

Ethical Conduct and Staff Performance in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council, Rivers State, Nigeria 2015-2025

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Abstract

For year concerns have been raised about unethical practices such as bribery, nepotism, misuse of public funds, absenteeism, and lax attitudes to work in local councils in Rivers State. This study examined the impact of ethical conduct on staff performance in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council, Rivers State from 2015 to 2025. The study evaluated code-of-conduct compliance and administrative transparency and accountability. The study adopted a quantitative research design using primary and secondary data. The population comprised 1,886 council staff, from which 330 respondents were determined using Taro Yamane's formula. Out of 330 structured questionnaire that were administered, 280 were retrieved and analysed, representing 84.8% retrieval rate. The instrument reliability recorded Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.74 to 0.85. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Correlation in SPSS version 27. Findings showed low code-of-conduct compliance, with a grand mean of 2.12, while administrative transparency and accountability recorded 2.95 and had a significant positive relationship with service delivery and efficiency ($r = 0.721$, $p = 0.000$). Anti-corruption mechanisms and ethical oversight recorded 2.99 and significantly related positively to staff productivity and workplace discipline ($r = 0.746$, $p = 0.000$). Organizational and systemic challenges recorded 3.00 and had a significant negative relationship with ethical behaviour enforcement ($r = -0.681$, $p = 0.000$). The study concluded that effective ethical administration required stronger implementation, monitoring, accountability, sanctions, training, and administrative systems. The study recommended that local government authorities should develop a mechanism for the enforcement of ethical standards and institutional reforms to strengthen administrative performance, service delivery, and workplace outcomes.

Keywords: *Ethical Conduct, Staff Performance, Administrative Transparency, Accountability*

Introduction

Ethical integrity is widely recognised as a critical determinant of effective public service delivery because it promotes honesty, fairness, impartiality, and commitment to public interest (OECD, 2020; Armstrong & Taylor, 2023). Despite the existence of the Nigerian Public Service Rules and Code of Conduct for Public Officers, Obio/Akpor Local Government Council continues to experience unethical practices such as favouritism, abuse of office, unofficial charges for public services, and misuse of public resources. These practices often result in delays in processing official documents, unequal treatment of citizens, and poor-quality service delivery. Studies have shown that weak ethical standards reduce

organisational efficiency and undermine public confidence in government institutions (Robbins & Judge, 2022; Treviño *et al.*, 2014). However, there is limited empirical evidence on how integrity influences service delivery efficiency in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council between 2015 and 2025, thereby justifying this investigation. Accountability is an essential element of public administration because it ensures that employees are answerable for their actions and responsibilities, thereby improving organisational performance (Hope, 2017; Ibietan & Ajayi, 2018). Nevertheless, weak supervision, poor monitoring systems, irregular attendance, lateness to work, absenteeism, negligence of duty, and inadequate enforcement of disciplinary measures continue to affect operations in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council. Consequently, official files remain unattended, administrative processes are delayed, and public projects are not completed within expected timelines because responsible officers are rarely sanctioned for poor performance. Such unethical practices have raised concerns regarding the extent to which accountability influences task completion rates within the council, necessitating empirical investigation. Although previous studies have established that professionalism promotes ethical behaviour and institutional effectiveness (Robbins & Judge, 2022), there is limited context-specific evidence on its relationship with compliance with official procedures in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council from 2015 to 2025.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine the impact of ethical conduct on staff performance in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council, 2015–2025.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. evaluates the level of compliance with institutional code of conduct among staff of Obio/Akpor Local Government Council, Rivers State, from 2015 to 2025 and
- ii. ascertain the impact of administrative transparency and accountability on service delivery and efficiency in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council, Rivers State, from 2015 to 2025.

The study raised corresponding research questions such as:

- i. What is the level of compliance with the institutional code of conduct among staff of Obio/Akpor Local Government Council, Rivers State, from 2015 to 2025? and
- ii. What is the impact of administrative transparency and accountability on service delivery and efficiency in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council, Rivers State, from 2015 to 2025?

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance to the guide the study:

H₀₁: There is no relationship between compliance with the institutional code of conduct and the conduct of staff of Obio/Akpor Local Government Council, Rivers State, from 2015 to 2025.

H₀₂: There is no relationship between administrative transparency and accountability and service delivery and efficiency in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council, Rivers State, from 2015 to 2025.

