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Public Administration Ethics and Bureaucratic Morality in Indonesian Public Services: A Structured Narrative Review

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Abstract

Indonesian public-service scholarship has documented maladministration, ethical lapses, and uneven accountability, yet these issues are often discussed separately and with limited integration between individual moral judgment and institutional conditions. This structured narrative review asks how administrative ethics is related to bureaucratic morality in public service, which individual and organizational mechanisms are associated with ethical conduct, and how teleological and deontological perspectives illuminate recurring service dilemmas. The revision-stage corpus comprised 19 analytical sources published primarily during 2016-2025, supplemented by one methodological reference and one official Ombudsman report used only for contextual evidence. Sources were purposively re-screened for relevance, traceability, design quality, and evidentiary fit, then coded using a hybrid deductive-inductive matrix. Four recurring themes were identified: ethical judgment and public duties; individual-institutional interaction; ethics infrastructure; and service experience, maladministration, and legitimacy. The synthesis distinguishes bureaucratic morality as a normative orientation from ethical conduct as observable behavior. Compared with existing accounts centered on public service motivation, codes, leadership, or behavioral micro-foundations, the review proposes a contextual framework linking individual ethical capacity, organizational ethics infrastructure, observable conduct, and public-service legitimacy, with culture, discretion, and digital systems treated as contextual conditions rather than tested causal moderators. Teleological and deontological analyses often converge on transparency, fairness, and accountability but may diverge where short-term efficiency conflicts with legal or impartial duties. The evidence supports cautious association rather than a simple causal claim that ethics alone determines service quality. The contribution is therefore a traceable synthesis and a set of conceptual propositions for empirical testing in public organizations.

KEYWORDS

administrative ethics; bureaucratic morality; ethical leadership; public service; maladministration; accountability.

Introduction

Administrative ethics is a normative-analytical field concerned with how public officials should exercise authority, justify decisions, and balance legality, fairness, accountability, impartiality, efficiency, and the public interest. In public service, ethical conduct is not equivalent to courtesy or procedural compliance alone. It also concerns whether decisions can be publicly justified, whether discretion is exercised impartially, and whether officials remain accountable for the consequences of their actions (Santos & Serafim, 2024; Svara & Baizhanov, 2019; Wright et al., 2016). This distinction is important because a service may be procedurally completed while still raising ethical concerns when information is withheld, treatment is discriminatory, discretion is arbitrary, or improper interests influence a decision (Nurhadi et al., 2026).

