



Civil Servant Behavior in Public Service Delivery: A Qualitative Case Study

Yosar Kardiat¹

¹Stie Tri Dharma Nusantara Makassar, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: Yosar Kardiat

Email: ysarakrdiat@gmail.com



Article Info

Article history:

Received 27 January 2026

Received in revised form 12

February 2026

Accepted 25 March 2026

Keywords:

Civil Servant Behavior

Public Service Delivery

Discretion

Organizational Culture

Leadership

JEL Classification:

H83, D73, J45, M14, M12

Abstract

This paper will be analyzing the dynamics of civil servant behavior in the delivery of services in Gowa Regency, Indonesia. It is based on the fact that service quality is determined not only by the formal procedures but also by how the civil servants interpret their jobs, react to their citizens, exercise discretion and work within the organizational and managerial environments. The study was based on a qualitative case study design and the population was selected purposely and included frontline civil servants, managerial officials, and community citizens who had direct exposure to the services of the population. The information was gathered via in depth interviews, non-participant observation and data analysis using themes, and was then analyzed using thematic analysis. The results show that the behavior of civil servants is created in a negotiation process between the official rules of administration and the realities that people face in their daily lives. The discretion was found to be empowering and dangerous, in a sense that it can make it more responsive, but it may bring inconsistencies where there is no mutual basis and certain direction. The research also found out that organizational culture, bureaucratic environment and leadership have a strong impact on service behavior in the sense that they influence coordination, communication, confidence and responsibility. In conclusion, the research finds that improvement of the public service must not be restricted to the change of procedures but also a favorable organizational culture and leadership that is able to maintain the same responsive and ethically based service behaviour.

Introduction

One of the most tangible ways in which citizens are exposed to the state in their everyday lives is still the public service delivery. It is often considered that government institutions are not only tested in policy documents, administrative frameworks, or procedure standards, but are also tested in the quality of the actual interaction in the course of citizen seeking assistance, clarifications, recognition, or resolving their needs. As far as this aspect is concerned, public service can never be a purely technical procedure of dealing with procedures or fulfilling demands, rather it is a social and institutional experience where state is manifested in the behavior of its representatives (Rivera & Knox, 2023; Heuberger, 2022; Demir, 2022; Daigneault, 2023). Therefore, the conduct of civil servants is placed at the core of the determination of the perception of accessibility, fairness, and credibility of the existence of the private institutions, or, on the contrary, their aloofness, inflexibility, and untrustworthiness. What citizens can remember about the service to the state is not so much a rule, but the way in which that rule is put across, understood, and exercised at the time when it is truly needed.

The problem is all the more important in the light of the local government where the administration of the state is not realized as an abstract constitutional form but as a series of daily contacts between the official administration and society (Egwuagu et al., 2024; Bhusal, 2023; Ryu, 2025; Wang et al., 2025). Local governments in the context of decentralized governance like in Indonesia have a rather heavy burden of trying to implement formal principles of governance into real-world practice of service provision. However, there is hardly an act of pure mechanical realisation of the idea of public service on the local level. The citizens do not show up at the government offices as homogenous administrative subjects but arrive with different degrees of knowledge, different social backgrounds, incomplete information, urgent personal needs and belong to different ranks of capability of going through the bureaucracy (Deja, 2024; Ryu, 2023; Shah, 2024). It is due to this that civil servants are not simply rule enforcers who enforce formal requirements in a dispassionate and impersonal manner. Instead, they are performers that should make sense of the institutional demands as they address the intricacy of human circumstances that often go beyond the orderliness of the procedural design. This interpretive space, in particular, is where the behavioral component of the public service acquires an analytical significance (Elias, 2024; Palumbo & Manesh, 2023; Wessels, 2023).

Debates about the enhancement of services in the public administration have been highly influenced by the issue of efficiency, accountability, procedural clarity, and institutional reform over a long period of time (Birdayanthi et al., 2025; Goldfinch, 2023; Ahmed, 2024; Wardiyanto et al., 2025). These issues are indispensable, as a functioning of any public service system does not take place without legal order, organizational discipline and consistency of the operations. Nevertheless, a strict emphasis on structures and procedures is likely to result in an under-exploration of the important part of service reality. The formal rules can specify the way service is to be given, but they have no complete explanation on why the same institutional set up can be perceived to be supportive in one context yet alienating in another. The applied sense of service rests on the discursive interactions of the officials with the members of the population as well as the ways in which they deal with possible misunderstanding or anger, how they elaborate the limitations of the procedures, and how they place themselves when procedures face socially complicated situations (Hou, 2023). That is, the institutional design does not deplete the service quality, but it is also created through the day-to-day conduct that imbues the design of an institution with a human nature.

In this perspective, the behavior of civil servants should not be considered only as the peripheral or interpersonal phenomenon. It has institutional implications per se, because it is mediating the nexus between administration and experience of the populace (Liu et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2026). Citizens do not relate to the state in the abstract legal sense; they do so through the tenor of explanatory discourse, through the willingness to give guidance, and patience when there is a lapse of understanding, and judgement when the formal procedure cannot be well adapted to the pragmatics of certain situations. An institution serving the general population might have clear rules and formalized procedures which, however, when implemented without any communication with the audience or perception of the specifics, might seem insensitive (Parycek et al., 2024; Hansen et al., 2024; Scott et al., 2024). On the other hand, even mundane administrative processes might be perceived as fair and significant when civil servants integrate procedural fidelity with responsiveness, coherence and respect. This point suggests that civil servants cannot simply be identified by their behaviour being simply an expression of personal style, but rather a major locus through which the legitimacy of the state can either be strengthened or undermined in the day to day running.

The salience of behaviour is also enhanced with the understanding of the conceptualisation of the public service as a space of tension and not a smooth administrative spectrum (Ahmed, 2024; Abdillahi, 2026). Civil servants are working within both the demands that are both valid at the same time and are usually hard to balance. They should be able to be lawful, consistent, and accountable, and at the same time answer the citizens in a manner that makes sense, is humane, and pragmatically helpful. In this interstitial space, discretion can easily be inevitable. Although rules give directions on the outline of operation, service-based follow-up situations often require judgment about the expression of need, taking care of part-readiness, upkeeping order without unnecessary inflexibility, and avoiding socially isolating service procedures. At the same time, these judgements are not shaped in an institutional vacuum; they are shaped by the larger environment within which civil servants work and this includes internal communication, office atmosphere, common norms, managerial direction and leadership praxis. Based on this, the research of civil servant behaviour should not only focus on the individual official but needs to include the organisational existence that moulds, nourishes and limits service behavior (Nekmahmud & Patwary, 2023).

These considerations may be deemed as especially topical in the context of the Gowa Regency since the local administrative constraints, civil pressure, organisational routine and managerial anticipation collide in arrangements that make public service a relatively fertile field where the empirical study of the enactment of governance may focus. Gowa Regency is not addressed in this research as a generic administrative place but another local environment where the practical nature of the public service can be viewed through everyday interactions between civil servants and society. This interest allows the study to leave the formal bureaucratic accounts behind, and instead, develop a more practical understanding of the experience of service in its lived form. It also allows an exploration of how civil servants make sense of their jobs, bargaining the requirements of process and responsiveness, judging within the institutional pressure, and acting by organisational cultures that can support or inhibit effective service behaviour. In this respect, the local environment is not only a background; it is the social and administrative landscape on which the dynamics of service behaviour can be observed.

