

# “Effect of Employees’ Moral Integrity on Poverty Alleviation: The Case of the BARMM Central Offices”

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## ABSTRACT

This study is a modest attempt to determine the perceived impact of moral integrity on poverty alleviation in the BARMM central offices. The study used a descriptive research design and a survey questionnaire in gathering the primary data from a purposively selected official and employee respondents at the BARMM central offices. In terms of its significant findings, the study has found that majority of the respondents were aware of the important provisions of RA 6713 otherwise known as the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees. The study results also showed that the respondents agreed with majority of the statement indicators of moral integrity as practiced in the BARMM. More importantly, the respondents also believed that poverty has a great negative impact on the socio-economic condition of the Moro population. The important implications of these findings include the need to continuously conduct awareness campaign on moral governance not only among BARMM officials and employees but also the general Moro population. The study findings also suggest that BARMM officials and employees are generally perceived as practicing high standards of honesty, transparency, accountability, and fairness in their work. Moreover, it was also concluded by the study that there is no significant relationship between respondents' profile and their perception on moral integrity. At any rate, amidst the study findings and their implications, the study recommends for the institutionalization of moral integrity in public service or good governance within the BARMM by adopting effective measures and strategies which should focus on integrating moral values and ethics into the school curriculum, conducting workshops or seminars for students, teachers, and community members. The study also recommends for the active involvement of the Moro population in the BARMM governance through effective citizen participation as symbolically represented by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs).

**Keywords:** Moral Integrity, Poverty Alleviation, BARMM

## INTRODUCTION

In the field of government administration, moral governance presents a complex and challenging notion that can be difficult to measure, particularly when it is adopted as a government's central policy to tackle the intricate matters of governance and administration. The Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) has garnered significant attention for employing moral governance as a key strategy. To grasp the concept of moral governance within public administration, it is helpful to explore established frameworks that address morality and ethics in administration. Hence, terms like administrative morality, administrative ethics, or civil service ethics can be employed to describe the moral aspect of public administration. Nevertheless, from an Islamic perspective, moral governance can be seen as a faith-based approach that underscores upright conduct and advocates for principled living based on Islamic teachings (Chandio, 2019). Consequently, the fundamental principles that govern both governance and administration share similarities.

Various governments, including the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), have placed significant emphasis on eradicating poverty as a primary objective. However, accomplishing this goal is not always straightforward, and various factors can influence the effectiveness of poverty reduction endeavors. One particular factor that has attracted public scrutiny and generated controversy is the ethical conduct of government employees and officials. Ethical conduct, characterized by the adherence to a set of moral values,

constitutes a vital element of public service. Government officials and personnel who exhibit high ethical standards are more inclined to act in the best interests of the public and are less prone to engaging in corrupt practices (Transparency International, 2020). As emphasized by the World Bank (2018), individuals lacking ethical integrity are more likely to partake in corrupt activities, thereby undermining efforts aimed at poverty reduction.

In the case of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) which is under the leadership of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), it has initiated a groundbreaking campaign aimed at addressing the societal issues faced by the Bangsamoro people. This campaign involves a significant shift in their role, transitioning from a revolutionary armed group to participating in public administration and governance. What makes this transition noteworthy is its emphasis on moral governance, which establishes a fundamental framework for self-governance and administration based on religious virtues and values. The underlying motivation behind this moral cause is to bring about socio-moral reconstruction by drawing guidance from the Qur'an and the Sunnah. These Islamic scriptures serve as the foundation for development and the moral framework for governance. The Mufti of Bangsamoro Darul-Ifta, a respected authority in religious matters, explains that moral governance encompasses various concepts including management and leadership, candidates and voters, public servants and public service, inclusion and exclusivity, as well as association and disassociation. All of these concepts are derived from the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah.

Moreover, the establishment of moral governance principles within the public sector will be rooted in the moral authority wielded by the leadership, which will serve as a guiding force in shaping the behavior of both individuals and organizations, leading them towards moral and ethical actions and decisions. The leadership of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) is fully dedicated to spearheading the regional government and effectively managing available resources in accordance with the principles of ethical governance. In line with Ibn Khaldun's teachings, it is understood that a strong foundation for good administration and effective leadership lies in fostering collective cohesion and instilling a sense of belonging. These factors can inspire loyalty and garner support from the populace (Abdullah, 2018). To ensure the comprehensive success of moral governance principles, it is essential that the entire regional government, including local government units, wholeheartedly embraces and endorses these policies.

For the Bangsamoro region, the issue of poor governance has persisted for a significant period, tracing back to the administration of the former Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). The problems related to governance and poverty play a significant role in the region's deteriorating situation, not to mention the detrimental impact of corruption, which exacerbates poverty and hampers progress. The concept of development poses a significant challenge for Muslims residing in the southern Philippines, particularly within the Bangsamoro region, leaving them uncertain about where to initiate improvements. However, the approval of Republic Act 11054, commonly referred to as the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), represents a significant milestone as it establishes the groundwork for the creation of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). This autonomy provides the people in the region with newfound hope and opportunities to actively shape their own future.

Given these circumstances, the objective of this research is to explore the influence of employees' moral integrity on the alleviation of poverty in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). The study delved into the impact of government employees' and officials' moral integrity on the effectiveness of poverty reduction initiatives within the region. Furthermore, it examined the perspectives of employees regarding moral integrity and poverty alleviation, while also investigating the connection between their background and their perceptions on moral integrity. Recognizing the significance of moral integrity in poverty reduction efforts within the BARMM, this research seeks to provide valuable insights on this matter.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This research study seeks to examine the impact of employees' moral integrity on poverty alleviation in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM). Specifically, the study intends to address the following research questions:

1. What is the socio-demographic and administrative profile of the respondents?
2. What is the awareness of the respondents on the important provisions of RA 6713?
3. What is the perception of the respondents on moral integrity as an official and employee of the BARMM?
4. What is the perception of the respondents on the poverty alleviation in the BARMM?
5. What is the relationship between the respondents' profile and their perceptions on their moral integrity?

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The present study is based on the Good Governance Theory. The good governance theory has become an area of great concern in the sphere of public administration since it focuses on the principles and practices of transparency, accountability, participation, effectiveness, and the rule of law in governance processes. In the framework of this paper, which is more specifically on the impact of moral uprightness of employees to the reduction of poverty within the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region within Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), the good governance theory can make some invaluable contributions to the idea of reducing poverty in this region through the engagement of moral uprightness and responsible governance practices of employees. Ethical standards in governance assure that the operation of the public institutions is towards the general interest of the society and not individual or political interest (Sharma, 2007).

More so, the good governance theory covers a series of norms, principles, and standards in which governments, institutions, particularly their officials and employees, are governed by. The definition of good governance offered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is highly significant in this study since it is the main guideline to be used in establishing the major attributes and principles that qualify good governance on the local government levels in the Philippines. These attributes are accountability, transparency, responsiveness, equity, inclusiveness and rule of law (Elahi, 2009). The UNDP as an international development agency works with many countries in helping them to eliminate poverty, curtail inequalities and achieve sustainable development, especially in developing world like BARMM.

