

THE ROLE OF ETHICS IN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT LAW: THEORETICAL STUDY FOR THE UNDERPINNINGS OF ETHICS

Karem Sayed Aboelazm^{*}, Emad Ibrahim^{**}, Nada Zuhair AlFil^{***},
Hanadi Sharif^{***}

^{*} Corresponding author, College of Law, United Arab Emirates University, Abu Dhabi, UAE

Contact details: College of Law, United Arab Emirates University, P. O. Box 15551, Abu Dhabi, UAE

^{**} College of Law, Umm Al Quwain University, Emirate of Umm Al Quwain, UAE

^{***} College of Law, University of Khorfakkan, Sharjah, UAE



Abstract

How to cite this paper: Aboelazm, K. S., Ibrahim, E., AlFil, N. Z., & Sharif, H. (2025). The role of ethics in public procurement law: Theoretical study for the underpinnings of ethics [Special issue]. *Corporate Law & Governance Review*, 7(3), 170–179. <https://doi.org/10.22495/clgrv7i3sip2>

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ISSN Online: 2664-1542

ISSN Print: 2707-1111

Received: 12.12.2024

Revised: 05.07.2025, 18.07.2025;
15.09.2025

Accepted: 07.10.2025

JEL Classification: K10, K15, K19, K24

DOI: 10.22495/clgrv7i3sip2

This paper aims to introduce the concept of ethical behavior in the public service, in general, and in public procurement, in particular. The issue of ethics has not been adequately addressed in the literature or laws (Rejeb et al., 2024). Ethics in any profession is fundamental in general, and in public procurement in particular. By promoting ethics through laws, regulations, and many other methods, corruption can be significantly reduced. The study also sought to define ethical values in public procurement by reviewing the most critical ethical values of the public service. The descriptive approach was used to review various definitions of public service ethics and values. The analytical approach was also employed to identify the causes and motivations underlying ethical collapse in public procurement as well as the factors contributing to deviations in this field. Several mechanisms have been identified to address this issue, which is considered a significant challenge to public procurement systems in many countries.

Keywords: Ethics, Morals, Public Office, Public Procurement

Authors' individual contribution: Conceptualization — K.S.A., E.I., N.Z.A., and H.S.; Methodology — K.S.A., E.I., N.Z.A., and H.S.; Writing — Original Draft — K.S.A., E.I., N.Z.A., and H.S.; Writing — Review & Editing — K.S.A.; Supervision — K.S.A.; Project Administration — K.S.A.

Declaration of conflicting interests: The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ethical issues in public procurement are considered one of the motivations and reasons for turning to electronic procurement to reduce unethical behaviors (Ibusuki et al., 2023; Widhiasthini et al., 2023), and employees and managers work electronically, which makes electronic leadership easier (Jacobis et al., 2024; Mohammad et al., 2023; Buchholz et al., 2023; Adekanmbi & Ukpere, 2022). Accordingly, the interest in the behaviors of public procurement employees stems from the significant amount of money they handle, as the volume of public procurement in many countries accounts for 25% of the gross domestic product (Kaliannan & Awang, 2008). Public procurement is considered one of the areas where unethical behavioral practices,

amounting to corruption and financial crimes, occur (Singer et al., 2009; Auriol, 2006). Public procurement is also considered due to the large number of private sector dealings with public procurement employees (Ampratwum, 2008; Matechak, 2002; Romanets, 2006), as it is the most governmental field in which there is direct communication between the service provider and the service recipient (Ades & Tella, 1999; Salin et al., 2024).

Governments have recently increased their interest in issues related to ethics in the civil service (Schoeberlein, 2022; Johari et al., 2022). To this end, many countries have issued codes of professional conduct, given the great importance that ethics represents in the field of work in the civil service, as controlling the behavior of civil service employees

would reduce but also lead to an increase in performance rates within civil service agencies, which helps the organization or administrative unit achieve its goals and also helps the government achieve its goals (Compte et al., 2005).

Accordingly, governments' interest in the issue of civil service ethics or ethical standards in public administration comes to address the phenomenon of deviation in the behavior of some bureaucrats (Aboelazm, 2025b; Fazekas & Cingolani, 2017; Eyo, 2017; Bovis, 2008), or in other words, to confront undisciplined practices that may come from some civil service employees. These practices are primarily influenced by various factors that can be controlled through mechanisms both within and outside the civil service (Denhardt & Catron, 1989; Kennedy & Malatesta, 2010; Cohen & Eimicke, 1995).