Theoretical Review

Weber's Bureaucratic Theory

Weber's Bureaucratic Theory was articulated by Max Weber (1864–1920) and is foundational in classical public administration. Developed in the early twentieth century, Weber's ideas emerged from his broader sociological investigations into authority, rationalisation, and societal organisation (Weber, 1947). Weber analysed different forms of

authority-traditional, charismatic and rational-legal-and argued that rational-legal authority, embodied in bureaucracy, was most suited to modern administrative systems. In a rational-legal bureaucracy, tasks are governed by formal rules; roles are clearly defined, and decision-making is depersonalised and predictable (Rosenbloom *et al.*, 2015). Weber saw bureaucracy as an efficient mechanism for organising complex administrative tasks in large organisations, including governments, because it limits arbitrariness and standardises processes. Max Weber is regarded as the father of Bureaucratic Theory, and his work laid the intellectual foundations for modern organisational and public administration theory. Weber's emphasis on structured authority and rational procedures distinguished bureaucratic administration from earlier patronage-based or informal systems, making his ideas critical for understanding how public organisations function in structured environments (Aberbach *et al.*, 1981). Weber's Bureaucratic Theory rests on several key principles. First, a hierarchy of authority ensures that each employee reports to a specific superior, creating an ordered chain of command that enhances control and accountability (Weber, 1947). Second, formal rules and regulations guide all organisational actions, providing consistency and predictability in behaviour (Rosenbloom *et al.*, 2015). Third, a clear division of labour assigns specialised tasks based on expertise, improving efficiency and competence (Merton, 1957). Fourth, impersonality in decision-making removes personal bias, ensuring that actions are based on organisationally prescribed procedures rather than individual preferences (Scott & Davis, 2015). Fifth, recruitment and promotion are based on formal selection and merit-based criteria, promoting competence and reducing nepotism or political interference (Perry & Hondeghem, 2008). Lastly, documentation and records are essential, ensuring that actions are traceable and decisions are transparent (Weber, 1947). Applying Weber's Bureaucratic Theory to Obio/Akpor Local Government Council reveals how formal administrative structures and standard procedures influence ethical conduct and staff performance. In a bureaucratic system, codified rules and procedures reduce ambiguity in duties and responsibilities, enabling staff to act consistently and professionally. When staff members of the council adhere to formalised procedures, hierarchical reporting, and merit-based standards, discipline and accountability improve. For instance, effective implementation of job descriptions, standard operating procedures, and performance evaluations can minimise absenteeism and wilful neglect of duties. As a result, bureaucratic structures support ethical conduct by governing behaviour through impersonal and rule-based norms rather than arbitrary discretion, discouraging patronage, favouritism and other forms of unprofessional conduct (Bozeman, 2000). Research suggests that bureaucratic organisations that enforce rules and professional boundaries experience higher levels of employee compliance, improved organisational efficiency and enhanced public trust (Hondeghem & Demmke, 2000; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). In the context of Obio/Akpor Local Government Council, this means that the presence of strong bureaucratic mechanisms can help mitigate unethical conduct, reinforcing ethical standards and improving staff performance across departments.

Conceptual Review

Ethical

Ethical, in the context of public administration, refers to the principles, values, and standards that guide behaviour and decision-making within an organisation. It encompasses honesty, integrity, accountability, fairness, and professionalism, serving as the foundational framework through which staff align their actions with both organisational expectations and societal norms. Ethical behaviour is not simply a matter of compliance with rules; it reflects an internal commitment to uphold moral standards even in situations where external supervision may be minimal or absent (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015; Thompson, 1987). By embracing ethics, employees contribute to the credibility, efficiency, and legitimacy of public

institutions, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of administrative operations. Ethical conduct plays a pivotal role in fostering trust within organisations. When staff adhere to moral principles, colleagues, supervisors, and the public develop confidence in their decisions and actions. This confidence translates into a collaborative and harmonious work environment, where employees are motivated to perform diligently and conscientiously. Studies have shown that organisations with strong ethical climates experience higher levels of employee commitment, reduced instances of misconduct, and improved service quality (Kaptein, 2011; Paillé & Raineri, 2015). Employees who perceive ethical behaviour as both valued and rewarded are more likely to internalise these values, ensuring consistent adherence in both routine and exceptional circumstances. In practical terms, ethical standards manifest in behaviours such as honesty in reporting, transparency in decision-making, fairness in the allocation of resources, and accountability for actions. Honesty entails the accurate and truthful presentation of information, ensuring that decisions are based on facts rather than personal interests or manipulation. Transparency involves open communication about processes, procedures, and outcomes, allowing stakeholders to assess the legitimacy of actions. Fairness requires impartiality and equity in dealings with colleagues, subordinates, and the public, preventing bias or preferential treatment. Accountability ensures that employees accept responsibility for their actions, recognising the impact of their decisions on organisational goals and public welfare (Kernaghan, 2003; Frederickson *et al.*, 2016). Ethical behaviour also has profound implications for organisational culture. When employees consistently act in accordance with ethical standards, they establish norms that shape collective expectations and behaviours. These norms influence not only individual actions but also the overall atmosphere within the organisation, promoting cooperation, mutual respect, and professional diligence. Conversely, organisations that fail to prioritise ethics often experience a decline in morale, increased incidences of misconduct, and inefficiencies in service delivery (Van Wart, 2013). A workplace characterised by ethical ambiguity or inconsistency in enforcing moral standards can result in distrust, frustration, and disengagement among staff.

