

Awareness and Practices on Professional Conduct Among Land Transportation Personnel

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Abstract:

Professional conduct is a foundation for integrity, accountability, and excellence in public service. This study aimed to assess the awareness and practices of Land Transportation Office (LTO) personnel regarding professional conduct in a province in Central Philippines. Using a descriptive research design, data were gathered from 90 LTO employees through a validated and reliability-tested researcher-made instrument. The study focused on dimensions such as integrity, accountability, commitment to public interest, and professionalism. The results revealed that the respondents demonstrated a high level of awareness and generally favorable practices aligned with professional conduct. Findings also indicated consistency across demographic variables such as age, sex, and years in service, with minimal differences. However, certain aspects of practice, particularly those related to customer relations and ethical decision-making, were found to be areas for improvement. Based on the findings, the study recommends the implementation of continuous professional development programs, regular value-based seminars, and a localized code of conduct orientation to strengthen both awareness and the consistent application of professional behavior in public service.

Keywords: Awareness on professional conduct, practices among land transportation personnel, professional conduct

Introduction:

Nature of the Problem

Proper conduct is determined by organizational regulations as well as by the values of the organization, its employees, and society (Andersson & Ekelund, 2021). Among other ideals, public service changed to reflect integrity, objectivity, and equity (Grishchuk, 2021). From recruiting to promotions, the firm based its career structures on merit (Hu et al., 2022). Sepiashvili et al. (2021) state that public servants operate the administrative machinery supporting decision-making, government policy, and program execution, which is vital to a nation's sustained growth and administration. According to Ali (2018), the public sector shapes society. Staff behavior and ethics are quite important in public administration and governance (Grishchuk, 2021).

Reflecting the best ethical standards of the country, the Philippine Constitution, as stated in Republic Act 6713 of the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees, states that public officials and government employees must operate with integrity, ethics, and professionalism if they are to deliver efficient and equitable public services (Camaya & Gabriel, 2019). This comment relates to the Land Transportation Office (LTO) of the Philippines, which manages road user welfare and land transportation networks.

Academic research on corporate ethics has shown the importance of combining regulatory practice procedures and staff ethics education (Andersson & Ekelund, 2021). Benedicto and Caelian (2020) investigated public interest, professionalism, justice, honesty, political neutrality, public responsiveness, nationalism, patriotism, democracy, and simple living as work ethics. Their work ethics and job performance studies illuminated the intricate relationship between ethics and professional success. Their poll also revealed local government employees' work ethic and performance issues (Benedicto & Caelian, 2020). Employee professionalism is essential to public trust in the LTO. The researcher is part of the LTO, which promotes professionalism, transparency, and ethics. However, compliance with these professional conduct norms is vital for LTO officials. Despite a global awareness of public service professionalism, little is known about how Philippine government personnel behave professionally.

This study investigated how well land transportation personnel are following the rules and explore how adherence trends vary according to different demographic and profile factors. This study is important because it could provide real insights that would help shape targeted interventions, training programs, and policy enhancements within the LTO and the broader context of public service ethics in the Philippines. The study identified differences in adherence,

which can help shape plans aimed at enhancing and reinforcing professional behavior and public trust while also ensuring improved delivery of public services.

Current State of Knowledge

Professional conduct is a crucial aspect of ensuring integrity, accountability, and openness among government officials and employees, serving as the foundation for ethical behavior in public service (Grishchuk, 2021). Key principles such as integrity, honesty, impartiality, accountability, and responsibility are fundamental to professional conduct, guiding public servants in fulfilling their roles (Marquette et al., 2022). Tremblay et al. (2016) note that professional behavior involves adhering to relevant rules, regulations, and ethical codes, although it may vary across different cultures, organizations, and industries (Huberts & van Montfort, 2021). The application of ethical standards in public service has global significance, influencing democratic governance, public trust, and the effective delivery of services (Vasylovych et al., 2021). The integration of ethics management strategies, such as codes of ethics, ethical audits, and training programs, is vital for fostering ethical behavior within public institutions (Andersson & Ekelund, 2021).

Ethical conduct within public service is influenced by organizational culture, leadership, and external factors like public scrutiny (Hasan, 2023). Governments worldwide face challenges in promoting ethical behavior, particularly within bureaucratic systems, where formal rules can sometimes take precedence over ethics (Ali, 2018; Dinh et al., 2020). Furthermore, conflicts may arise when personal ethics clash with organizational requirements (Tremblay et al., 2016). Effective service delivery and responsiveness, crucial components of public administration, depend on a government's ability to meet citizens' needs in a timely and transparent manner (Hu et al., 2022). The integration of digital technologies, such as e-government initiatives, has transformed service delivery, enhancing accessibility and public participation (Bertot et al., 2010). Research indicates that responsive governance, especially during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, can significantly improve public trust and societal well-being (Woodhouse et al., 2021).

Numerous studies highlight the importance of ethical leadership and practices in public service, underlining the role of organizational values, leadership, and frameworks in shaping ethical conduct. Hassan et al. (2019) discuss how ethical leadership influences organizational outcomes like commitment and absenteeism, stressing that ethical conduct is essential for effective public organizations. Uzun (2021) elaborates on tools such as ethical audits and training programs that managers can use to foster ethical behavior in both public and private sectors, making ethics management a practical necessity. Furthermore, studies by Downe et al. (2016) and Moon & Christensen (2021) emphasize how leadership directly influences ethical behavior and helps reduce prejudice and foster inclusivity in public institutions. The importance of legal frameworks is also underscored by Vasylovych & Koval (2021), who compare ethical conduct legislation across countries, illustrating its critical role in regulating professional behavior in government.

