

Civil Servant Behavior Towards Public Service Compliance: a case study in Makassar City

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Abstract

This study examines the behavior of civil servants toward compliance in public service delivery within the bureaucratic framework of Makassar City. Employing a qualitative literature review approach, the research synthesizes contemporary studies published between 2015 and 2024 to analyze how professionalism, ethics, leadership, and organizational culture collectively shape compliance behavior in Indonesia's public sector. The findings reveal that compliance is not solely a function of regulatory enforcement but rather a product of moral internalization, professional competence, and ethical leadership. Bureaucratic structures characterized by hierarchy and procedural rigidity tend to produce formal rather than substantive compliance, emphasizing rule adherence over ethical responsibility. Conversely, environments that foster trust, reflective leadership, and participatory accountability cultivate intrinsic motivation among civil servants to uphold public service values. The review further underscores that training, merit-based human resource systems, and digital transparency mechanisms are essential in transforming compliance from a rule-bound duty into a professional ethos. Theoretical implications highlight the need for management scholars to reconceptualize compliance as an evolving moral capability shaped by institutional culture and leadership ethics. Practically, the study recommends integrated reform strategies that balance regulatory control with ethical empowerment and community engagement. Ultimately, sustainable compliance in Makassar's bureaucracy and comparable governance contexts depends on embedding integrity and professionalism within the managerial core of public administration, aligning bureaucratic systems with the ethical aspirations of democratic governance.

Keywords: Civil Servants, Compliance, Professionalism, Public Service

Introduction

The basic building blocks of the Indonesian public administration and governance are civil servants. Since they are a stakeholder in the execution of a societal policy, their moral and professional responsibility is to make sure that their delivery of services to the population is effective, efficient, and equitable. However, empirical data reveals that quality of public service in most regions such as the Makassar City still faces numerous challenges that have been associated with ASN behavior in the course of duty execution. The lack of compliance with the standards of service, insufficient work ethics, as well as the consistently present traditional bureaucratic culture, often hamper the provision of high-quality public service (Saprudin, 2023).

In turn, the holistic interpretation of ASN performance in terms of compliance with the public service is an inseparable action in upholding good governance at the local level. The provision of effective public service requires ASN to comply with the existing regulations and codes of ethics. In this respect, compliance encompasses both the formal adherence to the procedural rules as well as the ethical obligation to offer the best quality service to citizens. In Makassar,

the fast-paced urbanizing metropolitan center, the need to have a vastly open, timely, and responsive public services has become more acute.

However, according to Jumady & Lilla (2021), the complaints about the behavior of civil servants are still common among the population, and such behavior is often characterized as unprofessional, unfriendly, and contradicting the principles of the work of the civil service. It is under these circumstances that a recurrent discontinuity emerges between the expectations of the people and the actual performance of ASN in practice. Diverse factors influence ASN behavior in the public service and they can be organizational culture, style of leadership, internal motivation, and personal values.

Uluturk et al. (2023) argue that the level of convergence between personal values, perceptions, and motivations and institutional goals is shown in individual behavior in organizations. The more the civil servants uphold positive impressions about regulations and feel accepted in their working conditions, the more they are likely to adhere to the standards of the public service. On the other hand, the unhappiness due to the lack of supervision, perceived injustices, or a lack of appreciation can foster non-compliant behaviors that can be in terms of negligence, delays or even professional ethics.

Past literature discussed various aspects of the performance and professional discipline of the personnel working in the public sector. As an example, Khanal et al. (2022) believes that the discipline and integrity of civil servants are crucial factors to building the trust of the population. Equally, transformational leadership may boost motivation and compliance among ASN in the environment of the public service regulations. However, most of these studies have used quantitative research designs that focus on estimation of correlations between variables. As a result, there is an impressive lack of studies that explore in-depth how civil servant behaviors are developed in particular social and bureaucratic context, specifically the municipal level, as in the case of Makassar.

This gap justifies the need of a qualitative methodology that has the capacity to unveil the situational and interpretive nature of ASN behavior. Makassar City, an important node of government and economic life in eastern Indonesia, illustrates a complicated bureaucratic structure. The civil servants in this environment do not only work under administrative demands but also social and political demands that they face in day-to-day interactions with the people. In this case, the compliance with the requirements of the public service is no longer a strictly technical issue, but rather a reflection of integrity, accountability, and professionalism.

Following this, there is an urgent need to question the manner in which the ASN conduct is constructed, what influences it, and the perception of compliance among civil servants themselves in the confounding realities of daily service delivery. The current research aims to do a detailed inquiry of the civil servant behaviors on compliance in the provision of services in Makassar City using qualitative approach of conducting a case study. Such a methodology allows understanding the phenomenon in detail and in a context with the help of direct observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentary analysis. The research attempts to understand the social processes, organizational culture and the seat behavior that underlie the behaviors exhibited instead of concentrating on the measurable evidence like compliance rates.