Ethical Conduct

Ethical conduct refers to the demonstration of moral principles, professional standards, and integrity in the execution of duties within an organisation. It represents the observable and consistent alignment between employees' behaviour and the ethical values they are expected to uphold. While ethics provides the foundational principles and conduct represents observable behaviour, ethical conduct is the intersection of these dimensions, highlighting how individuals operationalise values into practical actions that influence organisational outcomes (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015; Kaptein, 2011). Ethical conduct embodies honesty, accountability, fairness, professionalism, and transparency in all interactions and decisions. In contemporary administrative practice, ethical conduct is essential for sustaining organisational credibility and enhancing staff performance. Employees who consistently demonstrate ethical conduct foster trust among colleagues, supervisors, and external stakeholders, which, in turn, facilitates collaboration, efficiency, and effective service delivery (Rainey, 2014; Van Wart, 2013).

Ethical conduct is particularly significant in public institutions, where the behaviour of staff directly impacts citizens' perceptions of fairness, reliability, and accountability. When ethical principles are consistently operationalised through conduct, organisations benefit from enhanced legitimacy and strengthened stakeholder relationships. The application of ethical conduct can be observed in several practical dimensions of organisational life. Honesty, as a core component, ensures that employees communicate accurately, maintain truthful records, and report outcomes transparently. Integrity involves consistency between values, decisions,

and actions, ensuring that employees act according to established moral and professional standards. Fairness requires impartiality and equity in interactions with colleagues, subordinates, and clients, preventing discrimination, bias, or preferential treatment. Accountability entails accepting responsibility for one's actions, acknowledging errors, and providing transparent explanations for decisions made (Frederickson *et al.*, 2016; Thompson, 1987). Professionalism encompasses competence, reliability, and adherence to organisational rules and expectations, promoting operational effectiveness and trustworthiness. Empirical evidence demonstrates that ethical conduct has a profound influence on organisational performance. Employees who act ethically are more likely to exhibit diligence, commitment, and motivation in fulfilling their roles (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007). Ethical conduct reduces the likelihood of misconduct, negligence, and conflict, thereby promoting a positive work environment conducive to high productivity.

Staff Performance

Staff performance represents the measurable output, efficiency, and effectiveness of employees in fulfilling their duties within an organisation. It captures the practical impact of staff actions on organisational goals, encompassing productivity, quality of service delivery, adherence to policies, timeliness, and accountability. Staff performance is the tangible manifestation of competence, motivation, ethical conduct, and organisational support, reflecting both individual and collective contributions to operational success (Andrews & Van de Walle, 2013; Van Dooren *et al.*, 2015). In contemporary organisational practice, staff performance is critical because it directly influences the ability of institutions to achieve their objectives. High-performing staff ensure that resources are utilised efficiently, processes are followed diligently, and services are delivered with professionalism and reliability. Staff performance is not limited to task completion; it includes problem-solving, innovation, responsiveness, and the quality of interactions with colleagues, supervisors, and stakeholders. Thus, it serves as a key indicator of organisational health, effectiveness, and credibility (Boyne, 2002; Andrews & Van de Walle, 2013). Several factors determine staff performance, including competence, motivation, working conditions, and leadership support. Competence refers to the knowledge, skills, and experience that employees bring to their roles, enabling them to perform tasks effectively. Motivation drives the effort, commitment, and persistence of staff in achieving organisational goals. Positive working conditions, including access to resources, supportive supervision, and clear organisational policies, facilitate high performance, whereas inadequate resources, unclear expectations, or hostile work environments hinder performance (Van Dooren *et al.*, 2015; Brewer & Selden, 1998). Leadership support, including guidance, mentoring, and recognition, further enhances staff performance by fostering engagement, accountability, and professional growth.

Staff performance is closely linked to organisational outcomes. Efficient and effective staff contribute to the achievement of strategic objectives, improved service delivery, and enhanced stakeholder satisfaction. Conversely, poor staff performance, characterised by negligence, delays, errors, or non-compliance with procedures, undermines organisational credibility, reduces operational efficiency, and diminishes public trust. The practical implications of staff performance are particularly evident in administrative and service delivery contexts, where employees act as the primary interface between organisational policy and stakeholder experience (Boyne, 2002; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). Performance measurement is an essential tool for managing and improving staff output. Organisations employ various quantitative and qualitative indicators to evaluate staff performance, including task completion rates, service quality metrics, timeliness, resource utilisation, and adherence to ethical and procedural standards. Quantitative metrics provide clear evidence of productivity, while qualitative assessments capture professionalism, communication, and

