

# Review of Understanding Motives and Ethics: The Impact on Civil Servants' Political Knowledge and Federal Governance Systems

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## Abstract

The role of civil servants in shaping governance federal systems is influenced by motives and adherence to ethical principles, which directly impact political knowledge and decision-making. The article examines how motives and ethics among civil servants influence governance effectiveness and public trust in federal systems. This review analyzed existing literature on the intersection of motives, ethics, and political knowledge within the context of civil service in federal systems—a systematic review methodology covering studies published between 2003 and 2023. Searches were conducted in PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, and Google Scholar using relevant keywords and search strings. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied during the screening process, followed by data extraction and quality assessment. The findings revealed civil servants' ethical motives enhance accountability and decision-making, while challenges like political patronage and ideological bias can hinder integrity and objectivity. Specialized knowledge from policy advocacy motives may limit broader governance effectiveness. The findings emphasize the need for strong ethical frameworks, continuous training, and institutional support to promote knowledgeable and ethically driven governance. This study recommends more robust ethical training programs, clear regulatory frameworks, and enhanced oversight mechanisms to ensure that civil servants' motives align with the principles of good governance.

**Keywords:** Political Awareness, Power Dynamics, Civil Servants' Knowledge, Federal Systems, Motives in Governance

## Introduction

Federalism has historically emerged as a governance framework that accommodates diverse territories by balancing unity and diversity, allowing local preferences and identities to coexist within a national polity (Gagnon, 2021; Zahrin & Mohamed, 2022). This decentralization of political authority enhances democratic participation by enabling citizens to be represented

locally and nationally (Brenton, 2023). As a result, federal systems can tailor policies to meet regional needs, fostering innovation through what are often termed "laboratories for democracy" (Tyler & Gerken, 2022). However, federalism also introduces complexities, including jurisdictional conflicts, uneven resource distribution, and the necessity for effective intergovernmental coordination (Gagnon, 2021).

Globally, federal systems exhibit significant variation in structure and function, shaped by unique historical and cultural contexts. For instance, while the U.S. federalism was designed to balance power among independent states, Nigeria's system aims to accommodate its vast linguistic, religious, and cultural diversity (Leider, 2020). Within these frameworks, civil servants are crucial for daily governance, implementing policies, and providing public services (Salomonsen et al., 2016; Engin & Treleaven, 2019). Their effectiveness is closely linked to their understanding of the political landscape, as political awareness among civil servants fosters good governance by enabling them to navigate complex policymaking processes (Zetra et al., 2022).

Political awareness is a foundational aspect for civil servants, encompassing an understanding of the political environment, government functions, and the policy goals of various actors (Rhodes, 2016). This awareness allows them to anticipate political challenges and align their actions with government objectives, especially in federal systems characterized by competing interests and complex governance structures (Sarihati & Santosa, 2019). The political dynamics within federal systems can significantly shape the level of awareness among civil servants, with those closer to power centers often having better access to information and understanding of government goals (Kopecký et al., 2022).

While research has explored elements of political knowledge and civic education, a gap exists in understanding how political awareness, power dynamics, and motives collectively influence civil servants' knowledge in federal systems. Previous studies have examined issues like trust in government and political responsiveness, yet the interplay between these factors has not been thoroughly investigated (Christensen & Læg Reid). This review aims to bridge these gaps by analyzing how political contexts and power structures shape civil servants' understanding and application of information, ultimately impacting governance outcomes.

The growing complexity of civil servants' environments emphasizes the significance of this review. Federal systems, with their decentralized power structures, require civil servants to navigate intricate relationships among various levels of governance. Understanding the dynamics of political awareness, power, and motives is essential for improving governance quality and equipping civil servants to handle political challenges effectively.

Despite existing literature on civil servants' roles in policy implementation, a focused analysis of the intersection of political awareness, power dynamics, and motives remains scarce. Research typically examines these factors in isolation, missing their interconnected effects. This review posits that these interrelated aspects profoundly shape the knowledge held by civil servants. Political awareness influences how information is perceived, power dynamics dictate access to knowledge, and personal motives drive its application in

policymaking. Integrating these factors, this review provides a holistic perspective on the complexities of civil service effectiveness within federal systems.