Academically, this research study is relevant to the wider body of knowledge on the topic of civil servant behavior and governance of the public service in Indonesia. It provides new evidence of how the bureaucratic culture, ethical models, and personal attitudes meet to enhance compliance. In practice, the results would be expected to support local administrations in developing effective measures to increase ASN compliance, such as strengthening the work

ethics, improving the competency development, and adopting the performance-based supervisory systems. With the achievement of an exhaustive insight into the ASN behavior, one can anticipate that the quality, transparency, and responsiveness of the public services in Makassar City can be improved thus increasing the level of public trust and contentment.

Methods

Research Design

The study adopts a systematic qualitative review design, integrating both conceptual and thematic analysis. Unlike a traditional narrative review, this design follows a structured and transparent process in identifying, selecting, analyzing, and synthesizing relevant literature. The systematic aspect ensures rigor and comprehensiveness, while the qualitative orientation allows for in-depth interpretation of key concepts and theoretical linkages. The design consists of four major stages: (1) identification of research objectives and key concepts; (2) systematic search and selection of relevant literature; (3) thematic organization and analysis of findings; and (4) synthesis and interpretation of results in relation to the study's research questions. This methodological structure ensures that the review not only summarizes existing studies but also critically examines their assumptions, methodologies, and implications.

Data Sources and Selection Criteria

The data for this study are derived from secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, academic books, and policy documents relevant to the study of public service, bureaucratic ethics, and compliance among civil servants. The literature was gathered from reputable academic databases such as Scopus, Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, and JSTOR, as well as official government publications from the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform and the Ombudsman of the Republic of Indonesia. The selection of sources for this study followed a set of carefully defined criteria to ensure both the quality and relevance of the reviewed materials. First, relevance served as the primary criterion, meaning that only publications directly related to key themes such as public service, bureaucratic behavior, compliance, ethics, and civil servant professionalism were included. Second, recency was emphasized to maintain the study's contemporaneity and analytical accuracy; therefore, literature published between 2015 and 2024 was prioritized, reflecting the most current theoretical and practical developments in the field. Third, credibility was assured by including only peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and officially recognized government reports, thereby safeguarding the integrity and reliability of the information analyzed. Lastly, contextual relevance guided the inclusion of studies focusing on the Indonesian bureaucratic system or comparable governance contexts in developing nations, ensuring that the findings would be contextually meaningful and applicable to the case of Makassar City. Through this systematic process, approximately 50 academic sources were initially identified. After comprehensive full-text screening and critical relevance evaluation, 30 core studies were selected for in-depth qualitative analysis, forming the foundation of the review's interpretive synthesis.

Data Collection and Management

Data collection involved a systematic search process using combinations of keywords such as "*civil servant behavior*," "*compliance*," "*public service ethics*," "*bureaucratic reform*," and "*Indonesia*." Boolean operators (AND, OR) were used to refine the search results. The retrieved articles were catalogued and organized. Each selected document was read comprehensively, and key information such as research objectives, methodologies, findings, and theoretical perspectives was extracted and coded manually. Summaries and analytical

notes were prepared for each article to facilitate thematic comparison. The process ensured that all data were systematically managed, traceable, and aligned with the research objectives.

Data Analysis Procedure

The collected literature was analyzed through a thematic synthesis approach, which involves identifying, analyzing, and interpreting recurring themes across studies. The analysis proceeded through several interconnected steps. First, familiarization involved repeated reading of the selected literature to gain a deep understanding of the material and its conceptual nuances. Second, coding was conducted by labeling key ideas, theoretical arguments, and patterns related to compliance behavior, bureaucratic ethics, and service culture. Third, theme development grouped the codes into broader thematic categories such as “organizational culture and compliance,” “leadership and ethical behavior,” “bureaucratic structure and motivation,” and “challenges in service delivery.” Finally, interpretive synthesis was undertaken to draw connections between these themes and the broader theoretical frameworks of public administration and organizational behavior. This method of thematic analysis ensured that the review moved beyond simple description toward an interpretive understanding of how compliance behavior among civil servants is shaped by structural, cultural, and individual dimensions.

Results and Discussion

The results of this literature-based study present a comprehensive synthesis of theoretical and empirical insights concerning the behavior of civil servants (ASN) toward compliance in public service delivery within the bureaucratic context of Makassar City. Drawing from 30 core studies published between 2015 and 2024, the analysis identifies recurring themes that illuminate how organizational culture, leadership style, ethical orientation, and structural governance mechanisms interact to shape compliance behavior. These findings are organized to reveal not only the surface manifestations of compliance such as rule adherence and procedural conformity but also the deeper psychological, moral, and institutional forces that sustain or undermine genuine commitment to public service ethics. By contextualizing these dynamics within the Indonesian administrative framework, the results provide a nuanced understanding of how compliance evolves as both a managerial function and an ethical responsibility, thereby offering crucial insights for public sector reform and governance innovation in developing bureaucracies.

