

Ethical Practices and Perceptions of Organizational Ethics among Employees in a Local Government Institution

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the ethical practices of employees in a local government institution in Bukidnon, Philippines, amid growing expectations for integrity, transparency, and accountability in public service. Specifically, it aims to identify employee ethical behaviors across personal, interpersonal, and organizational domains, examine the perceived importance of ethical conduct, and assess its effect on organizational development. A descriptive research design was utilized, employing purposive non-probability sampling. The primary data collection instrument was a modified survey questionnaire adapted from the Institute of Business Ethics. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that ethical practices were consistently upheld across all domains, with interpersonal ethics, such as respect, teamwork, and professionalism, emerging as the most dominant. Employees viewed ethical behaviour as integral to fostering a positive work culture, enhancing public confidence, and aligning individual performance with institutional values. Ethical conduct was perceived to significantly strengthen organizational reputation, support resource efficiency, and ensure long-term effectiveness. However, the study also noted operational challenges, particularly in maintaining confidentiality and consistent attendance, indicating strategic improvement areas. These challenges underscore the necessity for targeted interventions to reinforce ethical standards and address areas where adherence may be lacking. In conclusion, the research affirms that ethical behavior is ingrained in the organizational culture of local government service and serves as a key driver of individual accountability and institutional success. Recommendations include ongoing ethics education, reinforced policy enforcement, and cultivating a value-driven workplace culture to institutionalize ethical standards within government agencies, thereby promoting integrity, transparency, and excellence in public service.

Keywords: Ethical Practices, Public Service, Disaster Risk Management

INTRODUCTION

In today's public sector environment, which is often complex and demanding, ethical behavior is not merely a moral ideal but fundamentally a condition for good governance and public service delivery. As governments around the world are working to rebuild and sustain public trust, particularly amid social unrest and heightened scrutiny, the ethical behavior of public employees has become prevalent. Nowhere is this more pronounced than in local government institutions, where the conduct of public employees in their daily interactions with citizens often determines perceptions of fairness, accountability, and trustworthiness. Ethical behavior in the public sector is more than simply following laws or regulations; it embodies the value of integrity, transparency, impartiality, and responsibility in all aspects of the way the organization works (Benedicto & Caelian, 2020; Quain, 2019). These values are vital for the integrity of individual employees but also for the legitimacy and effectiveness of the organizations for which they work. However, while ultimately ethical behavior is an individual responsibility, it is not devoid of the context of the organization's culture, leadership, and accountability structures.

Numerous studies emphasize that organizational ethical behavior significantly contributes to employee morale, public confidence, institutional reputation, and long-term success (Moldova, 2025; Guo, 2022). Per Republic Act No. 6713 (LawPhil, 1989) or the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees, all public servants in the Philippines are required to uphold the highest standards of ethics in the performance of their duties. The Code states the values of commitment to public interest, professionalism, integrity, and accountability, which public officials must follow, act on, and abide by. The Code highlights the fact that officials

are not only servants in the name of the government, but they are also trustees of the public trust. In line with this, ethical behavior is recognized as a moral duty and a strategic imperative that shapes organizational culture, promotes trust, and fosters sustainability (Adini & Saud, 2024; Acero, 2016).

Studies such as Okorie et al. (2025) and Ahmed et al. (2023) highlighted the integral relationship between ethical conduct and organizational productivity. Particularly in the Philippines, values such as bayanihan (community spirit) and pakikisama (camaraderie) reinforce interpersonal ethics within government offices, aligning personal actions with institutional values (Caga et al., 2025).

Despite the well-established importance of ethics in organizational success, there remains a gap in localized and contextualized assessments of ethical behavior in specific government units, particularly those involved in high-stakes operations such as disaster risk reduction and emergency response. While general studies have affirmed the role of ethics in public service, limited research has explored how ethical practices manifest in daily operations, especially within local disaster management offices in rural or geographically challenged areas like Bukidnon. Moreover, while ethics training and policy compliance exist on paper, inconsistencies in implementation suggest operational gaps that merit closer empirical scrutiny.

