

# Assessing the Ethical Competencies and Ethical Decision Making of the State Civil Apparatus: Insight from the Board of Regional Development Planning, Research and Development of Bandung City

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## Abstract

This study examines the impact of ethical competence on ethical judgment among Regional Development Planning, Research, and Development Agency of Bandung City Civil Servants (ASN). The study embraced a quantitative approach by administering questionnaires on 50 civil servant respondents at the agency. The study results are that the ethical competence level of the civil servants falls within the "good" range, reflecting that they are competent to be fair and neutral in a range of scenarios. Moreover, they are disposed towards ethical judgment in the direction of following the principles of justice, openness, and serving the public interest irrespective of being pressured or some limitation. The research findings highlight the significance of internalizing ethical values in influencing responsive and high-quality decisions. The study, in general, presents a close correlation between ethical competence and ethical decisions and supports the development of ethical values within the bureaucracy to ensure transparent and fair delivery of public service. The findings, apart from the context for the Bandung City Government, present practical implications for the Indonesian government-training approach and staff-recruitment procedures for transferring agile leadership traits such as adaptability and open-mindedness. Developing ethical competence among civil servants has greater societal benefits, such as greater trust from the public, better governance quality, and the development of an adaptive bureaucracy that is able to handle the future policy problems.

## Keywords

Ethical Competence, Ethical Decision Making, State Civil Apparatus (ASN), Agile Leadership.

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## **Introduction**

Civil Servants (Aparatur Sipil Negara/ASN) play a crucial role in the functioning of the state. They are the key component ensuring that the government can perform its duties effectively and deliver quality public services. As part of the governmental structure, civil servants are responsible for implementing government policies so that they can be applied within society. This role demands professionalism, accountability, and a high level of ethical competence. Ethical competence encompasses the understanding and application of moral values in every action and decision taken (Agang & Athirah, 2024). Therefore, civil servants must be capable of making ethical decisions that take into account their impact on society and the public interest.

Civil servants comprise both permanent civil servants (Aparatur Sipil Negara/ASN) and government employees under work agreements. Both are appointed by the State Civil Apparatus Supervisory Officer to carry out government positions or other state duties, with rights and salaries regulated by statutory provisions. In performing their duties, civil servants are responsible for implementing public policies in accordance with legal requirements, providing professional and high-quality public services, and strengthening the unity and integrity of the Republic of Indonesia.

Beyond administrative tasks, civil servants are obliged to uphold ethical principles that underlie every action and decision (Timbuleng et al., 2023). Ethics serve as the foundation for developing an ethical competence framework and ethical decision-making. Moral values such as neutrality and transparency are vital in serving the public interest. This is in line with the mandate of Law Number 5 of 2014, which emphasizes that civil servants should not only fulfill administrative functions but must also adhere to moral principles. Ethical conduct among civil servants is not merely a moral obligation but also a strategic instrument to ensure public services that are fair, transparent, and responsive (Yuniningsih et al., 2025).

In this research, ethical competencies are operationalized into six situational categories (1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 9), which include dimensions of neutrality, impartiality, and the commitment of civil servants to continuously develop their ethical capabilities in line with deontological, teleological, and consequentialist approaches. Meanwhile, ethical decision-making comprises four situational categories (4, 7, 8, and 10) that focus on the ability of civil servants to make decisions, including the application of affirmative action, consideration of the impacts of New Public Management (NPM), and ensuring transparency.

This study is motivated by the need to examine the extent to which ethical competencies and ethical decision-making among civil servants at the Regional Development Planning, Research, and Development Agency in Bandung City influence the process of making more ethical and higher-quality decisions. Although Law Number 5 of 2014 has established the rights, obligations, and fundamental principles of civil servants, practical

challenges remain, including potential biases in decision-making, political pressures, and low levels of transparency within the bureaucracy.

Therefore, improving the performance in the public sector means building human resources endowed with a flexible personality that enables adaptive, responsive, and innovation-oriented public organizations to respond to environmental dynamics. Moral competence must be maintained since losing it has direct consequences for the quality of decisions and service delivery for the public. This would enable civil servants to provide services that are more professional, transparent, and responsive to the needs of society.

### **Conceptual Framework**

In the contemporary world, the level of complexity in tasks for public service has become quite high, mandating that public service employees should not only be accomplished technically but should also enjoy a high degree of integrity and moral obligation. The success in performing these tasks is determined not just by efficiency and effectiveness but also by the capacity to perform ethically while encountering diverse obstacles and moral predicaments. As such, becoming ethically competent becomes essential and a basic foundation for ensuring that proper and accountable performance takes place within public service.