### **Eligibility Criteria**

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to maintain the review's focus and rigor. Empirical studies, theoretical articles, and case studies published in peer-reviewed journals between 2000 and 2024 were included. Articles had to be published or translated into English, and the review focused only on federal systems with significant regional autonomy. Studies addressing civil servants' motives and ethics were prioritized, while those on non-federal systems or irrelevant topics were excluded.

### **Search Strategy**

The literature search was conducted across multiple databases, including PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. These databases were selected to provide a comprehensive range of high-quality peer-reviewed articles, ensuring that the review captured both theoretical and empirical insights into civil service motives, ethics, and governance within federal systems. A combination of keywords such as "civil servants," "motives," "ethics," "political knowledge," and "federal systems" was used. The search strings were designed to capture studies at the intersection of these concepts. The review targeted literature published between 2000 and 2024 to include foundational and current studies.

### **Study Selection Process**

The selection process involved title and abstract screening, followed by full-text review. Initially, titles and abstracts were reviewed to exclude studies that did not meet the inclusion criteria. The full texts of the remaining studies were then assessed in detail for their relevance to the research objectives. Two independent reviewers conducted the assessment to enhance reliability. Any disagreements between the reviewers were resolved by consulting a third reviewer, ensuring that all included studies met the necessary methodological and thematic standards.

### **Data Extraction**

A standardized data extraction form was used to collect relevant information from each study systematically. Key details captured included the study's author, year of publication, region, methods used (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods), and the main findings related to motives and ethics. The extracted data were used to synthesize insights into how civil servants' motivations and ethical considerations shape political knowledge and governance within federal systems.

### **Data Synthesis and Integration**

Thematic analysis was employed to synthesize qualitative data from the reviewed studies, identifying key themes and patterns related to civil servants' motives, ethics, and their influence on political knowledge and governance. To provide a comprehensive view, findings from qualitative and quantitative studies were integrated, facilitating data triangulation. This mixed-methods approach provided a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics driving civil servants' behavior, enhancing the review's contribution to the field. The synthesis of diverse data sources allowed for robust conclusions and a nuanced interpretation of how motives and ethics interact within federal governance structures.

