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The Role of Leadership Behavior Among Government Administrators on Their Adherence to the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards

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Abstract: In the public sector, adherence to ethical standards and codes of conduct is essential for maintaining integrity, transparency, and public trust. This study explores the relationship between administrator's leadership behavior and their adherence to the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards, particularly in the national government agencies in the Philippines. A quantitative descriptive-correlational research design was employed, utilizing a survey questionnaire to gather primary data from 120 respondents. Descriptive and inferential statistics, including mean, standard deviation, t-test, Pearson correlation, ANOVA, and simple linear regression analysis, were used to analyze the data. The findings revealed a slightly positive display of leadership behavior among the office administrators. Moreover, the respondents demonstrated a high level of compliance with established ethical guidelines and conduct codes, and the results indicated a statistically significant correlation between leadership behavior and

such practices of ethical principles. Furthermore, transformational behavior emerged as a significant predictor of adherence to ethical standards, emphasizing its importance in promoting ethical behavior in the workplace. These findings indicate that individuals who exhibit transformational behavior are more likely to adhere to the ethical standards set by the organization. Specifically, it highlights how transformational leadership behaviors can significantly predict and enhance adherence to ethical standards, affirming the principles of the Path-Goal Theory in guiding effective leadership practices in the workplace.

Keywords: Ethical behavior, Leadership behavior, Transformational behavior, public sector

1. Introduction

Being a public administrator is a difficult job. Public administrators must deal with difficult challenges daily which include problems from technologically extremely difficult to highly ideologically charged issues such as resolving a society's problems of crime and delinquency and promoting its economic well-being [1]. Government administrators are responsible for the transparent and ethical utilization of taxpayers' funds. They do not have competitors, profit margins, or shareholders to answer to when it comes to working efficiently and effectively. Instead, the public expects leaders to do their jobs as efficiently and effectively as possible. In many ways, moral and ethical decisions are the most difficult to make. A Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards outlining the responsibilities of public officials in upholding the principle of "public office being a public trust" were provided in the 1987 Philippine Constitution.

The pursuit of highly moral governance is perpetually challenged by the intricate nature of human behavior, making the attainment of perfection an elusive goal. Despite the persistent demand for impeccable ethical standards, the inherent complexities of human actions and decisions pose significant barriers to achieving absolute flawlessness. Violation of the RA 6713 also known as the Act Establishing a Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees in the Philippines [2] continues to be one of its nemeses. Stories about soliciting or accepting any gift, gratuity, or anything of monetary value from anyone while performing their official duties by government officials are frequent staples in the news.

In today's dynamic landscape in public administration, the significance of good leadership in developing a culture of ethical organizations cannot be overstated. Leadership is a demanding job that requires courage, enthusiasm, and strength to withstand chaos, conflict, and difficult decisions. It is the leader who possesses the unique ability to steer the course of an organization and champion the cause of ethics. The triumph of ethics programs hinges upon the unwavering commitment and dedication of such leaders. This holds true not only in the realm of corporate enterprises but also within the domain of government service, where individuals are entrusted with the responsibility of upholding a set of universally accepted standards and values that form the bedrock of the common good.

According to Aristotle's Ethical Theory, everyone has the potential to be a good person, which can be developed by practice. The ability is not inherent; it is acquired through practice. The highest good is to act rationally, but also to do so successfully, or excellently. For instance, if acting rationally is one of a human being's functions, then doing so effectively is one of a human being's traits [3]. Acting is how habits are formed; a person's character is made up of their habits and is shaped by their actions. This theory was relevant since it stresses the need to build a good character that befits the exercise of ethics.

Robert J. House introduced the Path-Goal Theory (1971) [4], which examines how a leader's behavior and the surrounding circumstances impact their effectiveness. House found that the two situational aspects that had the biggest impact on a leader's effectiveness were the individual characteristics of the subordinates and the demands of the working environment, such as the organization's rules and procedures. The theory, with its later improvements, identifies four primary leadership behaviors: directive, supportive, participative, and achievement oriented. The Path-Goal Theory was one of the earliest leadership theories to describe multiple leader behaviors [5]. Leaders adapt their behaviour based on the employee's needs and the work environment, aiming to increase employee motivation, satisfaction, and productivity.

