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Civic Trust and Local Accountability: Public Ethics Among Barangay Officials in the Seaside A, B, and Poblacion Clusters of Boac, Marinduque, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Republic Act (RA) No. 6713 defines the ethical standards for Philippine public servants, yet its observance at the barangay level, where citizens meet the state most directly, has received limited empirical attention. This study examined how elected officials in 20 barangays of Seaside A, Seaside B, and Poblacion clusters of Boac, Marinduque, understand and apply the law, how accountability mechanisms operate, and what these conditions imply for civic trust. Under a mixed-methods triangulation design, structured questionnaires were administered to 272 purposively selected officials, comprising Punong Barangays, Sangguniang Barangay members, and Sangguniang Kabataan chairpersons and members; responses were analysed using weighted means and standard deviations. Key informant interviews and focus group discussions supplied qualitative data, which were analysed thematically. Respondents reported complete familiarity with the provisions of RA 6713 and consistent observance of its standards in leadership (WM = 3.61), service delivery (WM = 3.64), and the use of public resources (WM = 3.65). Barangay assemblies and financial disclosure emerged as the most firmly established accountability mechanisms, whereas participatory budgeting and feedback channels lagged behind. Among ethical challenges, resisting political pressure received the lowest rating (WM = 3.54). Interviews identified transparency boards, social media groups, and community reputation as informal yet effective sources of accountability. The findings indicate that ethical knowledge and compliance are no longer the binding constraint; the more pressing gaps lie in limited citizen participation and persistent political influence. The study recommends strengthening participatory structures, introducing digital transparency platforms, and extending ethics training to appointed barangay personnel.

Keywords: *Republic Act 6713, ethical governance, participatory budgeting, transparency mechanisms, political pressure, conflict of interest, citizen participation, grassroots governance, mixed-methods research*

INTRODUCTION

Good governance at the community level requires public officials to uphold integrity, transparency, accountability, and citizen participation. In the Philippines, these expectations are institutionalized primarily through Republic Act (RA) No. 6713, the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees, which mandates norms such as professionalism, responsiveness, commitment to the public interest, justness, and the disclosure of interests and assets. RA No. 7160, the Local Government Code of 1991, complements these standards by operationalizing participatory governance through local development councils, mandatory barangay assemblies, participatory budgeting, and public access to financial documents. Together, these statutes establish the legal architecture within which barangay officials—the frontline implementers of local governance in the Philippines—are expected to serve.

Governance in practice, however, does not always reflect these legal and ethical expectations. Prior research points to persistent barriers to compliance, including limited fiscal autonomy, political patronage, uneven transparency, and modest citizen engagement in local decision-making. Understanding how barangay officials interpret, apply, or deviate from these standards, and how citizens respond to this governance performance, is central to strengthening trust, participation, and accountability at the grassroots level. Internationally, frameworks such as the United Nations Principles for Effective, Accountable, and Inclusive Institutions similarly emphasize integrity, citizen engagement, and trust-building as prerequisites for effective local governance, and cross-national evidence associates strong local accountability systems with reduced corruption risk and improved service delivery.

This study situates these concerns within the Poblacion, Seaside A, and Seaside B clusters of Boac, the provincial capital of Marinduque. Community reports from these clusters have pointed to inconsistent conduct of barangay assemblies, limited dissemination of information on barangay projects, modest consultation in project planning, and uneven application of ethical standards—circumstances that raise questions about whether local officials are fulfilling their statutory duties under RA No. 6713 and whether existing accountability mechanisms are functioning as intended. While a substantial literature addresses decentralization and governance in the Philippines at the regional or municipal level, comparatively few studies examine how ethical norms and participatory mechanisms operate at the level of individual barangay clusters. This study addresses that gap by assessing barangay governance practices in Boac against the ethical and participatory standards prescribed by RA No. 6713 and RA No. 7160.

Research Problem

As the primary implementers of local government policy, barangay officials are obligated under RA No. 6713 to act with integrity, transparency, and accountability. Issues associated with patronage politics, limited transparency, and constrained citizen participation persist in many small communities, with governance lapses carrying direct consequences for citizens' trust in local government. This study evaluated how elected barangay and Sangguniang Kabataan (SK) officials in the Poblacion, Seaside A, and Seaside B clusters of Boac, Marinduque, understood and practiced ethical standards, examined the extent and effectiveness of accountability mechanisms available to them, and assessed the implications of these practices for civic trust and governance performance. Specifically, the study addressed the following research questions:

1. What is the level of understanding of barangay officials regarding the specific protocols and provisions of RA No. 6713?
2. To what extent do barangay officials apply the ethical standards prescribed under RA No. 6713 in (a) leadership, (b) service delivery, and (c) utilization of public resources?
3. To what extent are the accountability mechanisms mandated under RA No. 7160—barangay assemblies, participatory budgeting, and public disclosure—applied and utilized in the study clusters?
4. What is the perceived impact of these ethical and accountability practices on transparency, citizen engagement, and overall governance performance?
5. What actions do barangay officials undertake to address ethical challenges relating to (a) conflicts of interest, (b) political pressure, and (c) financial transparency?
6. What are the implications of these findings for strengthening civic trust and local accountability in barangay governance?

The findings of this study are intended to inform several groups of stakeholders. For barangay officials, the results identify areas of ethical strength and areas warranting improvement, offering practical guidance for leadership, service delivery, and resource management. For residents of the study clusters, the findings clarify legal rights and avenues for participation in assemblies, budgeting, and community decision-making. For the Department of the Interior and Local Government and other local government authorities, the study offers empirical evidence to inform capacity-building programs, oversight systems, and policy interventions. For future researchers, the study contributes a contextualized case study of RA No. 6713 implementation at the barangay-cluster level and a framework that may guide comparative research in other localities. More broadly, because barangays represent the first point of contact between citizens and the state, the study's findings contribute to the wider discourse on ethical governance, transparency, and democratic legitimacy in the Philippines.

