

The Role of Administrative Ethics in Achieving Professional and Transparent Service

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ABSTRACT

Public services in Indonesia still face structural challenges in the form of maladministration, low civil servant competence, and limited access to information. This study examines the contribution of administrative ethics to creating professional and transparent public services using a qualitative literature review method. Data sources include journals indexed in SINTA and Scopus, policy documents, and official government reports from 2015 to 2025, which were then analyzed using content analysis and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The findings indicate that administrative ethics serve as a value foundation that shapes the professionalism of civil servants and supports service transparency, in line with the New Public Service framework (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015) and the principles of good governance (UNDP, 1997). Its implementation remains hindered by a formalistic bureaucratic culture, gaps in ethical literacy, and weak oversight mechanisms. Strengthening administrative ethics through capacity building for civil servants, fostering an organizational culture of integrity, and digitizing services are strategic prerequisites for substantive bureaucratic reform in Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

Public service is a primary function of the state that reflects the government's success in meeting public needs. High-quality public services not only demonstrate the effectiveness of the bureaucracy but also reflect the level of public trust in the government. However, the delivery of public services in Indonesia still faces various challenges, one of which is maladministration. In its 2023 Annual Report, the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia noted that complaints regarding maladministration continue to involve prolonged delays, procedural irregularities, abuse of authority, and the inability of service providers to deliver quality services (Ombudsman RI, 2024). This indicates a gap between the public's expectations of excellent service and the actual conditions within bureaucratic practice.

Public service issues are not merely technical or administrative but are inherently tied to public administration ethics, which provide the values, norms, and moral principles guiding government officials. Applying these ethics is crucial for achieving good governance, as they shape civil servants to be honest, accountable, fair, and public-interest oriented. As emphasized by Choirulsyah and Azhar (2024), the integrity and ethical commitment of civil servants are key drivers that significantly influence the overall quality of government administration.

Administrative ethics are also closely related to the professionalism of civil servants. Professionalism is not only evident in technical competence but also in the attitudes, sense of responsibility, and commitment of civil servants to ethical values. Yudianto et al. (2024) state that the urgency of public administrative ethics lies in its ability to foster a civil service that is professional, accountable, and objective, as well as oriented toward the public interest. Therefore, the professionalism of civil servants must be internalized through ethical values in the administration of government.

Furthermore, public administration ethics serve as a crucial foundation for the application of good governance principles. The implementation of public administration ethics supports the achievement of good governance by strengthening the integrity, accountability, and responsibility of civil servants. Civil servants who adhere to ethical standards tend to reduce the risk of abuse of authority and maintain public trust in government institutions.

One of the core principles of good governance is transparency, which ensures open access to information, clear procedures, and easy public access to public service data. According to Ramdhan and Hafni (2024), transparency enhances government accountability and provides opportunities for the public to monitor bureaucratic performance. Open access to information and transparent service systems are expected to reduce opportunities for misconduct in the administration of government.

The implementation of public service ethics also contributes to increasing public trust. Budiman et al. (2022) state that civil servants who

uphold ethical values tend to more easily build harmonious relationships with the public and enhance the government's legitimacy. Conversely, low adherence to ethical standards can lower service quality and damage the bureaucracy's image.

Improving the quality of public services requires continuous bureaucratic reform. Strengthening civil servant integrity is a key focus of reform to make the bureaucracy more professional and service-oriented. The Ministry of PANRB's 2025–2029 Bureaucratic Reform Roadmap emphasizes the development of a work culture characterized by integrity, adaptability, collaboration, and results-orientation to improve the quality of public services and strengthen public trust (Ministry of PANRB, 2025) .

The professionalism of civil servants is a key factor in improving the quality of public services. Service quality is largely influenced by the application of civil service ethics in terms of discipline, responsibility, and commitment to public service. Therefore, strengthening the professionalism of civil servants must be aligned with the internalization of administrative ethics as a code of conduct.

Ramadhan and Rahmatulloh (2026) emphasize that public administrative ethics serve as a code of conduct for civil servants to achieve good governance. Ethics are not merely normative rules but also instruments that shape an organizational culture that values integrity, accountability, and a service-oriented approach. With a commitment to ethical values, civil servants are expected to provide professional, transparent, and fair services.