It is against this background that the current study examines the dynamics of civil servant behaviour in the delivery of public service in the Gowa Regency with the help of a qualitative case study design. The study is not interested only in the existence of service procedures but the interpretation, execution and experience of service procedures in the daily administrative life. In particular, it studies the behaviour of civil servants in relation to the citizens, the role of discretion in service interactions, the way organisational culture and the bureaucratic environment shape patterns of behaviour and the impact of leadership and managerial practice in bringing about better service performance and future service orientation. The synthesis of these dimensions will hopefully add to further understanding of the field of public service management by acknowledging that the efficacy and legitimacy of the public institutions lie not in their formal structures but in the everyday behaviours that make these structures significant to the citizens they are meant to serve.

Methods

Research Design and Approach

The study carried a qualitative case study design to look into the dynamics of the civil servant behavior in the delivery of the services of the public in Gowa Regency. The qualitative approach was considered suited since the focus of investigation was not limited to administrative processes or institutional set-ups, but included the interpretation of roles by the

civil servants, their response towards the citizen, discretion, and the negotiation of expectations in the organization through the daily service routines. The case study design allowed substantively discussing these dynamics of behavior in the context of their genuine administrative environment, and thus developing a more situationalized perspective on how service delivery is influenced by the interplay of individual behavior, organizational culture, leadership practices, and local conditions of governance.

The choice of design was also based on the fact that the study was supposed to capture meanings, experiences, and interaction patterns, which cannot be explained entirely by quantitative measurement only. Delivery of the public services is not only an instrument of institutional regulations, but it is a process of interpretation and enactment of regulations by the local actors. This research therefore aimed to produce an empirical based insight into the behavior of civil servants with reference to the Gowa Regency highlighting the case study as a reference point.

Research Site and Context

The research was conducted in Gowa Regency, Indonesia, in a local government context where performance and behaviour of civil servants are highly associated with the delivery of the public service. Gowa regency provides a relevant background to the study since the local governments of Indonesia work under a decentralized administrative framework where frontline bureaucratic players has a great role on ensuring that official regulations are converted to practical service delivery. Under such circumstances the conduct of civil servants is very prominent in the relationship that exists between the state and the citizens especially in areas where service encounters are most common and direct.

The choice of Gowa Regency was on the basis of the fact that local administrative realities, organizational routines, and citizen demands all overlap in such a way that the area is suitable to investigate how the public service management is being practiced. This study, however, did not conceive of local government as an administrative circle, but instead, Gowa Regency as a socially and institutionally specific context, where organizational pressures, managerial expectations and practical demands of service delivery shape bureaucratic behavior.

Participants and Sampling

The subjects in this research were chosen purposely on grounds of their relevance to the research focus. They were the civil servants who are directly implicated in the delivery of services to the community, the management officials who oversee the processes of service delivery, and the community members, who had an experience of dealing with government services. This was to ensure that the views of the service providers and service users are captured hence facilitating a better comprehension of the behavioral dynamics that shape the results of service delivery.

The purposive sampling was used due to the fact that qualitative inquiry demands the use of participants who can give plentiful and valuable information on the phenomenon being studied. The civil servants were chosen based on their positions, duties, and direct involvement in service delivery, whereas the community members were chosen based on their experience as the beneficiaries of the public services in Gowa Regency. It was the combination of the groups of participants that enabled the study examine the civil servant behavior not only through an internal bureaucratic lens but also through the lens of citizens who are directly exposed to the effects of the civil servant behavior.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were gathered using in-depth interviews, non-participant observation and analyzing documents. The main approach to investigate the experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of the participants about the civil servant behavior in the framework of the public service delivery was in-depth interviews. The study used interview to get a feel of how civil servants perceived the role they had to play, and their reaction to the institutional constraints, and how the citizens would evaluate the quality of their interactions with the public service providers.

The observation was used to supplement the interview data with some real practices in the field in terms of service, patterns of interaction, and routines of administration. The method was significant as it helped the researcher to evaluate the statements of participants against what has happened in reality. The analysis of documents was also applied to assess the administrative documents, service standards, internal guidelines and regulations of the public services that might offer an institutional framework within which the behavior of the civil servants can be interpreted. These three methods were employed to enable the research to develop a stronger and conceptualized dataset.

Data Analysis

The information underwent thematic analysis. It was done in stages starting with transcription of interview transcripts, field notes and other pertinent documents and then, readings were repeated until one was familiar with the content. After this first immersion, the researcher derived salient utterances, expressions, and substantive patterns that were related to the conduct of civil servants, responsiveness to service, discretionary actions, ethical behaviour, organisational culture, and impact of leadership.

These initial codes were then grouped into larger codes which were further narrowed down into analytical themes that represented the main dynamics of behaviour in the delivery of the public services. The analysis process was not limited to the descriptive enumeration, it went further into the interpretative analysis seeking inter-themes associations and locating the developmental themes within the larger discourses of public administration and public service management. In this process, the research has tried to explain how, how and why behavioural patterns are formed, maintained and negotiated within the local government of Gowa Regency.

Result and Discussion

Civil Servant Behavior as a Negotiation Between Formal Rules and Citizen Needs

The results show that the character of the civil servants in the system of governmental provision of services in Gowa Regency is shaped in an ongoing process of interaction between the formal expectations of an administration and tangible realities presented by citizens into the realms of services. Officially, the public services are managed by regulations, procedural demands, and institutional guidelines that define the way services are to be offered. However, the empirical fact that was found in this research is that service delivery rarely occurs in such a way that it manifests procedural design to the full extent. Citizens come with different amounts of knowledge, different levels of readiness and with personal situations which often make administration processes difficult. Others are not fully documented, others do not fully understand the steps of the requirements, others come to the government bodies with demanding needs that cannot easily fit in the bureaucratic processes. In these kinds of situations, civil servants are not simply applying rules in a dead or mechanical way. Instead, they are constantly decoding institutional requirements based on social circumstances of the society that they operate. This results in a new image of behavior not being one of naive

obedience but a more complex phenomenon of the behavior being a negotiating zone between the normative world of bureaucracy and the real world of citizenship.

This bargain is most apparent in the immediacy of first hand contact between the citizen and the government. In these presentations, it is specifically that the state comes to express itself in a physical sense in the eyes of the populace. People do not experience governance as an abstract legal structure but they experience it in the gestures, the explanations, attitudes, and judgments of civil servants in the presence of which they stand. Therefore, the behavioral aspect of service cannot be simplified into an interpersonal style only, it is highly institutional in its aftermath, since the way the civil servants communicate and address a problem can strengthen or destroy the trust people have in the administrative control. The results were that numerous service interactions demand officials to do beyond verification of documents or receiving requests. They further need to put the language of the bureaucracy into comprehensible explanations, eliminate feelings of frustration, deal with misperceptions, and know how to maintain order in the procedures without making the institution irrelevant to the realities of the community. According to this, the process of providing the public services is never simply procedural, it is also interpretive, relational, and strongly affected by the ethical tensions present in actual human circumstances.