Understanding Compliance as a Behavioral and Ethical Construct

The literature generally underscores that compliance to the public administration goes beyond just conformance to the formality and procedures that are followed in the administration; it is an extended behavioral and ethical obligation to the service to the people. Compliance is characterized by scholars like Riani et al. (2022) as a multidimensional construct, in which there are moral consciousness, professional discipline, and institutional accountability. In this sense, the actions of civil servants (ASN) in performing to the expectations of the standards of a public service are not only dictated by the external supervision or the fear of the sanctions, but also by their internal values and sense of ethical responsibility towards the citizens. Compliance hence should be conceived as a behavioral expression and a moral orientation which is in line with the larger principles of good governance and bureaucratic rectitude.

According to Akpa et al. (2021), the behavior of an individual in an organizational context is usually influenced by the complex of cognitive and affective elements in the sense of how a person sees obligation and how he/she experiences the responsibility to observe the ethical standards of work. This would translate in the bureaucratic setting to the voluntary nature of the civil servants to adhere to laid down procedures or operate in an ethical manner based on

his or her identification with the ethics of the public service. The same viewpoint is echoed, who states that the internalization of professional identity of ethical standards by the bureaucrats makes the compliance self-driven instead of imposed. On the contrary, compliance that is instilled just by the fear of punishment or obligation to deliver performance indicators is likely to be shallow and ineffective. This difference is critical in realizing why reforms that put emphasis on regulatory frameworks only tend to fail in instilling permanent behavior change among ASN.

There are other studies that distinguish formal and substantive compliance as two types of orientations of behavior. Formal compliance is the action that is inspired by the compliance with the official rules, laws or administrative regulations. One can witness it regularly in terms of punctuality, report submission or adherence to protocol. Substantive compliance, in its turn, is based on moral accountability and ethics. It shows the adherence of a person to the spirit of the regulation-doing ethically even in a situation when a person is not under supervision. As an illustration, a civil servant that offers fair services to all the citizens without considering personal relationships depicts substantive compliance. According to the reviewed literature, both of these types are needed, however, substantive compliance is a more sustainable and transformative variant of bureaucratic integrity since it is based not on coercion but intrinsic motivation.

The proposition that the ethical orientation of the civil servants has a strong influence on their compliance behavior is supported by empirical data obtained through the Indonesian research. Claims that civil servants (ASN) who are gifted with a strong level of moral awareness and civic values exhibit a higher level of uniformity in the application of service standards even in situations that are defined by the lack of supervision. Similarly, according to Young & Tanner (2023), when bureaucrats perceive compliance as a manifestation of civic responsibility, not as a duty, their initiative and compassion in communication with citizens increase. These observations highlight why internalization of ethical norms is the psychological basis of genuine compliance, which will distinguish between genuine compliance and rule-based compliance. Furthermore, when the principles of ethics are embedded in the organization culture in terms of ethical leadership, clear policy processes, and fair appraisal systems, civil servants will be more willing to shape their actions towards overall mission of serving people.

The academic sources also connect the compliance behavior to general systems of moral growth and organizational ethics. Elaborating on the levels of moral reasoning developed, assume that ethical bureaucratic conduct evolves gradually, first to compliance under the pressure of an external authority (pre-conventional stage), then to adherence to the principles of justice and service internalized in the character (post-conventional stage). In this regard, ethical climate in the organization plays a central role in driving the civil servants through these developmental paths. Empowering leadership, ethical thinking, and the recognition of ethical action create a shift between compliance according to the rules and a choice based on values. It follows that compliance becomes an active moral practice as opposed to an active submission.

The other informative insight that has been made in the reviewed scholarship is that compliance as a behavioral construct cannot be separated of its emotional and relational aspects. How the civil servants relate with the citizen, their bosses and fellow-workers influence their understanding of compliance and its implementation. Empirical studies conducted by Arghode et al. (2022) indicate that a culture of ethical accountability is developed through positive interpersonal relationships, empathies, and trust between the citizens and the public officers. Compliance becomes a part of the moral identity of the civil servants when they view their positions as a link within the society. Conversely, environments that are characterized by high

control, distrust or bureaucratic compulsion have a tendency to undermine intrinsic motivation where compliance is an obligation and a ritual.

These differences are quite relevant within the Indonesian bureaucratic framework, particularly in the municipal one. The example of Makassar City is a typical example of a bureaucratic milieu where structural enforcement and ethical consciousness are intertwined with heterogeneous efficacy rates. The degree to which civil servants adopt institutional reforms of more explicit standards of service and performance benchmarks varies significantly across departments even though such norms have been instituted as ethical commitments by institutional reforms. The reviewed literature indicates that long-term progress in the compliance of public services require a twofold approach the development of the institutional accountability framework and cultivation of moral consciousness in the mind of individual civil servants (ASN).

