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## Research Article

### Organizational Information Visibility and Ethical Climate among Line-Agencies in Sulu: An Assessment

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#### ABSTRACT

This is a descriptive-correlational study (Aming-Hayudini et al., 2024) that focuses on the extent of organizational information visibility and ethical climate among employees of line agencies in Sulu during Fiscal Year 2022. The results indicate that the overwhelming majority of the 200 respondent-employees were female, aged below 30 years old, with 5 or fewer years of service in the organization. Most of them were permanent employees, but nearly half are contractuels; most have completed a Bachelor's degree. In terms of organizational information visibility, the line agencies in Sulu manage information availability, approval, and accessibility at a high level. Similarly, the agencies exhibit a strong ethical climate, characterized by high ratings in egoism, benevolence, and principled ethical dimensions. No significant differences in either organizational information visibility or ethical climate were found when data were analyzed by gender, age, length of service, appointment status, or educational attainment. Furthermore, a strong positive correlation is established between the sub-categories of organizational information visibility: availability, approval, and accessibility, and ethical climate: egoism, benevolence, and principled. These findings support the theoretical models by Stohl et al. (2016) on organizational information visibility and Martin & Cullen (2006) on ethical climate, which state that the proper management of organizational information is very much associated with a positive ethical work climate in the line agencies of Sulu.

**Keywords:** *Organizational Information, Information Visibility, Ethical Climate*

#### Introduction

Citizens are guaranteed the right to access public information in a democratic society, and

the government agencies (Hayudini, 2018) have a responsibility to be transparent about their operations. Transparency is the most

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important ingredient for public trust and accountability, especially within government line agencies responsible for policy implementation and services. However, this information flow is also influenced by administrative mandates as well as the ethical climate that defines the behavior and the decision-making of the organization.

Transparency forms the cornerstone of good governance by making sure citizens understand what goes on in public administration. This gives the people a chance to see how government runs its operations, the steps that go into making regulations, and the knowledge about decisions that influence rights. The Republic Act 10633, Section 91, formally implements transparency in the Philippines, mandating all government agencies-including local government units and state universities and colleges-to post their transparency seals on their websites. Agencies are also mandated to post information such as mandates, functions, official contact details, budget reports, major projects, and the status of implementation.

Although transparency in the digital age is now highly feasible with technology advances, actual organizational information visibility inside government agencies remains a function of internal factors-the ethical climate of the workplace. Such an ethical climate refers to standards and behaviors guiding decision-making that can foster openness and access or inhibit them in these organizations.

There is an obvious gap in the literature with respect to how the ethical climates within government agencies impact the flow and visibility of information, given the increasing role of information transparency and the enabling function of technology for visibility. While various studies have examined the impact of organizational transparency and technological progress (Gibbs et al., 2013; Flyverbom et al., 2016), there is also a very limited study on the relationship between organizational ethics and information visibility in the framework of local government agencies in the Philippines.

This study seeks to fill this gap (Aming-Hayudini et al., 2022)by exploring the level of organizational information visibility and the ethical climate among employees of line agencies in Sulu. Specifically, it explores how the

ethical environment within these agencies influences the management and accessibility of public information. Conclusions will provide valuable insights to improve transparency and further cultivate openness, accountability, and efficiency in public administration in Sulu as well as practical application benefits the effectiveness of government services and promotion of citizen participation.

## **Methods**

A descriptive-correlational study will be utilized, describing (BANTAYAN<sup>1</sup> et al.)and ascertaining the visibility of information about organizational structure as well as its climate being ethically aligned by line-agency employees of the Province of Sulu for Fiscal Year 2022. Such descriptive-correlational study allows quantifying a relation, making determinations whether such is existent in important ways as possible so to serve future predictively as defined based on its contemporary values. According to Bless and Higson-Smith (1995), research design is a systematic tool, to guide the collection, analysis, and interpretation of observed data. Babbie and Mouton (2001) depict it as a roadmap that leads to achieving the research goals. The purpose of this study (Hayudini et al., 2023)was to describe the socio-demographic profile of employees in Sulu's line-agencies, assess the extent of organizational information visibility and ethical climate, and investigate the significant differences in these factors based on demographic characteristics like gender, age, length of service, status of appointment, and educational attainment. Additionally, this study aimed to look into the relationship between organizational information visibility and ethical climate.