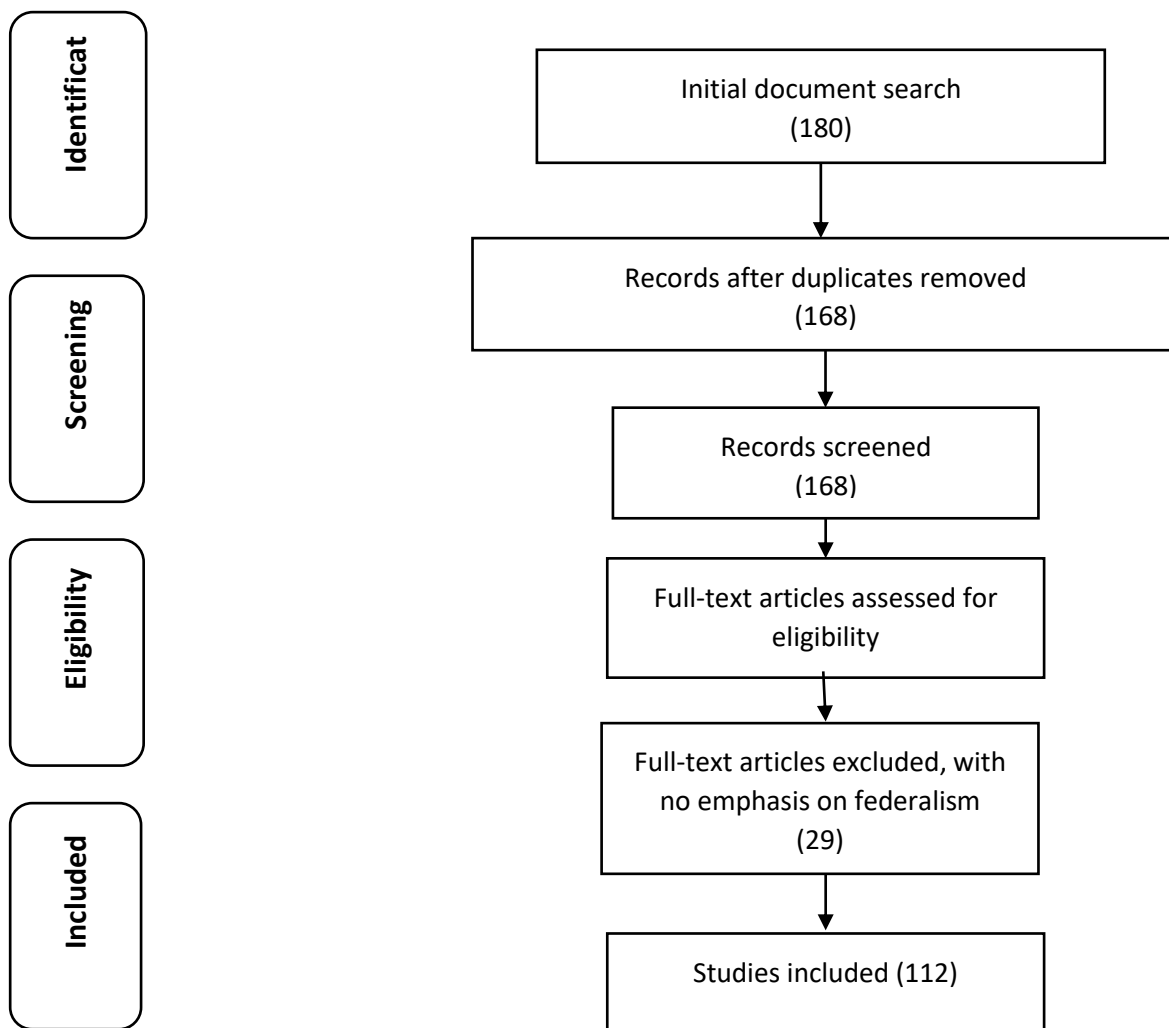


Figure 1: Document selection criteria

## Results

The literature on political awareness and knowledge utilization highlights the complex relationship between civil servants' understanding of political contexts and their application of knowledge in policy-making. Quaglia (2005), and Biland & Gally (2018), emphasize that political awareness enhances civil servants' ability to navigate policy environments and anticipate political consequences. However, Sandberg et al (2019), suggest that political awareness aligns decisions with political priorities for effective policy implementation, while Yu et al (2024), warn that excessive political awareness can bias knowledge application by favoring political objectives over evidence-based decisions. Although these studies provide insights, they often lack longitudinal data and fail to explore how political awareness evolves within federal systems.

In federal systems, where authority is divided between central and regional governments, civil servants play a crucial role in coordinating and implementing policies across levels of government (Ndraha, 2023). Their understanding of federalism, including the division of powers, is essential for ensuring policies align with national and regional needs (Stevens, 2011; Rohr, 2002). An informed civil service is vital to navigating jurisdictional

overlaps and promoting policy coherence, as seen in Germany's effective intergovernmental relations (Behnke & Kropp, 2021). Additionally, political awareness fosters accountability and transparency, helping civil servants understand the political implications of their actions and maintain public trust (Tamsah et al., 2020).

Civil servants must also be attuned to elected officials' political climate and priorities, particularly in managing complex intergovernmental relations (Aliyu et al., 2022). For instance, Canada's civil servants have successfully addressed regional disparities by facilitating communication between government levels (Atkinson et al., 2013). Understanding the constitutional framework and mechanisms for resolving disputes helps mitigate conflicts and maintain harmonious relations between federal and regional authorities (Hadiyantina, 2021). Continuous professional development in federalism equips civil servants to adapt to emerging challenges, ensuring the resilience and sustainability of federal systems (Acharya & Zafarullah, 2020; Aliyu et al., 2022). Investing in these competencies strengthens governance and allows federal systems to remain responsive and innovative.

### **The Relationship between Political Awareness and Knowledge**

The relationship between political awareness and civil servants' knowledge in federal systems is crucial for effective governance but often underexplored. Civil servants in federal systems, such as Nigeria, must balance centralized authority with regional autonomy, requiring technical expertise and a deep understanding of intergovernmental relations. Political awareness allows civil servants to navigate political ideologies, party priorities, and governance processes, enabling them to implement policies that align national and regional interests (Gerson, 2020).

Civil servants' political awareness helps anticipate policy shifts and manage conflicts between state and federal priorities in countries like India and the U.S., where state autonomy is significant. However, maintaining neutrality amid political pressures remains challenging, especially in polarized environments like the U.S. (Grube, 2015). Balancing political awareness with impartiality is vital for aligning national and regional policies (Sørensen et al., 2020).

