



# A Comparative Analysis of Accounting Ethics in Decision Making between Private and Public Organizations: A Case Study of Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania

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## Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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## ABSTRACT

Ethics in organizations is a matter of great interest to those entrusted to run the organizations. The purpose of this study was to conduct a comparative analysis of accounting ethics in decision making between private and public organizations within Morogoro Municipality, aiming to explain how ethical standards are maintained and perceived in these differing organizational contexts. It was

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guided by four objectives which were to determine the extent to which there is objectivity, to determine the extent to which there is integrity in decision making by private and public organizations in Morogoro Municipality, to determine the extent to which there is professional competence in decision making by private and public organizations in Morogoro Municipality, to determine the extent to which there is confidentiality in decision making by private and public organizations in Morogoro Municipality.

The study used a descriptive research design. The target population of this study comprised personnel who are directly or indirectly involved with accounting practices in private and public organizations. The sample size for this study was 176 respondents. Descriptive statistics and t-tests were used to analyze quantitative data. The findings indicate that while both sectors value ethical principles, private organizations generally exhibit higher levels of commitment to objectivity, professional competence, confidentiality, and ethical behavior. In contrast, public organizations show a stronger inclination towards accountability. To address these differences, private organizations should focus on enhancing ethical training, fostering accountability, investing in professional development, and strengthening confidentiality policies. Public organizations, on the other hand, should develop targeted ethical training, promote a strong ethical culture, invest in professional skills development, and review their confidentiality policies to better align with sector-specific needs.

*Keywords: Accounting ethics; private organizations and public organizations.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The importance of maintaining ethical standards in accounting cannot be overstated. Ethical breaches in accounting can lead to severe consequences, including damage to reputations, financial losses, and erosion of public trust. High-profile corporate scandals and unethical practices by prominent accounting firms have highlighted the need for a stringent ethical framework to safeguard the integrity of financial information Nnko [1]. In this context, accounting ethics extends beyond mere adherence to standards; it involves a commitment to moral principles that guide decision-making and foster transparency and accountability.

Ethics, as defined by Thilly [2], encompasses the science of right and wrong, duty, moral principles, and conduct. Butts and Rich [3] describe ethics as a branch of philosophy concerned with ideal human behavior and the well-being of individuals and communities. Resnik, David B. [4] emphasizes that ethical norms vary across disciplines and institutions, tailored to promote trust and coordinate actions effectively. This perspective is essential for understanding how ethics applies in different organizational settings, including the public and private sectors.

In the Tanzanian context, ethical behavior in accounting is influenced by various factors, including local cultural norms and the specific

challenges faced by organizations. The accounting profession in Tanzania, guided by the International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants (IESBA), adheres to principles such as integrity, objectivity, professional competence, confidentiality, and professional behavior. These principles are intended to uphold the profession's responsibility to act in the public interest and mitigate unethical conduct.

However, unethical behavior remains a significant issue. Historical accounting scandals and the rise of international business networks have exposed vulnerabilities in both public and private sectors, revealing the need for effective ethical practices and enforcement Toms, S. [5]. Despite the existence of codes of ethics, ethical malpractice persists, underscoring the need for ongoing vigilance and improvement Webley & Werner, [6] and Newberg, [7].

This study aimed to conduct a comparative analysis of accounting ethics between private and public organizations within Morogoro Municipality. By examining the ethical frameworks and practices in these sectors, this research seeks to contribute to a better understanding of how ethics is perceived and implemented in varying organizational contexts. Through this comparative analysis, we hope to identify key areas where improvements can be made and provide recommendations for promoting a stronger ethical culture in accounting across both sectors.

## 1.1 Research Objectives

### 1.1.1 General objective

The general objective of this study is to conduct a comparative analysis of accounting ethics in decision making between private and public organizations in Morogoro Municipality.

### 1.1.2 Specific objectives

- i. To determine the extent to which there is objectivity in decision making by private and public organizations in Morogoro Municipality.
- ii. To determine the extent to which there is integrity in decision making by private and public organizations in Morogoro Municipality.
- iii. To determine the extent to which there is professional competence in decision making by private and public organizations in Morogoro Municipality.
- iv. To determine the extent to which there is confidentiality in decision making by private and public organizations in Morogoro Municipality.