The mechanisms of unmonitored external control or deviant behavior are represented by laws and regulations controlling the behavior of public employees (bureaucrats) by including in these laws and regulations some matters that help reduce this phenomenon (Plant & Gortner, 1981; Cooper & Gulick, 1984; Raile, 2013), such as (financial disclosure statements for employees regularly, tightening penalties for crimes related to administrative corruption, things that are forbidden), as for internal control mechanisms, the focus is on developing positive behaviors, such as working to spread the principles of justice, transparency, and integrity within the organization, through ethical charters or codes of professional or ethical conduct (Wakefield, 1976; Kennedy & Malatesta, 2010; Hawkins et al., 2011), on the one hand.

On the other hand, it is necessary to identify the reasons that may push the bureaucrat towards acting in a hostile and deviant manner to determine the appropriate mechanisms to address this phenomenon and develop an ethical charter commensurate with the behavioral phenomena within the civil service (Williams-Elegbe, 2012; Ebekozen, 2019). In addition, addressing negative behavioral phenomena benefits the organization's work in general and the quality of services provided to the public (Aboelazm, 2025a; Weber & Wasieleski, 2013; Zejnullahu, 2016).

There is still discussion about the importance of ethical behaviors among those working in the public procurement field, which is also expected of civil service employees in general (Fazekas & Cingolani, 2017; Goss, 1996). However, their possession of these ethical behaviors is considered more important than that of the rest of the civil service employees (Farmer, 1998; Raile, 2013). Given that these employees deal with public funds and state resources, as well as their frequent dealings with the private sector more than other civil service employees, which makes them vulnerable to taking corruption as a gateway to profit, bribery, and increasing income from here stems and increases the importance of public procurement employees having many of the ethics of public service (Denhardt & Catron, 1989).

The issue of the ethical behavior of civil service employees shows excellent importance in the field of public procurement, as public procurement is one of the largest areas in which corruption spreads due to the frequent convergence of the public and private sectors and the ethical behavior of employees in the public procurement position is considered one of the main determinants of unethical practices in In this field, the same ethical behavior of public office

holders determines the ethical behavior of employees in the public procurement job. However, those working in public procurement have some additional mechanisms that help establish moral values in the field (Ebekozen, 2019).

The significance of this study confirms that ethics in public service in general, and public procurement in particular, is one of the most critical aspects relied upon to improve the procurement process and reduce corrupt practices, thus achieving optimal government spending. This makes the study of paramount importance, focusing on identifying the elements of ethical behavior and the causes and motives that lead to deviations in public service, particularly in the field of public procurement. In addition, the study analyzes the views of thinkers and researchers on ethics in public procurement law, presenting the ongoing debate among them to determine the ethical standards required for public procurement law and the reasons behind them. It also examines the challenges facing the ethics of public procurement law, its independence as a profession, and its distinct nature.

The importance of this study is confirmed by the lack of interest in researching this topic, as the controversy over professionalism in public procurement remains unresolved (Rejeb et al., 2024). Therefore, the research problem of this study can be expressed as a question about the extent of ethics standards in public procurement law.

This paper seeks to achieve several goals by answering the following questions:

RQ1: What is the concept of ethics in public procurement?

RQ2: What are the most important moral values in public service?

RQ3: What are the main drivers of deviation in the public procurement function?

RQ4: How can ethical values be established in the government procurement function?

The structure of this paper is as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature related to ethics in public procurement. Section 3 presents the methodology employed in conducting the research. Section 4 presents the study's results, and Section 5 concludes the research paper, outlining future research directions.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The concept of ethics in bureaucracy

The bureaucratic apparatus in most countries currently works to provide high-quality services, and the beneficiaries of this service are no longer viewed as citizens but rather as clients, according to the concepts of modern reformist schools such as New Public Administration. In addition to contemporary trends in administrative reform, such as reinventing government (Wiener, 1991; Kennedy & Malatesta, 2010; Aboelazm, 2025b). Citizens have become able to demand that the bureaucratic apparatus be responsible for its actions and that they be involved in discussing issues that concern them. From this point, this apparatus cannot be viewed as mysterious. While bureaucrats serve the state impartially, independently, and competitively, it has become necessary for them to possess certain ethics and values that help achieve the interests of citizens or beneficiaries (Plant & Gortner, 1981).

Undoubtedly, the quality of public services provided by the bureaucratic apparatus at all central and local levels is affected by the extent to which bureaucrats adhere to certain functional ethics and values. It can also be said that these ethics and values are linked to the nature of the activities of the bureaucratic apparatus, and from this standpoint, it can be noted that these ethics are called “ethics of public service” (Cohen & Eimicke, 1995; Ferhani, 2025).

