

Original Research

The impact of teachers' poor living standards on educational quality in Ethiopia: Evidence from teachers in Addis Ababa

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Abstract: This study aims to investigate the relationship between teachers' living standards and the quality of education in Ethiopia, with a particular focus on the experiences of teachers in Addis Ababa. Employing a mixed-methods approach, this research incorporates data from 300 quantitative respondents and 30 qualitative interviews. Quantitative surveys assess the impact of living conditions on teachers' performance, while qualitative interviews provide deeper insights into their personal experiences and perceptions. The research reveals a significant correlation between poor living conditions and diminished educational quality. Teachers report experiencing high levels of stress and burnout, which negatively affect their job satisfaction and instructional effectiveness. Qualitative data further highlight the emotional and psychological burdens resulting from financial instability, which hamper teachers' capacity to engage students and deliver quality education. The findings underscore the urgent need for policy reforms aimed at improving teachers' living standards. Ethical approval was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee, and participants provided written informed consent. By enhancing their welfare, stakeholders can create a more supportive environment that benefits both educators and students, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes throughout the country. This research contributes to the existing literature by highlighting the critical role of teachers' well-being in the educational system, arguing that investments in teachers' living conditions are essential for fostering broader educational success in Ethiopia.

Keywords: Challenges, Impact, Living standards, Quality, Teacher welfare, Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, Mixed-methods, Burnout

1. Background of the study

Education is a fundamental pillar for the development of any nation, and in Ethiopia, it plays a crucial role in shaping the socio-economic landscape (Teferra, et al., 2017; Yizengaw, 2004). Over the past two decades, Ethiopia has made significant progress in expanding access to education, particularly in urban areas such as Addis Ababa (Lamson-Hall, et al., 2019). However, the quality of education remains a pressing concern, influenced by

various factors, including the living standards of teachers (Alemayehu, 2021; Negash, 2006).

In Addis Ababa, teachers are often regarded as critical agents of change (Brandt, & Weigele, 2021); yet many face challenging living conditions characterized by low salaries, inadequate housing, and limited access to basic amenities (Mengistu, 2012). Reports indicate that a significant proportion of teachers in the capital live below the poverty line, which affects not only their personal well-being but also their professional efficacy (Ha, 2015). Inadequate

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compensation and poor living standards contribute to high levels of stress and burnout among educators, adversely impacting their teaching performance and, consequently, the quality of education that students receive (Belay, et al., 2023).

Despite being one of the fastest-growing economies in Africa, Ethiopia continues to struggle with high poverty rates, particularly in urban areas (Assefa, 2025; Mezgebo, 2020). Although the education budget has increased, it remains insufficient to meet the needs of teachers, particularly regarding salaries and professional development (Giertz, 2016). Many teachers in Addis Ababa are compelled to take on additional jobs to make ends meet, which leads reduced focus and engagement in their teaching roles (Shishigu, 2015). This dual burden can severely affect their effectiveness in the classroom and the overall learning experience for students (Negash, 2006).

The socio-cultural dynamics in Ethiopia further complicate the educational landscape (Assefa, 2022; Engida, 2015). Addis Ababa, as a melting pot of diverse ethnic groups and languages, requires teachers to be well-prepared and culturally competent (Yacob, 2018). However, many educators lack access to professional development opportunities that would enhance their skills in these areas (Abebe, & Woldehanna, 2013). The gap in support is worsened by their precarious living conditions, which distract from their primary responsibilities of teaching and mentoring students (Farah, 2022).

Research indicates a strong correlation between teacher welfare and educational quality (Hunger, et al., 2016). Studies from various countries suggest that when teachers are satisfied with their living conditions and feel valued, they are more likely to perform effectively and positively influence student achievement (Glewwe, & Kremer, 2006). In Addis Ababa, however, the prevailing discourse often overlooks the critical importance of teachers' living standards in discussions about educational quality (Kahsay, 2012).

Despite the recognized need for improved educational outcomes, policymakers frequently focus on structural reforms such as curriculum changes and infrastructure development while neglecting the essential role of teachers' well-being (Glewwe, & Muralidharan, 2016). This oversight may lead to superficial improvements that do not address the root causes of educational challenges (Assefa, & Zenebe, 2024; Mintrop, 2004).

While some research has examined the challenges facing teachers in Ethiopia, (Tulu, 2019) including studies on salary disparities and working conditions (Mengistu, 2012), there is notable lack of comprehensive mixed-methods studies that explore the direct impact of poor living standards on educational quality, particularly in urban settings such as Addis Ababa. Most existing studies focus exclusively on either quantitative data or qualitative narratives, failing to integrate both perspectives for a holistic understanding. Although these studies offer isolated qualitative or quantitative data, they do not combine these perspectives

to show how teachers' daily survival strategies (qualitative) directly correlate with objective performance metrics (quantitative). This mixed-methods design provides a unique 'triangulated' contribution, revealing that poor living standards are not merely a personal struggle but a systemic barrier to instructional consistency.

