Implementation of Ethics in Public Administration from a Philosophical Perspective in the Implementation of Government in South Sulawesi

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Abstract: The following study focuses on the application of ethics in public administration within the culture of the South Sulawesi Indonesia from philosophical approach. Using a qualitative research approach, the study explores cultural values, oriented specifically to siri' na pacce, as determining the pattern of ethical decision-making of public administrators. The result presents cultural relativism as a factor that affects the ethical performance: the drawbacks of disclosing and reporting in an elaborate system. Ethical leadership: an objective continuation of the topic list In addition, the study considers the principles of personal integrity and moral character in ethical governance and argues for the need for development of more contextualised ethical training. Through filling the gaps which are in the literature both in administrative and non-administrative economies the research enhances the effort in proactive ethical behavior in public administration.

Keywords: Public administration; ethics; cultural relativism; South Sulawesi; qualitative research.

1. Introduction

Ethics in public administration has been for a long time considered an essential ingredient for the performance of government and the confidence placed in it by the public. It is therefore important that ethical standards are complied with in the public sector particularly to eradicate cases of corrupt practices in any country. As in any other provinces in Indonesia, it is neither easy nor unimportant to enforce ethical governance in South Sulawesi though it is rendered important due to socio-political dynamics of the region. This paper is undertaken from a philosophical standpoint with a view to ascertaining the efficacy and practice of ethical standards in public administration in this province of South Sulawesi by establishing the actual ethical standards that are upheld by public officers and whether and how these principles are realised in practice [1,2].

Ethics in public administration is only comprehensible with the understanding of good governance that is; the efficiency and effectiveness of the governing systems with particular reference and practice to the rule of law or governance which entails remembrance on issues to do with; accountability, transparency and responsiveness in public service. Ethics is therefore the system that steers the conduct of public administrators in their operations and assist them to make the right decisions for the benefit of the public and in a noble manner. However, this is not very easy to apply ethical standards in public administration On this, there several challenges hich accompany ethical standards especially in regions where socio-political and cultural factors dominate the governance structures. These challenges are even more exacerbated in South Sulawesi by the fact that the ethical realities of the region are informed by the

region's history and culture within which such public administrators work [3,4].

South Sulawesi is South Sulawesi has a diverse cultural background and a politically delicate structure. The area contains different ethnic cultures, which define their view and expectations towards power and authority in the society. This cultural diversity thus presents the set challenge for the adoption and practice of ethical uniformity as a practice in the public administration. For example, two big ethnic groups in the region, the Bugis and the Makassar, possess quite different sets of cultural values that include such notions as honor, loyalty, and social order. While these values are essential they tend to go hand in hand with transparency and accountability which is the political governance ethical compass.

The study of ethics in philosophy of public administration is crucial in comprehending these conflicts and in searching for the method of harmonizing between civilizational values and the requirements of the contemporary administration [5,6]. In fact, there is appreciation that philosophy offers the instruments to analytically assess the norms of ethical conduct that leadership in public service applies and consider if these norms are adequate to address the moral issues that the administrators encounter. Based on the philosophies of deontology, utilitarianism and virtue this study aims at exploring the ethical principles of public administration in South Sulawesi and at the same time providing an evaluative insight on the prospects of ethical governance.

Deontological ethics, based on the principles of obligation and duty can be said to apply well within the public administration since the latter requires strict observance of the law. However, in the area where culture has a relatively strong influence such as South Sulawesi the deontological theories could sometimes be in tension with the cultural practices. For instance, the obligation to disclose the corruption or misconduct may be anathema to the revered corporate culture of the organization as far as the employees are concerned or to the political culture as far as the politicians are concerned. This brings the conflict of deontological ethics and cultural values as one of the major research questions of this study.

Another ethical theory that may be used to evaluate the conduct of public administration is known as utilitarianism which holds that the best action is the one which results in the greatest amount of happiness. The situations which may appear to South Sulawesi public administrators can involve the balancing of interests of one community against the other because each will have their own needs and expectations. The utilitarian approach otherwise referred to as the consequentialist approach would advise that decisions should be made to provide greatest benefits to the largest number of people. But this is possible when the qualities being chosen are accepted as the 'greatest good' by most stakeholders; the approach can be problematic in a culturally divided region where excellence may mean different things to different people.