To preserve specific public values, such as justice, fairness, and equality, the administrative behavior of bureaucrats must be grounded in the moral foundations and values originating from public service (community service), which are values based on the concept of sacrifice, devoid of material and individual interests. The idea of sacrifice in this field is understood in terms of commitment to serving others through adherence to specific ethical and behavioral standards. The bureaucrat derives her/his sense of satisfaction from providing public service through this concept, based on the belief that the service dimension of the public office is more important than material considerations. The nominal goal in the field of public office is to achieve the public interest. Accordingly, public service is more like practicing medicine or nursing than just a profession (Bowman, 1990; Menzel, 1997).

The public office embodies some ideal and moral values, even if they are implicit. The public office is considered a public trust. It is also considered the profession of those who know how to act ethically, and bureaucrats must carry out their duties and functions impartially, relying on the fact that serving the state is the most sacred duty that can be presented to the nation (Dwivedi, 1987).

The issue of ethics in public office was raised due to the powers that bureaucrats enjoy through their use of discretionary power when participating in the development and implementation of public policies. The reason for raising the issue of the ethics of bureaucrats is that they exercise discretionary powers in managing state affairs, even though they are not accountable to citizens. The primary objective of ethical codes is to ensure that bureaucrats conduct their work impartially and without bias (Cooper & Gulick, 1984).

When discussing the ethics of public office, a distinction must be made between morality and ethics. Both concepts are different. Morality is not synonymous with ethics, as ethics means the study of moral principles and ethical behavior. It expresses actions that are considered suitable and those that are otherwise. It is concerned with the values and principles that these actions reflect. Within the framework of the bureaucratic apparatus, ethics is considered to be the determinant of what is right and what is wrong, so that there is an almost collective agreement within the bureaucratic apparatus on a set of moral principles and values that must be adhered to and respected, which is demonstrated through the laws and regulations regulating work within this apparatus. Therefore, ethical behavior reflects the prevailing values within society and its precise definition of what is wrong and right. Ethics is considered an attempt to imbue various behaviors with a moral character, thereby determining the values that should govern those behaviors. Therefore, ethics refers to the process through which ethical standards and values can be clarified and adherence to them emphasized (Aboelazm, 2025a; Denhardt & Grubbs, 1999; Kennedy & Malatesta, 2010).

Ethics is “a set of standards or rules of behavior that have been developed through human practice or experience and in the light of which behavior can be judged as right or wrong, good or evil from a human point of view” (Eyo, 2017, p. 256; Fazekas & Cingolani, 2017; Salin et al., 2024).

Ethics is viewed as a means of reform, not an end in itself. Ethics is considered a means of reforming the bureaucratic apparatus, mainly due to the prevalence of undisciplined or immoral practices within its work environment (Schoeberlein, 2022; Compte et al., 2005). In light of this, efforts must be made to enhance the agency’s ethical standards. Bureaucrats, there must also be increased convergence between work ethics and policies, which significantly helps to enrich the concepts of integrity and justice and, in turn, raises the level of public service. In addition, ethical policies may help increase the service provided to citizens by distancing themselves from internal administrative issues if these policies are given a significant role in further developing work ethics (Weber & Wasieleski, 2013; Bovis, 2008; Wakefield, 1976; Adekanmbi & Ukpere, 2022).

Although ethics may be taken as a means of reform to make the job more upright, it is also considered necessary for the bureaucratic apparatus to develop professionally in various government areas. The issue of ethics in public office is also considered a vital concern for establishing clear boundaries between personal interests. The subjectivity of the bureaucrat and the public interest are embodied in the provision of public services, whether through self-service or otherwise, and this is the essence of the bureaucrat’s internal conflict and justifications for their undisciplined or immoral behavior. Confronting corruption or uncontrolled practices is prohibited by laws and regulations, and constantly urging it is not advisable, as this internal conflict lies in the souls and consciences (Gilman & Lewis, 1996; Lee & Paddock, 1992).

In addition, many writings in the field of public administration, which concern bureaucracy and the reform of the bureaucratic apparatus, confirm that modern trends, such as good governance, which is based on accountability, transparency, and integrity, consider public administration ethics as a prerequisite for them. Governance is regarded as an ethical project in its essence if its principles are looked at, and the principles of governance that express moral values and principles that constitute the ethics of public office help in raising and demonstrating the social awareness of bureaucrats and their keenness to achieve the public good at the expense of their personal or self-interest (Lee et al., 2012; Ferri Di Fabrizio, 2017).

