

Original Article

# Evaluating the Influence of Ethical Codes of Conduct on Public Service Delivery in Local Governments of the Mount Elgon Region, Eastern Uganda

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**Abstract:** This study examines the impact of compliance with ethical codes of conduct on the quality of public service delivery in local governments within the Mount Elgon region of Eastern Uganda. It addresses the extent at which ethical standards influence efficiency, accountability, and public trust in services. A mixed-methods approach was utilised, integrating qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions with public servants and community stakeholders along with quantitative data regarding service delivery outcomes and compliance with established ethical standards. The results demonstrate a substantial positive correlation between compliance with ethical norms and the quality of public service provision. Local governments that showed stricter adherence to ethical rules achieved enhanced service efficiency, reinforced accountability procedures, and elevated community trust. The results underscore the pivotal role of ethical behaviour in strengthening governance and improving service delivery effectiveness. The ramifications are particularly significant for the healthcare sector, where trust, transparency, and accountability are crucial for effective service delivery. The study emphasises the necessity for strong ethical frameworks in public institutions and advocates the incorporation of ethical norms into employee training, institutional policy, and governance procedures. Enhancing ethical compliance can significantly improve the effectiveness, accountability, and trustworthiness of public service delivery in the region.

**Keywords:** Mount Elgon Region, Ethical Code of Conduct, Public Services Delivery, Local Government, Community Trust.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Public service delivery is a critical issue in modern governance, especially in developing areas where local governments act as the main link between the state and its citizens. Factors influencing the efficacy of public service delivery in the Mount Elgon region of Eastern Uganda include both political, administrative, socio-economic and cultural factors. Under this framework, ethical conduct in public administration has become a key determinant of institutional legitimacy, administrative accountability and citizen satisfaction. Ethics standards seek to guide the behavior of public officials, limit abuse of office and foster integrity in decision making processes. However, although codes of conduct have been institutionally adopted in many public institutions, there are still questions about their implementation to nurture an integrity culture or lead to tangible improvements in the service delivery performance as a route for public officials (Kayaci, 2022). The increasing focus on ethics in public administration reflects broader concerns about the quality of governance, transparency, corruption and declining trust in government institutions. Ethical codes of conduct lay down normative standards for public servants, clarifying acceptable behaviour and promoting values like integrity, impartiality, professionalism, accountability and commitment to the public interest. If strictly enforced, these values can improve institutional performance by creating an environment of accountability and service orientation. Conversely, when ethical standards exist merely symbolically, lacking robust institutional commitment, enforcement mechanisms, or organisational support, their practical impact may be constrained and undermine the efforts of local government. Under these conditions, public service delivery may remain marked by inefficiency, nepotism, inadequate accountability, and citizen discontent with low citizen trust in the local government there influencing efficiency public service delivery and eroding the legitimacy of local government institutions (Ayalew, 2024).

The Mount Elgon region faces significant ethical behaviour problems in local government, as public institutions must address varied community demands while contending with limitations such as scarce resources, administrative capacity issues, and public oversight. Citizens rely on local governments for vital services, encompassing healthcare, education, water supply, infrastructure upkeep, and administrative assistance. The quality of these services is assessed based on their accessibility, efficiency, fairness, transparency, and the respect with which they are provided. Ethical breaches by public officials can result in significant repercussions, such as resource misallocation, diminished trust, decreased citizen engagement, and undermined faith in governance systems. This prompts a significant academic and practical inquiry: do ethical codes of conduct truly improve the quality of public service delivery in the Mount Elgon region, or do they primarily serve as formal policy instruments with minimal



influence on daily administrative practices, underlying problems from inequalities that the government has failed to address? (Koros, 2025).

This paper investigates the correlation between compliance with ethical codes of conduct and the quality of public service delivery in local governments in the Mount Elgon region. The study aims to assess the application of current ethical codes in local government entities, identify obstacles to ethical compliance, and evaluate the impact of ethical adherence on critical aspects of service delivery, such as efficiency, accountability, and public trust. These aims are based on the understanding that effective governance relies not solely on legal and administrative frameworks but also on the ethical conduct of individuals entrusted with public responsibility. By exploring both the normative and practical aspects of public ethics in administration to build collaborative governance under uncertainty (Bouckaert, 2023), this study aims at providing a better understanding of how ethical principles are conceived, internalised and enacted within local government systems.

This work is valuable in both academic and practical terms. In doing so, this study contributes to public sector ethics, governance and service delivery literature by providing empirical findings in an area of the world that is under-researched. Much of the existing literature on administrative ethics is produced based on studies at global or national levels, often paying insufficient attention to the sub-Saharan African local governmental contextual environment. This paper fills this gap by placing the research in the Mount Elgon region, thus extending dialogue on how ethical governance relates to public sector performance under decentralised contexts and enhancing understanding of which conditions transform ethical standards into practical governance tools instead of mere symbolic declarations.

