

Administrative Transparency in Higher Education: Insights from Frontline Service Providers of Basilan State College

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Abstract— This study examines administrative transparency and accountability in higher education, focusing on frontline service providers at Basilan State College. Employing a descriptive research design, data were collected from 25 students and 5 administrative personnel using structured surveys and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative results indicate that students generally perceive administrative services as transparent, fair, and professional, with high levels of trust, satisfaction, and institutional credibility. However, qualitative findings reveal challenges, including outdated systems, inconsistent dissemination of information, lack of formal feedback mechanisms, and interdepartmental coordination issues. Administrative staff reported strategies to address these limitations, such as using multiple communication channels and developing a centralized student portal, but acknowledged resource and structural constraints. The study highlights the need for enhanced staff training in communication, ethics, and service delivery, as well as the implementation of digital feedback and complaint systems. These measures are recommended to strengthen transparency, accountability, and trust between students and administrative personnel. The findings contribute to understanding governance practices in higher education and provide actionable insights for improving frontline administrative services.

Keywords—Administrative transparency; accountability; frontline service providers; higher education; Basilan State College.

I. INTRODUCTION

Transparency in governance stands as one of the fundamental pillars of democratic institutions. It ensures that government actions are visible and understandable to the public, thereby strengthening accountability and fostering citizens' confidence in public institutions (Bovens, 2007; Hood, 2010). When government operations are conducted transparently, they not only discourage corruption but also create an environment where decisions are based on fairness, truth, and ethical reasoning. In this way, transparency becomes a cornerstone for promoting efficiency, equity, and trust in public service delivery. In the realm of higher education, transparency takes on an even deeper meaning. It is not confined to compliance with administrative procedures or the publication of institutional data; rather, it embodies the moral and ethical responsibility of academic institutions to uphold fairness, openness, and integrity in their dealings with stakeholders (Fung, Graham, & Weil, 2007). Colleges and universities serve as models of governance for their students, employees,

and communities. Hence, their internal systems—ranging from financial management to academic services—must reflect transparency that nurtures trust, accountability, and inclusivity.

Basilan State College, being a Higher Education Institution in the province, holds a crucial role in shaping local development and fostering human capital in Basilan. Its administrative and frontline service units, particularly those managing student enrollment, recordkeeping, and administrative support, serve as the bridge between the College and the public it serves. The way these frontline units operate directly influences how students, faculty, and external partners perceive the institution's credibility and governance culture. However, despite ongoing institutional reforms and modernization efforts, reports of delayed transactions, inadequate communication, and perceived favouritism have occasionally surfaced, raising legitimate concerns regarding transparency and accountability in service delivery (Indama & Salain, 2023).

The call for transparent and accountable governance in educational institutions has been echoed by several studies. Gorospe et al. (2021) emphasized that while many universities demonstrate high levels of stakeholder engagement, lapses in administrative communication often lead to inefficiencies and misunderstandings. Nkomo (2024) similarly noted that when transparency is compromised, institutional performance and public confidence tend to decline. Indama (2023) also underscored that transparency in public service delivery rests not only on the availability of information but also on the presence of ethical leadership and participatory decision-making. Her findings revealed that when institutions adopt mechanisms promoting openness, dialogue, and shared responsibility, service delivery becomes more accessible, reliable, and trusted by the public. These insights reinforce the notion that transparency must be institutionalized as a cultural norm rather than viewed as a mere bureaucratic formality. Within Basilan State College, the perception of uneven administrative practices reflects the broader challenges facing many public higher education institutions in the country. As public expectations evolve, universities and colleges are urged to uphold higher standards of accountability, not only in academic performance but also in the ethical management of resources and the equitable treatment of stakeholders (Indama

& Salain, 2023). Globally, higher education institutions are expected to demonstrate good governance, anchored on openness, participatory leadership, and responsiveness—to maintain credibility and ensure sustainable institutional development (Armstrong, 2019).

The present study rests on the premise that the effectiveness and credibility of frontline service providers mirror the governance culture of the institution. Transparent administrative practices signify that policies are applied consistently, decisions are communicated clearly, and stakeholders are treated equitably. Yet, ensuring transparency requires more than policy compliance; it necessitates nurturing a culture of accountability, responsiveness, and ethical leadership within the organization.

Hence, this study examines the administrative practices of selected frontline service providers at Basilan State College with the intent to assess existing mechanisms that promote transparency and accountability, identify gaps and challenges in service delivery, and recommend strategies for improvement. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to the strengthening of institutional governance, reinforcing stakeholder trust, and advancing the principles of ethical and effective public administration within the higher education context.

II. METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive research design aimed at providing a detailed account of the administrative practices of frontline service providers of Basilan State College. The focus was on examining transparency and accountability within administrative processes and understanding how these practices are perceived by students. The design allowed the researcher to systematically describe existing conditions, document patterns and trends, and identify areas for improvement in institutional governance without manipulating variables. The descriptive approach was particularly suitable for capturing stakeholder experiences and providing a comprehensive overview of the functioning of administrative services.

Population and Sampling

The study involved two groups of participants: students and frontline administrative personnel. The student population included those who regularly engage with administrative offices for enrollment, academic advising, and other student services. A convenience sampling method was used to select 25 students from different academic programs and year levels, ensuring a diversity of experiences. Administrative personnel, totaling five frontline staff members, were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in service delivery. This approach ensured that the study captured detailed insights into the administrative processes, practices, and challenges encountered in promoting transparency and accountability. The chosen sample sizes were considered appropriate given the descriptive focus of the study, which prioritized depth and richness of information over generalizability.

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative techniques. For the quantitative aspect, a structured survey questionnaire was administered to students to measure perceptions of transparency, accountability, trust, satisfaction, and institutional credibility. The survey included Likert-scale items as well as demographic questions to contextualize the responses. The qualitative component involved semi-structured interviews with administrative personnel, designed to explore administrative procedures, challenges in implementing transparent practices, accountability mechanisms, and perceptions of student trust and satisfaction. Interviews were conducted in private, quiet settings and lasted approximately thirty to forty-five minutes to encourage open and candid discussions.

Research Instruments

Two instruments were utilized in this study: a survey questionnaire for students and an interview guide for administrative personnel. The survey was developed based on relevant literature concerning transparency, accountability, and service quality in higher education. It was pretested with a small group of students to ensure clarity, relevance, and reliability of items. The interview guide was semi-structured, allowing flexibility for participants to elaborate on their experiences while maintaining focus on transparency and accountability in frontline administrative services. Both instruments were designed to complement each other, providing a holistic understanding of the administrative environment.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data obtained from the student survey were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, and weighted mean. Frequencies and percentages described demographic characteristics and patterns in perceptions of administrative services, while weighted mean determined overall levels of perceived transparency, accountability, trust, satisfaction, and institutional credibility. The qualitative data from interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, identifying recurring patterns and themes related to administrative practices, challenges, and strategies for promoting transparency and accountability. The combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses provided a comprehensive perspective on the current state of administrative governance at Basilan State College.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to strict ethical standards to protect participants' rights. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents after fully explaining the purpose, procedures, and voluntary nature of the study. Participants were assured of confidentiality, with personal identifiers removed and data stored securely. Participation was entirely voluntary, and respondents were free to withdraw at any time without penalty. The study obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Basilan State College prior to data collection to ensure compliance with ethical research standards.

Limitations of the Study

The study acknowledges certain limitations. The small sample size of twenty-five students and five administrative staff may limit the generalizability of findings to the broader student population. Additionally, self-reported data from both students and administrative personnel may be subject to response bias. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the practices, challenges, and perceptions surrounding transparency and accountability in frontline administrative services, contributing to the improvement of governance at Basilan State College.

III. RESULTS

TABLE 1. Transparency of Administrative Services

Statements	Weighted Mean	Interpretation
1. The administration provides clear and accessible information.	4.36	Agree
2. Updates regarding policies are communicated effectively.	4.39	Agree
3. I have easy access to information on administrative procedures.	4.38	Agree
4. Admin staff explain student services processes clearly.	4.35	Agree
5. Students are well-informed about deadlines and requirements.	4.33	Agree

TABLE 2. Transparency of Administrative Services

6. Admin personnel handle concerns professionally.	4.38	Agree
7. There are clear procedures for addressing complaints.	4.35	Agree
8. Students receive timely responses.	4.40	Agree
9. Feedback mechanisms are in place.	4.40	Agree
10. Administrative personnel follows policies fairly.	4.42	Agree

TABLE 3. Student Trust in Administrative Services

11. Admin staff prioritize student needs.	4.37	Agree
12. The administration is transparent in decision-making.	4.37	Agree
13. Admin personnel act with professionalism.	4.34	Agree
14. Student concerns are addressed fairly.	4.50	Strongly Agree
15. Administrative personnel maintains ethical standards.	4.41	Agree