In addition to leadership and management, transparency and accountability have become central to good governance, with recent research focusing on how these principles enhance public trust and reduce corruption. Lyrío et al. (2018) emphasize the connection between transparency and anti-corruption efforts, while studies by Bertot et al. (2010) and Sari & Muslim (2023) highlight how transparency in government operations boosts citizen participation and improves outcomes. Transparency International (2018) further links reduced corruption with stronger economic growth. Service delivery and responsiveness are also pivotal for effective governance, with studies by Kulmie et al. (2024) and Heeks (2017) showing how technological tools and citizen involvement enhance public trust and service quality. Together, these studies suggest that integrating ethical leadership, transparency, and responsiveness into public sector management is essential for fostering good governance and sustainable development.

In the Philippines, public service ethics are fundamental to the behavior and responsibilities of government officials, shaping their conduct and ensuring that they serve the Filipino people with integrity, transparency, and professionalism (Roberto & Madrigal, 2018; Camaya & Gabriel, 2019). Rooted in the principles of honesty and accountability, these ethics are reinforced by Republic Act No. 6713, the "Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees," which sets clear expectations for the ethical conduct of government workers (Benedicto & Caelian, 2020; Alvarado, 2022). The Civil Service Commission (CSC), established in 1946, plays a key role in enforcing these standards, promoting integrity, and holding public servants accountable for their actions (Civil Service Commission, 2023). Despite these efforts, challenges remain, particularly with local government units (LGUs) that struggle with consistent ethical practices and public perception (Osibanjo et al., 2018).

The implementation of ethical standards in the Philippines also extends to local governance, where transparency and accountability are essential in fostering trust and participation among citizens (Bertot et al., 2010). Legal frameworks like the Anti-Red Tape Act and initiatives such as the Citizen's Participatory Audit enhance the transparency of government operations and encourage citizen involvement (Grishchuk, 2021). The Local Governance Performance Management System (LGPMMS) also aims to improve service delivery by promoting accountability in budget allocation and project implementation. Technological advancements in e-governance and participatory governance further strengthen service responsiveness, enabling local governments to address community needs more effectively.

(Waddington et al., 2019; Liu et al., 2021). This commitment to transparency, accountability, and responsiveness is critical for building public trust and ensuring the sustainability of development efforts across the country.

Research on professional and ethical conduct in the civil service, particularly in the Philippines, highlights ongoing challenges in ethics and accountability. Studies like Aranas (2016) reveal that while there is room for improvement in ethical behavior within the public sector, optimism remains for future reforms. Benedicto and Caelian (2020) emphasize the importance of ethical governance in enhancing public sector performance, focusing on work ethics such as commitment to the public interest, professionalism, and political neutrality. Similarly, studies by Sapada et al. (2018) and Osibanjo et al. (2018) show that strong organizational culture and work ethics are directly linked to improved job performance and satisfaction. Ethical leadership plays a key role in fostering a responsive and responsible culture in government institutions, which is vital for citizen trust and service delivery.

The significance of ethical behavior in public service is further underscored by studies such as Acero (2016), which demonstrate a positive correlation between ethical conduct and job performance. Research in local governance and public administration highlights that transparency, accountability, and responsiveness are crucial for enhancing public trust and citizen engagement. However, challenges such as political favoritism, limited resources, and corruption continue to impede effective service delivery. The role of leadership in ensuring transparency and ethical conduct is critical, as local officials set the tone for governance. Technology and digital tools also play a vital role in improving transparency and service delivery, though their effectiveness depends on local infrastructure and digital literacy. Overall, these studies underscore the need for tailored approaches and further research to improve ethics and efficiency within the public sector.

Theoretical Underpinnings

The study explores the awareness and practices of professional conduct among Land Transportation Office (LTO) personnel, drawing from two key frameworks: Kohlberg's Cognitive Moral Development Theory and Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior, alongside Republic Act No. 6713, the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials. Kohlberg's theory emphasizes moral development through sequential stages, where individuals advance to higher levels of ethical sophistication. This framework helps evaluate LTO employees' moral thinking and ethical decision-making, assessing whether their stage of moral growth impacts their awareness and practice of ethical standards. Meanwhile, Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior suggests that human behavior is influenced by attitudes, social pressures, and perceived control, highlighting how employees' beliefs about ethical behavior and professionalism, along with their confidence in following rules, shape their commitment to professional conduct.

Republic Act No. 6713 serves as the statutory foundation, establishing ethical benchmarks for public sector employees in the Philippines, and is used as a normative structure for assessing the level of compliance to professional conduct. The integration of Kohlberg's theory, Ajzen's theory, and the legal framework provided by the Act offers a comprehensive approach to understanding how both cognitive and external factors influence LTO personnel's professional behavior. By combining these perspectives, the study presents a holistic understanding of the mechanisms that affect ethical conduct, from individual moral development to legal compliance, providing valuable insights into improving professionalism and ethical standards within public service.

Objectives

This study aimed to determine the level of awareness and level of practices to professional conduct among Land Transportation Office (LTO) Personnel in a province in Central Philippines. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions: 1) the level of awareness of the professional conduct of LTO personnel according to the area of ethical compliance and integrity, transparency and accountability, and service delivery and responsiveness; 2) the level of practice in the professional conduct of LTO personnel when grouped according to the aforementioned areas; 3) the significant difference in the level of awareness of professional conduct of LTO personnel when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables; 4) the a significant difference in the level of professional conduct practices of LTO personnel when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables; and 5) the significant relationship between the level of awareness and the level of practices of professional conduct of LTO personnel.

Methodology

This section presents a discussion of the research methodology used, the subjects and respondents of the study, the research instruments used, the validity and reliability of the instruments, the procedure for data gathering, and the statistical tools and procedures for data analysis.