In this regard, moral integrity becomes very critical to the achievement and exercise of the principles of good governance. Moral integrity is the commitment of individuals to ethical standards, integrity, justice and high degree of responsibility to the wellbeing of the population. Within the framework of administering the state, workers and officials with high moral standards have a better chance to adhere to ethical principles, including the ones stipulated by the Republic Act No. 6713, which requires accountability, professionalism, and loyalty to serving the population. As highlighted by Treviño, Weaver and Reynolds (2006), individual moral values and institutional frameworks determine ethical actions in organizations, and this determines the decision-making processes. By practicing moral uprightness, the public servants should help in enhancing the credibility of institutions and reducing the corrupt practices that limit the development outcome.

Moreover, the interconnection of moral integrity and good governance is observed in how moral behavior affects the efficiency of the administration and policy execution. Employees of the government who uphold moral values have higher chances of bringing about transparency in transactions, accountability in the utilization of government resources and responsiveness to the needs of the people. This is especially applicable in the context of BARMM, where the shift towards moral governance lies in values-based leadership based on the administrative ethics and the Islamic principles. This kind of alignment between ethical behavior and governance practices strengthens the trust of the institution and encourages good service delivery.

Moral integrity, good governance, and alleviation of poverty thus go hand in hand. Moral integrity is a good governance practice that ensures equitable resource allocation, participation of citizens, and a transparent and accountable decision-making process. Moral values in governance institutions will encourage them to focus more on poverty reduction policies, use resources effectively, and adopt pro-poor policy (World Bank, 2018).

In contrast, poor moral uprightness by the officials in the society may result in corruption, misappropriation of resources and inefficiencies which ultimately worsen the state of poverty.

Moral integrity of employees is a decisive factor of governance in the case of the BARMM Central Offices, in which the moral governance is institutionalized as a framework to work on. The success of the poverty alleviation programs in the area is not only pegged on the policies and resources but also on the moral character and dedication of the people who are supposed to execute them. Therefore, this research presupposes that the greater the moral integrity of the employees, the greater the commitment to the principles of good governance, which further increases the effectiveness of the poverty reduction efforts in the region.

**Conceptual Model**

The conceptual framework employed in this investigation is reflected in Figure 1. As shown in Figure 1, the upper left box deals with the respondent’s profile which was also treated as the independent variable. It is then linked with the right box representing the respondent’s perception on moral integrity which was treated as the dependent variable. It is significant to mention that the study tested the relationship between respondents’ profile and their perceptions on moral integrity.

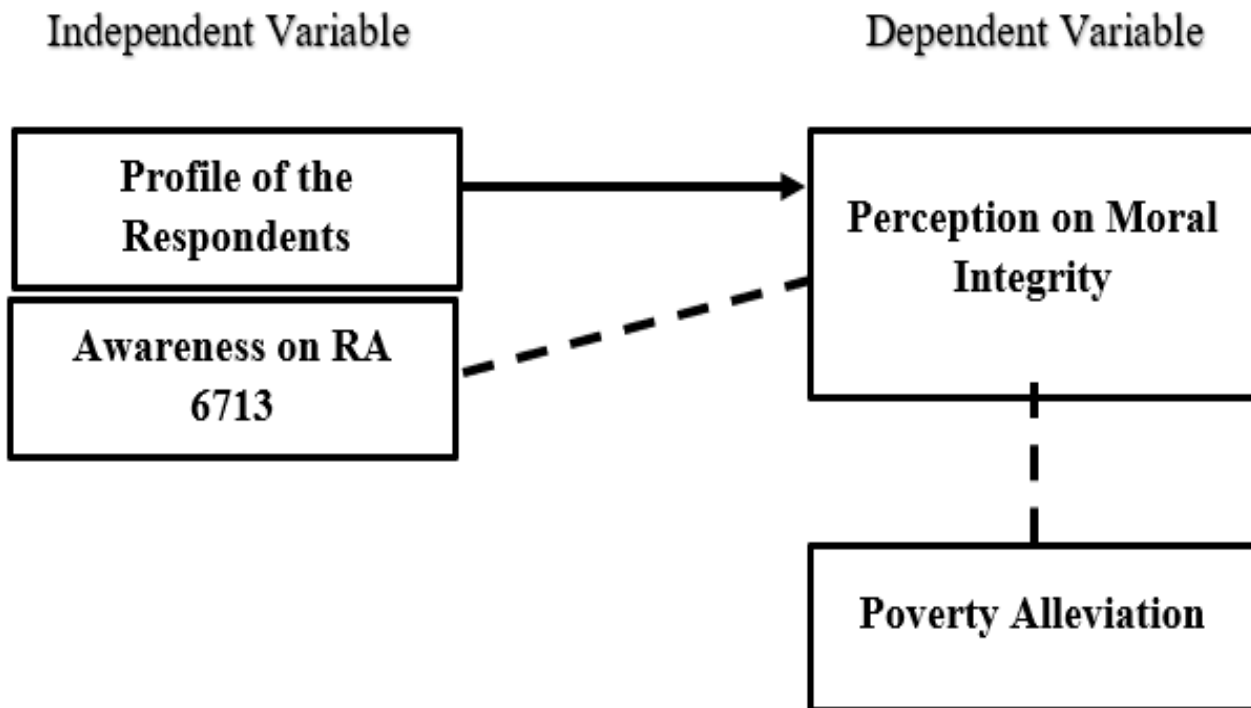


Figure 1 – Schematic Diagram showing the variables used in the study

**Statement of the Hypothesis**

The study attempted to test the following hypothesis:

Ho: There is no relationship between the respondents’ profile and their perceptions on their moral integrity.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Moral Integrity in the Public Service**

It has been observed that the conduct and actions of public officials and employees carry significant weight and impact on society due to the authority and responsibilities entrusted to them. Upholding the highest ethical standards becomes crucial in maintaining public trust and confidence in government institutions. Treviño et al.

(2006) highlight the elevated ethical expectations placed on public officials and employees compared to those in the private sector, attributing it to the substantial power they hold. Thus, understanding the factors influencing the ethical behavior of these individuals is imperative for effective governance and the preservation of public trust.

Moreover, one influential factor often cited is organizational culture, which plays a pivotal role in shaping ethical behavior. A positive correlation exists between ethical behavior among public officials and employees and organizations that prioritize moral conduct and foster an environment of integrity. Additionally, accountability and monitoring mechanisms significantly influence ethical behavior. When individuals face clear consequences for unethical actions and are held accountable for their behavior, they are more likely to act ethically (Treviño et al., 2006).

In the study of Gino and Pierce (2010) which focused on the effect of unethical behavior as practiced by employees and public officials, on the organizational resources. They argued that understanding and addressing this effect is crucial for comprehending unethical behavior within organizations. They recommended for the organization to educate its employees about the importance of moral integrity in order to mitigate its negative effect on individual or organizational performance.

Nonetheless, examining the role of perceived organizational justice as a moderator between moral integrity and corruption in public organizations, Tufan et al. (2023) aim to gain deeper insights into the causes of corruption. The findings of their study have implications for promoting moral behavior among employees within organizations. The results indicate a negative correlation between moral integrity and corruption in public organizations, suggesting that individuals with higher moral integrity are less likely to engage in corrupt behavior. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that the perception of organizational justice acts as a mediator between moral integrity and corruption. Individuals with greater moral integrity are more inclined to perceive their organization as fair and just, thereby reducing the likelihood of engaging in corrupt behavior.

In another related study conducted by Pusch (2021), it was found that there is a connection between moral disengagement and white-collar crime. White-collar crime encompasses various forms of unethical conduct by employees and public officials, and its widespread occurrence can have far-reaching economic and social consequences. Consequently, the study holds significant importance in enabling the development of effective prevention and intervention plans, necessitating a thorough understanding of the underlying causes of this type of behavior.