This dynamic is also important, as civil servants are often placed in the middle of two incompatible expectations that each can be considered legitimate. On the one hand, they are expected to maintain legality, uniformity, and administrative discipline, which are also characteristics of the integrity of the public institutions and the concept of the services that should be provided arbitrarily. Conversely, they are supposed to be responsive, human and socially intelligible to the citizens. The empirical evidence of the field indicates that the conflict between these expectations is not extraordinary and it is one of the normal administrative components. One of the civil servants has put it succinctly by writing about the practical difficulty of handling citizens where the circumstances seldom fit within the tidiness of procedure. As one participant remarked:

“The rules are already there, but in practice people come with many different conditions. Sometimes they do not understand the requirements, sometimes their documents are incomplete, so we cannot just say no and stop there. We have to explain, guide, and help them understand the process first.”

This assertion is eye-opening in the sense that it is seen that service work sustainability does not only rely on the rule cognizance, but also on an intentional communicative action and situational judgement. Although the bureaucratic procedure gives us the structural framework of action, the behavior of civil servants, however, makes the difference between making or making inaccessible the structural framework of action in practice.

On the part of the citizen, there is the same dynamic, but this time it is not an abstract governance question, but rather the immediate texture of the public service itself. The citizens are not usually opposed to the fact that there are rules; most citizens are familiar with the fact that the rules are needed and administrative order should be maintained. The challenge is not procedural, but the application of procedure with lack of guidance, patience and understanding of their situation. One of the members of the community summed up this sentiment in such a way that it goes to the very roots of relational basis of public service. As one informant explained,

“We understand that there are rules, but sometimes what people need is not only to be told what is missing. We need officers who want to explain properly and show us what to do next, not just send us away.”

This quote throws a lot of light on a critical aspect of administrative legitimacy. The citizens do not desire to be exempted by a procedure, but rather a method of engagement in which the procedure will be intelligible and navigable. Service, in this prospect, will not be considered only with reference to the acceptance or rejection of an application, but with regard to whether the institution will treat people as participants in a process, but not disruptions to bureaucratic routine.

The results also show that this negotiation has a strong dependence on unequal social and administrative capacity that citizens come with them. Government services are not met with equal confidence or familiarity by all the members of the public. There are those who are aware of what is required of them by the administration and can get through service processes with relative ease and those who rely on the good will of civil servants to be able to explain and guide. This inequity is important since it influences how open or closed to experience is the public institutions. When civil servants react with responsiveness and patience, a service process will become more legitimate and approachable. In cases where they receive formal education but not on the level of interpretation, the process may seem threatening, strict, and alienated. It then becomes evident that behaviour is not a decorative part of administration, it is one of the key process through which fairness is either realised or compromised. This is not merely the way to make public service fairer, as the same rules can apply to all citizens, but it is also made possible by the fact that the officials can implement these rules in a manner that acknowledges the unequal ability of citizens to navigate through bureaucratic systems.

Meanwhile, it is not proposed in the study that all types of flexibilities ought to be glorified blindly. The issue of negotiation between rules and needs of citizens is not necessarily solved in a way that would result in responsive service. At times, the civil servants withdraw themselves into strict compliance due to the fear of making procedural errors, or being blamed as making decisions which seem excessively accommodative. In this situation, official regulations may serve as a fortress and not a path toward a just administration. One of the participants gave an expression of this institutional pressure by noting,

“Sometimes we want to help more, but we also worry because if something is not exactly according to the procedure, we can be blamed later.”

This statement uncovers the fact that responsiveness is not an ingredient of personal goodwill but also an organisational context under which civil servants operate. In bureaucratic environments where fear or excessive caution is fostered by an organizational structure or a certain understanding of accountability, officials will opt to exercise procedural safety despite the fact that a more beneficial response can be achieved within the confines of the institution. This shows that the negotiation that occurs during service encounters is not simply an issue of personality, but rather an issue that is informed by broader organisational circumstances that determine the way civil servants understand the risk, responsibility, and acceptable behaviours.

That is why the research results encourage a more extensive interpretation of the essence of the management of the local government in terms of the public service. The administrative rules are also inevitable since they ensure consistency and institutional integrity. But the rules are not the only determinants of the experience that the state has on the populace. The key to such rules lies in the interpretation that civil servants do in daily experience, what makes such rules meaningful. The same process may be perceived as equal and supportive during a certain

encounter and at the same time remote and punitive during another depending on the way it is conveyed and executed. This highlights the reason the behavioural aspect of bureaucracy is what is worth the study of analysis. It is no incident to structure; it is one of the places where structure takes a reality.

The Gowa Regency civil servant behaviour in this perspective is an adaptive behavior that is placed in a field of tension as opposed to a rigid pattern of unthinking obedience. Civil servants are not entirely free to do as they please, and nor are they mere implementers of texts in the administration. They have to work in the realm where legality, ethics in service, communicative competence and societal expectation are in permanent conflict. The quality of service is thus not necessary only in the presence of rules, and as such, it is subject to the ability of the civil servants to negotiate the rules in the manner that would maintain both administrative order and social responsiveness. This makes behaviour the central focus of any serious conception of the way local governance is lived, perceived and judged in the daily service provision.

Discretion as an Enabling but Risk Prone Dimension of Service Delivery

The other significant trend that comes out of the field is the issue of discretion in daily service provision in the public. The empirical evidence suggests that discretion is not a standout or peripheral aspect of the bureaucratic activity; instead, it is more than integrated into the day-to-day activity of service interactions, especially where civil servants are required to address those situations that are not totally predetermined by the process. Despite having a general framework of action in administrative rules, they cannot give a comprehensive picture of cases as they happen in reality. Citizens come with different levels of urgency, different levels of preparedness and individual situations which may not always easily fit within the procedural expectations. Under such circumstances, civil servants are likely to be forced to make a decision on how to continue, how much to advise and how to keep the service flowing without necessarily fully compromising the integrity of the laid down rules. Discretion then no longer seems to be an infringement of administration, but of the practical means by which administration is rendered workable in practice.

The importance of discretion in particular is that, it exists in the gap between the formal regulation and the situation on the ground. It comes into service provision at the time when rules are not adequate to dictate action in a simple manner. And at these times, it is necessary that civil servants make use of personal judgment and experience and a sense of practicality. This is not to imply that they are operating outside the institution but see what the institution is doing. They make their decisions based on their interpretation of the responsibility, fairness, risk, and the needs of the citizens before them. Discretion can therefore not be an individual decision but a relational and institutional practice, which involves the ways in which civil servants manage uncertainty trying to stay within acceptable limits of behaviour. The results indicate that, in most instances, the service delivery process would be stalled or would be unnecessarily tough, in case civil servants purely apply the literal reading of the procedure in all scenarios.

Discretion acts as a facilitating force in service delivery in most cases. It enables civil servants to bend their own rules when the existing procedures fail to supply the needs of the citizens or conditions of the field. Some of the participants gave scenarios where officers were trying to find operational means of helping the citizens without betraying the spirit of the rules. This support was not expressed in the form of disregarding procedure, but rather making the procedure more manageable. This was explained by one of the civil servants who said,

“Sometimes the regulation is clear, but the situation in front of us is more complicated than what is written. If we only repeat the procedure without helping the person understand it, the service may not move at all.”

This assertion indicates that discretion usually has a positive role to play. It helps officials to get beyond administrative design and human complexity. Through this, the accessibility of the public services can be enhanced as the discretion will help to avoid bureaucracy being so stiff that it is non-responsive.