Research Design

Using a descriptive research design, this study determined the level of awareness and level of practices for professional conduct among Land Transportation Personnel. While using a descriptive plan for research, pertinent characteristics were found in the area being studied. To figure out the conditions in which things are now found, which is what this intellectual quest is all about and what is being done right now. It looked at how the factors taken into account are compared to each other and how one variable affects another (Fox & Bayat, 2007). As a result, this research approach was the most appropriate for the study because it contributed to the enhancement of the data that was gathered, which in turn enabled the development of accurate interpretations and analyses.

Study Respondents

The study participants consisted of 90 full-time, permanent personnel from the Land Transportation Office (LTO), selected based on criteria including at least six months of tenure and an unblemished disciplinary record. The total eligible population of 124 included both permanent and contract employees, but only 91 met the criteria, with one permanent employee retiring before data collection. The respondents were responsible for enforcing transportation laws and regulations, including vehicle registration, driver's licenses, and law enforcement. Most respondents were from the Negros Occidental Licensing Center (NOLC), with others from the Cadiz and Himamaylan offices. The distribution of male (51.11%) and female (48.89%) respondents was nearly equal.

Instruments

The research utilized a researcher-made questionnaire designed to assess the awareness and practices of professional conduct among Land Transportation Office (LTO) personnel. The instrument was divided into three sections: Part 1 gathered demographic data such as age, sex, and length of service, essential for subgroup analysis. Part 2 evaluated awareness of professional conduct, featuring 30 items across three themes—Ethical Compliance and Integrity, Transparency and Accountability, and Service Delivery and Responsiveness—rated on a five-point Likert scale. Part 3 focused on actual practices, with 30 items reflecting the same themes, rated on a frequency-based Likert scale. The questionnaire was designed with first-person phrasing for self-reflection and tailored to LTO's ethical standards, validated by experts in public administration and ethics to ensure clarity and reliability. It was subjected to validity (4.59-excellent) and reliability (0.820 for awareness and 0.863 for practice variable). All of them were interpreted as worthy and good; respectively.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data collection process began with thorough preparation, including finalizing the research instrument, ensuring its alignment with the study's objectives, and conducting a pilot test to address any issues. Ethical considerations were prioritized, with measures to protect respondent confidentiality and obtain informed consent. The researcher secured approval from the LTO management and coordinated with office heads to distribute the questionnaires to participants, ensuring clear instructions and confidentiality. Data collection involved a combination of electronic and paper methods, with respondents given a designated timeframe to complete the surveys. The researcher-maintained oversight throughout, encouraging prompt submissions and addressing concerns. Upon completion, the collected data underwent a validation and cleansing process to ensure accuracy, before analysis began.

Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment

Objective No. 1 used the descriptive analytical scheme and frequency and mean to determine the level of awareness of the professional conduct of Land Transportation Office personnel when grouped according to the areas of ethical compliance and integrity, transparency and accountability, and service delivery and responsiveness.

Objective No. 2 used the descriptive analytical scheme and mean to determine the level of practices of the professional conduct of Land Transportation Office personnel when grouped according to the areas of ethical compliance and integrity, transparency and accountability, and service delivery and responsiveness.

Objective No. 3 used the comparative analytical scheme and Mann-Whitney U test to determine if there is a significant difference in the level of awareness in the areas of professional conduct of Land Transportation Office (LTO) personnel in the three areas when grouped according to the aforementioned variables.

Objective No. 4 used the comparative analytical scheme and Mann-Whitney U test to determine if there is a significant difference in the level of practices in the areas of professional conduct of Land Transportation Office (LTO) personnel in the three areas when grouped according to the aforementioned variables.

Objective No. 5 used the comparative analytical scheme and Spearman's rho to determine if there is a significant relationship between the level of awareness and the level of practices on professional conduct among LTO personnel.

Ethical Consideration

The research ethics protocol in this study prioritized ethical standards and participant protection throughout the research process. Participants were informed about the study's objectives, methods, and potential outcomes, with informed consent obtained before involvement. Confidentiality and privacy were strictly upheld, ensuring data was anonymized and securely stored. Participation was voluntary, with no impact on participants' interactions with the Land Transportation Office (LTO). The principles of beneficence and non-maleficence were emphasized, reducing potential discomfort or harm to participants. The protocol was reviewed and approved by the institutional review board (IRB) to ensure compliance with ethical standards and data protection laws. The researcher committed to honesty, accuracy, and responsible reporting of the findings, ensuring transparency and acknowledging study limitations. Overall, the protocol maintained the highest ethical standards to protect participant rights and uphold the research's legitimacy.

Results and Discussion

This section presents, analyzes, and interprets the data that were gathered consistent with its predetermined objectives.

Table 1

Awareness of the professional conduct of Land Transportation Office personnel in the area of Ethical Compliance and Integrity

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a public servant, I...		
1. understand the importance of prioritizing public interest over personal interest in my decisions and actions.	4.71	Very High Level
2. am aware that soliciting or accepting gifts, favors, or loans could compromise my integrity and is prohibited.	4.82	Very High Level
3. am knowledgeable about strategies to actively manage conflicts of interest to ensure they do not interfere with my official duties.	4.62	Very High Level
4. understand the expectation to live a modest lifestyle that aligns with my position and income as a public servant.	4.80	Very High Level
5. recognize the need to maintain political neutrality by delivering services impartially, regardless of political affiliations.	4.74	Very High Level
6. am aware that engaging in unauthorized private employment or activities is not allowed during my tenure as a public servant.	4.74	Very High Level
7. understand the value of promoting nationalism by supporting and encouraging the use of local products and resources.	4.69	Very High Level
8. am aware of the need to act with fairness and sincerity in my interactions with colleagues and the public.	4.78	Very High Level
9. know it is essential to avoid holding any financial or material interest in transactions involving my office.	4.78	Very High Level
10. understand the legal requirement to disclose any relatives working in government positions honestly.	4.86	Very High Level
Overall Mean	4.75	Very High Level

