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## Research Article

### Strengthening Global Fire Safety Governance: Examining Integrity and Accountability Measures in Bureau of Fire Protection Bacnotan La Union

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## ABSTRACT

This study evaluates the integrity and accountability mechanisms of the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) in Bacnotan, La Union. Using a quantitative approach, data were collected through a validated and pilot-tested survey instrument distributed to 90 stakeholders, including barangay officials, community members, and business sector representatives. Descriptive statistics and ANOVA were used to assess stakeholder perceptions across six governance dimensions: code of conduct, transparency, responsiveness, anti-corruption, public engagement, and performance review. Results indicated generally favorable perceptions, with the business sector reporting the highest satisfaction. However, relatively lower scores in anti-corruption suggest areas for improvement. The study highlights the importance of ethical leadership, community engagement, and transparency in public safety governance. Recommendations include enhancing feedback mechanisms, reinforcing anti-corruption initiatives, and scaling best practices across other regions.

**Keywords:** BFP, Engagement, Measures, Integrity, Accountability, Ethical professionalism

## Introduction

To preserve the confidence of the public mass and guarantee the efficient provision of services, government institutions must be honest and accountable. The Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) has been instrumental in protecting communities from fire-related events and disasters in recent years. Evaluating the BFP's accountability and integrity is crucial given its enormous duties in order to make sure that it meets the expectations of the public it serves

and functions in an ethical and transparent manner.

Research particularly addressing the integrity and accountability procedures used by the BFP is notably lacking, despite the organization's vital function. Prior research has brought attention to corruption and mismanagement in a number of government organizations, but the BFP has little empirical support.

While existing literature has explored the broader themes of integrity and accountability

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in public administration, the unique challenges and practices of the BFP remain under-researched. This study aimed to bridge the gap by providing a comprehensive assessment of the BFP's internal controls, ethical practices, and accountability mechanisms. By focusing on this specific institution, the research offered valuable insights that can inform policy and practice within the BFP and other similar agencies.

Conducting a thorough review of the BFP's systems for accountability, standards of ethics, and internal controls was carried out to attain the purpose of this study, which was to narrow the gap by. Consequently, this study yielded crucial information that could potentially strengthen and be useful in modifying the policy and practice at the BFP.

This study aimed to evaluate the current state of accountability and integrity in the BFP. This included evaluating how well the laws in place now are working, identifying areas for improvement, and offering recommendations to encourage transparency and moral conduct. A quantitative approach was utilized in the study by using quantitative surveys administered on the general public related to BFP.

In order to contextualize the ideas of honesty and responsibility in public administration, this paper started with a review of the literature. Following that, the methodology section described the data collection techniques and research strategy. Following a presentation of quantitative analysis results, the findings section discussed the implications for the BFP and public sector governance in general. For the BFP to continue serving the public in an ethical and efficient manner, the paper's conclusion included specific recommendations for improving accountability and integrity inside the organization.

By conducting this study, we aimed to provide a robust framework for assessing and improving the integrity and accountability of the BFP, ultimately contributing to better governance and public trust in this vital institution. In the end, this study aimed to support the principles of good governance in public safety. This is especially true in administrative contexts where environmental problems require customized solutions.

## Literature Review

Integrity and responsibility are the cornerstones of good governance. This is especially true in public institutions with a social role, such as the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) in the Philippines. The BFP's mission is to protect life, property, and the environment through fire prevention, suppression, and emergency response. However, the unit's success The job also largely depends on public trust. Considering honesty and responsibility in operations and interactions with the community. Honesty in this context It means consistent quality practice. Honesty and transparency while accountability ensures that actions and decisions are responsible to citizens and stakeholders. Research consistently shows that institutions that raise standards of honesty and accountability are more likely to gain public trust. Improve performance and improve organizational results (Jones & Smith, 2022; Morales et al., 2023)

The relationship between honesty and accountability is widely recognized in the governance literature. According to Doe and Smith (2020), accountability is often seen as a consequence of transparency. It serves as a mechanism for verification by stakeholders. Transparency makes decision-making processes and resource allocation visible. It enables government partners and institutions to monitor actions and decisions. This openness leads to higher levels of trust. and subsequently increase public satisfaction (Gonzalez et al., 2022). In the case of BFP, transparency is especially important. Because the role of disaster response and fire safety directly affects the lives and safety of the public, a study by Lim and colleagues (2020) shows that transparency is one of the most effective tools for reducing fire safety. Corruption and neutrality in public institutions When the decision-making process is open and accessible It is difficult for unethical behavior to flourish. Because stakeholders can immediately identify abnormalities.