More importantly, the study identifies four key mechanisms of moral disengagement: moral justification, euphemistic labeling, responsibility displacement, and responsibility diffusion. These defense mechanisms assist individuals in rationalizing their unethical actions and evading feelings of remorse or accountability. Furthermore, the study proposes a theoretical framework that links moral disengagement to white-collar crime, outlining a series of steps through which this association occurs. By employing moral disengagement, individuals can legitimize or downplay the harm caused by their actions, making it easier for them to engage in fraudulent, bribery, or embezzlement practices.

Moreover, the study suggests that moral disengagement can cultivate a permissive culture that tolerates and even encourages unethical behavior. Such a culture often thrives in environments where there is a lack of accountability, or where unethical conduct is rewarded with bonuses or promotions. Additionally, the study highlights the role of moral disengagement in fostering a sense of group identity, wherein individuals feel obligated or loyal to those who exhibit similar behavior. Consequently, it becomes challenging for individuals to break away from an unethical culture or expose wrongdoing. To effectively prevent and combat white-collar crime, the study emphasizes the promotion of ethical behavior and accountability within organizations, along with the implementation of robust regulatory and enforcement mechanisms.

In a separate study by Aquino and Reed (2002), the focus shifts towards exploring the relationship between moral identity and behavior. The authors investigate how individuals' perception of their own moral selves and their sense of importance influence their behavior. They argue that moral identity plays a pivotal role in shaping individual behavior and determining how people perceive and respond to ethical situations. Understanding this

relationship has significant implications for comprehending and addressing unethical behavior within organizations. Consequently, strategies aimed at promoting moral identity and highlighting the importance of ethical conduct may prove effective in reducing unethical behavior among public servants and employees.

On the other hand, Perry (2000) argues that moral convictions, beliefs, and ideologies are of utmost importance in shaping individuals' motivation and behavior within the public sector as social institutions. Morality, in this context, reflects the dynamics of how individuals relate to others. It encompasses one's identity and values, enabling individuals to differentiate between right and wrong and establishing corresponding obligations and motivations. Public Service Motivation (PSM) can be understood as a collection of beliefs about what is morally right or wrong, influenced by both personal and societal perspectives. Institutional values play a pivotal role in shaping this moral framework, which individuals internalize through their identities and beliefs. Consequently, moral values and identity contribute to an individual's self-concept and generate a sense of appropriateness that carries motivational implications within public service (Perry, 2000).

In a related study by Stazyk and Davis (2015), it was disclosed that moral values and worldviews significantly impact individual motivation and influence collaborative and ethical behavior within the public sector. Moral values provide individuals with attitudes, beliefs, and norms that guide their relationship with the social world, encouraging them to prioritize the common good over self-interest. Likewise, PSM aligns with the concept of the common good, urging public employees to act with compassion, sacrifice personal interests, and uphold public values. The beliefs and norms associated with PSM are inherently connected to the ethical path, which emphasizes personal integrity and moral intuition (Stazyk and Davis, 2015)

### **Republic Act 6713**

Republic Act No. 6713, commonly referred to as the "Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees," is a Philippine law that sets the expected behavior and ethical standards for individuals serving as public officials and employees in the performance of their duties and responsibilities (LawPhil.Net). Its primary objective is to cultivate a culture of honesty, integrity, transparency, and responsibility within the public service. It was the late Philippine President Corazon C. Aquino who signed RA 6713 into law on February 20, 1989 (LawPhil.Net). The law applies to all government officials and employees, whether appointed or elected, across all branches and levels of government. This includes government-owned and controlled corporations (GOCCs), government financial institutions (GFIs), and local government units (LGUs). Among other objectives, it aims to promote moral uprightness among public officials and employees in the Philippines. Its purpose is to foster a culture of honesty, integrity, transparency, and accountability in the public service by delineating the expected behavior and ethical conduct of those serving in these roles.

The same RA 6713 places moral integrity as a foundational principle. It mandates that public officials and employees uphold ethical and moral principles, including honesty, fairness, responsibility, and respect for the rule of law. By promoting these values, RA 6713 seeks to ensure that public officials and employees carry out their duties with the utmost moral integrity and serve the public interest with honor, integrity, and dedication.

The law imposes specific duties and responsibilities on public officials and employees, such as avoiding conflicts of interest, exercising prudence and diligence in the use of public resources, and filing and disclosing their Statement of Assets, Liabilities, and Net Worth (SALN). These requirements are designed to promote transparency and hold public officials and employees accountable for their actions, maintaining a high standard of moral integrity in the performance of their duties. It is also closely linked to the moral character of public officials and employees. The law provides a framework for ethical behavior and establishes specific requirements to foster honesty, transparency, and accountability in the public service, which are integral components of moral integrity.

In a related study by Benedicto and Caelian (2020) conducted a study it was indicated in their findings that government employees generally demonstrated good work ethics, with high responsiveness but lower scores in simple living. However, when demographic factors were considered, significant differences emerged in work ethic practice and job performance, suggesting a lack of awareness and understanding of ethical norms and consequences. While meeting government standards, work ethics have yet to be fully embedded in institutional

culture and integrity. The study emphasizes the need for continued education and training programs for government employees to enhance their knowledge and awareness of work ethics and job performance. Strengthening the link between performance and compensation can also promote accountability and motivation.

On the other hand, Callao (2022) conducted a descriptive study focusing on teachers at Cebu Technological University campuses to determine their level of ethical practices, organizational commitment, and job performance. The study revealed that teachers consistently adhered to the provisions of RA 6713, exhibited a high level of organizational commitment, and performed well in their roles. The teachers' profiles showed no significant correlation with their levels of ethical practices and organizational commitment, except for age, which had a noticeable impact on job performance. The study suggests that school administrators should strive to maintain and enhance teachers' ethical practices, organizational commitment, and job performance.

In another study conducted by Niere-Gumahad (2019), the level of compliance among secondary teachers of national high schools in the Division of Cagayan de Oro with RA 6713 and its impact on teaching performance were examined. The study utilized a descriptive method and found that the teachers' level of compliance with RA 6713 and their teaching performance did not differ significantly, regardless of their profile. Additionally, the study revealed a positive and significant relationship between teachers' compliance with RA 6713 and their professionalism, as well as other indicators specified in Republic Acts.

Similarly, Wanya and Waña (2022) conducted a study to assess the level of awareness and implementation of RA 6713 among respondents at the Cagayan State University Lal-lo campus. The study employed a descriptive-correlational design and discovered that the respondents demonstrated a high level of awareness and effective implementation of RA 6713. Furthermore, the study found that, except for sex, variables such as civil status, employment status, designation, age, and highest educational attainment did not have a significant relationship with the respondents' level of implementation of RA 6713.

### **Poverty Alleviation: The Case of BARMM**

This part of the study is focused on the discussion of the poverty situation in the Bangsamoro region, aiming to explain the development challenges faced by the region in terms of poverty alleviation. The Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) continues to face significant challenges in terms of poverty. The BARMM region, which consists of five provinces (Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Basilan, Sulu, and Tawi-Tawi) and the cities of Cotabato and Marawi, has historically been identified as one of the poorest regions in the country.