## 1.2 Hypothesis

- i. H<sub>0</sub>: There is no difference between the private and public sectors on objectivity in decision making by private and public organizations in Morogoro Municipality.
- ii. H<sub>0</sub>: There is no difference between the private and public sectors on integrity in decision making by private and public organizations in Morogoro Municipality.
- iii. H<sub>0</sub>: There is no difference between the private and public sectors on professional competence in decision making by private and public organizations in Morogoro Municipality.
- iv. H<sub>0</sub>: There is no difference between the private and public sectors on confidentiality in decision making by private and public organizations in Morogoro Municipality.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### 2.1 Ethics

Ethics encompasses a collection of moral principles that steer human behavior and decision-making, helping to define what is right and wrong. It focuses on the values and standards that individuals and organizations adhere to in their interactions with others and

society at large. Ethics extends beyond personal conduct; it also pertains to professional practices, with the goal of fostering fairness, integrity, and responsibility Velasquez *et al.*, [8]. In a broader sense, ethics aids in addressing dilemmas by providing a framework for assessing actions and their outcomes [9].

### 2.2 Accounting

Accounting involves the methodical and orderly way of recording, classifying, and summarizing, then interpreting financial transactions against the useful insight it provides to decision makers. It is normally done by maintaining correct and accurate financial records, preparation of financial statements, and carrying out relevant regulations. Weygandt, Kimmel, and Kieso [10] identified accounting as the "language of business," since accounting helps to provide necessary information in the areas of finance that assist stakeholders in making proper decisions. The process helps monitor financial performance, creating further transparency and accountability within an organization's internal management structures.

### 2.3 Accounting Ethics

Ethics in accountancy cover the moral principles and professional standards which support the guidance of the accountant's acts in ensuring that financial reporting is transparent, integrative, and accountable. Ethics in accounting have played a major role in safeguarding the stakeholders' interests and gaining confidence through the general public by preventing fraud, misrepresentation of facts, and manipulation of account books. According to Mintz and Morris [11], ethics in accounting practice bear relevance to ensure that there is veracity and validity of statements with a view of attaining good reputation of the profession. Good ethics in accounting practices secure legality of standards in addition to financial accuracy, always significant during decision-making as noted by Duska *et al.*, [12]. Bowie [13], on the other hand, appends that accounting ethics involve more than mere fulfillment of legality but encompass justice, responsiveness, and promotion of interest to the public in financial disclosure.

### 2.4 Organization

An organization is a structured social unit that is intentionally developed to achieve specific goals through coordinated activities and relationships among people and groups. An organization

would include people systematically working together to attain a set of objectives guided by formal rules, roles, and hierarchies that Daft described [14]. This is the structure that enables organizations to operate with speed and efficiency as the tasks and responsibilities of the groups are divided to ensure the goals are realized. The primary purpose of an organization is to bring resources, competencies, and capabilities together for common objectives accomplished.

## 2.5 Public Organization

As Lienert [15] reveals, the public sector embraces all units that make up "government" and public enterprises. Here, the "General government" provides goods and services on a non-market basis, while public corporations serve with a market orientation for their production and services. As Rainey [16] points out, even though public organizations have a great number of characteristics in common with private business and nonprofit organizations, they are also distinctly different in a number of important ways. First, public organizations are subject to the legal authority of governmental executives, legislators, and judges, who exercise formal authority over them. Second, public organizations exist within a system of constitutional requirements, law, and political dynamics that shape in different ways the way they organize and manage themselves. Aykac and Metin, [17] argue that, by definition, public organizations are formed to pursue public goals and carry out functions. The uniqueness of the public organizations emanates from the purpose they serve in problem-solving regarding public needs and public order. For the purpose of this research, the public sector is considered to encompass both the government and the public organizations that are subject to oversight from the government and legislature.

## 2.6 Private Organization

A private organization is the one that is independently owned, controlled, and the legitimacy was gained through finance by the owner or the owners themselves, apart from the government. Some of the business classifications that belong to this category are for-profit corporations, non-profit organizations, and mutual organizations. According to The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, [18] private entities play a very important role in the setting of a market economy. They consist of

all those businesses and organizations that are independently owned and operated with their major drive for profit. In relation to the public sector, which is financed and controlled by the government, private sectors enjoy relatively high levels of autonomy.