Training programs in federations like Canada and Germany focus on technical governance and federalism's political nuances. However, they often fail to address the need for civil servants to critically analyze political contexts without partisanship (Vincent & Stephen, 2015). In Australia, senior civil servants receive intergovernmental relations and political literacy training, enabling them to provide nonpartisan advice under political pressure (Steane, 2008).

Civil servants' ability to mediate intergovernmental disputes is critical in federal systems with frequent tensions, such as Brazil. Their understanding of constitutional frameworks and political awareness is key to resolving conflicts and fostering cohesive governance. Civil servants must continually refine their political and technical expertise to uphold ethical standards while navigating complex political landscapes (Eichbaum & Shaw, 2010).

### **Factors Affecting Political Awareness among Civil Servants**

Political awareness among civil servants is shaped by factors such as their role, education, and access to information, all of which influence their political engagement and effectiveness.

Senior civil servants, especially in Brazil and Nigeria, tend to have higher political awareness due to their proximity to policy decisions, while administrative staff focus more on efficiency (Aliyu et al., 2022; Preston, 2001). Education plays a key role, with civic education enhancing awareness in countries like Switzerland and Ethiopia, particularly in navigating complex governance systems (Behrens, 2016; Fiseha, 2019). Access to reliable information varies by country, with Australian civil servants benefiting from open data, while restrictions limit access in the UAE (Alkendi, 2011). Broader political culture also affects awareness, as seen in Argentina's activist history and Belgium's neutrality (Panizza et al., 2018; Poirier, 2008). Leadership and socio-cultural factors like ethnicity and regional identity further shape awareness, particularly in South Africa, Nigeria, and Malaysia (Naidoo, 2006; Ile, 2004; Junn & Masuoka, 2008).

### **The Impact of Political Awareness on Civil Servants' Political Knowledge**

The relationship between political awareness and knowledge among civil servants is complex, especially in federal systems like Switzerland and Nigeria. Politically aware civil servants are skilled at navigating information across government levels, helping them adapt to policy changes and align with political objectives (Eke et al., 2009; Ojo, 2022). Unlike centralized systems, federal structures require managing competing interests, making political awareness essential for enhancing knowledge (Pribadi & Kim, 2022). Civil servants balance national directives with regional interests in countries like Brazil and Austria, gaining deeper insights into policies and negotiations (Stepan, 2004; Maybin, 2016). Political awareness also connects policies to broader goals, critical in regions like Argentina and Malaysia, where autonomy and ethnic factors influence governance (Ardanaz et al., 2014; Tajudin & Yusoff, 2020). It strengthens critical thinking, enabling civil servants in countries like India and South Africa to propose tailored policy adjustments (Rex & Singh, 2003). Additionally, it improves communication, fosters public trust, and ensures responsive governance (Galston, 2001; Cheung, 2009).

### **Political Power and Its Role in Civil Servants' Knowledge**

Political power significantly influences civil servants' knowledge acquisition and effectiveness, especially in complex political environments (Koliba et al., 2017). Their effectiveness in implementing policies is tied to their understanding of power structures, particularly in federal systems where power is dispersed across national, regional, and local authorities. This decentralized power can empower or constrain civil servants based on their capacity to navigate these dynamics, as seen in Somalia, Sudan, and South Sudan, where fragmented political power requires adaptability for stable governance (Menkhaus, 2006; Zona, 2020; Neo et al., 2023). Political power influences hierarchical structures and affects decision-making, resource distribution, and policy prioritization. In the Comoros, civil servants adjust strategies based on shifting alliances and political agendas, demonstrating the importance of understanding who holds power and its local impact (Oxley, 2020). This dynamic process is also evident in the USA, where civil servants must understand overlapping federal and state powers to anticipate conflicts and align actions with government objectives (Colombo & Steenbergen, 2020).

Power dynamics further shape resource allocation and civil servants' access to knowledge. In Sudan and South Sudan, political power is concentrated among elites, limiting civil servants' access to information and development opportunities, which leads to

disparities in governance capabilities and policy implementation (Meuleman, 2021). Civil servants must strategically navigate these dynamics to fulfil their roles effectively.