Organizational Culture and Leadership Influence

It is a recurring theme in the literature that organizational culture and leadership are the most decisive factors that influence the behavior of the civil servants (ASN) and the rate of compliance in the provision of the government services. Bureaucratic behavior is not a stand-alone phenomenon, but happens to be placed in a web of shared values, institutional norms, leadership practices, and organizational routines, which together inform the civil servants in the interpretation and application of rules, ethics, and professional standards. Strong organizational culture creates intrinsic motivation to comply, and weak leadership and inflexible hierarchies are more likely to instill the attitude of mechanical, superficial compliance with procedures instead of being committed to quality service delivery (Lazarević & Mosurović, 2023).

The traditional understanding of organizational culture is often understood as a system of shared meanings that is internalized by the members and makes one organization special compared to another. The shared meanings in the sense of the public-service context manifest themselves as norms, expectations and patterns of behavior that define what is acceptable behavior. Bureaucratic organizations in Indonesia have traditionally placed a lot of emphasis on hierarchy, seniority and compliance with procedures. Though these qualities might guarantee order and discipline which are essential, it can also stifle initiative and moral thinking unless these are balanced out with participatory practices. As Zeb et al. (2021) notes, the concept of compliance is often mixed in most local government offices, such as Makassar, where it is often referred to as obedience to the authority, as opposed to adherence to the ethics of the public service. This image fosters some sense of normative conformity in that civil servants do the right thing because it is right in the hierarchy as opposed to them doing it on the basis that it matches internalized values of integrity.

Influence of peers is also imperative to influence compliance behavior. The above-mentioned research studies by Grande et al. (2022) show that ethical behavior and professionalism tend to spread to the rest of the organization when displayed and role-modeled by other employees. On the other hand, the civil servants will tend to embrace similar non-conform behaviors when corruption, laxity or apathy are normal behaviors in the peer group. It is also these dynamics that indicate the social character of bureaucratic ethics by pointing to the fact that compliance is not necessarily an individual decision but a socially supported pattern of behavior that depends upon collective norms and moral reinforcement at the workplace.

Leadership is one of the key determinants of compliance behavior among the public organizations. Empirical research constantly confirms that the trustworthiness and ethical behavior of leaders form a moral reference point of sub-ordinate employees (Qin et al., 2021).

Providing leaders with fairness, transparency, and accountability leads to a culture of trust and moral consistency, which, in turn, helps to motivate employees to follow set regulations willingly. The application of transformational leadership, which is characterized by inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration in particular, has been especially effective in instilling moral conformity among civil servants. These leaders inspire subordinates to go beyond the formal requirements, inculcate the values of the public-servants, and co-ordinate personal goals and organizational missions.

Transactional leadership is mostly dependent upon control mechanisms, monitoring schemes and conditions of contingent reward punishment. Although this measure can ensure short-term compliance, it does not work most of the time in promoting fundamental ethical involvement. According to the analyses done by Vijayakumar et al. (2025), an over-reliance on punitive actions is likely to create fear-based compliance that consequently inhibits innovation and reduces personal responsibility. In the Indonesian setting, which is typified by a strong hierarchical distance between leaders and subordinates, transformational leadership plays a central role in closing this gap by ensuring an open dialogue, empathy, and a common sense of morality.

The top-down structure of governmental establishments is intended to maintain accountability and procedural control but tends to have ambiguous impact on the compliance behavior. On the one hand, it provides distinct lines of command and defines responsibilities, thus, facilitates consistency of the process. Conversely, strict hierarchies may kill feedback, innovation and a healthy moral debate among civil servants. Notes that most local bureaucracies are still used to a system of authoritarian supervision, whereby decision-making is still centralized, with little autonomy to interpolate or adjust regulations. This kind of restriction limits the possibilities of ethical reflection and participatory problem-solving, which are crucial requirements of substantive compliance.

Organizational communication patterns also become emphatic in the spread of ethical standards and adherence behavior within an organization. Highlights that open communication, systematic feedback and an open discussion of ethical issues encourages the development of a collective sense of responsibility among employees. When leaders express their values in a clear and consistent way, compliance becomes a cooperative organizational goal and not a dictatorship. On the other hand, misunderstanding of regulations and the implementation of conflicting service practices can be caused by the barriers of communication, which may be the result of bureaucratic silence or fear of being reprimanded. Fragmented interdepartmental communication has been found to be a common problem in the local government of Makassar that negatively affects the consistency of service standards and accountability measures.