One of the key factors in maintaining integrity in government institutions is having a code of ethics. A well-defined code of ethics provides employees with clear performance standards. and set expectations for behavior and decision-making. Garcia and colleagues (2021) empha-

size that codes of conduct in government agencies such as the BFP serve as guidelines for employees. This reduces the risk of corruption and misconduct. However, having such a code alone is not enough. Ordonez and Santos (2022) argue that regular training and reinforcement of these codes is necessary to ensure that employees strictly adhere to the principles described in the Code of Conduct. Without regular training and reminders Employees may fail to fully comply with ethical standards. As a result, the effectiveness of the principles decreases.

Another important part of honesty and accountability is the performance appraisal system. In the public sector, regular performance appraisals are a tool to measure the effectiveness and efficiency of the work done. To ensure that the agency's actions are consistent with ethical standards. According to Garcia and colleagues (2023), indicators include both quantitative measures (such as response time or number of fire protections) and qualitative information (such as community response or quality trend measures). are included in agency performance for BFP, such assessments can provide valuable insights into strengths and areas for improvement in both performance and quality. Performance reviews can also promote a culture of accountability. This is because they hold employees accountable not only for their performance. but also, to adhere to ethical standards and transparency (Anderson et al., 2021).

Furthermore, accountability mechanisms such as public meetings and feedback are critical to ensuring greater engagement with local stakeholders. Wilson and colleagues (2021) argue that these measures empower to citizens by giving them a direct voice in evaluating government employees. and make various institutions respond to their needs. Regular meetings and feedback under the BFP can help identify areas where the agency is improving and needs improvement. Ramos and colleagues (2020) found that fire departments with strong accountability mechanisms including public relations mechanisms They tend to have higher levels of public satisfaction and higher efficiency. These findings highlight the importance of a comprehensive governance system. which the people are not only the recipients of services

but also participates in organizing those services.

In addition to transparency and performance evaluation Anti-corruption measures are also important for maintaining the integrity of public institutions. Corruption can significantly undermine the credibility of public safety agencies. Especially when it comes to resource allocation. Personnel assignment or the Emergency Response Decision Mendoza and Others (2020) argue for an anti-corruption framework that includes measures such as whistleblower protection. independent verification and clear reporting channels It is necessary to ensure that unethical behavior is quickly detected and corrected. In this regard, Bautista and colleagues (2021) emphasize the importance of leadership in promoting an anti-corruption culture. Leaders who model ethical behavior Emphasize honesty in decision making They set the tone for the rest of the organization. By sending a signal that unethical practices will not be tolerated.

The role of leadership in promoting quality in public institutions cannot be overstated. Leaders who value fairness, impartiality, and transparency in decision-making promote a culture of integrity in their organizations. According to Tan and colleagues (2022), ethical leadership does not only set a good example for employees. But it also creates an environment that promotes ethical behavior at all levels. Park and Lee (2023) further argue that leadership development programs focus on developing ethical decision-making skills. It is especially important in sectors such as fire safety. Decisions made in high-risk situations can have important implications for public safety.

Studies also show that when leaders prioritize responsibility and ethical behavior, It will lead to greater organizational morale and greater public trust in the agency's ability to perform its duties (Smith et al., 2021). Leadership in BFP is more than just managing resources and ensuring delivery. Only timely service It is also about being an example of transparent, fair and ethical decision-making. Especially in emergency situations Leaders who demonstrate these qualities inspire their employees and the public they serve.

In summary, integrating honesty, Integrating accountability, transparency, and strong leadership into the Fire Protection Bureau's operational and ethical framework is essential to increasing efficiency and maintaining public trust. by strengthening accountability mechanisms. Strengthening ethical standards through training and by promoting a transparent decision-making process, BFP can increase its ability to serve the people of Bacnotan, La Union, and beyond, as this review demonstrates. Aligning these principles with BFP's daily operations will not only improve the institution's performance. But it also contributes to a more ethically responsive public safety system.