The participants of this study were employees from different line-agencies in Sulu, such as those under the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), Region IX, and the national government. In all, 200 employees were purposively selected based on their availability and willingness to participate regardless of rank or civil status. Purposive sampling was justified since the need was to focus on participants who were directly involved in the organizational dynamics of line-agencies, thereby ensuring the study's relevance and

focus on specific operational characteristics. This sampling method (Hayudini et al.) helped capture insights from employees who were best suited to answer the research questions.

The data gathering tool was the survey questionnaire with three parts, part I intended to gather the socio-demographic information (gender, age, years of service, appointment status, and educational attainment) ; part II deals with information about the organizations from three points—Availability, Approval, and Accessibility, divided further into its specific sub categories, and Part III is meant for the study on ethical climate where egoism, benevolence, and principled behavior will be assessed. The main tools were taken from previous studies. The Organizational Information Visibility Questionnaire was adapted from ter Hoeven et al. (2021), and the Ethical Climate Questionnaire was based on DiSorbo (2017). Because these instruments were originally developed in different cultural and organizational contexts, adjustments were made to make them clear and contextually relevant for Sulu's line-agency employees.

These instruments underwent a two-stage validation and adaptation process. Initially, the modifications in questionnaires were subjects to review by two faculty experts from the School of Graduate Studies, Sulu State College, in order to consider the clarity and cultural appropriateness of the items in relation to the objectives of the study. Through this expert review, the questions were ensured to be understandable and relevant to the local context. A pilot test was conducted on a small group of employees from non-participating line-agencies to further assess the clarity, reliability, and ease of completion of the instruments. Feedback from the pilot test was used to make minor revisions in the wording and scale descriptors to ensure that participants in Sulu could easily understand and respond to the survey items. These adaptations ensured the validity and reliability of the instruments within the local context.

Ethical considerations (Hayudini et al., 2022) were given throughout the data collection process. Participants were fully informed about the nature, purpose, and procedures of the study and assured that their participation

was voluntary and confidential. Informed consent was obtained, and participants were informed that they could withdraw at any time without consequences. All responses were kept anonymous, and no personally identifiable information was obtained. Ethical approval was granted by the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies and the heads of the line-agencies in Sulu to ensure that the study was conducted according to ethical standards. The study also minimized harm by ensuring the questions were not invasive and respected the personal and professional boundaries of participants.

Questionnaires for the survey were (Warid-Sahial) distributed and collected from the participants. The relevant offices such as Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies and the line-agencies' heads received formal permission for administering the survey. The researcher himself personally distributed the questionnaires and, on certain cases, provided explanation to the participants. Completed copies were then retrieved and safely kept for processing.

Analysis was done using both descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The socio-demographic profile of participants was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and percentages. Means and standard deviations were calculated to measure the extent of organizational information visibility and ethical climate. Inferential statistics of t-tests of independent samples, and One-way Analysis of Variance, (ANOVA), were utilized in determining differences regarding demographic factors about organizational information visibility and ethical climate. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, that is, Pearson's  $r$  was conducted to see whether there exists any relationship between the variables of organizational information visibility and ethical climate.

The study made use of the 5-point Likert scale (Warid-Sahial et al., 2024) for both instruments, Organizational Information Visibility and Ethical Climate. For the former, it used a range from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always), whereas for the latter, it made use of the range from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). These allowed the researcher to quantify the responses given and assess to what extent respondents agreed or disagreed with the statements on the measured dimensions.