Another characteristic feature of leadership in the Indonesian bureaucracy is the paternalism whereby leaders take a quasi-parental role to the subordinates, both in terms of authority and protection. Although paternalistic leadership may serve to strengthen loyalty, integration, and a familial organizational culture, it simultaneously has the risk of creating dependency and preventing severe critiques. Paternalistic leaders often focus on discipline and obedience without paying much attention to the significance of empowering subordinates to make moral judgments and take initiative. Therefore, this leadership style gives both positive and negative results: it brings about order and respect and may foster a culture of compliance that is regulated by the rule and not grounded in morals.

Paternalistic leadership is extremely entrenched in the bureaucratic institutions of Makassar. A lot of civil servants feel deep respect and emotional attachment towards their seniors, but their relationship tends to limit their desire to question what is going on in an unethical way or make reformistic efforts. Because of this, compliance is mainly an externally driven factor which is

based on loyalty to the leader as opposed to being accountable to the people. However, paternalistic leadership, when combined with ethical leadership and participatory communication, may develop into benevolent leadership pattern, which preserves the respect of the hierarchy, and at the same time encourages the authentic moral interaction.

Structural and Institutional Challenges to Compliance

Empirical research has always shown that the behavior of civil servants (ASN) in regards to compliance is central to shaping and in many cases restricting the behavior of civil servants. Even though personal ethics and leadership potentials do matter, institutional malfunctions in the bureaucratic institutions often constrain the ability of even the well-meaning civil servants to behave in a way that is ethically and professionally acceptable. These restrictions can take many forms and some of them are overregulation, rigidity in procedures, ineffective accountability systems and political interference. Together, they contribute to the formation of the environment where compliance is still formal, not substantive, and is predetermined by the administrative necessity, but not the ethical desire to act (Amankwa et al., 2022).

Overregulation is one of the most recurrent institutional issues, as has been found in the reviewed literature. The Indonesian bureaucracy follows a kaleidoscope of rules, circulars, and administrative decrees as most bureaucracies in the developing countries do. Although these rules are meant to provide order and standardization, they often cause confusion, duplication, and inefficiency in the delivery of the services in the government. As a matter of fact, civil servants are usually at crossroads in interpreting or balancing the different instructions by various levels of government. Because of this, compliance turns out to be a question of following the most immediate or enforceable rule, instead of following and comprehending the wider goal of ethics within the span of serving the populace.

This is complicated by procedural rigidity. Numerous researchers point to the fact that formalism, which is a culture where compliance to form but not function is still dominant in the bureaucratic procedures within a local government. The civil servants tend to care more about paperwork, signature, or compliance with reporting templates than delivery of their services in time, fairly, and satisfactorily to citizens. Such an insistence on procedure compromises adaptability, creativity and receptiveness to service provision. It also does not encourage moral judgment or discretion among civil servants because they are prone to see going out of the normal procedure as dangerous or unfaithful. This climate brings compliance down to an automated exercise to go through procedures that pass the checklists but disregard morality and responsibility to society.

The second issue that is closely associated with overregulation is the fact that there is a lot of red tape in bureaucracy which is the overburdening of administration that hampers efficiency and responsiveness. Red tape not only makes delivery of services slow but also discourages Civil servants who are willing to deliver their duties effectively. Bureaucratic processes in most local government agencies, such as Makassar, are marked by redundant paperwork, several chains of command, and poor delegation of powers. These inefficiencies cause frustration and lessen the sense of agency in civil servants and encourage compliance behaviors where procedure is prioritized over ethical initiative.

There are a few supervision and irregular performance evaluation systems that compound these issues. The authors note that the current control systems in the Indonesian bureaucracies usually focus on administrative performance (e.g., report submission or attendance) more than on quality performance (e.g., integrity in the service, customer satisfaction, or ethical behavior). Supervisory positions are more inclined towards the identification of procedural infractions than does ethical contemplation or career development. Thus, civil servants get to

understand how to follow the superficial signs of performance without focusing on deeper moral and service-oriented aspects. This is also due to the absence of systematic feedback loops or participatory evaluation which does not provide the opportunity to detect unethical practices or structural inefficiency early so that noncompliant behaviors become free to continue.

The other significant structural issue detected in the literature regards the poor accountability structures both internally and externally. Strong accountability involves transparency, control and being able to penalize or remedy a noncompliant behavior. Nevertheless, the research by Setiawan (2022) shows that in most Indonesian governmental institutions, accountability is still disrupted and politicized. Bureaucratic accountability will be downward; internally, accountability usually moves up the line, thus, civil servants are answerable to their bosses and not the citizens. This vertical system of accountability supports allegiance to power and not duty to its citizens. On the outside, external controls like public complaint systems or audit apparatuses are either ineffective or obscure or political in nature.