Compared with the stakeholder approach, which concentrates on satisfying different stakeholders' requests and needs, and the deontological approach, which refers to the list of rules of ethically correct conduct, virtue ethics offers a much more organic strategy of ethical governance based on the concept of the possession of such character traits as honesty, courage, and compassion. In the context of South Sulawesi, which attributes significant importance to persons and their relationships, it is virtue ethics that may help the public administrators figure out how to develop the right character to meet the ethical demands they experience. Through this study's emphasis on the cultivation of virtuous public administrators, it is hoped that the issue of moral education and the provision of ethical training for ethical governance in the region would be well emphasized.

2. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach to explore the implementation of ethics in public administration from a philosophical perspective in South Sulawesi. The qualitative approach was selected to allow for an in-depth exploration of the complex and nuanced ethical issues that public administrators face, as well as to understand the cultural and contextual factors influencing ethical practices in the region.

2.1 Research Design

The research design was rooted in a phenomenological approach, which aimed to capture the lived experiences and perceptions of public administrators in South Sulawesi regarding the implementation of ethics in their professional roles. This approach was chosen because it facilitated a deeper understanding of how these individuals interpret and apply ethical principles within the specific cultural and socio-

political context of the region.

2.2 Data Collection Methods

Data were collected through a combination of semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. These methods were selected to gather rich, detailed data from multiple sources, providing a comprehensive view of the ethical landscape in public administration in South Sulawesi.

2.2.1 *Semi-Structured Interviews*

Interviews were conducted with 20 public administrators, government officials, and civil society representatives who were directly involved in the implementation of public administration in South Sulawesi. The semi-structured format allowed for flexibility in exploring specific topics of interest while ensuring that all key areas were covered. The interview questions were designed to probe participants' perceptions of ethical principles, the challenges they faced in implementing these principles, and their views on the influence of cultural and philosophical factors on ethical governance.

2.2.2 *Focus Group Discussions*

Two focus group discussions were held, each comprising 8-10 participants from different sectors of public administration. The focus groups were designed to encourage interactive discussions, allowing participants to share their experiences and perspectives on ethical issues in a collaborative setting. The discussions were guided by a moderator who ensured that all participants had an opportunity to contribute, and that the conversation remained focused on the research objectives.

2.3 Document Analysis

In addition to interviews and focus groups, a thorough analysis of relevant documents was conducted. This included official government policies, ethical guidelines, internal reports, and other public records related to the implementation of ethics in public administration. The document analysis provided context and background information, helping to corroborate and enrich the data obtained from interviews and focus groups.

2.4 Data Analysis

The qualitative data collected were analysed through thematic analysis, a good technique of arriving at a conclusion concerning patterns or themes in qualitative data. This study underwent a series of analysis process identified below In the process of analysis, several processes were incorporated. The first step was to take a word by word record of the interviews and focus group discussions which were then read through by the researchers at least three times. It is at this stage that notes and initial ideas that would form a basis for the identification of the possible themes were taken. The second stage centred on coding the data in a rigorous and deliberate manner. Manual coding was used and the text was segmented so that segments could represent each of the themes obtained. Based on the research questions and the analysis of the data, codes were created to have both primary as well as secondary focus to involve both deductive and inductive processes in the generation of the themes. The code in stage three was categorised into the overarching themes that best reflected the data. These themes became more specific and evolving as the analysis process went on with the purpose of becoming representative for the data. For each adopted theme, the study critically looked at and reshaped the other themes to make as much sense and be as different from the first theme as possible. This process ensured that the highlighted themes had not skewed the data and was in synchrony with the extra data set and the participants' experience and perception. A brief definition and the name of every theme was given, in which the essence of a theme was described in a few words. The last step included analysing the identified themes in the light of the presented philosophies of ethics in public administration. It was the intention of the interpretation to relate the results to the identified theories and to discuss the conclusion emerging from the results in terms of ethical governance in South Sulawesi.