Table 1 shows the awareness of the professional conduct of LTO personnel in the area of Ethical Compliance and Integrity. The overall mean is 4.75, which shows that the respondents have a very high awareness of all items. In particular, item number 10, "understand the importance of prioritizing public interest over personal interest in my decisions and actions," obtained the highest mean with a score of 4.86, interpreted as a "very high level" of awareness. On the other hand, item number 3, "knowledgeable about strategies to actively manage conflicts of interest to ensure they do not interfere with my official duties," had the lowest mean score of 4.62, which indicates a "very high level" of awareness. The strong awareness of prioritizing public interest over personal interest confirms and aligns with principles of good governance and public service ethics (Osborne et al., 2018). However, the slightly lower awareness of conflict-of-interest management strategies highlights a potential gap, which negates that may require targeted training to reinforce ethical decision-making in complex situations (Kaptein, 2014). Maintaining high ethical standards is essential in regulatory agencies like the LTO to prevent misconduct and enhance accountability. Menzel (2015) asserts that ethical conduct is vital for maintaining public trust and ensuring the effectiveness of regulatory agencies.

Table 2

Awareness of the professional conduct of Land Transportation Office personnel in the area of Transparency and Accountability

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a public servant, I...		
1. understand the importance of submitting performance reports on time and ensuring they accurately reflect my office's operations.	4.81	Very High Level
2. am aware of the requirement to promptly and accurately submit my Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Worth (SALN) on a regular basis.	4.69	Very High Level
3. understand the legal obligation to provide the public with access to documents and information within the mandated time frame.	4.78	Very High Level
4. am aware that I must avoid financial interests that could conflict with my official duties.	4.72	Very High Level
5. am aware that I must avoid financial interests that could conflict with my official duties.	4.79	Very High Level
6. know the importance of acting promptly on letters, requests, and inquiries from the public within the required timeframe.	4.70	Very High Level
7. understand the need to avoid unnecessary delays in processing public transactions and ensure efficient service delivery.	4.81	Very High Level
8. am aware of the obligation to fully disclose my financial interests, liabilities, and assets upon assumption of office, annually, and upon separation from service.	4.79	Very High Level
9. understand the principles of transparency and accountability mechanisms and the need to avoid practices that violate RA 6713.	4.70	Very High Level
10. know the legal guidelines for ensuring that the public has access to my SALN and related documents upon request.	4.76	Very High Level
Overall Mean	4.75	Very High Level

Table 2 shows the awareness of the professional conduct of LTO personnel in the area of Transparency and Accountability. The overall mean is 4.75, which also shows a "very high level" of awareness across all items among the respondents. Both item number 1, "understand the importance of submitting performance reports on time and ensuring they accurately reflect my office's operations," and item number 7, "understand the need to avoid unnecessary delays in processing public transactions and ensure efficient service delivery" had the highest mean score of 4.81 indicating a "very high level" of awareness. On the other hand, item number 2, "am aware of the requirement to promptly and accurately submit my SALN on a regular basis," had the lowest mean score of 4.69, which also indicates a "very high level" of awareness. The strong awareness of timely performance reporting and efficient service delivery reflects a commitment to operational integrity and responsiveness, confirming or aligning with best practices in public administration (Bovens et al., 2016). However, the slightly lower awareness of the requirement to submit the SALN suggests a potential need for reinforcement through compliance training or policy reminders to ensure full adherence to financial disclosure regulations (Heald, 2018). Strengthening transparency mechanisms in government agencies can enhance accountability and prevent corruption as Fung et al. (2007) emphasize how better public participation and control resulting from transparent systems helps to create knowledgeable citizens.

Table 3

Awareness of the professional conduct of Land Transportation Office personnel in the area of Service Delivery and Responsiveness

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a public servant, I...		
1. understand the importance of consistently providing courteous and adequate service to the public.	4.84	Very High Level
2. am aware of the need to avoid unnecessary delays or red tape in delivering government services.	4.74	Very High Level
3. recognize the value of simplifying and systematizing procedures to improve efficiency in public service.	4.79	Very High Level
4. understand the importance of communicating policies and procedures clearly and understandably to the public.	4.73	Very High Level
5. am aware that actively seeking feedback from stakeholders is essential to improving the quality of services provided.	4.72	Very High Level
6. understand the need to act promptly on public requests and transactions during office hours.	4.76	Very High Level
7. recognize the importance of ensuring that procedures for delivering government services are accessible and understandable to all citizens.	4.81	Very High Level

8. understand the value of conducting public consultations when appropriate to include stakeholders in the decision-making process.	4.77	Very High Level
9. provide complete and accurate information about government services to the public.	4.76	Very High Level
10. recognize the importance of aligning my service delivery with the socio-economic conditions of the community I serve.	4.74	Very High Level
Overall Mean	4.77	Very High Level

Table 3 shows the awareness of the professional conduct of LTO personnel in the area of Service Delivery and Responsiveness.