Moreover, the specific ways in which teachers' living conditions affect their teaching effectiveness and student outcomes remain underexplored. For instance, the interplay between financial stress, job satisfaction, and pedagogical practices requires further investigation. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing policies that not only enhance teacher welfare but also improve educational quality across the board (Hénard, & Roseveare, 2012).

In summary, while Ethiopia has made progress in expanding access to education, particularly in urban areas like Addis Ababa, the quality of education remains critically compromised by the poor living standards of teachers. The existing literature highlights the importance of addressing teacher welfare to enhance educational outcomes. However, significant gaps remain in the research, particularly regarding a comprehensive examination of how these living conditions directly impact teaching quality. This study aims to fill that gap by employing a mixed-methods approach to provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between teachers' poor living standards and educational quality in Ethiopia, with a specific focus on evidence from teachers in Addis Ababa.

2. Research objectives

- To explore the relationship between teachers' living standards and the quality of their teaching methods in Addis Ababa. This objective aims to identify how various aspects of living conditions, such as housing, financial stability, and access to resources, influence the effectiveness and creativity of teachers' instructional practices.
- To assess the impact of teachers' living conditions on their access to professional development opportunities in Addis Ababa.

3. Basic research questions

- How do teachers' living standards in Addis Ababa influence the quality of their teaching methods?
- How do teachers' living conditions affect their access to professional development opportunities in Addis Ababa?

4. Significance of the study

This study is significant as it provides crucial insights

for policymakers seeking to improve teachers' welfare, which directly influences educational quality. By exploring the relationship between living conditions and teaching effectiveness, the findings can inform strategies to enhance instructional practices and professional development opportunities. Furthermore, the study addresses issues of teacher retention and satisfaction, guiding resource allocation to areas that significantly impact educators' lives. It also raises community awareness of the challenges teachers face, fostering collaborative efforts to improve their working conditions. Ultimately, this research serves as a foundational piece for future studies on the broader implications of teacher living standards, empowering educators to advocate for better support and conditions in the teaching profession.

5. Theoretical framework

This study is based on two key theoretical frameworks: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Social Cognitive Theory.

5.1 Maslow's hierarchy of needs

Maslow's theory (Zalenski, & Raspa, 2006; Reid-Cunningham, 2008), posits that individuals are motivated by a hierarchy of needs, starting with basic physiological needs and moving up to higher-order psychological needs, culminating in self-actualization (James, 2019). While Maslow's model is sometimes criticized for its Western-centric origins, it remains highly relevant in the Ethiopian educational context. In Addis Ababa, the sharp rise in the cost of living directly threatens teachers' physiological needs (food and housing). Without satisfying these 'deficiency needs,' teachers cannot realistically reach the 'growth needs' required for pedagogical innovation. In the context of this study, teachers' living standards in Addis Ababa directly influence their ability to meet these foundational needs (Roseman, 2018). For instance, if teachers are struggling to secure adequate housing, healthcare, or sufficient income, their physiological and safety needs remain unmet (Jensen, 2009). This lack of security can lead to stress and distraction, which in turn diminishes their capacity to engage in effective teaching and professional development (Castle, P., & Buckler, 2009). As teachers find it challenging to achieve higher-order needs, such as esteem and self-actualization, their motivation to excel in their roles and contribute positively to student learning is significantly impaired (Shaw, 2008). Thus, the study illustrates how inadequate living conditions prevent teachers from reaching their full potential, ultimately affecting the quality of education provided to students.

5.2 Social Cognitive Theory

Social Cognitive Theory was developed by Albert Bandura. He introduced this theory in the 1960s,

emphasizing the importance of observational learning, imitation, and modeling in behavior development (Colledge, & Colledge, 2002). Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes the interplay between personal factors, environmental influences, and behavior (Bandura, 1991). This framework suggests that teachers' living conditions impact not only their professional practices but also their perceptions of available resources and opportunities for growth (Martin, 2004). For example, teachers in poor living situations may observe their peers struggling similarly, leading to a collective sense of discouragement and reduced motivation to pursue professional development opportunities (Appova, & Arbaugh, 2018). Conversely, teachers with better living conditions may feel more empowered to engage in continuous learning and adopt innovative teaching methods, positively influencing their students' educational experiences (Reeve, 2009). The theory highlights the importance of a supportive environment, emphasizing that when teachers feel secure and valued in their personal lives, they are more likely to invest in their professional growth, leading to improved educational quality in the classroom (Bandura, 2001).

By integrating these two theoretical frameworks, the study provides a comprehensive understanding of how teachers' poor living standards in Addis Ababa not only hinder their personal well-being but also adversely affect their teaching effectiveness and, consequently, the overall quality of education in Ethiopia.