In Indonesia, bureaucratic reform and digitalization have improved many

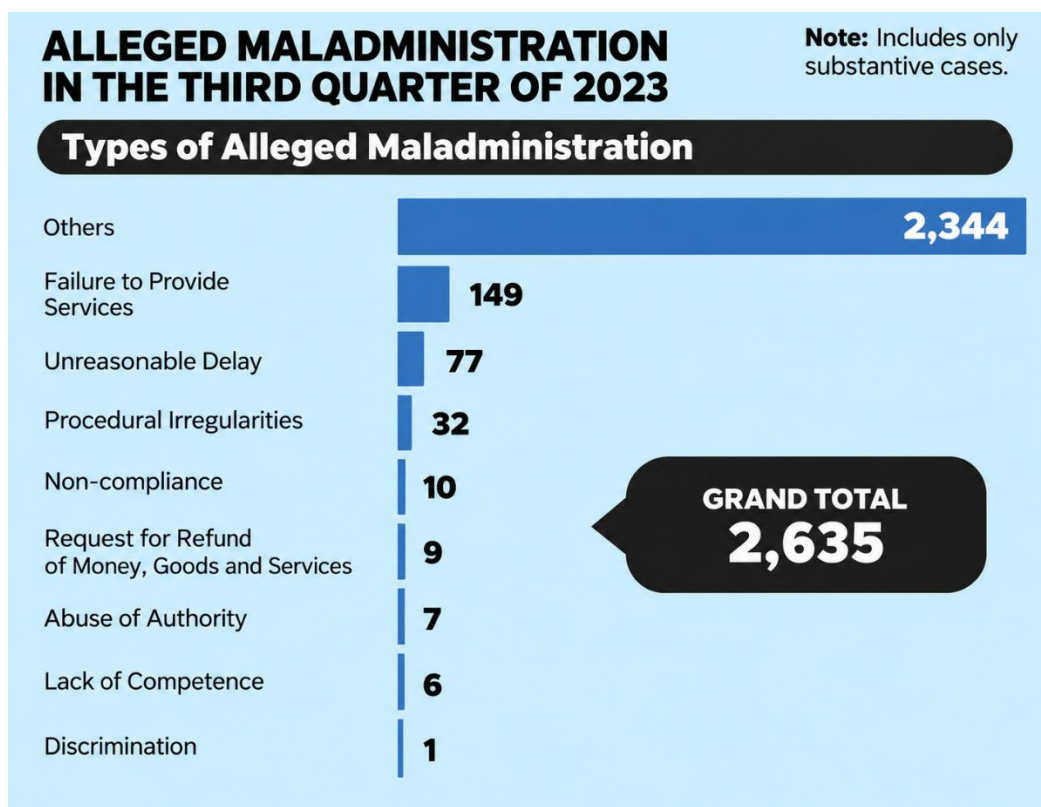


Figure 1. Alleged maladministration reported in the Third Quarter of 2023

Source: Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia, Laporan Triwulan III 2023 (published 2024).

administrative procedures, but procedural modernization does not automatically resolve ethical problems embedded in discretion, organizational culture, leadership, or enforcement. Studies of Indonesian public services continue to report the relevance of ethical literacy, professional behavior, accountability, and organizational norms to how citizens experience government services (Bisri & Asmoro, 2019; Hasanah, 2019; Iskandar et al., 2019; Nuraini, 2020; Yanur, 2023). These studies are useful, but much of the literature remains descriptive or normative and frequently treats ethics as an individual attribute rather than examining how personal judgment interacts with organizational systems.

International public-administration research similarly shows that ethical conduct is shaped by more than personal values. Ethical leadership, clarity of standards, procedural fairness, supervision, and credible reporting mechanisms can affect whether employees identify and report ethical problems and whether codes of conduct influence behavior (Armstrong & Stedman, 2024; Lekubu & Sibanda, 2021; Nkyabonaki, 2019; Tahirs et al., 2026; Wright et al., 2016). Contemporary scholarship also extends administrative ethics to digital decision environments, where questions of transparency, accountability, bias, and exclusion remain relevant even when technology improves speed and access (Irwani et al., 2024; Morrison et al., 2024).

The unresolved issue is therefore not whether ethics matters in public administration, but how literature connects ethical principles with bureaucratic morality in practice and which institutional conditions make ethical standards behaviorally meaningful. Existing Indonesian discussions often address codes of ethics, maladministration, service quality, or individual morality as separate topics. A more integrated synthesis is needed to connect ethical judgment with leadership, organizational culture, supervision, accountability, and service outcomes while avoiding

unsupported causal generalizations.

This review uses two terms that should not be conflated. Bureaucratic morality refers to the normative orientation through which public officials understand what ought to count as a responsible, fair, lawful, and public-regarding use of authority. Ethical conduct refers to observable decisions and behaviors through which that orientation may or may not be enacted. The distinction matters because moral orientation is not directly observable and because appropriate conduct can be enabled or constrained by organizational conditions.

The closest frameworks in the included literature emphasize different parts of this problem. Wright et al. (2016) connect public service motivation, ethical leadership, and willingness to report wrongdoing at the employee-supervisor level; Nkyabonaki (2019) shows that the practical force of a public-service code depends on structural conditions such as monitoring, incentives, and organizational practices; Armstrong & Stedman (2024) stress alignment among leadership, accountability, and ethics-management systems; and Yang et al. (2025) add behavioral micro-foundations that help explain why formal norms do not automatically translate into behavior. The present synthesis does not claim to replace those models. Its added value is to make the cross-level sequence explicit - from individual ethical capacity, through organizational ethics infrastructure, to observable bureaucratic conduct and public-service legitimacy - while treating culture, discretion, and digital systems as contextual conditions and labeling untested links as conceptual propositions.

