

Administrative Ethics as the Foundation of Quality Public Services

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ABSTRACT

Public services, as a means of fulfilling citizens' basic needs, continue to face challenges such as bureaucratic pathologies, maladministration, and corruption, resulting in declining service quality and public trust. This study examines the role of administrative ethics as the foundation for improving public service quality toward good governance. The research employs a literature review with a qualitative descriptive approach using the Miles and Huberman data analysis model. The findings show that ethical values, including honesty, integrity, accountability, transparency, and fairness, strengthen professionalism and promote public-oriented services while reducing unethical behavior. The study concludes that high-quality public services depend not only on technical systems and infrastructure but also on officials' ethical commitment, supported by ethical leadership, code enforcement, and digital governance.

INTRODUCTION

Public services are a vital component of government operations that play a strategic role in meeting citizens' basic needs. As a manifestation of the state's presence, public services are not solely focused on administrative aspects but also reflect the overall quality of government management. Therefore, the quality of public services serves as a key indicator for assessing the government's success in fulfilling its duties and responsibilities (Tarandung et al., 2023). Good service is characterized by efficiency, effectiveness, fairness, transparency, and the ability to respond to public needs. However, the reality on the ground indicates that the quality of public services in Indonesia still faces various complex challenges. Various obstacles, such as convoluted procedures, long service times, a lack of transparency, and maladministration, still frequently arise (Titania & Nursadi, 2023).

Additionally, abuse of authority, unofficial fees, and acts of corruption also signal the low integrity of some government officials. These conditions not only hinder the effectiveness of services but also contribute to a decline in public trust in government institutions. One key factor influencing the quality of public services is the implementation of administrative ethics within the government bureaucracy (Betresia et al., 2021).

Administrative ethics refers to the values, norms, and moral principles that guide government officials in performing their duties. Core principles such as honesty, integrity, responsibility, professionalism, and fairness encourage civil servants to prioritize the public interest and prevent misconduct (Farhanuddin et al., 2022). As globalization and information technology advance, public expectations for faster, more transparent, accountable, and accessible services continue to grow. Consequently, public administration has shifted from a power-oriented approach to a service-oriented one, making administrative ethics essential in ensuring ethical and professional public service.

Administrative ethics is also fundamental to building public trust in government. Ethical and responsible conduct strengthens confidence in public institutions, while ethical violations reduce public trust and may hinder social stability and development. However, the implementation of administrative ethics still faces challenges, including limited ethical awareness, weak enforcement of ethical standards, inadequate supervision, and bureaucratic cultures that do not fully support ethical values. To overcome these challenges, governments should strengthen internal oversight, enforce ethical standards consistently, provide regular ethics training, and promote ethical leadership. Through these efforts, administrative ethics can become not only a formal guideline but also a practical foundation for delivering professional, transparent, and accountable public services.

Although numerous studies have examined administrative ethics, most previous research has primarily focused on ethical principles, bureaucratic integrity, or the implementation of good governance

separately. Only a limited number of studies have comprehensively synthesized the interrelationship between administrative ethics, public service quality, public trust, and good governance through a literature review approach. Consequently, there remains a gap in understanding how administrative ethics functions as the fundamental mechanism connecting these dimensions within public service reform.

This study offers a theoretical contribution by developing an integrated perspective that positions administrative ethics as the central foundation linking good governance, service quality, public satisfaction, and public trust. Unlike previous studies that discuss these variables independently, this article synthesizes recent empirical and conceptual literature to construct a comprehensive framework explaining the strategic role of administrative ethics in improving public service performance.

From the above discussion, it is evident that administrative ethics plays a crucial role as the foundation for creating high-quality public services. Without the strong application of ethics, the quality of public services will struggle to meet public expectations. Therefore, a deep and sustained commitment is required to improve the implementation of administrative ethics within the government bureaucracy. In this way, professional, transparent, and public-interest-focused public services can be achieved to the fullest extent.

LITERATURE REVIEW

With the development of modern governance, administrative ethics are no longer viewed merely as an additional formality, but have become the cornerstone for the delivery of quality public services. The importance of ethics in the bureaucracy stems from the responsibility of government officials as public servants, not as rulers. From the perspective of the (NAYI, 2023), changes in public service demand a fundamental paradigm shift from a rigid traditional bureaucracy to a model that is more responsive, transparent, and focused on the public interest. Success in delivering excellent services depends heavily on the integrity of each public official, with ethical values serving as a moral compass in every strategic decision. Without a strong ethical commitment, the professionalism of public officials will lose its relevance, ultimately eroding public trust in state institutions.