Since the goal of public service ethics is to achieve the public good (public interest) and prioritize it over self-interest, this ethics infuses spiritual values within the souls of bureaucrats. It motivates them to provide public services to citizens with care, justice, and integrity. This fosters a constant and shared passion among bureaucratic officials and the citizens they serve, leading to a more prosperous society where peace, security, and prosperity prevail (Brady, 2003).

The emergence of functional behavior from ideals linked to the concept of service as the highest profession, such as medicine and nursing, encompasses the possession of ideals like honesty, integrity, sincerity, and justice. Also, the behavior of

managers going beyond the point of blaming subordinates and constantly alerting them to the need to perform their duties faithfully and efficiently is considered necessary and even desirable (Kennedy & Malatesta, 2010; Dwivedi, 1995), meaning that the behavior resulting from the bureaucrat's enjoyment of specific moral values shows in itself a high degree of professionalism and high-quality public service. This is based on the triangle of public service ethics represented by justice, fairness, and morality (Plant & Gortner, 1981).

Establishing a comprehensive definition of public service ethics that can be applied to various public offices is extremely difficult due to the different ecological factors specific to each system. There is diversity in cultures from one country to another, and from one system to another. Civil service systems also differ from one country to another. Therefore, there are many definitions of public office ethics.

In return, these moral values of the bureaucrat constitute fundamental values for citizens, and some of these values are represented in accountability, citizenship, legitimacy, public interest, integrity, honesty, justice, and the spirit of sacrificing self-interest to achieve the public good (Mukhametzhanova, 2017).

There are many definitions of public office ethics. As mentioned, some believe that ethics deals with what is right and wrong, with moral duties and obligations. It can also be conceptualized as a set of moral values or principles that may be unique to an individual or part of a group of shared values among some nations. Morals are also behavioral principles that govern individuals or groups (Kennedy & Malatesta, 2010).

Ethics has been defined as everything related to conduct and behavior. This fosters a sense of commitment to considering one's interests and the interests of others and society. It has also been defined as a science that deals with the behavior of individuals to the extent that it is possible to determine whether this behavior is good or bad.

Others have stated that ethics consist of beliefs and values acquired through life experience, starting from the child's socialization through the years of education they spend and family customs (Aboelazm, 2025a; Crank & Caldero, 2000). It has also been defined as the values related to behaviors in the job or a specific professional specialty (Crank & Caldero, 2000). Ethics is also part of the human value system, distinguishing humans from all other creatures (Adekanmbi & Ukpere, 2022).

Others also define public service ethics as the controls imposed on public employees, which they adhere to out of conviction to improve their administrative behavior and achieve high efficiency for the organization, thereby providing distinguished public service (Goss, 1996).

Through these definitions, many common elements or aspects emerge regarding the concept of public office ethics, which are as follows:

1) Ethical rules and behavioral values aim to enhance administrative behavior, prevent uncontrolled practices, and promote responsible conduct.

2) The bureaucrat must adopt disciplined behaviors and adhere to these ethics out of conviction in them; not only that, but this conviction also stems from the belief in the importance of these ethics in enhancing their professional level.

3) Targeting the public interest by the bureaucrat on an ongoing and permanent basis to achieve general satisfaction for service recipients through high-quality services by ensuring this satisfaction, which reaches a high level of confidence in the institution.

Although there is disagreement on the concept of public office ethics, the nature of public office ethics is determined in light of the moral values inherent in public office. There is also significant agreement in administrative literature regarding the ethical values of the public office, which will be presented in the next point.

2.2. Ethical values in public office

Most civil service systems agree on a set of ethical values in the field of public service. These values or ideals have emerged in response to citizens' dissatisfaction with the performance of governments and the widespread phenomenon of bureaucratic corruption within government institutions. Announcing these values in the form of an ethical charter for public service is considered one of the preventive measures. To fight or reduce corruption (Bowman, 1990).

Many codes of professional conduct in many countries (Adekanmbi & Ukpere, 2022; Marini, 1992) have shown some of these shared values. These values include respect for the law, honesty, integrity, justice, and professionalism. These values are detailed as follows.

2.2.1. Respect the law

Respecting the law, by extension, includes respecting the Constitution, acting by the principle of legality (Menzel, 1997), following instructions and orders, and not exceeding the statutes for any opinion or circumstance. The bureaucrat must obligatorily respect the laws and regulations, whether substantive or formal, and not exceed the limits. In the texts, she/he must also refrain from acting in any way without a legal basis (Chandler, 1983).