## Materials and Methods

This study employed a **quantitative research design** to evaluate stakeholder perceptions of the integrity and accountability of the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) in Bacnotan, La Union. As Creswell (2014) notes, quantitative approaches are appropriate for measuring variables and analyzing patterns across large populations using numerical data.

The research utilized **descriptive and inferential statistical methods** to assess stakeholder opinions on six key governance dimensions: code of conduct, transparency, responsiveness, anti-corruption, public engagement, and performance review. The survey questionnaire was designed based on constructs identified in relevant literature (Schwartz, 2020; Morales et al., 2023) and aligned with public sector governance indicators.

To ensure **content validity**, the initial version of the instrument was reviewed by two public administration experts and two fire safety practitioners. Based on their feedback, several items were refined for clarity and contextual relevance. A **pilot test** was conducted with 15 individuals from a neighboring municipality not involved in the final sample. The instrument demonstrated high internal consistency, with a **Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.87**.

A **purposive sampling method** was used to select 90 respondents: 30 barangay officials, 30 community members, and 30 representatives from the business sector. These partici-

pants were chosen because of their direct interactions with BFP operations and their ability to provide informed assessments. As Palinkas et al. (2015) point out, purposive sampling is particularly effective in selecting individuals with rich contextual knowledge relevant to the research topic.

Participants were informed of the study's purpose and provided informed consent prior to data collection. Surveys were self-administered and collected in person over two weeks.

Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were used to summarize the responses. To **identify significant differences in perceptions** across stakeholder groups, a **one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)** was performed for each governance dimension. A significance level of **p < 0.05** was used to determine statistical significance. These methods allowed the researchers to draw comparisons across sectors and identify areas of convergence or divergence in stakeholder perceptions.

### **Perception of Integrity and Accountability**

#### *Code of Conduct*

Integrity is often the foundation of public institutions and the fire department is no exception. BFP conduct, including staff performance reviews, was rated by respondents. Research on adherence and training for workers revealed that upholding the credibility of institutions and public trust depends on having clear ethical standards and consistently enforcing codes of conduct (Schwartz, 2020). The investigation concentrated on how BFP complies with these requirements in its daily operations.

#### *Transparency*

In order to ensure accountability and foster public trust, government transparency is essential. Participants had the opportunity to score the BFP's policy communication. How successful are project updates, financial reporting, and decision-making? More public participation and fewer potential for corruption are recognized to result from transparency (Bovens et al., 2020). The inquiry used BFP's initiatives to educate the public and streamline its operations as a case study.

### *Responsiveness*

This section examined BFP's handling of complaints and concerns from stakeholders. Organizations that listen to the community and act quickly and effectively to meet its demands are said to be responsive. Research indicates that organizations that communicate openly with stakeholders and the general public foster more cooperation and confidence (Houghton & Sheehan, 2021). This series of questions evaluated BFP's general dedication to stakeholder satisfaction and readiness to handle ethical issues.

### *Anti-Corruption*

Strong measures must be put in place by the BFP to tackle corruption, which is still a significant issue in many public organizations. This section of the inquiry evaluated the ways in which BFP employs procedures and policies, like data protection, to stop fraud. Prompt action in corruption cases and transparency in financial transactions Anti-corruption efforts are critical to maintaining the BFP's legitimacy, as corruption undermines public trust and hampers its effectiveness. (Puspitasari, 2021).

### *Public Engagement*

The public is encouraging BFP and communities where it serves to have an open discussion. BFP's attempts to start environmental awareness campaigns were assessed in this study. Using a philosophical platform and collaborating with neighborhood organizations to engage the public It is well recognized that successful public engagement tactics boost participation and community trust. In the area of fire safety, this is particularly crucial because emergency situations require public participation (Seppala et al., 2019).

### *Performance Review*

The final item examined BFP's efforts to evaluate and improve performance. This included evaluating whether BFP continuously measures performance using clear performance indicators, how well are these metrics shared with stakeholders and incorporate feedback to ensure how well performance can be improved. Performance monitoring is important for BFP to remain responsive to the

public and continue to improve performance (Kendall et al., 2021).

The survey process began when researchers gave informed consent to the participants, and informed them of the procedures and conditions for answering the survey. Following this, the researchers scheduled the survey administration based on the respondents' availability. On the day of the survey, all researchers were present to ensure smooth conduct. Participants were provided with the survey questionnaire beforehand to review and prepare their answers. Once the surveys were completed, the researchers tallied the data gathered from the respondents' completed questionnaires.

