

ETHICS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: EVIDENCE FROM SLOVENIA

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Abstract

The main purpose of this paper is to examine how employees' personal ethics, expressed through their personal values and attitudes toward social and environmental issues, are associated with the ethics of organizations in public administration. The authors introduce their own theoretical model that examines the relations between employees' personal ethics – expressed through employees' personal values and attitudes toward natural and social environments – and the ethics of public administration. The reported study examined these relations and tested a proposed model based on the answers of 212 employees from public administration organizations in Slovenia. Employees' attitudes toward natural and social environments and the ethics of their organizations were measured using a questionnaire designed to measure aspects of ethics whereas personal values were measured using the Schwartz value survey.

The results demonstrated that employees' self-enhancing values significantly influence their attitudes toward the natural environment. Employees' self-transcendence and self-enhancement values significantly influence their attitudes toward the social environment and the ethics of organizations. In addition, research results about the mediation effect of employees' attitudes toward natural and social environments on the association between the employees' personal values and their perception of the ethics of public administration organizations reveals that employees' social attitudes have a significant impact on the ethics of public administration while the impact of self-transcending and self-enhancing values becomes insignificant. Based on results of testing our model we can conclude that the employee's attitudes toward the social environment represent a significantly more powerful predictor of ethics in public administration organizations than the employees' personal values. These results present a solid basis for further theoretical and practical advancement of public administration ethics.

Keywords: attitudes, ethics, natural environment, public administration, Slovenia, social environment, values.



1. Introduction

The current economic crisis has confronted the Slovenian government with pressing questions of budgetary restraint and organizational efficiency related to public administration. Simultaneously, citizens have raised their expectations about the responsibility of public administration for more sustainable development. Combined with structural reforms aimed at balancing limited funds and engagements as well as expectations about the implementation of modern ethical standards and practices, these developments re-open the question about initiating advanced ethics in Slovenian public administration. For several reasons this consideration is meaningful and relevant to public administration organizations' debates on advanced ethics.

Slovenia has developed novel administrative traditions and systems during the last decades, with potentially different consequences for how government ethics have been shaped (United Nations, 2004; Jelovac, Van Der Wal and Jelovac, 2011; Rodic *et al.*, 2012). After gaining independence in 1991, Slovenia created a new administrative system on a foundation equal to the systems of countries across the Western hemisphere. In addition, with permanent reforms – especially with structural reforms in 1996 and 2009 – and related to the growing public interest in ethical issues, public administration has sought to continuously improve its ethics (Jelovac, Van Der Wal and Jelovac, 2011; Kovac, 2013).

Slovenian public administration has based its work on officially defined ethical principles, stated through key public values derived from justice, legality, transparency, professionalism, responsibility, efficiency, and effectiveness to citizens' user-orientation (Republic of Slovenia, 2002; Jelovac, Van Der Wal and Jelovac, 2011). Stated values are harmonized with values followed by legislation, and the standards, and good practices of international organizations and of developed Western countries (United Nations, 2004; Moilanen and Salminen, 2007; Demmke and Moilanen, 2011). In the last ten years, public values have been at the forefront of many debates about social and environmental issues in Slovenia and worldwide.

Social and environmental issues are regularly mentioned in public administration research, but often separately from organizational ethics (Bossaert and Demmke, 2005; Denhardt and Denhardt, 2009). Authors also frequently overlook connections between social and environmental issues, and organizational ethics (Davis, Whitman and Zald, 2008; Fiorino, 2010; Stensöta, 2010).

In addition, current studies do not conduct detailed examinations of influences of hidden behavioral factors – namely, values and attitudes of personal ethics (Stensöta, 2010; Witesman and Walters, 2013) as well as their impact on organizational ethics (Bowman and Knox, 2008). In public administration, single empirical studies have examined correlates between individual personal values of employees or specific employees' attitudes and organizational ethics (Lyons, Duxbury and Higgins, 2006; Vigoda-Gadot and Meiri, 2008). Indeed, their consideration is oriented on selected individual employees' personal values or sets of values and the application of several questionnaires that contain different ranges of values (Bossaert and Demmke, 2005;

Jørgensen and Bozeman, 2007). The literature does not offer detailed explanations about the direct influences of the majority of employees' values and indirect influences of the majority of employees' values expressed through selected variables of ethics.

The main purpose of this paper is to examine how employees' personal ethics expressed through their personal values and attitudes toward social and environmental issues are associated with the ethics of a public organization. Based on these relationships, we developed a theoretical model that was empirically tested using the theory of personal values (Schwartz, 1992) and with the application of a questionnaire aimed to measure different aspects of ethics (Ralston *et al.*, 1993) on a sample of 212 employees in public administration and civil servant organizations in Slovenia.

From a theoretical viewpoint, this article offers a new conceptual framework that integrates and extends existing discussions about the influence of personal ethics on the ethics of public administration. In practice, these results are essential for understanding the characteristics of correlates between employees' ethics and organizational ethics. In addition, we propose a new way for improving organizational ethics through the development of employees' personal ethics.

2. Literature review and hypotheses

Slovenian public administration has been working in many different political systems in the last hundred years, from several systems before World War II through the so-called socialistic system – namely, from 1945 to 1991 and eventually the current system created after Slovenia's independence in 1991. The system of Slovenia's public administration and its civil servants includes state administration, local self-government, and public services (Republic of Slovenia, 2002; United Nations, 2004; Demmke and Moilanen, 2011).