According to 2018, the BARMM region had a poverty incidence of 61.3 percent, making it the poorest region in the Philippines. Three provinces within the BARMM, namely Sulu, Basilan, and Lanao del Sur, had exceptionally high poverty incidences of 81.8 percent, 72.8 percent, and 71.2 percent, respectively. These figures indicate a significant proportion of the population living below the poverty line in these areas.

The poverty situation in the BARMM region is influenced by several factors. The presence of armed conflicts, particularly in Sulu and Basilan, has contributed to the exacerbation of poverty. These areas have been considered bases for terrorist activities by groups like the Abu Sayyaf Group and its allies. Additionally, Lanao del Sur faced significant challenges due to natural disasters, such as the impact of La Niña in 2016 and the terrorist attack in Marawi City in 2017, which resulted in widespread destruction and displacement.

In fact, a World Bank Report (2001) claimed that poverty in the BARMM is characterized by severe deprivation in well-being and encompasses various dimensions, such as low incomes, inadequate access to basic goods and services necessary for a dignified life, limited health and education opportunities, poor sanitation and water access, lack of security, voicelessness, and limited capacity and opportunities for self-improvement. Poverty alleviation refers to the economic and humanitarian measures taken to eradicate poverty from a country. Poverty alleviation programs, on the other hand, seek to reduce poverty rates by providing marginalized households and families below the poverty line with access to food, financial assistance, and essential necessities.

The United Nations' Millennium Development Goals have had a significant influence on encouraging countries to implement programs as a commitment to ending poverty for all (United Nations, 2012). Scholars worldwide have studied various development models and approaches to poverty alleviation in an effort to eradicate its roots globally. However, there are inherent flaws in these ideas and theories, such as using measures like the one-dollar-a-day benchmark to evaluate and monitor poverty levels, which obscure the true meaning of development (Gamon & Tagoranao, 2018).

Hence, in order to comprehend the poverty trend in the BARMM region, it is crucial to consider the broader context of the national poverty situation in the Philippines. Poverty has long been a serious issue confronted by successive governments in the country. Each president has introduced different policies and strategies to address the socio-cultural impact of poverty (Gamon & Tagoranao, 2018). The causes of poverty are complex and reflect deeply rooted cultural and institutional dynamics ingrained over decades, if not centuries. The development challenges faced by the Philippines today stem from reasons such as economic growth and the underlying structural inequities, societal harmony and political uncertainty, and the failure to address imbalances and inequities that hinder key agents of change, including women, the poor, and the marginalized, from actively improving their lives and the lives of others.

Although poverty affects many regions in the country, the situation in the BARMM region has been particularly severe in recent decades. The region is ranked as the poorest in the country, with a poverty incidence of 61.3 percent in 2018. The three poorest provinces in the country are located in the BARMM region: Sulu with an 81.8 percent poverty incidence, Basilan with 72.8 percent, and Lanao del Sur with 71.2 percent. The poverty situation has been worsened by armed conflicts, with Sulu and Basilan being considered bases for terrorist activities by the Abu Sayaff Group and its allies, and Lanao del Sur having faced the destructive impact of the 2016 La Niña phenomenon and the 2017 terrorist attack in Marawi, which resulted in a five-month battle and severe damage to the city center. The poverty profile of the Mindanao Island group as a whole is similar to that of the BARMM region. Mindanao remains the poorest among the three major island groups in the Philippines, with a poverty incidence of 31.5 percent in 2018, compared to 9.3 percent for Luzon and 20.1 percent for Visayas (Navarro, Reyes, & Francisco, 2021).

Moreover, the prevalence of low income can trap societies in a cycle of poverty due to a less productive workforce, while institutions and governance can perpetuate poverty traps. Additionally, poverty can hinder economic growth by increasing population growth rates. Insufficient investments in education and healthcare and a lack of physical capital accumulation further contribute to both poverty levels and economic growth.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The current study utilized a descriptive research design, a widely employed approach for investigating various phenomena and situations. This research design is designed to provide answers to questions regarding the nature of the issue or phenomenon by exploring its characteristics, patterns, and relationships. By focusing on the "how, when, where, and what" aspects, descriptive research seeks to describe and understand the population under investigation. Unlike experimental designs, descriptive research does not involve the manipulation of variables but rather relies on observational methods to gather data. By employing diverse research techniques, the study endeavors to achieve its objectives and contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

### **Locale of the Study**

The study was conducted within the area of the BARMM more specifically, in the provinces of Lanao del Sur and Maguindanao, and some selected Regional Ministries and Offices of the BTA parliament members in Cotabato City. This locale of the study was chosen due to the concentration of potential respondents in the regional government complex.

The primary objective of this study is to delve into the perceptions of moral integrity and its connection to poverty alleviation within the BARMM. The Bangsamoro region, officially recognized as the Bangsamoro

Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM), is an autonomous region situated in the southeastern part of Mindanao Island in the Philippines. Its establishment was facilitated by the ratification of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) through a two-part legally binding plebiscite held on January 21 and February 6, 2019, in Western Mindanao. The Commission on Elections (COMELEC) confirmed the ratification on January 25, marking the transition from the previous Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) to the BARMM. The formation of the Bangsamoro region was the result of years of peace negotiations between the Philippine Government and various autonomist groups, primarily the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), which advocated for a region with greater devolved powers from the national government and rejected the validity of the ARMM. A framework agreement called the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) was negotiated between the MILF and the national government in 2014. After further deliberations and discussions regarding specific provisions, the Congress of the Philippines drafted and ratified a basic law for the region, now known as the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL), which was signed into law on July 26, 2018. This law serves as the fundamental framework for the establishment of the BARMM, making it crucial to examine how its implementation influences the perceptions of moral integrity and poverty alleviation within the region

### **Respondents and Sampling Method**

The study actually utilized a perception-based research design to capture the responses of selected employees working in regional offices and ministries. The participants were purposely sampled, employing a non-random sampling technique. Specifically, the study focused on 12 Regional Parliament Offices and Ministries, including the Office of MP Paisalin P. Tago, Office of MP AbdulKarim T. Misuari, Office of MP Anna Tarhata S. Basman, Office of MP Jose I. Lorena, Office of Chief Minister – Human Resource Management Division, Policy and Research and Legal Services - BTA Parliament, Statutory Committees Support Services - BTA Parliament, General Services Division - BTA Parliament, Property and Supply Division - BTA Parliament, Medical Division - BTA Parliament, Ministry of Human Settlement and Development (MHSD), and Ministry of Public Order and Safety. Due to the availability of officials and employees during the administration of the questionnaires, a sample size of 80 was used in this study. However, only 70 questionnaires were retrieved out of the 80 distributed.

### **Data Gathering Method and Instrument**

The researcher employed primary sources to gather data for this study, utilizing a research-made survey questionnaire that underwent approval from the panel members. Once the questionnaire received approval, the researcher sought permission from the selected regional parliament offices and ministries to conduct the study. Upon obtaining permission, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to the employees within these institutions and subsequently retrieved it from the respondents.

In addition, the survey questionnaire is divided into four parts, each designed to collect specific types of information. The first part focuses on collecting factual data related to the respondents' profile. It includes questions about their name, age, gender, educational attainment, monthly salary, employment status, length of service, job position, and religious affiliation.

On the other hand, the second part of the questionnaire aims to gather data on the respondents' awareness of the important provisions of RA 6713. This section presents questions concerning the respondents' knowledge of specific provisions outlined in the law.

The third part of the questionnaire is focused on capturing the respondents' perceptions regarding their moral integrity as regional officials and employees of the BARMM. It includes questions designed at understanding the respondents' views on the significance of moral integrity in their professional roles and responsibilities.