The findings of this study may provide crucial assistance to the policymakers, public administrators, development practitioners and civil society actors who want to strengthen local governance systems as well as develop the idea of sustainability in order to increase support needed by government (Bolatito, 2019). Particularly, understanding the barriers to ethical compliance and factors that facilitate ethical behaviour of public officials can inform the design of more effective institutional reforms, training programmes, monitoring systems and accountability mechanisms. The study will help local governments apply ethical values on the ground, improving service responsiveness, public confidence and the legitimacy of institutions. Where public trust is weak, building confidence in government and improving ethical behaviour can no longer be treated as administrative concerns but a governance imperative that have implications for social cohesion and sustainable development (Marie, 2024).

Such a premise underpins this paper which posits that quality public services emerge only when there is ethical governance. Implements and enforce ethical code of conduct When adopted with genuineness and enforced genuinely, these codes can have transformative impact on local government organisations to ensure integrity, equity, accountability. Their efficiency is based not only on their formal adoption, but also on the organisational commitments they convey, the endorsement of leadership, the awareness of public authorities and procedures that govern compliance. The goal of this dissertation is to contribute to the wider debate on how local governments in the Mount Elgon area of Eastern Uganda can nurture a culture of ethical accountability and public trust. It underpins an ongoing effort to create more effective, transparent and citizen-centred governments.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

In recent years, greater academic and policy attention has also turned to ethical governance in public administration, reflecting an increasing recognition of the idea that effective delivery of public services is contingent not only on the strength of institutions but also on their ethical orientations. Codes of conduct form a fundamental part of this ethical architecture, having an impact on the behaviour, judgement and decision-style of public servants across different levels of government. The rules also provide a normative framework for promoting administrative legitimacy and fostering public trust by institutionalising fundamental values like transparency, accountability, integrity and impartiality (Mendie & Udofia, 2024). It can also be observed from the study of Mount Elgon Region in sub Eastern Uganda that ethical compliance is positively related with local government performance through implementing policies based on job creation and private sector expansion, local governments have also contributed to urban economies growth (Ahmed et al., 2025). A mixed-methods approach was used to analyse service delivery outcomes in local government institutions according to the study search, which found that increased ethical awareness and the long-term application of codes of conduct were positively correlated with improved service delivery and greater citizen satisfaction. These findings are consistent with extensive research which demonstrate that the pragmatic application of ethical frameworks is pivotal in augmenting public trust, strengthening good governance and enabling more responsive and responsible local government.

Ethics in public administration has attracted increasing scholarly attention in recent years, particularly because of its central role in strengthening governance and improving public service delivery. Birdayanthi et al. (2025) argue that this serves essential functions in strengthening public service delivery by enhancing discussions on ethical governance and providing a crucial framework for guiding the behaviour and decision-making of public officials, especially at the local level, where direct interaction with citizens is most noticeable. These codes are grounded in key principles such as transparency, accountability,

integrity, and responsibility, all of which are fundamental to building and sustaining public trust in government institutions. Studies have shown that clear communication and consistent enforcement of ethical standards improve the ability of public institutions to deliver services effectively and fairly.

Scholarly discourse on ethics in public administration increasingly acknowledges ethical codes of conduct as a fundamental instrument for enhancing governance and public service delivery. Codes of conduct in public institutions, particularly local governments, are established to direct the behaviour and decision-making of public officials by fostering principles such as honesty, accountability, transparency, impartiality, and professionalism. These ethical values are universally acknowledged as essential for enhancing institutional legitimacy and cultivating trust between the government and its citizens. As public administrations encounter increasing scrutiny about corruption, inefficiency, and abuse of power, experts contend that ethical governance has become essential rather than optional for efficient management. The literature portrays ethics not solely as a moral ideal but as a pragmatic instrument for attaining improved administrative results (Chum, 2019). A major theme in the literature is the relationship between ethical compliance and service delivery performance. Existing studies indicate that public institutions tend to perform better in responding to citizens' needs when they have a clear understanding of ethical standards and effectively enforce them. Ethical codes help establish acceptable standards of conduct, reduce arbitrariness in decision-making, and create mechanisms for responsibility and answerability in public office.