The respondents show a "very high level" of awareness across all items, with a mean score of 4.77. The highest mean score is item number 1, "understand the importance of consistently providing courteous and adequate service to the public," which had a score of 4.84, indicating a "very high awareness," while item number 5, "am aware that actively seeking feedback from stakeholders is essential to improving the quality of services provided," had the lowest mean score of 4.72 which also indicates a "very high level" of awareness. The strong awareness of providing courteous and adequate service aligns with best practices in citizen-centered governance (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). However, the slightly lower awareness of stakeholder feedback's role in service improvement suggests a need for further emphasis on participatory governance and continuous service evaluation, as it does not conform to the study of Osborne et al. (2018), where good public service delivery gains from a balance of proactive involvement and experience.

Table 4

Practices of the professional conduct of Land Transportation Office personnel in the area of Ethical Compliance and Integrity

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a public servant, I...		
1. consistently prioritize public interest over personal interest in my decisions and actions.	4.77	Very High Level
2. avoid soliciting or accepting gifts, favors, or loans that could compromise my integrity.	4.81	Very High Level
3. actively manage conflicts of interest to ensure they do not interfere with my official duties.	4.79	Very High Level
4. live a modest lifestyle that appropriately reflects my position and income.	4.78	Very High Level
5. maintain political neutrality by delivering services impartially, regardless of party affiliations.	4.74	Very High Level
6. avoid engaging in unauthorized private employment or activities during my tenure as a public servant.	4.77	Very High Level
7. actively promote nationalism by supporting and encouraging the use of local products and resources in my role.	4.78	Very High Level
8. act with fairness and sincerity in all my interactions with colleagues and the public.	4.84	Very High Level
9. ensure that I do not hold any financial or material interest in transactions involving my office.	4.81	Very High Level
10. honestly disclose any relatives working in government positions as required by law.	4.84	Very High Level
Overall Mean	4.79	Very High Level

Table 4 shows the professional conduct practices of LTO personnel in the area of ethical compliance and integrity. The respondents show an overall mean of 4.79, indicating a "very high level" of practice in ethical compliance and integrity. Item number 8, "act with fairness and sincerity in all my interactions with colleagues and the public," and item number 10, "honestly disclose any relatives working in government positions as required by law," had the highest mean score of 4.84 which indicates a "very high level" of practices. On the other hand, item number 5, "maintain political neutrality by delivering services impartially, regardless of party affiliations," had the lowest mean score of 4.74, indicating a "very high level" of practice.

A very high level of practice of Ethical Compliance and Integrity among LTO personnel shows that they are able to avoid conflicts of interest, uphold transparency, and act by established ethical norms. LTO personnel demonstrate a very high level of ethical compliance and integrity in practice, reinforcing their commitment to fairness and honesty in public service. They follow protocols consistently, ensure procedural fairness, and maintain order and legality in their work. The highest-rated practices, "acting with sincerity and disclosing government-employed relatives," conform with ethical governance principles from the study of Menzel (2015). However, the slightly lower adherence

to political neutrality highlights a potential area for reinforcement, as impartiality is crucial in maintaining public trust. Kaptein (2014) contends that in order to underline the need for objectivity in decision-making procedures, good ethics programs should clearly include rules on political neutrality.

Table 5

Practices of the professional conduct of Land Transportation Office personnel in the area of Transparency and Accountability

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a public servant, I...		
1. ensure that my performance reports are consistently submitted on time and accurately reflect my office's operations.	4.72	Very High Level
2. promptly submit my Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Worth (SALN) regularly and ensure its accuracy.	4.77	Very High Level
3. provide the public with access to documents and information within the mandated time frame.	4.74	Very High Level
4. avoid holding financial interests that may conflict with my official duties.	4.76	Very High Level
5. safeguard confidential information and ensure it is not misused for personal advantage.	4.79	Very High Level
6. act promptly on letters, requests, and inquiries from the public within the required timeframe.	4.74	Very High Level
7. avoid unnecessary delays in processing public transactions and consistently ensure efficient service delivery.	4.79	Very High Level
8. fully disclose my financial interests, liabilities, and assets upon assumption of office, annually, and upon separation from service.	4.76	Very High Level
9. follow transparency and accountability mechanisms, avoiding practices that violate RA 6713	4.71	Very High Level
10. ensure that the public has access to my SALN and related documents when requested, following legal guidelines.	4.79	Very High Level
Overall Mean	4.76	Very High Level

Table 5 shows the professional conduct practices of LTO personnel in the area of transparency and accountability. The respondents show an overall mean of 4.76. In total, item 5, "safeguard confidential information and ensure it is not misused for personal advantage," and item 7, "avoid unnecessary delays in processing public transactions and consistently ensure efficient service delivery." Item number 10, "ensure that the public has access to my SALN and related documents when requested, following legal guidelines," had the highest mean score of 4.79, indicating a "very high level" of practice. On the other hand, item number 9, "follow transparency and accountability mechanisms, avoiding practices that violate RA 6713," had the lowest mean score of 4.71, which also indicates a "very high level" of practice.

A very high practice of professional conduct in the area of transparency and accountability suggests that LTO personnel practice transparency in reporting, justifying decisions, addressing mistakes, and demonstrating a sense of responsibility for outcomes. The highest-rated practices, "safeguarding confidential information, avoiding delays, and ensuring access to SALN documents," demonstrate conformity and adherence to integrity and legal compliance; Heald (2018) emphasizes that practices are not simply the adherence to rules but a commitment to ethical principles and accountability. The slightly lower score for following RA 6713-related mechanisms suggests that while personnel understand transparency principles, periodic training may further enhance their implementation of regulatory frameworks, as Bovens et al. (2016) highlight the importance of regular training to improve practices of transparency and accountability.