In line with this perspective (Gunawan et al., 2020) asserts that administrative ethics is an essential factor for achieving Good Governance. According to this framework, effective governance cannot be achieved merely by improving systems or technology; rather, it must be supported by enhancing the character of public servants who adhere to the principles of accountability, justice, and transparency. Sedarmayanti emphasizes that every administrative decision must be accountable both legally and ethically. If ethics are incorporated into the bureaucratic framework, acts of maladministration such as abuse of authority and discrimination can be systematically reduced. Therefore, the consistent application of administrative

ethics serves as a monitoring mechanism that ensures all public sector activities remain focused on the broader public welfare

A synthesis of the two experts' views underscores that the quality of public services reflects the ethical state of the bureaucracy. The collaboration between the professionalism emphasized by Dwiyanto and the concept of Good Governance presented by Sedarmayanti yields a comprehensive framework. The application of ethics is not merely an administrative formality but a transformative approach to building a clean, competitive, and trustworthy bureaucracy. Therefore, strengthening administrative ethics must be the primary focus in every bureaucratic reform effort to achieve a balance between technical efficiency and the moral responsibility of public officials in serving the public.

Currently, the quality of public services serves as the primary benchmark for the success of bureaucratic reform and reflects the effectiveness of government governance. According to Hardiansyah (2023), the assessment of service quality cannot be viewed solely through the lens of administrative procedural efficiency but must be based on citizen satisfaction, which is multi-dimensional. Hardiansyah highlights five essential pillars, tangibility (physical evidence), reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy as mandatory standards for identifying the gap between public expectations and the services actually received. The ability of government agencies to bridge this gap is a crucial element in building public trust

In line with this approach, Sinambela (2024) offers a broader perspective by emphasizing the importance of a paradigm shift in public administration. According to him, to achieve excellent service, the bureaucracy must have the courage to move away from old patterns focused on internal organizational matters and shift to a model oriented toward user satisfaction. This transformation requires a more radical reform of civil servant behavior, including the simplification of workflows that are transparent, participatory, and accountable. The combination of Hardiansyah's thoughts on the dimensions of service quality and Sinambela's ideas regarding bureaucratic paradigm reform demonstrates that ideal public service requires a balance between precise technical standards and organizational cultural changes that prioritize the well-being of service users to achieve sustainable public welfare.

The shift to this user-oriented model requires bureaucratic flexibility in responding to the rapidly changing dynamics of public needs. To achieve this, rigid and hierarchical organizational structures must be streamlined so that decision-making processes at the front lines of public service delivery become more adaptive. The concept of humanizing service users also means treating citizens not merely as passive beneficiaries, but as strategic partners in the public sphere. Through equal opportunities for participation, the public can provide direct feedback, thereby compelling every government agency to continuously engage in self-evaluation and sustainable innovation to ensure that service quality remains relevant.

The reviewed literature demonstrates that administrative ethics is consistently associated with improved governance outcomes. However,

differences exist regarding the primary mechanism through which ethics affects service quality. Some scholars emphasize bureaucratic professionalism as the dominant factor, while others highlight accountability and transparency as the main determinants. These differing perspectives indicate that administrative ethics should not be viewed merely as an individual moral obligation but as an institutional governance mechanism that simultaneously strengthens organizational performance and public trust.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive qualitative library research approach. Information was obtained by reviewing a number of primary and secondary literature sources, such as scientific journals and books on public administration. Data processing was conducted using the Miles and Huberman framework, which includes the steps of data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions.