### 2.6.1 The extent to which there is objectivity in decision making by private and public organizations

Renaldo *et al.* [19] investigated the development of intermediate accounting teaching materials, namely financial accounting and accounting standards. This research seeks to provide effective teaching materials for intermediate accounting, with a particular emphasis on financial accounting and accounting standards. Good and thoroughly structured teaching materials are very important in preparing students to understand and apply complex concepts in financial accounting and follow relevant accounting standards. This research method is a study of literature, analysis of learning needs, development of the effectiveness of teaching materials, and evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching materials developed. A literature study was conducted to gather information about the latest developments in the field of financial accounting and accounting standards, as well as to study existing teaching materials. The outcomes of developing educational materials demonstrate the significance of accounting standards in guaranteeing the correctness, relevance, and dependability of financial statements. These standards play an important role in ensuring that financial reports comply with legal obligations and instilling trust among investors and other stakeholders involved in the decision-making process.

### 2.6.2 The extent to which there is integrity in decision making by private and public organizations

Abbas and Ismail [20] discuss the impact of independent commissioners, audit committees, and firm size on financial statement integrity. The purpose of this study is to determine how independent commissioners, internal auditors, and business size impact the financial statement reputability of firms listed on the Indonesia Stock Exchange that produce fundamental industrial and chemical products. The results showed that having an impartial board of commissioners had a considerable favorable influence on financial statement openness, but having an audit

committee and a huge business had no meaningful impact. According to the data analysis study, the audit committee improved the accuracy of the company's financial statements. Meanwhile, one of the audit committee's objectives is to improve the quality of the company's financial reports so that the information in the statements is current and reliable. Internal auditors cannot enhance the integrity of the company's financial statements using data analysis testing findings. Meanwhile, one of the internal auditors' objectives is to enhance the accuracy of the company's finances so that the financial statement information remains current and reliable. The audit committee cannot improve the reliability of the company's financial statements based on the results of the data analysis study.

### **2.6.3 The extent to which there is professional competence in decision making by private and public organizations**

Rogo and Perica [21] investigated the mediation function of the code of ethics in Croatia by assessing emotional professional commitment and accounting ethics principles. Accounting ethics has developed as a serious socioeconomic issue in response to recent scams that have destroyed public faith in financial statements and the accountants who create them. As a result, ethical corporate practices must be encouraged. This article examines the effect of affective professional commitment of accountants on their perception of the importance of accounting ethics principles application with the mediation of the Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants by ISEBA. As with other professions, some professional accountants have an intrinsic sense of morality, while others should check the Code of Ethics. This illustrates the direct and indirect link (mediated by the Code of Ethics) between affective professional dedication and the execution of accounting ethics standards. Our findings show that accountants with greater degrees of emotional and professional commitment are more likely to recognize the value of accounting ethical standards. To reduce unethical behavior among professional accountants, the fundamental accounting ethics principles (integrity, objectivity, professional competence and due care, confidentiality, and professional behavior) should be promoted, and consulting the Code of Ethics should be encouraged.

### **2.6.4 The extent to which there is confidentiality in decision making by private and public organizations**

Zwaid *et al* [22], assessed the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of accounting information reflected in enhancing the quality of financial inspections by using hotels as a case study. The goal of this research was to study the elements of the security of accounting information and how these impact the quality of financial reporting in industrial corporate reports. Second, to have access to the most important problems facing industrial companies in applied financial reporting in the case of confidential information. Third, to identify the issues encountered by industrial companies that have implemented accounting information security measures. To achieve the study's goal, the researcher created a questionnaire with twenty-one points on each side, which was analyzed using statistics software (SPSS). The findings indicate that providing high-quality information is central to financial reporting. Authorizers must prepare and deliver information that meets the safety requirements of the accounting information property. The supply of suitable and accurate information is one of the key features of accounting information, the secrecy of information ideas connected to delivering high-quality information cannot alter or modify its contents unless by authorized security measures. It means disclosure of secure information must be free of any form of manipulation. Hotel employees should be encouraged to be hands-on, critical, and helpful in promoting quality, security, and information safeguarding.

