

## The Role of Public Administration Ethics in Realizing Clean and Transparent Governance

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### ABSTRACT

Public administration ethics plays a crucial role in realizing clean and transparent governance. In the context of increasing global demands for honest, just, and transparent government actions, public administration ethics ensures that government officials act with integrity, professionalism, and social responsibility. The research aims to analyze the significance of these ethics in promoting governance that is free from corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN), and how its application can improve public trust and the quality of services. A qualitative, descriptive research methodology, primarily utilizing a literature review, was employed to explore the role of ethical principles, such as honesty, fairness, openness, and professionalism, in the public administration process. The results of this research indicate that while ethics are integral to fostering a clean government, challenges such as a deeply rooted culture of corruption, ineffective monitoring systems, and lack of public participation hinder their full implementation. Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of transparent decision-making, public participation, and accountability in reinforcing these ethical standards. The research concludes that strengthening public administration ethics, alongside enhancing transparency and citizen engagement, is essential for ensuring the effectiveness, fairness, and trustworthiness of public governance. Consequently, it provides recommendations for governmental reform to enhance ethical practices, improve public service delivery, and foster a more accountable and transparent system.

Keyword: Accountability, Administrative Ethics, Transparency, Governance



### INTRODUCTION

The ethics of public administration play a crucial role in realizing clean and transparent governance (Ciulla, 2003). As one of the main pillars in the government system, public administration is not only related to the implementation of policies and services to the public but also with moral values and principles that serve as the foundation for every bureaucratic action (Bailey, 1964). In this context, the ethics of public administration includes a set of rules and norms that must be followed by state officials in carrying out their duties, both in public service and in making decisions that affect the interests of the public (Odongo & Wang, 2018; Postema, 1983).

In the current era of globalization and technological advancement, the demand for clean, transparent, and accountable government has become increasingly prominent. Society

demands that the government act honestly, fairly, and transparently in all administrative processes to foster high public trust in government institutions. One way to achieve this is by implementing public administration ethics that prioritize integrity, professionalism, and social responsibility (Fadhlorrohan et al., 2021; Milton-Smith, 1995). Without a strong ethical foundation, practices such as corruption, collusion, and nepotism can easily spread within the government, ultimately harming society and undermining the credibility of the government (Mattingly & Throop, 2018; Rossiter et al., 2005).

The ethics of public administration has significant relevance in the context of clean governance. In this regard, ethics functions as a guide for public officials to act responsibly, not only based on personal or group interests but for the greater good. Fundamental principles of public administration ethics, such as honesty, justice, transparency, and professionalism, are key factors in creating a government free from the abuse of power. By applying these principles, the government is expected to improve the quality of public services and achieve better development goals, which in turn will enhance the well-being of the people (Simmons, 2008; Sorokin, 1957).

Furthermore, transparency is an essential element in building public trust in the government. A transparent government provides clear access to the public regarding policies, budgets, and the decision-making processes being undertaken. This not only minimizes the occurrence of deviations but also enables the public to actively participate in overseeing government operations. The ethics of public administration encourage the importance of accountability, where every action and decision made by the bureaucracy can be justified to the public (Moore, 2008; Stephens et al., 2012).

The role of public administration ethics in realizing clean and transparent governance is strategically vital. With a solid ethical foundation, governance will be more structured, efficient, and focused on public interests. Therefore, it is essential for every individual involved in public administration to uphold and prioritize ethics in every action. A government that upholds good public administration ethics will reflect a state with a strong commitment to the principles of clean, accountable, and transparent governance (Buckler, 2007; Cooper, 2000).

The implementation of public administration ethics faces several significant challenges. Inconsistent application of ethical principles by state officials increases the risk of abuse of power. The deeply rooted culture of corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN) hampers the formation of clean governance. Inadequate oversight systems exacerbate the situation, as there are no effective mechanisms to combat unethical behavior. This issue is intensified by the lack of education and understanding of ethical values among public officials, stemming from the absence of systematic ethics training (Fikriana & Suhendra, 2023; Krisharyanto et al., 2021).

In addition, limited public participation in decision-making and oversight restricts efforts to increase transparency and accountability. The lack of utilization of information technology, such as e-Government systems, further obstructs the openness of information. Finally, weak meritocracy in the appointment of public officials fosters nepotism, damaging the quality and credibility of the bureaucracy. These challenges underline the need for comprehensive reform to strengthen public administration ethics and achieve better governance.