Assumptions of the Study

The study proceeded from the following assumptions:

1. Barangay officials in the Seaside A, Seaside B, and Poblacion clusters are bound by Republic Act (RA) No. 6713 and RA No. 7160 and are therefore expected to know and observe the ethical standards and accountability procedures these laws prescribe.
2. The respondents answered the questionnaire and the interview questions honestly and on the basis of their own experience in office, so that their responses reflect actual governance practice in their barangays.
3. The researcher-made questionnaire and interview guide, having undergone expert validation and pilot testing, measured what they were intended to measure with acceptable consistency.
4. Accountability mechanisms such as barangay assemblies, participatory budgeting, and the public disclosure of financial information are present in all participating barangays, although the extent of their use may vary.
5. The ethical conduct of barangay officials influences the transparency of local governance, the willingness of residents to participate, and the degree of trust residents place in their leaders.
6. The 272 officials in active service at the time of data collection adequately represent the governance structure of the three clusters, notwithstanding vacancies in some positions.
7. Combining survey data with interview and focus group data yields a more complete and credible account of ethical governance than either method could provide alone.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to assess how barangay officials in the Seaside A, Seaside B, and Poblacion clusters of Boac, Marinduque, understand and apply the ethical standards prescribed under RA 6713, and to determine how these practices and the accompanying accountability mechanisms bear on civic trust and local governance. Specifically, it sought to:

1. determine the level of understanding of barangay officials of the protocols and provisions of RA 6713;
2. describe how barangay officials apply the ethical standards of RA 6713 in leadership, service delivery, and the utilization of public resources;
3. assess the extent to which the accountability mechanisms associated with RA 6713, namely barangay assemblies, participatory budgeting, and public disclosure, are applied and used effectively;
4. examine the impact of these mechanisms on transparency, citizen engagement, and the overall performance of barangay governance;
5. identify the actions barangay officials take to address ethical challenges arising from conflicts of interest, political pressure, and financial transparency; and

6. draw out the implications of the findings for strengthening civic trust and local accountability in barangay governance.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on three foundational theories used to examine the relationship among public ethics, accountability, and civic trust in barangay governance: Social Capital Theory, Agency Theory, and Stewardship Theory. According to social capital theory (Putnam, 1993), collective action can only happen when there are networks, norms, and trust between people living in the same community. Within the scope of this study, social capital theory will help define if citizens of Seaside A, B, and the Poblacion cluster in Boac, Marinduque, have civic trust due to observing ethical conduct and transparency from their barangay officials. High trust and reciprocity among members of the community provide an incentive for citizens to actively participate in local government (i.e., attending barangay assemblies, participating in participatory budget processes, and monitoring their communities).

On the other hand, the Agency Theory (Jensen & Meckling, 1976) is focused on the principal-agent relationship in which citizens are the principals, and elected officials (agents) have been given authority by principals. In relation to this study, agency theory helps illustrate the importance of having an accountability mechanism through compliance with RA 6713 to ensure that barangay officials are managing public resources properly and making decisions that are in the interests of the community rather than for their own benefit. Agency theory also shows how monitoring, reporting and participation structures can alleviate the information asymmetry that exists between citizens and officials, thus creating trust and understanding between citizens and the local government. The study is likewise anchored on Stewardship Theory (first developed by Donaldson & Davis [1991] and later adapted for use by Lévâ), leaders with a sense of ethical duty will fulfill the role of steward (or caretaker) toward those in their community, rather than acting solely in their own self-interest. The Stewardship Theory shows how barangay officials who possess integrity, treat others fairly, and lead with ethical principles can foster legitimacy and promote more accountable practices. Furthermore, when citizens view their leaders as true stewards of public welfare, they are more willing to cooperate and engage in the processes of governance.

The three theories mentioned here offer a unified perspective to better understand the relationship between the behavior of barangay officials as it relates to implementing systems of accountability that function between the institution and the citizens and how this affects the levels of civic trust present in the Seaside A, B, and Poblacion clusters located in Boac, Marinduque. These theories demonstrate that ethical governance is a basis for both moral and functional leadership/effectiveness within local governments throughout the grassroots community—wherein the interaction between citizens and their leaders is highly direct and exposed.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-method triangulation design to provide a comprehensive assessment of ethical governance and civic trust among barangay officials in the Poblacion, Seaside A, and Seaside B clusters of Boac, Marinduque. In the quantitative phase, structured survey questionnaires were administered to elected barangay officials to measure familiarity with RA No. 6713 and the application of ethical standards in leadership, service delivery, and resource utilization. In the qualitative phase, key informant interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with selected officials to provide an in-depth understanding of the ethical challenges, accountability practices, and governance dynamics within these communities. Triangulating the two phases allowed the qualitative findings to contextualize and corroborate the quantitative results, offering a more complete account of how governance practices relate to public trust.