stakeholder engagement. Performance measurement not only identifies areas for improvement but also reinforces accountability, recognising high achievement and addressing underperformance (Van Dooren *et al.*, 2015; Andrews & Van de Walle, 2013). Accountability mechanisms are central to sustaining staff performance. Employees who are held responsible for their actions are more likely to maintain high standards, adhere to policies, and deliver quality outcomes. Organisational mechanisms, including performance appraisals, audits, feedback systems, and supervisory oversight, ensure that employees remain focused on achieving objectives while adhering to professional and ethical standards. Accountability strengthens trust within the organisation, motivates staff, and ensures that the institution remains responsive to both internal and external expectations (Brewer & Selden, 1998). Staff performance is also influenced by motivation and reward systems. Intrinsic motivation, such as a sense of purpose, professional pride, and personal achievement, drives employees to excel in their roles. Extrinsic motivators, including promotions, recognition, bonuses, and improved working conditions, further enhance performance by reinforcing desirable behaviours. Organisations that integrate performance management with appropriate recognition and reward structures tend to experience higher levels of employee engagement, productivity, and commitment (Andrews & Van de Walle, 2013; Van Dooren *et al.*, 2015). Interpersonal relationships among staff also play a significant role in performance outcomes. Effective collaboration, communication, and teamwork promote efficiency, problem-solving, and innovation. Staff who maintain constructive relationships with colleagues, supervisors, and stakeholders are better equipped to share knowledge, resolve conflicts, and contribute to organisational learning. Conversely, poor interpersonal dynamics, such as conflicts, competition, or lack of cooperation, hinder performance and reduce overall organisational effectiveness (Boyne, 2002; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017).

Method

The study adopted a survey research design to systematically collect quantitative data from respondents through a structured questionnaire. The study area was Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria, selected because of its administrative, socio-economic and urban characteristics. The population of the study comprised 1,886 staff of Obio/Akpor Local Government Council, consisting of administrative, operational and service-delivery personnel. Using Taro Yamane's formula at a 5% level of precision, a sample size of 330 respondents was obtained. Purposive sampling was used to select staff whose duties and experience were relevant to the issues investigated. Both primary and secondary data were utilised. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire, while secondary data were obtained from official documents, government publications, policy documents, reports, books, journal articles and other relevant scholarly materials. The questionnaire contained demographic information and items measuring the study variables, using a four-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. Pasted markdown The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by two academic supervisors and senior lecturers in the Department of Political Science, Rivers State University. Reliability was established through a pilot test involving 20 staff excluded from the main study, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.74 to 0.85, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Data were coded and analysed using SPSS version 27. Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were used for descriptive analysis, while Pearson Product-Moment Correlation was employed to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Secondary data were analysed through qualitative content analysis.

Data Presentation

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval

S/N	Questionnaire Status	Frequency (F)	Percentage (%)
1	Questionnaires Distributed	330	100.00
2	Questionnaires Retrieved	280	84.85
3	Questionnaires Not Retrieved	50	15.15
Total Total Distributed		330	100.00

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The table shows that 330 (100.00%) questionnaires were distributed, out of which 280 (84.85%) were retrieved and 50 (15.15%) were not retrieved. The retrieval rate of 84.85% was considered adequate for the analysis of the study.

Data Analysis

RQ1 What is the level of compliance with the institutional code of conduct among staff of Obio/Akpor Local Government Council, Rivers State, from 2015 to 2025?

Table 2: Respondents' Responses on the Level of Compliance with the Institutional Code of Conduct

RQ No.	Questionnaire Items	SA F (%)	(4) A (%)	(3) F (%)	D (2) F (%)	SD (1) F (%)	Mean	Std. D	Decision
1	Staff comply with the institutional code of conduct in the discharge of their official duties.	35 (12.5)	52 (18.6)	108 (38.6)	85 (30.4)		2.13	0.97	Rejected
2	Staff observe the rules and regulations governing ethical conduct in the council.	32 (11.4)	55 (19.6)	112 (40.0)	81 (28.9)		2.14	0.95	Rejected
3	Staff avoid actions that violate the established code of conduct of the council.	38 (13.6)	49 (17.5)	105 (37.5)	88 (31.4)		2.13	1.00	Rejected
4	Staff follow approved procedures when carrying out their official responsibilities.	34 (12.1)	51 (18.2)	114 (40.7)	81 (28.9)		2.14	0.96	Rejected
5	Disciplinary measures are applied when staff violate the institutional code of conduct.	29 (10.4)	47 (16.8)	116 (41.4)	88 (31.4)		2.06	0.94	Rejected
Grand Mean							2.12	0.96	Rejected

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

The table 2, indicates that respondents generally expressed a negative assessment of compliance with the institutional code of conduct among staff of Obio/Akpor Local Government Council. For Item 1, 35 respondents (12.5%) strongly agreed and 52 (18.6%) agreed that staff complied with the institutional code of conduct, while 108 (38.6%) disagreed and 85 (30.4%) strongly disagreed. The mean score of 2.13 was below the decision benchmark of 2.50 and was therefore rejected.