This review addresses three questions: (1) How does the literature explain the relationship between administrative ethics and bureaucratic morality in public service? (2) Which individual and institutional mechanisms are associated with more ethical bureaucratic conduct? and (3) How do teleological and deontological perspectives help interpret maladministration, accountability, and public-service outcomes? The review focuses primarily on the Indonesian public-service context while using selected international

studies for conceptual comparison.

As shown in [Figure 1](#), official complaint data provide contextual evidence of service problems that may carry ethical significance. In the [Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia's Third Quarter 2023](#) report, alleged maladministration included failure to provide services, protracted delays, procedural irregularities, requests for rewards, abuse of authority, incompetence, and discrimination. These data are not interpreted as prevalence estimates for all public services or as proof that ethical deficits are the sole cause of service problems. They are used only to show that procedural and conduct-related concerns

coexist in the public-service environment ([Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024](#)).

Methods

This study applies a structured narrative review design. A narrative design was selected because the objective is interpretive and conceptual: to integrate heterogeneous literature on administrative ethics, bureaucratic morality, ethical leadership, accountability, maladministration, and public-service outcomes rather than estimate a pooled effect

Table 1. Inventory and appraisal of the analytical corpus

Source	Design/type	Setting	Primary focus	Role	Appraisal note
Armstrong & Stedman (2024)	Conceptual/policy analysis	Canada, federal public service	Ethics management, leadership accountability	T3; framework comparison	Strong institutional analysis; not causal empirical evidence
Arum et al. (2023)	Descriptive/normative article	Indonesia	Ethical literacy and public-service implementation	T1	Useful for literacy construct; limited mechanism evidence
Bertens (2000)	Foundational ethics book	Conceptual	Teleological/deontological ethics	T1; RQ3	Conceptual only; not public-service empirical evidence
Bisri & Asmoro (2019)	Conceptual/descriptive article	Indonesia	Public-service ethics	T4	Contextually relevant; mainly normative/descriptive
Choirulsyah & Azhar (2024)	Qualitative observation + literature/media study	Indonesia	Administrative ethics and good governance	T2/T4	Context-specific; limited design detail and generalizability
Hasanah (2019)	Conceptual/descriptive article	Indonesia	Bureaucratic morality and service ethics	T2/T4	Direct conceptual relevance; limited causal evidence
Insani (2020)	Conceptual/literature-based article	Indonesia	Professionalism, organizational culture, ethics	T1/T2	Supports distinction between competence and ethics; non-causal
Iskandar et al. (2019)	Qualitative/descriptive article	Indonesia	Bureaucratic ethics in public service	T1/T4	Contextual support; mechanism claims interpreted cautiously
Joković (2021)	Conceptual/normative analysis	Local government self- / Serbia	Professional and deontological service ethics	T1; RQ3	Strong normative fit; not behavioral evidence
Lekubu & Sibanda (2021)	Normative/legal-policy analysis	South Africa	Morality, ethics, leadership, corruption	T2/T3	Institutional and legal context specific; non-causal
Mendy (2023)	Normative research using secondary sources	General government bureaucracy / Indonesia-based publication	Ethics, accountability, transparency	T3	Useful for accountability concepts; secondary evidence
Morrison et al. (2024)	Multidisciplinary conceptual article	Digital public service / international	Algorithmic decision-making and ethics	T3/T4	Extends framework to digital context; conceptual
Nkyabonaki (2019)	Qualitative empirical study	Toangoma Ward, Tanzania	Effectiveness of public-service ethics code	T2/T3	Direct empirical evidence; single local setting limits transferability
Nuraini (2020)	Conceptual/descriptive article	Indonesia	Administrative ethics and good governance	T1/T4	Contextually relevant; limited empirical mechanism evidence
Santos & Serafim (2024)	Theoretical article	Brazil	Post-conventional administrative ethics	T1; RQ3	Strong conceptual account of moral reasoning; non-empirical
Svara & Baizhanov (2019)	Content analysis of 125 program	United States / NASPAA programs	Public-service values and ethics activation	T1/T3	Systematic content evidence in education