For our research we classify prior studies about ethics of public administration into two basic groups. The first group includes approaches which consider ethics of public administration as political ethics (Douglas, 1952; Thompson, 1985; Cooper, 1990). Those researches originate from the idea that ethics addresses the fundamental premise of a public administrator's duty as a 'steward' to the public (Cooper, 1990; Rabin, Bartley Hildreth and Miller, 2006; Stensöta, 2010). In other words, it is the moral justification and consideration for decisions and actions made during the daily duties when civil servants perform the general services of government and nonprofit organizations. Researchers focused their work on origins, definition and implementation of the general working framework. Such top-down approach is still the prevailing approach for macro consideration of administration's ethics (Rabin, Bartley Hildreth and Miller, 2006; Stensöta, 2010).

The second group incorporates approaches for considering public administration ethics as a type of applied ethics (Bowman and Knox, 2008; Denhardt and Denhardt, 2009; Menzel and White, 2011). With the growth of the importance of public administration organizations as a subject which crucially determines the realization of demanding purposes and goals of public administration, researches focused their

attention more on its micro consideration – i.e., on the working and behavior of organizations (Fiorino, 2010; Van Der Val, 2011; Witesman and Walters, 2013). Such a bottom-up approach is characteristic when ethics are considered in recent theoretical frameworks like contingency theory, postmodernism, scientific values approach, etc. This is the main approach for the micro consideration of public administration ethics in contemporary literature. Researchers focus on working and behavior characteristics of organizations, on its important appearance levels, and according to a predefined framework on macro level.

In accordance with the outlined cognitions we can define ethics of public administration organizations to mean how they ethically respond to an internal or external stimulus – i.e., which are the important needs and demands to consider for working and behavior of public administration.

Although ethics of public administration is akin to both political ethics – on the macro level, and organizational ethics – on the micro level, ethics of public administration is neither political ethics, nor is it solely organizational ethics. Ethics of public administration express the values of an organization to its employees and other entities as generally accepted and valid public duties defined through macro normative and non-normative provisions.

From the viewpoint of political ethics, the ethics of the Slovenian public administration are defined by normative provisions, which determine the general ethical framework and states its fundamental origins, principles, key public values, etc. (Republic of Slovenia, 1991, 2001, 2002; Kovac, 2013). The implementation of ethics is carried out to achieve normative solutions – namely, legislation identifies the levels of working and corresponding non-normative solutions like a code of ethics, recommendations for working, etc. (RS, 2001, 2002; Jelovac, Van Der Wal and Jelovac, 2011).

The fundamental ethical principles of administration stated through official normative and non-normative provisions in Slovenia are justice, legality, transparency, professionalism, responsibility, efficiency, effectiveness, and user-orientation (Republic of Slovenia, 2002; Jelovac, Van Der Wal and Jelovac, 2011; Kovac, 2013). International organizations like the UN (2004) as well as empirical studies (Demmke and Moilanen, 2011) have reported that the ethical principles of Slovenia's public administration are harmonized with the advanced ethical principles from the EU. In addition, Moilanen and Salminen (2007) reported that the key values of Slovenian public administration are in line with the stated key values of other EU member states.

In the last twenty years, organizations worldwide have been at the forefront of many debates about new ethical expectations and demands that arise from modern philosophies like sustainable development and corporate social responsibility which appear on different levels of society (Dietz, Fitzgerlad and Shwom, 2005; Davis, Whitman and Zald, 2008). Various authors emphasized the necessity to expand consideration of ethics with research of organization responsibility to their natural and social goals (Davis, Whitman and Zald, 2008; Ralston *et al.*, 2011). The initial studies from this research field of organizations' responsible work regarding the natural environ-

ment used individual concepts like eco- or natural-efficiency (Axelrod and Lehman, 1993; Karp, 1996), and researched social responsibility of organizations based on individual concepts like quality of life (Davis, Whitman and Zald, 2008; Menzel and White, 2011). The stated concepts follow the standards recognized and used by leading international organizations – such as UN, UNESCO, ILO, EU, and The International Institute of Administrative Sciences (Davis, Whitman and Zald, 2008; Ralston *et al.*, 2011). The standards range through all levels of humankind from individual, organizational, societal, to the global level. The detailed discussion of those issues is beyond the framework of our present research.

Based on that we understand: (1) natural responsibility as those organizational actions aimed to prevent environmental degradation, minimization of human impact on nature and programs for nature protection (Davis, Whitman and Zald, 2008; ISO, 2012); and (2) social responsibility as those organizational actions that actively contribute to the enhancement of community welfare, to solving social problems and the involvement in philanthropic actions (Davis, Whitman and Zald, 2008; ISO, 2012).

Organizations of public administration are also faced with dilemma on how to respond to new public demands regarding the responsible working and behavior of public administration at the organizational level (Fiorino, 2010; Menzel and White, 2011). Public administration uses several concepts to implement the generally accepted idea of sustainable development in their working, from balancing its working goals to developing a more sustainable behavior (Rabin, Bartley Hildreth and Miller, 2006; Menzel and White, 2011). Regarding the balancing of goals, different studies have reported on the interdependence among various goals and emphasized the importance of social and environmental goals for organizations in general (Davis, Whitman and Zald, 2008; Ralston *et al.*, 2011) and in particular for public administration (Fiorino, 2010; Stensöta, 2010).