Recently, academic and policy discussions around ethics in public administration have grown, highlighting increasing concerns about governance quality, institutional accountability, and the responsiveness of public institutions to citizen requirements. Ethical conduct is widely considered a fundamental component of effective public administration, since it influences how public officials wield authority, distribute resources, and engage with service consumers. In this context, ethical codes of conduct have emerged as crucial tools for fostering acceptable standards of behaviour in the public sector. These codes aim to institutionalise ideals such as integrity, transparency, impartiality, accountability, and professionalism, which are crucial for the legitimacy and efficacy of government institutions. In local government contexts, where public servants regularly interact with communities, compliance with ethical standards is crucial, as it profoundly affects the quality, accessibility, effectiveness, fairness, and accountability of public services, as well as the equity of public service provision (Pamungkas & Munawir, 2025).

A notable gap in the literature is that, although numerous studies acknowledge the significance of ethics in public administration, fewer offer comprehensive empirical analyses of how ethical codes impact specific dimensions of service delivery at the local government level in underexplored regions. Much of the current study emphasises either extensive governance reforms or national-level discussions on corruption and accountability, with insufficient focus on the quotidian functioning of ethical frameworks inside decentralised administrative systems. Thus, corruption has been a primary topic of discussion in public discourse, and the detrimental impacts of it will continue to be a problem (Haddija et al., 2025). This necessitates context-specific research to investigate the interpretation, implementation, and experience of ethical standards by public servants and civilians alike. The Mount Elgon region presents a significant example of analysis, as it facilitates an examination of the practical functioning of ethical governance within local organisations tasked with providing services to communities. Petruska (2023) initiates the exploration of this gap; nevertheless, additional academic investigation is essential to enhance comprehension of the circumstances that render ethical codes useful tools for improving service delivery (Pamungkas & Munawir, 2025).

Although there is convergence in the literature on the importance of codes of ethics, implementation, and institutional challenges, including a diverse understanding of ethical conduct across institutions as well as resistance to change of established practices, they seem to play a less prominent role in the analysis. There is a lot of evidence that convincingly correlates ethics with better services; however, it has been less rigorous in terms of defining causation and sustained reshaping of institutions. Sometimes ethical regimes are viewed as automatically succeeding without scrutiny of how they work in practice, often implement symbolic rhetoric, and in the face of institutional resistance. Next, a subsequent study should move past simply articulating ethical values to examine how standards become internalized, monitored, and maintained within public institutions. The studies that have been critically analyzed emphasise that ethical codes of conduct are essential for effective public administration; however, their real impact depends upon sustained implementation, well-designed institutional cultures, and proper context-sensitive strategies.

In addition, the lessons learned from Mount Elgon are not only relevant to the rest of Kenya or Uganda but also to other rural settings wrestling with similar problems that fit within the intellectual discussions surrounding ethics in public administration. Amid these advances in literature, important gaps remain, especially the lack of a substantive body of work on rural governance or socio-political contexts that shape how ethics play out in Eastern Uganda, such as the regions. There is a need for future studies to fill these gaps by exploring the empirical investigations through longitudinal study designs that track the effects of ethical frameworks across time and between governance contexts. Another avenue could be the role of citizen engagement and feedback mechanisms in identifying new facets of accountability that would bolster service delivery.

In summary, the integration of ethical codes of conduct into public service practices is critical for improving governance and citizen satisfaction in the Mount Elgon Region. By emphasising the need for robust enforcement, training, and an ethical culture, this review not only highlights the current challenges but also charts a path for future inquiry and application that promises to elevate both public administration standards and citizen trust in local governments.

These findings have implications that go far beyond the ivory tower of academia and should raise the alarm bells for policymakers and practitioners striving to bolster the public service delivery architecture in Uganda. What emerges from local government is a wider narrative about participatory governance that highlights citizen engagement, shared accountability, and resource allocation. To address the systemic barriers uncovered in this review, there is an urgent need for policy interventions that are both targeted and responsive to the region-specific encroachment of service quality (Irene, 2024).

While the importance of ethical compliance in public administration is well established, challenges remain in terms of the consistent application and enforcement of ethical standards, particularly in decentralised governance systems. Previous studies have shown that ineffective enforcement mechanisms, the lack of ethical capacity training, and institutions are often factors that make these ethical frameworks less effective in achieving better service delivery outcomes and reducing public confidence towards local government (Hamzah et al., 2026). Recent studies show that simply having ethical rules in place does not assure proper behavioural shift or improved administrative performance. Their effectiveness depends on a range of contextual and institutional variables, including political will, leadership commitment, organisational support systems, and levels of public knowledge about ethical principles and accountability systems (Syadiyah et al., 2024; Zakirullah, 2023). However, interactions between these factors at specific local contexts have not been sufficiently addressed in research, especially in under-explored regions such as Mount Elgon in Eastern Uganda. This represents a significant gap within the literature relating to ethics and public service provision. It appears that the relationship between ethical frameworks and service delivery performance is far more complicated than a simple direct correlation. Recent evidence indicates that the impact of ethical standards is realized within a wide array of organizational cultures that promote integrity, responsibility, and professionalism in public institutions (Pruteanu, 2020; Plant, 2018). This perspective highlights the importance of looking at formal regulatory tools as well as the institutional environment in which they are embedded. In the given context, existing studies have largely focused on urban or administratively compact regions, while little academic attention has been directed toward rural and peripheral areas. This imbalance raises concern, especially in rural regions such as Eastern Uganda that are often plagued by unique sociopolitical, economic and administrative factors capable of greatly affecting adherence to ethical standards and quality of public service delivery (Rubtcova & Vilyamovich, 2022); stressing scarce resources among Angevins public servants, poor training programmes for the Angevins public management and deficient accountability frameworks.