The urgency of this research is very high given the importance of public administration ethics in creating clean, transparent, and accountable governance, which forms the foundation for public trust in government institutions. During globalization challenges, technological advancements, and increasing societal demands for quality public services, this research is highly relevant to identify the factors affecting the implementation of public administration ethics and address issues such as corruption, collusion, and nepotism, which still hinder government effectiveness. Furthermore, this research is crucial to provide recommendations to the government for improving the public administration system by enhancing the integrity, professionalism, and accountability of public officials, as well as maximizing public participation

in oversight. It is expected that the results of this research will serve as a reference for designing more effective policies and reforms to realize better governance and reinforce the country's commitment to the principles of democracy and public welfare.

The purpose of this research is to analyze the role of public administration ethics in realizing clean, transparent, and accountable governance. This study will explore how ethical principles such as honesty, justice, transparency, and professionalism are applied in public administration practices and their impact on the quality of public services and public trust in the government. Additionally, this research will identify the main challenges faced in implementing public administration ethics, such as the culture of corruption, lack of public participation, and inconsistency in applying ethical principles, and provide policy recommendations to strengthen governance through improved ethics and integrity within the bureaucracy.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used in this study is a descriptive qualitative approach utilizing literature review techniques (Boocock & Grahame, 2003; Galvan & Galvan, 2017). A qualitative approach is chosen because the aim is to understand the phenomenon in depth through the analysis of various relevant written sources. In this context, the research aims to explore concepts and theories related to public administration ethics and how they are applied in the context of clean, transparent, and accountable governance. Using this approach, the study will delve into a more holistic understanding of the challenges faced in the implementation of public administration ethics and its impact on the quality of public services and government credibility.

The literature review serves as the primary method for data collection in this study. The researcher will review various literature including books, journal articles, research reports, and other relevant documents related to the topic of public administration ethics (Green et al., 2006; Kitchenham et al., 2009). The focus of this review is to examine existing studies regarding the ethical principles in public administration, their role in improving governance, and the challenges faced by governments in implementing these ethics. The literature to be reviewed will come from various sources, both local and international, to gain a broader and more comprehensive perspective.

In its analysis, this study will use a descriptive approach to provide a clear and in-depth depiction of the relationship between public administration ethics and the quality of governance. The researcher will analyze various findings from the existing literature and draw conclusions that illustrate the challenges in implementing public administration ethics, while also providing strategic recommendations for public policy development. The results of this literature review are expected to contribute to the development of knowledge and policies in the field of public administration, as well as strengthen efforts to create a cleaner, more accountable, and transparent government.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. The Importance of Ethics in Public Administration

Ethics in public administration plays a crucial role in realizing clean and transparent governance. Ethical principles such as honesty, justice, transparency, and professionalism are not merely moral guidelines but also tools to build and maintain integrity in public service. In administrative practices, every decision and action taken by public officials must be based on strong moral values, ensuring that the goal of achieving a just and transparent government can be achieved. Ethics encourages the bureaucracy to act in the public interest and avoid the abuse of power, which often occurs without adequate oversight.

Honesty, as a key principle, demands that every government policy and action be communicated with factual truth and free from personal or group interests. In the context of justice, public administration ethics ensures that every individual in society is treated equally

and fairly, without discrimination based on background, social status, or political affiliations. This sense of justice is crucial for creating a government that serves not just a select few but the entire population. In many cases, injustices in public administration often lead to social tensions and a loss of trust in the government. For instance, policies that benefit only a small group of people or certain political factions can lead to dissatisfaction in society, which in turn undermines social and political stability. Therefore, the application of justice in public administration is essential for creating a government that is not only efficient but also equitable in its implementation.

Transparency is another key element that is inseparable from ethics in public administration. A transparent government provides the public with full access to information regarding policies, budgets, and decision-making processes. This transparency allows the public to understand how decisions are made and what factors influence them. In an increasingly connected world through information technology, there are high expectations for greater access to information, especially concerning the use of state funds and public projects. Transparency not only builds public trust but also reduces the chances of corruption and nepotism, which often occur when governmental processes are conducted in secret and without proper oversight. Therefore, transparency becomes one of the main pillars in creating a clean government.