The concept of respect for the law encompasses multiple dimensions. It is not merely a matter of violating the law, but of implementing it as a positive obligation. Other sizes fall under the concept of respect for laws, which are (Gilman & Lewis, 1996):

- 1) Work within the existing legislation and systems.
- 2) Working to develop laws and regulations that would hinder or discourage production.
- 3) Eliminate illegal discrimination.
- 4) Preventing the mismanagement of public funds in all its forms by supporting systems of control, accountability, and inspection.
- 5) Encouraging constitutional principles such as equality, justice, and judicial practices.

2.2.2. Justice

Justice is defined as giving everyone their due rights without excessive or negligent behavior (Kennedy & Malatesta, 2010). Still, within the scope of public employment, it is known as "organizational justice", which is the method by which an individual judges the fairness of the method used by the manager in dealing with them on both functional and human levels (Karriker & Williams, 2009).

Organizational justice on the part of leaders or managers contributes many benefits to the organization and individuals, including the following (Karriker & Williams, 2009):

- 1) Subordinates' sense of job belonging, which in turn enhances the concept of organizational citizenship within the institution or organization.
- 2) The ability to understand the reasons behind a particular decision.
- 3) The degree of clarity of expectations regarding the criteria used to judge a particular decision and the penalties likely to be imposed in the event of failure.
- 4) Subordinates' reassurance towards leaders or managers regarding their various rights, whether related to material or job rights.

2.2.3. The professionalization

The quality of professionalism is one of the qualities known to be present (specialized capacity, independent exercise of this capacity, commitment to working in this capacity, the existence of a standard or ethical charter that governs and encourages this profession (Carvalho, 2020), and this quality must be present in the bureaucrat providing the public service. To continuously strive to achieve professional excellence and strengthen her/his capabilities through the following (Hickok, 2022; Cooper & Gulick, 1984):

- 1) Providing support and encouragement to update eligibility (academic background) and develop capabilities.
- 2) Accept responsibility as a personal duty to stay informed about emerging issues and potential problems.
- 3) Encouraging others through their professions to participate in professional activities and unions.

2.2.4. The integrity

It is the approval of the person who offers public service to citizens by divesting her/his behavior for any purpose other than achieving the public interest. People who possess this characteristic — integrity — enjoy the trust of the citizens who deal with them, as trust and integrity are two interrelated concepts (Ebekozen, 2019).

Integrity is the detachment and impartiality of human behavior from any particular purpose or benefit when serving citizens, thereby maintaining their trust, demonstrating the integrity of public administration, and promoting the general interest of society (Farmer, 1998).

Therefore, integrity as a moral value in public service obliges the bureaucrat to provide public service without targeting self-interest, personal benefit, or a purpose other than achieving the public interest. Integrity generally reflects the concept of avoiding unethical practices, that is, practices tainted by corruption. It refers to the abuse of public authority for private gain. As previously explained, integrity is the opposite of this concept (Wakefield, 1976).

2.2.5. The honesty

The concept of honesty is difficult to define precisely, as it is closely linked to several other moral concepts or values, such as integrity, justice, and respect for the law. Honesty in public service

refers to a bureaucrat's honesty with himself and with internal motivation, free from external control by the organization or institution (Raile, 2013).

The public office cannot carry out its duties and accomplish its tasks efficiently and effectively without acceptable and recognized ethical behavior. It is not possible to rely on accountability alone (in the form of monitoring or guarding) to ensure that the bureaucrat carries out their duties and responsibilities without relying on moral values such as honesty, in addition to the problems of oversight and accountability. It also needs moral values to organize its movement (Lee & Paddock, 1992).

After explaining what ethics is for public office, as well as the essential values it encompasses, which are agreed upon by most civil service systems in many countries, the following point will outline the most important reasons for deviation in the public office, which also applies to public procurement jobs.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study relied on several research methods in addition to several data collection sources, as follows.

3.1. Research methods

The study primarily employed a descriptive approach to compare and differentiate the concepts of ethics in public procurement, explaining the similarities and differences between them. Public procurement positions are among the key roles in public administration. The analytical approach was also employed to identify the elements of ethical behavior and the causes and motivations that lead to deviations in public service, particularly in public procurement. The analytical approach was also relied upon in reviewing the literature for this study. The analytical approach was also relied upon to analyze the opinions of thinkers and researchers about ethics in public procurement law and to present the controversy among them to determine the ethical standards necessary for public procurement law and the reasons driving that, in addition to exploring the challenges facing the ethics of public procurement law and its independence as a profession, with its subjectivity and privacy.