### **Power Structures within Federal Systems**

Federal systems exhibit varied power dynamics, with some maintaining centralized control and others decentralizing authority to regional entities (Huber, 2000; Bardhan & Mookherjee, 2006). For example, Pakistan's 18th Amendment in 2010 decentralized power significantly, altering civil servants' roles as they now balance regional and national priorities, necessitating an understanding of intergovernmental relations (Ali, 2015; Rana, 2020). In Iraq, ethnic and sectarian divisions complicate governance, requiring civil servants to navigate power distributions and maintain policy coherence (Visser, 2007).

Nepal's 2015 Constitution introduced a federal structure, demanding civil servants adapt to multi-tiered governance quickly, ensuring effective service delivery at local levels (Chandrika & Acharya, 2020; Jamil & Paudel, 2023). In decentralized systems like the Federated States of Micronesia, where states possess significant autonomy, civil servants must align local policies with national objectives while respecting regional governance (Puas, 2021; Weingast, 2014).

In contrast, the USA balances power through a complex federal-state relationship, requiring civil servants to understand jurisdictional boundaries and intergovernmental interactions (Bayer, 2003; Garritzmann et al., 2021). These diverse power structures compel civil servants to mediate conflicts, foster cooperation, and adapt to evolving political dynamics, with institutions like joint commissions crucial for effective governance (Van Kersbergen & Van Waarden, 2004; Demmke, 2005).

### **The Role of Civil Servants in Federal Power Dynamics**

In Canada and Australia, civil servants navigate the tension between federal directives and local priorities, ensuring policy coherence and service delivery across diverse regions (Stark, 2004; Bourgault & Dunn, 2014). In Pakistan and India, regional autonomy complicates the alignment of national and local policies, with the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) playing a crucial role in maintaining uniformity while accommodating regional variations (Ali, 2020; Verma, 2022). Regulatory agencies staffed by civil servants significantly influence policymaking in federal systems like Brazil and Mexico, where they balance central and regional interests, acting as arbiters in resource allocation disputes (Moynihan, 2004; Alston et al., 2006). Civil servants also serve advisory roles in multilingual and multiethnic contexts like Switzerland and Belgium, guiding elected officials in navigating complex political landscapes (Veit et al., 2017; Viallon, 2013). Civil servants in fragile states such as Iraq and Bosnia are essential in mediating between national and subnational entities, promoting political stability and cooperative governance amid ethnic and sectarian divisions (Byman, 2003; Heeks, 2002). This emphasizes their dual accountability to political leaders and the administrative frameworks they manage (Evans, 2001).

### **How Political Power Influences Civil Servants' Political Knowledge**

Civil servants function in environments where power dynamics between central and regional governments shape governance (Trondal, 2004). To navigate these complexities, they require comprehensive political knowledge to understand power structures, intergovernmental

relations, and their legal roles within federal systems (Gailmard & Patty, 2007). This knowledge is crucial for aligning actions with the shifting priorities of national and subnational authorities (Woods, 2017). Educational and training programs are essential for equipping civil servants with the necessary skills to manage regional autonomy effectively, particularly in countries like Pakistan and Nigeria (Kettl et al., 2010; Zafiroopoulos et al., 2012). Political neutrality is another challenge, as civil servants must remain impartial while operating in politically polarized environments like Iraq, balancing political pressures without compromising their integrity (Lal, 2014; Hadiyantina, 2020). Applying political knowledge affects policy implementation in federal systems like the USA and Brazil, where regional governments have substantial authority (Franklin et al., 2013). Civil servants must consider divergent priorities to meet national objectives while accommodating local needs, as seen in Argentina and Venezuela (Aranha et al., 2014). Political knowledge is also vital for ensuring transparency and accountability in governance (Maropo, 2018). In Canada and Switzerland, civil servants leverage their understanding of political processes to meet public expectations for accountability and engage with stakeholders, safeguarding democratic values within federal systems (Knassmüller & Veit, 2016).

### **Motives Driving Civil Servants' Behavior in Federal Systems**

Civil servants' motivation in federal systems is shaped by a blend of public service commitment, career aspirations, and ideological alignment, which vary by country and federal arrangement (Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010). A strong sense of public service and civic duty is a primary motivator, particularly in nations like Canada and Switzerland, where civil servants are driven by a desire to enhance societal well-being and prioritize the public good (Anderfuhren-Biget, 2012; Perry, 2005; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015). However, competing interests and political pressures can undermine this commitment in more fragile contexts like Iraq and Nepal (Brinkerhoff et al., 2012).