As Corley (2002) and Goethals et al. (2010) provide, the knowledge on laws and regulations, on moral standards, and on codes of ethics are elements that constitute ethical competence. As stated by Cooper et al. (2013), ethical competence also refers to the competence to manage moral predicaments efficaciously through the understanding of a body of ethical standards and appraisal of a situation. Ethical competence becomes influenced by a range of ethical frameworks constituting a base for making decisions and appraisal of actions and offers a direction for individuals to perform according to current moral standards and also to react aptly and with a sense of responsibility in various situations.

Ethical competence is also influenced by several ethical approaches, namely: Deontology, which evaluates actions based on moral principles and duties regardless of their consequences (Lum, 2022; Ranganathan, 2022); Teleology, which assesses actions based on the achievement of goals and collective well-being (Merrill & Odell, 1983; Sudarminta, 2013); and Consequentialism, which judges morality based on the impact or outcomes for the parties involved (The Ethics Centre, 2016; Saaida, 2024).

Furthermore, ethical competence incorporates values such as neutrality and impartiality. Ideally, neutrality signifies non-partisanship with the aim of upholding justice. However, in practice, neutrality can be questioned, as it may be used to preserve existing power structures and make it more difficult for marginalized groups to achieve justice. Neutrality according to Sari & Juniar (2024) is a non-alignment mindset acting in the upkeep of fairness and justice. Sianipar and Delima (2022) also elucidate that neutrality is one of the required values to be upheld in an effort to ensure nondiscriminatory behavior in

service provision to the people. Thus, non-partisanship is one essential pillar upon which fairness and balance are upheld in every action or judgment.

Neutrality and impartiality, according to Holmberg et al. (2009) and Suzuki et al. (2020), demand just and fair treatment in decisions that are made in the public. The principle is a crucial basis for the provision of fairness in decisions that are arrived at in the public and for boosting public legitimacy and trust towards service institutions. The use of neutrality and impartiality is thus a necessary aspect in the development of sound ethical competence, ensuring that service delivery is done professionally and responsibly.

Impartiality, as described by Holmberg et al. (2009) and Suzuki et al. (2020), requires fair and objective treatment in public decision-making. This principle is a vital foundation for ensuring justice in public decision-making processes and for enhancing public trust and legitimacy toward service institutions. Therefore, the application of neutrality and impartiality is an essential component in building strong ethical competence, ensuring that public services are delivered professionally and responsibly.

In each and every procedure for making decisions, especially in a public service context, it would be important that decisions are not just efficacious to a practical end but are also consonant with extant legal standards and moral principles. Decisions thus made shall be more widely accepted across the general public and thus fortify public trust in the institution in question. The idea of ethical decision-making thus assumes great importance as a model for appraisal and choice between alternative courses of action that are simultaneously legally justifiable and morally responsible.

Ethical decision-making refers to decisions that are both legally and morally sound and broadly acceptable to society (Trevino, 1986; Jones, 1991). Similarly, Lentari Dewi & Dwiyantri (2018) explain that ethical decision-making is the process of selecting one course of action from several alternatives, with the resulting decision adhering to legal norms and being morally accountable.

In this context, ethical decision-making is also particularly important in assessing the neutrality and transparency of civil servants (Aparatur Sipil Negara, ASN) as implementers of public policy. Civil servants are expected to work professionally without bias and maintain integrity in all bureaucratic processes. According to Klinik (2009), Affirmative Action is a policy designed to provide equal opportunities for specific groups or categories, whether based on gender or profession, so that they have the same opportunities as other groups in the same field. This policy can also be understood as granting certain privileges to specific groups. Malihah (2020) further notes that Affirmative Action is often perceived as a form of positive discrimination aimed at accelerating the realization of equality and justice. Meanwhile, Toda & Umbu Eda (2020) argue that Affirmative Action is inherently discriminatory, albeit positively, due to its temporary nature and its aim to open access or opportunities for certain societal groups so they can obtain equal opportunities with other groups that have previously enjoyed greater advantages or rights in the same field.