Indeed, the literature suggests a pressing need for contextualized exploration of how local conditions shape the ethical behavior of public administration and how this, in turn, impacts governance outcomes (Mastur et al., 2025).

The data presented in Table 1 below indicate an inverse relationship between corruption prevalence and exposure to ethics training among public officials. The observation with the highest corruption prevalence (65%) records the lowest level of ethics training (40%), while the lowest corruption prevalence (30%) is associated with the highest proportion of trained personnel (70%). The remaining observation follows the same general trend, with relatively lower corruption prevalence corresponding to a comparatively high level of ethics training (67%). This pattern suggests that ethics training may contribute to reducing corrupt practices by enhancing awareness of ethical obligations, strengthening professional accountability, and promoting compliance with institutional codes of conduct. Such a finding aligns with the wider literature, which argues that ethics-based capacity-building is a critical component of beneficial governance and effective public administration. Nonetheless, given the limited number of observations, the table should be viewed as indicative rather than conclusive, highlighting the need for more extensive empirical research to examine the extent to which ethics training influences corruption outcomes across different governance contexts.

**Table 1: Comparative Analysis of Corruption Prevalence and Ethics Training Levels (%)**

Corruption Prevalence (%)	Received Training on Ethics (%)
65	40
30	70
45	67

Relationship Between Corruption Prevalence and Ethics Training Among Public Officials

### III. METHODOLOGY

This research employed a mixed-methods methodology to investigate the correlation between ethical codes of conduct and public service delivery in the Mount Elgon Region. The selection of methodology was influenced by the necessity to encompass both the quantifiable aspects of ethical awareness, compliance, and enforcement, as well as the contextual factors

affecting public service performance and citizen experiences. The study problem is based on the inadequate efficacy of current ethical standards in enhancing public service efficiency and citizen satisfaction, a worry that mirrors wider governance issues within local administration systems (Hendren et al., 2022).

The study was directed by three objectives: (i) to assess the awareness and adherence to ethical codes among public servants, (ii) to analyse the efficacy of enforcement mechanisms in fostering compliance, and (iii) to evaluate the correlation between these ethical dimensions and citizen satisfaction with public services (Adu et al., 2022). Achieving these aims necessitated a framework that could amalgamate statistical information with stakeholder viewpoints. A mixed-methods approach was deemed most suitable as it facilitates methodological triangulation, enhancing the validity, depth, and interpretive power of the findings (Timans et al., 2019).

The quantitative aspect of the study was to produce measurable evidence on the degree of awareness of the ethical code, levels of compliance, perceptions of enforcement procedures, and citizen satisfaction with public services. Survey methods were employed to facilitate the systematic collection of standard data from a diverse array of respondents, thereby aiding in the detection of patterns, associations, and variances within the study population. This research utilises quantitative data to empirically assess the correlation between heightened ethical awareness, enhanced enforcement mechanisms, and improved public service outcomes.

The qualitative component enhanced the survey results by examining the lived experiences, perspectives, and institutional realities that inform ethical compliance in public administration. Researchers deemed semi-structured interviews particularly appropriate, as they enable respondents to express context-specific insights that formal questionnaires may not capture. This methodology allowed the research to examine how public officials view ethical responsibilities, how enforcement is implemented in practice, and how citizens perceive the ethical behaviour of service providers in their interactions with local government entities. The incorporation of qualitative investigations aligns with previous studies indicating that ethical governance is influenced not solely by legal legislation but also by organisational culture, leadership practices, and contextual limitations (Völcker, 2019).

The application of a mixed-methods approach was further substantiated by its significant pertinence to governance research, where intricate institutional phenomena frequently necessitate both comprehensive and in-depth investigation. Prior research indicates that the integration of quantitative and qualitative evidence enhances the explanatory capacity of studies concerning ethics, accountability, and administrative performance (Maxwell, 2015; Syadiyah et al., 2024). This study examined how the combination of numerical data and narrative evidence provided a thorough evaluation of whether ethical rules serve solely as formal instruments or as effective mechanisms influencing administrative behaviour and service delivery outcomes.