## **2.7 Research Gap**

While existing literaturein has explored the differences and similarities in accounting ethics between private and public organizations, a significant research gap remains, particularly in the context of Tanzania. Most studies have focused on developed economies, providing insights into ethical practices across sectors in those settings Toms, S. [5] and Awolowo *et al.*, [23]. However, what is still missing is an in-depth analysis of how accounting ethics is practiced in Tanzanian organizations, both private and public. Specifically, we need to understand how factors such as objectivity, integrity, professional competence, and confidentiality influence ethical decision-making processes in these organizations.

Research indicates that cultural, economic, and regulatory contexts significantly shape ethical practices in accounting Nnko, [24] and van Driel, [25]. However, there is a paucity of studies examining these factors within Tanzania, which has unique challenges and norms that may affect ethical behavior in accounting. This gap in research limits our understanding of how accounting ethics is applied in Tanzania, emphasizing the need for studies that investigate the specific ethical challenges and practices within this context. Addressing this gap could provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and practitioners aiming to enhance ethical standards in the accounting profession in Tanzania.

## 2.8 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by institutional theory. The theory argues that social institutions (encompassing norms, rules, and cultural expectations) shape organizational behavior, including accounting practices. In this comparative analysis, it shows how private and public organizations handle accounting ethics and differences in their approaches. Institutional theory was first introduced in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century with Philip Selznick showed how organizations gradually become more than just tools for achieving goals Selznick [26] This theory is particularly relevant in understanding how external pressures from these institutions influence decision-making processes within accounting firms and organizations, potentially impacting their ethical conduct. According to Prasad and Prasad [27], institutional theory highlights how the desire to conform to industry standards and gain legitimacy within the broader institutional environment can drive organizations to adopt specific accounting practices, even when these practices may raise ethical concerns. For instance, a company might use aggressive accounting methods commonly employed in its industry, despite the questionable ethical implications of such practices.

External forces, such as regulatory bodies and professional associations, exert pressure on organizations to adopt particular accounting practices. These pressures can manifest formally through regulations or informally through industry norms and expectations Prasad & Prasad [27]. This dynamic underscores the impact of institutional environments on accounting behaviors and the potential for ethical dilemmas arising from the need to align with prevailing standards.

### 2.8.1 Applicability in ethical decision-making

Understanding how institutions influence accounting practices is crucial for recognizing potential biases and conflicts of interest that may arise under such pressures. By becoming more aware of these influences, accountants can strive to make decisions grounded in ethical principles rather than merely conforming to external expectations. Institutional theory also encourages the exploration of alternative frameworks that support ethical practices within the accounting profession. This could involve advocating for greater transparency and stakeholder engagement or exploring accounting standards that prioritize ethical considerations alongside financial performance.

Institutional theory thus provides a valuable lens for evaluating the ethical landscape of the accounting profession. It helps identify how external pressures and institutional influences can shape decision-making processes and potentially lead to unethical behavior. By understanding these dynamics, accountants can better navigate complex situations and maintain a commitment to ethical practices in their work.

## 3. METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

Research design is the general plan of how the researcher will go about answering his/her research question(s) Saunders, *et al.*, [28]. This study employed a descriptive survey research design, which is particularly effective for capturing the current state of accounting ethics in Tanzanian organizations. By using this design, the collection of data from a diverse sample of participants across both private and public sectors was captured. This approach enables the identification of trends, patterns, and common ethical challenges faced by accountants in Morogoro Municipality. Descriptive surveys are advantageous for their ability to provide a broad overview of participants' perceptions and practices, thereby enriching our understanding of the ethical landscape in accounting Creswell, [29].

### 3.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Morogoro Municipality situated in the Morogoro Region in the Eastern zone in the country of the United Republic of Tanzania. The sample of the study has been taken specifically from public and

private institutions available in Morogoro Municipality. The location is purposively selected for the study because of regional economic significance, local context and representation, and the presence of key institutions.