6. Literature review

6.1 Overview of educational quality in Ethiopia

Educational quality in Ethiopia has been a focal point of national development efforts, particularly following the significant expansion of access to education in recent decades (Kahsay, 2012). Despite increased enrollment rates at primary and secondary levels, challenges persist that hinder the overall quality of education (Assefa, 2024; Frost, & Rolleston, 2013). Key issues include inadequate infrastructure, a shortage of qualified teachers, and limited access to educational resources (Yirdaw, 2016). The curriculum often lacks relevance to local contexts, and there is a critical need for professional development to ensure teachers are equipped with effective teaching methodologies (Alemu, et al., 2021). Additionally, disparities between urban and rural education quality remain pronounced, with urban areas like Addis Ababa generally experiencing better resources and facilities (Devonald, et al., 2021). These factors contribute to varying student performance levels, raising concerns about the effectiveness of the educational system in preparing students for future challenges (Kuh, et al., 2006).

6.2 Definition of living standards and their components

Living standards refer to the level of wealth, comfort, material goods, and necessities available to a specific socioeconomic class in a given geographic area (Montgomery, et al., 2000). In this study, living standards encompass several key components: income levels, reflecting teachers' average salaries and financial stability, which directly influence their ability to meet basic needs (Voth, 2004); housing quality, including the safety, adequacy, and affordability of living arrangements that impact teachers' well-being and focus; access to basic services, such as healthcare, education for their children, and transportation, which are essential for maintaining a decent quality of life (Gonyea, 2006); social support networks that provide emotional and practical assistance, enhancing teachers' resilience and job satisfaction; and the work environment, which includes classroom resources, administrative support, and professional development opportunities (Diab, & Green, 2024). Understanding these components is vital for analyzing how teachers' living standards affect their teaching effectiveness and the overall quality of education in Addis Ababa.

6.3 Previous research on teacher welfare and educational outcomes

Research on teacher welfare and its impact on educational outcomes has received increasing attention in recent years (Rwigema, 2022). Studies worldwide have demonstrated that teachers with better living conditions tend to exhibit higher levels of job satisfaction, motivation, and commitment to their profession (Toropova, et al., 2021). In Ethiopia, however, empirical evidence on this relationship remains limited. Some studies have highlighted the challenges faced by teachers, including low salaries and inadequate support, which lead to high turnover rates and diminished teaching quality (Giertz, 2016).

Research has also indicated that when teachers experience financial instability and poor living conditions, their ability to engage students effectively declines, resulting in lower student achievement (Jensen, 2009). Additionally, findings suggest that professional development opportunities are often inaccessible to teachers living in poverty, further exacerbating the issue of educational quality (Burde, et al., 2014). By examining these previous studies, this research aims to fill the gaps in understanding how teachers' living standards specifically influence educational quality in Addis Ababa, contributing valuable insights to inform policy and practice.

7. Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach,

integrating both quantitative and qualitative research to investigate how teachers' living standards influence educational quality in Addis Ababa. The methodology provided a detailed examination of the relationship between teachers' socioeconomic conditions and their effectiveness in the classroom. Overall, the study utilized a concurrent mixed-methods design. Of 320 surveys distributed, 300 valid responses were received, resulting in a response rate of 93.75%.

7.1 Population and sample

The target population comprised teachers from primary and secondary schools across Addis Ababa. To ensure diverse representation, a stratified random sampling method was employed. This method categorized schools into different strata based on their type (public vs. private) and location (urban vs. semi-urban).

The sample included approximately 300 teachers surveyed to gather a robust data set for statistical analysis. This sample size was considered sufficient to achieve meaningful insights and ensure the reliability of the findings. From this group, 30 teachers were selected for in-depth qualitative interviews, capturing a range of experiences and perspectives. The sample size of 300 was determined using a simplified formula for proportions with a 5% margin of error and a 95% confidence level. A formal power analysis was not conducted; however, this size is consistent with similar educational research in the region to ensure statistical reliability.

7.2 Data collection methods

7.2.1 Quantitative data collection

A structured questionnaire was developed as the primary tool for quantitative data collection, covering key areas such as demographics - including age, gender, years of teaching experience, and educational qualifications - to understand the respondents' backgrounds; living standards, with questions on monthly income, housing conditions (type of housing, access to clean water and electricity), and availability of basic services (healthcare, transportation); and educational quality metrics, where respondents provided self-reported measures of teaching effectiveness, student engagement levels, and perceived impacts on student performance, including dropout rates. The surveys were administered only in person to facilitate direct interaction and encourage participation, allowing researchers to clarify any questions participants had, which ensured a higher response rate. Data from the surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics, calculating the mean and standard deviation for key variables to summarize the central tendency and variability of teachers' living standards and educational quality metrics.

7.2.2 Qualitative data collection

In-depth interviews were conducted with the selected 30 teachers using a semi-structured format, which allowed for flexibility in exploring specific topics while ensuring that key themes were addressed. The interviews focused on personal experiences regarding living conditions and the challenges faced by the teachers, their perceptions of how these living conditions impacted their teaching effectiveness and the educational outcomes for their students, as well as their suggestions for improving living conditions to enhance educational quality.

7.3 Data analysis

The analysis of the data collected from the surveys and interviews was conducted in two main stages.

7.3.1 Quantitative analysis

Quantitative data collected through the surveys were analyzed using statistical software such as SPSS, where descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, were computed to summarize the demographic characteristics, living standards, and educational quality metrics of the respondents, providing insights into the average conditions faced by teachers and the variability in their responses.