Research Locale or Study Setting

The study was conducted in the Municipality of Boac, the provincial capital of Marinduque and the administrative, economic, and cultural center of the province, located along the coast of the Sibuyan Sea within the MIMAROPA Region of the Philippines. Three barangay clusters were included. The Poblacion Cluster (Tampus, Malusak, Isok I, Isok II, Mercado, Mataas na Bayan, San Miguel, Mansiwat, and Murallon) comprises the urbanized commercial and administrative core of the municipality, characterized by high population density and frequent citizen–government interaction. The Seaside A Cluster (Santol, Bangbangalon, Laylay, Ihatub, Balaring, Caganhao, and Amoingon) consists of coastal, largely rural barangays whose economies center on fishing, small-scale trade, and seasonal agriculture, and which are characterized by strong kinship and social networks. The Seaside B Cluster (Bunganay, Cawit, Tugos, and Duyay) comprises coastal communities exhibiting semi-urban growth owing to their proximity to the Poblacion, with mixed livelihoods spanning fishing, trade, transport, and small business. These three clusters were selected to allow examination of governance practices across urban, semi-urban, and coastal-rural barangay settings within a single municipality, providing a range of socioeconomic and organizational contexts within which to assess ethical governance and accountability.

Participants or Data Sources

Using non-probability purposive sampling, the study drew respondents from among actively serving elected officials—Punong Barangay, Sangguniang Barangay members, SK Chairpersons, and SK members—across the twenty barangays comprising the three clusters. Officials were purposively selected because they are directly mandated under RA

No. 6713 and RA No. 7160 to implement the ethical and accountability standards under study and are positioned as governance front-liners at the grassroots level. Although the full complement of elected positions across the study area would have yielded a target population of 320, the number of officials in active service at the time of data collection was 272, reflecting vacancies, resignations, and related circumstances; the study's findings therefore reflect the barangay governance structure as it existed at the time of data collection. All 272 active officials were surveyed, and a subset was subsequently invited to participate in the semi-structured interviews.

Research Instruments or Materials

For the quantitative phase, the study employed a researcher-developed structured questionnaire divided into sections measuring (a) familiarity with RA No. 6713, (b) application of ethical standards in leadership, service delivery, and resource utilization, (c) utilization of accountability mechanisms under RA No. 7160, (d) perceived impact of ethical practices on transparency, engagement, and governance performance, and (e) actions taken to address ethical challenges relating to conflicts of interest, political pressure, and financial transparency. Items were structured using a four-point Likert-type scale to allow statistical analysis of perceptions and self-reported practices. The instrument's content validity was assessed by an external validator prior to data collection, and its clarity and internal consistency were assessed through pilot testing.

For the qualitative phase, a semi-structured interview guide consisting of five open-ended questions was used to explore officials' experiences, perceptions, and challenges relating to public ethics, transparency, accountability, and civic trust. The semi-structured format allowed the researcher to probe emerging responses while maintaining focus on the study's objectives.

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to full-scale data collection, both instruments underwent pilot testing. A pilot focus group discussion involving five to ten community members not included in the final study sample assessed the clarity, contextual appropriateness, and richness of responses elicited by the interview guide, while a pilot administration of the survey with a separate group of community members assessed item wording, consistency, and flow; both instruments were refined based on the resulting feedback.

Following refinement, semi-structured interviews were conducted in person, in private settings, with participant consent for audio recording; supplementary notes captured verbal and non-verbal cues. Open-ended questions were used to elicit participants' own framing of governance issues, with follow-up probes used as needed to clarify or deepen responses.

Survey questionnaires were administered on-site in physical form; the researcher assisted participants with item comprehension where requested but did not otherwise influence their responses. Face-to-face, paper-based administration was adopted to maximize response rates, accommodate officials with limited internet access, and reduce errors associated with online survey administration; completed instruments were collected immediately to preserve data integrity.

Data Analysis

The research used various descriptive and inferential statistical tools that provided insight into how barangay officials understood the ethical standards of their work, how they used ethical standards in the course of their duties, how they implemented accountability mechanisms, how well they acted to address ethical issues that arose in their duties, and what outcomes they believed they provided for their constituents. In addition to presenting the various tools and techniques used in this research, all formulas used, interpretations of results, and other relevant methodological details were provided to ensure that this study was clearly and transparently supported by its methodology.

Weighted Mean and Standard Deviation (SOP 1–6)

To evaluate the responses of barangay officials from the Poblacion, Seaside A, and Seaside B Clusters in Boac, Marinduque, the study employed the weighted mean and standard deviation for the primary statistical analysis of SOP 1–SOP 6, along with percentage, composite weighted mean, and rank order where applicable. The weighted mean provided an average measure of responses to each SOP using a Likert scale, while the standard deviation indicated how consistent or variable those responses were.

Formula for Weighted Mean:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum wf}{N}$$

Formula for Standard Deviation:

$$SD = \sqrt{\frac{\sum (x - \bar{x})^2}{N}}$$

Application of the Statistical Tools per SOP

The study used weighted means and standard deviations to analyze barangay officials' levels of understanding, ethical practices, accountability mechanisms, actions taken in response to ethical challenges, and the governance outcomes resulting from the actions taken by barangay officials for each of SOPs 1 through 6.

For SOP 1, the application of both tools measured the degree of understanding, as well as the consistency in understanding, of the protocols and provisions established through Republic Act No. 6713.

For SOP 2 and SOP 3, these same statistical tools measured the degree and consistency of ethical standard practices in the areas of leadership, service delivery, and utilization of public resources, including the relative consistency of ethical practices across governance functions.

For SOP 4, both the weighted mean and standard deviation measured the effective implementation and consistency of the accountability mechanisms mandated under Republic Act No. 6713, including the following accountability mechanisms for the barangays: Barangay Assemblies, participatory budgeting processes, and public disclosure processes. Percentages were used to determine how many officials used each of these accountability mechanisms.

$$\% = \frac{f}{N} \times 100$$

The Composite Weighted Mean (CWM), Standard Deviation (SD), and Rank Order (RO) for SOP 5 established how much the governance outcomes were positively or negatively impacted by ethical practices or accountability actions. The calculations to determine the Composite Weighted Mean were conducted as follows:

$$CWM = \frac{\sum \bar{x}}{k}$$

where *k* is the number of indicators.

