





# Synthesis Research on Ethical Governance: Dimensions, Consequences, and Influencing Factors

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## ABSTRACT

Ethical governance is grounded in moral values. In today's context—marked by rising corruption and declining public trust—identifying the consequences, influencing factors, and ethical dimensions of ethical governance has become an unavoidable necessity. The purpose of the present study is to identify the consequences, influencing factors, and ethical dimensions and components of ethical governance using a meta-synthesis approach. The research method in this study is qualitative, and through meta-synthesis, the researcher analyzes the results and findings of previous studies. By implementing the seven-step method proposed by Sandelowski and Barroso, the research process was completed. The software used in this study was SPSS 19. The findings indicate that ethical governance includes 82 components categorized into seven main dimensions: (1) ethical leadership and competence, (2) participation and social interaction, (3) justice and fairness, (4) responsibility and accountability, (5) institutional structure and rule of law, (6) human development and welfare, and (7) fundamental and moral values. In addition, 21 influencing factors on ethical governance were identified across five main categories: socio-cultural factors, leadership and managerial factors, political and governmental factors, structural and institutional factors, and innovative and technological factors. The consequences of ethical governance encompassed 19 factors, grouped into four dimensions: economic dynamism and growth, economic integrity and transparency, work ethic and service orientation, and sustainable development and societal resilience. This study presents a comprehensive model that maps the relationships among these dimensions and consequences, as well as the factors influencing ethical governance, thereby providing a framework for the establishment of ethical governance.

**Keywords:** governance, ethics, ethical governance, meta-synthesis.

## Introduction

Ethical governance has emerged as a key response to contemporary crises of corruption, institutional distrust, and technological disruption in both public and private sectors worldwide (1, 2). While the classical good governance agenda emphasized procedural integrity, regulatory quality, and democratic accountability, newer discourses foreground the ethical content of decision-making, the moral character of leaders, and the value-laden nature of policy choices in complex, data-driven and globalized societies (3, 4). Ethical governance, in this sense, goes beyond compliance with formal rules to encompass justice, transparency, responsibility toward vulnerable groups, and stewardship of emerging technologies and shared resources (5, 6). In contexts marked by entrenched



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corruption and low institutional trust, neglect of ethical governance can entrench a “vicious circle” in which weak institutions, corrupt practices, and social cynicism reinforce one another (1, 7).

A growing body of empirical work demonstrates that ethical or “good” governance is strongly associated with macro- and micro-level outcomes such as economic growth, social development, human welfare, and subjective well-being (3, 8, 9). Studies in the Western Balkans, South Sumatra, and other regional blocs show that internal control systems, transparency mechanisms, and rule-based administration support higher-quality financial reporting and better development trajectories (4, 10, 11). Research on OPEC+ economies similarly indicates that dimensions of good governance play a significant role in sustainable development performance (9). At the meso level, investigations of local governments and sectoral administrations reveal that ethical governance correlates with improved service delivery, greater citizen satisfaction, and higher trust in public institutions (12–14). These findings collectively suggest that ethical governance is not a normative luxury but a crucial driver of economic and social resilience (11, 15).

The technological and digital transformation of governance has simultaneously created new opportunities and risks for embedding ethical principles in institutional practice. E-government initiatives in Pakistan, Indonesia, and other emerging economies illustrate how digital platforms can streamline public administration, enhance transparency, and create pathways toward more ethical and responsive governance arrangements (16, 17). Data-driven public management and predictive analytics have been used to improve decision-making quality, optimize resource allocation, and anticipate social needs, but they also raise concerns about algorithmic bias, opacity, and accountability gaps (1, 18). Research on digital medicine, robotics, artificial intelligence, and synthetic biology underscores the necessity of robust ethical governance frameworks to protect human autonomy, prevent harm, and maintain public trust in high-stakes technological systems (5, 19–21).

In the biomedical and data-intensive research domains, new institutional models of ethics governance are being tested and debated. Studies of research ethics committees in Canada, New Zealand, China, and other settings highlight tensions between bureaucratic audit cultures and more substantive, dialogical forms of ethical deliberation (22–24). Analyses of the Menlo Report and similar initiatives show how ethics governance evolves through attempts to interpret broad values such as respect, justice, and beneficence in technologically dynamic fields (25). At the same time, scholarship warns that ethics governance can drift toward “ethical imperialism” or performative compliance, in which formalized procedures are emphasized at the expense of genuine moral responsibility and contextual judgment (26). Biobank governance and the integration of electronic health records further demonstrate the importance of consent, privacy, confidentiality, and equitable benefit-sharing as core elements of ethical governance in health-related infrastructures (19, 27).

Parallel to these global developments, there is a rich and distinctive line of work that grounds ethical governance in Islamic political thought and scriptural sources. Studies based on Nahj al-Balagha, Farabi’s civil philosophy, and Qur’anic principles conceptualize ethical governance as the realization of justice, protection of human dignity, rejection of despotism, and promotion of collective welfare under divine sovereignty (28–31). These frameworks emphasize virtues such as moderation, honesty, compassion, accountability before God and community, and meritocratic appointment of officials (7, 32, 33). They also highlight the moral formation of leaders and citizens as a precondition for just and sustainable governance arrangements, moving beyond purely structural or procedural conceptions (34, 35).

Within this Islamic and Iranian context, several empirical and theoretical studies have begun to identify specific components, indicators, and domains of ethical governance in organizations and public institutions. Research in Iranian governmental bodies has mapped dimensions such as corruption control, political stability, rule of law, accountability, planning, and citizen participation as core elements of ethical governance architecture (36). Other work has explored ethical governance in Parliament, proposing transparency models that integrate financial disclosure, information accessibility, and oversight mechanisms with moral expectations of legislators (37). Studies on public welfare governance and social functions underscore the role of distributive justice, social protection, and ethical policy implementation in shaping citizens' perceptions of fairness and legitimacy (38, 39). Still others examine how ethnic diversity, cultural pluralism, and social capital can be harnessed to design more inclusive and just governance frameworks at national and local levels (39, 40).

Leadership has consistently been identified as a central mechanism through which ethical governance is enacted or undermined. Empirical research in governmental organizations shows that ethical leadership—characterized by integrity, fairness, role clarity, and responsible power-sharing—strengthens good governance practices and institutional credibility (41, 42). Strategic and traditional leadership roles in African local government and customary structures have also been shown to influence the promotion of ethical norms, responsiveness, and anti-corruption efforts (13, 43). Transformational leadership behaviors contribute to the internalization of ethical standards among public servants and can help translate formal governance principles into day-to-day administrative conduct (42, 44). At the micro level of the classroom, research on professors' ethical governance identifies domains such as respect, agency, authenticity, and practical commitment as important for shaping students' moral development and trust in academic institutions (23, 45).

Alongside leadership, a range of structural, social, and cultural factors have been shown to affect the quality of ethical governance. Studies on political tolerance and the functions of justice in Islamic political thought emphasize that resisting authoritarian tendencies, avoiding concentration of power, and institutionalizing mechanisms for checking injustice are preconditions for ethical governance (29, 46). Research on civil society, social accountability, and community participation highlights how citizen engagement, public scrutiny, and societal norms can constrain corrupt practices and strengthen ethical standards in local and national governance (2, 44, 47). Empirical work linking corruption perceptions, governance indicators, and institutional trust in various regions confirms that ethical governance underpins both public confidence in authorities and broader social cohesion (1, 14).

Digitalization and AI-driven transformations intensify the demands placed on ethical governance frameworks. The expansion of AI in defense, digital medicine, and data economy ecosystems has prompted calls for clear principles, participatory rule-making, and robust accountability mechanisms to guide the design and deployment of these technologies (19, 48, 49). Work on AI-augmented commons governance proposes models in which ethical rulemaking, participatory legislation, and context-sensitive enforcement support sustainable resource management and protect vulnerable rural communities (50). Similarly, studies of digital transformation in public financial management argue that accounting digitalization, data mining for anti-money laundering, and budget transparency can enhance financial integrity—but only when embedded within good governance and explicit ethical standards (11, 51, 52). Research on happiness, welfare, and subjective well-being further indicates that technical quality, regulatory effectiveness, and ethical governance collectively shape citizens' perceptions of life satisfaction and trust in institutions (3, 53).