Professionalism in public administration is also a crucial aspect in ensuring effective and clean governance. A professional public official will act with competence, integrity, and dedication to their duties, as well as having a deep understanding of their responsibilities to the public. Professionalism in this context includes the ability to make objective decisions based on ethical principles, not personal relationships or external pressures. Professionalism also involves the readiness of public officials to accept criticism and oversight from the public as part of the accountability process. Without professionalism, public administration processes are vulnerable to errors, abuse of power, and a lack of quality in public service.

The application of ethical principles in public administration not only affects the quality of service provided to the public but also has a significant impact on public trust in the government. Public trust in the government is the primary capital for the stability and sustainability of governance. When the government acts in accordance with ethical principles, the public feels valued and served fairly. This is crucial for establishing a harmonious relationship between the government and the people. On the contrary, if the government fails to uphold ethics in public administration, public trust will be lost, which may lead to social dissatisfaction and even division. Therefore, enhancing public trust through the implementation of good administrative ethics is an important step in maintaining the legitimacy and credibility of the government.

Finally, public administration ethics also plays a role in preventing practices such as corruption, collusion, and nepotism that undermine the foundations of clean governance. Corruption, collusion, and nepotism are three major issues that often plague the public sector, damaging public trust and deteriorating the quality of public service. Public administration ethics provides the foundation for addressing these issues by encouraging public officials to prioritize the public interest over personal or group interests. Through the consistent application of ethical principles, the government can create a more transparent, accountable, and responsive system to the needs of society. This not only improves the quality of public administration but also accelerates the realization of clean and transparent governance.

## 2. Challenges in the Implementation of Ethics

The application of ethics in public administration faces a range of complex challenges that can hinder the creation of clean and transparent governance. One of the greatest challenges is the deeply ingrained culture of corruption and nepotism within the bureaucracy and government structures. This culture often shapes the mindset and behavior of public officials, where personal or group interests are prioritized over the public good. Organized

corruption and nepotism can lead to the misuse of state resources, undermine public policies, and hinder the effective implementation of development programs. In this context, public administration ethics, which emphasize principles such as honesty and justice, become extremely difficult to implement when a culture of corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN) has become an accepted norm within government institutions.

Corruption is often regarded as one of the main causes of poor public service quality and the loss of public trust in government. When public officials prioritize personal gain through bribery, budget misuse, or the manipulation of projects for private interests, public service suffers. Moreover, policies may be based on subjective considerations rather than prioritizing the welfare of society as a whole. This is clearly in direct contradiction with the fundamental principles of public administration ethics, which emphasize integrity and justice in decision-making. Thus, the entrenched culture of corruption represents a serious challenge in realizing clean governance.

Another significant challenge is the lack of effective oversight mechanisms within the public administration system. Without a transparent and independent oversight system, unethical actions by public officials can easily go unnoticed or remain unaddressed without clear consequences. Weak oversight mechanisms open up opportunities for corruption, collusion, and nepotism, further deteriorating the quality of public administration. Ideally, the oversight system should be participatory and involve the public in the monitoring process. However, in many cases, existing oversight mechanisms are often formal without concrete actions being taken to address deviations. In this regard, public administration ethics, which demand accountability, cannot be optimally implemented because there is no system in place to follow up on violations.

The lack of training and understanding of ethical values among public officials also presents a major barrier to the implementation of public administration ethics. Many public officials do not have a deep understanding of the importance of ethics in decision-making and policy implementation. Without systematic and ongoing training, they may not realize the negative consequences of unethical actions or even fail to comprehend the basic principles of public administration ethics that they must adhere to. Therefore, it is crucial to integrate ethics education into the training and education of public officials from an early stage so that they can better understand and internalize ethical values in every action they take. Inadequate training results in public officials who tend to perform their duties in ways that do not align with ethical standards, ultimately undermining the quality of public service and government integrity.

Moreover, the application of public administration ethics also faces challenges related to the politicization of the bureaucracy. When the bureaucracy becomes polarized by political interests, policy implementation is often influenced by external factors unrelated to the public interest. In such situations, public officials may prioritize short-term political gains over long-term public welfare. As a result, policies produced may not reflect the principles of justice and professionalism, but rather focus on strengthening specific political positions. This politicization of the bureaucracy can affect objectivity in decision-making and undermine the independence of the bureaucracy, which should be neutral and oriented toward the common good.