Finally, the last part deals with the respondents' perceptions regarding poverty alleviation in the Bangsamoro Region. This section looks into the respondents' perspectives on the current state of poverty in the region, the challenges faced in addressing poverty, and their perceptions of the effectiveness of existing poverty alleviation policies and programs.

## Method of Data Analysis

The study used both descriptive and inferential statistical tools. These are as follows:

1. Frequency and Percentage Analysis. This was used in presentation and analysis of data obtained particularly on the socio-economic profile of the respondents, the respondents' perception on how poverty affects the people of the BARMM, the respondent's perception on programs that work best for the interest of the people of the BARMM, and the respondent's perception on government strategies and programs in reducing poverty in the Philippines that are available in the in the BARMM area.

Formula: Percentage =  $(F/N) \times 100$

Where, P = Percentage

F = Frequency

N = Number of Respondents

Weighted Mean. This method was utilized to analyze the data that were gathered from the respondent's level of awareness on RA 6713, and the respondents' perception on their moral integrity as BARMM officials and employees.

Formula:  $\bar{x} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n x_i}{N}$

Where,  $\bar{x}$  = Weighted Mean

Value  $\Sigma$  = Summation

x = Observed Frequency

N = Total number of respondents

In order to provide clarity in the assessment or interpretation of the data, the following mean score scales were used:

As to awareness on RA 6713:

Scale: 1.00 - 1.75 Aware 1.80 – 2.40 Uncertain 2.50 – 3.20 Not Aware

As to perception on their moral integrity as BARMM officials and employees.

Scale: 1.00 - 1.83 Strongly Disagree 1.84 - 2.67 Moderately Disagree 2.68 - 3.51 Slightly Disagree 3.52 - 4.35 Slightly Agree 4.36 - 5.19 Moderately Agree 5.20 - 6.03 Strongly Agree

To test the relationship between the respondents' profile variables and their perceptions of moral integrity, the Chi-Square Test of Independence was employed. This test was chosen because the variables involved are categorical in nature.

The chi-square test determines whether a significant association exists between two variables by comparing the observed frequencies with the expected frequencies under the assumption of independence.

The level of significance was set at 0.05. If the computed p-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected, indicating a significant relationship. Otherwise, if the p-value was greater than 0.05, the null hypothesis was not rejected, indicating no significant relationship.

All statistical computations were performed using appropriate statistical software to ensure accuracy of results.

Formula:  $\chi^2 = \sum (O_i - E_i)^2 / E_i$

$\chi^2$  = Chi Squared

$O_i$  = Observed Value

$E_i$  = Expected Value

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this section, the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of the study findings were conducted in a comprehensive and systematic manner.

### Awareness on Republic Act 6713

The findings regarding the awareness of the respondents on RA 6713 or otherwise known as the Code of Conduct and Ethical Standards for Public Officials and Employees are presented and analyzed. In this connection, Table 1 discloses that statement indicators 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8 and 9 were well known to majority of the respondents ranging from statement 9 “public officials and employees should make policies and procedures unknown and ignore suggestions” (65 or 92.86%) with the weighted mean of 1.07 to statement 1 “public officials and employees must act fairly and respect others’ right” with the weighted mean of 1.01. On the other hand, only statement indicators 4, 7 and 10 were uncertain or not well-known to majority of the respondents.

The findings suggest that majority of the BARMM employees have a basic understanding of the ethical standards and responsibilities expected of them in their roles as public servants, thus, their awareness of RA 6713 can contribute to the institutionalization of an administrative culture of ethical conduct and promote integrity within the BARMM government. Thus, employee high awareness of the ethical standards enumerated under the aforesaid law would help BARMM officials and employees clearly comprehend and perform their obligations to the general public they serve.

The important implications of the findings discussed above are consistent with previous studies, providing further support for the significance of these findings. For instance, Lobaton (2008) conducted a study examining the awareness, attitudes, and practices of dishonest acts among local government employees in the Provincial Government of Negros Occidental, Philippines. The study revealed the presence of corruption within the local government, as demonstrated by employee behavior in the workplace, irrespective of factors such as age, gender, educational attainment, office position, or length of service. When considering these studies collectively, they underscore the importance of ongoing training, education, and policy enforcement in combating corruption and promoting adherence to the ethical standards outlined in RA 6713. Callao (2020) and Lobaton (2008) both emphasize the significance of targeted training programs and awareness-raising initiatives to address areas where understanding of ethical standards may be ambiguous. The ultimate goal is to foster a more ethical and accountable public sector in the Philippines.

**Table 1: Frequency and Mean Distribution of Respondents on Awareness on RA 6713**

Statement	Aware		Uncertain		Not Aware		Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1. Public officials and employees must act fairly and respect others' rights	69	98.57	1	1.43	0	0.00	1.01	Aware
2. Public officials should prioritize public interest above personal interest and use government resources efficiently and effectively	68	97.14	1	1.43	1	1.43	1.04	Aware
3. Public officials and employees should	70	100.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	1	Aware

provide prompt, polite, and sufficient service to the public								
4. Public officials should be professional, smart, and skilled and dedicated to serving the public	13	18.57	28	40.00	29	41.43	2.23	Uncertain
5. Public officials and employees should serve everyone equally without discrimination	67	95.71	3	4.29	0	0.00	1.04	Aware
6. Public officials and employees should be accountable to the public and prioritize democracy	68	97.14	2	2.86	0	0.00	1.03	Aware
7. Public officials and employees should be loyal to their country and protect its sovereignty	10	14.29	21	30.00	39	55.71	2.41	Uncertain
8. Public officials and employees should give advantages to relatives	66	94.29	2	2.86	2	2.86	1.09	Aware
9. Public officials and employees should make policies and procedures unknown and ignore suggestions	65	92.86	5	7.14	0	0.00	1.07	Aware
10. Public officials and employees and their families should indulge in extravagant display of wealth	9	12.86	19	27.14	42	60.00	2.47	Uncertain
<b>Total</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>721.43</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>117.14</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>161.43</b>		
<b>Average weighted mean</b>							<b>1.439</b>	<b>Aware</b>

Scaling: 1-1.7 = Aware      1.8 – 2.4 = Uncertain    2.5 – 3.2 = Not Aware

**Perception on the Moral Integrity**

The study findings on the BARMM employee and official perceptions on moral integrity in the public service are presented, discussed and analyzed. In this connection, Table 2 shows that among the 23 statement indicators used in the study, 14 were strongly agreeable to the respondents ranging from statement indicators 10 “compassion for the poor is the most crucial virtue as a public servant” and 11 “people should not do things are disgusting, even if no one is harmed” with weighted mean of 5.23 to statement indicator 23 “as a public servant, I must be transparent and accountable to the people and Allah at all times” with weighted mean of 5.90. On the other hand, the other nine statement indicators were evenly distributed with the statements 7, 8, and 9 moderately agreeable; statements 5 and 6, slightly agreeable; statements 3 and 4 slightly disagreeable; and statements 1 and 2 moderately disagreeable.