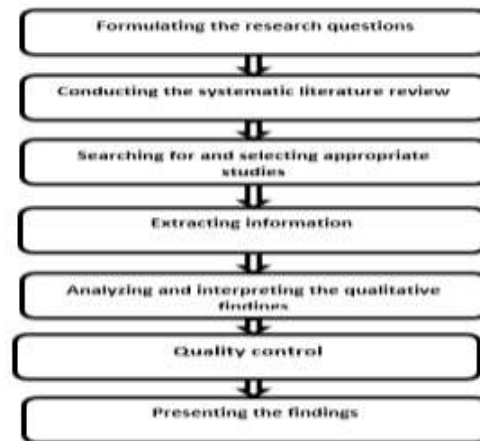
Despite these rich and diverse contributions, the literature on ethical governance remains fragmented across disciplines, sectors, and normative traditions. Studies often focus either on macro-level governance indicators, sector-specific applications (such as biobanking, AI, or e-government), or context-specific religious and cultural frameworks without systematically integrating these strands into a unified conceptual model (18, 21, 22, 27). Moreover, many investigations examine either antecedents (such as leadership, digitalization, or social accountability) or outcomes (such as trust, economic growth, and sustainable development), but few offer a comprehensive synthesis of how antecedent conditions, ethical dimensions, and consequences interrelate across different governance levels (6, 8, 9, 12). Emerging frameworks in Islamic, African, and Asian contexts point to the importance of contextually grounded ethical vocabularies, yet there is still limited cross-fertilization between these perspectives and global debates on AI ethics, data governance, and transnational regulatory regimes (5, 7, 33, 54).

These gaps highlight the need for systematic synthesis of existing qualitative and conceptual studies to clarify the core ethical dimensions of governance, the key factors that promote or hinder them, and the range of individual, institutional, and societal outcomes they engender. Meta-synthetic approaches are particularly well suited to integrate diverse empirical contexts—from Iranian governmental organizations and Islamic ethical treatises to AI governance cases, research ethics regimes, and local government reforms—into a coherent, multi-dimensional model (25, 26, 28). By drawing together prior work on leadership, social and ethical functions, institutional design, digital transformation, and sectoral applications, such a synthesis can offer both a theoretically grounded and practically relevant framework for implementing ethical governance in contemporary societies (13, 34, 36, 39, 55).

Therefore, the aim of the present study is to conduct a meta-synthesis of existing research in order to identify and integrate the ethical components, influencing factors, and consequences of ethical governance.

## Methods and Materials

In the present study, the researcher seeks to identify the consequences, influencing factors, and dimensions and components of ethical governance using the meta-synthesis method. Meta-synthesis involves analyzing the findings of previous studies. In other words, meta-synthesis focuses on qualitative studies that do not necessarily encompass extensive theoretical foundations and, instead of providing a collective summary of findings, produces an interpretive integration of the results. To achieve the objective of the article—namely identifying the consequences, influencing factors, and the dimensions and components of ethical governance through meta-synthesis—the seven-step method proposed by Sandelowski and Barroso (2007) was employed. A summary of these steps is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1. The seven-step method of Sandelowski and Barroso, representing the systematic process of gathering prior literature.**

## Findings and Results

The research findings are presented below through seven steps.

### Step One: Formulating the Research Questions

For this section, a four-question algorithm was used. Table 1 presents four questions related to the influencing factors, outcomes, and constituent elements of ethical governance, organized into the four parts of what, who, when, and how the study is conducted.

**Table 1. Research Questions**

Row	Four-Question Algorithm	Four-Question Algorithm for the Study
1	<i>What</i> – What is the meta-synthesis study designed to identify?	What influencing factors, consequences, and components are related to ethical governance?
2	<i>Who</i> – What is the study population?	In this study, the population includes credible books and scientific articles in Persian and English.
3	<i>When</i> – What is the time span of the study?	The study covers the years 2010 to 2025 (Gregorian Calendar) and 1390 to 1404 (Solar Hijri).
4	<i>How</i> – What is the method of conducting the study?	Data collection is based on the analysis of prior research articles.

### Step Two: Systematic Review of Texts

In this stage, the researcher systematically searches for published articles and studies in various reputable domestic and international scientific journals, as well as general sources and websites of credible organizations, with the aim of identifying authentic, reliable, and relevant documents within the appropriate time span. First, relevant keywords are selected. These keywords are listed in Table 2.

**Table 2. Research Keywords**

Row	English Keywords	Persian Keywords
1	Ethics – Moral	اخلاق
2	Moral Governance, Ethics Governance	حکمرانی اخلاقی

Next, using search engines and reputable databases, articles, dissertations, and texts containing relevant English and Persian keywords were searched. The keywords used in search engines and academic databases are shown in Table 3.

To conduct this process, previous studies on ethical governance were examined across several domestic and international databases.

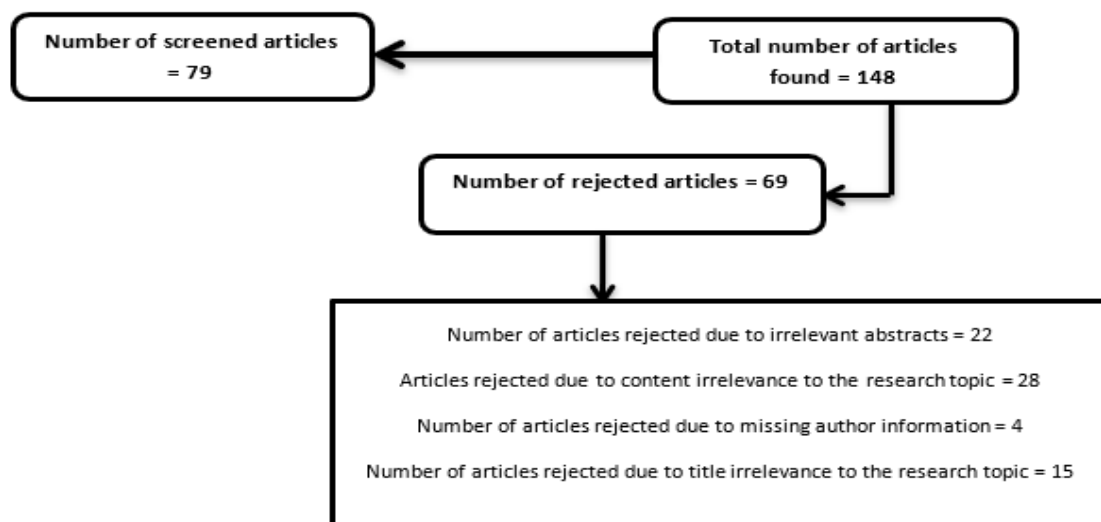
**Table 3. Databases Reviewed in the Field of Ethical Governance**

Type	Databases
Domestic	<a href="http://www.sid.ir">www.sid.ir</a>
<a href="http://www.Magiran.com">www.Magiran.com</a>	
<a href="http://www.Noormags.com">www.Noormags.com</a>	
<a href="http://www.civilica.com">www.civilica.com</a>	
International	<a href="http://www.google scholar.com">www.google scholar.com</a>
<a href="http://www.sciencedirect.com">www.sciencedirect.com</a>	
<a href="http://www.springer.com">www.springer.com</a>	
<a href="http://www.emeraldinsight.com">www.emeraldinsight.com</a>	

### Step Three: Searching and Selecting Relevant Texts

The purpose of this step is to eliminate articles whose findings the researcher does not consider reliable; therefore, an article that might otherwise be included in the synthesis may be excluded. Based on consultation with experts (university faculty and specialists), the sources identified in the previous stage were reviewed step-by-step according to acceptance or rejection criteria.