For Item 2, only 87 respondents (31.0%) gave positive responses, comprising 32 (11.4%)

who strongly agreed and 55 (19.6%) who agreed. In contrast, 193 respondents (68.9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed that staff observed the rules and regulations governing ethical conduct. The item recorded a mean of 2.14, indicating a low level of compliance. Item 3 recorded 38 respondents (13.6%) who strongly agreed and 49 (17.5%) who agreed, while 105 (37.5%) disagreed and 88 (31.4%) strongly disagreed. The resulting mean of 2.13 was also below the 2.50 benchmark. Similarly, Item 4 showed that 85 respondents (30.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that staff followed approved procedures, whereas 195 respondents (69.6%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. The item recorded a mean of 2.14 and was rejected. Item 5 produced the most negative assessment. Only 76 respondents (27.2%) agreed that disciplinary measures were applied when staff violated the code of conduct, while 204 respondents (72.8%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. The item had the lowest mean of 2.06. Overall, the grand mean of 2.12 was below the acceptance benchmark of 2.50. This showed that respondents generally perceived the level of compliance with the institutional code of conduct among staff of Obio/Akpor Local Government Council as low during the period under study.\

RQ2: What is the impact of administrative transparency and accountability on service delivery and efficiency in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council, Rivers State, from 2015 to 2025?

Table 3: Respondents' Responses on Administrative Transparency and Accountability

RQ No.	Questionnaire Items	SA (4) F (%)	A (3) F (%)	D (2) F (%)	SD (1) F (%)	Mean	Std. D	Decision
8	Administrative decisions in the council are made openly and transparently.	82 (29.3)	103 (36.8)	58 (20.7)	37 (13.2)	2.82	1.02	Accepted
9	Staff are held accountable for the duties and responsibilities assigned to them.	88 (31.4)	106 (37.9)	52 (18.6)	34 (12.1)	2.89	1.00	Accepted
10	Transparent administrative procedures improve the efficiency of service delivery.	101 (36.1)	109 (38.9)	44 (15.7)	26 (9.3)	3.02	0.94	Accepted
11	Regular reporting and proper documentation strengthen accountability in the council.	96 (34.3)	111 (39.6)	47 (16.8)	26 (9.3)	2.99	0.93	Accepted
12	Transparency and accountability contribute to timely and effective service delivery.	105 (37.5)	108 (38.6)	43 (15.4)	24 (8.6)	3.05	0.91	Accepted
Grand Mean						2.95	0.96	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Table 3 shows that respondents generally expressed a positive assessment of administrative transparency and accountability in relation to service delivery and efficiency in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council. For Item 8, 185 respondents (66.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that administrative decisions were made openly and transparently, while 95 respondents (33.9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean score of 2.82 was above the 2.50 benchmark and was therefore accepted.

For Item 9, 194 respondents (69.3%) gave positive responses, compared with 86 respondents (30.7%) who gave negative responses. The item recorded a mean of 2.89, indicating that respondents generally perceived staff as being held accountable for their assigned duties and responsibilities. Item 10 recorded the strongest positive assessment, with 210 respondents (75.0%) agreeing or strongly agreeing that transparent administrative procedures improved service-delivery efficiency, while 70 respondents (25.0%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. The mean score of 3.02 was accepted. For Item 11, 207 respondents (73.9%) responded positively that regular reporting and proper documentation strengthened accountability, compared with 73 respondents (26.1%) who responded negatively. The item recorded a mean of 2.99 and was accepted. Finally, Item 12 recorded 213 positive responses (76.1%), while 67 respondents (23.9%) responded negatively. With a mean of 3.05, the item was accepted. Overall, the grand mean of 2.95 exceeded the decision benchmark of 2.50. This indicated that respondents generally perceived administrative transparency and accountability as having a positive impact on service delivery and administrative efficiency in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council during the period under study.

Test of Hypotheses

Table 4: Relationship between Compliance with Institutional Code of Conduct and Staff Performance

Test of Hypothesis 1

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between compliance with the institutional code of conduct and staff performance in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council, Rivers State, from 2015 to 2025.

Variables		Ind. V	Dep. V
Ind. V (Compliance with Institutional Code of Conduct)	Pearson Correlation	1	0.684**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	–	0.000
	N	280	280
Dep. V (Staff Performance)	Pearson Correlation	0.684**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	–
	N	280	280

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2026.

Table 4, presents the relationship between compliance with the institutional code of conduct and staff performance in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council, Rivers State, from 2015 to 2025. The Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.684 indicates a strong positive relationship between compliance with the institutional code of conduct and staff performance. This suggests that higher compliance with established institutional rules, ethical standards, approved procedures, and workplace responsibilities is associated with improved staff performance. The significance value of $p = 0.000$ is less than the 0.01 significance level. This indicates that the observed relationship is statistically significant at the 1% level. Therefore, the relationship between compliance with the institutional code of conduct and staff performance was not due to random variation within the sample.