In addition to affirmative action, there is also the New Public Management (NPM) approach in public administration, which applies modern management principles to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery. This approach emphasizes achieving results (performance) over mere policy implementation and promotes decentralization, innovation, and accountability in government management (Indahsari & Raharja, 2020). Giaque (2010) shares a similar perspective, describing NPM as a public administration reform effort aimed at streamlining bureaucratic functions and enhancing flexibility in public sector organizations. While intended to reduce bureaucratic complexity, its implementation often produces the opposite effect, reinforcing the bureaucratic patterns it aims to change. Although NPM emphasizes efficiency and measurable outcomes, it may become ethically problematic if it focuses solely on performance without considering social justice. Therefore, efficiency must remain aligned with moral values and a commitment to public welfare.

Furthermore, transparency is also vital in the decision-making process. Decisions made openly must be subject to public oversight to ensure greater trust and moral as well as legal accountability. Mardiasmo (2009) defines transparency as the openness of government in providing information related to the management of public resources to relevant stakeholders. This definition is consistent with that of LPKN (2023), which describes transparency as the delivery of clear and accurate information without concealing facts that the public has the right to know. Through transparency, governments can demonstrate their commitment to justice and accountability while fostering active public participation.

Previous literature has mostly focused on ethical competence in such contexts as higher education institutions (Tey-Teijón et al., 2023), healthcare institutions (Suzuki et al., 2020), or religious institutions (Amrullah et al., 2023). National-level literature has similarly focused on regulatory compliance rather than decision-making under stress conditions (Timbuleng et al., 2023). We are aware of few studies on the link involved between ethical competence and decision-making by city-level planning institutions' civil servants. We fill such a void by presenting empirical observations from Bandung City and by introducing into such literature the agile leadership lens less applied in Indonesian public administration literature until now.

From the conceptual framework, the current study does not yield hypotheses in the classic sense of statistics, as the analytical technique is based on descriptive statistics. The study proposes instead two propositions to frame the analysis. P1: More ethical competence goes hand-in-hand with more pronounced patterns of ethical decision-making. P2: Ethical competence and decisional patterns of administrators align with practices of agile leadership, i.e., adaptability, responsiveness, and transparency. The proposition offers the interpretational lens used for analyzing and commenting on the descriptive findings. Here is the figure to clearly explain the conceptual framework.

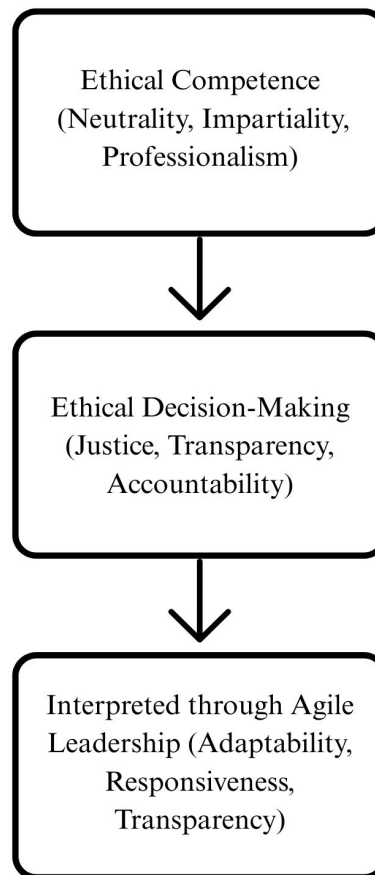


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

## Research Methods

The research method refers to the systematic procedures undertaken by the researcher to obtain data and information in accordance with the study's objectives. This study employed a quantitative approach to examine ethical competence and its influence on the ethical decision-making of civil servants (Aparatur Sipil Negara, ASN) at the Regional Development Planning, Research, and Development Agency (Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan, Penelitian, dan Pengembangan BAPPELITBANG) of Bandung City. The quantitative approach was selected as it is appropriate for measurable data processing and analysis.

Data collection was carried out through document studies and surveys by distributing questionnaires to civil servants at Regional Development Planning, Research, and Development Agency Bandung City. From the total population of civil servants, a sample of fifty (50) respondents was obtained, all of whom completed the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of three (3) questions regarding respondents' demographic information and ten (10) questions designed to measure ethical competence and its influence on the ethical decision-making of ASN in performing their duties and functions. To ensure the credibility of the research findings, the questionnaire included various

illustrative options that respondents could select. These illustrations aimed to provide clearer context, enabling respondents' preferences to be captured more accurately.