In current studies, ethical authors shifted their attention from the realization of environmental and social ethical goals to the consideration of human ethical behaviors, which importantly influence and define the state of organizational ethics (Davis, Whitman and Zald, 2008; Ralston *et al.*, 2011). Studies can range from the relationships between personal, group, and organizational behavior characteristics, values, culture, and norms and organizational ethics (England, 1967; Rokeach, 1968; Ralston *et al.*, 1993). Several authors have focused their researches on the relationships between employees' behavior and desired ethics of different types, sorts and kinds of organizations (Ralston *et al.*, 1993; Kimmelmeier, Krol and Hun Kim, 2002) like ethics of public administration (Lyons, Duxbury and Higgins, 2006; Jørgensen and Bozeman, 2007; Bowman and Knox, 2008). Authors have also reported on the decisive importance of the social and natural environment orientations of employees for their personal ethics and influences of these orientations of the employees on the ethics of organizations (Ralston *et al.*, 1993; Dietz, Fitzgerlad and Shwom, 2005; Ralston *et al.*, 2011).

Based on their studies, we used sets of factors to determine employees' pro-natural (Axelrod and Lehman, 1993; Kimmelmeier, Krol and Hun Kim, 2002) and pro-social

orientations (Karp, 1996; Schultz and Zelezny, 1999; Schwartz, 2010). We considered employees' ethical orientations through their perceptions of natural and social environments (Axelrod and Lehman, 1993; Kimmelmeier, Krol and Hun Kim, 2002; Schwartz, 2010).

The theory and prior research suggest the following hypotheses:

- H1:** Employees' attitudes toward the natural environment are positively related to the ethics of public administration.
- H2:** Employees' attitudes toward social environment are positively related to the ethics of public administration.

2.1. Employees' personal values and ethics of public administration

We continue our discussion with an examination of employees' less explored personal values that might partly explain the personal and organizational ethics (Schwartz, 2010; Menzel and White, 2011). In theory, researchers usually define personal values as important and these are lasting beliefs or ideas that guide a person's behavior and work (England, 1967; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992, 2010; Ralston *et al.*, 1993, 2011).

In considering ethics, authors have used different theories and different value measurement systems (Jørgensen and Bozeman, 2007; Stensöta, 2010; Witesman and Walters, 2013). In public administration, several studies have reported on the advantages of implementing Schwartz's theory of personal values to investigate correlations between individual employees' personal values and the ethics of organizations (Dietz, Fitzgerlad and Shwom, 2005; Jørgensen and Bozeman, 2007; Witesman and Walters, 2013). The Schwartz value survey (SVS) (Schwartz, 1992; 2010) includes 56 single values which represent a foundation for building dimensions of individual and societal values. In the SVS model frame Schwartz defined three levels of personal values: (1) in the first level 56 single values are considered, (2) at the second level those single values are merged into ten groups of values which are defined as sub-dimensions of personal values, (3) finally those sub-dimensions are used to form high-order dimensions of personal values.

For our research we used a set of four individual level higher-order dimensions which are aligned as two bi-polar orientations in the Schwartz values model, namely: self-enhancement (power, achievement, hedonism) versus self-transcendence (universalism and benevolence) and openness to change (stimulation and self-direction) versus conservation (tradition, conformity and security) dimensions (Schwartz, 1992, 2010) (Figure 1).

Self-enhancing values emphasize individuals' orientation toward the accomplishment of individual goals, even when the achievement of individual goals potentially occurs at the expense of others. Self-transcending values trigger actions aimed at understanding, appreciating, tolerating, and protecting the welfare of all people and nature. Openness to change emphasizes people's motivation to follow intellectual and emotional interests in unpredictable and uncertain ways. Conservation emphasizes

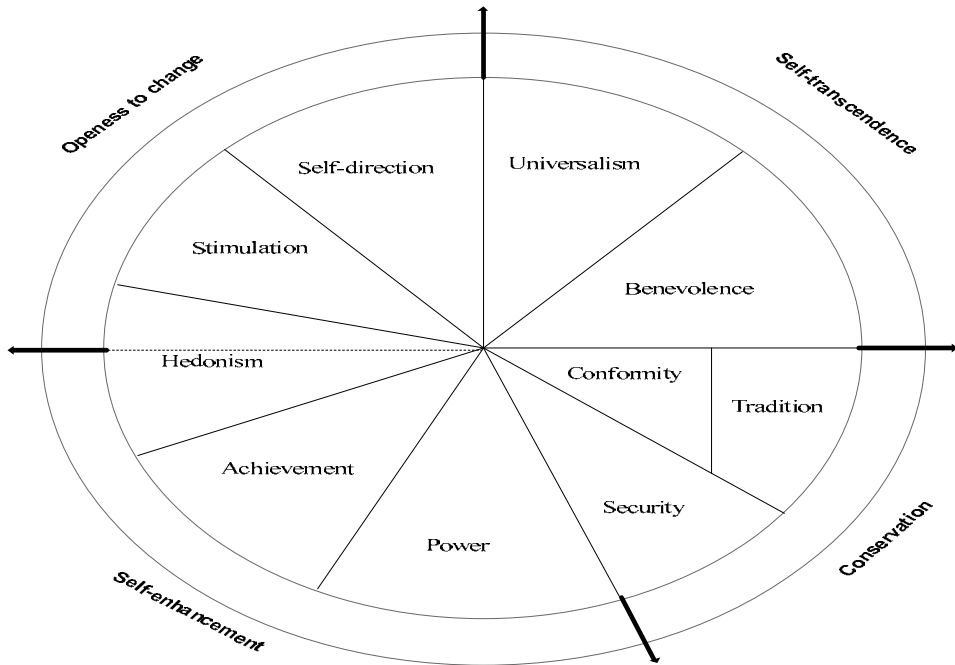


Figure 1: Schwartz's model of values (1992)

people's motivation to preserve the status quo and provides certainty in relationships with others, institutions, and traditions.