This research aimed to explore the ethical practices of Local Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Office (LDRRMO) employees in Bukidnon across three key domains: personal, interpersonal, and organizational ethics. Specifically, it answered the following research problems:

1. What are the employees' ethical practices in terms of:
 - 1.1 Personal Ethics;
 - 1.2 Interpersonal Ethics;
 - 1.3 Organizational Ethics?
2. How do the employees perceive the importance of ethical practices?
3. How do employees perceive the effects of ethical practices on the organization?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive research design to comprehensively examine employees' ethical practices and their effects on organizational development. A purposive non-probability sampling approach was used to ensure a rich and representative dataset, selecting 100 employees in different local government units in Bukidnon, including regular, casual, and job order personnel, who were present during data collection. This sampling strategy was deliberately chosen to capture diverse perspectives across different organizational employment statuses. The primary data collection instrument was a modified survey questionnaire adapted from the Institute of Business Ethics (St. Helena Public View on Ethics at Work, 2013). Before deployment, the questionnaire's reliability was rigorously tested, yielding a high Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.89, confirming its excellent internal consistency and appropriateness for capturing ethical practices among employees.

Data analysis involved calculating mean scores for each item to assess the prevalence of ethical practices, perceived importance, and organizational impact. Descriptive statistics served as the core analytical tool, providing clear insights into the overall ethical landscape within the organization and addressing the study's key research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Personal Ethics of LDRRMO Employees in Bukidnon

Personal Ethics	Mean	Interpretation
Challenge oneself to do what is right and good	4.00	Highly Practiced

Practice being organized and systematic	3.91	Highly Practiced
Goal-oriented	3.91	Highly Practiced
Pursue excellence in everything and show morale	3.84	Highly Practiced
Motivated to grow and learn	3.84	Highly Practiced
Accomplished the task within the required deadlines	3.84	Highly Practiced
Dependable and accountable	3.78	Highly Practiced
Arrive at the office on time	3.75	Highly Practiced
Consistent in your work attendance	3.72	Highly Practiced
Sub-Mean	3.81	Highly Practiced

Legend:

Scale	Mean Interval	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
4	3.25-4.00	Always	Highly Practiced
3	2.50-3.24	Sometimes	Practiced
2	1.75-2.49	Usually,	Sometimes Practiced
1	1.00-1.74	Never	Not Practiced

Table 1 illustrates the Personal Ethics of LDRRMO Employees in Bukidnon, indicating that employees demonstrate a high level of personal ethics, with an overall mean of 3.81, described as “Always” and interpreted as “Highly Practiced.” The highest-rated indicator was “*Challenge oneself to do what is right and good*,” with a perfect score of 4.00, reflecting a strong personal commitment to moral behavior. This suggests that employees are motivated by a strong sense of ethical responsibility, even when not directly supervised. In Bukidnon, this behavior is closely related to the region's cultural values of spirituality and accountability, often instilled through familial and community norms. This is supported by Heinig (2018), who emphasized that when individuals act ethically out of internal motivation, it boosts morale and long-term institutional integrity.

The lowest score in this domain was “*Consistent in your work attendance*,” with a mean of 3.72, which, while still highly practiced, indicates that external factors may occasionally influence attendance. In Bukidnon, where many employees commute from remote barangays, challenges such as transportation difficulties, weather, and family responsibilities might impact attendance. According to Lawrence (2019), punctuality and attendance are foundational workplace ethics and must be reinforced through clear policies and supportive practices. These results affirm Benedicto and Caelian’s (2020) emphasis on individual integrity, accountability, and commitment as ethical pillars of public service. For remote barangays, challenges such as transportation difficulties, weather, and family responsibilities affect attendance. According to Lawrence (2019), punctuality and attendance are foundational workplace ethics and must be reinforced through clear policies and supportive practices.

Table 2. Interpersonal Ethics of LDRRMO Employees in Bukidnon

Interpersonal Ethics	Mean	Interpretation
Create a harmonious relationship with colleagues, clients, and partners	4.00	Highly Practiced
Work with a high standard of professionalism	4.00	Highly Practiced
Give genuine care to everyone	4.00	Highly Practiced
Positive and helpful	3.97	Highly Practiced
Show respect to your colleagues, clients, and other partners	3.94	Highly Practiced

Observe fairness and equality	3.94	Highly Practiced
Honest and loyal to everyone in the organization	3.91	Highly Practiced
Communicate excellently	3.91	Highly Practiced
Respond to the client's concerns quickly	3.91	Highly Practiced
Practicing teamwork in the organization	3.91	Highly Practiced
Sub-Mean	3.95	Highly Practiced

Legend:

Scale	Mean Interval	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
4	3.25-4.00	Always	Highly Practiced
3	2.50-3.24	Sometimes	Practiced
2	1.75-2.49	Usually,	Sometimes Practiced
1	1.00-1.74	Never	Not Practiced