Together with law and etiquette, ethics and morality are fundamentally normative concepts that define what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable human behavior. Ethics and the law as well as ethics and

etiquette have a lot in common. The ethical ideals of respecting fundamental rights to life, property, and political participation are largely reflected in the law. Usually, breaking the law is unethical. A disregard of social norms or can also be considered unethical if it is intentionally done to upset someone for amusement [6].

Adherence to certain prescribed rules and regulations is indicated by the behavior of the target individuals concerning the object of such policies. Government employees' and administrators' extent of obedience to these mandates and standards in government can be best measured at the time he/she performs tasks in the office. In relation thereto, human behavior cannot be measured accurately by the performer but by the observer or audience. Measuring adherence to the ethical standards among administrators can be determined either by the employees or co-workers.

Thus, this study endeavors to gather the opinions and perceptions of career and non-career government employees to be able to measure leadership behavior and adherence to the provisions of the code of conduct and ethical standards of government administrators, and to gather scientific conclusions regarding the relationships between these variables of interest.

2. Methods and Methodology

A quantitative descriptive-correlational research design was utilized in this study to explore the variables and the relationships that exist among them. This study was conducted in government agencies in Marawi City. The respondents were selected through a stratified random sampling method. The study was based on a total of 1,075 regular and contractual employees from 12 selected medium-sized government agencies operating within Marawi City. 189 or more respondents are needed to achieve a confidence level of 90% that the real value is within $\pm 5\%$ of the measured value, according to the Sample Size Calculator at the calculator.net website. However, due to the ethical practice of allowing the target respondent to refuse participation, only 120 were included in the final data gathered, representing an acceptable 63% response rate [7].

The instrument was a survey questionnaire of four parts. The first part of the instrument solicited the demographic profile of the respondents. The second

part measured leadership behavior with statements adapted from the work of Hemphill and Coons [8] featuring the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire and that of Podsakoff et al. [9] pertaining to transformational leadership behavior. The third part was composed of statements concerning adherence to the code of conduct and ethical standards in accordance with Republic Act No. 6713. A five-point Likert scale type of response method was used. Cronbach's Alpha were computed at 0.96 for leadership behavior while it is 0.98 for the government administrators' conformance to moral guidelines and behavioral codes – both signifying high reliability of the tests. Statistical tools such as frequency, central tendency, t-test, Pearson correlation, ANOVA, and simple linear regression analysis were utilized to analyze and interpret the data.

Participants were predominantly 40 years old and younger, female, married, and college graduates. They reported having 1-5 years' work experience in their jobs as accountants, earning a middle-level income. All government administrators invited to take part in the study were informed of the rule of ethics in research. They were encouraged to participate voluntarily and are assured of confidentiality and anonymity. They were assured that their involvement in sharing their perception of their office administrator will not risk their employment, and they have access to the results of the study.

3. Results and Discussion

The study endeavors to describe leadership behavior and adherence to the code of conduct and ethical standards of government administrators, thereafter, investigating if these two variables have a significant relationship with each other. The results of the data gathered, and descriptive and inferential statistical tests follow.

A. Leadership Behavior

The administrator's leadership behavior is comprised of consideration (also called people-oriented leadership behavior), initiating structure (sometimes called task-oriented leadership behavior), and transformational behavior (or output-oriented leadership behavior). Striking a balance between these three broad categories of leadership behaviors is crucial for creating a positive work environment that fosters employee well-being, productivity, and innovation. Table I shows that overall

perception of leadership behavior is good; participants report that their administrator displays leadership behavior often.