Table 6

Practices of the professional conduct of Land Transportation Office personnel in the area of Service Delivery and Responsiveness

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a public servant, I...		
1. consistently provide courteous and adequate service to the public in my daily interactions.	4.84	Very High Level
2. avoid unnecessary delays or red tape when delivering government services.	4.83	Very High Level
3. actively work to simplify and systematize procedures to improve efficiency in public service.	4.78	Very High Level

4. communicate policies and procedures clearly and in a way that is easy for the public to understand.	4.78	Very High Level
5. regularly seek feedback from stakeholders to identify and implement improvements in the quality of services provided.	4.81	Very High Level
6. promptly act on public requests and transactions during office hours to ensure timely service.	4.74	Very High Level
7. ensure that procedures for delivering government services are accessible and understandable to all citizens.	4.72	Very High Level
8. conduct public consultations when appropriate to include stakeholders in the decision-making process.	4.73	Very High Level
9. consistently provide complete and accurate information about government services to the public.	4.80	Very High Level
10. align my service delivery with the socio-economic conditions and needs of the community I serve.	4.72	Very High Level
Overall Mean	4.78	Very High Level

Table 6 shows the professional conduct practices of LTO personnel in the area of service delivery and responsiveness. The respondents show a "very high level" of practice across all items, with an overall mean of 4.78. Item number 1, "consistently provide courteous and adequate service to the public in my daily interactions," had the highest mean score of 4.78, indicating a "very high level" of practice. On the other hand, both item number 7, "ensure that procedures for delivering government services are accessible and understandable to all citizens," and item number 10, "align my service delivery with the socio-economic conditions and needs of the community I serve," had the lowest mean score of 4.72 which also indicates a "very high level" of practice.

"Very high level" of practices in the area of Service Delivery and Responsiveness indicates that LTO personnel provide timely and courteous service delivery, are attentive to client concerns, and maintain professionalism during public interactions. LTO personnel exhibit a very high level of practice in service delivery and responsiveness, ensuring courteous and professional interactions with the public. The highest-rated practice of consistently providing courteous service supports the principles of citizen-focused governance. Fung et al. (2007) contend that good government should be transparent, participatory, and responsible, ensuring that people have real opportunities to interact with policies and initiatives of their government. However, the slightly lower scores for ensuring accessible procedures and aligning service with community needs do not really conform with the conclusions drawn by Denhardt & Denhardt (2015), which indicates that user-centered service design and inclusivity efforts could be further strengthened.

Table 7

Difference in the awareness of the professional conduct of Land Transportation Office personnel in the areas of Ethical Compliance and Integrity when grouped and compared according to variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	47	42.90	888.500	0.307	0.05	Not Significant
	Older	43	48.34				
Sex	Male	46	40.49	781.500	0.054	0.05	Not Significant
	Female	44	50.74				
Length of Service	Shorter	54	44.63	925.000	0.688	0.05	Not Significant
	Longer	36	46.81				

Table 7 shows the differences in the awareness of the professional conduct of LTO personnel in the area of Ethical Compliance and Integrity when grouped and compared according to age, sex, and length of service. Results revealed that there is no significant difference in the awareness of professional conduct in the area of ethical compliance and integrity when grouped according to age, sex, and length of service, as the computed p -values of 0.307, 0.054, and 0.688 are greater than the level of significance of 0.05.

While no p -value is significant, the p -value for sex ($p = 0.054$) is closest to the 0.05 threshold, suggesting a trend toward significance. This near significance may imply subtle differences in ethical awareness between male and female personnel. This goes against existing research that indicates that gender can influence ethical perceptions; for instance, women may exhibit higher ethical awareness in certain contexts (Wilford & Wakunuma, 2014). Although the results do not suggest any significant differences, they draw attention to a knowledge vacuum about how gender might affect ethical consciousness in this framework. Future studies could look at other elements, including organizational culture, training programs, and outside influences, to expand understanding of ethical behavior in

public service and guide policies for raising ethical compliance among many groups. Additionally, the lack of statistical significance here suggests minimal gender-based differences in ethical awareness among LTO personnel.

Table 8

Difference in the awareness of the professional conduct of Land Transportation Office personnel in the areas of Transparency and Accountability when grouped and compared according to variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	47	42.20	855.500	0.194		Not Significant
	Older	43	49.10				
Sex	Male	46	44.42	962.500	0.679	0.05	Not Significant
	Female	44	46.63				
Length of Service	Shorter	54	41.83	774.000	0.091		Not Significant
	Longer	36	51.00				

Table 8 shows the differences in the awareness of the professional conduct of LTO personnel in the area of Transparency and Accountability when grouped and compared according to age, sex, and length of service. There were also no significant differences noted in the area of Transparency and Accountability when grouped according to age, sex, and length of service, as the computed p -values of 0.194, 0.679, and 0.091 are all greater than the level of significance of 0.05.

While there is no specific variable that exhibited a significant difference, the p -value for length of service ($p = 0.091$) is closest to 0.05, indicating a potential, though not significant, variation in awareness based on tenure. Longer-serving employees might have more exposure to organizational policies promoting transparency, potentially enhancing their awareness, which agrees with the results obtained by Osborne et al. (2018). Though there are no statistically significant results, one should consider the length of service's near-threshold p -value. This points to a possible knowledge vacuum that should be investigated in future studies. Examining how tenure affects staff members' participation in openness projects could provide insightful analysis of the success of organizational training and communication campaigns. Furthermore, looking at whether longer service corresponds with more institutional knowledge or more experience with responsibility systems could assist in finding effective ways to improve openness at all levels of employees. Dealing with these issues not only improves public administration's awareness of responsibility and transparency but also guides policies meant to promote an ethical culture among LTO staff members. Nonetheless, the absence of significant differences suggests that LTO personnel, regardless of tenure, consistently understand transparency and accountability principles.