For SOP 6, the same weighted mean, standard deviation, and interpretation scales were applied after the responses were coded into thematic categories (such as disclosure practices, refusal of favors, and documentation measures) and then assigned numerical values for quantitative treatment. Frequency count, percentage, and ranking were also used to identify the most common actions taken by barangay officials in addressing ethical challenges such as conflict of interest, political pressure, and financial transparency.

Interpretation Scale (Applied to SOP 1–6)

In this study, two different Likert interpretation scales were used to match the distinct nature of the variables measured.

Explanation of the Two Likert Scales

SOP 1 measured the level of understanding, which was cognitive. Therefore, it used a descriptive and respectful scale (Very High to Developing Understanding).

SOPs 2–6 measured the frequency of ethical practices and accountability behaviors, which were behavioral. Therefore, they used a frequency-based scale (Always to Never).

The use of two appropriate scales ensured accuracy, relevance, and methodological alignment with the measurement objectives.

Interpretation Scale (Applied to SOP-1)

Table 4: *Interpretation — Level of Understanding of RA 6713*

Scale Point	Range (Mean Score)	Verbal Description
4	3.26- 4.00	Very High Understanding (VH)
3	2.51- 3.25	High Understanding (H)
2	1.76- 2.50	Sufficient Understanding (S)
1	1.00- 1.75	Developing Understanding (D)

Interpretation Scale (Applied to SOP 2–6)

Table 5: *Interpretation Scale for Public Ethics, Accountability, and Civic Trust among Barangay Officials*

Scale Point	Range (Mean Score)	Verbal Description
4	3.26- 4.00	Always
3	2.51- 3.25	Often
2	1.76- 2.50	Sometimes
1	1.00- 1.75	Never

Ethical Considerations

This study strictly observed ethical standards to protect the rights and welfare of its participants, particularly since the respondents were public officials in government service. Prior to data collection, participants were provided with an informed consent form that clearly explained the purpose of the research, the voluntary nature of participation, and the assurance that they could withdraw at any time should they feel uncomfortable or unwilling

to continue. As required by the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (Republic Act No. 10173), all personal information and responses shared by the participants remained confidential and were used only for academic purposes. The study did not reveal the identities of the participants in any part of the research. In addition, all collected data were safely stored and properly disposed of after the research concluded. These guiding principles demonstrated the study's commitment to being transparent, respectful, and ethically responsible toward the participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results were presented using tables and were supported by related discussions and literature so that the findings could be examined and interpreted in an objective manner, making them easier for readers to understand ethical governance, its implementation, and its effects within the local community.

Results for Objective or Statement of the Problem 1

Item No.	Correct Answer	Frequency (Correct)	Percentage (%)	Interpretation
1	Establish a set of moral and ethical standards for all public officials and employees	272	100%	Very High Understanding
2	Political allegiance	272	100%	Very High Understanding
3	Ensure transparency by disclosing required information to promote accountability	272	100%	Very High Understanding
4	Joining deliberations even when personally affected by the decision	272	100%	Very High Understanding
5	Refusing gifts that may compromise or appear to compromise impartiality	272	100%	Very High Understanding
6	Administrative penalties, criminal charges, or both	272	100%	Very High Understanding

7	Make decisions based solely on law, facts, and the public interest	272	100%	Very High Understanding
	Total Mean	**272**	**100%**	**Very High Understanding**

Table 6. *Level of Understanding of Barangay Officials on RA 6713*

Discussion of Objective or Statement of the Problem 1

All 272 respondents had an extremely high level of cognitive functioning in identifying the seven specific provisions and protocols outlined in Republic Act No. 6713. The unanimous response of all 272 respondents (100%) meant that all respondents had a very high level of knowledge about the ethical mandates, duties, and prohibited behaviors prescribed by the law in the Seaside A, B, and Poblacion Cluster of Boac, Marinduque. This indicated that the barangay officials and personnel had received extensive orientation on the Code of Conduct, most likely because of the mandated regular seminars that had been conducted and the implementation of civil service standards at the local level.

The findings were also consistent with Abenojar and Biana (2020), who stated in their research on governance at the grassroots level that the high levels of statutory knowledge possessed by local government officials were a consequence of the development of the barangay unit through the establishment of robust training programs implemented by the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) to professionalize and educate barangay officials. In addition, the authors stated that having complete mastery of legal concepts created a fundamental foundation upon which accountability could be built. However, the primary difficulty facing local government units was translating theoretical knowledge into actual ethical duties, as this was required to meet the pressures placed on local government units to adhere to their lawful, legitimate, and impartial obligations to serve the community, even when they were under the pressures of localized political influence.

Results of Objective or Statement of the Problem 2

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. Demonstrate honesty and integrity	3.68	Always	1
2. Decisions made fairly/without favoritism	3.61	Always	4
3. Act as role models of ethical behavior	3.63	Always	2.5
4. Guided by best interest of community	3.63	Always	2.5
5. Encourage participatory/inclusive governance	3.60	Always	5
6. Avoid using position for personal/political gain	3.55	Always	7
7. Ethical guidelines followed in decisions	3.57	Always	6

Composite Weighted Mean	**3.61**	**Always**

Table 7. *Application of RA 6713 in terms of Ethical Standards in Leadership*

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. Services delivered promptly and fairly	3.72	Always	1
2. Concerns handled respectfully/no discrimination	3.69	Always	2
3. Programs implemented with transparency	3.64	Always	4
4. Decisions reflect ethical standards	3.65	Always	3
5. Services provided without expecting favors	3.61	Always	6
6. Service information shared honestly	3.62	Always	5
7. Delivery free from political influence	3.57	Always	7
Composite Weighted Mean	**3.64**	**Always**	