Career development and job security also play significant roles in motivating civil servants. The civil service's hierarchical structure encourages individuals to align with superiors' expectations to secure promotions, particularly in countries with well-defined career pathways like India and Malaysia (Jacobson, 2011; Demmke, 2005; Perry et al., 2010). However, this can lead to self-serving bureaucratic behavior, especially in centralized systems where promotions may be politically motivated.

Additionally, ideological beliefs and values heavily influence civil servants' motivations. Civil servants may align with specific policy agendas in the U.S. and Brazil, which can either facilitate policy implementation or create friction when their beliefs conflict with those of the ruling administration (Levy, 2023; Brewer et al., 2000). In multi-tiered federal systems like Australia and Mexico, civil servants may advocate for policies aligned with their agency's strategic goals, which can lead to tensions amidst competing priorities (Lee & Jeong, 2015).

### **The Influence of Motives on Political Knowledge**

Civil servants' motivations significantly influence their political knowledge, with varying effects based on the nature of these motives (Vlacseková, 2019). Civil servants intrinsically motivated by public service or civic duty tend to proactively seek a deeper understanding of political processes within federal systems. Research indicates that such individuals often



pursue diverse information sources, enhancing their awareness of political developments across governance levels, as seen in countries like Switzerland and Canada (Anderfuhren-Biget et al., 2014; Syamsir, 2016).

In contrast, ideological motivations can lead to more complex outcomes. Civil servants with strong ideological beliefs may exhibit confirmation bias by selectively seeking information that aligns with their views, thereby limiting their broader understanding of political matters. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in polarized environments like the United States and Brazil, where ideological leanings can hinder objective policy evaluation (Tetlock, 2000).

Motives related to policy advocacy further complicate the dynamics between motivation and political knowledge. Civil servants focused on specific policy agendas often cultivate specialized expertise, such as in environmental or social welfare policy. While this specialization enhances their knowledge in those areas, it may restrict their engagement with broader political issues (Yi-Chong & Weller, 2008; Peters, 2015).

Lastly, ethical considerations influence political knowledge indirectly. Civil servants guided by ethical motives prioritize integrity, but unless ethical dilemmas intersect with political dynamics—like corruption or governance transparency—their understanding of political systems may not significantly improve. The relationship between ethics and politics becomes more pronounced in nations such as Nepal and Malaysia, where ethical governance is emphasized.

### **Ethical Considerations Related to Motives in Civil Service**

In federal systems, aligning civil servants' motives with ethical considerations is essential for integrity and public trust (O'Toole, 2006). Ethical motives promote accountability, transparency, and adherence to legal standards, which foster public confidence in governance (Farazmand, 2002). In countries like Canada and Australia, strict ethical adherence helps prevent corruption and enhances trust in institutions (Bureau et al., 2020; Pugh, 2019). Furthermore, avoiding conflicts of interest and acting in the public's best interests is crucial, especially in nations like Mexico and Brazil, where corruption challenges impartiality (López & Ramirez, 2016; Viana & Silva, 2017).

### **Discussion**

This review reveals significant insights into the motivations of civil servants in federal systems and their influence on political knowledge, ethical behavior, and governance dynamics. Intrinsic motivation driven by public duty strongly influences civil servants' political engagement, particularly in democratic contexts like Canada and Switzerland. Herein, civil servants are committed to public welfare, aligning policies with democratic principles (Atkinson et al., 2013; Meynhardt et al., 2024). However, in fragile federal contexts, such as Iraq and Nepal, civil servants struggle to balance public service ideals with political pressures (Heeks, 2002; Syamsir, 2016).

Career development is another significant motivator, particularly in structured civil service systems like India and Malaysia, where promotions drive behavior. This career focus can, however, stifle innovation, promoting bureaucratic inertia (Gangte, 2010; Yashaiya &

Noh, 2019; Kellough & Nigro, 2006). Ideological motivations, especially in polarized systems like the USA and Brazil, can lead to confirmation bias, influencing political knowledge and policy implementation (Tetlock, 2000; Piatak & Holt, 2021).