Notes that the lack of integration between the performance management systems and the set ethical standards usually results in the weak accountability. Even in many cases, when civil servants meet quantitative performance goals, they are seen as being compliant even though their actions might go against the principles of the ethics of the public service. This formal dissociation of obedience to rules and ethical responsibility creates a paradox in the sense that in a given scenario, civil servants can be seen to obey rules in paperwork and at the same time they can be involved in actions that undermine the quality of governance. Without having an extensive accountability system, which include ethical indicators and feedback by the people, compliance is just a superficial procedure and not a substantive accountability.

Political interference is another institutional setback that has biased compliance behavior within the delivery of services to the populace. Political patronage and clientelism still affect the way the bureaucracy is appointed and promoted and even how decisions are made in many local governments, Makassar being no exception despite the reform efforts in the bureaucracy. According to Upadhyaya (2025) The situation in which political considerations override meritocratic principles makes the civil servants feel pressured to act in accordance with the political interests instead of set service standards or ethical principles. This prisonization undermines the professionalism in administration and reduces the moral standing of the governmental bodies.

Besides, the fear of political retaliation does not make the civil servants report misconduct or defy unethical instructions. Discovered that a lot of ASN consider compliance to be a self-preservation tool in a highly politicized setting instead of a demonstration of ethical character. Accordingly, obedience becomes a dynamic behavior that is dictated by power relations as opposed to moral belief. This politicization of bureaucracy not only demeans the ideals of impartiality and fairness but also breeds the kind of distrust that the government institutions have on the society.

The climax of the structural and institutional problems is that procedural compliance- a form of behavior that involves the civil servants focusing on the satisfaction of the requirements of the administration instead of internalizing the moral spirit of governance. This symptom is widely described in the academic sources as a symptomatic manifestation of dysfunction on a systemic level. Adherence to procedures provides bureaucratic predictability but does not often bring about fair and responsive administrative services. Civil servants who work within institutionalized restrictions seem to be adherent but unrelated to the moral principles that form the basis of the administration of the population.

Institutional reforms should not simply be a procedural modification to achieve value-based compliance. Research highlights the fact that a form of integrated governance is required to balance the regulatory frameworks with the ethical goals, and to create a discretionary leeway within accountability frameworks and to give civil servants the ability to interpret and apply the law in a manner which is in the best interest of the people. The civil service re-evaluation, decentralization of decision-making powers, and strengthening external accountability mechanisms, including the public complaint portals and community monitoring are all important measures of changing the compliance strategy into an ethical obligation rather than a procedural one.

Professionalism and Service Ethics in Public Administration

The aspect of service ethics and professionalism is the critical theme of the conversation on compliance in the field of administration. In the literature reviewed, in addition to being a precondition of ethical behavior, professionalism has come to be a direct effect of institutional reform and organizational integrity. Professionalism is a set of values, skills, and conducts that civil servants should exhibit towards their roles to perform their responsibilities in an accountable, neutral, and serving the common good. Within the framework of the Indonesian state public administration, and especially the Makassar City, development of professionalism is rapidly considered as the means of turning the culture of bureaucracy of formality and hierarchy into the culture of ethicality and efficiency, as well as serving to its citizens.

According to the literature it is seen that setting up and internalization of professional standards and other codes of ethics is the basis of enhancing compliance and moral actions by civil servants. The Indonesian government has established some formal tools in the management of professional ethics, including the ASN Code of Ethics and the ASN Core Values, Values core values of the instruments of professional ethics, integrity, and public service. The codes are aimed at helping civil servants in complicated administrative scenarios and staying impartial in politically heightened settings (Upadhyaya, 2025). Nonetheless, according to a number of researchers, the success of such codes does not rely on their official nature but rather on the degree to which they are embedded in everyday bureaucratic procedures.

Studies focus on the fact that in most instances ethical codes are still symbolic documents which are not fully implemented into the performance evaluation procedures or decision making. This distance between the formal and the informal highlights the necessity of constant moral reinforcement, reflective leadership and institutional role models. When civil servants regard ethical codes as living documents to establish professional identity, and not as the requirements of the administration, the compliance shifts to the rule-following, to value-driven behavior. Professionalism in the field of public administration is also tightly connected with the concept of competence which presupposes the capacity of civil servants to use their knowledge, technical skills, and ethical judgment at work. There is also a consistent finding across the reviewed studies that the greater the level of competence, the higher the adherence to ethical standards and better the service delivery.

Competence does not just increase efficiency, but also gives civil servants the strength to make morally upright decisions in the situation where there is ambiguity or high-pressure. Low competence, on the other hand, is usually associated with adherence to inflexible processes, anxiety of responsibility, and vulnerability to malpractices. In this scenario, professional competence serves as a technical and ethical basis of compliance. Ethical accountability holds the civil servants to higher standards, participation in problem-solving, and the empathetic interaction with citizens. Andreetta & Kolloch, A. (2022) Argues that professionalism mediates between bureaucratic practices and moral will so that civil servants will be able to reconcile

institutional goals with social values. As a result, the overlap between competence and ethics is one of the main factors of service quality and institutional legitimacy.