**Table 2: Frequency and Mean Distribution of Respondents’ Perception on Moral Integrity**

Statement	Respondent (n =70)						Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
	1	2	3	4	5	6		
	SD	MD	SLD	SLA	MA	SA		
1. I cannot be punctual in reporting to office when most of my co-employees are frequently absent	35	14	7	5	6	3	2.17	Moderately Disagree
2. There is nothing that my government can do to reduce poverty	37	10	7	6	7	3	2.21	Moderately Disagree
3. It is very difficult to remain honest in a corrupt-ridden government	13	12	11	11	13	10	3.41	Slightly Disagree
4. People should be loyal to their family members, even when they have done something wrong	18	11	7	5	12	17	3.47	Slightly Disagree
5. I would call some acts wrong on the grounds that they are unnatural	4	6	12	24	12	12	4	Slightly Agree
6. I should not do anything to gain financial or other material benefits for myself, my family and friends	11	6	9	6	11	27	4.16	Slightly Agree
7. Public servants should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organizations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.	2	3	4	9	17	35	5.01	Moderately Agree
8. Respect for authority is something that my family and community need to learn	2	3	2	12	14	37	5.06	Moderately Agree
9. One of the worst things a person could do is hurt a defenseless animal	6	2	2	4	7	49	5.16	Moderately Agree
10. Compassion for the poor is the most crucial virtue as a public servant	1	1	3	11	14	40	5.23	Strongly Agree
11. People should not do things that are disgusting, even if no one is harmed.	2	0	0	17	10	41	5.23	Strongly Agree
12. The Muslim believers will not neglect the poor and will feel responsible towards them	0	0	2	13	14	41	5.34	Strongly Agree
13. I am proud of my country's history and culture.	0	0	3	9	15	43	5.40	Strongly Agree
14. Men and women each have different roles to play in society	1	0	0	6	23	40	5.43	Strongly Agree
15. Public officials should always decide based on merit and not	0	1	1	5	20	43	5.47	Strongly Agree

on blood relationship and partisan-politics								
16. I am a law-abiding citizen because I am a good taxpayer	2	0	0	6	13	49	5.5	Strongly Agree
17. There should never be discrimination as to race, ethnicity and religion	3	0	0	7	3	57	5.54	Strongly Agree
18. Justice is the most important requirement for a peaceful and harmonious society	0	0	1	5	13	51	5.63	Strongly Agree
19. Every single cent of my salary is taxpayers' money	0	2	2	1	9	56	5.64	Strongly Agree
20. In performing my job, I am strongly guided by fear of God	1	0	0	1	9	59	5.77	Strongly Agree
21. It is better to do good than to do bad	0	0	0	2	5	63	5.87	Strongly Agree
22. When the government makes laws, the number one principle should be ensuring that everyone is treated fairly and equally.	1	0	2	2	7	58	5.89	Strongly Agree
23. As a public servant, I must be transparent and accountable to the people and Allah at all times	0	0	1	0	4	65	5.90	Strongly Agree
<b>Average Weighted Mean</b>							<b>4.89</b>	<b>Moderately Agree</b>

**Legend:** 1-1.83 = Strongly Disagree, 1.84-2.67 = Moderately Disagree, 2.68-3.51 = Slightly Disagree, 3.52-4.35 = Slightly Agree, 4.36-5.19 = Moderately Agree, 5.20-6.03 = Strongly Agree

In terms of the significant implications of the above mentioned study findings, the following can be mentioned. Firstly, respondents have a strong perception of moral integrity, implying that they practice high standards of honesty, transparency, accountability, and fairness in their work. The findings also imply that employees are perceived as trustworthy and credible individuals, fostering trust among colleagues, superiors, and the general public. This trust is crucial for effective teamwork, coordination, and maintaining the regional government's reputation.

**Perception on the Impact of Poverty on the BARMM Population**

In terms of the effects of poverty on the people of BARMM, Table 3 shows that majority (53 or 75.7%) of the respondent claimed that poverty greatly affects the people of BARMM.

The finding showing that the majority of the respondents perceived a significant impact of poverty on the Moro population in the BARMM region have crucial implications. Firstly, it suggests the urgent need for targeted poverty alleviation measures and strategies that specifically address the unique challenges faced by the Moro population. The finding also discloses the importance of developing programs and policies that are culturally sensitive, inclusive, and responsive to the specific needs and aspirations of the Moro community. By acknowledging and addressing the disproportionate impact of poverty on the Moro population, policymakers and stakeholders can work towards more equitable and effective poverty reduction strategies.

**Table 3: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents on the Impact of Poverty on the BARMM Population**

Rate	Frequency	Percentage
Greatly	53	75.7
Moderately	10	14.3

<b>Slightly</b>	5	7.1
<b>Not at all</b>	2	2.9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### Effectiveness of Anti-Poverty Programs

In relation to the issue regarding the anti-poverty programs that work effectively for the interest of people in the BARMM, Table 4 reveals that all the seven statement indicators were well known and agreeable to majority of the respondents which can be ranked as follows: literacy and training/education (91.4%), income and employment support (90%), health (85.7%), housing (78.6%), infrastructure (74.3%), awareness and collaboration (74.3%) and transportation (60%).

The findings could imply the urgent need for targeted poverty alleviation initiatives that specifically address the unique challenges faced by the Moro population. These findings also demonstrate the importance of developing programs and policies that are culturally and tailored sensitive, inclusive, and responsive to the specific needs and aspirations of the Moro community. By appreciating and addressing the disproportionate impact of poverty on the Moro population, policymakers and stakeholders can work towards more equitable and effective poverty reduction measures.

These findings are consistent with previous studies that have identified education and income as key factors in poverty reduction. For example, the World Bank (2016) found that education and training can significantly reduce poverty by increasing access to better employment opportunities, while Lipton and Ravallion (1995) identified income growth as an important determinant of poverty reduction. Similarly, UN-Habitat (2010) emphasized the critical role of adequate housing in poverty reduction and sustainable development. These studies reinforce the importance of focusing on education, income, and access to essential services and infrastructure in efforts to alleviate poverty and improve overall living conditions.

**Table 4: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Respondents on Effective Anti-Poverty Programs**

<b>Program</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Literacy/Training/Education</b>	64	91.4
<b>Income and employment support</b>	63	90.0
<b>Health</b>	60	85.7
<b>Housing</b>	55	78.6
<b>Infrastructure</b>	52	74.3
<b>Awareness and Collaboration on anti-poverty programs</b>	52	74.3
<b>Transportation</b>	42	60.0

### Priority Anti-Poverty Programs in the BARMM

In terms of the priority programs being implemented in the BARMM for reducing poverty, Table 5 reveals that the top four priority programs being implemented by the BARMM as perceived by majority of the respondents are ranked as follows: income and employment, literacy education and training, health and housing.

It can be inferred from these findings that addressing the foundational pillars of poverty alleviation is crucial for BARMM. By recognizing education as a top priority, it emphasizes the role of knowledge and skills development in breaking the cycle of poverty. Moreover, investing in education can empower individuals, enhance their employability, and create opportunities for upward social mobility. Similarly, prioritizing health demonstrates an understanding of the significant relationship between the general welfare and poverty reduction. This implies that accessibility to quality healthcare services and initiatives that promote preventive care can improve the overall health outcomes and economic prospects of the population.

**Table 5: Frequency Distribution of the Respondents, By Ranking BARMM Anti-Poverty Programs**

Programs	Rank frequency								n	Ranking
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
1. Income and Employment	4	24	16	13	4	4	3	2	70	1st
2. Literacy/ Training /Education	4	16	22	13	8	3	1	3	70	2nd
3. Health	5	11	8	14	12	13	5	2	70	3rd
4. Housing	7	3	4	14	10	13	13	6	70	4th
5. Awareness and Collaboration on anti-poverty program	8	2	6	7	17	8	9	13	70	5th
6. Infrastructure	4	8	6	6	7	11	17	11	70	6th
7. Transportation	5	6	2	1	6	12	14	24	70	7th

\* The least total responses being the most prioritized after adding the total number for each statement.