In this step, the researcher collected suitable articles and rejected a number of them during each review cycle; these rejected articles were not examined further in the meta-synthesis process. The selected studies were reviewed multiple times, and at each stage, articles and texts not aligned with the research topic were removed. In the present study, the review process is summarized in Figure 2.



**Figure 2. Review process for selecting desired articles.**

In this stage, of the 148 articles reviewed, 79 articles were approved and 69 were excluded due to irrelevance.

### Step Four: Extracting Information from Texts

Extracting research findings involves classifying article information based on the reference details of each article, including the author(s), country, article title, and year of publication. In this stage, the final articles were analyzed using content analysis. The results obtained from this stage are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Scale (Constituent Dimensions of Ethical Governance)**

Row	Researcher	Year	Title	Country	Extracted Components
1	Bafghi et al.	2024	Identifying the Components and	Iran	1. Corruption control, 2. Transparency, 3. Political stability, 4. Quality of laws and justice, 5.

			Dimensions of Governance in Iranian Governmental Organizations with Emphasis on Ethical Issues		Accountability, 6. Effectiveness and efficiency, 7. Planning, 8. Public participation in decision-making, 9. Leadership, 10. Political and economic ideals
2	Sabouripour et al.	2024	Ethical Indicators of Human Capital Governance with an Efficient Management Approach	Iran	1. Moderation and temperance, 2. Responsibility and accountability, 3. Interaction-orientation, 4. Capacity building, 5. Criticism acceptance, 6. Work discipline, 7. Justice orientation, 8. Organizational commitment, 9. Monitoring ethical performance of human capital, 10. Transparency, 11. Human capital empowerment, 12. Conflict management in human capital governance, 13. Innovation in governance, 14. Participation and exchange-based governance, 15. Human capital supervision and leadership
3	Issa-Nia	2024	Citizens and Ethical Rulers in Islamic Thought: A Model for Just and Sustainable Governance	Iran	1. Rule of law, 2. Honesty, 3. Justice-centered governance, 4. Conscious compliance of citizens
4	Kahya et al.	2023	The Model of Ethical Governance from the Viewpoint of Islam in the Thought of Ayatollah Khamenei	Iran	1. Conduct and character of rulers, 2. Systems and mechanisms, 3. Institutions and structures
5	Fakher et al.	2023	An Ethical Approach to Governance: Components of Good Governance Based on Social Capital	Iran	1. Environmental factors, 2. Policymaking factors, 3. Structural factors, 4. Organizational factors, 5. Educational factors, 6. Leadership, 7. Social communication, 8. Organizational development, 9. Improvement of accountability, 10. Increased social responsibility
6	Hosseinpour-Tonekaboni, Rasoul & Masoudi	2023	Foundations and Identification of Signs of "Ethical Governance" in Farabi's Civic Science and Socio-Cultural Approach	Iran	1. Dissemination of values, 2. Appropriate cultural models, 3. Expansion of justice, 4. Combating moonlighting, 5. Prevention of power monopoly
7	Berenji Maryan	2023	Presenting a Transparency Model in the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran Based on the Concept of Ethical Governance	Iran	1. Accountability, 2. Oversight, 3. Financial transparency, 4. Information transparency
8	Shafipour Motlagh & Kashani	2022	Identifying the Domains of Teachers' Ethical Governance in University Classrooms through Meta-Synthesis and Presenting a Model	Iran	1. Fulfilling obligations, 2. Dignity, 3. Agency, 4. Attraction, 5. Practical commitment, 6. Character
9	Noorollahi et al.	2022	Components of Ethical Governance in the Light of the Holy Qur'an	Iran	1. Divine-compassionate relational governance, 2. Justice-centered governance, 3. Public satisfaction, 4. Expertise and commitment, 5. Rationality, 6. Public participation, 7. Reform and collective oversight, 8. Transparency and accountability for rulers, 9. Obedience to Islamic governance, 10. Empathy with citizens, 11. Cooperation with the government by the people, 12. Rejection of tyranny and preservation of dignity, 13. Attention to livelihoods, 14. Establishment of a healthy economy, 15. Importance of family, 16. Education and upbringing, 17. Rights-based legislation, 18. Merit-based appointments
10	Gazar, Amirhosein & Alipour	2022	Ethical Principles of Training Islamic Governance Officials from the Perspective of Nahj al-Balagha	Iran	1. Foundational-cognitive skills, 2. Behavioral skills, 3. Spiritual skills
11	Madani & Najari	2022	Exploring and Explaining the Components of Healthy Islamic Governance in Light of Core Values of the Islamic Revolution from the Viewpoint of the Supreme Leader	Iran	1. Governance aligned with divine religion, 2. Attention to human rights, 3. Just and ideal religious society, 4. Elitism, 5. Preservation of dignity and human rights, 6. Faithful and committed human resources



12	Akbari Goharshad & Azari	2021	An Ethical Governance Model for Justice Based on Ethnic Diversity (Case Study: Iran)	Iran	1. Economic development, 2. Social development, 3. Human development
13	Ghorbani-Zadeh et al.	2020	Ethical Governance Based on the Typology of Military Classes from the Viewpoint of Nahj al-Balagha	Iran	1. Ethics of warfare, 2. Ethics of soldiers, 3. Ethics of military commanders, 4. General military ethics, 5. Military operational strategies, 6. Civil–military relations, 7. Leadership style characteristics, 8. Military functions, 9. Senior officers' families, 10. Livelihood systems, 11. Belief in divine assistance, 12. Reliance on God, 13. Faith in the unseen, 14. Servitude, 15. God-consciousness, 16. Martyrdom-seeking, 17. Belief in the legitimacy of the Prophet, 18. Sincerity to God
14	Pour-Azzat	2010	Studying the Dimensions of Ethical Governance in the Context of Imam Ali's Covenant	Iran	1. Islamic administrative wisdom, 2. Unity in word and deed, 3. Meritocracy, 4. Justice in all dimensions for present and future, 5. Leniency with the general public
15	Li et al.	2025	Ethical Governance in Chinese Universities: A Review of Research Ethics Committees	China	1. Ethical oversight, 2. Cultivating responsibility culture, 3. Adherence to ethical standards
16	Blanchard et al.	2025	Ethical Governance of AI for Defense: Normative Trade-offs for Translating Principles into Practice	United Kingdom	1. Scope of stakeholder participation, 2. Selected accountability objectives, 3. Selection of transparency and traceability mechanisms
17	Clermont et al.	2025	(Epistemic) Injustice and Resistance in Canada's Ethical Research Governance	Canada	1. Regulatory frameworks and policies, 2. Ethics education, 3. Ethical considerations
18	Korol et al.	2025	AI-Based Common Resource Management: Legislating and Implementing Ethical Governance for Sustainable Resource Management in Rural Areas	USA	1. Participatory legislation, 2. Effective monitoring, 3. Proportionate enforcement by local institutions in common resources
19	Caro et al.	2024	Leveraging Data and Predictive Analytics: Advancing Innovation and Improving Decision-Making through Ethical Governance	Indonesia	1. Ethical policies and guidelines, 2. Stakeholder feedback and engagement, 3. Training and empowerment
20	Adenia & Okosi	2024	Ethical AI Governance, Financing, and Human Welfare in the 21st Century	United Kingdom	1. Ethics-based legal and regulatory frameworks, 2. Focus on human welfare and well-being, 3. Transparency and accountability, 4. Community data ownership and control, 5. Effective and ethics-driven financing
21	Koskinen	2023	An Ethical Governance Model for Data Economy Ecosystems	Finland	1. Rational discourse, 2. Legal rules, 3. Precise legislation
22	Ou & Gao	2023	Safety Risks and Ethical Governance of Biomedical Applications in Synthetic Biology	China	1. Human-centered principle, 2. Attention to sustainability, 3. Regular oversight, 4. Transparency
23	Finn & Schiltz	2023	Developing Ethical Governance	United States	1. Efforts to remedy past ethical violations, 2. Anticipation of future challenges and opportunities, 3. Future forecasting
24	Govender	2022	A Conceptual Model for Enhancing Ethical Governance in Local Government with Reference to Newcastle Municipality	South Africa	1. Transparency, 2. Sustainable compliance with legal frameworks
25	Branger	2021	Ethical Governance and Responsibility in Digital Medicine: The Case of Artificial Intelligence	—	1. Transparency, 2. Justice and fairness, 3. Accountability, 4. Data privacy and security, 5. Human-centeredness and human control, 6. Monitoring
26	Gaffar & Yasmin	2020	Ethical Governance: Insights from an Islamic Perspective and an Empirical Study	United Kingdom	1. Social justice, 2. Accountability before God and society, 3. Consultation (Shura) in decision-making, 4. Ethical oversight