The research utilized an exploratory quantitative design and descriptive statistical analysis. The purpose was not to test the causal connections but instead give an empirical map of tendency and ethical competency for decision-making among civil servants. The use of descriptive statistics was justified given that the interest was not to predict nor model causal impacts but instead emphasize prevailing patterns of response and ethical tendencies for various dilemmas. The study population comprised all civil servants assigned to the Regional Development Planning, Research, and Development Agency of Bandung City,  $N = 72$ . We used a total population sampling approach, that is, we attempted to survey the entire accessible population of the unit of analysis, because the research focus is organizational-level mapping of ethical orientations in a single agency. Total population sampling is appropriate for small, bounded populations where the research objective is to describe institutional patterns rather than to generalize to an unconstrained universe, and it is commonly applied in organizational case studies. When full coverage is not achieved, reporting the response rate and finite-population precision is essential. In this study 50 respondents completed the questionnaire, yielding a response rate of 69.44% (50/72). At a 95% confidence level and using the finite-population correction, the worst-case margin of error for proportions is  $\pm 7.7$  percentage points, which provides acceptable precision for descriptive mapping in an exploratory organizational study. References for this approach and for the finite-population correction include Cochran (1977), Lohr (1999), and Teddlie and Yu (2007). The questionnaire survey included demographic questions and ten situation questions assessing ethical competence (neutrality, impartiality, professionalism) and ethical decision-making (justice, transparency, accountability). The data collection is done by questionnaire adopted from previously used questionnaires (Cooper et al., 2013; Tey-Teijón et al., 2023).

## Results and Research Discussion

In the realm of public administration, the ethical approach plays a crucial role in assessing and guiding the behavior of civil servants (Aparatur Sipil Negara, ASN) in the performance of their duties. Ethics functions not only as a normative moral guideline but also as an evaluative instrument to assess the quality of decisions and actions taken by civil servants within a professional context. Through an ethical framework, the behavior of each civil servant can be analyzed based on its alignment with public values, propriety, and prevailing legal standards. Accordingly, understanding the ethical foundation allows for the identification of the motives behind a decision, the measurement of its consistency with principles of justice and accountability, and the evaluation of its impact on the legitimacy of public institutions.

This study classifies its findings into two main variables: Ethical Competence and Ethical Decision-Making. Ethical competence refers to the capacity of civil servants to understand, internalize, and apply moral principles in their daily professional practices. It

encompasses the ability to act with neutrality, impartiality, transparency, and professionalism, even under pressure or in the face of moral dilemmas. Ethical competence serves as the foundation of integrity in public service, as internalized moral principles guide the way individuals perceive and respond to workplace situations.

Ethical decision making is the immediate expression of ethical skills in the form of actual action. The procedure consists of a thoughtful weighing of alternative action options, calculation of risks and rewards, and consideration of the degree to which a choice accords with the greater good. Decisions by civil servants are not just evidence of conformity to written rules but also evidence of moral fortitude in upholding ethical standards, regardless of external pressure or negative personal recompense.

The interrelation between these two constructs is causal and reciprocal. Ethical competence at a high level increases the capacity for civil servants to make appropriate ethical judgments, and exposure to detailed scenarios about making hard ethical decisions complements and fortifies their ethical competence. Going by this research, the observation on a number of workplace conundrums encountered by civil service officers in the Regional Development Planning, Research, and Development Agency in Bandung City offers concrete examples on how ethical competence is channelled into making decisions that support the ideals of neutrality.

These findings also align with agile leadership characteristics. The civil servants that reflect neutrality, impartiality, and transparency share agile leadership's flexibility and adaptability. When they made decisions for justice and responsiveness as accorded to the minority groups, the respondents indicated characteristics of agile governance, wherein bureaucracies not just follow rules but are flexible and people-oriented. Then, ethical competencies exercised by Bandung's civil servants should be viewed as agile leadership's fundamental components of public administration.

Ethical competence in this study is defined as a set of abilities possessed by civil servants to internalize, understand, and consistently apply principles of public ethics when faced with dilemmas or certain pressures of interest. These principles include legal norms and codes of ethics (deontology), consideration of policy benefits (teleology), and evaluation of the consequences of each action (consequentialism). In civil servants at the Bandung City Development Planning Agency, ethical competence is closely related to the ability to maintain neutrality, impartiality, and professionalism in work processes and public interactions.

In general, the survey results show that the ethical competence of civil servants at the Bandung City Development Planning Agency is in the good category. This is reflected in the consistency of respondents in maintaining neutrality, impartiality, professionalism, and integrity in various situations they face. The six situations used to measure ethical competence (Situations 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 9) indicate that the majority of civil servants are able to internalize public ethical values in their daily work practices.