Source	Design/type	Setting	Primary focus	Role	Appraisal note
	mission statements + competencies				context, not workplace behavior
Wright et al. (2016)	Survey of 477 employees in a large state agency	United States	PSM, ethical leadership, willingness to report	T2/T3	Direct empirical association; single- agency, self- report/relational limits
Yanur (2023)	Qualitative literature study	Indonesia	Bureaucratic ethics and public service	T4	Broad synthesis; not primary empirical evidence
Yang et al. (2025)	Conceptual review/theory article	Public administration / international	Behavioral ethics micro- foundations	T1/T2	Useful explanatory micro-foundations; propositions require empirical testing

size. The review follows the principle that narrative reviews should make source selection and synthesis logic explicit and critically organize prior knowledge rather than reproduce sources sequentially (Snyder, 2019).

The revision-stage source selection was purposive rather than systematic. The starting pool was the set of sources already cited in the submitted manuscript. On 2 October 2026, the two authors re-screened that pool against explicit eligibility criteria and conducted supplementary bibliographic retrieval through DOI/publisher records and journal repositories to verify source identity, publication details, and direct relevance. No retrospective database-search history, PRISMA flow, or record-identification counts are claimed because those records were not retained in the original study. The coverage boundary is therefore the manuscript's citation set plus targeted verification and retrieval undertaken during revision, not an exhaustive search of all administrative-ethics literature.

Sources were eligible for the analytical corpus when they directly addressed at least one review construct: administrative or public-service ethics, bureaucratic morality or behavior, ethical leadership, codes of conduct, accountability, maladministration, public-service quality, or ethical decision-making in government. Sources were excluded from thematic synthesis when they were tangential to public administration, duplicated another source, could not be bibliographically verified, or served only a methodological or contextual function. The final corpus contains 19 analytical sources (Table 1). Snyder (2019) was retained only as a methodological reference, and the Ombudsman report was retained separately as contextual documentary evidence rather than thematic evidence of causal mechanisms.

A proportionate critical-appraisal procedure was used because the corpus combines empirical, conceptual, normative, and review-based sources. Empirical studies were appraised for design transparency, sample or setting specificity, correspondence between evidence and claims, and limits to transferability. Conceptual and normative articles were appraised for argumentative clarity, traceability to cited evidence or established theory, and relevance to the review questions. Books were used only for foundational ethical concepts. Claims supported only by normative or descriptive discussion were used to frame interpretation but were not treated as evidence of behavioral mechanisms. Greater interpretive weight was assigned to findings that were supported by empirical evidence and converged across different contexts; divergent or context-bound findings were retained as qualifications rather than averaged away.

Data were extracted into a matrix containing author/year, geographical context, design or source type, study focus, ethical construct, organizational mechanism, reported public-service implications, relevance to teleological or deontological analysis, and appraisal notes. The initial coding categories were deductively derived from the three review questions. During comparison, recurrent subcodes were added

inductively, including ethical literacy, discretion, leadership example, code implementation, reporting channels, sanctions, complaint handling, procedural fairness, digital transparency, and legitimacy. One author performed the first-pass extraction and coding and the second author audited source-to-code assignments against the cited material; interpretive disagreements were resolved by discussion and the matrix was revised until both authors agreed on the thematic placement. The coding process therefore combined question-driven categories with recurrent concepts emerging from the included literature.

Four themes were retained when they appeared across multiple sources and directly answered the review questions: (1) ethical judgment and public duties; (2) individual and institutional determinants of conduct; (3) ethics infrastructure, including leadership, codes, supervision, reporting, and accountability; and (4) service experience, maladministration, and institutional legitimacy. Cross-source agreement alone was not treated as sufficient: the synthesis also compared design strength, contextual fit, and evidentiary limitations. Representative coded concepts and divergent qualifications are reported below to make the thematic path traceable.