3. Comparative analysis and finding

3.1 Themes in Ethical Implementation

One of the most prominent themes that emerged from the data was the significant influence of cultural values on ethical decision-making within public administration. Participants consistently highlighted how local customs and traditions shape their understanding of what constitutes ethical

behavior, often leading to conflicts between traditional values and modern governance principles.

> *"In our culture, loyalty to one's superior is highly valued, sometimes more than following official regulations. This can make it difficult to report unethical behavior if it involves someone in a higher position."*

This theme reflects the tension between traditional cultural norms and the expectations of ethical governance. The data suggest that public administrators in South Sulawesi may prioritize cultural values such as loyalty and social harmony over strict adherence to formal ethical guidelines. This can lead to ethical dilemmas where individuals feel torn between upholding cultural expectations and complying with official regulations.

Participants frequently discussed the challenges associated with maintaining transparency and accountability in public administration. Many cited systemic issues such as bureaucracy, lack of resources, and political pressure as barriers to ethical governance. These challenges often result in a gap between the ethical ideals promoted by the government and the reality of their implementation.

> *"Transparency is something we all agree is important, but in practice, it's very difficult to achieve. There are too many layers of bureaucracy, and sometimes, things get lost in the process."*

This theme highlights the practical difficulties in implementing transparency and accountability measures within the public sector. The data reveal that despite widespread recognition of the importance of these ethical principles, structural and procedural barriers often hinder their effective implementation. This finding underscores the need for reforms that address these systemic challenges to enhance ethical governance.

Another recurring theme was the emphasis on moral integrity and personal responsibility among public administrators. Participants stressed the importance of individual character and ethical leadership in fostering an ethical organizational culture. Many described how their personal values and sense of duty guide their actions, even in the face of external pressures.

> *"At the end of the day, it comes down to personal integrity. You have to be the one who decides what is right and what is wrong, even if others are pushing you in a different direction."*

This theme reflects the centrality of moral integrity in the ethical practice of public administration. The data suggest that while external factors such as cultural norms and systemic challenges play a significant role, personal responsibility and ethical leadership are critical in ensuring ethical behavior. This highlights the importance of fostering a strong ethical culture within public organizations, where individuals are encouraged to act with integrity.

The need for ethical training and education emerged as a key theme, with participants calling for more robust programs to help public administrators navigate the ethical complexities of their roles. Many expressed a desire for ongoing training that not only covers formal ethical guidelines but also addresses the philosophical and cultural dimensions of ethics in public administration.

> *"We need more than just a list of rules. Ethical training should help us understand the reasons behind these rules and how to apply them in our specific context."*

This theme underscores the importance of comprehensive ethical training that goes beyond procedural knowledge to include philosophical and contextual understanding. The data indicate that public administrators in South Sulawesi recognize the value of such training in enhancing their ability to make ethical decisions. This finding suggests that investment in ethical education could significantly improve the implementation of ethics in public administration.

3.2 Philosophical Insights

For this reason, the analysis of ethical implementation in public administration in South Sulawesi from the philosophical point of view provides a profound comprehension of the role and meaning of ethical norms as well as the views of public administrators concerning these norms. Using the themes found in the research, this section examines the branches of philosophical systems that guide ethical conduct. Despite being qualitative, such insights can be contextualized with interpretations that are

similar in spirit to inferential statistical analysis as to how certain factors bear relationship to ethical outcomes in reality. Another of the substantive ideas that have emerged from the data analysis is that of ethical relativism, and how culture plays a huge role in ethical decision making. To this end, ethical relativism assures that what is right or wrong is relative to culture and/ or societal construct. The study of South Sulawesi reveals that there is evidence that most public administrators may balance between traditional cultural and the new ethic given the solutions they employ while solving an ethic dilemma. They provide an example of a relativistic approach as to applying ethics, where cultural particularity plays a major role. It was observed that there was a high degree of association between culture and the choice which might be in violation of organizational ethical standards.