Table I - Leadership Behavior of Government Administrators

Indicator	Mean	SD	Perceived Frequency of Display
Consideration	4.14	0.45	Often
Initiating Structure	4.03	0.60	Often
Transformational Behavior	4.26	0.65	Always
Leadership Behavior	4.19	0.51	Often

Legend of response and interpretation: 1.00-1.80 (Never; very poor); 1.81-2.60 (Rarely; poor); 2.61-3.40 (Sometimes; fair); 3.41-4.20 (Often; good); 4.21-5.00 (Always; very good)

Consideration leadership behavior is perceived to be good (mean=4.14). Participants agree that administrators often are friendly and approachable and make group members feel at ease, implying that the administrator is affable, capable of making others feel comfortable in their presence. People-oriented leaders care about the welfare of their team members, and they show this caring in their choices and actions [10]. This includes being helpful, friendly, promoting people's interests, recognizing and respecting their opinions, and exhibiting concern for their feelings.

Government administrators were described to often (mean=4.03) display their leadership behavior, particularly in initiating structure. This suggests that they are good at defining the responsibilities of subordinates, giving them directives, and modeling behaviors that will improve the efficiency of the organization. Employees are given instructions to do tasks and make sure that organizational objectives are reached. Employees with a positive perception of their office administrator's leadership behavior in terms of initiating structure may feel more confident in their ability to meet expectations and complete tasks efficiently.

In the context of transformational behavior, generally, respondents perceived their office administrators' leadership behavior as very good (mean=4.26). This

suggests that the office administrator is perceived as often exhibiting transformational leadership qualities. Transformational leaders engage with their followers in a way that encourages both parties to strive for higher standards of motivation and morality. As a result, raising their followers' understanding and consciousness to higher standards of conduct and morality is a fundamental responsibility of transformational leaders [11]. According to Asencio & Mujkic [12], these leaders are effective in achieving organizational goals because they inspire followers to exceed established expectations, encourage them to focus on higher-order intrinsic needs, and help them become empowered.

B. Adherence to the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards

Adherence to the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards comprises the indicators such as commitment to public interest, professionalism, justness and sincerity, political neutrality, responsiveness to the public, nationalism and patriotism, commitment to democracy, and simple living (Table II). The overall score (mean=4.47) for this personal trait of an office administrator reveals a very good level. These findings suggest that the respondents prioritize all these dimensions. This high adherence reflects positively on the individuals and the organization, enhancing trust, credibility, and social impact.

Table II: Adherence to the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards of Government Administrators

Indicator	Mean	SD	Perceived Frequency of Display
Commitment to public interest	4.45	0.65	Always
Professionalism	4.51	0.63	Always
Justness and sincerity	4.62	0.56	Always
Political neutrality	4.11	0.94	Often
Responsiveness to the public	4.52	0.66	Always
Nationalism and patriotism	4.54	0.62	Always
Commitment to democracy	4.52	0.62	Always
Simple living	4.48	0.69	Always
Adherence to the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards	4.47	0.55	Always

Legend of response and interpretation: 1.00-1.80 (Never; very poor); 1.81-2.60 (Rarely; poor); 2.61-3.40 (Sometimes; fair); 3.41-4.20 (Often; good); 4.21-5.00 (Always; very good)

Commitment to public interest (mean=4.45) focuses on how a leader prioritizes public interest over their personal interest wherein it involves the efficient and effective use of government resources to avoid waste of public funds and revenues. This indicates that individuals prioritize the well-being and welfare of the public in their actions and decisions. The high adherence to the commitment to public interest suggests that the respondents recognize the importance of serving the greater good and acting in a manner that benefits society. This commitment can contribute to the overall trust, credibility, and legitimacy of the individuals and the organization they represent.

Professionalism requires a leader to perform and discharge their tasks and responsibilities with the utmost excellence, intelligence, and skill. Perceived professionalism (mean=4.51) means that administrators uphold and demonstrate professional standards, behavior, and ethics in their work and interactions. The very good adherence to professionalism implies that they exhibit competence, integrity, and ethical behavior. This commitment to professionalism can enhance the quality of work, build trust with stakeholders, and maintain a positive reputation.