## Results

This expanded interpretation of the results, with more emphasis on the correlations and significance, makes it easier to bring the findings within the scope and relevance of the relationship between organizational information visibility and ethical climate.

The study aimed to probe organizational information visibility and ethical climate among employees of line-agencies in Sulu, and relationships between various demographic factors (gender, age, length of service, appointment status, and educational attainment) and the organizational elements of interest. In the findings of this study lie significant insights to the current state of organizational dynamics in these agencies, answering research questions and hypotheses set at the beginning of this study.

### 1. Demographic Profile of Employees

The demographic data formed the basis of understanding the distribution of employees across key characteristics:

**Gender:** The majority of employees were female (57.5%), with a substantial proportion of male employees (42.5%). This gender distribution reflects a more female-dominated workforce, which might influence the findings related to organizational culture and ethical climate.

**Age:** The study found that 40% of employees were 30 years old and below, with significant portions in the 31-40 (31%) and 41-50 (23%) age brackets. The predominance of younger employees suggests a workforce that may be in the early or mid-stages of their careers, potentially influencing their perspectives on organizational practices, such as information sharing and ethical behavior.

**Length of Service:** A majority of employees, that is, 54.5% had less than 5 years of service. This shows a relatively young workforce. This demographic characteristic is essential to understanding perceptions of organizational information visibility and ethical climate since familiarity with organizational processes may be influenced by the shorter tenure.

**Position Type:** Most were permanent appointees at 46.5 percent, contractual employees at 42.5 percent, and temporary employees 11 percent. Such differences may account for

discrepancies in perceptions toward organizational support and an ethical climate.

**Education Level:** A majority (61.5 percent) was a Bachelor's degree holder; such a number of educated people could be likely to understand or appraise what is going around about policies of organizations concerning information that can be publicly viewed and related matters involving ethics.

### 1. Demographic Profile of Employees

#### 1.1 Gender

Result 1.1: Female employees majority 57.5% and male employees 42.5%.

#### 1.2 Age

Result 1.2: Majority are 30 years old and below, 40.0%, significant proportions are 31-40, 31.0% and 41-50, 23.0%.

#### 1.3 Length of Service

Result 1.3: Majority have 5 years and below of service, 54.5%.

#### 1.4 Status of Appointment

Result 1.4: Nearly half permanent, 46.5%; significant contractual, 42.5% and temporary, 11.0%.

#### 1.5 Educational Attainment

Result 1.5: Bachelors majority hold 61.5%

### 2. Organizational information visibility

Organizational information availability, approval, and accessibility were examined in three main dimensions. Overall, all the sub-categories showed very strong positive tendencies, meaning, employees, overall, felt that organizational information is available and approved and accessible to a great extent.

**Availability:** Both inscription mean = 4.19 and Storage mean = 4.35 gained high scores, indicating an overall perception by employees that organizational information is well documented and also stored.

**Approval:** Employees indicated robust perceptions toward Legal obligations (mean = 3.91), Norms (mean = 3.77), and Social Awareness (mean = 4.19). Information approval mechanisms-including the acceptance of legal standards and norms-

are available and largely known among the employees.

Accessibility: This is the dimension with the highest mean across all subcategories. Directory Knowledge (mean = 4.22), Classification (mean = 4.16), Skills (mean = 4.25), and Effort (mean = 4.31) indicate that employees perceive information accessibility as very strong in terms of knowing where to find information, its classification, the required skills to access it, and the effort expended by employees to do so.