Table 2 shows the Interpersonal Ethics of LDRRMO Employees in Bukidnon, where this domain emerged As the highest-rated among LDRRMO employees in Bukidnon, with an overall mean of 3.95, interpreted as “Always” and described as “Highly Practiced,” three indicators—“*Create harmonious relationships with colleagues, clients, and other partners,*” “*Work with a high standard of professionalism,*” and “*Give genuine care to everyone*”—each received a perfect mean score of 4.00. These results reflect a deeply rooted culture of relational ethics and community responsibility within the organization. In Bukidnon, these practices mirror the local value of Bayanihan—a tradition of cooperative spirit and empathy that naturally translates into the workplace, especially in service-driven and community-facing offices such as LDRRMO. Caga et al. (2025) stated that ethical behavior promotes trust, strengthens cohesion, and supports long-term performance in organizational settings. Similarly, Wilkins (2018) noted that professionalism and interpersonal respect are essential for maintaining public trust and organizational efficiency, both of which are evident in the results.

While all indicators in this domain were rated highly, the lowest mean scores, still at 3.91, were observed in “Communicate excellently,” “Respond to client’s concern quickly,” “*Practice teamwork in the organization,*” and “*Honest and loyal to everyone in the organization.*” These relatively lower scores may point to areas where operational pressures or logistical barriers affect communication flow and responsiveness, especially during emergency deployments or fieldwork. In such settings, occasional lapses in immediate client response or coordination may occur despite high ethical intent. These findings align with Lawrence (2019) and Hill (2019), who emphasized that interpersonal ethics such as communication, loyalty, and teamwork directly impact public service effectiveness and client satisfaction. Reinforcing these areas through targeted training and continuous feedback mechanisms can help optimize ethical performance and public trust in LDRRMO services.

Table 3. Organizational Ethics of LDRRMO Employees in Bukidnon

Organizational Ethics	Mean	Interpretation
Utilize the organization’s resources efficiently and effectively	3.91	Highly Practiced
Able to avoid conflicts of interest	3.91	Highly Practiced
Uphold public interest over self-interest	3.91	Highly Practiced
Obey organizational orders and policies	3.91	Highly Practiced
Balance organizational and personal needs	3.78	Highly Practiced
Say "no" to inappropriate requests	3.72	Highly Practiced

Maintain appropriate confidentiality	3.63	Highly Practiced
Sub-Mean	3.82	Highly Practiced

Legend:

Scale	Mean Interval	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
4	3.25-4.00	Always	Highly Practiced
3	2.50-3.24	Sometimes	Practiced
2	1.75-2.49	Usually	Sometimes Practiced
1	1.00-1.74	Never	Not Practiced

Table 3 presents the domain of Organizational Ethics, where LDRRMO employees in Bukidnon achieved a sub-mean of 3.82, interpreted as “Always” and described as “Highly Practiced.” The highest-rated indicators, each with a mean of 3.91, include “*Utilize organization’s resources efficiently and effectively*,” “*Able to avoid conflict of interest*,” “*Uphold public interest over self-interest*,” and “*Obey organizational orders and policies*.” These results indicate a strong adherence to institutional protocols and public accountability, which are essential in a government unit like LDRRMO, where resource optimization and compliance are crucial for public service delivery. In the context of Bukidnon, where many municipalities operate with limited fiscal and logistical resources, employees’ ability to navigate these constraints while prioritizing public interest reflects a culture of resilience, discipline, and civic duty. This supports Svava (2015), who emphasized that ethical practices in government agencies save resources and enhance institutional efficiency. It also resonates with Republic Act 6713, which mandates public officials to prioritize public interest, exercise responsibility, and uphold transparency and integrity.

However, the lowest-rated indicator in this domain is “*Maintain appropriate confidentiality*,” with a mean of 3.63, though still categorized as “Highly Practiced.” This relatively lower score suggests that confidentiality, particularly in handling sensitive information, is a potential area for improvement. Maintaining strict information boundaries can be a cultural challenge in close-knit communities typical of Bukidnon, where overlapping social and professional relationships are common. Though often grounded in trust, informal information-sharing may unintentionally compromise institutional confidentiality. As Fernando (2009) highlighted, ethics is closely tied to trust, and safeguarding confidential information is essential for maintaining public confidence. These findings also align with Quain (2019), who asserted that clear behavioral policies and regular ethics training are critical for reinforcing institutional confidentiality. Thus, continuous reinforcement of data privacy policies and staff orientation on information sensitivity is recommended to strengthen this area of organizational ethics.