27	Winfield & Jirotko	2018	Ethical Governance is Essential for Building Trust in Robotics and AI Systems	United Kingdom	1. Ethical compliance, 2. Attention to standards, 3. Regulation, 4. Responsible research and innovation, 5. Public participation, 6. Trust-building, 7. Transparency
28	Goncharov & MacDonald	2016	Ethical Governance: New Brunswick–Otago Research Ethics Declaration 2016	Canada and New Zealand	1. Prospective ethical review, 2. Specialization of ethics committees, 3. Professional governance
29	Borucki et al.	2014	Ethical Governance in Biobanks Linked to Electronic Health Records	Croatia	1. Informed consent, 2. Privacy and confidentiality, 3. Transparency and accountability, 4. Ethical oversight, 5. Equity and justice, 6. Ethics education
30	Emmerich	2013	Ethics and Ethical Governance in the Social Sciences	United Kingdom	1. Attention to ethical imperialism, 2. Accountability, 3. Formation of decisions in ethics committees
31	Osifo et al.	2012	Effects of Ethical Governance on Public Trust	Ghana, Cameroon, Nigeria	1. Public trust, 2. Accountability, 3. Transparency, 4. Ethical regulatory mechanisms
32	Oghandia	2010	Democracy and Ethical Governance: The Nigerian Dilemma	Nigeria	1. Fair resource allocation, 2. Accountability, 3. Employment of political elites, 4. Anti-corruption efforts
33	Owot	2010	Ethical Governance and Happiness in Nations	127 Countries	1. Regulatory quality, 2. Rule of law, 3. Corruption control, 4. Political stability and absence of violence, 5. Accountability

**Table 5. Factors Influencing Ethical Governance**

Row	Researchers	Year	Country	Title	Research Method	Influencing Factor
1	Seyyed Bagheri	2025	Iran	Political Patience and Its Functions in Ethical Governance in Islam	Descriptive–analytical	Political patience
2	Berenji Maryan et al.	2023	Iran	Presenting a Transparency Model in the Islamic Consultative Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Iran with Regard to the Concept of Ethical Governance	Thematic analysis	Transparency
3	Elefpour et al.	2023	Iran	The Role of Social Functions in Ethical Governance and Public Welfare in Iran	Quantitative	Social functions
4	Omidi & Arbabi	2023	Iran	Examining the Effect of Organizational Legitimacy on Ethical Governance: Analyzing the Mediating Role of Ethical Leadership Style (Case Study: Lorestan Province Governor's Office)	Quantitative	Organizational legitimacy and ethical leadership style
5	Akbari Goharshad & Azari	2021	Iran	An Ethical Model of Just Governance Based on Ethnic Diversity (Case Study: Iran)	Quantitative	Attention to ethnic diversity
6	Molaei et al.	2019	Iran	The Relationship between Ethical Leadership and Good and Ethical Governance in Governmental Organizations	Quantitative	Ethical leadership (ethics-orientation, fairness, role transparency, and power sharing)
7	Aghaei	2018	Iran	The Role of Islamic Ethics in Ethical Governance	Descriptive	Islamic ethics
8	Seyyed Bagheri	2016	Iran	The Functions of Justice in Ethical Governance from the Perspective of Islamic Political Thought	Qualitative	Justice, realization of citizens' rights, avoidance of despotism, prudence in political behavior, and moderate conduct
9	Al-Aasouli et al.	2025	Jordan	The Impact of Digital Transformation on Financial Transparency: The Mediating Role of Good Governance	Quantitative	Digital transformation
10	Matsiliza	2024	Africa	The Role of Strategic Leadership in Promoting Ethical Governance	Descriptive	Strategic leadership
11	Asair	2024	Somalia	Assessing the Impact of Social Accountability on Ethical Governance: A Case Study of Puntland, Somalia	Qualitative	Social accountability

12	Roehl et al.	2023	Denmark	Inside Algorithmic Bureaucracy: Unraveling Optimal Decision-Making and Ethical Governance	Quantitative	Optimal decision-making
13	Gelgari et al.	2022	Ethiopia	Ethical Leadership, Ethical Governance, and Employee Commitment: Testing a Moderated Mediation Model in Ethiopian Public Universities	Quantitative	Ethical leadership
14	Vasilieva	2021	104 Selected Countries	The Impact of Digitalization and the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Anti-Money Laundering Scenario: A Data Mining Analysis for Ethical Governance	Quantitative	Digitalization, anti-money laundering
15	Al-Masri	2021	Palestine	Transformational Leadership Behaviors in Promoting Ethical Governance in the Palestinian Public Sector	Quantitative	Transformational leadership
16	Omeh	2020	Pakistan	E-Government as a Roadmap to Ethical Governance: The Case of Digital Punjab	Descriptive	E-government
17	Daga et al.	2018	Nigeria	The Impact of Corruption on Ethical Governance in Nigeria	Quantitative	Corruption
18	Rothstein	2017	Sweden	Corruption, Institutional Trust, and Ethical Governance: Understanding the Vicious Cycle. Cambridge University Press	Theoretical and comparative	Corruption
19	Afiah & Azwari	2015	Indonesia	The Effect of Implementing the Government Internal Control System (GICS) on the Quality of Local Government Financial Reporting and Its Implications for the Principles of Ethical Governance	Descriptive-explanatory	Government internal control system and quality of financial reporting
20	Alfira & Andrianto	2015	Indonesia	Evaluating the Correlation between E-Government and Ethical Governance	Quantitative	E-government
21	Grimes	2013	Sweden	Examining the Link between Civil Society and Ethical Governance	Quantitative	Civil society
22	Javid	2010	Pakistan	Corruption and Its Profound Impact on Ethical Governance in Pakistan	Quantitative	Corruption

Table 6. Factors Affected by Ethical Governance

Row	Researchers	Year	Country	Title	Research Method	Affected Factor
1	Zohiri et al.	2022	Iran	Examining the Impact of Good Governance Dimensions on Sustainable Development in Selected Countries (OPEC Plus Oil-Producing Countries)	Quantitative	Sustainable development
2	Sheikhi Delfan et al.	2020	Iran	Explaining the Effect of Ethical Leadership on Innovative Performance, Considering the Mediating Role of Ethical Governance in the Departments of Sport and Youth in Western Iran	Quantitative	Innovative performance
3	Nasirkhani	2014	Iran	The Impact of Good Governance as an Ethical Indicator on Economic Growth	Mixed-method	Economic growth
4	Ashayeri & Abbasi	2016	Iran	The Executive Mechanism of Judicial Justice in the Thought of Imam Ali with Emphasis on Islamic Governance	Descriptive	Judicial justice
5	Yang et al.	2025	China	Key Points of Ethical Governance in the Clinical Application of Emerging Biomedical Technologies	Descriptive	Application of emerging technologies
6	Al-Aasouli et al.	2025	Jordan	The Impact of Digital Transformation on Financial Transparency: The Mediating Role of Good Governance	Quantitative	Financial transparency
7	Kaswayo et al.	2024	Indonesia	Examining the Relationship between Ethical Governance and the Corruption Perceptions Index	Quantitative	Corruption Perceptions Index
8	Haryanti et al.	2024	Indonesia	Implementing Ethical Governance and Its Role in Improving Public Service Performance in	Quantitative	Improvement of public services