Our consideration is focused on individual-level high-order dimensions from Schwartz's values classification and based on a questionnaire adopted from Schwartz's (1992, 2010) value survey, focusing on natural and social questions related to ethics (Ralston *et al.*, 1993, 2011).

Therefore, theory and prior research suggest the following hypothesis:

H3: Employees' personal values significantly influence organizational ethics in public administration.

Public administration researchers have also recognized and reported on the impacts of individual or sets of personal values on ethical attitudes toward different environments. For example, Lyons, Duxbury and Higgins (2006), Bowman and Knox (2008), and Van Der Wal (2011) reported that individual personal values influence personal ethical attitudes toward several environments. Others, like Fiorino (2010), and Witesman and Walters (2013), reported on sets of single values that define the pro-environmental orientation of employees and organizations. This enables us to formulate the following hypotheses:

H4: Employees' personal values significantly influence their attitudes toward the natural environment.

H5: Employees' personal values significantly influence their attitudes toward the social environment.

Research into the correlations between personal values and ethics explained part of the possible influences between them, but not all. Authors examining public administration have reported on the indirect influences of employees' values on the ethics of organizations, but without detailed explanations or empirical evidence to support them (Stensöta, 2010; Van Der Wal, De Graaf and Lasthuizen, 2008). Only a few studies have considered correlates between employees' values and organizational ethics, mediated by different ethical labels such as ethical orientation and ethical work. In addition, authors have used different meanings and measures in their studies when considering ethical labels, which make a comparison of their results and cognitions difficult (Van Der Wal, 2011; Witesman and Walters, 2013). We added value to findings of previous studies by considering the impact of employees' personal values on the ethics of organizations in public administration, mediated by employees' attitudes toward natural and social environments.

Theoretical explanations and the findings in prior research are consistent with the following hypotheses:

H6: Employees' attitudes toward the natural environment mediate the effect of their personal values on the ethics of organizations in public administration.

H7: Employees' attitudes toward social environment mediate the effect of their personal values on the ethics of organizations in public administration.

3. Methods

3.1. Sample and procedure

Data were obtained through an online survey tool. Sampling was based on the Slovenian central directory that includes Slovenian public administration organizations and ministries. Public organizations were sampled based on their assigned number in the listings, using random numbers. For each selected organization, we selected a maximum of five direct email contacts from among employees. Altogether, we sent a link to our survey in an email to 1,000 employees in 200 selected organizations in Slovenian public administration. The sample for this study included 212 responses from employees (response rate = 21.2 %) and all participants participated voluntarily in the research. Based on the national classification of activities of Slovenian NACE, the basic activity of all considered organizations belonged to classification group 15: activities of general government and defense.

Sample demographic characteristics revealed that 18.9 percent of participants were males and 81.1 percent females. Respondents' average age was 41.2 years, and they had on average 18.08 years of work experience. In terms of education, 30.3 percent of the respondents finished secondary school, 63.2 percent had a bachelor's degree, and 6.6 percent had a master's degree. No participant had a doctorate degree. In addition, 68.7 percent were non-supervisory staff while 31.3 percent were supervisory staff; 10.9 percent were first-level managers, 18.5 percent were middle-level managers, and 1.9 percent were upper-level managers. Finally, 59 percent of the participants worked in organizations employing fewer than 100 employees, 34.4 percent in organizations

employing 100 to 1,000 employees, and 6.6 percent in organizations employing more than 1,000 employees.

3.2. Measures

Values are measured using the Schwartz Value Survey (SVS), a tool with cross-cultural validity (Schwartz, 1992, 2006). Schwartz's (1992) list of 56 values was used to measure employees' personal values. The importance of each personal value was measured using a 9-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 'opposed to my values' (-1) to 'of supreme importance' (7). SVS consists of 56 single personal values that represent 10 sub-dimensions, which are used to form a set of four higher-order dimensions: openness to change ($\alpha = 0.649$), self-transcendence ($\alpha = 0.850$), self-enhancement ($\alpha = 0.809$), and conservation ($\alpha = 0.834$). The defined individual-level high-order dimensions have been confirmed as a reliable measurement of personal values on Slovenian samples (Piciga *et al.*, 1992). Ralston *et al.* (2011) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging between 0.74 and 0.82.

Ethics of organizations in public administration were measured as perceived by the employees, who assessed the main duties of organizations (Ralston *et al.*, 1993). Items measuring organizational ethics were assessed using a 9-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 'strongly agree' (1) to 'strongly disagree' (9). Ethics of considered organizations were measured using these items: (1) always submit to the principles defined by the regulatory system; (2) give priority to ethical principles over economic goals; (3) refrain from bending the law, even if doing so could improve performance; and (4) train their employees to act within the standards defined by the law. The Cronbach's alpha for the construct was 0.767.

Employees' attitudes toward both natural and social environment were measured as their perception of an organization's duties in terms of its natural and social environments. The attitudes were measured using a 9-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 'strongly agree' (1) to 'strongly disagree' (9).

Employees' attitudes toward the natural environment were measured using the following items: (1) prevent environmental degradation caused by the pollution and depletion of natural resources, (2) adopt formal programs to minimize the harmful impact of organizational activities on the environment, (3) minimize the environmental impact of all organizational activities, and (4) assume total financial responsibility for environmental pollution caused by working activities. The Cronbach's alpha for the construct was 0.779.