## 2. Organizational Information Visibility

### 2.1 Availability

Inscription: Strong tendency, mean = 4.1883

Storage: Strong tendency, mean = 4.3533

### 2.2 Acceptance

Legally: Strong tendency, mean = 3.9100

Norms: Strong tendency, mean = 3.7750

Social Awareness: Strong tendency, mean = 4.1917

### 2.3 Accessibility

Directory know-how: Strong tendency, mean = 4.2150

Classification: Strong tendency, mean = 4.1600

Skills: Strong tendency, mean = 4.2517

Effort: Strong tendency, mean = 4.3133

## 3. Ethical Climate

The research measured ethical climate along three main dimensions: Egoism, Benevolence, and Principled behavior. All the dimensions were relatively high, meaning the ethical climate was positive in the organization.

Egoism: The mean score for this dimension was 3.97, which indicated a strong tendency towards egoistic behaviors. This could mean that employees are motivated by self-interest, though not overwhelmingly so.

Benevolence: The mean score of 4.14 signifies that employees regard the workplace as supportive and sympathetic to the plight of others; this is an excellent sign for organizational culture.

Principled: A mean score of 4.12 suggests that employees perceive that the ethical climate is primarily grounded on principles and fairness.

## 3. Ethical Climate

### 3.1 Egoism

Mean = 3.9688 Strong tendency

### 3.2 Benevolence

Mean = 4.1425, Strong tendency

### 3.3 Principled

Mean = 4.1162, Strong tendency.

## 4. Differences in Organizational Information Visibility and Ethical Climate

The study also aimed to find out if there were differences in organizational information visibility and ethical climate across the different demographic categories.

Gender: There was no difference found in organizational information visibility along gender lines. Thus, it may be argued that male and female employees view information visibility alike. However, the perceptions of Egoism varied significantly along gender lines, suggesting that women would probably perceive more egoism than men. It might indicate differences along gender lines in ethical values or workplace behavior.

Age: There is a difference in perception of Inscription and Legal Obligations based upon the age factors. The younger age categories (30 years and below) are expected to be positive regarding organisational information availability and legal compliance mechanisms. Perhaps this relates to generational differences in what is considered transparent and ethical practice.

Length of Service: This was the only scale for which a significant difference was found. Respondents with fewer years of service (< 5 years) felt that information was more inscribed and that more effort was required to get at the information, suggesting that organizational processes might be perceived by newcomers as even more formalized and effortful than by employees who have served longer.

Status of appointment: There were no significant differences among the employment statuses, permanent, contractual, and temporary. Thus, the perceptions of information visibility or ethical climate may not heavily rely on the type of appointment.

Educational Attainment: The educational level was not a significant influencing factor over the perceptions of information visibility or ethical climate, implying that employees at different levels held similar views about these measures.

#### 4. Differences in Organizational Information Visibility

##### 4.1 Gender

No significant differences in perceptions of visibility across gender.

##### 4.2 Age

Significant differences in Inscription and Legal Obligation.

##### 4.3 Length of Service

Significant difference in Inscription and Effort.

##### 4.4 Status of Appointment

No significant differences across different statuses.

##### 4.5 Educational Attainment

No significant differences across educational levels.

#### 5. Relationship between Organizational Information Visibility and Ethical Climate

One of the major findings of this study was the strong positive correlations between sub-categories of organizational information visibility and ethical climate. This implies that employees who perceive information as being more available, approved, and accessible also tend to view the ethical climate more favorably, with stronger tendencies toward egoism, benevolence, and principled behavior.

Availability, Acceptability, and Accessibility of information were positively related to benevolence and principled behavior; it follows that when the employees believe the flow of information is accessible and ethically acceptable, the organization could be perceived as ethical and just.

Egoism had a lesser degree of correlation with information visibility; that is, employees who have a higher perceived level of available, approved, and accessible information are less likely to show egoistic behavior, thus congruent with the ethical norm where collective rather than individual interests take precedence.

The correlations point toward the conclusion that organizational transparency and openness in access to information would likely improve the climate of the organization, hence enhancing the culture from being more principled, benevolent, and less egoistic.