Table 9

Difference in the awareness of the professional conduct of Land Transportation Office personnel in the areas of Service Delivery and Responsiveness when grouped and compared according to variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	47	44.07	943.500	0.577		Not Significant
	Older	43	47.06				
Sex	Male	46	47.57	917.000	0.429	0.05	Not Significant
	Female	44	43.34				
Length of Service	Shorter	54	45.69	962.000	0.932		Not Significant
	Longer	36	45.22				

Table 9 shows the differences in the awareness of the professional conduct of LTO personnel in the area of Service Delivery and Responsiveness when grouped and compared according to age, sex, and length of service. Results also revealed that there is no significant difference in the awareness of professional conduct in the area of Service Delivery and Responsiveness when grouped according to age, sex, and length of service, as the computed p -values of 0.577, 0.429, and 0.932 are greater than the level of significance of 0.05. All p -values are substantially above 0.05, indicating uniform awareness across demographic groups. This finding agrees with the insights made by Denhardt & Denhardt (2015) that explain that uniformity may stem from standardized training programs and organizational culture that emphasize consistent service delivery standards. Though there is no significance in the awareness of the professional conduct of LTO personnel in the area of Service Delivery and Responsiveness, it suggests that there is stability in awareness among demographic groupings. It also begs critical issues for the next studies. Deeper

understanding could come from specifically investigating the influence of company culture on views of service delivery and training efficacy. Examining whether changes in training approaches or the integration of feedback systems influence employee responsiveness to service delivery issues may expose chances to improve public service results. By tackling these areas, organizations may improve their plans to guarantee that every employee from different backgrounds is ready to satisfy the changing needs of the communities they operate in.

Table 10

Differences in the practices of the professional conduct of Land Transportation Office personnel in the areas of Ethical Compliance and Integrity when grouped and compared according to variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	47	43.96	938.000	0.540		Not Significant
	Older	43	47.19				
Sex	Male	46	46.88	948.500	0.592	0.05	Not Significant
	Female	44	44.06				
Length of Service	Shorter	54	45.04	947.000	0.829		Not Significant
	Longer	36	46.19				

Table 10 shows the differences in the practices of the professional conduct of LTO personnel in the area of Ethical Compliance and Integrity when grouped and compared according to age, sex, and length of service. Results revealed that there is no significant difference in the practices of professional conduct in the area of ethical compliance and integrity when grouped according to age, sex, and length of service, as the computed p -values of 0.540, 0.592, and 0.829 are greater than the level of significance of 0.05. The p -values suggest that demographic factors do not significantly influence the ethical practices of LTO personnel. This could be attributed to a strong organizational emphasis on ethical standards and regular reinforcement of compliance protocols, which is in agreement with a previous study by Kaptein (2014).

However, the lack of significant differences urges more investigation into the subtleties of ethical behavior inside the organization. Future studies could look at how certain training programs or the efficacy of ethical leadership affect the consistency of ethical behavior among many demographic groups. Furthermore, looking at how company culture and peer influence shape ethical compliance could help one get important understanding of how to strengthen ethical framework. By tackling these aspects, organizations can improve their awareness of ethical behavior and find ways to increase ethical compliance among all employees, therefore guaranteeing a strong foundation of integrity inside the LTO.

Table 11

Differences in the practices of the professional conduct of Land Transportation Office personnel in the areas of Transparency and Accountability when grouped and compared according to variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	47	44.86	980.500	0.801		Not Significant
	Older	43	46.20				
Sex	Male	46	42.83	889.000	0.302	0.05	Not Significant
	Female	44	48.30				
Length of Service	Shorter	54	44.91	940.000	0.784		Not Significant
	Longer	36	46.39				

Table 11 shows the differences in the practices of the professional conduct of LTO personnel in the area of Transparency and Accountability when grouped and compared according to age, sex, and length of service. There were also no significant differences noted in the area of transparency and accountability when grouped according to age, sex, and length of service, as the computed p -values of 0.801, 0.302, and 0.784 are all greater than the level of significance of 0.05. While the p -value for sex ($p = 0.302$) is the lowest among the three, it is still not significant. This suggests that both male and female personnel engage in transparency and accountability practices at similar levels. Such consistency may result from organizational policies that uniformly promote these values across all employees, which is consistent with insights made by Bovens et al. (2016). Although the lack of significant differences indicates a praiseworthy consistency in transparency and responsibility standards, it also emphasizes a possibility for closer examination of the processes promoting this homogeneity. Future studies could look at how particular

leadership styles, communication techniques, or training programs help to strengthen responsibility and openness among many demographic groups. Furthermore, looking at how employee engagement programs or feedback systems affect the view and behavior of these values could help one understand how to improve corporate performance. By tackling these areas, companies can increase their dedication to openness and responsibility, therefore guaranteeing that every employee not only understands but also actively participates in maintaining these values in their professional behavior.

Table 12

Differences in the practices of the professional conduct of Land Transportation Office personnel in the areas of Service Delivery and Responsiveness when grouped and compared according to variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	47	44.02	941.000	0.564		Not Significant
	Older	43	47.12				
Sex	Male	46	41.62	833.500	0.139	0.05	Not Significant
	Female	44	49.56				
Length of Service	Shorter	54	46.52	917.000	0.642		Not Significant
	Longer	36	43.97				

Table 12 shows the differences in the practices of the professional conduct of LTO personnel in the area of Service Delivery and Responsiveness when grouped and compared according to age, sex, and length of service. Results also revealed that there is no significant difference in the awareness of professional conduct in the area of service delivery and responsiveness when grouped according to age, sex, and length of service, as the computed *p*-values of 0.564, 0.139, and 0.642 are greater than the level of significance of 0.05.