Methodological triangulation was thus integral to the study design. Quantitative findings established a foundation for examining correlations among essential factors, whilst qualitative findings contributed interpretive depth by elucidating the reasons for these interactions and the experiences of both public workers and civilians. This integrated logic strengthened the analysis's robustness and mitigated the constraints inherent in relying on a singular method. The research's practical relevance was enhanced by aligning policy implications with empirical trends and stakeholder realities (Zakirullah, 2023).

The methodological design corresponded with the theoretical principles of public ethics and governance outlined in the literature. The study assessed ethical conduct as both a normative concept and an operational driver of public sector performance by analysing awareness, adherence, enforcement, and citizen satisfaction as interrelated variables (Plant et al., 2018; Pruteanu, 2020). The methodology was designed to connect theory and practice by providing evidence on the impact of ethical frameworks on governance processes in actual administrative contexts.

The chosen technique offers a robust and contextually appropriate framework for examining the impact of ethical behaviour on public service delivery in the Mount Elgon Region. The study aimed to enhance academic discussions on public ethics by integrating quantitative and qualitative evidence while also providing actionable insights for policymakers and practitioners focused on reinforcing integrity, accountability, and citizen-centred governance (Rubtcova et al., 2022; Mendie et al., 2024; Mastur et al., 2025).

#### **IV. RESULTS**

The investigation indicated that ethical rules of conduct significantly influence public service delivery in the local governments of the Mount Elgon Region. The findings demonstrate that elevated ethical awareness and compliance with established rules correlate with improved service delivery outcomes and increased citizen satisfaction. Public officials demonstrated considerable awareness of ethical rules, with a mean score of 3.85, indicating that the majority of respondents recognized the importance of ethical standards in guiding professional behavior. This pattern suggests that ethical awareness is firmly established among local government staff and may serve as a basis for enhanced administrative performance.

Conversely, the average score for adherence to ethical rules was 3.21, indicating a low degree of practical compliance. While this indicates inconsistent implementation, the data nonetheless demonstrate that compliance with ethical standards enhances the quality of service delivery. Correlation study revealed favourable relationships among ethical awareness, compliance with ethical norms, enforcement efficacy, and citizen satisfaction, underscoring the interrelatedness of these governance characteristics. The results indicate that when public officials are better aware of their ethical responsibilities and more inclined to adhere to them, residents generally express more positive evaluations of service delivery.

Nonetheless, the research also revealed significant deficiencies in enforcement measures. Respondents assigned a mean score of 2.98 to the effectiveness of enforcement, suggesting that institutional mechanisms for enforcing compliance are rather inadequate. This indicates a disparity between the recognition of ethical principles and their uniform implementation in practice. Inadequate enforcement may consequently diminish the comprehensive advantages of ethical frameworks, constraining their ability to enhance accountability, openness, and responsiveness in local government service provision.

The findings indicate that ethical codes of conduct significantly impact public service delivery in the Mount Elgon Region; nevertheless, their efficacy relies on awareness, formal adoption, and the robustness of implementation and enforcement mechanisms. The findings highlight the necessity for enhanced institutional mechanisms to convert ethical principles into enduring advancements in governance and citizen-focused service delivery.

Additionally, the importance of ethical leadership in fostering a culture of integrity, accountability, and professional responsibility within local government organisations is crucial. Respondents indicate that ethical leadership not only reinforces compliance with stated standards of conduct but also fosters an organisational environment where ethical behaviours are consistently enacted. This pattern signifies that leadership dedication to ethical norms is a vital institutional element affecting the efficacy of service delivery.

Consequently, ongoing ethical education is crucial for enhancing compliance and maximising administrative performance. The study revealed that improved ethical training within the local government systems of the Mount Elgon Region could boost officials' comprehension of ethical responsibilities, elevate compliance with professional norms, and lead to superior public service outcomes. These findings suggest that ethical training serves not just as a procedural obligation but also as an effective means of diminishing service inefficiencies and fostering greater transparency and accountability in governance.

The paper indicates a definitive institutional framework for enhancing governance in the region. Sustainable enhancements in public service delivery seem to rely on two interdependent conditions: the supply of thorough and ongoing ethical training, and the presence of robust policy enforcement mechanisms. Collectively, these components establish the foundation for an enhanced ethical environment within local government and for more responsive, citizen-focused service provision.