> *"In our culture, loyalty to one's superior is highly valued, sometimes more than following official regulations."*

Indicates how cultural loyalty often supersedes formal ethical standards. This insight highlights the tension between universalist ethical frameworks and relativistic approaches within the public administration context. It suggests that efforts to enhance ethical governance must consider these cultural influences, possibly through ethical training that bridges traditional values with modern ethical expectations. Another philosophical perspective evident in the data is the deontological approach, which focuses on the importance of duty and adherence to rules as the foundation of ethical behavior. Many public administrators in South Sulawesi view their ethical obligations through a lens of duty both to the state and to their communities. This perspective aligns with the deontological theory of ethics, where the morality of an action is judged based on adherence to rules and duties, rather than the consequences of the action. The data reveal that participants who emphasized personal duty and responsibility were more likely to report strict adherence to ethical guidelines, despite external pressures.

> *"At the end of the day, it comes down to personal integrity. You have to be the one who decides what is right and what is wrong."*

Demonstrates this deontological commitment to duty. This suggests that fostering a sense of duty and ethical responsibility among public administrators could enhance adherence to ethical guidelines. The challenge lies in integrating these deontological principles with the existing cultural norms, ensuring that duty to ethical standards is not compromised by other loyalties or obligations. Virtue ethics, which emphasizes the role of moral character in ethical decision-making, also emerged as a significant philosophical theme. The data suggest that public administrators who view ethical behavior as an extension of their personal virtues such as honesty, integrity, and courage are better equipped to navigate the complexities of ethical governance. This approach aligns with the Aristotelian concept of virtue ethics, where the cultivation of good character traits leads to ethical actions. The qualitative analysis suggests that variations in ethical behavior can often be traced back to differences in individual moral character. Public administrators who emphasized virtues like honesty and integrity were more consistent in their ethical practices.

> *"We need more than just a list of rules. Ethical training should help us understand the reasons behind these rules and how to apply them in our specific context."*

Is consonant with the virtue ethics approach in which the focus is made on comprehending and enacting ethical values. This insight calls for moral education as well as the development of virtues in public administration. Because of the emphasis on the cultivation of moral character ethical training can enable the public administrators to make the right decisions that augurs well with their training as well as the ethical expectations of the society. Last but not the least; the data of the study reveal that there is a consequentialist notion at play sometimes when public administrators judge the ethical value of their actions based on the consequences that follow them. Consequentialism, where the morality of an action becomes the consequence of the effects it holds is not as common, but evident where an administrator has to assess the utility and disutility of actions on the community and the public good. Largely, the findings of the study postulate that those in a position of public administration who choose to embrace consequentialism are likely to assess the degree and the extent of the effects of their decisions. The greater good is generally involved in tasks such as priorities or resource allocation or deciding when the public must be informed. One participant noted.

"Transparency is something we all agree is important, but in practice, it's very difficult to achieve. There are too many layers of bureaucracy, and sometimes, things get lost in the process."

Indicating a consequentialist concern with the practical outcomes of ethical principles. This reflects the pragmatic realities of public administration, where the consequences of actions are often a critical consideration. It suggests that ethical governance could benefit from a balanced approach that considers both the intent (deontological) and the outcomes (consequentialist) of public decisions.

The study on the implementation of ethics in public administration from a philosophical perspective in South Sulawesi provides critical insights into the intricate dynamics between cultural values, systemic challenges, and personal integrity in the ethical governance of the region. The findings offer significant contributions to the existing literature on public administration ethics, particularly in the context of developing regions where cultural influences are profound.

Perhaps one of the outstanding features of this research is its endeavor to examine the cultural factor in the ethical decision-making of public administrators. In focusing on Indonesian culture, studies show that culture plays a significant role in public administration, although the specific way own cultural orientation, which is as deep-rooted as in South Sulawesi, intersects with the norms and standards of formal ethical framework has not been considered [7,8]. This study fills this gap by presenting data that shows that cultural beliefs like siri' na pace – an honor-shame continuum can indeed affect the ethical choices of the officials in the public service.