Another relevant challenge is the lack of public involvement in overseeing public administration. Public participation is essential to ensure that the government truly serves the interests of the people. Without active participation from the public, oversight of government policies and actions is severely limited, and abuses of power may continue without being detected by the public. Public involvement in decision-making and government oversight can enhance transparency and accountability. However, in many cases, public involvement is still minimal, either due to lack of understanding or limited access to relevant information. Therefore, it is important to build systems that allow the public to actively participate in the public administration process.



Finally, another significant challenge is the inconsistency in the application of ethical principles by state apparatus. Sometimes, even though ethical principles are set out in laws and government policies, their application is not consistent. This inconsistency may be due to inadequate oversight, the ineffectiveness of oversight institutions, or the inability to enforce existing regulations. This inconsistency leads to a lack of trust in the governance system and undermines the credibility of the government in the eyes of the public. Therefore, consistency in applying ethical principles is crucial to ensuring that the government functions in a fair, transparent, and accountable manner.

### 3. The Role of Transparency in Governance

Transparency is one of the most crucial elements in clean, efficient, and accountable governance. Its significance extends beyond the realm of public administration to also fostering healthy relationships between the government and the public. When the government is open about decision-making processes, policy formation, and budget allocation, it creates a more trustworthy and accountable governmental ecosystem. Transparency provides the public with access to monitor and understand government actions, which in turn can strengthen public trust in state institutions.

One of the primary roles of transparency in governance is to enhance accountability. Accountability refers to the government's obligation to explain and justify all actions, decisions, and policies it implements to the public. Without transparency, it is difficult for the public to understand the processes behind decision-making or how public funds are managed. When the government is open about these processes, the public can more easily assess whether the policies implemented align with principles of justice, efficiency, and public welfare. Clear accountability also provides incentives for public officials to act more carefully and professionally, as they are aware that their actions will be monitored by the public, who have the right to know and oversee governmental operations.

Transparency in policy formation and decision-making also allows the public to participate more actively in the process. Public participation is crucial in a democratic government, as it gives the public an opportunity to express opinions, suggestions, or criticisms regarding proposed or implemented policies. In a transparent governance system, the public is given space to engage in determining the direction of public policy, whether through discussion forums, public consultations, or other mechanisms. This not only enriches the decision-making process but also creates a sense of ownership among citizens. When the public feels that they can influence decisions directly related to their lives, a more positive relationship between the government and the citizens is established.

Transparency also serves as an effective tool for reducing the potential for corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN). One of the main causes of such practices is the lack of openness in budget management, decision-making, and policy implementation. When the government conceals information or fails to provide clear access to the public regarding policies or the use of funds, the opportunity for the abuse of power increases. On the other hand, by implementing transparency, the government can minimize the potential for such abuses because every action taken will be open to monitoring and evaluation by the public and independent oversight bodies. Clear and accountable use of state funds makes it more difficult for resources to be misappropriated or diverted for purposes other than their intended use.

Transparency in budget allocation is one of the most critical aspects of creating clean governance. In many cases, ambiguity about how public funds are allocated and used can raise suspicions among the public. If the public is unaware of how state funds are utilized or whether these funds are being used efficiently, trust in the government will decline. Conversely, with openness in budget allocation, the government provides a clear picture of the priorities for public funds, which can show whether the funds are used fairly and according to the needs of critical sectors, such as education, health, or infrastructure. This also enables

oversight from various parties, both from the public and regulatory bodies, to ensure that the funds are being used properly and effectively.

Moreover, transparency enables the effectiveness of public oversight. The public's ability to monitor the government depends on how accessible the necessary information is. Without adequate access to information related to policies, decisions, and budget use, the public will be unable to identify irregularities or policies that do not meet their needs. A transparent government will provide full access to the data required for this oversight. Thus, transparency functions as a control mechanism that allows the public to identify ineffective or harmful policies and encourages continuous improvement in governance.

Transparency in government also contributes to creating a culture of governance that is more responsive and adaptive. When the government is open to criticism and input from the public, this promotes the development of policies that are more responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people. With feedback from the public, the government can more quickly adjust its policies and programs to address existing dynamics and challenges. A transparent government tends to be more flexible in responding to changes in social, economic, and political conditions, as they have better information about the impact of policies already in place. Therefore, transparency is not only important for oversight but also in creating space for improvement and innovation in governance. Thus, transparency is not merely about the accessibility of information, but also serves as a cornerstone for building accountable, responsive, and abuse-free governance. Openness in government leads to improved public services, more active public participation, and more effective oversight, ultimately building public trust and establishing clean and transparent governance.