### 3.3 Targeted Population

The target population in research is defined as the entire set of individuals or units to which the researcher wishes to generalize the findings of the study [30]. The target population for this study comprises individuals directly and indirectly involved in accounting practices within private and public organizations in Morogoro Municipality. Direct involvement includes personnel such as accountants and auditors who actively engage in financial reporting and compliance, while indirect involvement encompasses management and IT professionals who influence accounting processes. This approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of accounting ethics by capturing insights from various roles that shape accounting practices in both sectors. The distribution of the target population from private and public organizations is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1. Distribution of the target population**

S/No.	Nature of Organization	Frequency
1.	Private Organization	159
2.	Public Organization	86
<b>Total</b>		<b>245</b>

*Source: Field Data (2024)*

### 3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

#### 3.4.1 Sample size

Sample size refers to the number of participants or observations included in a research study Rea & Parker [31]. In this study, the sample size for respondents was determined by using the proposed formula by Taro Yamane sample size formula of 1967:

$$n = N / 1 + N (e)^2$$

Where  $n$ = corrected sample size,  $N$ =total population of the study area,  $1$ =constant, and  $e$ =Margin of error or error limit or level of precision ( $MoE$ )=0.05, which was (5%).

#### 3.4.2 Sampling Techniques

Sampling techniques are the methods used to select a subset (sample) of individuals or units from a larger population [32]. This sample is then used to collect data and draw inferences about the entire population. Choosing the appropriate

sampling technique is crucial for ensuring the representativeness and validity of research findings. The study used a stratified random sampling technique to compare accounting ethics between private and public organizations in Morogoro Municipality. The population was divided into two strata: one consisting of accountants and auditors, and the other comprising the rest of the management. This approach ensured that both key stakeholders in financial reporting and broader managerial roles were adequately represented, allowing for a more balanced and insightful analysis of ethical practices across organizational types.

### 3.5 Methods for Data Collection

The method that will be used in data collection for this study will be questionnaires.

#### 3.5.1 Questionnaires

A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions designed to gather information from respondents. It is used in surveys to collect data on various topics, often involving opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the target population [33]. This method will be used to collect data from staff of private and public organizations in Morogoro municipality. Through this method, data on objectivity in decision-making was collected using a scale developed by Shin, Kim, and Yoon [34], Data on professional competence in decision-making will be collected using a scale developed by Busto, Espina, Palazuelos, and Montoya del corte [35], then Data on confidentiality in decision making will be collected using a scale developed by Stoughton and Whelan [36] also Data on integrity in decision making will be collected using a scale developed by Suryadi, Sumiati, and Nisa [37]. These scales were adopted and modified to fit our study.

### 3.6 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of analyzing, cleaning, manipulating, and modeling data to extract relevant information, draw conclusions, and support decision-making (Bowen, 2009). To analyze data for the comparative analysis of accounting ethics between private and public organizations in Morogoro Municipality, t-tests were utilized. This statistical method is appropriate as it allows for the comparison of means between two groups, helping to determine if significant differences exist in accounting ethics practices between the two sectors.

**Table 2. Distribution of the Sample Size**

S/No.	Nature of Organization	Frequency	No. of Respondents
1.	Private Organization	16	112
2.	Public Organization	9	64
<b>Total</b>		25	176

Source: Field Data (2024)

### 3.7 Ethical Consideration

Ethical considerations in research are defined as the principles and guidelines that researchers ought to follow from the start of a research study to its very completion in order not to violate the rights and welfare of participants, ensure the integrity of research itself, and maintain public confidence. Among the key issues to which the researcher gave priority was permission from the responsible authority before conducting the study, whereby an introductory letter was obtained from Jordan University College and the District Executive Director of Morogoro Municipality. The important issues like privacy and human dignity are observed by the researcher in actions such as not taking pictures in prohibited areas, keeping secrets from respondents, and not taking any material or note without prior permission on purpose by the responsible person.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Objectivity in decision-making is a critical aspect of ethical conduct in both private and public organizations. This section evaluates how respondents from these sectors perceive their objectivity in decision-making, based on a set of statements. The means and T-values for each statement are presented in Table 3.