Based on the result, the null hypothesis (H_{01}) which states that there is no significant relationship between compliance with the institutional code of conduct and staff performance in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council, Rivers State, from 2015 to 2025, is rejected. The

study therefore concludes that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between compliance with the institutional code of conduct and staff performance in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council during the period under study.

Table 5: Relationship between Administrative Transparency and Accountability and Service Delivery Efficiency

Test of Hypothesis 2

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between administrative transparency and accountability and service delivery and efficiency in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council, Rivers State, from 2015 to 2025.

Variables		Ind. V	Dep. V
Ind. V (Administrative Transparency and Accountability)	Pearson Correlation	1	0.721**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	–	0.000
	N	280	280
Dep. V (Service Delivery and Efficiency)	Pearson Correlation	0.721**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	–
	N	280	280

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2026.

Table 5, presents the relationship between administrative transparency and accountability and service delivery and efficiency in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council, Rivers State, from 2015 to 2025. The Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.721$ indicates a strong positive relationship between administrative transparency and accountability and service delivery efficiency. This implies that higher levels of administrative openness, staff accountability, transparent procedures, proper reporting, and documentation were associated with improved service delivery and administrative efficiency.

The significance value of $p = 0.000$ was less than the 0.01 significance level. Therefore, the observed relationship was statistically significant at the 1% level. The result indicated that administrative transparency and accountability had a significant relationship with service delivery and efficiency during the period under study.

The coefficient can also be interpreted in terms of the coefficient of determination:

$R^2 = (0.721)^2 = 0.5198 \approx 0.520$ Thus, approximately 52.0% of the variation associated with service delivery and efficiency was statistically associated with administrative transparency and accountability, while the remaining 48.0% was attributable to other factors not captured by this bivariate correlation. Based on the result, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) which stated that there was no significant relationship between administrative transparency and accountability and service delivery and efficiency in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council, Rivers State, from 2015 to 2025, was rejected. The study therefore concluded that there was a statistically significant positive relationship between administrative transparency and accountability and service delivery and efficiency in the council during the period under study.

Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What is the level of compliance with the institutional code of conduct among staff of Obio/Akpor Local Government Council, Rivers State, from 2015 to 2025?

The findings from table 2 revealed that the level of compliance with the institutional code of conduct among staff of Obio/Akpor Local Government Council was generally low. For Item 1, only 35 respondents (12.5%) strongly agreed and 52 (18.6%) agreed that staff complied with the institutional code of conduct in the discharge of their official duties, while 108 (38.6%) disagreed and 85 (30.4%) strongly disagreed. The item recorded a mean of 2.13 and standard deviation of 0.97, which was below the 2.50 decision benchmark and was therefore rejected. Similarly, Item 2 showed that 32 respondents (11.4%) strongly agreed and 55 (19.6%) agreed that staff observed the rules and regulations governing ethical conduct, whereas 112 (40.0%) disagreed and 81 (28.9%) strongly disagreed. The mean of 2.14 and standard deviation of 0.95 indicated a low level of compliance. Item 3 produced a similar result, as 38 respondents (13.6%) strongly agreed and 49 (17.5%) agreed that staff avoided actions that violated the established code of conduct, while 105 (37.5%) disagreed and 88 (31.4%) strongly disagreed. The mean score of 2.13 and standard deviation of 1.00 remained below the acceptance benchmark. For Item 4, 34 respondents (12.1%) strongly agreed and 51 (18.2%) agreed that staff followed approved procedures in carrying out their official responsibilities, whereas 114 (40.7%) disagreed and 81 (28.9%) strongly disagreed. The mean of 2.14 and standard deviation of 0.96 further indicated inadequate compliance. Item 5 recorded the lowest mean of 2.06, with only 76 respondents (27.2%) agreeing or strongly agreeing that disciplinary measures were applied when staff violated the institutional code of conduct, compared with 204 respondents (72.8%) who disagreed or strongly disagreed. The overall grand mean of 2.12 and standard deviation of 0.96 therefore showed that compliance with the institutional code of conduct was generally low during the period under study.

These findings were consistent with Adebayo (2020), who observed that weaknesses in ethical practices within public sector organisations could undermine organisational performance and institutional effectiveness. The finding was also consistent with Adebayo (2021), who emphasized the importance of public sector ethics, institutional rules, and ethical standards in promoting responsible administrative behaviour. Similarly, Eke and Abba (2022) linked effective administrative accountability in Nigerian local governments to the observance of ethical standards and responsible conduct by public officials. The low level of compliance observed in Obio/Akpor therefore suggested that the existence of institutional codes alone might not have been sufficient to ensure ethical conduct without effective implementation, monitoring, and enforcement mechanisms.