After all literature sources were collected, the data were analyzed by applying the Miles and Huberman model to ensure accurate and high-quality research results. This analysis was carried out through three main steps that are continuously interconnected. The first step is data reduction, which involves filtering, refining, and simplifying a set of literature data to align with the research problem formulation. The second step, data presentation, organizes the selected information in a regular and systematic manner in narrative form so that the relationships between parts become clearer and easier to understand. The third step, drawing conclusions, aims to formulate the essence and provide a strong final answer to all the research problems discussed.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Literature Synthesis

Tabel 1. Literature Synthesis

Author	Method	Main Findings	Relevance to This Study
Gunawan et al. (2020)	Quantitative	Good governance improves accountability	Supports the relationship between administrative ethics and good governance
Betresia et al. (2021)	Qualitative	Administrative ethics reduces corruption practices	Demonstrates the role of ethics in preventing maladministration
Farhanuddin et al. (2022)	Literature Review	Ethics strengthens professionalism	Supports ethical values in public service
Tarandung et al. (2023)	Case Study	Good governance improves service quality	Shows the relationship between

			governance and service quality
Scott (2025)	Conceptual	Integrity strengthens public trust	Supports the relationship between ethics and public trust

According to the literature, administrative ethics serves as the foundation for delivering quality public services. It comprises the values, norms, and moral principles that guide government employees in carrying out their responsibilities. Principles such as honesty, integrity, responsibility, professionalism, fairness, transparency, and accountability should underpin all public service activities. Without the effective implementation of administrative ethics, public administration becomes vulnerable to maladministration, abuse of authority, and corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN). These unethical practices reduce the quality and efficiency of public services, violate citizens' rights, weaken government credibility, and diminish public trust. Over time, they may also increase social inequality, trigger public dissatisfaction, and undermine political legitimacy. Administrative ethics not only regulates employee conduct but also promotes a public service culture that prioritizes fairness, accountability, and the public interest. Ethical principles guide decision-making and ensure that policies are implemented responsibly and transparently. Therefore, the success of public service depends not only on effective systems and adequate resources but also on the ethical standards upheld by public officials.

The quality of public service is fundamentally measured by how satisfied the public is with the services they receive. Citizens desire services that are fast, easy, accurate, transparent, and responsive. These expectations can only be met if public officials demonstrate a strong commitment to the values of administrative ethics. The qualities of friendliness, honesty, discipline, and accountability exhibited by officials will create a positive service experience for the public. Conversely, unethical actions such as abuse of authority, illegal fees, discrimination in service delivery, and corruption will degrade service quality and erode public trust in the government.

Administrative ethics not only influence service quality but also play a crucial role in implementing the principles of good governance. Good governance emphasizes the need for transparency, accountability, effectiveness, efficiency, citizen participation, and the rule of law in the administration of government. These values are closely linked to administrative ethics. Therefore, the stronger the application of administrative ethics within the bureaucracy, the greater the likelihood of achieving high-quality public services and a government that enjoys public trust.

However, the application of administrative ethics within the government bureaucracy still faces many obstacles. Low moral awareness among some officials, weak enforcement of ethical codes, a bureaucratic culture that is not yet fully focused on service, and an oversight system that is not yet optimal are the main hindering factors. Additionally, personal or group interests sometimes cause officials to set aside ethical principles while performing their

duties. This situation indicates that strengthening administrative ethics remains an urgent necessity to improve the quality of public services.

To address these challenges, sustained efforts are needed to strengthen the implementation of administrative ethics. The competence of public officials must be enhanced through regular ethics education and training to deepen their understanding of ethical values. Additionally, the government must strengthen codes of ethics, implement effective oversight systems, and impose strict sanctions for any ethical violations. Leadership by example is also a critical factor, as leaders of integrity can foster an organizational culture that upholds ethical values. On the other hand, the use of information technology can support the creation of services that are more transparent, accountable, and easily monitored by the public.

Therefore, administrative ethics can be considered the primary foundation for achieving high-quality public services. Administrative ethics are not merely a guide for civil servant behavior but also a cornerstone in creating a professional, open, fair, and citizen-centered service system. The more consistently administrative ethics are applied within the civil service, the higher the quality of public services delivered to citizens. Thus, strengthening administrative ethics must be a primary focus in every step of bureaucratic reform and efforts to improve the quality of public services in Indonesia.