### BARMM Anti-Poverty Programs in Rural Areas

In regard to the anti-poverty programs that would help reduce poverty in the BARMM rural areas, Table 6 shows the following ranking of anti-poverty programs as follows: income and employment, literacy education and training, health and infrastructure.

The study findings indicating that the majority of the respondents believe that literacy or education, health, infrastructure, and income and employment are the key anti-poverty programs that would effectively reduce poverty in rural areas have significant implications. Among others, the thrust on literacy or education as a priority clearly show the recognition of competence and technical skills as essential tools for empowering individuals and communities. By prioritizing education, especially in rural areas, policymakers can address the challenges of limited access to quality education, low literacy rates, and educational discrepancies. Pouring government funds in education can cloth individuals with the necessary tools to be emancipated from the cycle of poverty, enhance their employability, and contribute to the sustainable development of rural areas

**Table 6: Frequency Distribution of Respondents, By Ranking BARMM Anti-Poverty Programs in Rural Areas**

Programs	Rank Frequency								n	Ranking
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
1. Income and Employment	1	22	18	15	7	4	2	1	70	1st
2. Literacy/ Training /Education	2	15	17	18	11	6	0	1	70	2nd
3. Health	4	8	9	7	14	9	12	7	70	3rd
4. Infrastructure	2	11	8	3	7	17	16	6	70	4th
5. Awareness and Collaboration on anti-poverty program	6	8	4	12	6	7	9	18	70	5th
6. Housing	4	2	9	9	14	12	6	14	70	6th
7. Transportation	4	10	2	3	8	10	18	15	70	7th

### BARMM Anti-poverty Programs for Priority Funding from Taxpayers Money

As to BARMM priority anti-poverty programs that truly deserve spending taxpayers' money, the data in Table 7 consistently reveal similar ranking of the top four priorities compared to the previous tables, to wit: income and employment, literacy education and training, health and housing, respectively.

The study results which disclose income and employment as the highest top priority BARMM anti-poverty program indicates the recognition of the vital role that economic empowerment plays in poverty reduction. By prioritizing investments in income-generating opportunities and promoting employment, the government can

contribute to sustainable economic growth and improve the livelihoods of individuals and families. This ranking highlights the importance of creating an enabling environment that fosters entrepreneurship, supports job creation, and provides skills training to enhance the employability of the population. Allocating resources to income and employment programs can help lift individuals out of poverty, reduce inequality, and contribute to overall socio-economic development.

More importantly, the ranking of literacy and training, education, health, and housing as subsequent priorities reflects the understanding that addressing the fundamental needs and capacities of individuals is vital for poverty reduction. Similarly, prioritizing education can ensure access to quality education for all, which can break the cycle of poverty and empower individuals to achieve their full potential. Allocating resources to health programs can improve access to healthcare services, promote preventive care, and enhance overall well-being. Lastly, investing in housing initiatives can address the housing needs and living conditions of individuals and families, providing them with a stable and secure environment.

**Table 7: Frequency Distribution of Respondents, By Ranking BARMM Anti-poverty Programs for Priority Funding from Taxpayers Money**

Programs	Rank Frequency								n	Ranking
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
1. Income and Employment	2	21	18	8	6	7	5	3	70	1st
2. Literacy/ Training /Education	2	13	17	14	8	11	3	2	70	2nd
3. Health	2	14	9	6	17	11	8	3	70	3rd
4. Housing	2	2	11	13	14	11	11	6	70	7th
5. Awareness and Collaboration on anti-poverty program	2	2	1	10	10	5	13	27	70	6th
6. Infrastructure	2	14	7	8	10	10	14	5	70	5th
7. Transportation	1	3	5	10	3	13	14	21	70	4th

\* Based on multiple responses.

**National Government Strategies and Programs Available in BARMM Area**

With regard to government strategies and programs in reducing poverty in the Philippines that are available in the BARMM area, Table 8 indicates that most of the national anti-poverty programs especially basic social services were perceived by majority of the respondents as available or being implemented in the BARMM. These findings suggest that there is a high level of confidence in the BARMM's commitment to poverty reduction. This perception plays a significant role in strengthening the trust and credibility between the BARMM government and the Moro community, ensuring a collaborative environment for effective implementation and monitoring of anti-poverty projects. It also serves as a motivation for the government to continue and strengthen its efforts, knowing that their actions are recognized and appreciated by the public.

Furthermore, the study finding showing that most anti-poverty projects are available or being implemented in the BARMM highlight the potential for impact and positive change. When people believe in the existence of specific projects, it implies that resources are being allocated and efforts are being made to address poverty in a targeted manner. This can lead to tangible improvements in the lives of individuals and communities, such as increased access to education, healthcare, livelihood opportunities, and improved living conditions.

**Table 8: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Respondents on Government Strategies and Programs Available in BARMM Area**

Strategies and Programs	Frequency	Percentage
1. Provision of primary health care for mothers and children the people of BARMM	54	77.1
2. Free Tertiary/College Education for the poor	54	77.1

3. Provision of livelihood program for the poor	52	74.3
4. Availability and accessibility to social welfare services	50	71.4
5. Existence of barangay roads and related infrastructure projects	49	70
6. Provision of agricultural support and credit to farmers and other agricultural workers	46	65.7
7. Free access to health services in both public and private hospitals	43	61.4
8. Availability and accessibility to job opportunities	42	60
9. Provision of free shelter or low-cost housing for the poor	38	54.3
10. Availability and accessibility to family planning counseling services	38	54.3
11. Implementation of acceptable minimum wage	32	45.7
12. Provision of free water	25	35.7
13. Provision of free electricity	17	24.3
14. Provision of free or discounted transportation fares for the poor	11	15.7

### Important BARMM anti-poverty strategies and programs

As to important BARMM anti-poverty strategies and programs as perceived by the respondents, Table 9 also show similar pattern of responses and ranking pointing to health, education, employment, infrastructure and other social services as the top priority anti-poverty programs that must be addressed by BARMM using the appropriate strategies.

In this regard, several important implications can be inferred from the aforesaid study findings. For instance, it can be emphasized that the Moro population believe in the strong political will and commitment of the BARMM government in reducing if not eliminating widespread in the Moro areas. Needless to say, BARMM officials could not discard the fact that the BARMM areas are the most impoverished places in the country. This means to say that the poverty problem is continuously worsening in the Muslim areas without much improvement. There is no denying the fact that if the present BARMM government would fail to address the poverty problem, it becomes hopeless for any succeeding government to make the major difference.