Employees' attitudes toward the social environment were measured using three items: (1) allocate some of their resources to philanthropic activities, (2) contribute actively to the welfare of our community, and (3) help solve social problems. The Cronbach's alpha for the construct was 0.721.

In terms of identifying multicollinearity among ethics of organizations, employees' attitudes toward natural and social environments, and their personal values, the 'tolerance values' were greater than 0.396 while the VIF values ranged between 1.000

and 2.587. According to Ho's (2006) suggestions, tolerance values greater than 0.10 and VIF values lower than 10 are all acceptable, thus, multicollinearity was not seen as a problem in our hierarchical regression analysis.

3.3. Research design

In line with the main idea of this investigation, we examined the relationships among employees' personal values, their attitudes toward both natural and social environments, and their perception of ethics of public administration organizations. We used regression and hierarchical regression analyses for the examination of these relationships. We also outlined descriptive statistics and zero-ordered correlations for variables used in our study.

As a first step, we examined the impact of employee's attitudes toward natural and social environment on ethics of public administration. Next we examined the impact of four individual-level high-order dimensions of personal values on the employees' perceptions of the ethics of public administration. Thirdly, we examined the impact of four individual-level high-order dimensions of personal values on the employees' attitudes toward natural and social environment. In the last step, we examined the mediation effect of employees' attitudes toward natural and social environments on the association between the employees' personal values and their perception of the ethics of public administration organizations. The research model for the outlined research steps is depicted in Figure 2.

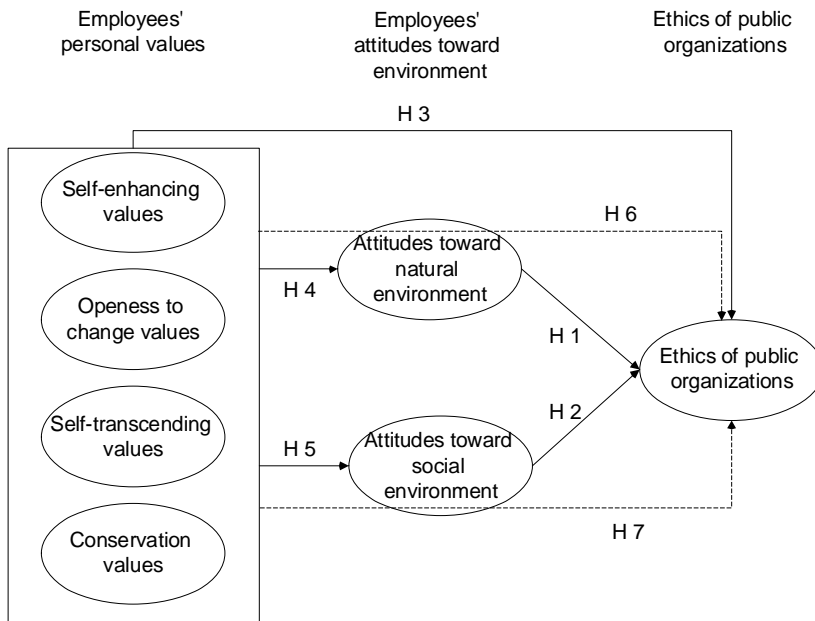


Figure 2: Research model

4. Results

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the variables and the zero-ordered correlations among variables in the study.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics and correlations among variables

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Self-enhancing	3.96	1.03	1						
2. Openness to change	4.22	0.98	.704**	1					
3. Self-transcending	5.25	0.81	.247**	.375**	1				
4. Conservation	4.49	0.93	.362**	.302**	.757**	1			
5. Natural environment	2.53	1.43	.167*	-.038	-.251**	-.117	1		
6. Social environment	2.90	1.48	.105	-.095	-.341**	-.252**	.595**	1	
7. Ethics of public organization	2.55	1.40	.093	-.030	-.291**	-.231**	.478**	.645**	1

Notes: ** $p < 0.001$, * $p < 0.05$; sample size is 212.

These findings suggest the need for a deeper examination of: (1) the impact of employee's attitudes toward natural and social environment on the ethics of public administration, (2) the impact of employee's personal values on the ethics of public administration, (3) the impact of employee's personal values on their attitudes toward natural and social environment, and (4) the mediation effect of employees' attitudes toward natural and social environments on the relationship between employees' personal values and the ethics of public administration. First we outline results regarding the impact of employees' attitudes toward natural and social environment and their personal values, on the ethics of public administration, utilizing multiple regression analysis.

According to the proposed research model and referring to zero-correlations among employees' attitudes toward natural and social environment and ethics of public administration in Table 1, both natural and social employees' attitudes have positive and significant correlations with ethics of public administration organizations. Based on these results, we next examine the strength of the impact of employees' attitudes toward natural and social environment on perceived ethics of public administration organizations. We employed multiple regression analysis.

ANOVA results show that employee's attitudes toward natural and social environment are significant predictors of ethics in public administration $F(2,203) = 75.694$, $p < 0.001$. Thus, employees' attitudes toward the natural environment are significantly associated with the ethics of organizations in public administration ($\beta = 0.148$, $t = 2.247$, $p < .001$). Employees' attitudes toward the social environment are significantly associated with ethics of organizations in public administration ($\beta = 0.554$, $t = 8.391$, $p < 0.001$). Employees' attitudes toward the natural and social environment accounted for 42.7% of the variance in the ethics in public administration. Detailed results are presented in Table 2.