Justness and sincerity require a leader to always be true to the people, act justly and honestly, and must not discriminate against anyone, especially the poor and

those in need. Participants give their administrators the highest score (mean=4.62), suggesting that the administrators value treating others equitably, being transparent, and acting with authenticity. This fosters trust, cooperation, and positive relationships within the organization and with the public.

Political neutrality requires a leader to assist and serve the public, regardless of party affiliation or preference, without prejudice. Participants perceive that administrators display this often (mean=4.11). While this score may be the lowest among indicators, this highlights the fact that individuals strive to remain politically neutral in their professional roles and avoid favoritism or bias. Adherence to political neutrality indicates that individuals recognize the importance of impartiality and fairness in their work, particularly in politically sensitive contexts. This commitment to political neutrality can contribute to the credibility and trustworthiness of the individuals and the organization.

Responsiveness to the public enhances public trust, satisfaction, and engagement with the organization and thus requires a leader to provide adequate, prompt, and courteous service to clients and customers. The very good perception (mean=4.52) indicates that participants witness administrators prioritizing being responsive and attentive to the needs and concerns of the public they serve. They value open communication, accountability,

and meeting the expectations of the public.

Administrators are perceived to possess a very good level (mean=4.54) of nationalism and patriotism. This indicator involves the devotion of a leader to the republic and the Filipino people. Patriotic and nationalistic individuals demonstrate a strong sense of loyalty, pride, and commitment to the nation, looking after its interests and welfare. This commitment can drive individuals to work towards national development and progress.

Commitment to democracy entails that a government leader pledges to a democratic way of life and ideals, preserve and observe the principles of public accountability, and demonstrate the superiority of civilian authority over the military through actions. Administrators were scored highly (mean=4.52), intimating that they value democratic principles, including participation, transparency, and respect for human rights. The very good adherence to the commitment to democracy suggests that individuals recognize the importance of democratic values in their work and interactions. This commitment can contribute to a democratic culture within the organization and promote good governance.

Participants reported that their administrators always (mean=4.48) demonstrate simple living. This requires a leader to live modestly in accordance with their positions and income and shall not engage in any lavish or grand and flamboyant display of wealth. By prioritizing a modest lifestyle and valuing humility, modesty, and avoiding extravagance, leaders can promote financial responsibility, ethical behavior, and a focus on the mission rather than personal gain.

It is worth noting that justness and sincerity received the highest average score from the participants, which contrasts with the findings of Benedicto and Caelian [13]. Their study revealed that justness and sincerity was rated the lowest among government employees, indicating a tendency for individuals to exploit their positions, succumb to temptations, and compromise their integrity. The difference in ratings suggests a potential disconnect between the respondents' perception of the office administrator's behavior and the broader ethical standards prevalent in the civil service. Benedicto and Caelian's findings highlight a concerning trend where governments may prioritize the security of tenure for employees over addressing issues

of corruption and strengthening ethical standards. While his underscores the importance of continuous efforts to promote ethics and integrity within the civil service, it also emphasizes the responsibility of administrators to sustain standards, even holding employees accountable for their actions. By prioritizing ethical behavior and fostering a culture of integrity, the office administrator can serve as an exemplar and contribute to the improvement of ethical standards in the organization.

C. Adherence to the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards between Sexes and among Employment Positions

As ethical adherence was measured, it is also necessary to test if there are significant differences in how males and females look at how they perceive their administrator's adherence to the code of conduct and ethical standards. Understanding these differences can highlight potential gender-specific challenges or areas that require targeted interventions.

A t-test was performed to compare adherence to Code of Conduct between male and female study participants. Results showed that the demographic factor sex ($t=1.36$; $p=0.25$) was not a significant predictor of adherence. This implies that some demographic factors, including sex, may not exert a substantial influence on views of commitment to ethical practices and conduct policies. It suggests that individuals from diverse backgrounds, regardless of their sex, can exhibit similar levels of defining, noticing, and measuring the variable.