The findings are set in contrast with the universalist approach to ethics, which is commonly promoted in the literature and according to which ethical values are universally applicable regardless of the cultural context that is found in the work of Enke et al. (2023) and Czingon et al. (2020) [9,10]. However, this present research affirms relativism for the proposition that, ethical decision making in South Sulawesi is a pragmatic purchase between culture and law. In this way, the present study enriches knowledge about the practices of ethics in the non Western culture and questions the applicability of the Western ethical paradigm in such environment.

Another important assumption of this research is the presence of systematic barriers to transparency and accountability in public administration. Earlier research has explored these principles in relation to the promotion of ethical governance in detail [10,11] but there is a relatively limited empirical emphasis on the challenges to the implementation of these principles where developing countries are concerned. This research responds to this gap by highlighting various challenges for instance bureaucracy and politics which hinder the process of ethical standards adoption.

Whereas the principles of transparency being one of the remaining key values underlying successful governance initiatives around the world, the research identifies the issue of this value to be one of the most insoluble in South Sulawesi because of the presence of numerous layers of bureaucracy and political interference. This is also in line with leading literature, which suggests that transparency and accountability interventions should not be pursued in a vacuum, given that the principles may have to be implemented in line with local administrative and political system [12,13]. While presenting these findings the study adds a realistic texture to the issues entailing the actual everyday challenges of ethical governance in modern large scale administration.

The theme of moral integrity and personal responsibility that emerged from this study aligns with the broader literature on virtue ethics in public administration [14]. However, this study goes further by contextualizing these virtues within the specific cultural and systemic constraints of South Sulawesi. The findings suggest that while personal integrity is crucial for ethical behavior, its effectiveness can be limited by external pressures, such as cultural expectations and bureaucratic challenges.

This contrasts with more optimistic views in the literature that suggest personal virtues alone can drive ethical behavior [15]. Instead, this study argues for a more integrated approach that combines personal integrity with structural reforms and cultural sensitivity. By doing so, it provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding how ethical behavior can be promoted in public administration, particularly in regions where cultural and systemic factors play a significant role.

The study's findings on the need for ethical training and education also address a critical gap in the

literature. While previous research has emphasized the importance of ethical training in public administration, there has been less focus on the content and structure of these training programs, particularly in non-Western contexts. This study highlights the inadequacy of existing training programs in South Sulawesi, which often focus on procedural knowledge without addressing the philosophical and cultural dimensions of ethics.

By calling for more robust and contextually relevant ethical training, this study contributes to the growing body of literature that advocates for a more holistic approach to ethics education in public administration. It suggests that ethical training should not only cover formal guidelines but also equip public administrators with the philosophical and cultural tools necessary to navigate the complex ethical landscape of their specific contexts.

This study has made significant strides in addressing the existing gaps in the literature on public administration ethics, particularly by focusing on the underexplored context of South Sulawesi. While much of the existing literature has been dominated by studies from Western contexts, which often emphasize universal principles of ethics [17,18], this study provides a counterpoint by illustrating the importance of cultural relativism in understanding ethical behavior in non-Western settings.

Furthermore, the study challenges the assumption that ethical training and education can be standardized across different contexts [19]. By emphasizing the need for culturally and philosophically informed training, the study contributes to a more differentiated approach to ethics education, one that recognizes the diversity of ethical landscapes in public administration globally.

4. Conclusions

The study on the implementation of ethics in public administration in South Sulawesi from a philosophical perspective has illuminated the complex interplay between cultural norms, systemic challenges, and personal integrity in shaping ethical behavior among public administrators. By addressing the significant gaps in existing literature, particularly the underexplored influence of cultural relativism and the need for contextually tailored ethical training, the study provides a nuanced understanding of how ethics are practiced in non-Western settings. The findings emphasize the importance of integrating cultural sensitivity, structural reforms, and the cultivation of moral virtues in promoting ethical governance, offering valuable insights for enhancing ethical practices in similar contexts globally.

5. Acknowledgment

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