Results about the association of employees' attitudes toward the natural environment with ethics of public administration organizations reveal that the greater an employee's concern for the environment, the higher the ethics of these organizations is; this is consistent with hypothesis 1.

Table 2: Multiple regression analysis of employees' natural and social attitudes on ethics of public administration organizations

Model	R Squ.	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		β	Std. Error	β		
1. Attitudes	42.7 %					
Natural environment		0.145	0.065	0.148	2.247	0.026
Social environment		0.526	0.063	0.554	8.391	0.000

Results indicating the association of employees' attitudes toward the social environment with the ethics of public administration organizations reveal that the more the employees show concern for society, the higher the level of ethics of these organizations is; this is consistent with hypothesis 2.

Next we examine the impact of employees' personal values on the ethics of public administration organizations utilizing multiple regression analysis. ANOVA results reveal that the higher-order dimensions of employees' personal values are significant predictors of ethics in public administration $F(4,166) = 4.453, p < 0.05$. The regression of the four high-ordered dimensions of employees' personal values on the ethics of organizations in public administration reveals that employees' personal values explain 9.7% of the variance in ethics of public administration organizations. Detailed results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Multiple regression analysis of employees' high-ordered dimensions of personal values on ethics of public administration organizations

Model	R Squ.	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		β	Std. Error	β		
1. Personal values	9.7 %					
Self-enhancing		0.335	0.723	0.248	2.228	0.027
Openness to change		-0.152	0.157	-0.108	-0.966	0.335
Self-transcending		-0.409	0.203	-0.235	-2.015	0.045
Conservation		-0.087	0.180	-0.057	-0.486	0.628

The results reveal that self-enhancement values ($\beta = 0.248, t = 2.228, p < .05$) and self-transcendence values ($\beta = -0.235, t = -2.015, p < .05$) are significant predictors of the ethics of public administration organizations. Thus, a positive association of self-enhancement values with the ethics of organizations in public administration reveals that the more employees strive to promote self-interest, the lower the ethics of organizations in public administration are. Inversely, a negative association of self-transcending values with the ethics of considered organizations reveals that the more employees strive to promote the welfare of others, the higher the ethics of organizations in public administration are.

The impact of self-enhancement and self-transcendence values supports hypothesis 3, whereas the impact of openness to change ($\beta = -0.108, t = -0.966, p > .05$) and conservation values ($\beta = -0.057, t = -0.486, p > .05$) on the ethics in public administration is insignificant, thereby rejecting hypothesis 3.

Next we examine the impact of employees' personal values on their attitudes toward the natural environment utilizing multiple regression analysis. ANOVA results reveal that higher-order dimensions of employees' personal values are significant predictors of their attitudes toward the natural environment $F(4,166) = 5.027, p < 0.05$. The regression of the four high-order dimensions of employees' personal values on their attitudes toward the natural environment reveals that employees' personal values explain 10.8 % of the variance in their attitudes toward natural environment. Detailed results are presented in Table 4. These results reveal that only self-enhancing personal values significantly influence employees' attitudes toward the natural environment ($\beta = 0.347, t = 3.137, p < .05$).

Table 4: Multiple regression analysis of employees' high-ordered dimensions of personal values on their attitudes toward natural environment

Model	R Squ.	Unstandardized		Standardized	t	Sig.
		Coefficients β	Std. Error	Coefficients B		
1. Personal values	10.8 %					
Self-enhancing		0.456	0.145	0.347	3.137	0.002
Openness to change		-0.229	0.152	-0.167	-1.506	0.134
Self-transcending		-0.378	0.196	-0.224	-1.927	0.056
Conservation		-0.028	0.174	-0.018	-0.158	0.874

Thus, the positive association of employees' self-enhancement values with their attitudes toward natural environment shows that the more employees strive to promote self-interest, the less favorable their attitudes toward the natural environment are. This supports hypothesis 4. However, the other value dimensions – namely, openness to change ($\beta = -0.167, t = -1.506, p > .05$), self-transcendence ($\beta = -0.224, t = -1.927, p > .05$), and conservation values ($\beta = -0.018, t = -0.158, p > .05$) – are not significant predictors of employees' attitudes toward natural environment, thereby rejecting hypothesis 4.

We continue our analysis by examining the impact of employees' personal value on their attitudes toward the social environment using multiple regression analysis as well. ANOVA results reveal that high-order dimensions of employees' personal values are significant predictors of their attitudes toward the social environment $F(4,167) = 6.878, p < 0.001$. The regression of the four high-order dimensions of employees' personal values on their attitudes toward the social environment reveals that employees' personal values explain 14.1% of the variance in their attitudes toward the social environment. Detailed results are presented in Table 5.

The results outlined above reveal that personal values of self-enhancement ($\beta = 0.335, t = 3.094, p < .05$) and self-transcendence ($\beta = -0.258, t = -2.271, p < .05$) significantly influence employees' attitudes toward the social environment. The positive association of employees' self-enhancement values with their attitudes toward the social environment shows that the more employees strive to promote self-interest, the less favorable their attitudes toward the social environment are. Inversely, the negative

Table 5: Multiple regression analysis of employees' high-ordered dimensions of personal values on their attitudes toward social environment

Model	R Squ.	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		β	Std. Error	β		
1. Personal values	14.1 %					
Self-enhancing		0.477	0.154	0.335	3.094	0.002
Openness to change		-0.295	0.162	-0.198	-1.826	0.070
Self-transcending		-0.473	0.208	-0.258	-2.271	0.024
Conservation		-0.116	0.185	-0.071	-0.625	0.533

association of employees' self-transcending values with their attitudes toward the social environment shows that the more employees strive to promote the welfare of others, the more favorable their attitudes toward social concerns are. Therefore, the impact of self-enhancement and self-transcendence support hypothesis 5. Openness to change values ($\beta = -0.198$, $t = -1.826$, $p > .05$) and conservation values ($\beta = -0.071$, $t = -0.625$, $p > .05$) are not significant predictors of employees' social attitudes, thereby rejecting hypothesis 5.