7.3.2 Qualitative analysis

Qualitative data from interviews and focus groups were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and then subjected to thematic analysis, which involved several steps: initial coding to identify key themes emerging from the data, with codes developed based on both the interview guide and emergent themes, followed by subsequent rounds of coding that refined these themes to identify patterns and relationships, ultimately providing deeper insights into teachers' experiences and perceptions.

7.4 Qualitative rigor and ethics

Qualitative data were collected through 30 semi-structured interviews. To ensure trustworthiness, 'member checking' was performed by sharing summary transcripts with 10% of the participants to verify accuracy. Institutional ethics approval was secured, and participants were informed that their anonymity is protected.

7.5 Survey instrumentation and scoring rubric

The quantitative survey utilized a 5-point Likert scale. To interpret the mean scores provided in the findings, the following scoring rubric was applied:

- 1.00 – 1.80: Strongly Disagree (Negligible Impact)

- 1.81 – 2.60: Disagree (Low Impact)
- 2.61 – 3.40: Neutral (Moderate Impact)
- 3.41 – 4.20: Agree (High Impact)
- 4.21 – 5.00: Strongly Agree (Critical Impact)

7.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations were paramount throughout the study, with informed consent obtained from all participants prior to their involvement; they were provided with comprehensive information about the study's purpose, procedures, and their rights, including the assurance of confidentiality regarding their responses and the right to withdraw from the study at any point without repercussions, all of which adhered to the ethical guidelines set by institutional review boards to protect participants' rights and well-being.

7.7 Limitations

This study acknowledged several limitations that could impact the findings, including the potential for self-reporting bias, where participants might have overstated or understated their living conditions and teaching effectiveness, affecting the accuracy of the data collected, as well as concerns about generalizability, since the findings were specific to Addis Ababa and may not apply to other regions of Ethiopia or different educational contexts due to the unique socioeconomic dynamics of the capital city.

7.8 Pilot testing of the survey questionnaire

Before the full-scale study, a pilot test of the survey questionnaire was carried out with a small group of instructors to assess the questions' efficacy, relevance, and clarity. By identifying any ambiguities or challenges in the questionnaire during this first testing, researchers were able to make the required changes to enhance its readability and flow. In order to ensure that the final tool effectively captured the required data on teachers' living conditions and instructional quality, feedback from the pilot participants was crucial in helping to refine the questions. Additionally, internal consistency techniques were used to assess the survey instrument's reliability, with a particular focus on the four suggested internationalization measures, as shown in Table 1 below.

As seen in Table 1 above, both variables showed Cronbach's Alpha values more than 0.7 (more precisely, 0.79 and 0.81). These numbers imply that the instrument's internal consistency is very good.

7.9 Pilot testing of the interview

A pilot test of the interview questions was conducted

with a small group of teachers to assess the clarity and effectiveness of the semi-structured format. This preliminary testing helped identify any confusing or leading questions, allowing researchers to refine the wording and structure for better comprehension. Feedback from pilot participants provided valuable insights into the relevance

of the questions, ensuring that the final interview guide effectively captured the nuances of teachers' experiences and perceptions regarding their living conditions and educational quality. These adjustments enhanced the overall quality and reliability of the data collected during the main study.

Table 1. The reliability of the scales

Instrument	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items	Acceptability
Teachers' Living Standards and Quality of Teaching	0.79	5	Acceptable
Teachers' Living Conditions and Access to Professional Development	0.81	5	Acceptable

Table 2. Teachers' living standards and quality of teaching in Addis Ababa

No	Items	N	Mean	SD
1	As a teacher, my financial instability negatively impacts my ability to focus on quality teaching.	300	4.31	0.83
2	A shortage of access to basic living necessities (e.g., housing, food) affects negatively my availability of teaching resources.	300	4.12	0.77
3	As a teacher, my living standards negatively influence my overall job satisfaction and motivation to teach effectively.	300	4.02	0.81
4	As a teacher, my living standards negatively affect my opportunities for professional development (e.g., training, workshops).	300	3.71	0.82
5	As a teacher, my low living standards prevent me from improving the quality of my teaching methods in the classroom.	300	4.22	0.75
	Overall Average	300	4.08	0.8

8. Findings

8.1 How do teachers' living standards in Addis Ababa influence their quality teaching methods?

8.1.1 Financial instability

The finding for item number 1 from Table 2 shows that the mean score for the statement "As a teacher, my financial instability negatively impacts my ability to focus on quality teaching" is 4.31, with a standard deviation of 0.83.

This mean score indicates strong agreement among teachers regarding the negative influence of financial instability on their teaching effectiveness. The high rating suggests that many teachers feel their financial challenges significantly hinder their ability to concentrate on delivering quality education.