The finding was further supported by Kaptein (2011), who argued that ethical codes were more effective when supported by an organisational ethical culture and appropriate mechanisms for implementation. The result also corresponded with Treviño *et al.* (2014), who explained that unethical behaviour in organisations was influenced by institutional conditions, leadership, organisational culture, and the effectiveness of ethical controls. In the context of Obio/Akpor Local Government Council, the low scores recorded across the five items suggested that formal ethical provisions had not been consistently translated into everyday administrative conduct. The test of Hypothesis 1 further substantiated the survey findings. Table 4.2.1.1 produced a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.684$ with $p = 0.000$ and $N = 280$, indicating a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between compliance with the institutional code of conduct and staff performance. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. This result implied that improved compliance with institutional rules and ethical standards was associated with improved staff performance. The finding supported Yusuf and Metiboba (2019), who reported a relationship between ethical climate and

employee performance in the Nigerian civil service. It was also consistent with Bello and Akinbode (2023), who emphasized the importance of ethical leadership and conduct in improving employee performance in Nigerian local government administration. Overall, the findings demonstrated that although compliance with the institutional code of conduct was low, such compliance remained important for staff performance. The results suggested that strengthening ethical compliance required more than the existence of formal rules. It required consistent enforcement, effective supervision, appropriate disciplinary measures, ethical leadership, and an organisational environment that encouraged responsible conduct. Therefore, improving compliance with the institutional code of conduct represented an important requirement for strengthening staff performance and administrative effectiveness in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council.

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What is the impact of administrative transparency and accountability on service delivery and efficiency in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council, Rivers State, from 2015 to 2025?

The findings from Table 3 revealed that respondents generally assessed administrative transparency and accountability positively in relation to service delivery and efficiency. For Item 8, 82 respondents (29.3%) strongly agreed and 103 (36.8%) agreed that administrative decisions in the council were made openly and transparently, while 58 (20.7%) disagreed and 37 (13.2%) strongly disagreed. The item recorded a mean of 2.82 and standard deviation of 1.02 and was accepted. Item 9 showed that 88 respondents (31.4%) strongly agreed and 106 (37.9%) agreed that staff were held accountable for their assigned duties and responsibilities, whereas 52 (18.6%) disagreed and 34 (12.1%) strongly disagreed. The mean of 2.89 and standard deviation of 1.00 indicated a positive assessment.

Similarly, Item 10 recorded the strongest positive assessment of the first three dimensions, with 101 respondents (36.1%) strongly agreeing and 109 (38.9%) agreeing that transparent administrative procedures improved the efficiency of service delivery. Only 44 respondents (15.7%) disagreed and 26 (9.3%) strongly disagreed. The item recorded a mean of 3.02 and standard deviation of 0.94. For Item 11, 96 respondents (34.3%) strongly agreed and 111 (39.6%) agreed that regular reporting and proper documentation strengthened accountability, while 47 (16.8%) disagreed and 26 (9.3%) strongly disagreed. The mean score was 2.99 with a standard deviation of 0.93. Item 12 produced the highest positive assessment, as 105 respondents (37.5%) strongly agreed and 108 (38.6%) agreed that transparency and accountability contributed to timely and effective service delivery, compared with 43 (15.4%) who disagreed and 24 (8.6%) who strongly disagreed. The item recorded a mean of 3.05 and standard deviation of 0.91. The grand mean of 2.95 and standard deviation of 0.96 therefore indicated an overall positive assessment of administrative transparency and accountability.

These findings were consistent with Ehule *et al.* (2022), who emphasized the importance of good governance in improving development outcomes at the local government level in Obio/Akpor. The finding also agreed with Eke and Abba (2022), who identified accountability as an important component of effective administration in Nigerian local governments. Similarly, Ola and Effiong (2021) argued that transparency and accountability were central to improving public sector performance and institutional effectiveness. The positive assessment recorded in the present study therefore suggested that administrative openness, responsibility, reporting, and documentation had contributed to improved administrative processes and service delivery within the council.

The finding was also supported by Rothstein and Teorell (2008), who associated quality of government with impartiality, accountability, and effective institutional practices. In the same manner, Van Dooren *et al.* (2015) emphasized the importance of performance-oriented management, monitoring, and accountability in improving public-sector performance. These

perspectives helped explain why respondents associated transparent administrative procedures with improved service delivery efficiency. When administrative decisions were made openly, responsibilities were clearly assigned, and activities were properly documented, the possibility of administrative inefficiency and arbitrary decision-making was reduced.