Result and Discussion

Theme 1. Ethical judgment, public duties, and professional responsibility

Across the reviewed literature, administrative ethics is consistently treated as more than compliance with formal rules. It concerns the quality of judgment used when officials interpret duties, exercise discretion, and justify decisions to citizens. Ethical literacy is therefore relevant when it helps officials identify competing values and explain why a decision is fair, lawful, impartial, and consistent with the public interest rather than merely memorizing abstract moral principles (Arum et al., 2023; Santos & Serafim, 2024; Yang et al., 2025). Professionalism and ethics overlap, but they are not identical: technical competence addresses whether tasks are performed correctly, whereas administrative ethics asks whether authority is exercised responsibly and justifiably (Fitriyah & El-fattah, 2024; Insani, 2020; Joković, 2021).

Teleological and deontological perspectives provide complementary but not interchangeable lenses. Teleological analysis asks what consequences administrative choices produce for access, timeliness, fairness, service quality, trust, and public value. Deontological analysis asks whether officials respect duties of legality, impartiality, honesty, and equal treatment even when violating those duties might produce a short-term administrative advantage. Public administration requires both perspectives because an efficient outcome obtained through discriminatory, opaque, or unlawful means remains ethically problematic, while rigid adherence to procedure without regard to foreseeable harm may also require ethical scrutiny.

Table 2. Traceability of themes, coded concepts, and evidentiary qualifications

Theme	Representative coded concepts	Sources	Divergence/limitation
T1 Ethical judgment/public duties	ethical literacy; justified discretion; legality; impartiality; professional responsibility	(Arum et al., 2023; Joković, 2021; Santos & Serafim, 2024; Yang et al., 2025)	Primarily conceptual/normative; supports interpretation more strongly than behavioral causation
T2 Individual-institutional interaction	motivation; moral awareness; culture; incentives; supervision; bounded ethical awareness	(Hasanah, 2019; Nkyabonaki, 2019; Wright et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2025)	Empirical evidence exists but settings differ; individual and institutional factors should not be collapsed
T3 Ethics infrastructure	ethical leadership; codes; reporting; sanctions; accountability; procedural fairness	(Armstrong & Stedman, 2024; Mendy, 2023; Nkyabonaki, 2019; Wright et al., 2016)	Strongest convergence across source types; exact mechanisms remain context dependent
T4 Service experience/legitimacy	fairness; timeliness; respect; accountability; complaint risks; public trust	(Bisri & Asmoro, 2019; Iskandar et al., 2019; Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024; Yanur, 2023) (context only)	Service outcomes are multi-causal; complaint data cannot estimate ethical prevalence
Cross-cutting context	digital algorithmic transparency; bias; explainability; human review	(Morrison et al., 2024)	Conceptual extension; empirical testing in Indonesian services remains needed

(Bertens, 2000; Joković, 2021; Santos & Serafim, 2024).

Theme 2. Bureaucratic morality emerges from individual-institutional interaction

The literature does not support reducing bureaucratic morality to the personal character of individual officials. Individual motives, ethical awareness, interests, and willingness to misuse discretion matter, but their effects are shaped by the organizational environment. Ambiguous rules, weak supervision, inconsistent sanctions, informal loyalty networks, and cultures that normalize improper conduct can reduce the practical force of formal ethical standards (Hasanah, 2019; Lekubu & Sibanda, 2021; Nkyabonaki, 2019). Conversely, employees are more likely to recognize and challenge ethical problems when standards are clear and when leaders and institutional procedures make ethical expectations credible (Armstrong & Stedman, 2024; Wright et al., 2016).

This interaction helps explain why ethics education alone is unlikely to be sufficient. Training can strengthen ethical recognition and reasoning, but its organizational effect depends on whether employees encounter congruent signals from leaders, evaluation systems, complaint mechanisms, and enforcement practices. Where institutional incentives contradict training messages, ethical knowledge may remain symbolic. Yang et al. (2025) adds a behavioral-ethics qualification: even officials who endorse ethical norms may be affected by bounded awareness, situational cues, and other micro-level processes. The synthesis therefore shifts from an individual-deficit model of morality toward a relational model in which ethical capacity and institutional conditions jointly shape the probability of ethical conduct, without assuming that either level is determinative.