#### 4. The Impact of Ethical Practices on the Quality of Public Services

Ethical practices in public administration play a significant role in determining the quality of public services provided by the government to society. The principles of ethics, when consistently applied, ensure that the services provided are not only efficient and effective but also fair and transparent. One of the main impacts of implementing public administration ethics is the prevention of the abuse of power by public officials. When government officials act based on ethical principles such as honesty, justice, and professionalism, they are more likely to serve the public with integrity and without using their positions for personal or group interests. Strong ethical practices reduce the opportunities for corruption and collusion, which in turn enhances the quality of services provided to the public.

The application of strong ethical principles ensures that public resources are managed efficiently and effectively. When public officials act in accordance with ethics, they are more careful in making decisions related to the use of state budgets and other resources. Decisions are based on objective analysis and align with the needs of society, rather than personal or political interests. For example, when managing the budget for sectors like education or health, ethical officials will prioritize fund allocation to improve public services, not for the benefit of specific groups. This directly impacts the quality of services received by the public, as the budget is used correctly and effectively to enhance the welfare of the people.

Furthermore, the application of ethics in public administration also leads to improved transparency and accountability in the management of public services. When public officials perform their duties based on ethics, they will be more open in reporting and explaining the policies they implement to the public. For instance, in decision-making regarding public policy, transparency in the process is critical to ensure that the policy benefits not just a few but truly serves the public interest. Accountability in public administration, driven by ethics, requires officials to be able to account for every policy and action they take, allowing the public to feel safer and more confident in the existing governance system.

The application of ethics also plays an essential role in creating a culture of high-quality public service. When ethical principles are applied at every level of public administration, it fosters a more professional work environment focused on public satisfaction. Ethical public

officials prioritize the public interest in every action they take, ensuring that the services provided are of the highest quality. In this context, ethics is not only about the behavior of public officials in carrying out their duties but also about their attitude and approach to public service. A strong ethical culture within the public bureaucracy contributes to the creation of a more responsive, efficient, and high-quality public service.

Moreover, the application of ethics in public administration can also enhance public trust in the government. When the public perceives that public officials act with integrity and based on ethical principles, they are more likely to trust that policies and programs will provide fair benefits to them. This trust is crucial for fostering a good relationship between the government and society and for ensuring that the public supports the policies implemented. On the other hand, if the public feels that officials are unethical or involved in corrupt and collusive practices, they will lose trust in the government and be less likely to support government policies. This can hinder development processes and further degrade the quality of public services.

The application of good ethics in public administration also facilitates continuous improvement in public service systems. A government that prioritizes ethical principles will be more open to criticism and feedback from the public. Constructive feedback is vital for improving existing policies and public services. By listening to the public's voice and implementing improvements based on the feedback received, the government can continually enhance the quality of public services. Public administration ethics that encourage the government to act transparently and accountably also provide room for public involvement in the evaluation process and the enhancement of service quality.

Overall, the impact of implementing ethical practices in public administration is significant in improving the quality of public services. Ethics serves as the moral foundation that guides every action and decision made by public officials in serving the public. By applying strong ethical principles, the government can ensure that public resources are used effectively and efficiently, improve transparency and accountability, and enhance the relationship between the government and society. Therefore, the implementation of public administration ethics not only influences the quality of services but also the public's trust in the government, which ultimately contributes to the creation of a clean, transparent, and responsive government that meets the needs of society.

## CONCLUSION

Overall, the role of ethics in public administration in achieving clean and transparent governance is fundamentally crucial. Public administration ethics are not just moral guidelines for state apparatus, but also the foundation for the creation of a government that is integral, efficient, and accountable. As previously discussed, the implementation of ethical principles such as honesty, professionalism, transparency, and accountability plays a vital role in avoiding practices such as corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN), which often tarnish the image of the government and hinder development. By instilling strong ethical values, state officials are expected to act in the public interest and uphold moral principles in every decision-making process. Furthermore, transparency and public participation are key to realizing clean governance, where every policy adopted can be held accountable to the people, and the public can actively participate in the governance process. Therefore, the application of good public administration ethics not only prevents the abuse of power but also improves the quality of public services and strengthens public trust in the government.

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