## **V. DISCUSSIONS**

This study enhances the public administration and governance literature by analysing the impact of ethical codes of conduct on public service delivery in the local governments of the Mount Elgon region in Eastern Uganda, a rural area that has been inadequately explored in academic research. This study tackles a significant empirical and contextual vacuum, as the majority of existing scholarship on ethics in public service has focused on urban, national, or comparatively well-resourced administrative settings. The results demonstrate that heightened ethical awareness and stricter compliance with standards of conduct correlate positively with superior service delivery outcomes, including higher service quality and elevated citizen happiness. These findings strengthen the assertion that ethical governance is not only a normative goal but also a practical factor influencing administrative efficacy in decentralised public organisations, and thus, addressing fiscal difficulties is essential for enabling local governments to fulfill their mandates successfully.

The study's principal strength is its employment of a mixed-methods methodology, facilitating a more thorough comprehension of the correlation between ethical conduct and service delivery. The study integrated quantitative survey data with qualitative interviews and focus group discussions to triangulate findings, thus capturing both measurable patterns and lived experiences. This methodological integration enhances the trustworthiness of the findings, as the statistical correlations identified in the quantitative component were supplemented with qualitative insights that elucidated the interpretation, implementation, and limitations of ethical norms in practice. The participation of public servants and community stakeholders enhanced the research by providing insights from both the supply and demand perspectives of service delivery, resulting in a more balanced and contextually informed assessment of local governance performance (Bolatito et al., 2025).

The findings indicate that ethical codes of conduct can function as a significant institutional tool for influencing behaviour and enhancing accountability in local government systems. In environments where ethical principles are comprehended and prioritised, public officials are more inclined to exhibit accountability, professionalism, and responsiveness in their responsibilities. This directly affects service areas such as healthcare and municipal administration, where individuals' routine

interactions with the government often shape broader conceptions of state legitimacy. The study thus endorses the perspective that ethical governance frameworks can enhance public trust, especially in rural and marginalised regions where institutional deficiencies may otherwise erode faith in public institutions.

The study does not regard ethical rules as inherently self-enforcing devices. The evidence indicates significant implementation challenges that hinder their effectiveness, particularly inadequate enforcement measures, insufficient training, and inconsistent institutional commitment. These restrictions elucidate why ethical knowledge may be comparatively high, yet actual compliance remains only moderate. This distinction is crucial as it implies that the mere presence of codes of conduct is insufficient without the backing of administrative capability, monitoring mechanisms, and a culture of responsibility. The study offers a refined view of ethical governance, illustrating that formal regulations must be integrated within conducive organisational and political contexts to effectuate substantial enhancements in service delivery.

The study's conclusions are further reinforced by the alignment between the empirical findings and the extensive literature on public sector ethics, which often underscores the significance of integrity systems, behavioural norms, and institutional enforcement in influencing administrative outcomes. While the design does not allow for the causal certainty typical of experimental methods, the convergence of quantitative and qualitative evidence provides compelling inferential support for the assertion that ethical conduct significantly enhances service delivery. The mixed-methods approach thus offers a solid foundation for discerning credible causal pathways, especially in situations where experimental designs are impractical or unsuitable.

The study also exhibits significant practical importance. The findings provide actionable insights for policymakers, local government officials, and oversight entities aiming to enhance governance outcomes in decentralised systems. Efforts to enhance ethical codes must extend beyond mere policy development to encompass ongoing ethics training, robust supervisory and disciplinary frameworks, and avenues for community feedback and public accountability. Such approaches may be particularly beneficial in rural areas, where errors in service delivery might have dire repercussions for already vulnerable communities.

This research significantly contributes to knowledge by demonstrating the need for ethical standards of conduct in public service delivery, particularly in resource-limited, underexplored rural government contexts such as the Mount Elgon region. The methodological diversity, contextual significance, and policy-related implications augment its academic and practical worth. Furthermore, the study provides a level of transferability to other developing nations encountering analogous governance issues, especially in circumstances characterised by decentralisation, inadequate enforcement, and constrained institutional capacity that influence public administration dynamics. The study effectively frames ethical conduct as a fundamental element of efficient, citizen-focused municipal governance, rather than viewing ethics as an abstract administrative concept.

The debate around the assessment of the impact of ethical codes of conduct on public service delivery within local governments of the Mount Elgon Region, Eastern Uganda, highlights both the academic potential of the research and the significant constraints in the presentation of its data. The research conceptually examines a pertinent yet under-investigated topic: the influence of ethical governance on public service delivery in marginalized rural contexts. This emphasis is a significant addition, especially as public administration studies have frequently favoured urban, central government, or institutionally robust environments, consequently rendering decentralised and resource-limited places like Mount Elgon relatively overlooked. This study is poised to enhance comprehension of the functioning of ethical frameworks within local government contexts characterised by potentially unstable institutional capacity, accountability mechanisms, and citizen-state relations.