Table 4. Summary of LDRRMO Employees’ Ethical Practices in Bukidnon

Domain	Mean	Interpretation
Personal Ethics	3.81	Highly Practiced
Interpersonal Ethics	3.95	Highly Practiced
Organizational Ethics	3.82	Highly Practiced
Overall Mean	3.86	Highly Practiced

Legend:

Scale	Mean Interval	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
4	3.25-4.00	Always	Highly Practiced
3	2.50-3.24	Sometimes	Practiced

2	1.75-2.49	Usually,	Sometimes Practiced
1	1.00-1.74	Never	Not Practiced

The summary presented in Table 4 indicates that ethical practices among LDRRMO employees in Bukidnon are consistently rated as “Highly Practiced” across all domains, with an overall mean of 3.86. Among the three domains, Interpersonal Ethics achieved the highest mean of 3.95, suggesting that employees strongly emphasize respectful relationships, professionalism, and collaborative service. This result reflects a shared organizational culture rooted in values like Bayanihan—the Filipino tradition of communal unity, which is particularly strong in Bukidnon's community-based local governance. This result corroborates the findings of Adini and Saud (2024), who noted that strong interpersonal ethics enhance teamwork, institutional trust, and organizational cohesion. Moreover, the high score affirms that public trust is fostered through policy and daily respectful engagement with clients and coworkers.

Conversely, Personal Ethics scored the lowest among the three domains (mean = 3.81), still interpreted as “Highly Practiced.” This suggests that while employees show commitment to ethical work behavior, certain areas—such as punctuality and consistent attendance—may require improvement. In the Bukidnon context, where LDRRMO personnel may be deployed in remote or geographically challenging areas, delays and irregular schedules are not uncommon. These logistical realities may affect perceptions of personal ethical performance. Nonetheless, the results affirm that ethical behavior remains embedded across individual and collective practices within the organization. This aligns with Lawrence (2019) and Lorreto (2015) in Chapter 2, who emphasized that workplace ethics—whether personal, interpersonal, or organizational—significantly influence employee conduct and service outcomes. The findings underscore the need for continuous reinforcement of ethical standards across all levels of professional interaction in the LDRRMO office

Table 5. Perceived Importance of Employees’ Ethical Practices

Importance of Employees’ Ethical Practices	Mean	Interpretation
Employees’ ethical practices help to attract and retain the best talent	4.00	Very Important
Employees’ ethical practices support greater consistency with the organization's standards	4.00	Very Important
Employees' ethical practices help to gain the trust and confidence of the public.	4.00	Very Important
Employees’ ethical practices help to avoid legal problems	3.94	Very Important
Employees’ ethical practices help create a positive working environment	3.91	Very Important
Employees’ ethical practices boost morale, motivation, and productivity	3.84	Very Important
Employees’ ethical practices build higher client/customer loyalty and attract new clients	3.81	Very Important
Overall Mean	3.93	Very Important

Legend:

Scale	Mean Interval	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
4	3.25-4.00	Strongly Agree	Very Important
3	2.50-3.24	Agree	Important
2	1.75-2.49	Disagree	Less Important
1	1.00-1.74	Strongly Disagree	Not Important

Table 5 presents the perceived importance of ethical practices among LDRRMO employees in Bukidnon. The domain achieved a high overall mean of 3.93, interpreted as "Strongly Agree" and described as "Very Important."

Three statements are tied as the highest-rated indicators, each with a perfect mean score of 4.00, “*Ethical practices help to attract and retain the best talent,*” “*Support greater consistency on organizational standards,*” and “*Help gain trust and confidence from the public.*” These responses indicate that employees recognize ethics as an abstract value and a strategic asset to organizational stability and growth. In Bukidnon, where government employees frequently work closely with the public in community-driven environments, the value placed on trust and consistency reflects significant insights about the organizational culture. This finding aligns with Heinig (2018), who asserted that an ethical workplace attracts talent and fosters morale, and with Guo (2022), who emphasized that organizational ethics are central to building trust and credibility with the public.