Existing literature supports this as a study conducted by Ukeje et al. (2020) found that ethical behavior in public administration is primarily influenced by organizational culture, leadership, and established ethical standards, rather than individual demographic factors like age, sex, or tenure. Additionally, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2017), adherence to ethical standards in public service is more closely linked to systemic factors such as codes of conduct, accountability mechanisms, and a culture of integrity, rather than individual demographic characteristics. Other studies also align with these findings which suggest that organizational culture, leadership, and systemic ethical frameworks play more pivotal roles in shaping ethical conduct (Roszkowska & Melé, 2020; Metwally et al., 2019). However, some literature contradicts these findings as they posit that demographic factor like age and length of service influence ethical practices among government employees (Sofyani et al., 2020). Some studies also support this showing that while individual characteristics do not directly impact ethical practices, they interact with organizational and systemic factors to impact ethical practices (Call et al., 2022).

Although the results confirm the idea that ethical behavior is shaped by institutional elements, they also draw attention to a crucial area that has to be explored more. Future studies might look at how the interaction of corporate culture and demographic elements shapes methods of service delivery. Furthermore, looking at how organizational rules and leadership styles may be customized to meet the various demands of staff members might improve the results of services provided. Organizations can create more successful strategies that not only respect ethical norms but also fit the different experiences and backgrounds of their employees by realizing and analyzing these dynamics, therefore enhancing public service delivery and responsiveness.

Table 13

Relationship between the awareness and practices of professional conduct of Land Transportation Office (LTO) personnel

Variable	rho	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Awareness Practices	0.737	0.000	0.01	Significant

Table 13 shows the relationship between the awareness and practices of professional conduct of LTO personnel. In terms of association analysis, a correlation was established between the awareness of the practices of professional conduct of LTO personnel ($p < 0.01$; $\rho = 0.737$). This ρ value suggests a moderately strong positive correlation, which highlights the pivotal role that awareness plays in fostering ethical behavior within government agencies, especially the LTO. The positive correlation, as depicted with a positive ρ , signifies the directly proportional

relationship between awareness and level of practice of professional conduct of LTO personnel. The direct proportional relationship means the higher the awareness of professional conduct, the higher the level of its practices. Such correlation supports a logical relationship between these two variables.

Continuous training and development leading to increased awareness are crucial in enhancing the practice of professional conduct among government personnel, which is consistent with findings by Shiri et al. (2023). A mixed methods study by Mendoza & Bautista (2022) on scenario-based training and development design among local government units (LGUs) in the Philippines also supports these findings. Results emphasized the importance of aligning training programs with organizational objectives to improve employee performance. The study found that well-structured training programs lead to a better understanding and implementation of ethical standards, thereby enhancing overall organizational performance.

The strong correlation between awareness and practice of professional conduct among LTO personnel also suggests that enhancing awareness through targeted training and clear communication of ethical standards can lead to improved ethical practices. This is affirmed by the study conducted by Sun (2021) which investigated the relationship of public service motivation to the affective commitment among public employees. Results suggested that awareness of public service values fosters ethical behavior and adaptability. By leveraging the frameworks and initiatives established by institutions like the CSC, the Philippine government can continue to strengthen the ethical standards and practices within its agencies, thereby enhancing public trust and the effectiveness of public service delivery.

Though the results show a favorable interpretation where each analysis indicates a "very high level" rating in awareness and practices and when both awareness and practices are grouped and compared to different variables such as age, sex, and length of service, it is important to note that age and experience contributes to the awareness and practices of ethical standards in LTO personnel. When we consider the overall mean in awareness and practices when grouped and compared to each variable, the younger group has a lower average mean in all three areas of ethical compliance and integrity, transparency and accountability, and service delivery and responsiveness compared to the older group. This is consistent with Huberts (2014), who notes that experienced public officials are usually more prepared to spot ethical issues and make good decisions because of past experiences. Likewise, those with a shorter length of service have a lower average in all three areas compared to those with longer tenures. This may be due to the accumulated knowledge and experience that is specific to the occupation, which allows them to exercise ethical guidelines and principles. Thus, experienced employees often have more exposure to systemic factors in work, which increases their engagement in ethical practices compared to younger employees who might still be adjusting to the organizational environment, as Bovens et al. (2016) highlight the importance of systemic factors in promoting transparency and accountability.

Moreover, there is a need for systematic training programs to equip government officials with the necessary skills and knowledge to ensure that LTO personnel are well-prepared to uphold ethical standards in their respective roles. Advocating for the continuous assessment of training needs and the implementation of development programs by government officials allows for greater trust to be placed in the LTO personnel from the public (Beshi & Kaur, 2019). This finding emphasizes the importance of continuous education and reinforcement of ethical guidelines to ensure that government personnel not only understand but also embody the principles of professional conduct in their daily responsibilities.

Conclusions

The study found that most LTO personnel respondents were younger adults (40 years old and below), predominantly male, and had less than 11 years of service. Their level of awareness and practices regarding professional conduct—specifically in ethical compliance and integrity, transparency and accountability, and service delivery and responsiveness—were both rated "very high." No significant differences in awareness or practices were found based on age, sex, or length of service; however, a very strong positive relationship between awareness and practices was observed. The findings support Kohlberg's Cognitive Moral Development Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior, suggesting that ethical awareness influences conduct. Despite the high ratings, technical gaps emerged, especially regarding conflict-of-interest management, SALN compliance, and responsiveness to community needs, while longer service did not guarantee higher ethical standards, indicating the need for continuous training. Based on these, the study recommends structured ethics training, monitoring by tenure, stronger regulatory audits, the institutionalization of ethics education in public administration, promotion of citizen feedback, and further research on how tenure, culture, and accountability influence ethical behavior.

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