This flexible position is even more eminent when citizens face the problems that are not caused by bad faith, but by the lack of familiarity with the systems of administration. When this happens, there is a tendency by civil servants to exercise discretion over the extent to which they can make the process easy without necessarily being held accountable. The value of such judgment, as it is practically useful, was revealed by a citizen informant who related this experience in the way that puts emphasis on the practical usefulness of such judgment. As one participant noted,

“What helped me was not that the officer changed the rule, but that they explained which part could still be completed and what I needed to do first so I did not have to start everything from the beginning.”

This quote is significant in that it shows that discretion is not necessarily received with special treatment. It may also be undergone as a procedural counseling in an intelligent and caring manner. Citizens do not want the officials to abolish the rules, although they do appreciate attempts to make such rules less obscure and repressive in the reality.

Nevertheless, it can also be seen that discretion is not completely neutral. It is not only that the same flexibility which enables public services to be made more responsive can result in inconsistency when it is exercised without a well-defined sense of ethics or institution. It is at this point that discretion is risk-prone. This also can be different in different officers, differing between offices and even between situations due to its reliance on judgment. This is because citizens might end up receiving varied treatment of cases that seem to be the same and this results in confusion on what the institution fairly believes should be done or what is legitimate. Such inconsistency may undermine trust particularly where citizens feel results depend on who is in charge of the case rather than common service standards. This concern was raised by one participant in rather straightforward words, which he said,

“Sometimes people feel confused because one officer says it can still be processed, while another says it cannot. For the public, that difference can look unfair even if there are reasons behind it.”

This implies that discretion though imperative in many occasions, also creates a platform through which a fragile administrative legitimacy can be achieved.

Tension is further compounded in institutional settings where there is a lack of strong coordination or inevitable vague supervisory directions. Under these circumstances, civil servants can resort to personal interpretation, not possessing a rather common framework on the basis of which the decisions should be made. This does not imply that they are being irresponsible but maybe it is just because the organization lacks the mechanisms that will assist in balancing flexibility with accountability. The aftermaths are not insignificant though. In a place where there is no consistency in discretion, the citizens will feel that they are receiving service in a random manner. In the event that discretion is too closely guarded by the fear of making a mistake, services can become technically right and socially useless. The two

conditions demonstrate one and the same problem that discretion cannot be perceived as merely as an individual ability. It also is influenced by organizational culture, leadership and the extent to which institutions allow a discretion of responsibility without compromising on standards that can be known by the citizens as fair.

The other aspect which came out of the data is the emotional and professional burden that accompanies discretionary action. It is quite common that civil servants can realize their judgment has consequences. They are aware that assisting too little would result in making the service seem indifferent, whereas assisting too much would mean that they will be accused of not following the procedure. This predicament was captured by one of the officers in a manner that illustrates the uncomfortable frontline bureaucracy. The participant stated,

“We want to make the service easier for people, but we also have to be careful because if our decision is later questioned, we are the ones who must answer for it.”

This assertion shows that discretion does not only serve as a source of adaptation but also as a source of vulnerability. Civil servants do not make judgment out of a place of absolute freedom. They are working in the shade of institutionalization, personal accountability and the fact that what seems to be a practical solution today might a procedural issue tomorrow. This is the reason why there are officers who develop timidity even when they are aware that citizens need a facilitative response.

The new trend brings more refined interpretations to the service effectiveness. Service delivery is not promoted through limiting discretion by the sake of being consistent and neither is it enhanced by provoking unlimited discretion in the guise of being responsive. Both extremes entail risks. A system that leaves no place to judgment may grow cold, rigorous and socially detached and one that may be over dependent on individualized judgment can grow uneven, opaque and untrustworthy. The dilemma is in the way institutions develop the forms of discretion that are not arbitrary, but responsive, and not permissive, but guided by ethics, but not just situational. In this regard, discretion cannot be viewed as a bureaucratic compromise that has to be eradicated; but should be viewed as an unavoidable aspect of frontline governance which requires organisational backing, articulate service values and managerial principle.

In the framework of Gowa Regency, the results indicate that discretion enjoys a leading role in the determination of the experience of the citizens in the process of receiving public service. When practiced in a clear and responsible manner, it can assist in gaining access, maintaining continuity of service and make administration more humane. On the other hand, it may create suspicion and imbalance when it is not anchored by common standards and institutional confidence. This finding is important in that the issue of discretion is not marginal to service delivery; it is a point of critical junction at which the bureaucratic system expresses its practical nature. Discretion can make public service either a place of reflective responsiveness or a place of indecisiveness. Such a differentiation lies not just in the intent of individual civil servants, but also in the larger administrative context which educates them of the scope of their action, the rationale they must have to justify their action, and the end, optimally, of the kind of service that the institution should become.

Organizational Culture and Bureaucratic Environment as Behavioral Contexts

The results suggest that personal character, as well as individual ethics and technical competence, cannot be sufficient to explain the civil servant behaviour in the provision of the public service. Despite the fact that these factors are still relevant, the facts indicate that the behaviour of the civil servants is also strongly influenced by the organisational culture they work in and by the wider bureaucratic context that defines everyday life in the administration.

Service behaviour arises in a realms of institutional pressure where routines, internal demands, communication arrangements, supervisory behaviour and informal office customs keep on shaping the manner in which officials interpret and play their roles. What may be displayed by the masses as courtesy, coldness, patience, or inflexibility, may be a mere surface manifestation of an underlying organisational circumstance. Owing to this reason, the actions of the civil servants can be understood not just as a personal acting but as an organizational conclusion that depicts the moral and working climate of the office in itself.

This was particularly noticeable in how respondents gave accounts of the relationship between the internal office atmosphere and quality of the external service. As the results indicate, frontline service experiences are greatly affected by what happens behind the service desk. Once the office atmosphere is favorable, there is an easy flow of communication among employees and the allocation of responsibilities is easily understood and everyone is willing to help the citizens. Conversely, when tension, fragmentation or uncertainty are the hallmarks of the office environment, these internal states usually drift over into the realm of external relations. This relation was one which one civil servant has related in a very descriptive manner, when he explained,

“What happens at the front desk is strongly affected by what kind of office atmosphere we have inside. If the working environment is calm and supportive, we are more patient when serving people. If the office is tense, that tension also reaches the service room.”

The significance of this account is that service behaviour is not created at the point of contact only. It is rather pre-determined by the emotional and organisational atmosphere with the help of which civil servants perform their daily duties.

The research also discovered that organisational culture is normally practised in mundane habits and not proclamation. It is manifested in the willingness of the colleagues to support each other when there are problems, the ability to transfer information to the other sections, the ability to provide guidance to the junior staff, and the attitude to the service issues as a shared corporate task instead of a personal liability. Respondents kept on citing positive internal culture promotes confidence in the service level and fragmented internal culture creates hesitation and uneven reactions. One participant noted,

“Sometimes the public only sees the officer in front, but the service depends on many people inside. If the coordination is good, the process becomes easier. If not, the citizen feels the confusion immediately.”

This assertion indicates that bureaucratic behaviour cannot be narrowed down to the behaviour of individual official. The frontline of public service is relational but the production of the service is organisational. The citizen can personally experience one of those officers, but the nature of that experience is usually predetermined by the unity or incoherence of the office.