Although many studies have examined public administration ethics, professionalism, transparency, and good governance, most treat these concepts in isolation, focus on specific institutions, or rely heavily on empirical methods. Consequently, there is a distinct research gap for a comprehensive literature review that synthesizes the relationship between these concepts and the New Public Service perspective within Indonesia's bureaucratic reform framework. To address this gap, this study aims to analyze the role of administrative ethics in realizing professional and transparent public services through a comprehensive literature review. This research is expected to provide both a theoretical contribution to the field of public administration and practical recommendations for stakeholders to strengthen bureaucratic ethics in achieving good governance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This study employs a conceptual framework that integrates the concepts of administrative ethics, civil service professionalism, *the New Public Service* (NPS), and *good governance* to elucidate the significance of ethics in the delivery of public services. This framework was developed through a synthesis of previous studies examining the relationship between administrative ethics, professionalism, service transparency, and good governance. This approach

was chosen because ethical issues in the bureaucracy are not only related to the actions of individual civil servants but are also influenced by organizational culture, administrative systems, and the demands of bureaucratic reform to improve the quality of public services.

Tabel 1 Synthesis of previous research

Author	Research Focus	Key Findings	Research Gap
Choirulsyah (2024)	Implementation of administrative ethics	Administrative ethics enhance the integrity of civil servants and support <i>good governance</i> .	There has not yet been an integrated approach linking administrative ethics to civil servant professionalism and service transparency.
Yudianto et al. (2024)	The Urgency of Public Administrative Ethics	Administrative ethics enhance professionalism, objectivity, and the quality of public services.	Has not yet discussed implementation through bureaucratic reform and the digitization of services.
Ramdhan & Hafni (2024)	<i>Good Governance</i> in Public Services	Transparency, accountability, and participation are key indicators of <i>good governance</i> .	It has not yet explained administrative ethics as the foundation for the application of the principles of <i>good governance</i> .
Hanifah Tri Indah et al. (2025)	The Role of Public Administration Ethics	Administrative ethics improve the quality of public services.	Has not specifically examined the relationship between administrative

			ethics and service transparency.
Saepudin (2026)	Ethics in Public Administration Practice	The digitization of services requires an ethical commitment to improve transparency and accountability.	Has not yet integrated the aspect of civil service professionalism.

According to Table 1, previous studies indicate that administrative ethics play a crucial role in enhancing professionalism, clarifying transparency, and supporting good governance. However, most research examines these relationships separately, leaving a gap in integrating administrative ethics, the New Public Service, and good governance into a single conceptual framework. Therefore, this study designs a literature synthesis to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the interrelationships among these three concepts within the context of public service in Indonesia.

Previous studies were then evaluated using the theoretical foundations of administrative ethics, civil service professionalism, the New Public Service, and good governance to explain the relationships among the concepts under study. From the perspective of public administrative ethics, ethics is defined as a set of moral values and principles that serve as guidelines for assessing whether actions are appropriate or not in the conduct of government. Ethics is not merely about compliance with the law but also encompasses moral responsibility, honesty, justice, and service to the public. Yuniningsih (2018) argues that weak implementation of ethics within the bureaucracy can lead to maladministration, abuse of authority, and a decline in the quality of public services. Therefore, ethics serves as a vital tool for achieving clean governance and good governance.

The concept of professionalism enriches the ethical perspective on public administration in explaining the behavior of civil servants. Professionalism is not merely demonstrated through technical competence but also through a commitment to ethical values, enabling civil servants to work effectively, objectively, transparently, and responsibly in delivering public services. Furthermore, integrity serves as a crucial foundation for preventing the abuse of

authority, enhancing accountability, and strengthening public trust in government institutions.

In the development of modern public administration, the concept of the New Public Service (NPS) presents the perspective that civil servants do not merely act as policy implementers but also function as public servants. According to Wicaksono (2018), this paradigm positions citizens as the stakeholders of the public interest who must be served through the principles of democracy, participation, accountability, and social justice.