Ethical motivations, especially in countries like Canada and Australia, play a crucial role in maintaining transparency and public trust (Graycar & Sidebottom, 2012). Upholding legal standards and acting impartially, as seen in Switzerland and India, reinforces the rule of law and promotes governance integrity (Schmid, 2015; Kumar, 2003). In contrast, civil servants in politically fragmented systems like Bosnia face challenges in maintaining impartiality (Solomon et al., 2002). Civil servants in regulatory roles further mediate central-regional tensions, ensuring policy coherence while allowing regional flexibility (Merino, 2006; Meister, 2010). Thus, civil servants' motivations shape governance quality, especially in balancing public interest and political pressures.

### **Implications and Policy Considerations**

#### *Implications For Civil Service Training and Development*

This synthesis of existing literature highlights several critical implications for civil service training and development in federal systems. First and foremost, there is a pressing need for political awareness training. Civil service training programs should prioritize cultivating political awareness among civil servants. This entails providing in-depth education on the power structures within federal systems, including understanding the division of powers, legal frameworks, and the intricacies of intergovernmental relations. Therefore, by equipping civil servants with this knowledge, they can make informed decisions, effectively execute their responsibilities, and navigate the complex political landscapes inherent to federal systems. Ethical education also emerges as a critical consideration. It is essential to emphasize the importance of ethical principles within the civil service. Training should encompass ethical values, principles of accountability, transparency, and strategies for managing conflicts of interest. Civil servants should be guided in balancing their motives with ethical standards to maintain the integrity of the civil service and build trust with the public they serve. Additionally, these training programs should be viewed as continuous learning opportunities. Government agencies should actively encourage civil servants to learn lifelong and stay updated on evolving political developments. This could involve offering regular workshops, providing access to educational resources, and creating opportunities for further academic and professional development.

#### *Policy Recommendations for Enhancing Political Knowledge*

Policymakers can consider recommendations further to enhance political knowledge among civil servants in federal systems. Firstly, structured training programs should be developed and implemented. These programs must prioritize political awareness and ethical considerations and be mandatory for civil servants at all levels. Moreover, these programs should be tailored to the specific needs and challenges civil servants face within federal systems, recognizing the uniqueness of these governance structures. Interagency collaboration is another crucial recommendation. Encouraging cooperation and knowledge sharing among government agencies is vital to ensure that civil servants are well-informed about the political dynamics that impact their roles. This cross-agency approach can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the political landscape. Additionally, incentivizing lifelong learning should be a policy priority. Policymakers should incentivise civil servants to

engage in continuous learning and professional development. These incentives might include financial support for further education, recognition of expertise in specific policy areas, or opportunities for career advancement based on knowledge acquisition.

### *Practical Contribution*

The practical contribution of this review lies in its detailed examination of how political awareness, power dynamics, and underlying motives shape the knowledge civil servants hold and apply within federal systems. Highlighting these dynamics, this review offers key insights for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of public administration. Political awareness and an understanding of power structures are shown to be crucial for effective policy implementation, enabling civil servants to align their actions with evolving political landscapes. This alignment ensures that policies are effectively executed and adaptable to changing conditions, promoting stability and sustained governance.

This review also provides critical guidance for civil service training programs. By incorporating training modules focused on political awareness, ethical decision-making, and navigating power dynamics, civil servants can be better equipped to address the complexities of federal systems. This tailored training prepares them to manage challenges linked to political dynamics and ethical considerations, ultimately improving their performance and decision-making capabilities. Another significant contribution is the emphasis on how motives influence knowledge acquisition and application. Whether driven by ideology, career goals, or a public service ethos, these motives impact the decision-making process and the quality of policy advice. Recognizing and mitigating these biases, policymakers can design more balanced decision-making frameworks, leading to objective and effective governance.

The review also highlights the importance of promoting ethical governance. Focusing on transparency, accountability, and avoiding conflicts of interest, civil servants are better positioned to uphold public trust and ensure their actions align with democratic values. Additionally, this review offers insights into improving intergovernmental coordination, highlighting how understanding power dynamics can enhance collaboration between federal and subnational governments. Supporting balanced political neutrality is another practical implication, with this review offering frameworks that help civil servants maintain objectivity while exploring diverse political environments. This neutrality is essential for consistent public service delivery and for preventing undue partisan influence. In addition, this review contributes to more strategic career development within civil service, promoting alignment between institutional goals and personal aspirations. This fosters professional growth while improving public service outcomes.