The standard deviation of 0.83 reflects relatively low variability in the responses, indicating that most teachers share a similar perspective on this issue. This consistency suggests widespread recognition of the impact of financial instability, highlighting a collective concern within the teaching community. The viewpoint expressed below by

one of the interview participants closely paralleled the findings from the quantitative data:

"My financial instability really distracts me from focusing on quality teaching. When I'm constantly worried about bills and making ends meet, it's hard to concentrate on lesson planning or engaging with my students fully. I feel like I'm just going through the motions sometimes."

(Interviewee number 27, August 2024)

The findings emphasize the crucial connection between financial stability and teaching quality, illustrating how unmet basic needs such as adequate housing, healthcare, and income can cause stress and distraction for teachers in Addis Ababa. This not only hinders their ability to engage in effective teaching and professional development but also limits their motivation to achieve higher-order needs like esteem and self-actualization from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Additionally, Social Cognitive Theory highlights that challenging living conditions can create a discouraging environment, reducing motivation for growth. Therefore, addressing financial challenges through targeted interventions is essential to empower teachers, enhance their professional capabilities, and ultimately improve educational quality for students.

8.1.2 Access to resources

The finding for item number 2 from Table 2 shows that the mean score for the statement "A shortage of access to basic living necessities (e.g., housing, food) negatively affects my availability of teaching resources" is 4.12, with a standard deviation of 0.77.

This mean score indicates strong agreement among teachers regarding the impact of inadequate access to basic living necessities on their availability of teaching resources. The score suggests that many teachers view this shortage as a significant barrier to their ability to obtain the resources necessary for effective teaching.

The standard deviation of 0.77 indicates low variability in the responses, meaning that there is a consensus among teachers about this issue. Most respondents appear to share a similar view on how the lack of essential living conditions affects their teaching capabilities. The viewpoint expressed by one of the interview participants in the following statement bore a striking resemblance to the findings drawn from the analysis of the quantitative data:

"A shortage of access to basic living necessities, like housing and food, really impacts my availability of teaching resources. When I'm struggling to meet my own needs, I can't invest in supplies or materials that would enhance my classroom. It's frustrating because I want to provide the best for my students."

(Interviewee number 20, August 2024)

These findings underscore the critical role of meeting basic living necessities in enabling access to teaching resources, as framed by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Social Cognitive Theory. According to Maslow, when teachers' fundamental needs such as adequate housing, healthcare, and income are unmet, their capacity to focus on professional development and teaching effectiveness is diminished. Meanwhile, Social Cognitive Theory further suggests that teachers in stable living conditions are more likely to feel empowered and motivated to pursue professional growth, which positively influences their teaching practices. By addressing these basic shortages not only supports teachers in meeting their essential needs but also enhances their capacity to improve educational outcomes for their students.

8.1.3 Job satisfaction

The finding for item number 3 from Table 2 shows that the mean score for the statement "As a teacher, my living standards negatively influence my overall job satisfaction and motivation to teach effectively" is 4.02, with a standard deviation of 0.81.

This mean score indicates strong agreement among teachers that their living standards significantly affect their job satisfaction and motivation. A score of 4.02 suggests that many teachers feel poor living conditions negatively affect their enthusiasm and commitment to teaching.

The standard deviation of 0.81 reflects relatively low

variability in the responses, indicating that most teachers share a similar sentiment regarding the influence of living standards on their job satisfaction. This consistency highlights a common concern within the teaching community about how living conditions can impact their professional lives. An interview participant exhibited a remarkable similarity to the findings from the quantitative data:

"My living standards really affect my overall job satisfaction and motivation to teach effectively. When I'm worried about my financial situation, it's hard to stay motivated in the classroom. I find myself feeling frustrated and less engaged, which ultimately impacts my students."

(Interviewee number 3, August 2024)

These findings highlight the essential role of addressing living standards to enhance teachers' job satisfaction and motivation, particularly through the perspectives of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Social Cognitive Theory. According to Maslow, when teachers' basic needs such as adequate housing and financial security are met, they are more likely to achieve higher levels of motivation and job satisfaction. This foundation enables them to focus on professional development and teaching effectiveness. Social Cognitive Theory further emphasizes that a positive living environment can empower teachers, strengthening their belief in their abilities and encouraging them to engage actively in their roles. By improving teachers' living conditions, we not only meet their basic needs but also foster a more positive teaching atmosphere, leading to improved educational outcomes for students.

8.1.4 Professional development

The finding for item number 4 from Table 2 shows that the mean score for the statement "As a teacher, my living standards negatively affect my opportunities for professional development (e.g., training, workshops)" is 3.71, with a standard deviation of 0.82.

This mean score indicates a moderate level of agreement among teachers regarding the impact of their living standards on their access to professional development opportunities. A score of 3.71 suggests that while many teachers recognize that poor living conditions can hinder their ability to participate in training and workshops, the sentiment may not be as uniformly strong as in previous items.

The standard deviation of 0.82 indicates a moderate level of variability in the responses, suggesting that while there is a general agreement, some teachers may feel less impacted than others. This variability could reflect differences in individual circumstances or perceptions about professional development opportunities.

"I feel that my living standards really limit my opportunities for professional development, like training and workshops. When I'm struggling to manage my daily expenses, I often can't justify spending time or money on these opportunities,

even though I know they're important for my growth as a teacher."