Theme 3. Ethics infrastructure: leadership, codes, supervision, reporting, and accountability

Codes of conduct are most useful when they are embedded in an ethics infrastructure rather than treated as stand-alone documents. Across the literature, recurring institutional mechanisms include leadership example, clear behavioral expectations, supervisory feedback, accessible reporting channels, fair procedures, consistent sanctions, and opportunities to discuss ethical dilemmas (Armstrong &

Stedman, 2024; Mendy, 2023; Nkyabonaki, 2019; Wright et al., 2016). The convergence of these studies indicates that the credibility of a code depends on implementation conditions: employees need to know the standard, observe that leaders follow it, and expect that misconduct will be addressed through predictable procedures.

The evidence is not uniform in strength. Wright et al. (2016) provide employee-level survey evidence linking ethical leadership and willingness to report wrongdoing, whereas Nkyabonaki (2019) offers qualitative evidence that code effectiveness can be undermined by weak monitoring, underpayment, and nepotistic practices (Lisnawati, 2023). Armstrong & Stedman (2024) and Mendy (2023) provide institutional and normative arguments rather than causal tests. Taken together, these sources support an association between credible ethics infrastructure and ethical conduct, but they do not establish a universal effect size or a single mechanism across administrative systems.

This finding also clarifies the practical role of administrative ethics in organizational design. Ethical leadership is not merely inspirational; it communicates which behaviors are rewarded, tolerated, or challenged. Complaint-handling systems are not merely service-recovery devices; they create feedback about recurring ethical risks. Performance evaluation can reinforce ethics when it includes fairness, accountability, responsiveness, and respect for citizens rather than focusing solely on output volume. In digital public services, ethics infrastructure must also cover transparency of automated decisions, data responsibility, accessibility, and mechanisms for contesting harmful or biased outcomes (Morrison et al., 2024; Ngatiran, 2024; Widaningsih et al., 2021).

Theme 4. Ethical administration, service experience, maladministration, and legitimacy

Indonesian studies associate bureaucratic ethics with dimensions of service experience such as clarity, timeliness, respectful treatment, impartiality, and accountability (Bisri & Asmoro, 2019; Hasanah, 2019; Iskandar et al., 2019; Yanur, 2023). These associations should be interpreted cautiously. A literature review cannot establish that weak ethics directly causes poor service quality, and service outcomes are also influenced by staffing, workload, technology, regulatory complexity, budgets, and organizational capacity. The stronger

Table 3. Public Service Ethics: A Comparative Reading of Key Administrative Dilemmas

Dilemma	Teleological reading	Deontological reading	Convergence/conflict	Sources
Protracted delay or failure to provide service	May condemn delay when it creates avoidable harm, exclusion, or loss of public value; may permit triage if it demonstrably reduces greater harm.	Emphasizes duty to provide service according to law, equal treatment, and procedural commitments; resource scarcity does not justify arbitrary discrimination.	Often converge on timely, non-arbitrary service; conflict can arise when emergency prioritization benefits some users before others.	(Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024) (Yanur, 2023)(Joković, 2021)
Request for reward / improper benefit	Condemned because it distorts access, increases social cost, undermines trust, and worsens service outcomes.	Condemned because it violates integrity, impartiality, and lawful-duty requirements regardless of beneficial short-term consequences.	Strong convergence.	(Lekubu & Sibanda, 2021; Mendy, 2023; Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia, 2024)
Discretion used to accelerate an urgent case	Can support expedited action if overall harm is reduced and reasons are transparent and consistently defensible.	Acceptable only when discretion is authorized and compatible with equal-treatment duties; favoritism remains impermissible.	Potential conflict if efficiency gains depend on unequal or unauthorized treatment.	(Joković, 2021; Santos & Serafim, 2024; Yang et al., 2025)
Automated decision improves speed but is opaque or biased	Efficiency gains count positively, but harms from exclusion, bias, or inability to contest decisions count against the practice.	Opacity and discriminatory treatment can violate duties of explanation, accountability, and equal respect even if average processing time improves.	Converge when opaque automation causes harm; duty-based concerns can reject some designs even with aggregate efficiency gains.	(Morrison et al., 2024)

inference supported by the reviewed evidence is that ethical and institutional factors form part of the conditions under which service standards are interpreted and implemented.