### *Theoretical Contribution*

This review contributes to the theoretical understanding of the relationship between civil servants' motives, ethics, and political knowledge in federal systems. Integrating perspectives from public administration, governance, and ethics, this review provides a holistic framework that links motives—such as civic duty, career advancement, and ideological alignment—with their ethical implications on governance. This review highlights how intrinsic and extrinsic motivations interact with ethical considerations to shape civil servants' behavior, influencing the effectiveness of governance within federal structures. Additionally, this review introduces the concept of selective political knowledge driven by ideological motives and the potential

trade-offs between specialized expertise and broader governance understanding. These insights extend existing theories by illustrating the complex dynamics between personal motives, ethical decision-making, and institutional performance, particularly within decentralized and politically diverse systems. The findings also provide a foundation for future research on improving the ethical governance of civil servants through targeted interventions and support systems.

### **Addressing Potential Challenges and Concerns**

While enhancing political knowledge and aligning motives with ethical principles is essential, policymakers must also address potential challenges and concerns while implementing these recommendations. Neutrality and partisanship, for instance, pose an ongoing challenge. Balancing political awareness with the imperative for civil servants to remain politically neutral can be delicate. Policymakers and training programs should emphasize the importance of impartiality and professionalism in civil service roles. Resource constraints are another challenge that governments may encounter. Some government agencies may have limited resources, hindering their ability to provide extensive training and development programs. Policymakers should seek cost-effective training solutions and strive for equitable access to resources to ensure that all civil servants have the opportunity to enhance their political knowledge. Lastly, privacy and security concerns may emerge as civil servants engage in lifelong learning and political awareness activities. Policies and training programs should proactively address these concerns by ensuring the confidentiality and protection of sensitive information, thus safeguarding the individual civil servant and the government's interests.

### **Research Gaps and Future Research Agenda**

This review identifies several research gaps that offer opportunities for future studies. While the existing literature provides insights into the role of motives and ethics in civil service, there is limited empirical research on how these factors interact in politically fragmented federal systems. More comparative studies are needed to understand how civil servants in different federal contexts balance regional autonomy with national governance, particularly in regions marked by political instability or weak institutions. Additionally, the role of ideological motives and their impact on selective political knowledge remains underexplored. Future research could investigate how ideological biases shape decision-making processes and whether these biases hinder or enhance governance effectiveness across different administrative levels.

Another gap lies in the understanding of ethical dilemmas civil servants face when navigating conflicts between personal beliefs, regional priorities, and national policies. Studies that explore into how civil servants reconcile these tensions can provide practical insights into improving ethical governance in complex federal systems. Moreover, there is limited research on the impact of capacity-building programs to enhance civil servants' ethical decision-making and political knowledge. Future studies could evaluate the effectiveness of such interventions across various federal settings. The influence of technology and digitalization on civil servants' motives, ethics, and political knowledge warrants further exploration, especially in governance innovation and transparency. Addressing these research gaps can contribute to more robust theories and practices that promote ethical and effective public administration in diverse federal systems.

## Conclusion

This review has explored the multifaceted relationship between political awareness, power dynamics, motives, and civil servants' knowledge within federal systems. It has emphasized the critical role of political awareness in enabling civil servants to effectively engage with the intricacies of their governance structures while also highlighting the significance of ethical motives in maintaining the integrity of the civil service. This review has shed light on how political awareness enhances civil servants' ability to seek information, comprehend their political context, and develop vital critical thinking skills, all of which contribute to their effectiveness in communication, policy development, and adaptation to changing political landscapes. Recommendations to enhance civil service in federal systems include prioritizing political awareness and ethical education in training programs, tailoring training to address the unique dynamics of federal systems, promoting lifelong learning through incentives, facilitating cross-agency collaboration for comprehensive knowledge sharing, emphasizing political neutrality and professionalism, addressing resource constraints, and safeguarding privacy and security in the learning process. These measures aim to equip civil servants with the knowledge and ethical principles necessary to navigate the complexities of power structures and intergovernmental relations and maintain the integrity of the civil service while fostering transparency, accountability, and public trust in government operations. For future research, a comparative analysis of civil service in different federal systems, longitudinal studies tracking changes in civil servants' knowledge, investigations into the ethical dimensions of motives, and the efficacy of training and development programs can provide invaluable insights. Understanding the intricate interplay between political awareness, power dynamics, motives, and knowledge is imperative for the continued advancement of responsible and effective governance in federal systems across the globe.

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