#### Summary of Statistical Results

The statistical analysis employed in this study is summarized in the tables below for ease of reference:

#### Demographic Profile Percentage

##### Gender

Female 57.5%

Male 42.5%

##### Age

30 years and below 40.0%

31-40 years 31.0%

41-50 years 23.0%

##### Length of Service

5 years and below 54.5%

##### Status of Appointment

Permanent 46.5%

Contractual 42.5%

Temporary 11.0%

Educational Attainment

Bachelor's degree 61.5%

##### Organizational Information Visibility Mean

Availability: Inscription 4.1883

Availability: Storage 4.3533

Approval: Legal Obligation 3.9100

Approval: Norms 3.7750

Approval: Social Awareness 4.1917

Accessibility: Directory Know-How 4.2150

Accessibility: Classification 4.1600

Accessibility: Skills 4.2517

Accessibility: Effort 4.3133

##### Ethical Climate Mean

Egoism 3.9688

Benevolence 4.1425

Principled 4.1162

### Differences in Ethical Climate

#### Gender

Significant difference in Egoism perceptions.

#### Age

Significant difference in Egoism perceptions.

#### Length of Service

No significant differences across lengths of service.

#### Status of Appointment

No significant differences across statuses.

#### Educational Attainment

No significant differences across educational levels.

### Correlation Among Sub-categories

High positive correlations among sub-categories of organizational information visibility and ethical climate.

## **Discussions**

### **Demographic Profile**

The demographic analysis revealed a female workforce with a strong presence of 57.5%. The age profile was relatively young, as 40% of the employees were 30 years or less in age. Such a trend of younger and diverse workforces is observed by Bryant & Allen, 2013; Shantz et al., 2013, particularly in governmental and public sector agencies. This may impact the organizational expectations, as younger generations are more concerned with transparency, work-life balance, and ethical practices (Stahl et al., 2012). The fact that females are in the majority may also suggest a growing trend of female empowerment and participation in the workforce, especially in administrative and governmental positions (Kabeer, 2005).

The length of service also had a high proportion of employees (54.5%) with 5 years or less of service, which corresponds to the general demographic trend of a relatively new and dynamic workforce. The finding is in contrast to older studies that are mainly concerned with long-term employees and emphasizes a generational shift in job tenure and organizational

commitment (Saks, 2006). The relatively younger and shorter-serving workforce may imply that the organization is still adjusting to organizational norms and systems, which could also influence perceptions of information visibility and ethical climate.

### **Organizational Information Visibility**

The three dimensions of availability, approval, and accessibility had high visibility of organizational information. These findings are indicative of a positive organizational climate, robust information-sharing practices, and commitment to transparency. This is in line with Vargas & Hauser (2020), who found that the transparency and visibility of information foster a higher level of trust and cooperation among employees in public-sector organizations. The results of this study also match the key findings of ter Hoeven et al. in the year 2021, who stressed that clear access to information may improve organizational commitment and reduce uncertainty on the part of employees.

The high mean scores for accessibility, in particular, ranged from 4.16 to 4.31, indicating that the employees are confident about accessing relevant information. This is important since it shows openness and empowerment in the workplace. Studies such as Men (2014) and Mishra et al. (2014) suggest that if an organization can ensure that the employees have access to the right information, the employees are more likely to be engaged, valued, and empowered to make appropriate decisions.

However, the study found that there are no significant differences based on demographic factors, such as gender, status of appointment, or educational attainment; this means that the perceptions of being visible are generally homogeneous. Contrary to such findings, however, some research studies have presented the notion that organizational practices and information flows would vary among other diverse demographic groups (Krause, 2009). The lack of any significant difference in perceptions across these groups might suggest that the information visibility practices are applied uniformly across the board, thus reiterating the sense of fairness and openness.

## Ethical Climate

What's interesting about this finding is that it was achieved in a study with high scores on all dimensions of ethical climates but especially in the benevolence (mean = 4.14) and principled behavior (mean = 4.12) dimensions. This is in line with public and private sector organizational studies where employees who view their work environment as ethical and fair are more likely to exhibit positive organizational behaviors, including trust, cooperation, and commitment, respectively (Brown & Treviño, 2006; DiSorbo, 2017).