On the other hand, the relatively lowest-rated indicator, “*Ethical practices build higher client/customer loyalty and attract new clients/customers,*” received a still-strong mean score of 3.81, categorized as “Very Important.” This result suggests that while LDRMO employees acknowledge the relevance of ethics in client relations, their immediate focus may be more grounded in-service delivery and public accountability rather than in client acquisition, likely due to the nature of disaster response work, which prioritizes public safety over market competitiveness. In a locale like Bukidnon, with geographically dispersed communities and limited infrastructure, the concept of “customer loyalty” may be interpreted less in a commercial sense and more as sustained community trust. Supporting this, Hill (2019) and Fernando (2009) emphasized that ethical conduct fosters public trust, strengthens institutional image, and minimizes risk exposure. Therefore, the perceived value of ethics among employees reflects a deep understanding of its impact on both internal organizational health and broader community relationships.

Table 6. Perceived Effects of Employees’ Ethical Practices on the Organization

Effects	Mean	Interpretation
Employees' ethical practices improve the organization’s reputation	4.00	Very High Effect
Employees' ethical practices help to ensure organizations’ long-term success	4.00	Very High Effect
Employees' ethical practices make a huge contribution to the organization's development.	3.91	Very High Effect
Employees' ethical practices have a positive impact on the community	3.91	Very High Effect
Employees' ethical practices help the organization to grow and develop	3.91	Very High Effect
Employees' ethical practices help shape strong customer loyalty and clients’ loyalty	3.84	Very High Effect
Employees' ethical practices lead to quality management	3.84	Very High Effect
Overall Mean	3.92	Very High Effect

Legend:

Scale	Mean Interval	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
4	3.25-4.00	Strongly Agree	Very High Effect
3	2.50-3.24	Agree	High Effect
2	1.75-2.49	Disagree	Low Effect
1	1.00-1.74	Strongly Disagree	Very Low Effect

Table 6 shows the perceived effects of employees' ethical practices on the organization, as evaluated by LDRMO employees in Bukidnon. The overall mean of 3.92, interpreted as a “Very High Effect,” reflects the consensus that ethical conduct greatly contributes to organizational outcomes. The two highest-rated indicators— “*Improve the organization’s reputation*” and “*Help to ensure organizations’ long-term success,*” both with a mean of 4.00, highlight the belief that ethics are not merely a set of behavioral norms but are fundamental to sustaining credibility, growth, and institutional resilience. These findings echo Quain (2019) and

Hill (2019), who noted that ethical behavior enhances public image and stakeholder trust. This is particularly relevant in Bukidnon, where government agencies such as the LDRRMO operate in close proximity to the public they serve. The integrity of public service institutions is constantly under community scrutiny, especially during disaster response, making ethical reputation a core organizational asset.

The lowest-rated indicators— *“Help shape strong customer and client loyalty”* and *“Lead to quality management”*—both received a mean of 3.84, yet were still interpreted as having a “Very High Effect.” These scores suggest that while these outcomes are important, their impact may be less immediate or observable in a government office focused on disaster management rather than direct service commerce. In Bukidnon, loyalty and quality may not be framed in traditional customer service terms but are instead seen through trust, dependability, and timely intervention in emergencies. Despite this nuance, the overall high rating of all items affirms that employees view ethics as essential not only for internal cohesion but also for the broader success of the organization. As Heinig (2018) and Moldovan (2025) supported, ethical behavior is instrumental in fostering a positive organizational culture, enhancing strategic development, and contributing positively to the wider community.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Ethical behavior is deeply entrenched in building a workplace culture in a government office because the employees have consistently demonstrated high ethical standards in personal, interpersonal, and organizational behaviors with exceptional standard in interpersonal and organizational behaviors which indicates that the working culture of the employees is truly fostering a culture of professionalism, following the rules, and a strong commitment to public service.

Employees strongly acknowledged the importance of ethical practices within their organization, as reflected by the overall “Very Important” interpretation across all indicators. They particularly valued ethics for their role in attracting competent personnel, fostering trust with the public, and ensuring alignment with organizational standards. These insights suggest that LDRRMO staff understand ethics as individual responsibilities and organizational assets that drive consistency and public accountability. Even the lowest-rated items, such as ethics contributing to client loyalty, still received very strong recognition, indicating that employees perceive ethics as vital to both internal efficiency and the broader mission of public service.

The perceived effects of ethical practices on the organization were also rated very highly, indicating widespread agreement that ethical conduct contributes directly to institutional success. Employees believed that ethics significantly improve the organization's reputation and help ensure long-term sustainability. Although areas like customer loyalty and quality management scored marginally lower, they still reflected a strong consensus on the far-reaching influence of ethics on overall performance. These findings underscore the belief among LDRRMO staff that ethics are not merely aspirational values but critical to the organization's effectiveness, resilience, and trustworthiness, especially in a public service office that operates under the scrutiny of the communities it serves.

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