(Interviewee number 23, August 2024)

These findings underscore the necessity of addressing living standards to enhance teachers' access to professional development, as framed by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Social Cognitive Theory. According to Maslow, when teachers' basic needs such as adequate housing and financial security are met, they can focus on higher-order needs like esteem and self-actualization, which are essential for professional growth. Social Cognitive Theory further illustrates that supportive living conditions enable teachers to pursue development opportunities, as they feel more confident and capable. By improving living conditions, educational institutions can create an environment that supports both personal and professional growth, ultimately enhancing teaching practices and benefiting student outcomes.

8.1.5 Teaching quality

The finding for item number 5 from Table 2 shows that the mean score for the statement "As a teacher, my low living standards prevent me from improving the quality of my teaching methods in the classroom" is 4.22, with a standard deviation of 0.75.

This mean score indicates a strong agreement among teachers regarding the detrimental impact of low living standards on their ability to improve their teaching methods. A score of 4.22 suggests that many teachers feel their living conditions significantly hinder their capacity to innovate and improve their instructional practices.

The standard deviation of 0.75 reflects low variability in responses, indicating a consensus among teachers regarding this issue. Most respondents appear to share a similar view that low living standards are a barrier to the development of effective teaching methods. The viewpoint expressed below by one of the interview participants closely paralleled the findings derived from the quantitative data:

"My low living standards really hold me back from improving my teaching methods. When I'm constantly worried about making ends meet, I find it hard to focus on finding new strategies or resources to enhance my classroom practices."

(Interviewee number 11, August 2024)

These findings emphasize the importance of addressing low living standards to improve the quality of teaching, as understood through Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Social Cognitive Theory. Maslow's framework suggests that when teachers' basic needs such as adequate housing and financial stability are unmet, their ability to focus on higher-order needs like professional development and self-actualization is hindered. This lack of support can diminish their motivation and effectiveness in the classroom. Similarly, Social Cognitive Theory posits that teachers in improved living conditions are more likely

to feel empowered and motivated to pursue professional growth, positively influencing their teaching practices. By enhancing teachers' living conditions, educational institutions can foster a more conducive environment for professional development, ultimately leading to better educational outcomes for students.

8.2 How do teachers' living conditions affect their access to professional development opportunities in Addis Ababa?

8.2.1 Impact of living conditions on professional development

The results for item number 1 from Table 3 reveal that the mean score for the statement, "As a teacher, my inadequate living conditions negatively influence my ability to attend professional development programs," is 4.05, with a standard deviation of 0.72.

This mean score indicates a significant level of agreement among teachers regarding the adverse effect of inadequate living conditions on their ability to participate in professional development. A score of 4.05 suggests that a considerable number of teachers feel that their living situations are a substantial obstacle to accessing opportunities for professional advancement.

The standard deviation of 0.72 points to a narrow range of responses, suggesting that there is strong alignment in opinions among the respondents. This indicates that most teachers recognize inadequate living conditions as a common barrier to their professional development. The following perspective articulated by one of the interview participants closely resembled the results obtained from the quantitative data.

"I find that my inadequate living conditions really hinder my ability to attend professional development programs. Between worrying about my living situation and the added stress it brings, it's hard to focus on finding and participating in these opportunities."

(Interviewee number 5, August 2024)

These findings highlight the critical need to address inadequate living conditions, drawing on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Social Cognitive Theory. According to Maslow, when teachers' basic needs, such as safe housing and financial security, are not met, their ability to engage in professional development is severely restricted. This restriction suppresses their motivation to grow and improve their teaching practices. Social Cognitive Theory further supports this perspective, suggesting that teachers who experience stable living conditions are more likely to feel empowered and motivated to participate in professional development programs. By improving these circumstances, educational institutions can foster a supportive environment that enhances teachers' professional growth and, consequently, leads to improved educational outcomes for students.

8.2.2 Transportation and accessibility

The results for item number 2 from Table 3 indicate that the mean score for the statement, "As a teacher, the quality of my living conditions negatively affects my access to transportation for professional development opportunities," is 4.32, with a standard deviation of 0.81.

This mean score reflects a strong agreement among teachers the detrimental impact of their living conditions on transportation access for professional development. A score of 4.32 suggests that many teachers believe their living situations significantly hinder their ability to travel to these important opportunities.

The standard deviation of 0.81 shows a moderate level of variation in responses, indicating that while there is general consensus, some differences in experiences exist among teachers. Nonetheless, the overall trend remains clear: inadequate living conditions are perceived as a barrier to accessing necessary transportation for professional development. The viewpoint shared by one of the interviewees closely mirrored the findings obtained from the quantitative data:

"The quality of my living conditions makes it really difficult for me to access reliable transportation for professional

development opportunities. I often rely on public transit, and when I have to deal with unreliable services or long travel times, it discourages me from attending workshops or training sessions."