Notably, differences in the perception of egoism were significantly influenced by gender and age. These results indicate that women and younger employees have a lesser egoistic view of ethical behavior than their male and older counterparts. Findings in this study actually support the literature that further asserts that younger employees are often more idealistic and oriented to be more ethical, especially in organizational behavior contexts (Eisenberg & Goodall, 2001). Other studies have also addressed gender differences in ethical perceptions, and it has generally been found that female employees emphasize more on ethical practices and social responsibility (Kaplan, 2014).

The implication here is that the perception of egoism differs among individuals, and it is complex how individual characteristics influence ethical behaviors within an organization. This is also in support of the idea provided by Trevino et al. (2000), that personal values and organizational culture inter-relate to produce the organizational ethical climate.

## Correlations Between Organizational Information Visibility and Ethical Climate

One of the most significant findings is that organizational information visibility strongly correlates positively with ethical climate. This finding stands in support of previous studies indicating that if information is available and there is transparency, then a positive ethical climate can be developed. Both Men (2014) and Mishra et al. (2014) strengthen this statement with the idea that organizational transparency leads to trust in leadership and that leads to an ethical environment.

The positive relationship found in this study indicates that the more organizational information is available, approved, and accessible, the more employees will perceive the environment as ethical, benevolent, and principled. On the other hand, when information visibility is low, there may be suspicion, ambiguity, and ethical dilemmas. Thus, open communication, clear information flows, and accessible decision-making processes are very important for developing an ethical climate within the organization (Gillespie & Mann, 2004).

However, the fact that the egoism dimension did not correlate as strongly with information visibility suggests that egoistic behavior may still persist in the workplace even in high-visibility environments. This points to the need for further strategies to combat self-interested behavior through leadership, employee engagement, and training in ethical decision-making (Brown & Treviño, 2006).

## Implications of the Findings

A good level of visibility in organizational information and a favorable ethical climate of the current study described a good, supportive ethical working environment among line agencies in Sulu. High rating of information visibility is said to be driven mainly by this driver, that agencies are indeed establishing an open system to facilitate the openness of the workplace, leading employees to better understanding, increased commitment, and a reduction of uncertainty. Moreover, the ethical climate represents the commitment of an organization to moral principles, and this commitment results in positive organizational outcomes, including employee satisfaction, retention, and compliance with regulations.

These findings suggest a potential benefit of promoting organizational transparency and ensuring that ethical standards are reinforced. More information may become visible to line agencies in Sulu, which would have the opportunity to enhance their ethical standing as well as improve their overall performance and employee morale. Implications are more general for public sector agencies across the Philippines and similar contexts, where transparency and ethical practices are often associated with improved governance and public trust.



The current study provides insight into the information-visibility-and-ethical-climate relationship, but it has also spawned avenues for further discovery. The future directions of such research may be as follows:

**Longitudinal Studies:** This study was cross-sectional in nature, capturing data at only one point in time. A longitudinal study could examine how changes in organizational information visibility over time might affect ethical climate and other organizational outcomes.

**Investigating Organizational Interventions:** Future research could examine how specific organizational interventions, such as leadership training, changes in information systems, or ethics programs, affect both information visibility and ethical climate over time.

## Conclusion

This study indicates that information visibility and ethical climate play a critical role in shaping perceptions and behaviors among employees in line-agencies in Sulu. Transparency and ethics, therefore, become the main themes that foster an environment for the development of organizational trust and integrity. Nevertheless, demographic factors such as age and gender indicate that the perception of ethical behavior might be more complex and thus requires further investigation. The findings call for sustained efforts to foster openness, fairness, and accountability within organizational systems in order to build a stronger, more ethical workforce.

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