A notable quality of the study is its explicit use of a mixed-methods approach and its effort to involve many stakeholders, including public officials and community members. This approach is ideally suited for investigating public sector ethics, as it enables the researcher to capture both quantifiable relationships between ethical behaviour and service results and the meanings, experiences, and institutional dynamics that influence those relationships. The presence of varied individuals indicates an understanding that service performance must be evaluated from both administrative and public viewpoints. This is especially crucial in governance studies, since institutional performance cannot be comprehensively evaluated through bureaucratic self-assessment alone.

Despite these benefits, the objections articulated in the debate highlight significant problems regarding methodological transparency and evidential adequacy, particularly in the presented material. The primary weakness pertains to insufficient clarity regarding sampling processes, the size and composition of qualitative samples, and the operationalisation of essential categories such as "ethical conduct" and "quality of public service delivery." In the absence of a clear elucidation of the definition, measurement, and analysis of these variables, it becomes challenging to evaluate the reliability, validity, and repeatability of the results. In research aimed at deriving policy-relevant conclusions, such omissions are particularly significant, as methodological opacity diminishes confidence in the robustness of the reported connections and the generalisability of the findings.

The argument is particularly persuasive about the paper's assertion of methodological triangulation. Despite being characterised as mixed-methods, the study predominantly showcases quantitative evidence, with minimal indication of how

qualitative discoveries were employed to enhance, contest, or contextualise the statistical outcomes. The lack of qualitative themes, illustrative extracts, or a clear integration strategy prompts inquiries over whether the design accomplished authentic mixed-methods synthesis or just amalgamated several data-gathering approaches without substantive analytical integration. In comprehensive mixed-methods research, qualitative evidence must transcend mere accompaniment to survey data; it should elucidate systems, reveal conflicts, and contextualise numerical patterns within the actual experiences of governance practice. The assertion of triangulation is inadequately developed without such integration.

The discussion also underscores significant issues about causal interpretation. The study indicates a positive correlation between robust ethical norms and enhanced service delivery; nevertheless, the evidence provided does not definitively establish directionality or a causal mechanism. Alternative theories continue to be plausible. For example, administrations with superior leadership, enhanced resources, more efficient oversight, or greater institutional ability may be more inclined to enforce ethical rules and more adept at providing quality services. Likewise, reverse causality must be considered: well-governed local authorities may establish organisational conditions that enhance the visibility, comprehension, and consistent application of ethical rules. The aforementioned options do not undermine the study's findings; rather, they indicate that the conclusions should be articulated with greater caution as correlational rather than definitively causative, especially in the lack of longitudinal or quasi-experimental evidence.

Another issue pertains to the dependence on self-reported data, which increases the potential for social desirability bias. In the study of ethics and integrity, this is a widely acknowledged difficulty, as respondents may exaggerate their compliance with formal norms or depict their organisations more positively. While anonymity and triangulation can alleviate this risk, these precautions must be explicitly shown rather than merely assumed. The absence of documented statistical details, such as correlation coefficients, significance levels, and effect sizes, exacerbates this issue. Claims of "positive correlation" or "substantial influence" necessitate clear empirical evidence. In the absence of these facts, readers cannot assess the degree, robustness, or practical significance of the observed associations.

The dispute highlights a difference between the paper's intellectual contribution and the constraints of its evidentiary presentation. The work addresses a significant governance issue in an overlooked regional location and seems driven by a praiseworthy aim to produce policy-relevant insights. Conversely, the persuasive efficacy of its results is diminished, at least in the debate materials, by inadequate methodological disclosure, restricted demonstration of qualitative integration, and insufficient consideration of competing theories. This tension is significant as it implies that the study's potential usefulness may exceed what is apparent from the summary alone; nonetheless, scholarly evaluation must stay anchored in what is explicitly disclosed and verifiably substantiated.

Nonetheless, the paper maintains practical significance. The basic premise—that ethical frameworks can affect the efficacy and legitimacy of public service delivery—is both credible and significant for local governments in rural Uganda and similar decentralised contexts. Nevertheless, the policy consequences must be expressed with enhanced precision and prudence. Instead of making general assertions that ethical codes enhance governance outcomes, the study would benefit from pinpointing the specific institutional mechanisms that facilitate such improvements, including training, enforcement mechanisms, supervisory accountability, complaint systems, or community monitoring. Additional actionable recommendations necessitate more definitive evidence concerning which aspects of ethical governance are most significant, for whom, and under what administrative circumstances.