**Table 9: Frequency Distribution of the Respondents, By Ranking the Important Anti-poverty Strategies and Programs**

Program	Rank frequency															n	Ranking
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14		
1. Free Tertiary/college Education for the poor	1	28	9	3	5	4	5	2	5	2	1	2	1	0	2	70	1st
2. Free access to health services in both public and private hospitals	1	11	21	3	12	5	7	3	1	1	2	0	1	1	1	70	2nd
3. Provision of livelihood program for the poor	4	8	8	5	6	5	4	5	5	11	1	2	3	3	0	70	3rd
4. Availability and accessibility to job opportunities	4	8	8	4	3	2	8	4	8	4	4	1	10	1	1	70	4th
5. Provision of free water	2	3	4	8	12	6	7	2	6	6	4	2	5	3	0	70	5th

6. Provision of free shelter or low-cost housing for the poor	2	3	4	1/4	1	7	8	2	5	5	2	6	6	2	3	70	6th
7. Provision of agricultural support and credit to farmers and other agricultural workers	3	1	4	5	3	5	2	1/5	7	5	5	5	6	2	2	70	7th
8. Availability and accessibility to social welfare services	4	2	2	4	2	9	2	7	7	7	5	9	5	3	2	70	8th
9. Provision of free electricity	3	0	5	5	7	9	6	5	1	2	4	6	0	8	9	70	9th
10. Implementation of acceptable minimum wage	4	1	2	2	5	3	3	6	1/1	5	9	6	2	6	5	70	10th
11. Provision of primary health care for mothers and children the people of BARMM	4	2	1	6	5	5	1	3	3	2	9	3	8	6	1/2	70	11th
12. Existence of barangay roads and related infrastructure projects	0	2	0	4	3	7	9	6	3	5	5	5	5	9	7	70	12th
13. Provision of free or discounted transportation fares for the poor	4	0	0	2	1	0	3	6	3	3	1/1	9	9	8	1/1	70	13th
14. Availability and accessibility to family planning counseling services	4	0	0	2	3	1	3	0	1	9	5	1/0	7	1/4	1/1	70	14th

\* The least total responses being the most prioritized after adding the total number for each statement.

### Socio-Demographic and Administrative Profile Moral Integrity

In terms of the relationship between the respondents' socio-demographic and administrative profile and their perceptions on moral integrity, the data in Table 10 generally disclose no significant correlation between the eight socio-demographic variables used in the study, namely, gender, age, educational attainment, monthly salary, status of employment, length of service, religion and job position, on one hand, and the respondents' perception on moral integrity. This implies that the null hypothesis, which states that there is no significant relationship between the respondents' socio-demographic and administrative profile and their perception of moral integrity, is not rejected.

**Table 10: Relationship between Socio-Demographic and Administrative Profile Moral Integrity**

	Socio-Demographic & Administrative Profile	Chi-Square test value	P-value	Verbal Interpretation
Moral Integrity	Gender	1.944	0.493	Not significant
	Age	3.26	0.783	Not significant

<b>Educational Attainment</b>	0.762	1.00	<b>Not significant</b>
<b>Monthly Salary</b>	5.547	0.364	<b>Not significant</b>
<b>Status of Employment</b>	4.726	0.178	<b>Not significant</b>
<b>Length of service</b>	1.223	1.00	<b>Not significant</b>
<b>Job Position</b>	1.782	0.626	<b>Not significant</b>
<b>Religion</b>	0.426	1.00	<b>Not significant</b>

## DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research problems identified, the study presents the following key findings derived from the respondents' perceptions:

For the respondents' awareness of the important provisions of RA 6713, it was revealed by the study findings that except for few provisions which were not so familiar with the respondents, majority of the respondents were knowledgeable about RA 6713.

In relation to respondents' perception on the moral integrity of BARMM officials and employees, it was disclosed by the study results that majority of the 23 positive statement indicators used in measuring respondents' perception were agreeable to majority of respondents except four statement indicators which were disagreeable to them.

In terms respondents' perception on the impact of poverty on the lives of the Moro population, it was found by the study that a big majority of the respondent believed that poverty has a great negative impact on the lives and socio-economic condition of the BARMM constituency and communities, in general.

For the respondents' perception and ranking of the BARMM top priority anti-poverty programs especially those that must be urgently implemented in rural areas and those that truly deserved in spending taxpayers money, five major anti-poverty programs were cited by majority of the respondents, namely, income and employment, literacy education and training, health, housing and infrastructure.

Moreover, as to the national anti-poverty strategies and programs that are available or being implemented in the BARMM, majority of the respondents emphasized the different social services and programs more specifically, health, education and housing as being implemented in the BARMM.

Finally, the study findings disclosed that there is no significant relationship between the eight socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, namely, gender, age, educational attainment, monthly salary, religion, job, status of appointment, and length of service, and their perception on BARMM moral integrity.

### Conclusion

In relation to the null hypothesis tested in this study, which states that there is no significant relationship between the respondents' socio-demographic and administrative profile and their perception of moral integrity, the findings revealed that the null hypothesis is not rejected. This indicates that none of the socio-demographic and administrative characteristics of the respondents have a significant influence on their perception of moral integrity in BARMM Central Offices.

Based on these results, it can be concluded that employees' moral integrity is relatively consistent across different socio-demographic and administrative groups. This suggests that perceptions of moral integrity are not significantly shaped by factors such as gender, age, educational attainment, monthly salary, employment status, length of service, job position, or religion.

## RECOMMENDATION

Based on the study findings and their important implications, the following recommendations may be advanced:

- 1) That it is highly recommended for BARMM leadership to enhance the understanding and application of ethical standards among public officials and employees in the BARMM by conducting regular training programs and workshops that focus on the principles and guidelines outlined in RA 6713 with special emphasis on the importance of good governance and its various components such as integrity, transparency, accountability, and citizen participation. It is also necessary to implement effective monitoring mechanisms to ensure compliance with the ethical standards outlined in RA 6713 such as the establishment of an independent oversight body or an internal ethics committee within government agencies. Regular assessments and evaluations should also be conducted to identify any ethical lapses among top officials of the BARMM, in particular, and take appropriate disciplinary actions.
- 2) That in response to the study finding which disclosed that a majority of respondents believe or agree with most positive indicators of moral integrity in the BARMM, the study recommends to reinforce and expand moral education measures within the BARMM area which should focus on integrating moral values and ethics into the school curriculum, conducting workshops or seminars for students, teachers, and community members. Corollary to this is the urgent need to conduct IEC awareness campaigns on moral governance which underscore the importance of moral integrity and its positive impact on society. These campaigns can be conducted through various channels such as social media, local television and radio stations, and community events as well as partnering with religious and cultural institutions within BARMM to enforce related Islamic moral teachings and ethical values.
- 3) That in relation to the study finding which revealed that majority of the respondents claimed that poverty has a great negative impact on the lives of the Moro population, it is, therefore, recommended to promote inclusive economic policies and initiatives that prioritize the participation and empowerment of the Moro population by encouraging entrepreneurship, supporting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), promoting vocational and skills training programs, and attracting investments to the region. This should be combined with the implementation of programs that focus on providing access to quality education, healthcare, livelihood opportunities, and basic services to emancipate the Moro population from old-banded of poverty.
- 4) That the study suggests that in order to effectively address the high poverty incidence in BARMM especially in rural areas, it is imperative to develop and implement customized programs that are tailored to the unique challenges faced by the Moro communities. This entails devising initiatives centered around income generation, job creation, skills training, and education, tailored to the specific needs and available resources of the local communities. Furthermore, placing a priority on the delivery of social services and infrastructure development is crucial to ensure that the fundamental health requirements of the community are met and that residents have access to affordable medical services.
- 5) For future studies on moral integrity and poverty alleviation in the BARMM, it is recommended to employ a multi-disciplinary approach that combines qualitative and quantitative research methods. This would involve conducting in-depth interviews, surveys, and focus group discussions to gain a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing moral integrity and the impact of poverty on socio-economic conditions

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