The other notable trend in the data is the place of hierarchy in the bureaucratic setting. Naturally, hierarchical structure is required in governmental organizations since it brings the order, authority, and the chain of accountability. However, the results indicate that there is no one uniform way in which hierarchy influences service behaviour. It is also dependent on the experience a person working within it has. In case of hierarchy, coupled with guidance, openness and with a common understanding of the service goals, it aids in civil servants executing their tasks with confidence and consistency. In these conditions, officers do not just follow the orders they know the meaning of their work and they feel that they are supported by the institution in their relations with citizens. This was said by one of the informants in the following way,

“If the leadership gives direction clearly and we understand what is expected, it is easier for us to serve people well because we do not feel like we are working alone.”

This quote is used to highlight the fact that hierarchical structures can be facilitative when offering interpretive scaffolding as opposed to giving orders. On the other hand, it has been found that hierarchy could provoke defensive behavioural patterns when viewed as a form of pressure or correction, and this is the main aspect that is held dominant. When the officials in the office view the prevention of mistakes to be more decisive than helping the citizens maneuver through the bureaucratic procedures, the service delivery would be more rigid and less responsive. In these situations, the fear of being accused makes the area of initiative narrow and hence undermines the relationship nature of service. Institutional pressure as perceived by one civil servant was summarized as follows,

“Sometimes officers become too careful, not because they do not want to help, but because they worry that if something goes wrong, they will be the ones held responsible.”

This quote is meaningful as it portrays that bureaucratic inflexibility is not always the by-product of indifference, an organisational culture that defines accountability in a penalised way, instead of a way that is developmental. This type of culture generates a kind of self-protection into which officials often need to withdraw in formalism in the face of such culture, leading to a less accessible service where the service intent is still salient.

The results also show that organisational culture determines the tendency of civil servants to think of the idea of public service as an institutional directive or as the performance of given duties. This difference was decisive. Participants in offices where service was considered a shared duty and responsibility were found to have more cooperation, more consistent and clearer commitment to the needs of citizens. In such environments, challenges were also not more likely to be moved over or left behind since the officials perceived them as issues that required the attention of a group. One participant observed,

“If everyone in the office has the same understanding that public service is our responsibility, the work becomes lighter and more focused. But if people only think about finishing their own part, the service feels disconnected.”

This is not just a statement about the limited question of teamwork, but it is a statement about the ethical subtext of the institution. More tendencies to foster behaviours that citizens perceive as coherent and reliable are more likely to be developed in a bureaucratic climate that fosters a sense of purpose. In cases where the sense is poor, the services can still be completed procedurally but they can do away with continuity and relationship depth.

To the citizen, these conditions of organisations are frequently perceived at a glance, albeit this may not be possible to the masses to express in institutional terms. Citizens do not know much about the internal administrative framework of an office, but usually have a sense of whether an institution is well coordinated, responsive and service oriented. It has been mentioned several times that individuals evaluate the quality of the public service, not only based on the results, but also the feel of the interaction. The description of these observations made by the community member indicates the extent to which organisational culture is experienced by the masses. The participant explained,

“When we come to the office, we can usually feel whether the staff work together well or not. If they seem coordinated and give similar explanations, we feel more

comfortable. If they look confused or pass us from one person to another, we feel the service is complicated.”

Such a view is especially eye-opening since it shows how institutional culture can be made public through practices. The citizen can never have a glimpse, of the internal meetings, leadership direction or administrative coordination but the outcomes of the process are immediate, experienced during the service encounter.

Routine was also found to be a crucial element of bureaucratic environment which influences behaviour. Routine has a lot of value in administrative work as it provides stability in expectations, systems in the workflow, and structure to the repetitive work. However, according to the findings, routine may have a significantly different impact on service under different cultures. Having routine with a strong feeling of civic duty will help the civil servants work more efficiently and at the same time be more conscious of the needs of the citizens. On the other hand, losing an element of routine to reflection and institutional purpose can make it turn into ossification of indifference. In these circumstances, the service process continues, but its role as a human value starts wearing out. Authorities can be doing their duties in the right way, but citizens feel that the institution is remote and hostile. This highlights a key analytical point, namely the fact that the problem is not routine as such; the point of contention is whether routine is ingrained within an organisational culture which still maintains the elements of attentiveness, empathy, and a sense that every administrative case portrays a person coming in contact with the state.

The internal communication was also found to be very crucial in the development of the behavioural context of service delivery. In areas where there was effective staff-staff communication, officers could coordinate their responses, minimize confusion and ensure that institutional bewilderment was not passed on. Where there was poor or lack of communication, various officials often tend to communicate different information leading to frustration among the citizens and loss of institutional integrity. This issue was briefly defined by one of the participants who said,

“If information inside the office is not the same, then the public will receive different answers. When that happens, they may think the officers are careless, even though the real problem is internal communication.”

This quote elucidates that inconsistency of behaviour is not necessarily based on personal incompetence; it can also be a demonstration of being detached to the organisation. Public service is not then simply a question of what officers do at the counter it is also a question of how institutions are held together at the back office.

Their results indicate that organisational culture and bureaucratic environment do not serve as secondary background variables in the delivery of the public service but rather they form part of the fundamental conditions through which civil servant behaviour is acquired, reinforced and manifested. Civil servants are not entering the service situations as absolutely autonomous actors who simply transfer personal values to institutional work. Their behavior is informed by constant exposure to workplace practices, managerial demands, group norms, and administrative rhythms which instruct them on the kind of service they can provide, which service is acceptable and what the institution highly esteems. When the organisational culture condones indifference, then even technically correct procedures could not be used to improve the experiences of the citizens. When the culture, in its turn, encourages clarity, collegial support, and accountability to the population, the normal interactions in the administration can become more human without undermining the order.

More significantly, the findings in relation to Gowa Regency imply some significance in conceptualising the improvement of the public service. Reform cannot be based on technical changes, refinement of the process, or formal service standards. These are important measures, and their practical impact is largely dependent on the organisational life of the institution. The bureaucratic internal environment shows whether the civil servants feel encouraged to serve the citizens in a positive way, whether the civil servants have faith in dealing with uncertainty, whether they view service as a living institutional role, as opposed to an administrative burden on a repetitive basis. In this meaning, public service does not only exist by institutions; it is experienced by them. That institutional life has a direct and lasting mark in the behavior of civil servants and on the daily experience of governance among the citizens to whom they serve.

Leadership and Managerial Practices as Drivers of Service Behavior

The results show that in the direction of the civil service provision, leadership and managerial practice takes a prime role in influencing the behaviour of civil servants. The attitude of the civil servants at the service counter does not just come out of individual initiative or company habit. It also depends on the way leaders establish priorities, convey expectations, how they react to challenges and the way they develop the practical meaning of service in the institution. The process of leadership in this study was not encountered as an administrative role that was abiding above normal service delivery. Instead it existed in the working environment of the office, in the trust or mistrust that employees developed and in how much service duty was perceived as a joint obligation as opposed to divided tasks. This implies that leadership is not outside the scope of culture of the behavior of the public service. It is among the forces that embody that behavior and make it normalized and perpetuated.

This trend is particularly apparent when civil servants explain the circumstances in which they feel comfortable to serve the population. The evidence indicates that the officials would be more inclined to act clearly, patiently and proactively, when the leadership offers instruction, not just this, but also practical assistance and interpretation. When leadership in offices is perceived to be communicative and accessible, the staffs are more likely to grasp their roles better and are less ambiguous whenever they have to face complex service situations. In this context, leadership assists in changing service as a more limited procedural requirement into a more intelligible institutional aim. One participant expressed this clearly by stating,

“If the head of the office gives clear direction and is open when we face difficulties, we feel more confident in serving the public because we know what kind of service is expected from us.”