Table 8. *Application of RA 6713 in Service Delivery*

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. Funds used for approved purposes	3.65	Always	4
2. Property/Equipment used for official functions	3.66	Always	3
3. Financial records available upon request	3.69	Always	2
4. Resources used efficiently/no waste	3.63	Always	5.5
5. Allocation follows ethical/legal standards	3.63	Always	5.5
6. Transactions documented clearly/accurately	3.61	Always	7
7. Avoid misuse/misappropriation of funds	3.69	Always	1
Composite Weighted Mean	**3.65**	**Always**	

Table 9. *Application/Effectiveness in Use of Public Resources and Accountability*

Discussion of Objective or Statement of the Problem 2

Table 7 presents the assessment of the respondents on the application of RA 6713 regarding ethical standards in leadership, yielding a composite weighted mean of 3.61, which is verbally interpreted as "Always." The data reveals that the leadership in Seaside A, B, and Poblacion Cluster has demonstrated honesty and integrity (mean score of 3.68) as the strongest pillar in their governance model. However, while all indicators received "always" ratings, the lowest mean (3.55) was for the "avoidance of using one's position for personal or political gain," showing that while ethical performance as a whole is excellent, the community remains aware of political motivations. The high perceived ethical leadership of the Seaside leaders is congruent with Dator and Villaluz (2022), who found that the personal integrity and visibility of local Philippine government leaders were key factors in establishing public trust. They note that the modeling of ethical behaviors by officials leads to a "trickle-down" effect, encouraging all subordinates and constituents to act within legal and moral standards, while also noting that sustaining this perception requires ongoing transparency to counteract the inherent "patron/client" dynamics frequently found in rural barangay communities.

Table 8 presents the assessment of the respondents on the application of RA 6713 in terms of service delivery, obtaining a composite weighted mean of 3.64, which is verbally interpreted as "Always." Data indicates that the indicator highest-ranked indicative of service delivery is timely and equitable with WM=3.72. Even-handled grievances respectfully; no discrimination with WM=3.69. From this data, it is clear that the barangay leaders in Seaside A, Seaside B, and Poblacion Cluster have been able to create a professional and equitable environment for their constituents at all levels. All other indicators also remained consistent with the “Always” rating on two or more occasions; however, Grant Delivery Free from Political Influence WM=3.57 was the lowest rated indicator. Thus, while quality of service is exceptional, there remains an underlying sense among the respondents that political factors may have an impact on administrative functions. This claim is supported by Cajot (2020), who researched the ethical behavior of frontline public service officers in Philippine local government units and determined that institutionalizing a “Citizen’s Charter” and ethical training have significantly improved timely delivery and courteousness; however, the ability to operate out of true neutrality from political influence is one of the most difficult challenges in barangay governance, as small communities contain close social ties and political alliances.

Table 9 presents the assessment of the respondents regarding the application and effectiveness of RA 6713 in the use of public resources and accountability, resulting in a composite weighted mean of 3.65, which is verbally interpreted as "Always." Data shows that the most significant indicators of service delivery include the most important indicator of delivery of service being timely and equitable with WM=3.72. Also, grievances are handled in the same way and with the same respect towards all persons (WM=3.69). From this data, it can be fully understood that all barangay leaders (Seaside A / Seaside B / Poblacion Cluster) have successfully created a professional and equitable environment for their constituents across all levels of government. In addition to the above two indicators, the other six indicators received an “always” rating on two or more occasions. Political Influence on Grant Delivery received the lowest score at WM=3.57. Thus, although all respondents believe that quality of service is consistently excellent, many respondents have expressed concerns that political influences may affect how a government department functions. This concern is supported by Cajot (2020), who studied the ethical behavior of frontline public service personnel in Philippine local government and concluded that by institutionalizing a “Citizen’s Charter” and ethical training, timely and courteous delivery of services has been greatly improved; however, maintaining true neutrality and freedom from political influence continues to be one of the most difficult problems faced by government in small communities with close social ties and strong political affiliations.

Results of Objective or Statement of the Problem 3

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. Barangay assemblies in line with RA 6713.	3.64	Consistently	1

2. Residents are actively	3.56	Consistently	5
3. Participatory budgeting	3.50	Consistently	8
4. Priorities in budget allocation.	3.52	Consistently	6.5
5. Financial reports.	3.59	Consistently	3
6. Financial matters.	3.57	Consistently	4
7. Feedback.	3.52	Consistently	6.5
8. Accountability mechanisms	**3.60**	Consistently	**2**
Composite Weighted Mean: 3.56		**Verbal Interpretation:** Consistently	

Table 10. *Application of Accountability Mechanisms under RA 6713*

Discussion of Objective or Statement of the Problem 3

Table 10 presents the level of application of accountability mechanisms under RA 6713, with a composite weighted mean of 3.56, which is verbally interpreted as "Consistently."

The research shows that most barangay officials practice accountability well. The highest ranked indicator of accountability this time was conducting barangay assemblies on a regular basis (WM=3.64). This indicates that the barangay officials performed very well in meeting their obligation regarding transparency and community engagement. The next highest indicators are overall effectiveness of the accountability mechanisms to develop transparency and trust (WM=3.60) and public availability of financial reports and documents (WM=3.59). Both indicators have a good level of transparency.

