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### **Ethically challenging situations in teachers' work: role of school neighborhood socioeconomic status**

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**Background:** Ethically challenging situations are common in the teaching profession and can lead to significant stress. In particular, teachers working in socially disadvantaged areas may face these kinds of situations more often due to conflicts between educational needs and available resources. We investigated the link between school neighborhood socioeconomic status (SES) and the prevalence of ethically challenging situations among teachers.

**Methods:** Data were from primary school teachers (n = 1265) participating to the Finnish Public Sector study in 2022. Experiences on ethically challenging situations were assessed with two questions: In your work how often do you feel that you have to 1) reflect on ethically challenging situations and 2) act contrary to rules, norms, or personal values (at least weekly vs. less frequently). Survey data were linked to information on school neighborhood SES obtained from national grid database. Log-binomial regression models were used to analyze the relationship between school neighborhood SES and ethically challenging situations.

**Results:** Of the respondents, 61% reported having to reflect on ethically challenging situations, and 18% felt they had to act against rules or personal values at least weekly. Teachers in schools located in the most disadvantaged areas were more likely to feel that they had to act against rules, norms, or values weekly compared to teachers in schools in the most advantaged areas (adjusted RR 1.43, 95% CI 1.01-2.02). No association was observed between reflecting on ethically challenging situations and school neighborhood (adjusted RR 0.98, 95% CI 0.87, 1.11).

**Conclusions:** School neighborhood SES appears to be associated with teachers' possibilities to choose action in ethically challenging situations.

**Key messages:**

- School neighborhood SES appears to be associated with teachers' possibilities to choose action in ethically challenging situations.
- It is essential to develop strategies to support teachers in managing ethically challenging situations in their work environments.