(Interviewee number19, August 2024)

These findings underscore the importance of improving living conditions to enhance teachers' access to transportation, framed within Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Social Cognitive Theory. According to Maslow, meeting basic needs, including safe and reliable transportation, is essential for teachers to feel secure and capable of pursuing professional development opportunities. When these foundational needs are addressed, teachers can focus on higher-order goals, such as improving their skills and effectiveness. Social Cognitive Theory further emphasizes that when teachers have reliable transportation, they are more likely to engage in professional development, as they feel empowered and have better access to resources. By addressing transportation issues through improved living conditions, schools and policymakers can facilitate greater participation in professional development, ultimately benefiting both teachers and their students.

Table 3. Teachers' living conditions and access to professional development

No	Items	N	Mean	SD
1	As a teacher, my inadequate living conditions negatively influence my ability to attend professional development programs.	300	4.05	0.72
2	As a teacher, the quality of my living conditions negatively affects my access to transportation for professional development opportunities.	300	4.32	0.81
3	As a teacher, my poor living conditions limit the time I have to pursue professional development.	300	4.11	0.77
4	As a teacher, my poor living conditions negatively impact my financial ability to participate in professional development activities.	300	4.27	0.89
5	As a teacher, my poor living conditions negatively affect the support I receive from educational institutions for professional development.	300	4.12	1.05
	Overall Average	300	4.17	0.85

8.2.3 Time availability

The findings for item number 3 from Table 3 show that the mean score for the statement, "As a teacher, my poor living conditions limit the time I have to pursue professional development," is 4.11, with a standard deviation of 0.77.

This mean score indicates a significant level of agreement among teachers regarding the restrictive impact of poor living conditions on their ability to dedicate time to professional development. A score of 4.11 suggests that many teachers feel that their living situations substantially constrain their opportunities for growth and learning.

The standard deviation of 0.77 reflects a moderate level of consistency in responses, indicating that while most teachers share a similar view, there are some individual differences in experiences. Overall, the data suggests

a common perception that poor living conditions are a considerable barrier to pursuing professional development. One of the individuals interviewed expressed a perspective that aligned closely with the findings derived from the quantitative data:

"My poor living conditions really cut into the time I can dedicate to professional development. Between managing daily chores and taking care of my family, I often find myself too exhausted to engage in workshops or online courses that could help me improve my teaching."

(Interviewee number19, August 2024)

These findings highlight the importance of addressing poor living conditions to provide teachers with more time and resources for professional development, as explained by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Social Cognitive

Theory. Maslow's theory suggests that when teachers' basic needs such as adequate housing and financial stability are unmet, they are often focused on survival, leaving little room for ongoing learning and professional growth. This instability can hinder their motivation to engage in development opportunities. Similarly, Social Cognitive Theory posits that teachers in supportive living conditions are more likely to feel empowered and capable of pursuing professional development. By improving living circumstances, educational institutions can increase access to learning opportunities, ultimately enhancing teaching effectiveness and leading to better outcomes for students.

8.2.4 Financial constraints

The findings for item number 4 from Table 3 reveal that the mean score for the statement, "As a teacher, my poor living conditions negatively impact my financial ability to participate in professional development activities," is 4.27, with a standard deviation of 0.89.

This mean score indicates strong agreement among teachers about the negative effect of poor living conditions on their financial capacity to engage in professional development. A score of 4.27 suggests that many teachers feel their living situations significantly limit their financial resources, making it challenging to afford participation in these important activities.

The standard deviation of 0.89 indicates a wider range of responses, suggesting that while there is substantial agreement, some variability exists in how teachers perceive the financial implications of their living conditions. This variability may reflect differing personal circumstances or perceptions regarding the costs associated with professional development. Just like the numerical data, one of the interview participants expressed a similar sentiment:

"My poor living conditions definitely affect my finances, which in turn limits my ability to participate in professional development activities. I often have to prioritize basic needs, like rent and bills, over spending money on workshops or courses that could help me grow as a teacher."

(Interviewee number 8, August 2024)

These findings emphasize the critical need to address the financial challenges stemming from poor living conditions, as understood through Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Social Cognitive Theory. According to Maslow, when educators' basic needs, such as financial security and stable living conditions, are unmet, their focus shifts from professional growth to addressing immediate survival concerns. This distraction can inhibit their motivation to invest in professional development. Social Cognitive Theory further supports this idea, suggesting that when educators experience improved financial stability, they feel more empowered and capable of pursuing growth opportunities. By enhancing living conditions, educational institutions can help educators to invest more effectively in their professional development, ultimately leading

to improved teaching practices and enriched learning experiences for students.

8.2.5 Support from institutions

The findings for item number 5 from Table 3 indicate that the mean score for the statement, "As a teacher, my poor living conditions negatively affect the support I receive from educational institutions for professional development," is 4.12, with a standard deviation of 1.05.

This mean score suggests a notable level of agreement among teachers regarding the detrimental impact of poor living conditions on the support they receive for professional development. A score of 4.12 indicates that many educators feel their living situations hinder their access to institutional support, which is critical for their professional growth.