However, participatory budgeting processes were the lowest ranked at 3.50, but this still means that they are "Consistently" utilized as a form of accountability practice. This means that there is community input on planned budgets, but this is probably to a lesser degree than with the other forms of accountability practices. Likewise, the lowest-ranked indicator, which pertains to providing opportunities for community members to express their priorities and provide feedback (WM = 3.52), shows that while community engagement is taking place, there is still room for improvement to achieve a higher level of participation.

Results of Objective or Statement of the Problem 4

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. Increases community trust	3.69	Consistently	2.5
2. Improves credibility of decisions	3.70	Consistently	1
3. Citizens more willing to participate	3.63	Consistently	6.5

4. Better project implementation	3.63	Consistently	6.5
5. Helps prevent corruption/misuse	3.66	Consistently	5
6. Open communication improves trust	3.68	Consistently	4
7. Overall governance performance improves	3.69	Consistently	2.5
Composite Weighted Mean	**3.67**	**Consistently**	

Table 11. *Impact of Ethical Practices on Transparency, Engagement, and Performance (N = 272)*

Discussion of Objective of Statement of the Problem 4

Table 11 explores the broader outcomes of ethical governance, yielding a composite weighted mean of 3.67, which is verbally interpreted as "Consistently." The findings show that the improved credibility of barangay decision-making is the highest-ranked impact (WM=3.70); this is followed closely by an increase in community trust (WM=3.69) and overall improvement in governance performance (WM=3.69). This means that when officials within the Seaside A, B, and Poblacion clusters follow the ethical standards outlined in RA 6713, it causes a clearly visible positive change in how the community perceives and interacts with government. While the results show high consistency for all indicators, citizens' willingness to engage in the process of creating and implementing projects (WM=3.63) received the lowest response rating; this indicates that while trust and credibility are established, there will be significant effort required beyond simply being ethical to convert this trust into active involvement in the community. This conclusion is supported by Santiago & Tan (2021) in their study regarding local accountability in the Philippines, where they determined that the basis of a barangay's "social capital" is ethical behavior, and they determined that although integrity consistently enhances a leader's credibility, the transition from passive trust to active citizen participation is an additional stage of development that requires inclusive platforms for dialogue along with moral leadership to achieve a high-quality governance outcome.

Results of Objective or Statement of the Problem 5

Indicators	VI	Rank
1. Explain financial matters clearly	VH Impact	1
2. Measures taken to improve transparency	VH Impact	2
3. Residents' financial concerns addressed	VH Impact	3
Composite Weighted Mean: *3.60*	***Verbal Interpretation:*** *Very High Impact*	

Table 11.1. *Actions Undertaken to Address Ethical Challenges in terms of Conflict of Interest*

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. Resist political pressure in decisions	3.52	VH Impact	3
2. Decisions fair despite political allies	3.55	VH Impact	1
3. Report/address political interference	3.54	VH Impact	2
Composite Weighted Mean: 3.54		**Verbal Interpretation:** Very High Impact	

Table 11.2 *Actions Undertaken to Address Ethical Challenges in terms of Political Pressure*

Indicators	WM	VI	Rank
1. Explain financial matters clearly	3.67	VH Impact	1
2. Measures taken to improve transparency	3.65	VH Impact	2
3. Residents' financial concerns addressed	3.64	VH Impact	3
Composite Weighted Mean: 3.65		**Verbal Interpretation:** Very High Impact	

Table 11.3 *Actions Undertaken to Address Ethical Challenges in terms of Financial Transparency*

Discussion of Objective or Statement of the Problem 5

Conflicts of Interest by Barangay Officials: Barangay officials are taking significant steps (weighted mean 3.60, indicating “very high impact”) to manage conflicts of interest in the barangay. Avoiding decisions regarding personal interest is the highest rated method. This demonstrates a strong commitment to ethical behavior (weighted mean 3.61). Implementing a process to manage conflicts was the second highest rated method (weighted mean 3.60), followed closely by making public their conflicts (weighted mean 3.58). The actions of barangay officials indicate a significant amount of integrity and transparency when addressing conflict issues, thus promoting trust and accountability in local governance.

According to the results of Table 11.2, addressing political pressure with a composite weighted mean score of 3.54 (interpreted as "Very High Impact") had the highest-ranked indicator, ensuring that decisions made by barangay officials are fair and impartial

regardless of any political affiliation or ties (WM score = 3.55), followed closely behind by whether or not they reported/addressed instances of political interference (WM score = 3.54). Resisting political pressures received the lowest WM score of 3.52. However, all WM scores were still classified as 'Very High Impact'. While these results illustrate that barangay officials generally have good practices regarding maintaining fairness and accountability in their actions and decisions to sustain an ethical process of making decisions, the presence of political influences continues to be an area needing ongoing development to uphold the integrity of the decision-making process.

As indicated by the composite weighted mean of 3.65 for financial transparency in Table 11.3, the three highest-ranked indicators are 1) the clarity of how finances are reported (WM=3.67); 2) the existence of measures to provide additional transparency (WM=3.65); and 3) the provision of ways to assist residents with their financial concerns (WM=3.64). These results show that barangay officials provide highly effective assistance in promoting transparency and accountability in their financial operations. As illustrated by the consistently high averages across all three indicator categories, financial openness is a significant contributor to the enhancement of public trust and confidence in local government.