The test of Hypothesis 2 further supported the descriptive findings. Table 4.2.1.2 showed a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.721$ with $p = 0.000$ and $N = 280$. The coefficient indicated a strong positive relationship between administrative transparency and accountability and service delivery efficiency. The significance level was below 0.01, resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis. The coefficient of determination, $R^2 = (0.721)^2 = 0.5198$, indicated that approximately 52.0% of the variation associated with service delivery and efficiency was statistically associated with administrative transparency and accountability, while approximately 48.0% was associated with other factors not examined in the bivariate analysis. The result was consistent with the principles of effective public administration, which emphasize openness, accountability, documentation, performance monitoring, and responsiveness. It also reinforced the argument that service delivery at the local government level was not determined solely by financial or material resources but was also influenced by the quality of administrative processes through which public responsibilities were performed. The findings therefore indicated that maintaining transparency and accountability could contribute substantially to efficient service delivery in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council. In conclusion, the findings demonstrated that administrative transparency and accountability had a positive and statistically significant relationship with service delivery and efficiency. The results suggested that continued strengthening of transparent decision-making, staff accountability, reporting systems, documentation, and administrative procedures could further improve the efficiency and effectiveness of local government service delivery.

Summary of Findings

The major findings of the study are summarised as follows:

The study found that the level of compliance with the institutional code of conduct among staff of Obio/Akpor Local Government Council was low. The five items measuring compliance recorded mean scores of 2.13, 2.14, 2.13, 2.14 and 2.06 respectively, with a grand mean of 2.12, which was below the 2.50 decision benchmark. The findings indicated that respondents generally disagreed that staff consistently complied with the institutional code of conduct, observed rules and regulations governing ethical conduct, avoided actions that violated established codes, followed approved procedures, and were subjected to disciplinary measures when violations occurred. The lowest mean score of 2.06 was recorded for the application of disciplinary measures when staff violated the code of conduct, indicating weakness in disciplinary enforcement. The corresponding hypothesis test produced a Pearson correlation coefficient of $r = 0.684$ and $p = 0.000$, indicating a statistically significant positive relationship between compliance with the institutional code of conduct and staff performance. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

The study established that administrative transparency and accountability had a positive relationship with service delivery and efficiency in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council. The five items recorded mean scores of 2.82, 2.89, 3.02, 2.99 and 3.05 respectively, with a grand mean of 2.95, which was above the 2.50 decision benchmark. The findings showed that respondents generally agreed that open administrative decisions, staff accountability, transparent procedures, regular reporting and documentation, and transparency and accountability mechanisms contributed to improved service delivery and administrative efficiency. The highest mean score of 3.05 was recorded for the contribution of transparency

and accountability to timely and effective service delivery. The corresponding hypothesis test produced $r = 0.721$ and $p = 0.000$, indicating a statistically significant positive relationship between administrative transparency and accountability and service delivery and efficiency. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected.

Conclusion

The study concludes that ethical administration in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council during the period 2015–2025 was characterised by low compliance with the institutional code of conduct among staff. The study further concludes that stronger compliance with the institutional code of conduct was significantly associated with improved staff performance. Administrative transparency and accountability were also found to have a significant positive relationship with service delivery and administrative efficiency. Similarly, anti-corruption mechanisms and ethical oversight were significantly associated with improved staff productivity and workplace discipline. However, inadequate monitoring mechanisms, political interference, limited sanctions, insufficient ethics training and poor administrative systems constituted major barriers to effective ethical behaviour enforcement. The significant negative relationship between organizational and systemic challenges and ethical enforcement showed that institutional weaknesses undermined the effective implementation of ethical standards. The study therefore concludes that the improvement of ethical administration requires effective implementation, monitoring, accountability and sanctions in addition to the existence of formal codes and regulations. Overall, strengthening ethical governance mechanisms and addressing institutional weaknesses are essential for improving staff performance, service delivery, productivity, workplace discipline and ethical behaviour in Obio/Akpor Local Government Council.

Recommendations

The findings of the study showed that while transparency and accountability, anti-corruption mechanisms and ethical oversight were positively associated with improved administrative outcomes, compliance with the institutional code of conduct remained low and organizational and systemic challenges continued to weaken ethical enforcement. Based on these findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. **Strengthening Institutional Code-of-Conduct Compliance:** The management of Obio/Akpor Local Government Council should strengthen compliance with the institutional code of conduct through regular communication of ethical rules, approved procedures and staff responsibilities. Continuous orientation and ethics training should be provided to ensure that staff understand the required standards of conduct and the consequences of violations. Disciplinary measures should be applied consistently, fairly and promptly whenever staff breach established ethical and administrative standards.
2. **Improving Administrative Transparency and Accountability:** The council should strengthen transparent decision-making, proper documentation, regular reporting and clear accountability procedures across all departments. Staff should be required to account for their assigned responsibilities and administrative decisions through effective reporting and performance-review mechanisms. This will help sustain the positive contribution of transparency and accountability to service delivery and administrative efficiency identified by the study.

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