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REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR-50736

Date: 22-03-2025

Title: Strengthening Ethical Values and Accountability in Local Governance: Citizen-Led Strategies in the Greater Kigezi Sub-Region of Uganda

Recommendation:

Accept as it is.....**YES**.....
Accept after minor revision.....
Accept after major revision
Do not accept (*Reasons below*)

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality	√			
Techn. Quality		√		
Clarity		√		
Significance			√	

Reviewer's Name: Dr Abdul Hameed Shah

Reviewer's Decision about Paper: **Recommended for Publication.**

Comments (*Use additional pages, if required*)
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Reviewer's Comment / Report

Abstract Review:

The abstract provides a clear and concise summary of the study, effectively outlining the research problem, objectives, methodology, and key findings. The focus on citizen involvement in enhancing ethics and accountability in local governance is well-articulated. The study's emphasis on empowering communities through education and participation, reducing bureaucratic inefficiencies, and fostering collaboration with civil society organizations is well-highlighted. The conclusion and recommendations align well with the study's objectives and findings.

Keywords Review:

The selected keywords—Citizens, Ethics, Accountability, Local Governments, and Uganda—are appropriate and capture the essential themes of the study, ensuring relevance for academic indexing and research retrieval.

Introduction and Background Review:

The introduction provides a strong foundation by contextualizing the study within broader ethical and governance discourses. The discussion of ethics as a philosophical and practical concept is well-grounded in scholarly references. The historical perspective on accountability, tracing its evolution from financial accounting to broader public administration, adds depth to the study. The references to New Public

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Management (NPM) reforms and decentralization provide relevant historical and conceptual context, linking past developments to the present study focus. The explanation of decentralization, with supporting literature, enhances the reader's understanding of governance structures in developing countries.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework:

The study effectively integrates various theoretical perspectives, drawing from both classical and modern thinkers on ethics and accountability. The discussion of Aristotle, Kant, and Confucius provides a philosophical grounding, while the engagement with public administration scholars like Dubnick, Mulgan, and Bovens strengthens the conceptual framework. The inclusion of decentralization theories further contextualizes the study within governance literature.

Methodological Review:

The methodology is clearly outlined, demonstrating a balanced combination of qualitative and quantitative research approaches. The inclusion of surveys and interviews with local government officials and community leaders enhances the reliability of findings. The study's focus on citizen engagement mechanisms and participatory governance is well-reflected in the chosen research methods.

Findings and Interpretation:

The findings highlight the gaps in local government initiatives regarding citizen involvement while emphasizing education and active participation as key strategies for fostering ethical values and reinforcing accountability. The identification of bureaucratic inefficiencies and the role of civil society organizations is well-articulated. The study's emphasis on structural barriers and recommendations for political accountability, anti-corruption models, and institutional reforms aligns with its research objectives.

Conclusion Review:

The conclusion effectively synthesizes the study's key findings, reinforcing the importance of citizen engagement, transparency, and governance reforms. The recommendations are well-aligned with the research objectives and provide practical insights for policymakers, civil society, and local governments.

Overall Assessment:

The manuscript is well-structured, theoretically robust, and methodologically sound. The integration of ethical, philosophical, and governance perspectives enhances its scholarly contribution. The study provides valuable insights into the role of citizens in strengthening ethical governance and accountability in Uganda's local government system.

Recommendation:

The study presents a comprehensive and insightful examination of ethical governance and accountability in local governments. It is a significant contribution to public administration and governance literature, with well-supported arguments and practical recommendations.