The information gathered from the respondents was evaluated in descriptive statistics. Statistical treatments such as mean and standard deviation were used. to calculate the average score across eight key dimensions (ethics, transparency, accountability, anti-corruption public participation and performance evaluations). This data provided an overall summary that reflects general perceptions of the BFP's effectiveness, providing insights into how stakeholders view the agency's effectiveness and ethical standards (Bobby, 2021).

The following were the statistical tools used to answer the problem posed in this study:

Mean was a statistical tool used for calculating the weight of questionnaire responses provided by respondents during the actual data collection period.

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\Sigma x}{n}$$

Where:

$\bar{x}$  = sample mean

$\Sigma$  = summation symbol

x = sample value

n = the size of the sample

Standard Deviation was a statistical measurement that determined the amount of variation or dispersion of a set of data relative to its mean and calculated it as the square root of the variance.

$$s = \sqrt{\frac{\Sigma (Xi - \bar{x})^2}{n - 1}}$$

Where:

$s$  = sample standard deviation  
 $n$  = size of the sample  
 $X_i$  = each value from the sample  
 $\bar{x}$  = sample mean

## Results

Level of integrity perceived by stakeholders on the Bureau of Fire Protection in Bacnotan, La Union terms of: code of conduct, transparency, accountability, anti-corruption, public engagement and performance evaluation.

*Table 1. Integrity and Accountability Perceptions by Barangay Officials*

This section presents stakeholder ratings from barangay officials across the six governance dimensions evaluated. Results indicate high scores particularly in **code of conduct** and **responsiveness**, with mean values generally above 4.5

	Indicator	Mean	SD
<b>Code of Conduct</b>			
a. The Bureau of Fire Protection adheres to its established code of conduct.	4.80	0.24	
b. Members of the Bureau demonstrate professionalism while performing their duties.	4.67	0.47	
c. The Bureau takes action against actual violations of rules.	4.77	0.42	
d. To promote good behavior, the Bureau conducts regular training sessions and discussions.	4.73	0.45	
e. The Bureau evaluates how well employees adhere to the code of conduct.	4.63	0.49	
<b>Transparency</b>			
a. The Bureau communicates its policies and actions to the public clearly.	4.63	0.49	
b. The Bureau provides accessible financial reports and budgets.	4.53	0.52	
c. The Bureau formulates and implements all its decisions openly and straightforwardly.	4.47	0.59	
<b>Responsiveness</b>			
a. Officials in the Bureau are accountable for their actions.	4.70	0.46	
b. Individuals can report unethical conduct through established channels.	4.63	0.51	
c. The Bureau addresses concerns raised by stakeholders.	4.60	0.52	
d. The Bureau provides detailed and timely responses to stakeholder inquiries.	4.57	0.58	
e. Regular internal assessments are conducted by the Bureau, and stakeholders are knowledgeable of the outcomes.	4.63	0.51	
<b>Anti-Corruption</b>			
a. It has clear policies aimed at preventing corruption.	4.37	0.62	
b. Prompt action is taken on cases of corruption that are actively pursued and resolved.	4.40	0.64	
c. Anti-corruption measures are enforced at all organizational levels.	4.37	0.62	
d. Corruption issues are regularly reviewed and shared with the public.	4.33	0.67	
<b>Public Engagement</b>			
a. The Bureau initiates programs aimed at enhancing community awareness that are well-organized.	4.37	0.66	
b. Public feedback systems are widely accepted due to their user-friendliness and convenient accessibility.	4.40	0.64	
c. Collaborations with local organizations are valued, leading to improved actions and better services delivered.	4.33	0.67	
d. Public engagement initiatives are designed to include diverse community groups.	4.43	0.59	
<b>Performance Review</b>			
a. The Bureau's productivity is measured against specific, predetermined indicators.	4.63	0.51	

Indicator	Mean	SD
b. Stakeholders are informed about the evaluation outcomes of performance.	4.53	0.52
c. The Bureau is constantly striving to learn from insights and improve its practices.	4.40	0.64
d. The performance metrics are regularly reviewed to ensure they meet user demands.	4.53	0.52
<b>General Averages</b>	<b>4.66</b>	<b>0.51</b>

Barangay officials rated the BFP's performance favorably across all dimensions, with mean scores consistently above 4.00, indicating strong community engagement. All variables have mean ratings that are regularly higher than 4 (Agree), suggesting that stakeholders believe the BFP interacts with the community in an effective manner. The overall mean rating of 4.52 confirms a positive perception of the agency's integrity and responsiveness. The mean rating of 4.80, indicating a high level of confidence in the moral principles that the BFP upholds was also revealed.