Results of Objective or Statement of the Problem 6

Theme	Code	Verbatim Statements with Barangay Source
Professionalism and Public Accountability	Adherence to Office Standards	“Sinisiguro naming may tao lagi sa barangay hall lalo na sa emergency clearances.” (Brgy Bangbangalon, Brgy Cawit)
	Impartiality in Service	“Pantay ang serbisyo namin, kaalyado man o hindi sa politika.” (Brgy Isok I, Brgy Isok II, Brgy Bunganay)
	Commitment to Public Interest	“Kahit disoras ng gabi, tumutulong kami lalo na sa medical concerns.” (Brgy Laylay, Brgy San Miguel)
	Standardization of Courtesy	“Ginagamit namin ang ‘po’ at ‘opo’ bilang respeto sa lahat ng kliyente.” (Brgy Balaring, Brgy Santol, Brgy Tugos)

Table 12. *Thematic Presentation on the Demonstration of Ethical Behavior*

Theme	Code	Verbatim Statements with Barangay Source
Navigating Structural Friction	Resistance to Political Pressure	"Dumaan pa rin sa tamang proseso kahit may rekomendasyon mula sa taas." (Brgy Caganhao, Brgy Duyay, Brgy Tugos)
	Mitigating Nepotism	"Nag-i-inhibit kami kapag may kamag-anak sa bidding para iwas issue." (Brgy Amoingon, Brgy Balaring, Brgy Mansiwat)
	Financial Documentation Lags	"Minsan mabagal ang pondo pero sinisiguro naming kompleto ang dokumento." (Brgy Cawit, Brgy Mercado)
	Balancing Social Debt	"Pinapaliwanag namin na batas ang sinusunod kahit kaibigan o kamag-anak." (Brgy Santol, Brgy Tampus)
	Resistance to Political Pressure	"Dumaan pa rin sa tamang proseso kahit may rekomendasyon mula sa taas." (Brgy Caganhao, Brgy Duyay, Brgy Tugos)

Table 13. *Thematic Presentation on Managing Ethical Challenges and Pressures*

Theme	Code	Verbatim Statements with Barangay Source
Integrity as Foundation for Engagement	Trust as Catalyst for Cooperation	"Mas madaling magmobilize ng tao kapag may tiwala sila sa amin." *(Brgy Bangbangalon, Brgy Laylay, Brgy San Miguel)*
	Deterrent Effect of Perceived Bias	"Kapag may napapaboran, hindi na sumasali ang ibang residente." *(Brgy Isok I, Brgy Bunganay, Brgy Murallon)*
	Youth Empowerment (SK Focus)	"Mas active ang kabataan kapag transparent ang paggamit ng pondo." *(Brgy Isok II, Brgy Caganhao, Brgy Tugos)*
	Social Capital Building	"Ang pagiging tapat ang puhunan para magtulungan ang komunidad." *(Brgy Mansiwat, Brgy Mataas na Bayan, Brgy Mercado)*

Table 14: *Thematic Presentation on the Impact of Ethics on Public Trust*

Theme	Code	Verbatim Statements with Barangay Source
Frameworks for Ethical Reform	Localized Ethics Workshops	"Kailangan ng training sa ethics lalo na sa tanod at lupon." *(Brgy Balaring, Brgy Santol, Brgy Tampus)*
	Digital Transparency Hubs	"Maganda kung may online system para makita ang budget at resolutions." *(Brgy Isok I, Brgy Amoingon, Brgy Caganhao)*
	Stricter Oversight	"Mas mabuting may regular audit para masigurong sumusunod lahat." *(Brgy Laylay, Brgy Mercado, Brgy San Miguel)*
	Public Awareness Campaigns	"Dapat alam din ng tao na bawal magbigay ng pabor sa opisyal." *(Brgy Duyay, Brgy Murallon, Brgy Tugos)*

Table 15: *Thematic Presentation on Recommendations for Strengthening RA 6713*

Theme	Code	Verbatim Statements with Barangay Source
Institutionalizing Transparency	Assemblies for Feedback	"Sa assembly namin kinukuha ang reklamo at suhestyon ng tao." *(Brgy Caganhao, Brgy Duyay, Brgy Santol)*
	Physical Transparency Boards	"Nakapaskil sa labas ng hall ang lahat ng gastos para makita ng residente." *(Brgy Amoingon, Brgy Balaring, Brgy Mercado)*
	Digital Response Time	"Sa GC at Facebook, mabilis naming nasasagot ang concerns." *(Brgy Isok II, Brgy Mansiwat, Brgy Tugos)*
	Service Prioritization	"Dahil may reporting, napipilitan kaming tapusin agad ang proyekto." *(Brgy Bangbangalon, Brgy Laylay, Brgy San Miguel)*

Table 16: *Thematic Presentation on Accountability and Decision-Making*

Discussion of Objective or Statement of the Problem 6

The study's findings indicated that accountability mechanisms implemented in accordance with Republic Act 6713, as well as other actions taken to deal with ethical challenges, are regularly used by barangay officials and have a very high impact on their performance. Furthermore, these findings have numerous implications for building trust in communities and increasing local accountability in barangay governance.

The consistently high ratings related to the conduct of barangay assemblies, the public disclosure of financial reports, and the clear presentation of financial information suggest that there is already widespread transparency at the barangay level. When information is made available to barangay residents and is presented in a manner that allows for easy comprehension, it creates confidence in the leadership, which in turn diminishes suspicions/mistrust. However, the lower rating associated with participatory budgeting and feedback mechanisms demonstrates that transparency on its own does not create sufficient trust in local leaders; therefore, it is necessary to further institutionalize opportunities for active participation by citizens. Strengthening the ability of citizens to express their opinions about the decisions being made by local leaders and impacting the decision-making process has the potential to convert passive trust into an active form of civic engagement.

The results of the study indicate that most barangays are characterized by their commitment to ethics through abstaining from self-interest and adherence to prescribed procedures. Strengthening ethical framework and ongoing orientation to integrity can further reinforce the accountability mechanisms in local government. When officials comport themselves consistently with integrity, they create a precedent for behavior that fosters fairness and transparency in government.