TABLE 4. Student Satisfaction

16. Admin personnel are approachable.	4.42	Agree
17. Satisfaction with enrollment, advising, and financial services.	4.42	Agree
18. Reasonable waiting time.	4.51	Strongly agree
19. Administrative experience is positive.	4.52	Strongly agree
20. Services are student-friendly.	4.41	Agree

TABLE 5. Institutional Credibility

21. Admin staff prioritize student needs.	4.37	Agree
22. The administration is transparent in decision-making.	4.37	Agree
23. Admin personnel act with professionalism.	4.34	Agree
24. Student concerns are addressed fairly.	4.40	Agree
25. Admin maintains ethical standards.	4.41	Agree

Qualitative Analysis: Thematic Findings from Administrative Interviews

The interviews with frontline administrative personnel provided insights into transparency and accountability in

student-facing services. Analysis of the responses identified four major themes: challenges to transparency, barriers to accountability, institutional strategies, and the need for improvements. These themes reveal both existing limitations and potential areas for institutional development.

Challenges to Transparency

Frontline administrative staff at Basilan State College consistently reported difficulties in maintaining transparency in their service delivery. One staff member observed, "Limited digital systems and outdated procedures make it difficult to provide real-time updates to students," highlighting that reliance on manual processes often delays information sharing. Another remarked, "Sometimes students are unaware of policies because they aren't disseminated consistently," pointing to gaps in communication that prevent students from accessing accurate and timely guidance. Several respondents further noted that inconsistencies across departments contribute to confusion among students. One administrator explained, "Each office manages its own schedules and requirements, so students sometimes receive different instructions depending on whom they ask." This inconsistency not only undermines transparency but also affects students' confidence in the administrative process. Another staff member added, "Even when we post updates on bulletin boards or social media, not all students see them, and we often get repetitive inquiries."

These accounts suggest that transparency in administrative services is constrained not by the willingness of staff but by structural and procedural limitations. Outdated procedures, fragmented communication channels, and limited use of integrated digital systems hinder the College's ability to provide uniform and timely information. Addressing these challenges is essential to ensure that all students have access to clear, consistent, and reliable guidance, thereby strengthening trust and confidence in the institution.

Barriers to Accountability

Administrative personnel at Basilan State College reported several obstacles that hinder accountability in frontline service delivery. A recurring concern was the absence of formal mechanisms for receiving student feedback and addressing grievances. One staff member noted, "Lack of formal mechanisms for student feedback or grievance redressal is a major issue," emphasizing that without structured channels, it is difficult to track, monitor, and resolve student concerns systematically. In addition to the absence of feedback systems, staff pointed to coordination challenges among departments. One respondent explained, "Some departments do not coordinate effectively, which leads to delayed responses," indicating that miscommunication or lack of alignment across offices slows down problem-solving and creates inconsistencies in service delivery. Another staff member added, "When a student submits a concern in one office, it sometimes takes days for it to reach the relevant department, and by then the student may have already become frustrated," highlighting how process inefficiencies affect the timeliness and quality of responses.

The interviews suggest that accountability is closely tied to both procedural structures and interdepartmental cooperation. While staff strive to provide responsible and fair services, the absence of formal reporting systems and the fragmented coordination among units undermine their efforts. Establishing clear accountability mechanisms, such as a digital feedback system or a formalized grievance process, would enable the College to respond more efficiently to student concerns, enhance service quality, and reinforce trust between students and administrative personnel.

Institutional Strategies

Despite the challenges in maintaining transparency and accountability, administrative personnel at Basilan State College described several strategies currently in place to support effective service delivery. Many staff members highlighted their reliance on traditional and digital methods to disseminate information. One participant explained, “*We rely on manual forms, bulletin boards, and social media to announce updates,*” showing that multiple communication channels are being used to reach students, even if coverage is not always complete. In addition to these existing measures, staff expressed efforts to modernize and centralize administrative processes. A respondent shared, “*We are advocating for a more centralized student portal to streamline services,*” reflecting an initiative to integrate information systems to improve accessibility and efficiency. Another staff member noted, “*We are trying to ensure that students can find all the necessary forms and announcements in one place, but the system is still under development,*” indicating a recognition of both the potential benefits and current limitations of digital infrastructure.

These accounts suggest that while resource and structural constraints remain, the administration is actively seeking solutions to enhance transparency and accountability. The use of multiple communication channels combined with plans for digital centralization demonstrates a proactive approach to improving service delivery. Such strategies indicate an awareness among staff that achieving effective governance requires not only following procedures but also adopting innovative and accessible systems that allow students to receive consistent and timely information.