Based on the results obtained above it is evident that conditions for testing the mediation effect of employees attitudes toward natural and social environment on the relationship between employee's personal values and ethics of public administration organization are fulfilled (Ho, 2006). We continue with an analysis of the mediation effects. In the hierarchical multiple regression analysis, model 1 represents the entry of personal values, while model 2 represents the entry of the mediator variables – namely, the employee's attitudes toward the natural and the social environment. Results are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6: Results of hierarchical multiple regression analysis for ethics of organizations in public administration

Variable	Step1		Step 2	
	β	t	β	t
Self-enhancing	0.248	2.228*	0.032	0.347
Openness to change	-0.108	-0.966	0.018	0.195
Self-transcending	-0.235	-2.015*	-0.069	-0.719
Conservation	-0.057	-0.486	-0.016	-0.173
Natural environment			0.080	1.048
Social environment			0.567	7.260**
F	4.419*		20.040**	
R ²	0.097		0.425	

Notes: ** $p < 0.001$, * $p < 0.05$; β is the standardized beta coefficient; sample size is 212.

The results show that model 1 – impact of employees' personal values on the ethics of public administration organizations – accounted for 9.7% of the variance in the ethics of public administration. The entry of two mediator variables (model 2) increased the explained variance in the ethics in public administration organization from 9.7% to a total of 42.5%. The ANOVA results reveal that employees' personal values (model

1) yielded a significant influence on ethics in public administration, $F(4,165) = 4.419$, $p < 0.05$.

For model 2, ANOVA results reveal that mediator variables have a significant influence on the relationship between personal values of employees and ethics of public administration organizations, $F(6,163) = 20.040$, $p < 0.001$. In that frame, only employee's attitudes toward social environment ($\beta = 0.567$, $t = 7.260$, $p < 0.001$) have significant influence on the relationship between employee's personal values and ethics of public administration organizations. The impact of employee's attitudes toward the natural environment is insignificant ($\beta = 0.080$, $t = 1.048$, $p > 0.05$). Thus, these findings reject hypothesis 6, but support hypothesis 7.

5. Discussions

The main purpose of this paper is to examine how employees' personal ethics, expressed through their personal values and their attitudes toward social and environmental issues, are associated with the ethics of public administration organizations.

First, we considered relationships between employees' attitudes toward the environments and the ethics of public administration. In our study, employees' attitudes toward the natural and social environments were significantly associated with the ethics of public administration. Previous studies about these relationships are limited in the existing literature, although some studies of public administration both worldwide and in Slovenia have reported on employees' growing concern for social and environmental issues in the frame of sustainable development (Lyons, Duxbury and Higgins, 2006; Van Der Wal, De Graaf and Lasthuizen, 2008; Stensöta, 2010; Van Der Wal, 2011; Witesman and Walters, 2013).

Our results are in line with the main cognitions from other studies about the interdependence of different organizational ethical goals related to environments, important influences of employees' attitudes on organizational attitudes, the need for the harmonization of employees' and organizational attitudes. Our results reflect the findings previously reported by Moilanen and Salminen's (2006) study related to the high-ranking value of 'social care' in official documents and employees' practices in Slovenia's public administration; our conclusions also agree with the Demmke and Moilanen (2011) study related to employees' care for social issues in Slovenian public administration. Our results about the weak impact of employee's attitudes toward natural environment on ethics of public administration organizations are in line with cognitions of Jelovac, Van Der Wal and Jelovac (2011) and Kovac (2013), who reported that public administration ethics did not give needed attention to protect the natural environment.

The study results related to the influences of employees' personal values on the ethics of public administration organizations concur with those from several international studies (Ralston *et al.*, 1993; Kimmelmeier, Krol and Hun Kim, 2002; Dietz, Fitzgerlad and Shwom, 2005; Davis, Whitman and Zald, 2008; Ralston *et al.*, 2011). However, it is difficult to compare our empirical findings with other results because

of the different theoretical approaches used and the difference in the questionnaires (Kakabadse, Korac-Kakabadse and Kouzmin, 2003; Van Der Wal, De Graaf and Lasthuizen, 2008; Stensöta, 2010). Our results are comparable with the results of studies that used the same theoretical framework for examining personal values – namely, Schwartz’s values list (Jørgensen and Bozeman, 2007; Witesman and Walters, 2013). For instance, Witesman and Walters (2013) expanded the list of Schwartz values to be more appropriate for surveying values in public administration and assessing the impact of public service values on specific public management decisions. They also reported on the impact of the sustainability value on the motivation for managers’ actions in public administration. Those authors also developed a new public service values framework based on Schwartz’s (1992) original model by incorporating several value dimensions applicable to public administration. For instance, the sustainability value was placed in a new category named community, which is the part of Schwartz’s (1992) self-transcendence dimension that promotes the welfare of others and nature. Our results – namely, the more employees strive to promote the welfare of others the higher the ethics of public administration – are in line with the findings of Witesman and Walters (2013) regarding the importance of sustainability for public administration.

