaction between the impacts of both school and home environments, promoting a seamless connection between the two contexts. (González *et al.,* 2024). According to Nucci *et al.,* (1991), parental engagement can help to create consistent disciplinary methods between home and school. Furthermore, the engagement of parents can have a beneficial impact on children's conduct, both in the home environment and within the classroom, as parents and educators work together to enhance social abilities and address behavioral challenges (Molchanov, 2013). For example, a recent study of Head Start students revealed that parent involvement was associated with lower conduct problems (Fantuzzo *et al.,* 2004).

Story telling was another finding established in this study. It was found that children love story and they can understand better through the use of story. Johnson, (2000), stressed that, children must understand the reasons behind actions, and children's stories can be one of the most effective methods to instil values in young minds while providing them with opportunities to develop their reasoning skills. By engaging with examples from these stories, they can reflect on their own experiences. The narratives come in various forms, including fairy tales, tales from sacred texts, cultural stories, international narratives, and both written and oral traditions. Many scholars and educators advocate for the use of literature as a means to fulfil the goals of moral education (Aristostle, 1988). Numerous well-known books advocate for the use of literature as a resource for educators and parents who wish to impart moral teachings (Erchul, 2008). Through engaging in story reading or storytelling activities, pupils become acquainted not only with various examples of commendable and reprehensible actions, rules, and consequences, but they also gain insights into the motivations behind actions, problem-solving techniques, and the importance of considering their choices before acting. Furthermore, stories provide enjoyment for both students and teachers (Power *et al.,* 2008).

Narratives can serve as a means of moral instruction for young children. Through stories, children discover their own religious, social, and cultural values, as well as those of others. They engage in questioning, contemplation, and decision-making regarding these values. This process teaches them to become responsible moral individuals who not only perform good deeds but also understand the reasons and methods behind their actions (Chein, 1972).

CONCLUSION

Although the issue of promoting moral characters to pupils have been debated for many years, still its implementation is questionable throughout the country due to lack of emphasize from the stakeholders. Promotion of pre-primary pupil's moral characters needs high cooperation. It can be achieved through collective efforts between teachers, parents, society, community and other educational stakeholders. It has established that promotion of pre-primary pupils' moral characters is less effective in absence of concerted combined effort of various actors, such as government, educational officers, teachers, pupils and parents. Failure to develop and promote moral character among pupils in early stage especially in preprimary schools will influence a school and community at large into moral disintegration. Since the current study did not exhaust all matters related to moral character in preprimary schools, there are issues that emanate from study that require further investigation. In addition, the further study could be conducted that will cover a larger sample size and over a long span of time so as to expand knowledge on the effectiveness of the methods used by teachers to promote pre-primary pupils' moral characters. Since the current study had its focus on pre-primary schools, further studies need to be conducted in primary as well as secondary schools to investigate on the effectiveness of the methods used by teachers to promote pupils' moral characters in their respective schools. Lastly, since this study employed qualitative methodology, similar study could be conducted using quantitative or mixed methodology.

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