Such a statement is significant as it demonstrates that leadership influences the behavior of service not only by means of supervision, but of establishing interpretive certainty. Rules are not the only things that civil servants require. They also require managerial cues that assist them to comprehend how such rules were to be practiced.

The results also indicate that leadership can either encourage the commitment-based approach, or wariness bordering on passivity, by civil servants to service. In cases where the leaders promote responsibility and at the same time offer guidance, the officials are more inclined to engage in further initiatives to clarify the processes, coordinate among themselves, and appropriately address the concerns of the citizens. This type of leadership does not eliminate accountability. Instead, it puts accountability in a manner that enhances services capacity as opposed to freezing it. One informant explained this dynamic in such a way that she demonstrates the facilitating strength of managerial presence. The participant explained,

“When the leader does not only check the results but also helps us understand how to handle service problems, the work becomes easier and we do not feel afraid every time we need to make a decision.”

According to this story, management practice work is of most importance when it does not merely act as a check-up of compliance, but when it serves as an empowering device of staff to be able to operate in the unpredictable and challenging nature of frontline service. That is why the civil servant is made more responsive not by removing pressure but by becoming more sensitive to leadership to transform pressure into direction and not to be afraid.

This is especially important in the public service environment where majority of the work is done through personal contact with the citizens whose needs are diverse and at times unpredictable. Institutionally based procedures might offer a simplistic outline, but the same procedures cannot be used to dictate how the officials ought to communicate, how they ought to react to frustration and how they ought to deal with situations that demand judgment. Where such is the case, leadership is an expedient behavioral orientation. It affects the way civil servants perceive values of services, the extent to which they believe they are allowed to act responsibly and whether they view the populace as a burden to be dealt with or citizens to be served with institutional respect. Some of the participants added that the tone created by leaders might turn out to be the tone of the office. When leaders provide positive examples of seriousness, fairness and respectfulness to the population, these values tend to be transmitted along the administrative process chain and influence the everyday behavior at the very frontline. The working of leadership is not based on policy alone, but also, example, repetition, and the development of institutional habit over time.

Meanwhile, the research has also discovered that leadership can diminish the quality of service in cases when it is applied in over-procedural, distant, or corrective manner. When the offices have a leadership that is more about control, warning or fault finding, the civil servants are likely to be more interested in making sure that they do not make mistakes rather than making sure that the citizens are well attended to. In such circumstances, the service can be officially in compliance, but the relationship and problem solving aspects are weaker. Employees can reduce their initiative, constrain their communication and retreat to less risky modes of bureaucratic behaviour.. One civil servant described this condition with notable candor by saying,

“Sometimes officers already know what would help the public, but they hesitate because they feel the important thing is not to be blamed later.”

This quote shows that managerial climate is not only a source of performance but also the morality stance of service. When the idea of good leadership only equates it with procedural faultlessness, the civil servants are likely to react by becoming inflexible enough to act even in a more constructive and yet responsible manner. It is in this sense that weak leadership is not just leadership which lacks the ability to guide. It is also leadership that inadvertently tries to teach the staffs to be self protective rather than service accessible.

The other notable trend that comes up as a result of the data is the issue of leadership in instilling a sense of shared discipline in the institution. Not only are individual efforts important in the quality of service provided by the publics, but it is also important that the offices operate as coordinated systems. The results show that leadership is very critical in determining whether such a coordination is truly realized. Leaders who engage in the practice of developing communication between units, defining roles, and strengthening shared standards of service will have an increased probability of civil servants coming up with consistent answers to

citizens. Conversely, in a leadership situation where leadership is passive or disengaged, the institution is likely to become fragmented. Various officers might provide various explanations, service delivery becomes lopsided, and people will feel that the office is not consistent. One participant summarized this problem by explaining,

“If leadership is weak, each section works on its own understanding. The public may not see that internal problem, but they feel it when the information they receive is not consistent.”

This assertion brings out a crucial aspect. Leadership does not just consist in motivating the subordinates. It also relates to the establishment of coherence, and coherence is necessary since the citizens will view a lack of coherence as an indicator that the institution is not dependable.

The results also indicate that leadership influences the emotional organization of the bureaucratic work. Service in most of the institutions that are publicly based, is not necessarily technical only, but it is also emotionally taxing. Civil servants are required to respond to the same request, complaints, misunderstanding, and pressure of being polite even in challenging times. Their ability to maintain this demand will be partly determined by the support of the institution. In this case, leadership is important since it determines whether the staff feel recognized, safe, and instructed or they feel abandoned under the pressure. Some of the respondents suggested that supportive leadership is useful in balancing emotions at work and ensuring that the strain does not find an outlet on the citizens. One informant stated,

“If the leader listens and gives us support when the workload is heavy, we are more able to stay calm when dealing with the community.”

This quotation suggests that leadership affects public service not only through rules and evaluation, but through the emotional environment it creates. Service behavior can become more patient and constructive when staff are not carrying institutional pressure in isolation.

From the perspective of citizens, leadership is not always directly visible, yet its effects can be felt in the rhythm and quality of service delivery. Citizens may not know who makes decisions internally or how managerial authority is structured, but they can often sense whether an office is well led. They notice whether explanations are clear, whether officers seem coordinated, whether problems are handled with confidence, and whether the institution appears committed to helping rather than merely processing requests. One community member described this perception in a revealing way by saying,

“Even if we do not know the leader personally, we can feel whether the office is managed well. If the staff work in a clear and orderly way, we trust the service more.”

This description has analytical value since it puts us to mind that leadership is publicly meaningful in terms of institutional conduct. It cannot be evaluated based on its internal power alone, but rather on the value of the experience that it can afford to people.

The study therefore points to a broader understanding of leadership in local public administration. Leadership should not be seen solely as a matter of formal position or managerial procedure. It is also a behavioral force that shapes how institutions translate administrative responsibility into lived service practice. Leaders influence whether civil servants understand service as a meaningful public obligation, whether they feel equipped to handle complexity, and whether they can maintain responsiveness without losing procedural integrity. This means that leadership is deeply connected to the production of trust. Where leadership is clear, supportive, and ethically oriented, service behavior becomes more coherent and more credible. Where leadership is distant, punitive, or excessively procedural, service

may continue, but its legitimacy begins to erode because citizens encounter not an institution that serves with confidence, but one that acts with caution and fragmentation.

Within the context of Gowa Regency, these findings suggest that efforts to improve public service cannot rely only on procedural reform or technical training at the operational level. Such measures remain important, yet their effects are mediated by leadership and managerial practice. Civil servants work within institutional environments that are interpreted through the actions and priorities of those who lead them. When leaders frame service as a shared responsibility, create room for guided initiative, and foster internal coherence, they strengthen the behavioral conditions necessary for better public service. When leadership fails to do so, even capable civil servants may become hesitant, fragmented, or overly formalistic in their interaction with the public. Public service quality, therefore, depends not only on what frontline officials do, but also on the managerial and moral architecture through which their conduct is shaped. In that sense, leadership is not simply above service delivery. It moves through it, leaving its imprint on how governance is ultimately experienced by citizens in their everyday encounters with the state.