3.2. Data collection and analysis

The study relied on several qualitative research studies to understand phenomena rather than measure them, which is the focus of quantitative approaches. In the qualitative approach, attention is focused on understanding the statements collected by the researcher or the behaviors she/he observed. Therefore, the focus is on a situation or a few items to understand it in depth (Larson, 2017). This study belongs to this type of research, "qualitative research", as the study seeks to analyze the dimensions of the concept of ethics and its most important criteria at both the theoretical and practical levels. Hence, the study will rely on research and analysis of secondary data from various research and literature in the field of public procurement published in specialized scientific journals and indexed on international databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and J-store, and

then analyze the results of scientific debate discussions about the ethics of public procurement law, which is helpful. However, resolving the theoretical debate in this field would yield several advantages through access to ethical standards, which this study aims to clarify.

4. RESULTS

4.1. The reasons and motives of deviation in the public procurement job

In general, deviation in public office is considered one of the forms of bureaucratic corruption, and this usually occurs in two situations: the first is when a request for a service is made. The bureaucrat can then exploit her/his position and powers to become a force for construction or demolition and thus naturally enter into a reciprocal trade relationship with the person in need of that service. The bureaucrat is in a position to prioritize those who pay the most and put pressure on others until their cases are accepted. The second position is when the state purchases goods and services or one of its agencies or bodies through contracts, known as public procurement (Bailey, 1964; Snider & Rendon, 2012). As is well known, this area is where corruption occurs most frequently, given that the convergence of the public and private sectors is extensive. The emergence and urgency of the self-interests of bureaucrats, especially in the field of public procurement, where large amounts of public money are handled daily, and the spread of various phenomena that raise concerns regarding modern technologies, necessitate a reevaluation of the moral values of public service. The current widespread deviation in civil service systems can be attributed to some reasons (Denhardt & Catron, 1989; Ebekozen, 2019), such as the employee's lack of appreciation for the results of her/his work, employment policy, and procedures based on a non-merit system (Heath, 2022; Gilman & Lewis, 1996).

The most important reasons for employees working in public procurement jobs to deviate from it or follow some undisciplined practices can be mentioned as follows.

4.1.1. Lack of material and moral appreciation

Most often, procurement employees wait to be rewarded for their efforts, whether this reward is in a material form (bonuses and financial incentives) or in a moral form (encouraging phrases and sentences and thanking them), as the government procurement process requires a great effort in addition to its complexity. The tasks assigned to these employees, when the employee makes a great effort and does not receive any appreciation for this, may lead to the employee shifting away from her/his responsibilities and job duties due to the feeling that forms within her/him due to her/his lack of appreciation (Ebekozen, 2019; McCardy, 1977).

4.1.2. Hiring policies

The importance of adopting sound policies in the appointment field for the public service is evident when discussing deviations in the public service. A good start for any employee helps her/him grow and develop in her/his career, while a lousy start constantly causes problems and

troubles; this is what good administration tries to avoid. What helps raise the level of efficiency at work is the success of management in placing the right employee in a suitable workplace and giving them a salary that is commensurate with their qualifications, experience, and the level at which they work. For management to succeed in achieving this, it is essential. Society must undertake a great deal of qualification so that employment agencies (Malin, 2020; Snider & Rendon, 2012) can select the best candidates to fill positions in its cadres (Mohammad et al., 2023; Buchholz et al., 2023), as it is necessary to appoint the best applicants to serve the government (Ebekozen, 2019; Gilman & Lewis, 1996).

Sound recruitment policies in government procurement must rely heavily on qualified personnel to fill these positions, academically or practically, and ensure a career future for them. This calls for discussing a career path in government procurement and moving it beyond an administrative role. For a technical job, the person occupying it must possess a range of specifications and qualifications to carry out this vital role effectively.

4.1.3. The weakness of oversight and accountability

Although it has previously been stated that a bureaucrat must value honesty, weak oversight and accountability are the primary reasons for deviation in public service. The motives for corruption, unethical behavior, and undisciplined practices appear clearly when public officials enjoy broad authority and freedom. In acting (broad discretionary authority) and with little accountability (Ibusuki et al., 2023; Widhiasthini et al., 2023), this calls for developing legislation in a way compatible with the level of the times and the needs of the administration. On the other hand, all control methods must be modernized, and public officials must be informed of their existence. She/he may comply with that, or she/he may not. Instead, the existence of a regulatory system is a necessity dictated by the administrative requirements in contemporary society (Williams-Elegbe, 2012). The starting point in administrative reform is the human element. If this element is not committed to and is not considered the law, it isn't easy to reform it (Jacobis et al., 2024; Fox, 1981).