The data indicating that respondents from private organizations report slightly higher means across various decision-making statements compared to their public sector counterparts suggests a fundamental difference in how individuals perceive their decision-making processes. This trend may align with institutional theory, which posits that the behaviors and practices of organizations are influenced by the environments in which they operate, including norms, values, and regulations Scott, W. R. [38]. In the context of private organizations, a culture that emphasizes competition and efficiency may foster stronger individual commitments to optimal decision-making, as these organizations often prioritize performance metrics and outcomes.

When examining the statement, “Regardless of the circumstances, the focus is always on selecting the best option available” private sector respondents scored a mean of 4.2 compared to 4.0 for public sector respondents, with a T-value of 2.64. This difference underscores a more pronounced commitment to excellence in the private sector, likely driven by the competitive pressures that characterize these environments. Research supports this notion, suggesting that private organizations are often incentivized to innovate and improve efficiency, leading to a culture where choosing the best option is not only encouraged but expected Porter & Heppelmann [39].

About the preference for avoiding “settling for “good enough.” the mean scores of 3.8 for private organizations versus 3.6 for public organizations, along with a T-value of 2.58, further illustrate this trend. The reluctance to settle for mediocrity is indicative of a mindset prevalent in private enterprises, where failure to meet high standards can result in loss of market share or profitability. This aligns with findings from organizational behavior studies that highlight how private entities are more likely to cultivate a culture of high performance and continuous improvement O’Reilly & Tushman, [40].

The inclination to “Patience is maintained for the best option, regardless of how long it takes.” with mean scores of 4.1 for private organizations and 3.9 for public ones, reflects a strategic patience that is often embedded in private sector decision-making. The T-value of 2.36 indicates this inclination is statistically significant. This behavior may be influenced by the long-term focus that many private organizations adopt, as they aim for sustained competitive advantage through informed and deliberate choices Mintzberg, Ahlstrand, & Lampel [41]. In contrast, public organizations may face different pressures, such as political considerations and the need for quicker decision-making, which could explain the lower mean score.



**Table 3. Objectivity in decision making**

S/No.	Statements	MEAN		
		Private organization	Public organization	T-value
1.	Regardless of the circumstances, the focus is always on selecting the best option available	4.2	4	2.64
2.	There is an alternative for avoiding settling for "good enough."	3.8	3.6	2.58
3.	Patience is maintained for the best option, regardless of how long it takes.	4.1	3.9	2.36
4.	The goal is to be a good decision-maker who consistently finds the best solution.	4.3	4.1	2.64
5.	When faced with a choice, it's important to consider all possible options, including those that may not be immediately clear.	3.9	3.7	2.36
6.	A decision is not made without thoroughly considering all available options.	4	3.8	2.5
7.	All alternatives are carefully considered before a decision is made.	4.1	3.9	2.36
	<b>The average score on objectivity</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>2.49</b>

Source: Field Data (2024)

The aspiration to be a good decision-maker, with mean scores of 4.3 for private versus 4.1 for public sector respondents, further emphasizes the strong desire for effective decision-making in both environments. The T-value of 2.64 reinforces the notion that while both sectors value good decision-making, private organizations may have a stronger intrinsic motivation, likely driven by the demands of the market and stakeholder expectations Kaplan & Norton [42].

Similarly, the consideration of alternatives, as indicated by the mean scores of 3.9 for private organizations and 3.7 for public organizations, suggests that private sector respondents are more proactive in exploring possibilities. This behavior aligns with the adaptive nature emphasized in institutional theory, where organizations that are more responsive to their environments tend to thrive DiMaggio & Powell, [43]. The slightly higher score in the private sector indicates a greater emphasis on comprehensive analysis before decisions are made.

Finally, the careful consideration of options and the time taken to deliberate before making decisions, with mean scores of 4.0 for private and 3.8 for public organizations, again highlight the thoroughness characteristic of private organizations. The significant T-values, both at 2.50 for the former and 2.36 for the latter, suggest that while both sectors value careful deliberation, this trait is somewhat more pronounced in private organizations. This tendency can be attributed to the competitive landscape that drives private employees to ensure that decisions are well-informed and strategically sound, ultimately fostering an environment where careful analysis is not just appreciated but necessary for success.