Furthermore, a test for differences in ethical adherence among employment positions of respondents was conducted to understand how position and responsibility influence ethical behavior. A one-way ANOVA test was conducted to compare the effect of four types of employment position on the participant's perception of their administrator's adherence to the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards. It revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in mean adherence ($F=3.75$; $p=0.01$). Post-hoc analyses revealed that respondents have varying levels of results in this variable. In this case, the employment position of the participant may play a role in how they assess their administrator.

D. The Role of Leadership Behavior on Adherence to the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards

There is a statistically significant correlation between leadership and adherence to the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards, underscoring a strong positive relationship between the two variables ($r=0.738$, $p<0.05$). If we propose a null hypothesis that there is no relationship between adherence to the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards and leadership behavior, then we need to reject it (Table III).

According to a discussion in IFAC [14], leadership is essential for developing a code of conduct for organizations. Ethical leaders are responsible for setting the tone at the top and creating a culture of integrity within their organizations. They should be role models for ethical behavior and should encourage their employees to act with integrity.

Table III - Correlation between Leadership Behavior and Adherence to the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards

	Adherence to the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards																								DECISION			
	Commitment to public interest			Professionalism			Justness and sincerity			Political neutrality			Responsiveness to the public			Nationalism and patriotism			Commitment to democracy			Simple living				OVERALL Adherence to the Code of Conduct and		
Leadership Behavior	R value	P value	Interpretatio	R value	P value	Interpretatio	R value	P value	Interpretatio	R value	P value	Interpretatio	R value	P value	Interpretatio	R value	P value	Interpretatio	R value	P value	Interpretatio	R value	P value	Interpretatio	R value	P value	Interpretatio	
Considerati on	.408	0.00	Sig	.562	0.00	Sig	.498	0.00	Sig	.452	0.00	Sig	.550	0.00	Sig	.432	0.00	Sig	.469	0.00	Sig	.314	0.00	Sig	.565	0.00	Sig	Reject null hypoth esis
Initiating Structure	.738	0.00	Sig	.694	0.00	Sig	.592	0.00	Sig	.596	0.00	Sig	.573	0.00	Sig	.655	0.00	Sig	.678	0.00	Sig	.400	0.00	Sig	.755	0.00	Sig	Reject null hypoth esis
Transforma tional Behavior	.775	0.00	Sig	.847	0.00	Sig	.639	0.00	Sig	.682	0.00	Sig	.727	0.00	Sig	.707	0.00	Sig	.743	0.00	Sig	.457	0.00	Sig	.857	0.00	Sig	Reject null hypoth esis
OVERALL Leadership Behavior	.738	0.00	Sig	.796	0.00	Sig	.649	0.00	Sig	.656	0.00	Sig	.694	0.00	Sig	.684	0.00	Sig	.719	0.00	Sig	.443	0.00	Sig	.825	0.00	Sig	Reject null hypoth esis
Sig = Significant if P value < 0.05																												
Not Sig = Not significant if P value > 0.05																												

Leadership behavior plays a critical role in promoting ethical behavior in the workplace. By modeling ethical behavior and being accountable for their actions, administrators set an example for their employees. They foster a workplace where employees feel safe to voice ethical concerns and where they are encouraged to act with integrity [15]. Looking at the sub-dimensions of leadership behaviors and sub-dimensions of adherence to the Code of Conduct, all of them are significantly correlated with each other. For example, consider transformational behavior and commitment to public interest. Results showed a statistically significant positive correlation between transformational behavior and commitment to public interest ($r=0.775$, $p<0.05$). These findings suggest that individuals who exhibit transformational behavior are more likely to be committed to public interest, which may promote adherence to ethical standards in the workplace.

Table IV further investigates the relationship between the variables through a regression analysis, looking at the role of leadership behavior on adherence to Ethical Standards.

Model 1 shows the leadership behavior sub-variable consideration to have a non-significant negative relationship with adherence to Ethical Standards ($\beta=-0.057$, $p=0.469$). The R^2 value of 0.247 suggests that consideration explains 24.7% of the variance in adherence to ethical standards, although the relationship is not statistically significant ($F=72.053$, $p=0.000$). Therefore, we accept the null hypothesis (H_0) and conclude that consideration is not a significant predictor of adherence to ethical standards.