Barangay officials expressed confidence in the BFP's community involvement strategies. High scores reflect effective communication and responsiveness in the BFP's stakeholder engagement efforts. This view is essential for fostering trust and collaboration between the Bureau of Fire Protection and the community,

especially since fruitful public engagement boosts community involvement and satisfaction (Seppala et al., 2019).

Moreover, the total average deviation of 0.54 suggests that respondents' opinions of the BFP's public involvement initiatives are moderate. However, it should be noted that there is potential for more perceptual agreement among the respondents, that can be interpreted as an overall acceptance of the BFP's function and efficacy in the locale of the study.

The BFP's commitment to its established code of conduct is viewed positively by stakeholders. This finding is corroborated by Schwartz (2020), who argues that clear ethical standards and adherence to codes of conduct are foundational for maintaining the credibility of public institutions, thereby fostering public trust

*Table 2. Perceptions from Community Members*

Community members also rated the BFP positively, although slightly lower than the barangay officials. The highest scores were observed in **transparency**, while **anti-corruption** measures received the lowest ratings.

Indicator	Mean	SD
<b>Code of Conduct</b>		
a. The Bureau of Fire Protection adheres to its established code of conduct.	4.47	0.44
b. Members of the Bureau demonstrate professionalism while performing their duties.	4.60	0.47
c. The Bureau takes action against actual violations of rules.	4.47	0.44
d. To promote good behavior, the Bureau conducts regular training sessions and discussions.	4.47	0.44
e. The Bureau evaluates how well employees adhere to the code of conduct.	4.40	0.52
<b>Transparency</b>		
a. The Bureau communicates its policies and actions to the public clearly.	4.53	0.50
b. The Bureau provides accessible financial reports and budgets.	4.57	0.49
c. The Bureau formulates and implements all its decisions openly and straightforwardly.	4.43	0.57
<b>Responsiveness</b>		
a. Officials in the Bureau are accountable for their actions.	4.47	0.53

Indicator	Mean	SD
b. Individuals can report unethical conduct through established channels.	4.47	0.53
c. The Bureau addresses concerns raised by stakeholders.	4.43	0.57
d. The Bureau provides detailed and timely responses to stakeholder inquiries.	4.47	0.53
e. Regular internal assessments are conducted by the Bureau, and stakeholders are knowledgeable of the outcomes.	4.47	0.53
<b>Anti-Corruption</b>		
a. It has clear policies aimed at preventing corruption.	4.38	0.59
b. Prompt action is taken on cases of corruption that are actively pursued and resolved.	4.38	0.59
c. Anti-corruption measures are enforced at all organizational levels.	4.40	0.58
d. Corruption issues are regularly reviewed and shared with the public.	4.28	0.65
<b>Public Engagement</b>		
a. The Bureau initiates programs aimed at enhancing community awareness that are well-organized.	4.38	0.63
b. Public feedback systems are widely accepted due to their user-friendliness and convenient accessibility.	4.40	0.64
c. Collaborations with local organizations are valued, leading to improved actions and better services delivered.	4.33	0.67
d. Public engagement initiatives are designed to include diverse community groups.	4.35	0.64
<b>Performance Review</b>		
a. The Bureau's productivity is measured against specific, predetermined indicators.	4.47	0.53
b. Stakeholders are informed about the evaluation outcomes of performance.	4.40	0.64
c. The Bureau is constantly striving to learn from insights and improve its practices.	4.43	0.57
d. The performance metrics are regularly reviewed to ensure they meet user demands.	4.43	0.57
<b>General Averages</b>	<b>4.44</b>	<b>0.56</b>

Table 2 displayed the mean scores for Community Members which revealed that the BFP's public engagement initiatives are generally viewed favorably. This can be implied that the locals believe the BFP is interacting with them in an effective manner. A relatively positive perception is indicated by the overall average mean rating of 4.44. There is room for improvement in a few areas, though, as the scores are marginally lower than those provided by barangay officials. Regarding respondents' opinions of the BFP's public engagement initiatives, there appears to be a moderate degree of agreement, as indicated by the general average standard deviation of 0.56. The indicator pertaining to the BFP's compliance with its set code of conduct had the highest mean rating, indicating a high level of trust in the organization's moral principles.