Need for Improvements

The administrative personnel at Basilan State College highlighted several areas requiring improvement to strengthen transparency and accountability in frontline services. A recurring point emphasized by respondents was the importance of staff development. One administrator noted, “*Training staff in communication and ethics is essential,*” underscoring that equipping personnel with the necessary skills and ethical awareness is critical to ensuring fair, consistent, and transparent interactions with students. Another staff member added, “*Regular workshops on service delivery and handling student concerns would really help staff perform their roles more effectively,*” indicating a recognition that professional development directly impacts the quality of administrative services. In addition to capacity-building, staff stressed the need for technological enhancements. One

participant stated, “*A digital feedback and complaint system could really help build trust,*” reflecting the potential of integrated digital tools to provide students with accessible channels to voice concerns, track requests, and receive timely responses. Another respondent remarked, “*If students can submit complaints online and get updates automatically, it would reduce confusion and improve transparency,*” demonstrating how technology could address existing gaps in communication and accountability.

These insights suggest that improvements in both human and technological resources are necessary to enhance the effectiveness of frontline services. Strengthening staff competencies, coupled with the adoption of digital platforms for monitoring and feedback, can foster a culture of transparency, ensure consistent implementation of policies, and reinforce trust between students and administrative personnel. Ultimately, these measures would contribute to more efficient, equitable, and accountable service delivery within the institution.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, several conclusions can be drawn regarding transparency and accountability in the administrative practices of frontline service providers at Basilan State College. First, the quantitative results indicate that students generally perceive administrative services as transparent and accountable, with most items receiving “Agree” to “Strongly Agree” ratings. Students reported that administrative personnel provide clear information, follow procedures fairly, and prioritize student needs. Trust in administrative staff and overall satisfaction with services were also rated positively, suggesting a foundational level of confidence in the College’s governance. Institutional credibility similarly scored high, reinforcing the perception that the College maintains professional and ethical standards in service delivery.

However, qualitative findings reveal underlying challenges that constrain the full realization of transparency and accountability. Staff interviews highlighted structural and procedural limitations, such as outdated systems, inconsistent dissemination of policies, and lack of formal feedback or grievance mechanisms. Coordination issues among departments further impede the timely resolution of student concerns. While the administration has adopted strategies such as manual notices, social media announcements, and the development of a centralized student portal, these efforts remain constrained by limited digital infrastructure and fragmented communication processes.

The study also underscores the importance of continuous improvement in both human and technological resources. Administrative personnel identified the need for enhanced training in communication, ethics, and service delivery, alongside the implementation of digital feedback and complaint systems. These measures are critical to fostering a culture of transparency, ensuring consistent application of policies, and reinforcing trust between students and administrative staff. Overall, the findings suggest that while

Basilan State College has made strides in transparent and accountable governance, targeted interventions are necessary to address systemic inefficiencies and strengthen service delivery at the frontline.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations are offered to enhance transparency and accountability in frontline administrative services at Basilan State College. Strengthening staff capacity is a primary consideration. Regular training on communication, ethics, and customer service should be provided to frontline personnel, alongside workshops on handling student concerns, complaint resolution, and ethical decision-making. These measures aim to equip staff with the necessary skills to perform their roles effectively and consistently. Enhancing digital infrastructure is also essential. The College should prioritize the development of a centralized student portal that consolidates enrollment, academic, and administrative information in one accessible location. Alongside this, an online feedback and complaint system should be implemented to allow students to submit concerns, track their progress, and receive timely responses. Such digital tools will improve accessibility, support transparency, and strengthen the responsiveness of administrative services.

Improving communication and information dissemination is another key area. Standardized procedures should be established across departments to minimize inconsistencies, and multiple channels, including emails, social media, bulletin boards, and the student portal should be utilized to ensure that all students are informed promptly and accurately. Formal accountability mechanisms must also be established. Structured channels for student feedback and grievance redressal should be developed and closely monitored, while clear interdepartmental coordination protocols should be put in place to ensure timely responses and effective resolution of student concerns.

Finally, promoting a culture of transparency and continuous improvement is recommended. Staff should regularly engage in self-assessment and peer review, while the institution should foster a climate that values openness, responsiveness, and accountability in all student-facing services. Implementing these recommendations will help address existing gaps, enhance student trust and satisfaction, and reinforce the credibility of the College's administrative services.

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