This study suggests that the quality of local public service delivery is shaped less by procedural design in isolation than by the behavioral mediation through which rules are interpreted, communicated, and enacted in citizen encounters. Recent scholarship supports this view from several directions. Research on administrative burden has shown that citizens experience the state through learning, compliance, and psychological costs shaped by frontline interaction rather than by rules alone (Halling & Bækgaard, 2024). Work on citizens' inclusion in public services similarly argues that accessibility and inclusion remain underexamined when public administration focuses too narrowly on participation or representation while neglecting the lived usability of services (Licsandru et al., 2025). In parallel, recent discussions of public management and street level bureaucracy show that management does not displace frontline judgment but structures the conditions under which it is exercised (Larsen et al., 2025). This interpretation is reinforced by evidence that street level bureaucrats increasingly understand their role in broader public value terms rather than within narrow professional boundaries (Lavee & Cohen, 2025), while citizens assess bureaucratic rule behavior through moral judgments shaped by deservingness, identity, and outcomes (Wolff et al., 2025) and distinguish between bureaucrats who protect the public and those who merely protect themselves (Jakobsen & Petersen, 2022). What emerges from this body of work is that behavior should not be treated as an interpersonal accessory to service delivery, but as the practical medium through which state legitimacy is experienced.

The discussion of discretion also gains sharper analytical meaning when viewed through recent work that moves beyond the simple opposition between flexibility and arbitrariness. Studies on creative discretion show that frontline actors do not only bend rules to cope with complexity, but often produce context sensitive solutions under competing service demands (Forester et al., 2023). Related work on public value conflicts demonstrates that role ambiguity and flexible role orientation shape how discretion affects performance, suggesting that judgment is inseparable from how public servants understand their role under conditions of competing expectations (Sun et al., 2025). This matters because discretion is not merely a technical problem of control. It is also a legitimacy problem. Citizens may interpret adaptive conduct as fairness or as inconsistency depending on how it is justified and delivered, which is precisely why the arguments of Wolff et al. (2025) are important here. The contribution of this article lies in showing that discretion becomes institutionally productive only when it is anchored in ethical clarity, communicative competence, and a recognizable service orientation.

The role of organizational culture and bureaucratic environment can also be understood more clearly through recent empirical evidence showing that service behavior is socially produced inside institutions before it is displayed to the public. Research on employee voice in the public sector shows that organizational trust and culture mediate the relationship between voice and performance, with trust playing an especially powerful role in shaping institutional outcomes (Iddrisu & Mohammed, 2024). Studies of public administrations also show that middle managers influence engagement not only directly but through their support for reform processes in everyday work (Ancarani et al., 2021). This resonates with evidence that public service motivation and psychological safety climate can buffer the negative effects of organizational politics on engagement (Siddique et al., 2025), while both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation remain important for public sector performance under reform conditions (Elamalki et al., 2024). These studies strengthen the interpretation that rigid, fragmented, or defensive service behavior should not be read simply as individual failure. More often, it reflects weak trust, low psychological safety, poor internal coordination, and institutional climates that discourage responsible initiative.

The same logic extends to leadership. This article shows that leadership shapes not only supervision, but the practical meaning of service inside the organization. Recent literature provides strong support for this interpretation. A meta analysis by Ding and Wang (2024) finds that leadership style is systematically associated with public service motivation, particularly where leader member exchange, charismatic leadership, and servant leadership are strong. Stanescu et al. (2021) further show that transformational leadership affects innovative work behavior and job performance through person organization fit, psychological empowerment, and commitment. Ethical leadership research also demonstrates that performance is shaped indirectly through organizational politics, corporate social responsibility, and social capital (Ullah et al., 2022), while collaborative public leadership has been shown to improve service delivery through stronger administrative coordination (Zia ud Din et al., 2024). More recent studies suggest that leadership capacity itself must be cultivated institutionally rather than assumed from position alone (Backhaus & Vogel, 2025), and that public service innovation requires values based managerial agency rather than mere procedural modernization (Johnston & Fenwick, 2025). Evidence from Thai local government adds that transformational leadership improves organizational success through innovation and transparency (Zumitzavan et al., 2025). In this light, leadership affects service quality not abstractly, but through the behavioral environment it creates for frontline officials.

The broader implication of this study is that public service management in local government should be understood as the behavioral production of institutional legitimacy. The article does not simply confirm that civil servants matter. It shows that rules, discretion, culture, and leadership are interdependent conditions through which citizens come to experience the state as accessible, fair, and trustworthy or, conversely, as rigid, confusing, and distant. Recent scholarship on burden, inclusion, frontline work, innovation, and leadership points in the same direction, but this article adds value by bringing these strands together within a local governance setting where repeated citizen contact makes everyday conduct especially consequential. The central lesson is therefore not that procedural reform is unimportant, but that procedural reform will remain shallow unless institutions also cultivate humane judgment, coherent internal cultures, and leadership capable of sustaining responsive conduct under constraint.

Conclusion

This study shows that public service delivery in Gowa Regency is shaped not merely by formal procedures, but by the behavioral processes through which those procedures are interpreted and enacted in everyday encounters between civil servants and citizens. Service quality emerges through a continual negotiation between institutional rules and social realities, where discretion, organizational culture, bureaucratic environment, and leadership all influence how civil servants respond to the public. In this sense, what citizens experience as public service is not simply administrative order, but the lived expression of how institutions are embodied through frontline conduct.

The study therefore argues that improving public service requires more than procedural adjustment or technical reform. Service improvement depends equally on the cultivation of internal trust, coherent organizational culture, and leadership capable of sustaining responsive, consistent, and ethically grounded behavior. Although grounded in the context of Gowa Regency, the analysis offers a broader insight for local governance, namely that institutional legitimacy is built not only through rules, but through the everyday behavior that makes those rules meaningful to citizens.

References

- Abdillahi, M. M. (2026). E-Government and Digital Service Delivery: Investigating the Adoption of Digital Platforms for the Purpose of Citizens' Service Access, Transparency Increase, and Administrative Efficiency Promotion. *Moccasin Journal De Public Perspective*, 3(1), 13-33.
- Ahmed, L. K. F. N. (2024). *Public administration*. Prachi Digital Publication.
- Ahmed, L. K. F. N. (2024). *Public administration*. Prachi Digital Publication.
- Ancarani, A., Arcidiacono, F., Mauro, C. D., & Giammanco, M. D. (2021). Promoting work engagement in public administrations: the role of middle managers' leadership. *Public Management Review*, 23(8), 1234-1263. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2020.1763072>
- Backhaus, L., & Vogel, R. (2025). Leader training in the public sector: Can micro-interventions at the pre-training stage enhance public leaders' motivation to develop?. *International Public Management Journal*, 28(5), 680-697. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2025.2460639>
- Bhusal, T. (2023). Participatory local governance in rural Nepal: The primacy of informality. *Development Policy Review*, 41(6), e12724.
- Birdayanthi, B., Yusriadi, Y., & Ikmal, I. (2025). Accountability and transparency in public administration for improved service delivery. *Journal Social Civilecial*, 3(1), 34-47. <https://doi.org/10.71435/610633>
- Daigneault, P. M. (2023). Evaluation of the non-take-up of public services and social benefits. In *Handbook of public policy evaluation* (pp. 408-424). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Deja, M. (2024). Information culture of university administration: Making personnel bureaucracy a professional bureaucracy. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 56(2), 379-396. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09610006221145931>
- Demir, F. (2022). Innovation in the public sector. *Smarter states, services and citizens*, Cham: Springer.