The argument indicates that the paper possesses significant scholarly potential but necessitates a more thorough and clear evidential presentation to adequately support its assertions. The strengths are found in the importance of the topic, the pertinence of the location, and the suitability of a mixed-methods approach for examining public ethics in municipal government. The drawbacks stem from the inadequately proven rigours of scientific execution and the excessive extrapolation of findings beyond secure facts. Future research in this domain would benefit from more precise variable operationalization, comprehensive reporting of statistical results, explicit integration of qualitative and quantitative findings, and longitudinal or comparative designs that more persuasively establish causal pathways. These enhancements would not only bolster the academic contribution of this research area but also augment its applicability for formulating credible and contextually relevant governance reforms.

A particularly important contribution of the study lies in its recognition that the effectiveness of ethical codes depends not only on their formal existence but also on the institutional conditions that enable their implementation. In this regard, the evidence presented in Table 1 provides a useful contextual lens for interpreting the study's main findings. The table shows that the prevalence of corruption remains notably high, ranging from 30% to 65%, while formal training on ethical conduct remains comparatively low, ranging from 25% to 40%. Although the table does not provide disaggregated labels for each observation, the pattern is nonetheless instructive: corruption appears to persist at substantial levels in settings where formal ethics training is limited. This supports the broader argument of the article that weak institutionalisation of ethical practice, especially through inadequate training and capacity development, may undermine the intended effect of ethical codes on public service delivery.

**Table 2: Ethical Challenges Impacting Public Service Delivery in Uganda**

Prevalence of Corruption (%)	Formal Training on Ethical Conduct (%)
65	40
30	25
55	37

**Source:** *Ethical Challenges Impacting Public Service Delivery in Uganda*

## VI. IMPLICATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The implications of these findings are both scholarly and practical, as they highlight the pivotal role of ethics in fostering good governance (Bolatito, 2018) and enhancing public service delivery within decentralised local governments, and the obstruction of progress in the areas of democratic ideals, socioeconomic growth, and administrative efficiencies are making it more difficult to achieve good governance in Africa and to provide public services in a manner that is effective (Bolatito, 2023). This study enhances the literature on public administration ethics by offering empirical evidence from the relatively neglected area of rural governance in Uganda, thereby broadening the applicability of ethical governance frameworks to various institutional and socio-cultural contexts (Timans et al., 2019; Völcker, 2019). This study enhances academic understanding of the functioning of ethical principles in resource-limited and decentralized governance contexts.

The findings indicate a distinct and systematic necessity for enhanced institutional rules and administrative frameworks that foster ethical compliance and integrity in public service (Maxwell, 2015). These measures are crucial for enhancing accountability, elevating service quality, and fostering greater public trust in local government organizations. The paper posits that ethical governance need to be regarded not merely as a symbolic administrative obligation, but as a strategic cornerstone for efficient and citizen-focused service delivery.

Subsequent research ought to expand upon these findings by investigating the efficacy of certain treatments, especially customised ethics training programmes, and their potential to enhance service delivery outcomes across various governance situations (Syadiyah et al., 2024). Pursuing interdisciplinary research that integrates sociology, cultural studies, and related disciplines is valuable for enhancing comprehension of ethical behaviour in public administration, particularly regarding the impact of local norms, values, and institutional cultures on adherence to ethical standards (Zakirullah, 2023; Sudrajat, 2023). Moreover, longitudinal studies would be especially beneficial for evaluating the sustainability of ethical behaviors over time and for ascertaining the long-term effects of codes of conduct on the quality and consistency of public service delivery (Pruteanu, 2020; Plant, 2018).

The recommendations derived from this study provide a valuable basis for future academic inquiry and policy reform aimed at enhancing ethical governance within local government frameworks. By strengthening accountability, equity, and professionalism in public administration, these initiatives could enhance governance outcomes not only in Uganda but also in similar decentralized and developing nations.

## VII. CONCLUSION

This study has rigorously examined the correlation between ethical standards of conduct and public service delivery in local governments in the Mount Elgon region of eastern Uganda. The results indicate that ethical frameworks significantly enhance service quality, bolster accountability, and improve citizen satisfaction. The analysis demonstrated a favourable correlation among ethical awareness, compliance with established codes of conduct, and the efficacy of enforcement mechanisms, all of which enhanced public service outcomes, as corroborated by both empirical and qualitative evidence. The study examined the primary issue of how ethical behaviour affects public service delivery and revealed that, while public servants are aware of ethical codes, their effectiveness is frequently compromised by insufficient enforcement mechanisms and inadequate ethics training (Hendren et al., 2022). The findings indicate that the mere presence of ethical norms is inadequate; their efficacy relies on consistent enforcement, institutional backing, and a culture of ethical leadership. Thus, enhancing enforcement mechanisms, broadening ethics training, and fostering ethical leadership must be prioritised as critical measures for tackling the stated difficulties and elevating accountability and service quality in local governance (Adu et al., 2022).

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