Based on our results about the impact of employee’s personal values on ethics of public administration organizations – we can also compare our findings with those of previous studies that examined the impact of personal values on organizational ethics from previous studies, using similar methodological bases. For instance, Van Der Wal, De Graaf and Lasthuizen (2008) reported about 20 core organizational values in the public sector in the Netherlands. These values also included sustainability, which is considered to be a commitment to nature and the environment. In our study using Schwartz’s value model, the sustainability values are included in higher-order self-transcending values (Schwartz, 2010; Ralston *et al.*, 2011).

Our research results reveal that the influence of self-transcending values on the ethics of public administration in Slovenia show that the more employees strive to promote the welfare of others and nature, the higher the ethics of public administration are. Although statistically significant, we can explain less than 10% percent of variance in ethics of public administration organization with employee’s personal values. Findings from other studies on enterprise business ethics also reveal low explanatory power of personal values in shaping behavior and ethics in those organizations (Ralston *et al.*, 1993; Dietz, Fitzgerald and Shwom, 2005; Ralston *et al.*, 2011). Thus, our findings allow us to formulate some tentative conclusions about the impact of personal values on ethics of public administration organizations. In that frame we can at most tentatively conclude, that our results confirm the importance of sustainability as one of the core values shaping behavior and ethics in public organizations according to previous studies (Van Der Wal, De Graaf and Lasthuizen, 2008).

Based on obtained research results about the influence of employee’s personal values and strength of influence of two mediator variables – namely natural and social

attitudes, on ethics of public administration organizations, we can conclude that: (1) a significant (but weak) influence of employees' personal values exists, coupled with lower explanation power of personal values for employees attitudes toward natural and social attitudes on ethics of public administration organizations, and (2) a relatively very strong direct influence of employee's social attitudes on ethics of public administration organizations exists. This allows us to conclude that conditions which support mediating effect of social attitudes are statistically significant, but associated standard regression coefficients (hypotheses 1 – 5) are weak in comparison to relatively strong impact of employee's social attitudes on ethics of public administration organizations.

It is apparent that based on the associated regression coefficients in our model, we can conclude that the employee's attitudes toward to the social environment represent a significantly more powerful predictor of ethics in public administration organizations than the four dimensions of employees' personal values. Thus, we can support the self-standing effect of employee's social attitudes on ethics of public administration organizations instead of the mediating effect of employee's social attitudes on the relationship between employee's personal values and ethics of public administration organizations.

These findings are in line with business ethics studies reporting that attitudes, derived from personal values, have a stronger influence on people's ethical behavior or their behavioral intentions than the values themselves (Rokeach, 1968; Karp, 1996).

5.1. Implications

This paper offers several conceptual and practical implications. In terms of conceptual applications, our study provides a foundation for the future design and realignment of employees' values and ethical principles in Slovenia's public administration. Our results also stress the importance of employees' attitudes toward natural and social environments for advancing the ethics of public administration, although the importance of personal ethical drivers for organizational ethics is often overlooked. Consequently, the development of public administration needs to be more focused on the incorporation of social environmental issues of organizational ethics, which are currently undervalued. Furthermore, public administration and the related decisions significantly influence the natural environment, and more concern for the natural environment should be incorporated in the decision-making processes.

In terms of practical implications, the results of our study must be addressed when deciding about organizational ethics in public administration. First, from the viewpoint of educational systems (e.g., administrative, economics, and business schools), these findings must be incorporated into their curricula. New cognitions enable schools to rethink and innovative their curriculum in order to raise their future students' awareness of the increasing importance of the ethical orientation of organizations in public administration. Thus, future educational efforts must incorporate and

emphasize the role of the social environment in ethics to ensure sustainability from public administration's actions.

Second, for in-service employees' education and training, these cognitions must be incorporated into internal educational programs in public administration. In order to further increase ethical standards, organizations can dedicate more attention to the development of employees' personal organizational socialization process. Despite the weak influence of self-transcendent and self-enhancement values on the ethics of public administration, it is sensible to recommend that organizations can give more attention to incorporate these findings into their policies. Organizations should also devote some effort to counteract issues that negatively influence the development of ethics in public administration.

Finally, public administration can use the presented cognitions to improve their legislative and non-legislative regulations of ethical work and behavior (e.g., code of ethics, internal regulations).

5.2. Limitations and future research directions

Despite its contributions, this paper has some limitations. First, we defined personal values as the four individual-level high-order dimensions of personal values identified by Schwartz (1992). In this framework, our study considered only a selected level of personal values. Second, we considered a homogeneous sample of employees in organizations in Slovenian public administration, which limited the examination of differences among different groups of persons involved in organizations. Third, the comparison of our results with studies from abroad was also limited due to the specific context of public administration in Slovenia (Jelovac, Van Der Wal and Jelovac, 2011; Kovac, 2013; Rodic *et al.*, 2012).

In terms of future research, several directions are plausible. First, we can expand the examination of the role and importance of employees' personal values for ethics in public administration by comparing patterns in the business sector. Such a comparison would reveal whether any differences exist regarding these relations in public organizations and business organizations facing high pressure for economic results. Second, examining the relationships in different cultural settings will clarify the impact of cultural differences as well as the strength of the influence of personal values. Third, examining the different sub- or higher-order dimensions of Schwartz's value survey for testing impacts of personal values on organizational ethics and employees' attitudes toward natural and social environment will reveal a more comprehensive picture about the impact of each level of personal values on ethics. Finally, a detailed examination should be carried out to better understand the proposed model through relationships between different types of public administration organizations, working levels of public administration, and different groups of people involved in public administration.

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