The literature states that training and professional development programmes were crucial in ensuring that ethical behavior and law adherence among civil servants are strengthened. Modern training models do not only focus on technical skills development but also on the development of moral and emotional intelligence and values of servitude to the people. Indicatively, the value of integrity, accountability, and innovation in the provision of the public services are to be instilled by taking several initiatives taken by the National Institute of Public Administration (LAN RI) and the regional training centers (BKD).

According to Svava (2021), civil servants who undergo organized ethical training are more aware of their ethical duties and are more consistent in implementing ethical principles when interacting with service. The same argument is presented who believes that constant professional growth fosters reflective ability thus making civil servants be able to balance procedural requirements with ethical ones. However, there are still several obstacles such as inaccessibility and disparities in the coverage and quality of training programs by the regions. Training in many local government institutions has not been a channel of achieving ethical change but a requirement in its formality.

Based on this, training programs should be contextual, participatory and behavioral change oriented in order to be effective as opposed to just passing information. Ethical reasoning and translation of moral principles into everyday professional behavior could be supported with the inclusion of ethics module into the leadership development process, decision-making simulation exercises, and peer-review activities. Indonesia has some reform-oriented agencies that provide relevant examples of how professionalism and ethics can be institutionalized to the extent of encouraging compliance. One example is the Corruption Eradication Commission (KPK) which has established integrity-building programmes which combine ethical education with a well-developed system of monitoring and open recruiting procedures.

Similarly, the Ministry of Finance and the Tax Directorate have been the first to introduce the policy of promotions based on merit and campaigns to promote a culture of ethics, thereby helping to reduce the problem of discretionary abuse and increase the population of trust. Municipally, different places have also taken the initiative to introduce measures to enhance ethical accountability through digital systems to report complaints and transparent performance attractive displays in places like Makassar. Such programs increase transparency levels and instill a feeling of duty and professionalism among the civil servants. When performance information and ethical measures are put on the public eye, the civil servants are more likely to match their actions with the values of fairness, integrity, and excellence of services.

Discussion

Synthesis of the results of this literature review shows that behavior of civil servants (ASN) towards compliance in the service of the population is a multidimensional construct that is influenced by institutional, organizational and individual forces. The implication of these findings goes beyond the administrative reform to reach the heart of public management as an academic discipline and hence require a realignment of conceptualization and operationalization of compliance, professionalism, and ethics in public institutions. One of the major implications is made with regard to the distinction between formal compliance and substantive ethical behavior. It has been repeatedly warned in the existing body of literature that bureaucratic systems that are characterized by procedural conformity tend to be ineffective in terms of instilling moral responsibility or intrinsic motivation among civil servants.

The empirical investigations on the Indonesian reforms in bureaucracy reveal that despite the statutes like the ASN Act No. 5/2014 legalizing ethics and professionalism, the fragility in its adherence is observed when not internalized in the culture. This means that compliance management has to shift its paradigm to a rule-enforcement paradigm to an ethical-commitment paradigm where values are not written on paper but embedded in the mind. That is, ethics should be incorporated in the management of the public sector as a strategic competency and not a regulatory requirement a process long supported by researchers of organizational culture and ethics.

The second implication is the issue of leadership and the moral care. The transformational and ethical leadership theories regularly suggest that the ethical integrity of leaders has a direct impact on the ethical orientation and ethical compliance behavior of subordinates (Mohi & Zhang, 2023). In the Indonesian bureaucracy, the results of reforms are often associated with the quality of leadership. As per the empirical data, transparency, fairness, and accountability modeled by leaders create the environment where civil servants can internalize organizational values instead of just taking orders. Considering the traditionally hierarchical and paternalistic culture of bureaucracy in Makassar, leadership reform is therefore not a luxury, but central. Managers need to be developed as ethical leaders who take an active part in shaping norms, promoting ethical discussion, and innovating stagnation. This is in line with the increased management literature that leadership legitimacy is based on moral authority other than positional power.

The third implication is that of competence and professionalism as the motivators of ethical compliance. The analyzed literature indicates that competence supports a moral behavior as it provides civil servants with the ability to act responsibly and independently in a complex administration system. Employees who are incompetent or lacking skill knowledge would only go back to strict rule-following and avoid responsibility; a sign of procedural and not substantive compliance. This has been supported by the research on public-sector competence, which demonstrates that professional mastery can give the confidence to make ethically sound judgments even in the ambiguous situations. As such, in Makassar and similar urban bureaucries, the strategic management of competence development such as through the periodic learning, ethical training and performance-based career systems becomes a foundation of sustainable compliance.