9	Drăsa	2024	Romania	Budget Transparency and Ethical Governance for Human Development and Citizen Welfare: New Empirical Evidence from the European Union	Quantitative	Human development and citizen welfare
10	Al-Saadi & Khedri	2024	Oman	The Dynamic Relationship between Ethical Governance, Fiscal Policy, and Sustainable Economic Growth in Oman	Quantitative	Fiscal policy and sustainable economic growth
11	Muzaffar et al.	2024	Pakistan	Ethical Governance and Citizens' Trust in Pakistan	Quantitative	Citizens' trust
12	Sari et al.	2023	Indonesia	The Impact of Ethical Governance on the Quality of Public Management Decision-Making	Descriptive	Quality of decision-making
13	Bachin	2022	Vietnam	The Impact of Ethical Governance on Public Satisfaction with Administrative Public Services in Vietnam	Quantitative	Public satisfaction
14	Khan et al.	2022	Six Selected South Asian Countries	The Impact of Ethical Governance on Economic and Environmental Sustainability: An Empirical Analysis for South Asian Economies	Quantitative	Economic sustainability and environmental sustainability
15	Mungiu et al.	2019	Selected European Countries	The Role of Ethical Governance in the Economic Development of Central and Eastern Europe	Quantitative	Economic development
16	Helliwell	2018	Selected Countries	Empirical Links between Ethical Governance and National Well-Being	Quantitative	National well-being
17	Al-Jammal et al.	2018	Middle Eastern and North African Countries	Ethical Governance and Social Responsibility in Middle Eastern and North African Countries	Quantitative	Social responsibility
18	Momena et al.	2016	Pakistan	Examining the Impact of Ethical Governance on Citizens' Trust in Pakistan	Quantitative	Citizens' trust
19	Helliwell	2014	157 Selected Countries	Ethical Governance and National Well-Being: What Links Do They Have?	Mixed-method	National well-being
20	Engel	2015	Western Balkan Countries	The Impact of Ethical Governance on the Economic Development of Western Balkan Countries	Qualitative–quantitative	Economic development
21	Gori	2015	—	Ethical Governance as a Competitive Advantage: Creating Value through Responsible Business	Descriptive	Competitive advantage
22	Mungiu-Pippidi	2015	European Union	The Quest for Ethical Governance: How Societies Develop Corruption Control	Qualitative	Corruption control
23	Osifo	2012	Nigeria	Effects of Ethical Governance on Public Trust: A Comparative Analysis of Anti-Corruption Policies and Practices in Nigeria, Ghana, and Cameroon	Mixed-method	Public trust
24	Sebudu	2010	Africa	The Impact of Ethical Governance on Development and Poverty Reduction in Africa	Quantitative	Poverty reduction

### Step Five: Analysis and Integration of the Identified Factors

After removing duplicate factors from the set of reviewed articles, 82 components for ethical governance, 19 factors affected by ethical governance, and 21 factors influencing ethical governance were identified. In this study, open coding was used to analyze and integrate the qualitative findings. For this purpose, all factors extracted from the studies were initially treated as open codes. Then, considering the meaning of each code, they were grouped under similar concepts. In this way, the concepts (themes) of the study were formed. In the tables below, the factors and outcomes are briefly presented.

**Table 7. Components and Dimensions of Ethical Governance**

Row	Dimensions Extracted from Articles	Researcher's Classification (Dimensions)
1	Transparency	Dimension of institutional structure and rule of law
2	Political stability	Dimension of institutional structure and rule of law
3	Justice orientation	Dimension of justice and fairness
4	Corruption control	Dimension of institutional structure and rule of law

5	Quality of enacted laws	Dimension of institutional structure and rule of law
6	Reporting	Dimension of responsibility and accountability
7	Planning	Dimension of human development and welfare
8	Involving citizens in decision-making	Dimension of participation and social interaction
9	Ethical leadership	Dimension of ethical leadership and competence
10	Citizen-centeredness	Dimension of human development and welfare
11	Auditing	Dimension of responsibility and accountability
12	Interaction-orientation	Dimension of participation and social interaction
13	Openness to criticism	Dimension of responsibility and accountability
14	Work discipline	Dimension of ethical leadership and competence
15	Expertise and commitment	Dimension of ethical leadership and competence
16	Conflict management	Dimension of ethical leadership and competence
17	Innovation in governance	Dimension of ethical leadership and competence
18	Supervision and leadership	Dimension of ethical leadership and competence
19	Rule of law	Dimension of institutional structure and rule of law
20	Honesty	Dimension of ethical leadership and competence
21	Informed compliance of citizens	Dimension of participation and social interaction
22	Conduct and character of rulers	Dimension of ethical leadership and competence
23	Institutions and structures	Dimension of institutional structure and rule of law
24	Attention to environmental factors	Dimension of institutional structure and rule of law
25	Social communication	Dimension of participation and social interaction
26	Dissemination of values	Dimension of fundamental and moral values
27	Prevention of power monopoly	Dimension of institutional structure and rule of law
28	Financial transparency	Dimension of institutional structure and rule of law
29	Information transparency	Dimension of institutional structure and rule of law
30	Dignity	Dimension of justice and fairness
31	Rationality	Dimension of fundamental and moral values
32	Empathy	Dimension of ethical leadership and competence
33	Rejection of arrogance and preservation of dignity	Dimension of fundamental and moral values
34	Attention to the livelihood of subordinates	Dimension of justice and fairness
35	Education and training	Dimension of human development and welfare
36	Merit-based appointments	Dimension of ethical leadership and competence
37	Behavioral skills	Dimension of ethical leadership and competence
38	Spiritual skills	Dimension of ethical leadership and competence
39	Sovereignty of God's religion	Dimension of fundamental and moral values
40	Attention to human rights	Dimension of justice and fairness
41	Elitism	Dimension of ethical leadership and competence
42	Economic development	Dimension of human development and welfare
43	Social development	Dimension of human development and welfare
44	Human development	Dimension of human development and welfare
45	Reliance on God (tawakkul)	Dimension of fundamental and moral values
46	Servitude	Dimension of fundamental and moral values
47	God-consciousness (taqwa)	Dimension of fundamental and moral values
48	Martyrdom-seeking	Dimension of fundamental and moral values
49	Belief in legitimacy (of the divine message)	Dimension of fundamental and moral values
50	Conflict resolution	Dimension of participation and social interaction
51	Kindness	Dimension of ethical leadership and competence
52	Avoidance of elitist luxury during tenure	Dimension of fundamental and moral values
53	Religiosity	Dimension of fundamental and moral values
54	Consultation with pious and knowledgeable individuals	Dimension of participation and social interaction
55	Fair performance evaluation	Dimension of justice and fairness
56	Patience	Dimension of ethical leadership and competence
57	Humility	Dimension of ethical leadership and competence
58	Moderation and temperance	Dimension of justice and fairness
59	Meritocracy	Dimension of justice and fairness
60	Leniency	Dimension of ethical leadership and competence
61	Ethical oversight	Dimension of fundamental and moral values
62	Observance of ethical standards	Dimension of fundamental and moral values
63	Selection of transparency mechanisms	Dimension of institutional structure and rule of law
64	Participatory legislation	Dimension of participation and social interaction
65	Effective and regular oversight	Dimension of institutional structure and rule of law
66	Ethical policies and guidelines	Dimension of fundamental and moral values
67	Training and empowerment	Dimension of human development and welfare

68	Focus on human well-being	Dimension of human development and welfare
69	Rational discourse	Dimension of participation and social interaction
70	Regular oversight	Dimension of fundamental and moral values
71	Efforts to remedy past ethical errors and violations	Dimension of responsibility and accountability
72	Future foresight	Dimension of human development and welfare
73	Sustainable compliance with legal frameworks	Dimension of institutional structure and rule of law
74	Social justice	Dimension of justice and fairness
75	Attention to standards	Dimension of institutional structure and rule of law
76	Responsible research and innovation	Dimension of responsibility and accountability
77	Professional governance	Dimension of ethical leadership and competence
78	Ethics education	Dimension of fundamental and moral values
79	Attention to ethical imperialism	Dimension of fundamental and moral values
80	Formation of decisions in ethics committees	Dimension of institutional structure and rule of law
81	Design of ethical mechanisms	Dimension of institutional structure and rule of law
82	Fair allocation of resources	Dimension of justice and fairness