The data analysis shows that community people have a fair opinion of the BFP's community involvement initiatives. Even while they think the BFP is engaging well overall, they think there is potential for improvement in a few particular areas. For example, the comparatively low scores for "inclusive participation initiatives" imply that community members could believe the BFP could improve its efforts to include diverse groups.

Although community members generally have a positive opinion of the BFP's public engagement initiatives, there is need for improvement in order to better meet the needs and viewpoints of the community.

This finding aligns with the broader literature on public sector ethics, which emphasizes the importance of clear ethical standards and consistent adherence to codes of conduct to maintain public trust in institutions (Schwartz, 2020).

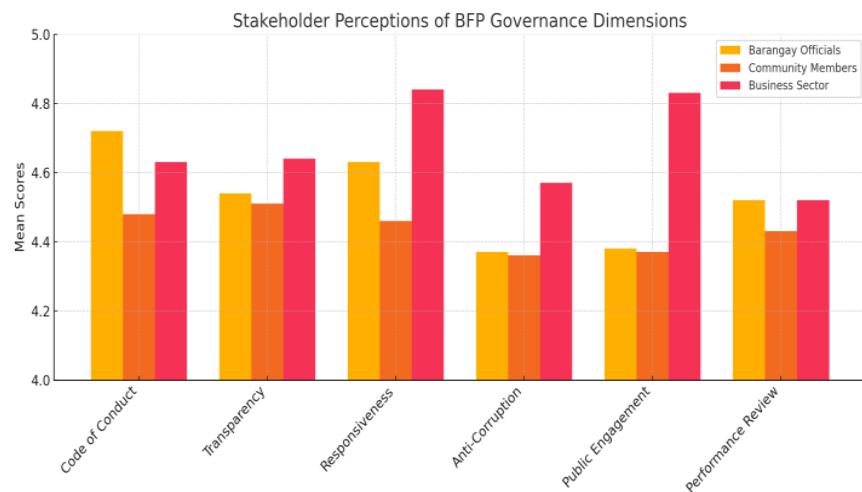
*Table 3. Business Sector Perceptions*

Respondents from the business sector demonstrated the highest satisfaction across all groups. The mean score for **responsiveness** reached as high as 4.90, reflecting strong confidence in BFP's promptness and professionalism.

Indicator	Mean	SD
<b>Code of Conduct</b>		
a. The Bureau of Fire Protection adheres to its established code of conduct.	4.67	0.47
b. Members of the Bureau demonstrate professionalism while performing their duties.	4.53	0.50
c. The Bureau takes action against actual violations of rules.	4.67	0.47
d. To promote good behavior, the Bureau conducts regular training sessions and discussions.	4.67	0.47
e. The Bureau evaluates how well employees adhere to the code of conduct.	4.60	0.52
<b>Transparency</b>		
a. The Bureau communicates its policies and actions to the public clearly.	4.67	0.47
b. The Bureau provides accessible financial reports and budgets.	4.63	0.51
c. The Bureau formulates and implements all its decisions openly and straightforwardly.	4.63	0.51
<b>Responsiveness</b>		
a. Officials in the Bureau are accountable for their actions.	4.83	0.38
b. Individuals can report unethical conduct through established channels.	4.90	0.32
c. The Bureau addresses concerns raised by stakeholders.	4.83	0.38
d. The Bureau provides detailed and timely responses to stakeholder inquiries.	4.83	0.38
e. Regular internal assessments are conducted by the Bureau, and stakeholders are knowledgeable of the outcomes.	4.83	0.38
<b>Anti-Corruption</b>		
a. It has clear policies aimed at preventing corruption.	4.55	0.51
b. Prompt action is taken on cases of corruption that are actively pursued and resolved.	4.60	0.52
c. Anti-corruption measures are enforced at all organizational levels.	4.37	0.62
d. Corruption issues are regularly reviewed and shared with the public.	4.75	0.43
<b>Public Engagement</b>		
a. The Bureau initiates programs aimed at enhancing community awareness that are well-organized.	4.83	0.38
b. Public feedback systems are widely accepted due to their user-friendliness and convenient accessibility.	4.83	0.38
c. Collaborations with local organizations are valued, leading to improved actions and better services delivered.	4.83	0.38
d. Public engagement initiatives are designed to include diverse community groups.	4.83	0.38
<b>Performance Review</b>		
a. The Bureau's productivity is measured against specific, predetermined indicators.	4.53	0.52
b. Stakeholders are informed about the evaluation outcomes of performance.	4.53	0.52
c. The Bureau is constantly striving to learn from insights and improve its practices.	4.50	0.53
d. The performance metrics are regularly reviewed to ensure they meet user demands.	4.50	0.53
<b>General Averages</b>		<b>4.66 0.51</b>