The Ombudsman data reinforce this distinction. Reports involving delayed or absent services may reflect capacity or process failures, ethical failures, or a combination of both, whereas allegations involving requests for rewards, abuse of authority, and discrimination more directly raise integrity and fairness concerns. Accordingly, complaint data are analytically useful as indicators of recurring risk categories, but not as a measure of the moral quality of the entire bureaucracy (Table 2).

Teleological and deontological comparison of documented service dilemmas

To answer the third review question more directly, the two ethical lenses were applied to service dilemmas documented or conceptually discussed in the included sources. The comparison below is a normative interpretation of documented situations; it is not presented as an empirical finding about officials' actual reasoning (Table 3).

Integrated framework and implications

Taken together, the findings support a four-construct framework rather than a tested causal model. Individual ethical capacity refers to ethical literacy, moral awareness, professional judgment, and the ability to recognize conflicts among legality, fairness, efficiency, and public interest. Organizational ethics infrastructure refers to leadership behavior, codes of conduct, supervision, reporting mechanisms, sanctions, complaint handling, and performance systems. Bureaucratic conduct refers to observable use of discretion, treatment of citizens, reporting of wrongdoing, compliance, and accountability behavior. Public-service legitimacy refers to the extent to which service processes are experienced or regarded as fair, explainable, responsive, and worthy of trust. Bureaucratic morality is the normative orientation informing judgments across the first

three constructs, not a directly observed outcome variable.

The proposed links are explicitly conceptual propositions, as summarized in Table 4. Proposition 1: stronger ethical capacity is associated with more defensible conduct when organizational signals do not contradict ethical standards (Arum et al., 2023; Santos & Serafim, 2024; Yang et al., 2025). Proposition 2: ethics infrastructure conditions whether individual ethical capacity can be enacted, particularly through leadership, reporting, monitoring, and accountability (Armstrong & Stedman, 2024; Nkyabonaki, 2019; Wright et al., 2016). Proposition 3: observable conduct contributes to service experience and legitimacy, but the relationship is multi-causal and also depends on organizational capacity and service design (Azzuhri et al., 2026; Bisri & Asmoro, 2019; Iskandar et al., 2019; Yanur, 2023). Proposition 4: organizational culture, discretion, and digital systems are contextual conditions that may strengthen, weaken, or redirect these relationships; the current corpus does not justify estimating them as causal moderators (Hasanah, 2019; Morrison et al., 2024; Suherman, 2024).

This formulation modifies rather than merely restates existing accounts. Wright et al. (2016) empirically connect motivation, ethical leadership, and reporting behavior; Nkyabonaki (2019) emphasizes the implementation environment of codes; Armstrong & Stedman (2024) focus on system alignment and leadership accountability; and Yang et al. (2025) emphasize behavioral micro-foundations. The present synthesis integrates these partial relationships into a cross-level sequence, explicitly separates normative morality from observable ethical conduct, and limits its strongest claims to associations supported by the heterogeneous evidence. The framework should therefore be read as a set of testable propositions for future comparative research, not as an established causal model.