**Concluding Remark:** The mean score for objectivity in decision-making was significantly higher in private organizations ( $M = 4.1$ ) compared to public organizations ( $M = 3.9$ , with a t-value of 2.49 and p-value of 0.0137. This suggests that respondents in private organizations perceive their decision-making processes as more objective than those in public organizations. This difference may reflect variations in organizational practices and cultures between the sectors, with private organizations potentially employing more rigorous or transparent methods that enhance perceived objectivity in their decision-making.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study reveals a stronger emphasis on ethical behavior among respondents from private organizations compared to their public sector counterparts. Private organization employees consistently report higher levels of commitment to honesty, integrity, ethical decision-making, competence, responsibility, and compassion. This suggests that private sector environments may foster a more pronounced ethical culture, which could be attributed to more rigorous ethical standards and practices. The findings underscore the need for public organizations to enhance their focus on ethical principles and practices to bridge the perceived gap in ethical commitment between the two sectors.

### 5.1 For Private Organisations

Ethical decision making for private organisations should be enriched through comprehensive ethical training programs. During such training, the integrity, objectivity, and confidentiality of the decision-making procedures should be emphasized. Regular workshops and seminars can also be organized on such areas of concern to ensure that ethical principles are continuously observed in work.

While private organizations generally demonstrate a strong trend towards ethical conduct, the incorporation of accountability in organization culture could lead to increased ethical behavior. Well-establishing mechanisms for accountability will help employees be responsible and accountable for their actions, which can allow transparency and build trust within an organization. This will result in the betterment of the cultural shift in ethical behavior and decision-making.

This goes a long way in ensuring that high levels of professional competence among employees are maintained through continuous professional development. Organizations should provide sessions on training in leadership, innovation, and resource management. When employees have these skills, they are better able to understand and make ethical choices in their performance of responsibilities.

Finally, private organizations should periodically review their confidentiality policy and strengthen it to ensure the situations of mistrust and leakage of sensitive information do not occur. The employees must be sensitized and trained in

regard to data privacy to reduce the risk of data breach.

## 5.2 For Public Organizations

Public organizations should focus on the development of ethics training programs with specific scenarios, emanating from their pool of ethical challenges. Such ethics training programs need to specially focus on increasing integrity, objectivity, and making ethical decisions since these will be basic in maintaining public trusts and accountability.

This will be encouraged by infusing ethical principles into the organizational mission and values of the public organization. Leaders should be examples of ethical behavior, while employees are continuously given opportunities for discussion and reflection regarding ethical dilemmas. In this way, ethics challenges are managed in a more proactive manner.

Public organizations have an equal need to invest in professional development programs for building up competence in decision-making. Training should be given in aspects like leadership, innovation, and effective resource management so that employees become more professionally efficient and well-equipped to meet ethical challenges.

Finally, public organizations need to revisit and revise their policies on confidentiality to make certain they are strict and complete. Training in data privacy and the culture of confidentiality is needed, among the implementation of systems that will surely protect sensitive information. It would be a guarantee that the public organization will be able to keep at the best level as regards ethical practices and protection of integrity in its operation.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the observed gap in ethical commitment, it is recommended that public organizations adopt more robust ethical standards and practices akin to those in the private sector. This could involve implementing comprehensive ethics training programs, developing clearer ethical guidelines, and fostering a culture of accountability and transparency. By enhancing their focus on ethical behavior and integrating best practices from the private sector, public organizations can strengthen their ethical culture and improve decision-making processes across their operations.

## 7. AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

There are a couple of areas that require further explanation in understanding ethical decision-making.

- i. First, there is a need to consider how objectivity in decision-making fluctuates across sectors other than private and public organizations; for instance, NGOs, international agencies, and institutions of learning. This may then highlight challenges and best practices related to different sectors.
- ii. It is again the study of the growth of integrity in decision-making within private and public organizations that will yield information on the long-term success of ethical training programs and cultural changes.
- iii. Another research direction may pertain to investigating how alternative levels of professional decision-making competence impact on general levels of capability of private and public sector organizations. This study would enable an identification of a 'competence-ethical decision-making outcome' function.
- iv. It would also be interesting to study how confidentiality practices actually protect sensitive information in both private and public organizations. By grasping the respective strengths and weaknesses of current practices, future policies and training could be better fitted to protecting sensitive data across all sectors.

## DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of this manuscript.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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