Furthermore, the theory of good governance emphasizes transparency, accountability, participation, effectiveness, and public interest. Yuniningsih (2018) argues that its success heavily depends on the ethics, integrity, and professionalism of civil servants. Overall, theoretical findings indicate that administrative ethics serve as the primary foundation for fostering professionalism and strengthening service transparency. Based on these insights, this study establishes a conceptual framework where administrative ethics act as the foundation, professionalism as the manifestation of ethics, transparency as the performance measure, and high-quality public services as the ultimate goal. This framework emphasizes that quality services rely not only on technical capabilities but also on ethical values aligned with New Public Service and good governance principles.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach using a library research design. This qualitative approach was chosen because the study aims to explore, describe, and analyze in depth the meanings, values, and patterns of relationships found in the literature regarding administrative ethics, public service professionalism, and bureaucratic transparency. (Creswell & Poth, 2016) emphasizes that qualitative research is used to explore and understand the meanings constructed by individuals or groups regarding a social phenomenon. In this context, the qualitative approach allows researchers to analyze not only the technical aspects of administration but also the normative and ideological dimensions that underpin the importance of ethics in the delivery of public services.

A literature review was chosen as the research design because this study relies entirely on written sources as primary data, without involving direct field data collection. (Zed, 2008) defines a literature review as a series of activities related to the methods of collecting literature data, including reading, note-taking, and processing research materials. Furthermore, Sugiyono (2019) emphasizes that a literature review is a valid method in qualitative research, particularly when the researcher aims to construct a conceptual synthesis from various perspectives documented in the scientific literature. Thus, the literature review in this study is not merely a step in collecting references but rather a systematic and focused analytical process.

The data used in this study consists of secondary data collected from a variety of relevant scientific literature, including national journals indexed in

SINTA, international journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science, textbooks and monographs related to public administration and governance, policy documents such as the Civil Service Law, the Public Information Disclosure Act No. 14/2008, as well as Regulations of the Minister of State Apparatus and Bureaucratic Reform, and official reports from state institutions such as the Indonesian Ombudsman, the Corruption Eradication Commission, and the Central Statistics Agency. Data sources were selected using purposive sampling; according to (Patton, 2002) , this technique in qualitative research is intended to select sources that are the richest in information and most suitable for the purpose of the analysis, rather than to achieve statistical representativeness.

Data were collected through a systematic literature review of scientific databases such as Google Scholar, GARUDA, SINTA, Dimensions, and Semantic Scholar, using the following keywords: administrative ethics, professionalism in public service, bureaucratic transparency, good governance, and accountability of the civil service. Data collection followed (Bowen, 2009) three-stage process: skimming for general relevance, reading for an intensive review of context and credibility, and interpretation for critical analysis. To ensure data quality, inclusion criteria required literature published between 2015 and 2025, written in Indonesian or English, sourced from journals indexed at a minimum of SINTA 4, and covering topics like administrative ethics, public service, professionalism, or transparency. Conversely, exclusion criteria filtered out irrelevant and scientifically unverifiable sources.

Data analysis employs content analysis and thematic analysis to process the data. Content analysis is used to extract valid, contextual conclusions from the text in a structured manner (Krippendorff, 2018). Meanwhile, thematic analysis provides a flexible yet rigorous approach to identifying, organizing, and interpreting major patterns of meaning across the literature through coding and categorization (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The analysis procedure follows six steps: (1) data familiarization through comprehensive reading; (2) initial coding of relevant information units; (3) theme identification by grouping codes; (4) theme review for alignment with the theoretical framework; (5) theme definition and naming; and (6) constructing an analytical narrative that links the findings to the theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The resulting themes were then integrated with the theoretical frameworks of the New Public Service and Good Governance (UNDP, 1997).

To ensure the validity and credibility of the study, three approaches to data validity were applied: source triangulation through the comparison of various documents; critical assessment to anticipate bias and the authors' backgrounds; and theoretical coherence to ensure that data interpretation aligns with the conceptual framework. Given that the credibility of qualitative research depends on consistency between data, interpretation, and theory, this methodology was systematically designed to produce an in-depth, structured, and scientific analysis of the role of administrative ethics in realizing professional and transparent public services.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Administrative ethics is a crucial element in the delivery of public services as it serves as a guideline for public officials in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. In public administration, ethics is not merely about compliance with rules but also reflects public officials' commitment to acting honestly, fairly, responsibly, and prioritizing the public interest. The application of these ethical values forms the foundation for creating high-quality public services and supports the realization of good governance (Hanifah Tri Indah, Dewa Perwantana Maha Putra, Maya Sartika, 2025).

Administrative ethics are closely linked to the professionalism of civil servants in providing services to the public. Professionalism is measured not only by technical skills and job competence, but also by the attitudes and behavior of civil servants in carrying out their duties responsibly. Civil servants who possess integrity and understand ethical values tend to be more disciplined, objective, and consistent in providing services. (Choirulsyah, 2024).