The practical implication is not simply to provide more ethics training. Public organizations should connect training to case-based dilemma analysis, require leaders to model and explain ethical decisions, maintain confidential and credible reporting channels, use complaint data to identify

Table 4. Evidence map for the integrated framework

Proposed relationship	Interpretation	Supporting sources	Evidence status
Ethical capacity -> conduct	Ethical literacy, public-service values, moral reasoning and behavioral micro-foundations shape recognition/justification of ethical action.	(Arum et al., 2023; Santos & Serafim, 2024; Svara & Baizhanov, 2019; Yang et al., 2025)	Conceptual proposition; limited direct behavioral evidence
Ethics infrastructure -> conduct	Leadership, reporting channels, code implementation, monitoring and accountability are associated with reporting and compliance behavior.	(Armstrong & Stedman, 2024; Mendy, 2023; Nkyabonaki, 2019; Wright et al., 2016)	Association supported; magnitude/context varies
Conduct -> service experience/legitimacy	Fairness, responsiveness, respect and accountability are linked in literature to service quality and legitimacy.	(Bisri & Asmoro, 2019; Iskandar et al., 2019; Yanur, 2023)	Multi-causal; no simple causal attribution
Culture/discretion as context	Informal norms and discretion can reinforce or undermine formal standards.	(Hasanah, 2019; Nkyabonaki, 2019)	Contextual proposition; settings heterogeneous
Digital systems as context	Algorithms can alter transparency, bias, responsibility and contestability.	(Morrison et al., 2024)	Conceptual extension; empirical testing needed

recurring ethical risks, apply sanctions consistently, and include fairness, accountability, and responsiveness in performance evaluation. These measures are most likely to be meaningful when employees perceive procedural fairness and when leadership behavior is consistent with formal standards. In digital services, agencies should additionally document decision rules, provide accessible explanations, and retain channels for human review of contested outcomes.

Limitations

This review has several limitations. First, it is a structured narrative review rather than a systematic review. The original study did not retain a complete database-search log, and the revision-stage procedure was purposive and anchored to the manuscript's citation set; selection bias and incomplete coverage therefore cannot be ruled out. Second, the evidence base combines heterogeneous study designs and contexts, preventing causal inference and quantitative aggregation. Third, several Indonesian sources are descriptive, normative, or literature-based, which limits the strength of claims about behavioral mechanisms. Fourth, the review is weighted toward Indonesian public-service literature with selected international comparisons, so institutional differences limit direct transferability. Fifth, only Indonesian- and English-language sources represented in the manuscript and targeted revision retrieval were considered. Sixth, Ombudsman complaint data represent reported allegations and administrative categories rather than the prevalence of ethical misconduct across all public services. Finally, the coding audit described in the method improves traceability but is not equivalent to independent duplicate coding in a prospectively designed systematic review. Future research should use a prospectively registered systematic or scoping-review protocol, expand database coverage, preserve full search and screening logs, and empirically test the proposed propositions across agencies and levels of government.

Conclusion

The review indicates that administrative ethics is related to bureaucratic morality through the interaction of individual ethical capacity and institutional ethics infrastructure, but bureaucratic morality should be distinguished from

observable ethical conduct. Ethical judgment is strengthened when officials can recognize competing public values and when organizations provide credible leadership, clear standards, supervision, reporting mechanisms, and consistent accountability. Codes of conduct and ethics education are therefore best understood as components of a broader organizational system rather than sufficient interventions by themselves. Teleological and deontological perspectives illuminate different dimensions of public-service dilemmas: they often converge on the rejection of corruption, discrimination, and opaque decision-making, but can diverge when aggregate efficiency or harm reduction appears to conflict with duties of legality, impartiality, or equal treatment. The revised evidence map supports cautious associations rather than a causal claim that ethics alone determines service quality or trust. The review's principal contribution is a traceable, cross-level set of conceptual propositions linking ethical capacity, ethics infrastructure, conduct, and legitimacy while explicitly identifying culture, discretion, and digital systems as contextual conditions requiring further empirical testing.

Author Contribution

Bambang Agus Diana contributed to the conceptualization of the study, literature review, revision-stage source extraction and first-pass coding, analysis, and preparation of the manuscript. Amud Sunarya contributed to the conceptualization, verification of the revised source corpus, audit of coding decisions, interpretation of findings, critical review, revision, and finalization of the manuscript. Both authors approved the final version and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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