Oversight and accountability for occupants of government procurement positions is a challenging process due to the diversity of tasks assigned to them and the complexity of these tasks as well, in addition to the difficulty of directing the violation to a specific person, as most government procurement operations are distributed in responsibility among the committees that carry them out, and thus the difficulty of holding a person accountable. Indeed, this is from the aspect of accountability. As for oversight, it is also a complicated process if we are talking about oversight of all government purchasing operations, as each government agency launches hundreds of government purchasing operations annually, which makes the tasks of oversight agencies difficult, but this is reduced. This entails the presence of external members in the various committees for government procurement operations — still, the talk concerns subsequent oversight and the difficulty of auditing each government procurement process (Ibusuki et al., 2023; Heath, 2022; Widhiasthini et al., 2023).

Weaknesses in oversight and accountability may lead to bureaucratic officials, in general, and government procurement officials in particular, being exposed to the temptation to exploit their discretionary power to achieve self-interest and avoid serving the public good. Whenever the bureaucratic official has elements of reward and punishment at her/his disposal without oversight or accountability, this may lead to deviation from public service. Naturally, this leads to deviation from public service (Hawkins et al., 2011).

4.1.4. Lower salaries and incomes of officials

The employee needs an acceptable and reasonable salary to provide themselves and her/his family with a decent living that meets their needs. This, on the one hand. On the other hand, it ensures that the administration will remain in its ranks, as the limited salary may push some employees to resign, and the phenomenon of job leakage will spread.

In addition to the possibility of losing some employees due to low salaries, which may lead to their resignation from public services, the financial element has the most significant impact on the morale of those who continue to work, as reflected in their level of service to the public. The employee who suffers from the high cost of living and the effects of a low salary. She/he is not expected to focus on implementing the requirements of her/his job duties, including treating the public at a decent and acceptable level. This may result in the spread of bribery, nepotism, and chaos within the administration if it does not address this essential issue (Zejnullahu, 2016; Jacobis et al., 2024).

The Civil Service Administration must continuously review the wage scale, reward and bonus systems, and make continuous adjustments to them in a way compatible with the current living situation.

If this is the case for civil service workers in general, improving wages, rewards, and incentives is an urgent necessity for those holding government procurement positions, given the great temptations to which they are exposed to tampering with bids or leaking information about their operations.

4.1.5. Lack of a code of ethics governing the work of employees

The absence of ethical charters and codes of professional conduct, which are considered a guide that specifies the ethical rules according to which organizational behavior must be determined, whether this behavior is towards employees, customers, or the surrounding environment, to describe the organization as a moral person, would constitute a reason for deviation in public service.

Departments and ministries are established to serve the public. The employee is permanently appointed to provide and provide services to the citizen, as she/he is, by nature, a servant of the people and the country, and those responsible in the administration must make her/him understand this before appointment and before starting her/his work by submitting a charter of work ethics or a code of job conduct, as well. States and their various institutions must disseminate this to all employees, and employees must accept these charters voluntarily and continuously throughout their work in the civil service (Weber & Wasieleski, 2013).

The same applies to the public procurement jobs. There must be an ethical charter that governs the work of employees in the field of government procurement. The ethical charter for civil service employees is considered the constitution for all employees. Regarding the existence of an ethical charter for government procurement employees, it is also considered a great necessity, given the challenges they face. These employees are from different practices daily.

Suppose these are the most critical causes of deviation in public procurement jobs. How can this phenomenon be confronted in light of the ethics and values of the job in the civil service? This will be addressed in the next point, which explains the mechanisms for consolidating ethical values in public procurement jobs and confronting deviation from them.

4.2. Mechanisms for consolidating ethical values in public procurement jobs

Promoting and consolidating ethical values in public procurement jobs would reduce bureaucratic corruption in this field (Bovis, 2008; Jurich, 2012). Moral values can be established in public procurement jobs by creating an appropriate climate for ethics. Consolidating moral values is not limited to simply launching slogans that praise a specific group of ethics and values, but it includes placing the foundation of these values on the size of their priorities. In this context, several mechanisms can be stated as critical elements in this environment that support the consolidation of moral values, as follows.