- Ding, M., & Wang, C. (2024). Relationship between leadership style and public service motivation: A meta-analysis. *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal*, 52(2), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.2224/sbp.12980>
- Egwuagu, U. B., Nnamani, D. O., & Okolie, N. U. (2024). The overbearing role of state over local government and provisions of 1999 constitution: Where is local level autonomy in Nigeria?. *Journal of Policy and Development Studies*, 15(2), 186-203. <https://doi.org/10.4314/jpds.v15i2.13>
- Elamalki, D., Kaddar, A., & Beniich, N. (2024). Impact of motivation on the job performance of public sector employees: the case of Morocco. *Future Business Journal*, 10(1), 53. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s43093-024-00342-4>
- Elías, M. V. (2024). Opening the “black box” of public administration: The need for interpretive research. *Public Administration*, 102(3), 953-968. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.12959>
- Forester, J., Verloo, N., & Laws, D. (2023). Creative discretion and the structure of context-responsive improvising. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 45(6), 1145-1162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2021.1901589>
- Goldfinch, S. F. (2023). The challenge of public administration reform: Introduction to the handbook of public administration reform. In *Handbook of public administration reform* (pp. 1-26). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781800376748.00005>
- Halling, A., & Baekgaard, M. (2024). Administrative burden in citizen–state interactions: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 34(2), 180-195. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/muad023>
- Hansen, J. R., Pop, M., Skov, M. B., & George, B. (2024). A review of open strategy: bridging strategy and public management research. *Public Management Review*, 26(3), 678-700. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2022.2116091>
- Heuberger, M. (2022). *Coordinating digital government: Explaining coordination challenges regarding the digital transformation of public administration in a federal context* (Doctoral dissertation, Universität Potsdam).
- Hou, M. (2023). Face and identity in intercultural conflict management. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 23(2), 88-96.
- Iddrisu, I., & Mohammed, B. (2024). Investigating the influence of employee voice on public sector performance: The mediating dynamics of organizational trust and culture. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 10, 101096. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2024.101096>
- Jakobsen, M., & Petersen, N. B. G. (2022). Defending your public kin: public sector identification and street-level bureaucrats’ perceptions of performance. *International Public Management Journal*, 25(6), 883-899. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10967494.2021.1948468>
- Johnston, L., & Fenwick, J. (2025). New development: Public service innovation. *Public Money & Management*, 45(2), 151-156. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540962.2024.2362873>

- Larsen, F., Møller, M. Ø., & Raaphorst, N. (2025). Public management and street-level bureaucrats. *Public Management Review*, 27(8), 1857-1867. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2025.2493875>
- Lavee, E., & Cohen, G. (2025). Street-level bureaucrats' perceptions of “the job”: Deviation from professional particularities and micro creation of public value. *Public Administration*, 103(1), 335-353. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.13025>
- Licsandru, T., Meliou, E., Steccolini, I., & Chang, S. (2025). Citizens' inclusion in public services: a systematic review of the public administration literature and reflection on future research avenues. *Public Administration*, 103(4), 1097-1119. <https://doi.org/10.1111/padm.13049>
- Liu, Y., Kim, C. Y., Lee, E. H., & Yoo, J. W. (2022). Relationship between sustainable management activities and financial performance: Mediating effects of non-financial performance and moderating effects of institutional environment. *Sustainability*, 14(3), 1168. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su14031168>
- Nekmahmud, M., & Patwary, M. A. (2023). Clientelism and Subservience in Organizational Behaviour and Professional Practice. *Global Business Review*, 09721509221143206. <https://doi.org/10.1177/09721509221143206>
- Palumbo, R., & Manesh, M. F. (2023). Travelling along the public service co-production road: a bibliometric analysis and interpretive review. *Public management review*, 25(7), 1348-1384. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2021.2015222>
- Parycek, P., Schmid, V., & Novak, A. S. (2024). Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automation in administrative procedures: Potentials, limitations, and framework conditions. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 15(2), 8390-8415. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-023-01433-3>
- Rivera, J. D., & Knox, C. C. (2023). Bureaucratic discretion, social equity, and the administrative legitimacy dilemma: Complications of New Public Service. *Public Administration Review*, 83(1), 65-77. <https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13550>
- Ryu, G. (2023). Learning Bureaucracy. In *Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance* (pp. 7552-7555). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Ryu, Y. (2025). Local government administration and biopolitics: Surrounding conflicts over the construction of mosque in South Korea. *Cities*, 159, 105790. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2025.105790>
- Scott, B. D., Van Laar, J. A., Larson, B. N., Wagemans, J. H., & Lumer, C. (2024). Norms of public argumentation and the ideals of correctness and participation. *Argumentation*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10503-023-09598-6>
- Shah, B. (2024). Administrative Subordination. *The University of Chicago Law Review*, 91(6), 1603-1724.
- Siddique, N., Naveed, S., & Inam, A. (2025). A bibliometric review on sustainable human resource management (1982–2023). *Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance*, 12(1), 14-36. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOEPP-09-2023-0432>
- Stanescu, D. F., Zbucnea, A., & Pinzaru, F. (2021). Transformational leadership and innovative work behaviour: the mediating role of psychological

- empowerment. *Kybernetes*, 50(5), 1041-1057. <https://doi.org/10.1108/K-07-2019-0491>
- Sun, F., Pang, X., & Niu, W. (2025). Street-Level Bureaucrats and Public Value Conflicts: Role Ambiguity, Flexible Role Orientation, and Performance. *Public Administration and Development*, 45(5), 513-528. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pad.70016>
- Ullah, I., Hameed, R. M., Kayani, N. Z., & Fazal, Y. (2022). CEO ethical leadership and corporate social responsibility: Examining the mediating role of organizational ethical culture and intellectual capital. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 28(1), 99-119. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2019.48>
- Wang, Y., Wu, F., & Zhang, F. (2025). State building in crisis management: Reflections on statecraft from the Shanghai lockdown. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 49(1), 126-141. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.13289>
- Wardiyanto, B., Setijaningrum, E., Samad, S., & Kandar, A. H. (2025). Mending the mismatch of minds and mandates: reimagining competency-centric public service delivery in Bojonegoro Regency, Indonesia. *Cogent Business & Management*, 12(1), 2442538. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2024.2442538>
- Wessels, J. S. (2023). Meaningful knowledge about public administration: Epistemological and methodological antecedents. *Administrative Theory & Praxis*, 45(1), 25-43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10841806.2022.2158633>
- Wolff, G. B., Steinbach, A., & Zettelmeyer, J. (2025). The governance and funding of European rearmament. *Intereconomics*, 4, 210.
- Yang, Y., Wen, B., & Song, Y. (2026). A moderated mediation model on the relationship among public service motivation (PSM), self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and readiness for change. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 46(1), 160-189. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X241281750>
- Zia ud din, M., Yuan yuan, X., Ullah Khan, N., & Estay, C. (2024). The impact of public leadership on collaborative administration and public health delivery. *BMC Health Services Research*, 24(1), 129. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12913-023-10537-0>
- Zumitzavan, V., Prachumrasee, K., & Pathak, S. (2025). Transformational leadership cultivating innovation and transparency in local government organisations, Thailand. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, 100626. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joitmc.2025.100626>