The consequence of accountability and institutional design are also important. Traditional monitoring strategies, characterized by the presence of sanctions and procedural regulation of the future, show limited performance within the setting that is characterized by shared norms and high levels of power distance. Empirical evidence suggests that compliance can be promoted through the introduction of accountability tools embedded in the transparency, participatory governance and community feedback strategies to align bureaucratic responsibility and societal expectations. The given observation is consistent with the survived academic discussion on the topic of public-management reforms that promulgate the ideas of citizen co-production and participatory monitoring as the key to enhancing bureaucratic ethics. In this regard, the municipal government of Makassar should formalize citizen-reporting systems, conduct ethical audits, and use performance dashboard, which links compliance to the visible community results.

Another institutional implication is derived out of bureaucratic culture itself. Research on the topic of the Indonesian public administration repeatedly follows the pattern and marks the hierarchy rigidity, status orientation, and risk aversion as structural factors that hold back ethical autonomy. It is not a secret that bureaucracies, in which a control logic as the underlying basis, are not receptive to innovation and moral reflexivity. According Suprayitno & Abbas

(2024) there is little chance that compliance reforms can succeed without cultural change whereby compliance culture of fear of reprimand is replaced with the culture of trust, integrity and professional pride. To researchers studying management in the public sector, the results make the analytical linkage between structural reform and behavioral change seem more important, that is, the applicability of the organizational-culture theory.

Professional ethics and codes of conduct are also considered as being important but under-used. Though the Code Etik ASN in Indonesia has been able to create a normative system, research indicates that, in many cases, ethical codes are symbolic, but not operational (Babri et al., 2021). The study in the field of organizational ethics shows that the impact of ethical codes on behavior is achieved only when they are incorporated into human-resource processes such as the recruitment, appraisal and promotion. This would require a combination of ethical performance measures in the Key Performance Index (KPI) systems and harmonization of institutional incentives with ethical behavior in Makassar instead of efficiency measures alone.

The implication, as per a managerial practice perspective is that the human-resource management in the context of the public organizations can move towards value-based systems (Kazmi et al., 2023). Merit systems Empirical studies on this topic indicate that open recruitment process, promotion based on competence, and evaluation based on ethics make merit systems sustainable to motivate adherence. On the other hand, compliance is weakened where promotion is politicized and this is evidenced by studies of bureaucratic politicization in Southeast Asia. Based on this recommendation, HR reform is necessary to instill professionalism within the civil service at Makassar by isolating personnel processes of politics and building a system of merit-based and morally upright careerism.

Another managerial implication is the technological innovation, specifically the digital governance. Indonesia has shown that e-governance can help increase transparency, limit discretion, and raise accountability levels. However, technology cannot reconfigure behavior alone as suggested by the global public -management scholarship. Without the parallel culture and moral change, online technologies will be used to maintain ineffectiveness instead of building honesty. Hence, digital innovation in Makassar needs to be complemented with ethical leadership, professional proficiency, and participatory control in order to embody transformative effects.

Policy wise, the consequences are just as disastrous. The reform of compliance should have a systems-thinking approach including legal, organizational, and behavior elements into a consistent management system. Divided efforts like ethics training without leadership reform; or without accountability mechanisms through digitalization; only bring about superficial compliance. The whole process of reform is thus synergistic; this means that institutions like the Civil Service Commission, Inspectorate and Human Resources Agency must work together and thus ensure that enforcement and cultural reinforcements are uniform. In addition to that, ethical impact assessments should be established by policymakers in similar ways as environmental assessments are to evaluate the effects of new regulations on civil servants' moral agency and discretionary exercise.

On a theoretical level, the paper encourages management theorists to rethink the concept of compliance as a dynamic process of learning morality rather than an objective of the enforcement of rules. This intersects with new notions in behavioral ethics (Jancsics et al., 2023), as well as, in the context of the theory of public-service motivation, that moral behavior in organizations is developed through socialization, introspection and reinforcement. In that respect, compliance can be discussed as a behavioral capacity that is being shaped by leadership, culture, and institutional design a framework that is consistent with the post-bureaucratic paradigm in public management.

Conclusion

This study reaffirms that the behavior of civil servants toward compliance in public service is not merely an administrative or procedural matter but a profound managerial and ethical challenge that lies at the heart of effective governance. The synthesis of literature reveals that genuine compliance arises where professionalism, ethical leadership, organizational culture, and institutional accountability intersect. In the context of Makassar City, and indeed across developing bureaucracies, reforms must move beyond the mechanistic enforcement of rules toward cultivating moral commitment, competence, and reflective public service values. Effective management of public institutions therefore requires integrating ethical reasoning into leadership development, embedding professionalism in human resource systems, and designing accountability mechanisms that are participatory, transparent, and value-driven. By advancing a multidimensional understanding of compliance rooted in ethics, professionalism, and citizen trust this study underscores that sustainable bureaucratic reform depends not simply on new policies or technologies but on the moral renewal of public administration itself.

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