In contrast to the previous measures taken to mitigate political pressure, the actions implemented to address these issues continued to receive lower ratings than the other measures. The evidence supports that this level of political influence is an issue of concern. The establishment of institutional protections such as improved reporting systems, protections from retribution for whistleblowers, and increased enforcement of accountability measures can enable barangay officials to make independent, impartial decisions without regard to their political relations. The resolution of these issues is paramount relative to maintaining governance that serves the needs and interest of the public, not political associations.

Financial transparency plays a significant role in fostering public trust provides strong support for transparency as a key contributor to trust in civic life. When officials offer clear and cogent explanations for financial matters and they address residents' questions about such matters, they build a greater sense of belongingness (and accountability) among the individuals in the community. Therefore, it is important to sustain and enhance the financial transparency effort through regular reports, accessible documentation, and community consultation. In summary, while the findings support existing research that indicates that barangay officials exhibit strong levels of financial accountability and are ethically responsible, it was also identified that barangays must continue to strengthen their ability to implement participatory governance to ensure that the political pressures surrounding

the decision-making process do not interfere with the need for public accountability. Overall, greater transparency and stronger community participation will further empower citizens and contribute to the development of a more accountable barangay governance system.

According to the information in Table 12, barangay officials from the 20 clusters express that ethical conduct is a fundamental part of professional conduct and being fair, sharing the same cultural values and ethics as everyone else in each of the barangays examined. This value from Brgy Tampus, Malusak, Cagamhao, and Duyay has demonstrated the evolution of a “service-first” mentality by developing a perception that punctuality and being available 24/7 are the most credible measures of integrity. Furthermore, approximately 60% of the municipalities with local government officials observed incorporated Filipino honorifics to reflect the cultural ethics of respect and courtesy (pagkamagalang) in their communication. Similarly, the research of Brgy. Mataas na Bayan, San Miguel, and Balaring also supported this finding. Based on the research of Almarez (2021), in this case, the significance of an official’s public persona, or accessibility and respectfulness in their communication, is the most significant measure used by constituents to evaluate an official’s compliance with the Code of Conduct and ethical standards within the context of Philippine local government.

Table 13 illustrates the "structural friction" officials face when balancing the law against local social realities. The core insights from Brgy Mercado, Bangbangalon, and Cawit show a proactive stance against nepotism through the use of "recusal" or inhibition during bidding processes. However, the mention of Utang na Loob in Brgy Ihatub and Bunganay and political pressure in Brgy Isok 2 and Mansiwat indicates that the "padrino system" remains a persistent challenge. Officials manage these dilemmas by using RA 6713 as a "shield" to justify their refusal of illicit favors. As supported by Velasco and Dones (2019), local leaders in rural clusters often navigate a "dual loyalty" between legal mandates and kinship ties; the study emphasizes that institutionalizing formal procedures, such as transparent documentation, is the most effective way for officials to resist personal or political interference without damaging community relationships.

The thematic results in Table 14 demonstrate that ethical governance acts as the "social glue" that facilitates community cooperation. In Brgy Mataas na Bayan, Malusak, and Balaring, high integrity directly correlates with successful mobilization for civic activities like cleanup drives. Conversely, the "deterrent effect" noted in Brgy Tampus, Murallon, and Caganhao suggests that even a perception of favoritism can lead to citizen apathy and low assembly attendance. The emphasis on youth empowerment through their identified communities of Brgy. Isok 1, Laylay, and Duyay prove that transparency is an essential requirement for youth participation in empowerment. Bautista et al.'s (2022) study indicates

that the greatest predictor of civic participation within the urban Asian context is the perceived fairness exhibited by leaders demonstrating consistent ethical behavior and providing "social capital" to a community that will encourage civic participation through governance initiatives from their government officials.

Respondents from the barangays (Brgy) of Balaring, Santol, and Tampus have expressed their support for modernizing and improving the ethical oversight of barangays with a strong emphasis on moving to digital transparency hubs. They believe that making a digital hub can lower human involvement in tracking financial transactions that take place within the barangay. However, respondents from Isok 1, Amoingin, and Caganhao are primarily focused on the training for "appointed" staff (Tanods and Lupon). These staff members are usually the first contact with people coming into the barangay, yet they have received the least amount of formal training on ethical standards. This is also supported by Mendoza (2020), who believes that the next phase of the implementation of Republic Act 6713 needs to include E-Governance tools. Mendoza states that when barangay records become digital, it will greatly decrease the likelihood of corruption but also give the community the information they need, thereby shifting the burden of monitoring from central government agencies to the residents of the barangay.

Table 16 identifies Barangay Assemblies and Transparency Boards as the most vital institutional mechanisms for accountability. Assemblies are increasingly being used by municipalities in Sitio Isok 2, Mansiwat, and Amoingon to provide the community with feedback loops on whether or not the decisions they made about rolling out new programs/services are being validated or corrected by other citizens/residents. Community members have adopted social media and instant messaging tools to create informal mechanisms for holding each other and elected/appointed officials accountable resulting in much quicker response times. As observed by community members from Brgy Mataas na Bayan, Mansiwat, and Duyay, the act of publicly reporting an official's failure to complete a project/meet the timeline established for completing a project tends to put "pressure" on an elected/appointed official to complete the project within the agreed-upon timeframe (to avoid being publicly ridiculed). These observations substantiate findings in a study conducted by Santiago (2023) regarding grassroots-level accountability, which found (1) that social pressure generated via open communication/notification to the public is often more effective at ensuring that government services are delivered than legal threats and (2) that the reputation of someone (an official) within their immediate community plays a significant role in ensuring they deliver the service they provided to the community.

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