**Table 8. Outcomes (Affected Factors) of Ethical Governance**

Row	Factors Extracted from Articles	Researcher's Classification
1	Innovative performance	Economic dynamism and growth
2	Economic growth	Economic integrity and transparency
3	Judicial justice	Economic integrity and transparency
4	Application of emerging technologies	Economic dynamism and growth
5	Financial transparency	Economic integrity and transparency
6	Corruption perception	Economic integrity and transparency
7	Improvement of public services	Work ethic and service provision
8	Human development	Sustainable development and societal resilience
9	Citizen welfare	Sustainable development and societal resilience
10	Trust	Work ethic and service provision
11	Quality of decision-making	Economic integrity and transparency
12	Public satisfaction	Sustainable development and societal resilience
13	Economic sustainability	Sustainable development and societal resilience
14	Environmental sustainability	Sustainable development and societal resilience
15	Economic development	Economic dynamism and growth
16	Social responsibility	Work ethic and service provision
17	Competitive advantage	Economic dynamism and growth
18	Corruption control	Integrity and transparency of the economic system
19	Poverty reduction	Sustainable development and societal resilience

**Table 9. Factors Influencing Ethical Governance**

Row	Extracted Factors	Researcher's Classification
1	Political patience	Political and governmental factors
2	Transparency	Structural and institutional factors
3	Social functions	Socio-cultural factors
4	Legitimacy	Structural and institutional factors
5	Ethical leadership	Leadership and managerial factors
6	Attention to ethnic diversity	Socio-cultural factors
7	Islamic ethics	Socio-cultural factors
8	Justice	Socio-cultural factors
9	Avoidance of despotism	Political and governmental factors
10	Moderate behavior	Socio-cultural factors
11	Digital transformation	Innovative and technological factors
12	Strategic leadership	Leadership and managerial factors
13	Social accountability	Socio-cultural factors
14	Optimal decision-making	Leadership and managerial factors
15	Anti-money laundering efforts	Structural and institutional factors
16	Transformational leadership	Leadership and managerial factors
17	E-government	Innovative and technological factors
18	Corruption	Political and governmental factors
19	Internal control system	Structural and institutional factors
20	Quality of financial reporting	Structural and institutional factors
21	Civil society	Socio-cultural factors

**Step Six: Quality Control**

In this study, to validate the extracted concepts from the reviewed studies, the researchers compared their assessments with those of another expert (holding a PhD in Public Administration and specializing in organizational behavior). The data obtained were analyzed using SPSS 19 to calculate Cohen's Kappa coefficient.

**Table 10. Kappa Coefficient Calculations for Influencing and Affected Factors of Ethical Governance**

Index	Value	Approx. Standard Error	Approx. t-value	Approx. Significance
Kappa measurement	1.000	0.000	4.895	0.000
Number of valid cases	40 factors	0	—	—

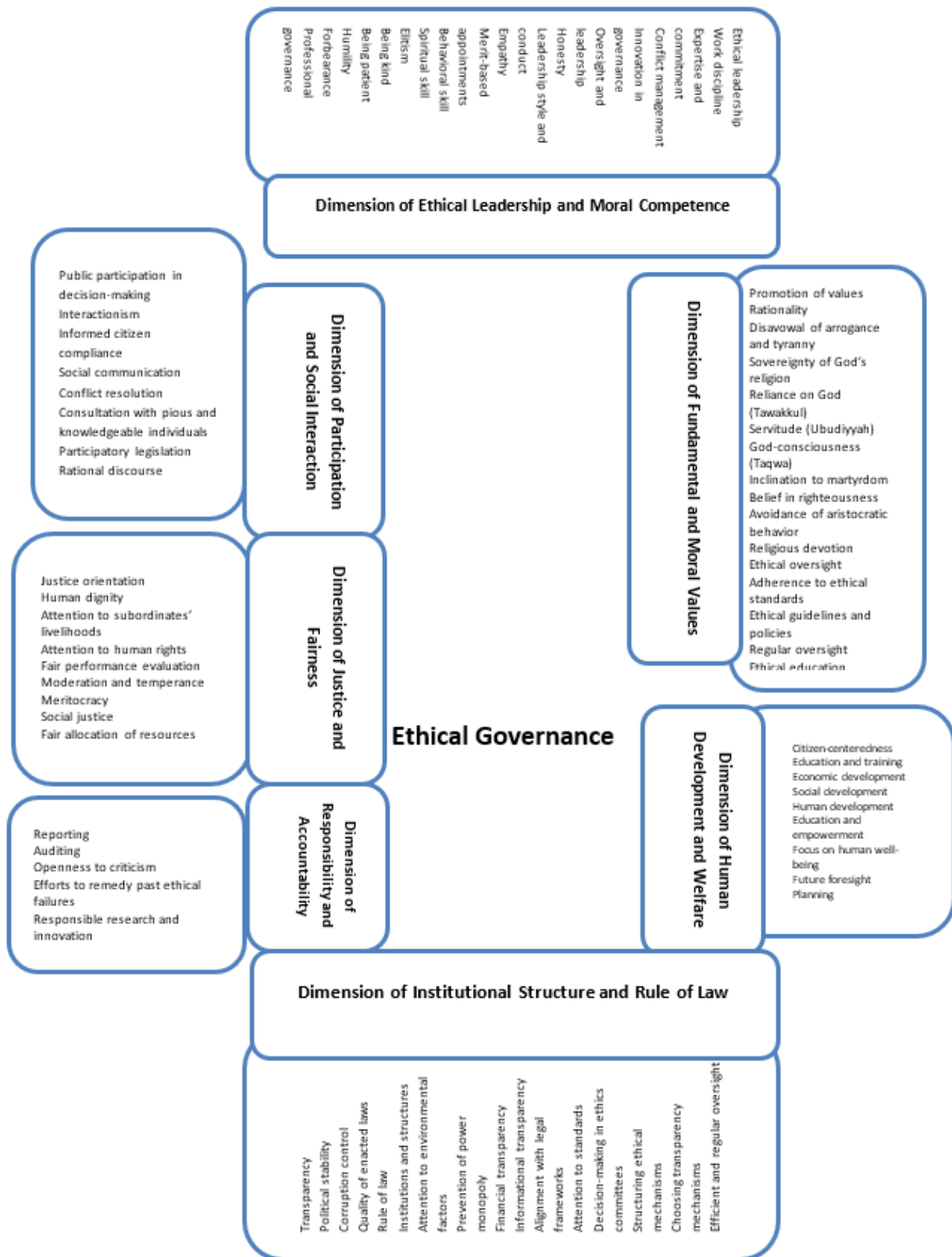
**Table 11. Kappa Coefficient Calculations for Dimensions of Ethical Governance**

Index	Value	Approx. Standard Error	Approx. t-value	Approx. Significance
Kappa measurement	1.000	0.000	8.392	0.000
Number of valid cases	82 factors	0	—	—

The results show that the Kappa coefficient for the influencing and affected factors of ethical governance equals 1.000, and for its dimensions also equals 1.000. According to the table below, this value indicates an excellent level of agreement.