The standard deviation of 1.05 indicates greater variability in responses compared to other items, suggesting that experiences and perceptions of institutional support may differ more widely among teachers. This variability could result from individual circumstances or differences in how support is perceived based on living conditions. As with the quantitative data, one of the interviewees said:

"I feel that my poor living conditions really limit my ability to seek support from my school for professional development. It seems like the resources are often geared towards those who are more financially stable. I want to improve as a teacher, but my situation makes it hard to access the help I need."

(Interviewee number 13, August 2024)

These findings highlight the importance of addressing the relationship between living conditions and institutional support for professional development, as framed by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Social Cognitive Theory. Maslow's model indicates that when teachers' basic needs, such as safe housing and financial security are unmet, they struggle to focus on higher-level needs like professional growth and self-actualization. This can impede their engagement in development opportunities. Social Cognitive Theory complements this perspective by suggesting that improved living conditions empower teachers and increase their sense of support, thereby enhancing their perception of available resources for professional development. By improving teachers' living situations, educational institutions can provide meaningful support that creates an environment conducive to professional growth, ultimately resulting in better educational outcomes for students.

9. Discussion

The findings from the quantitative data highlight a significant relationship between teachers' living standards and their professional effectiveness, which can be understood through Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Social Cognitive Theory.

An overall mean score of 4.08 regarding the impact of financial stability on teaching quality shows that many teachers perceive financial constraints as detrimental to their ability to deliver quality education. According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, basic physiological and safety needs must be satisfied before individuals can pursue higher-level needs such as esteem and self-actualization (Zalenski, & Raspa, 2006). The high mean score of 4.31 related to financial instability emphasizes that teachers are struggling to meet their foundational needs, which affects their classroom performance. This is consistent with previous research indicating that economic instability significantly reduces teachers' motivation and job satisfaction (Assefa, & Mujtaba, 2025; Meagher, 2011).

The data further reveal that limited access to basic living necessities negatively impacts teachers' access to teaching resources, with a mean score of 4.12. This reflects Maslow's assertion that when basic needs are unmet, their focus shifts away from higher-order goals, such as professional development and quality teaching. Qualitative insights from respondents reinforce this, with many sharing that they often redirect personal resources to meet classroom needs, detracting from their teaching focus.

The findings provide a comprehensive insight into the teacher crisis in Addis Ababa. Unlike previous studies that merely list challenges, this research demonstrates that the 'lack of mixed-methods efforts' in prior literature obscured the link between emotional burnout and specific pedagogical failures. Our integration of Maslow's theory with Social Cognitive Theory shows that teachers aren't just 'unmotivated'—they are environmentally constrained. The original contribution of this study lies in identifying that 'Transportation and Financial Constraints' (Mean > 4.20) are the primary preventing professional growth.

Additionally, the findings show that inadequate living conditions restrict teachers' access to professional development opportunities, as evidenced by a mean score of 4.05. This limitation aligns with Social Cognitive Theory, which posits that individuals' beliefs about their capabilities significantly influence their motivation and behavior (Bandura, 2001). When teachers perceive their living conditions as barriers to professional growth, their self-efficacy diminishes, leading to reduced engagement in development programs. The concern that poor living conditions adversely affect financial capability to participate in professional development (mean score of 4.27) further supports this point.

In contrast, some studies suggest that teachers can flourish in challenging environments when supported by robust institutional frameworks (Redelinghuys, 2016). This perspective is supported by Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes the role of social influences and environmental factors in shaping behavior (Colledge, & Colledge, 2002). However, our findings indicate that many teachers currently lack adequate support systems, suggesting a systemic issue that may exacerbate their challenges.

10. Conclusion

This study illustrates the critical link between teachers' living standards and the quality of education in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The evidence indicates that financial instability and inadequate living conditions significantly hinder teachers' ability to focus on quality teaching, affecting their motivation, job satisfaction, and professional development opportunities. With mean scores consistently above 4.0, the data reveal a compelling narrative: teachers who struggle with basic necessities are less able to engage effectively in their roles, ultimately impacting student learning outcomes.

The findings suggest that the challenges faced by teachers extend beyond individual circumstances; they reflect systemic issues within the educational framework. By neglecting the needs of teachers, the system undermines its own potential for growth and improvement. Therefore, it is crucial for policymakers and educational stakeholders to prioritize initiatives that enhance teachers' living conditions, such as competitive salaries, access to affordable housing, and support for professional development.

Moreover, further research is essential to explore specific interventions that could alleviate these challenges. Studies should investigate the effectiveness of targeted support programs, as well as the role of educational institutions in providing resources that enable teachers to thrive. By addressing these issues comprehensively, we can create a more supportive environment for educators, ultimately leading to improved educational quality across Ethiopia. Ensuring that teachers are well-supported is not only a matter of equity but a vital investment in the future of the nation's education system.

Author's contributions

Dr. Easaw Alemayehu conceptualized the study, designed the methodology, collected the data, and conducted the analysis. He wrote the initial draft of the manuscript in collaboration with the other author(s), and he reviewed and approved the final version.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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Ethics approval

Ethical approval for this study was granted by the

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