These conditions improve service quality by ensuring all processes are conducted fairly and in the public interest, making administrative ethics a crucial foundation for fostering a professional civil service that maintains public trust. In addition to supporting professionalism, administrative ethics enhance transparency through open access to information, clear procedures, and opportunities for public monitoring. The inherent values of honesty and accountability encourage civil servants to provide verifiable information openly, giving the public certainty regarding requirements, costs, and timelines, which ultimately reduces bureaucratic irregularities.

This aligns with the Indonesian Ombudsman's 2023 Annual Report, which revealed that the most frequently reported types of maladministration remain persistent delays, procedural deviations, and abuse of authority in public services. Similarly, the Ministry of State Apparatus and Bureaucratic Reform's (PANRB) 2025–2029 Bureaucratic Reform Roadmap emphasizes the importance of strengthening a work culture characterized by integrity, adaptability, and a service-oriented focus as a means of improving the quality of public services. This underscores that strengthening administrative ethics is a genuine necessity to support bureaucratic reform in Indonesia.

Transparency, supported by administrative ethics, can also enhance organizational accountability and strengthen public trust in government services. Advances in information technology further reinforce efforts to achieve transparency in public services. Through the digitization of services and the use of e-government systems, the public can access information more easily, monitor service processes, and submit complaints more quickly. However, the use of technology will not function optimally without an ethical commitment from government officials. Therefore, the application of administrative ethics remains a key factor in ensuring that the information provided to the public is accurate, open, and accountable (Saepudin, 2026) .

The implementation of administrative ethics faces challenges like a formalistic, hierarchical bureaucratic culture that prioritizes procedures over

service quality, uneven ethical understanding, weak oversight, low accountability, and conflicts of interest. To address these, sustained efforts are required through competency development, ethics training, and strengthened oversight. Furthermore, reinforcing an organizational culture of integrity and professionalism alongside digitalizing services will enhance transparency, collectively creating a professional and accountable bureaucracy.

In addition to enhancing transparency, strengthening an organizational culture grounded in integrity and digital transformation are two complementary strategies for creating a transparent, public-interest-oriented bureaucracy. A solid organizational culture fosters consistent behavior among civil servants in upholding ethical values, thereby shifting the focus of public service from mere administrative procedures toward public satisfaction while preventing the abuse of authority. On the other hand, the digitization of public services plays a crucial role in strengthening information transparency and public oversight, as integrated systems can objectively record and evaluate service processes to minimize maladministration and enhance public trust in government institutions. (Sri Yulianty et al., 2026) .

Based on the results of the literature review, it is clear that administrative ethics play a crucial role in realizing professional and transparent public services. The application of ethical values can enhance the professionalism of civil servants, strengthen the transparency and accountability of public services, and build public trust in the government. Although its implementation still faces various challenges, strengthening administrative ethics through capacity building for civil servants, enhanced oversight, fostering an organizational culture of integrity, and leveraging information technology can serve as strategic steps toward achieving high-quality public services that align with the principles of good governance. (Yudianto et al., 2024).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the literature review, administrative ethics serve as a crucial, concrete foundation for professional, transparent public services oriented toward good governance. These ethics successfully bridge technical competence with civil servants' moral commitment, ensuring substantive, disciplined, and objective service delivery in full alignment with the New Public Service framework (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015), which views officials as democratic servants rather than bureaucratic rulers. Furthermore, this ethical commitment encourages honest and accountable data sharing, reinforcing the Public Information Disclosure Act No. 14 of 2008 to prevent abuse of authority; thus, while modern digital technology greatly supports transparency, the success of these systems ultimately depends on public officials' moral dedication to ensuring accurate, open data.

This article identifies several obstacles to implementing administrative ethics—including a rigid bureaucratic culture, limited employee understanding, weak oversight, and special interests and argues that a sustainable approach combining integrity training, stricter monitoring, an

accountable culture, and digital transparency tools is required. Its primary contribution lies in presenting an integrated analytical framework that treats administrative ethics as the foundation, professionalism as the manifestation, and transparency as the indicator of public service quality, rather than discussing them separately as previous studies have done. Ultimately, strengthening administrative ethics is positioned as an absolute, non-negotiable prerequisite for achieving substantive bureaucratic reform and equitable public service in Indonesia.

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