#### **Step Seven: Presentation of Results**

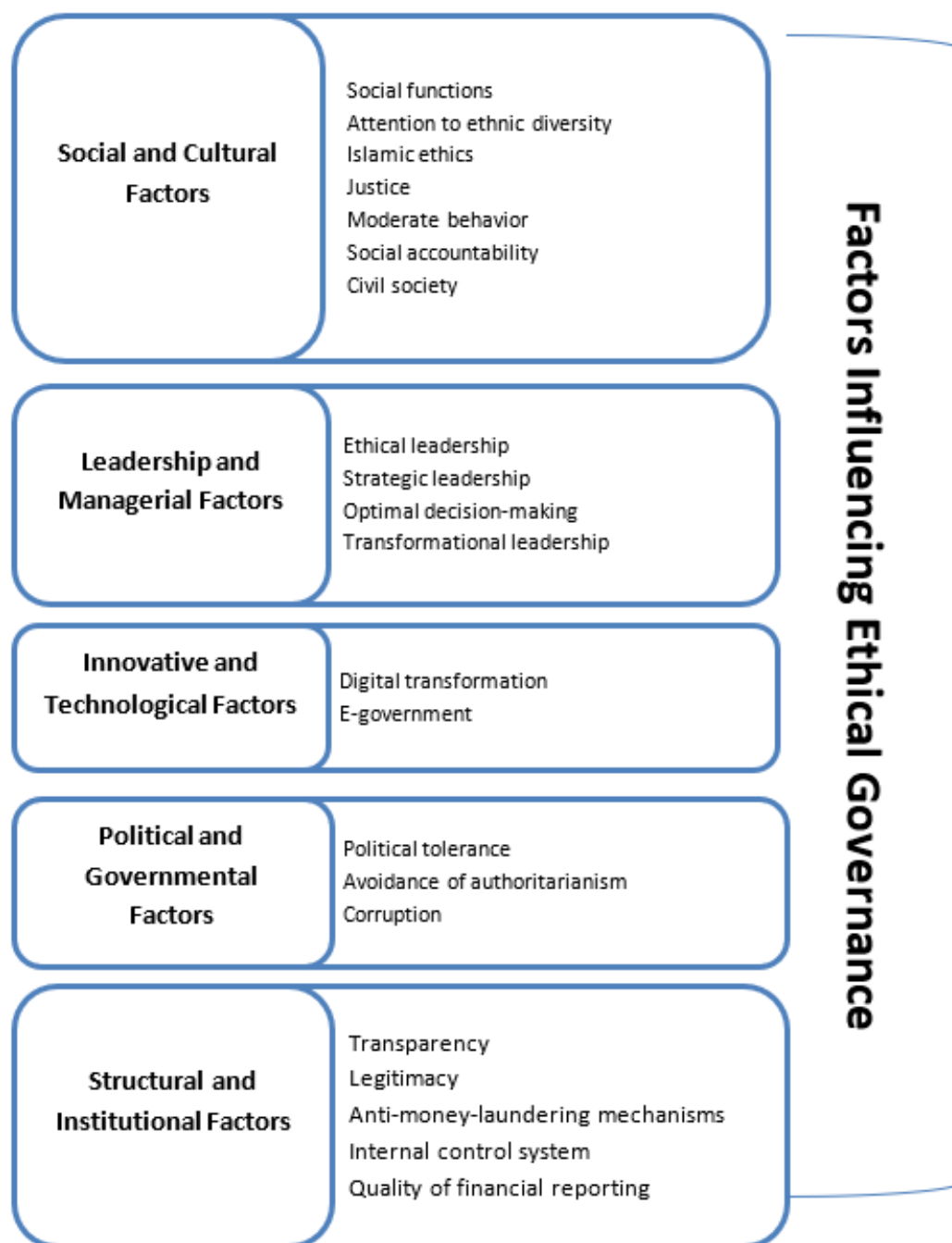
a) After the final review, 82 components related to ethical governance were identified and categorized into seven dimensions. These are presented in the diagram below.



**Figure 3. Dimensions and Components of Ethical Governance**

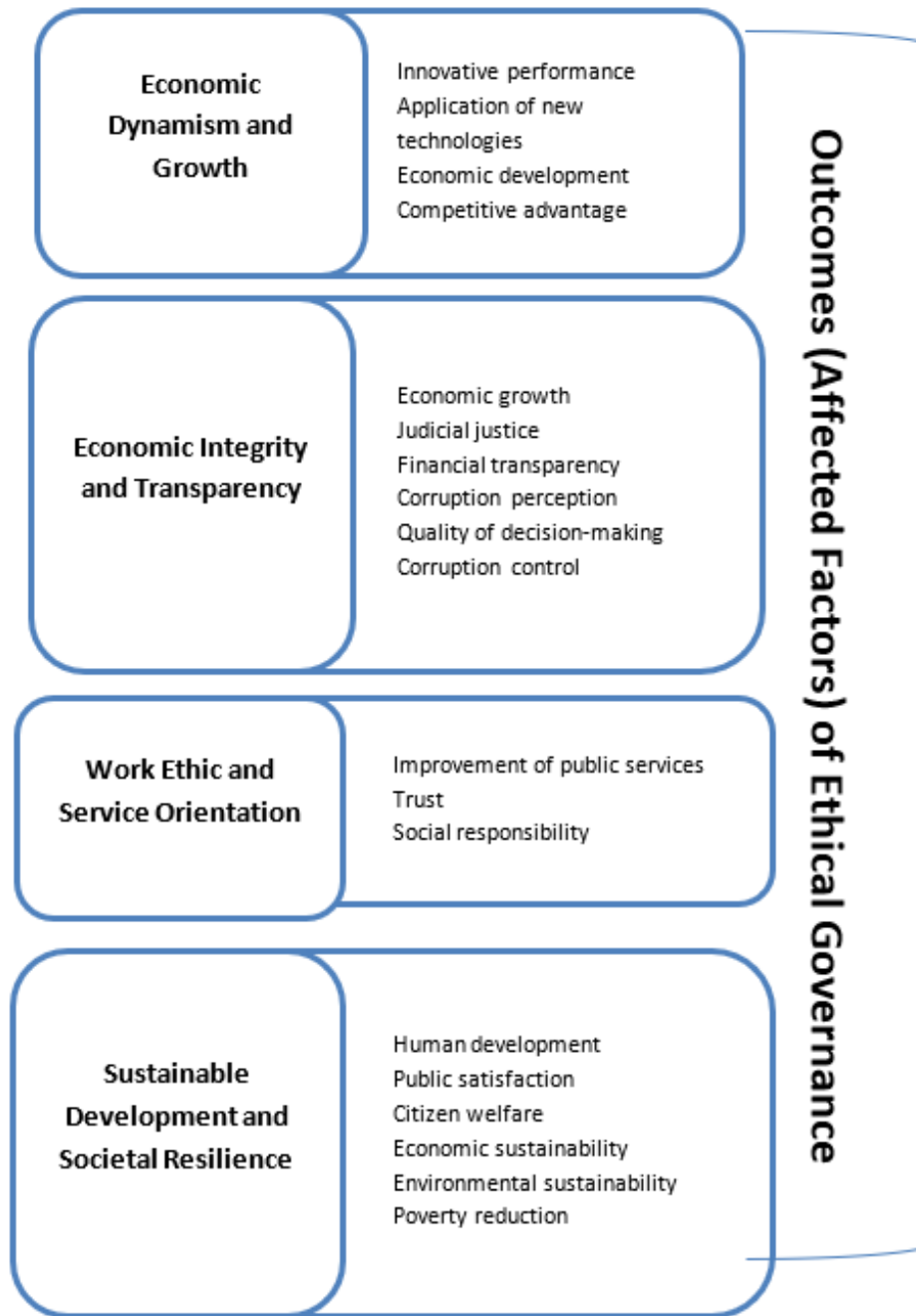
b) After the final review, 21 influencing factors on ethical governance were identified and categorized into five dimensions. These are presented in the diagram below.





**Figure 4. Factors Influencing Ethical Governance**

c) After the final review, 19 outcomes (affected factors) of ethical governance were identified and categorized into four dimensions. These are presented in the diagram below.



**Figure 5. Factors Affected by Ethical Governance**

## Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to synthesize the existing body of qualitative and conceptual scholarship on ethical governance in order to identify its core components, the major antecedent factors influencing it, and the key societal and institutional outcomes it produces. The findings reveal 82 components, 21 influencing factors, and 19 affected outcomes, organized into a multidimensional model. This section discusses each set of results and situates them within the broader literature, demonstrating consistency with and divergence from prior research as represented in the reference corpus.