With an overall mean rating of 4.66, which is much higher than 4 (Agree), the Business Sector shows a very favorable opinion of the BFP's public involvement initiatives. This shows that the BFP's attempts to interact and

connect with the business sector are well received. A generally consistent perception across all facets of public participation is indicated by the standard deviation of 0.51.



*Figure 1. Stakeholder Perceptions of BFP Governance Dimensions*

As shown in Figure 1, the business sector consistently rated BFP performance higher, particularly in public engagement and responsiveness. Community members provided slightly lower ratings across all dimensions.

## Discussions

The findings of this study indicate that stakeholders—including barangay officials, community members, and the business sector—generally view the Bureau of Fire Protection (BFP) in Bacnotan, La Union positively in terms of integrity and accountability. These results are consistent with the theoretical framework proposed by Doe and Smith (2020), which suggests that transparency, responsiveness, and ethical leadership directly contribute to public trust in safety institutions.

The high ratings across all dimensions, particularly among business stakeholders, support the **stakeholder-centered performance theory** (Anderson et al., 2021), which emphasizes that organizations perform better and earn higher public trust when they align their services with stakeholder needs and expectations. The business sector's particularly favorable assessment (mean = 4.66) may reflect direct benefits experienced through fire safety

inspections and compliance processes, where clear and consistent BFP engagement fosters mutual trust and efficiency.

From a governance lens, this study supports **New Public Governance theory**, which highlights co-production, transparency, and inclusivity as pillars of modern public service (Bovens et al., 2020; Gonzalez et al., 2022). The lower but still positive scores in the anti-corruption dimension suggest a perceived gap in BFP's communication and enforcement of anti-corruption measures. This aligns with the findings of Lim et al. (2020), who argued that even well-structured agencies must continuously reinforce transparency and whistleblower mechanisms to maintain legitimacy.

Moreover, ethical leadership emerged as a key theme in the perceptions of stakeholders. The strong ratings in "code of conduct" and "responsiveness" dimensions reflect an institutional culture of accountability and professionalism, consistent with the arguments of Park and Lee (2023) and Tan et al. (2022). Their works emphasize that frontline leadership behavior in public safety institutions plays a central role in modeling ethical norms and setting organizational tone.

These findings contribute not only to localized assessments but also to the **broader literature on fire governance and public sector ethics**. While the study focused on Bacnotan, the tools and indicators used here can inform performance reviews across other BFP regional offices and similar public safety agencies globally. The multi-stakeholder approach used also reinforces global calls for inclusive governance evaluation, particularly in disaster-prone countries like the Philippines.

Finally, the results affirm the importance of **performance feedback systems** and community participation as part of the accountability loop. As Seppala et al. (2019) emphasize, disaster resilience and preparedness are enhanced when public safety institutions maintain open communication and empower local groups to play active roles in preparedness efforts.

## Conclusions

The study revealed that all three stakeholder groups hold a generally positive view of the BFP's integrity and accountability practices, with the business sector showing the highest satisfaction. These results underscore the effectiveness of the BFP's community engagement strategies, ethical conduct, and performance monitoring efforts. However, the relatively lower scores in anti-corruption highlight a crucial area for policy intervention.

To enhance public trust and governance quality, the BFP should:

- 1 Regularly conduct community feedback sessions to improve inclusivity.
- 2 Strengthen the visibility and implementation of anti-corruption policies.
- 3 Institutionalize ethics training and performance evaluations across all branches.

Future research should explore comparative analyses between different BFP regional offices and investigate the long-term impacts of ethical leadership on fire safety service delivery. By adopting these strategies, the BFP can continue to strengthen public trust and model good governance practices for other public institutions.

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