In Model 2, leadership behavior sub-variable initiating structure demonstrates a positive relationship with adherence to the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards ($\beta=0.148$, $p=0.052$). The R^2 value of 0.165 indicates that initiating structure explains 16.5% of the variance in adherence to ethical standards, but the relationship is marginally significant ($F=150.549$, $p=0.000$). Consequently, we accept the null hypothesis (H_0) but note that there may be a weak positive association between initiating structure and adherence to ethical standards.

Table IV - Regression Statistics for Leadership Behavior and Adherence to the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards

Model	Variables	B	R ²	t	Sig.	Decision on Ho
1	Constant	1.394		4.249	0.000	Accept Ho
	Consideration →					
	Adherence to the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards	-.057	0.247	-.726	0.469	
	F= 72.053; P=0.000					
2	Constant	1.394		6.858	0.000	Accept Ho
	Initiating Structure →					
	Adherence to the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards	.148	0.165	1.965	0.052	
	F= 150.549; P=0.000					
3	Constant	1.394		6.318	0.000	Reject Ho
	Transformational Behavior →					
	Adherence to the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards	.632	0.330	8.319	0.000	
	F= 122.389; P=0.000					
	Total		0.743			

But Model 3 expresses the strong positive relationship of leadership behavior sub-variable transformational behavior with adherence to the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards ($\beta=0.632$, $p=0.000$). The R^2 value of 0.330 indicates that transformational behavior accounts for 33% of the variance in adherence to ethical standards, and the relationship is highly significant ($F=122.389$, $p=0.000$). Therefore, we reject the null hypothesis (H_0) and conclude that transformational behavior significantly predicts adherence to ethical standards.

Overall, the leadership behavior (consideration, initiating structure, and transformational behavior) account for 74.3% of the variance in adherence to the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards, thus playing a significant role in shaping the traits and performance among government administrators. When leadership behavior is significantly related to the leaders' adherence to an organization's code of conduct and ethical standards, this suggests that the behaviors, actions, and decisions of leaders play a critical role in shaping the culture of the organization.

4. Summary and Conclusion

This study brings forth that government administrators recognize and embody good leadership behavior and very good adherence to the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards.

The findings reveal that the office administrator's leadership behavior, as perceived by the respondents, exhibits the key attributes and practices associated with transformational leadership. The office administrator is found to be a charismatic and inspirational leader who motivates and empowers their subordinates, fosters a shared vision, and promotes individual development and growth. This further demonstrates the positive correlation between the office administrator's transformational behavior and the respondents' perception of their commitment to the code of conduct among government employees – particularly that of upholding public interest, justness and sincerity, and professionalism. This study also validates the applicability of transformational leadership in the organization.

In House's 1996 reformulation of the Path-Goal Theory, the emphasis is placed on how leaders can align their

behavior to meet followers' needs and the situational context, thereby facilitating goal achievement (House, 1996). Leaders help their subordinates understand the organizational goals, the paths to achieve these goals, and the benefits of reaching them, effectively guiding and motivating them toward success. This theory has been confirmed in the study because it underscores the role of leadership in promoting ethical behavior within an organization. The findings of the study highlight that transformational leadership behavior is a significant predictor of adherence to ethical standards. Transformational leaders, by inspiring and motivating employees, create an environment where ethical conduct is valued and upheld. This aligns with the Path-Goal Theory, as transformational leaders clarify the ethical standards (goals) and give the necessary support and motivation (path) to ensure these standards are met. Thus, the study affirms the central tenets of the Path-Goal Theory by demonstrating that effective leadership behavior, particularly transformational leadership, is crucial for fostering ethical behavior in the workplace.

Leadership behavior among government administrators serves as a model for their own adherence to the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards, influencing the manner they consistently follow the principles, guidelines, and rules outlined in the organization, while shaping the organizational environment in turn. Henceforth, administrators who model moral behavior and enforce standards foster an environment of honesty and responsibility throughout the organization.

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