The results show that ethical governance is constituted by a comprehensive set of normative, managerial, structural, participatory, and developmental components. These include transparency, political stability, justice orientation, corruption control, participatory decision-making, ethical leadership, responsible reporting, merit-based appointments, public empathy, rational discourse, effective oversight, and commitment to human dignity. These findings closely align with earlier structural models of ethical governance in Iranian governmental institutions, which similarly emphasized corruption control, quality of laws, and participatory structures as key pillars (36). The prominence of ethical leadership patterns—including honesty, humility, fairness, conflict management, and responsible power-sharing—reinforces the argument made in studies on ethical leadership in governmental organizations that leadership constitutes the most actionable mechanism for embedding ethical governance in daily administrative practice (41). Parallel results in Palestinian public institutions further emphasize that transformational leadership contributes significantly to internalizing ethical standards among civil servants (42).

The results also confirm the central importance of moral and religious values—such as God-consciousness, rejection of arrogance, avoidance of authoritarianism, and emphasis on justice—as foundational dimensions of ethical governance. These findings resonate strongly with Islamic governance studies grounded in Nahj al-Balagha and Qur'anic thought, which conceptualize ethical governance not merely as a technical procedure but as a moral and spiritual responsibility (28, 31, 32). The emphasis on moderation, empathy, humility, and consultative behavior closely reflects the qualities associated with ethical rulers in Islamic political thought (29, 33). These components show that ethical governance—particularly in socio-religious contexts—must be grounded not only in institutional design but also in moral formation and ethical character development.

A further major component identified is the need for robust institutional mechanisms such as clear rules, effective oversight, transparency structures, and accountable reporting systems. This aligns with the international literature on research ethics governance, where transparency, rulemaking, and institutional clarity are essential to preventing epistemic injustice and procedural arbitrariness (22, 24). Comparable findings in biobank governance highlight the importance of informed consent, confidentiality safeguards, and ethically accountable oversight systems (27). In the field of AI and robotics, transparency and traceability are similarly emphasized as critical safeguards to ensure responsibility and prevent algorithmic harm (5, 48). The convergence across governance domains—public administration, research ethics, digital systems, and biomedicine—suggests that transparency and accountability constitute universal ethical governance components.

The influencing factors identified in this study—including political tolerance, civil society participation, legitimacy, social functions, transformational leadership, digital transformation, and anti-money-laundering mechanisms—support the findings of multiple empirical studies across different regions. For example, political tolerance as a factor reflects earlier theoretical work on justice and anti-authoritarianism in Islamic ethical governance (46). The role of transparency and financial reporting quality echoes findings in digital accounting and public financial management studies in Jordan and the European Union, which showed that digital transformation and budget transparency significantly enhance the ethical quality of governance systems (11, 51). The relevance of transformational and strategic leadership in shaping ethical governance outcomes is consistent with African studies emphasizing leadership as a catalyst for institutional integrity and ethical conduct (43, 44).

Digital transformation—one of the strongest influencing factors—mirrors global findings showing that e-government initiatives enhance procedural integrity, reduce corruption opportunities, and increase access to transparent information (16, 17). This supports the argument that ethical governance is increasingly inseparable

from technological capacity. At the same time, digitalization poses risks, particularly in sectors employing artificial intelligence. Studies on AI governance stress the necessity of participatory rulemaking, clear accountability pathways, and community-centered data ownership to ensure ethical outcomes (6, 18, 50). These results confirm that ethical governance in the twenty-first century must incorporate not only human-centered leadership principles but also technologically aware and forward-looking frameworks.

Civil society and social accountability were also identified as key influencing factors. These findings reflect prior empirical work showing that community participation, public scrutiny, and societal engagement reduce corruption and strengthen legitimacy (2, 47). Studies in African municipalities and Indonesian contexts similarly conclude that ethical governance emerges through ongoing interaction between state and society, not solely through top-down institutional reforms (13, 55). This confirms the multi-actor nature of ethical governance.

Turning to the *outcomes*, the study found that ethical governance contributes to innovative performance, economic growth, financial transparency, judicial justice, reduced corruption, improved public services, human development, citizen welfare, national trust, public satisfaction, and socioeconomic sustainability. These results mirror strong empirical evidence showing that good governance indicators are closely tied to economic growth, trust, and sustainable development in Pakistan, OPEC+ countries, and Western Balkan states (8-10). Digitalization studies further demonstrate that good governance contributes to more robust anti-money-laundering performance and reduced systemic corruption (52).

Trust emerges as a particularly significant outcome, reflecting prior cross-national studies showing that ethical governance directly strengthens institutional trust and reduces public cynicism (2, 14). The improvement of public service performance as an outcome is consistent with research conducted in Indonesia demonstrating that ethical governance enhances decision-making quality, service orientation, and accountability in public organizations (15, 55). The identification of sustainability and environmental responsibility as outcomes of ethical governance confirms findings in broader research showing that ethical decision-making fosters long-term ecological responsibility and intergenerational equity (12, 47).

The results also reveal strong connections between ethical governance and the integrity of economic systems. Financial transparency, reduction of corruption perception, higher quality financial reporting, and improved AML outcomes all align with findings in studies of digital transformation in accounting and internal control systems (4, 51, 52). These results suggest that ethical governance not only reflects moral considerations but also functions as a determinant of economic stability and systemic resilience.

The integration of results shows that ethical governance is a multilayered construct, shaped by socio-cultural, institutional, political, technological, and leadership dynamics. These factors interact to influence a comprehensive set of moral, administrative, developmental, and participatory components. Their interaction, in turn, produces societal and institutional outcomes that encompass economic, social, technological, and civic dimensions. The synthesis demonstrates the value of meta-analytic approaches in identifying systemic patterns across highly diverse research traditions—from Islamic humanities and public administration to digital governance, international ethics, and biomedical innovation.

Overall, the discussion confirms that ethical governance is not simply an administrative ideal but a practical, empirically validated framework that enhances human well-being, institutional trust, and sustainable development across diverse national and sectoral contexts (6, 21, 33). These findings affirm the necessity of embedding ethical considerations into governance design, leadership practices, digital innovation, and societal engagement.

This study, while comprehensive, is limited by the qualitative and interpretive nature of meta-synthesis. Although the selected studies span diverse geographic and institutional contexts, some regions and sectors remain underrepresented, potentially constraining global generalizability. The analysis also depends on the quality and depth of prior publications, meaning that conceptual biases or methodological inconsistencies present in earlier studies may indirectly influence the synthesized findings. Additionally, because governance paradigms evolve rapidly—especially in technologically advanced sectors—the immediacy of emerging issues such as generative AI, algorithmic regulation, and data sovereignty may surpass what current literature captures. Lastly, the synthesis focuses on published materials, excluding unpublished dissertations or gray literature that might contain relevant insights.

Future research should empirically validate the synthesized ethical governance model through multi-country comparative studies and quantitative structural modeling. Scholars should explore ethical governance mechanisms in rapidly evolving technological environments, especially in generative AI, cyber-security governance, and high-risk automated decision systems. Further studies should examine the lived experiences of public sector employees, citizens, and vulnerable groups to understand how ethical governance is enacted or obstructed in practice. Longitudinal research could track the impact of ethical governance reforms over time, while experimental and simulation-based studies could test causal pathways between influencing factors and governance outcomes. Integrating indigenous, religious, and culturally specific ethical frameworks with universal governance principles would also enrich theoretical diversity.

Organizations should embed ethical governance into leadership development programs, institutional policies, and digital transformation strategies. Decision-makers should design transparent oversight systems, strengthen internal controls, and foster cultures that reward ethical behavior. Public institutions can enhance citizen trust by improving service quality, sharing information openly, and enabling participatory decision-making. Technological deployments, especially in AI and data-driven systems, should incorporate ethical guidelines, risk assessments, and human-centered accountability structures. Strengthening social accountability mechanisms, empowering civil society, and maintaining continual ethics education can help sustain ethical governance across organizational and societal levels.

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## Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

## Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

## Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

## Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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