This linear relationship demonstrates that the stronger and more integrated the application of administrative ethics at every level of the government bureaucracy, the higher the standards of quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of the services that can be provided to the public. Therefore, the fundamental reform of administrative ethics must no longer be viewed as a side program or merely an administrative formality, but must be made a strategic priority in every national bureaucratic reform agenda. With a deep and sustained political commitment to integrating ethics into oversight systems, enforcing codes of ethics, and developing civil servant competencies, Indonesia can accelerate the improvement of public services that are not only technically superior but also possess moral accountability trusted by the public.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the literature review and the discussion presented above, it can be concluded that administrative ethics is not merely a formal complement to bureaucracy, but rather a fundamental instrument and the primary moral compass in delivering high-quality public services. The substantive implementation of ethical values such as honesty, integrity, accountability, transparency, and fairness can minimize various forms of bureaucratic pathologies, maladministration, and practices of corruption, collusion, and nepotism (KKN).

The quality of public services and the success of good governance do not depend solely on the sophistication of technological systems or the adequacy of physical infrastructure. All these luxurious facilities and state-of-the-art digital systems will not have their full impact if they are not driven by honest

individuals of integrity. Therefore, the key determining factor lies in the moral quality and ethical commitment of public servants as service providers on the ground. When administrative ethics are firmly ingrained in every employee, the bureaucratic work culture will naturally transform into one that is more friendly, efficient, free from illegal fees, and fully focused on fulfilling the basic rights of citizens.

These positive changes in work culture will ultimately have a highly strategic impact on the relationship between the government and the public. Fair and transparent service from government officials has proven effective in restoring and strengthening public confidence in the credibility of state institutions. When the public feels respected and sincerely served, the government's political legitimacy will grow stronger in the eyes of citizens. This harmonious and mutually trusting relationship ultimately becomes vital social capital for creating national stability and accelerating the success of various development programs

The positive impact of this shift in work culture is immense in the long term, particularly for the relationship between the government and the public. Clean and sincere public service will play a strategic role in restoring and strengthening political legitimacy, while also rebuilding public trust in the credibility of government institutions. When the public feels respected and treated fairly, negative perceptions of the bureaucracy will fade. This harmonious relationship ultimately fosters strong social stability, where the public and the government can support one another to successfully implement various national development programs.

To address the various structural and cultural barriers that continue to hinder the implementation of administrative ethics within the government bureaucracy, comprehensive and sustainable strategic measures are required. First, the government must prioritize strengthening the capacity and ethical awareness of civil servants through the implementation of regular ethics education and training programs, designed to instill a deep moral understanding at every level of the bureaucracy. Second, this commitment must be supported by strong leadership by example, where agency leaders act as role models of high integrity to foster a clean organizational culture

Furthermore, regulatory reform is needed through stricter enforcement of codes of ethics, the establishment of an effective oversight system, and the imposition of firm administrative and legal sanctions—without discrimination—against all forms of violations. Finally, accelerating the use of information technology through the implementation of digital governance is a crucial instrument for creating a service system that is transparent, accountable, and easily monitored by the public, while minimizing opportunities for maladministration. Through a combination of these measures, public-interest-oriented bureaucratic reform can be maximally accelerated.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

For further studies, academics are advised to conduct empirical, testing on the actual impact of administrative ethics on the quality of public services. This

study could employ a quantitative approach widely applied across various government agencies, both at the central and local levels. Through surveys and statistical data analysis, such research will be able to objectively measure the extent to which employees' moral commitment directly impacts the satisfaction of the public they serve on a daily basis.

In addition, as technology in the government sector advances rapidly, research efforts must also focus on digital public service ecosystems. It is important to analyze how core values such as honesty, transparency, and accountability are practiced as physical interactions between officials and citizens begin to diminish. Ethical challenges in this digital age are far more complex, as automated systems still require moral oversight to prevent discrimination or systemic injustice.

Research in the field of digital governance must also delve deeper to address critical contemporary issues, such as ensuring the protection of citizens' personal data. Data security is now part of the government's ethical responsibility and must not be overlooked. On the other hand, future studies need to examine the mental readiness and moral adaptability of officials in operating such fully automated systems, so that technological efficiency does not come at the expense of the human aspect of service delivery.

Finally, future studies are expected to develop a more comprehensive model of the relationship between administrative ethics, the principles of good governance, and public satisfaction. Through in-depth analysis, this research will not only uncover the hidden factors that influence service quality but also generate concrete policy recommendations. The final results of this series of studies can serve as a key guide in accelerating bureaucratic reform, in order to realize a service system that is clean, transparent, and fully aligned with the interests of the public.

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