4.2.1. Code of ethics

The code of ethics serves as a guide that outlines a set of moral principles and values, directing employees' behavior in a specific direction or action. These ethical charters are essential due to their ability to address problems quickly and make effective decisions. These charters also help direct employees' behavior toward the right path, raising the organization's performance rates. Finally, ethical charters would convey to parties outside the organization that the organization is committed to ensuring that its employees' behavior aligns with clear moral values and principles (Schoeberlein, 2022; Lennerfors, 2007; Johari et al., 2022).

When preparing a charter of ethics, several guidelines can be employed, such as the necessity of informing and explaining it to all employees. In addition, it is essential that this charter be characterized by possibility and applicability, and it must also be clear (Bovis, 2008).

It is also crucial in this field to point out that the establishment or development of ethical charters depends on the nature of the organization's work, its size, the programs it implements, and the number of its employees (Schoeberlein, 2022).

4.2.2. Code of conduct

It differs from the code of ethics, as the code of conduct is the charter that defines the actions that employees must follow in the workplace. At the same time, the code of ethics includes general guidelines for decisions regarding these actions (Compte et al., 2005; Plant & Gortner, 1981; Bowman, 1990).

It is necessary to establish a code of conduct for any organization first to identify the basic behaviors required to implement the ethical values included in the code of ethics. It is also necessary to explicitly and obligatorily stipulate that employees adhere to the behaviors specified in the code of conduct (Siddharth, 2014; Eyo, 2017).

4.2.3. Training on ethical issues

Appropriate training regarding professional and ethical issues extends beyond traditional training, as it requires a shift from the conventional approach to an interactive one in which experiences and knowledge are exchanged. This is one of the most effective methods of training managers. Ethics training has become a key component of many training programs. Training is essential for familiarizing employees with the rules of conduct and ethics that must be followed when performing their assigned tasks (Fazekas & Cingolani, 2017; Siddharth, 2014).

4.2.4. Amending policies and procedures within the organization

When implementing ethical charters, the organization must amend its policies and procedures to support the behaviors stipulated in the charter of ethics or the code of conduct. It is also essential and of great importance that the organization's policies and procedures are modified to ensure and support employee training in these charters. Rewards for ethical behavior are used to motivate employees to engage in good behavior, and on the other hand, they must include penalties for unethical behavior. Continuous and periodic review of these policies and procedures is also necessary (Fazekas & Cingolani, 2017).

5. CONCLUSION

This paper examined the critical role of ethics in public employment, with a specific focus on the field of government procurement, and discussed the professionalism required in public procurement positions. The study was structured around four key themes: clarifying the concept of public service ethics; identifying the moral values underpinning public service; analyzing the reasons for ethical deviations in public procurement roles; and exploring mechanisms to strengthen ethical standards in these positions.

Paying attention to the issue of ethics and preparing codes of professional conduct in general,

as well as codes of conduct specific to each profession or job, makes developing a code of ethical conduct for public procurement jobs an urgent and essential need. Public procurement systems can achieve many of what some countries do in this field through the following:

1) Preparing a charter of ethical conduct for public procurement professionals.

2) Permanent and continuous awareness through training programs of the importance of public procurement jobs and the danger of employees' behavior deviating from public money.

3) Sending highly educated and professional trainees for education in institutes of accredited international organizations in government procurement.

4) Paying attention to government procurement in educational curricula by teaching one or more courses in various colleges.

The findings highlight the urgent necessity of establishing robust ethical frameworks within public procurement systems. Developing specialized codes of conduct tailored to procurement professionals is not just a procedural formality but a foundational requirement for enhancing transparency, integrity, and accountability in government spending. The paper proposes several practical steps, including drafting ethical charters, offering continuous ethics training, providing international professional education opportunities, and incorporating procurement ethics into academic curricula.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to addressing the persistent risks of corruption, conflicts of interest, and unethical behavior in public procurement. By emphasizing ethics, the study contributes to broader efforts aimed at improving governance and ensuring the proper use of public resources.

However, this study has limitations. It is primarily conceptual and does not include empirical data or case studies to substantiate its recommendations. Future research should seek to validate these proposals through empirical studies, surveys, or comparative analyses of existing procurement systems across different jurisdictions. Furthermore, exploring how cultural, legal, and institutional contexts influence the effectiveness of ethical codes in procurement would provide valuable insights.

In conclusion, this paper underscores the necessity of integrating ethical considerations more deeply into public procurement practices and sets a foundation for future research to build upon through empirical validation and policy development.

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