Table 1. Ethical Competencies

| Situation            | Question                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 (Deontological)    | As a civil servant at BAPPELITBANG, your superiors have asked you to attend and show support for a regional head candidate's campaign, even though this violates your civil servant neutrality obligations. What do you do? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 94% Politely refusing because it violates the principle of civil servant neutrality</li> <li>2. 4% Following a superior's instructions for fear of being perceived as disloyal</li> <li>3. 2% Following without revealing their identity</li> </ol> |
| 2 (Teleological)     | You know of a project that could quickly improve the region's image, but it involves cutting research funding. What would be your choice?                                                                                   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 52% Find a compromise to keep the research going.</li> <li>2. 38% Question its long-term effectiveness.</li> <li>3. 10% Support, because the results will be visible to the public quickly.</li> </ol>                                              |
| 3 (Consequentialism) | You reject political interference in the work program, even if it delays the disbursement of funds. What is your stance?                                                                                                    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 68% Expressing objections directly</li> <li>2. 30% Allowing them to do so because they won't be harmed</li> <li>3. 2% Doing the same for the sake of work harmony</li> </ol>                                                                        |
| 5 (Neutrality)       | A civil servant attended the declaration of support for a regional head candidate who is a distant relative. He was not wearing civil servant attire. What are your thoughts?                                               | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 84% It's still unethical because of the inherent status of a civil servant</li> <li>2. 14% It's normal as long as you don't actively invite others</li> <li>3. 2% It's okay because it's outside of work hours</li> </ol>                           |
| 6 (Impartiality)     | As a civil servant at BAPPELITBANG, you were asked by a close colleague to attend an internal political party activity, claiming you were "merely a general participant." What is your response?                            | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 88% Refusing because attendance could be considered supportive</li> <li>2. 12% Presenting simply as a casual observer</li> <li>3. 0% Presenting but not commenting</li> </ol>                                                                       |
| 9 (Competence)       | You've just been appointed to a functional planning position but don't yet possess full competency. What's your attitude toward the tasks assigned?                                                                         | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 90% Attending training and learning from mentors</li> <li>2. 10% Doing your best even if you don't fully understand the task</li> <li>3. 0% Delegating work to more experienced staff</li> </ol>                                                    |

These findings also align with agile leadership characteristics. The civil servants that reflect neutrality, impartiality, and transparency share agile leadership's flexibility and adaptability. When they made decisions for justice and responsiveness as accorded to the minority groups, the respondents indicated characteristics of agile governance, wherein bureaucracies not just follow rules but are flexible and people-oriented. Then, ethical competencies exercised by Bandung's civil servants should be viewed as agile leadership's fundamental components of public administration

Table 1 shows that the majority of respondents, 94%, chose to politely decline their superior's request because it violated the principle of civil servant neutrality. This choice indicates that respondents preferred to comply with regulations and maintain their integrity as civil servants. Only a small percentage chose to follow their superior's instructions out of loyalty or to follow but not reveal their identity. This demonstrates a high level of awareness of the importance of maintaining neutrality in political matters.

Additionally, table 1 also shows that 52% chose the option of finding a compromise to keep the research going. This indicates that most respondents tend to take a compromising position, considering the importance of maintaining research continuity while still supporting projects to improve regional image. A total of 38% of respondents questioned its long-term effectiveness, reflecting a critical attitude towards policies that are instantaneous and potentially sacrifice long-term interests. Meanwhile, only 10% of respondents supported the project, arguing that quick results would be visible to the public. This figure indicates that a small proportion of respondents prioritize image and quick results, even at the expense of research budgets. Overall, these findings indicate that the majority of respondents prioritize ethical principles, sustainability, and integrity in budgetary decision-making, especially those impacting the regional research and development sector.

The majority of respondents, 66%, chose to remain steadfast in their position, even though this risked delaying the project's progress due to delayed disbursement of funds. Meanwhile, 24% of respondents chose to remain passive and leave the decision entirely to their superiors, and only 10% stated they were willing to make minor adjustments to ensure prompt disbursement of funds. These choices illustrate the diverse attitudes of civil servants in the face of political pressure, with the majority remaining principled despite the potentially severe consequences.

Further, 84% of respondents stated that the actions of a civil servant attending a declaration of support for a regional head candidate, even without attributes and outside of working hours, are still considered unethical. This indicates that the majority of respondents understand that the status of a civil servant is attached anytime and anywhere, so maintaining political neutrality remains a necessity. Meanwhile, 14% of respondents considered this to be normal as long as the person concerned did not actively persuade or influence others. Only a small proportion considered it not a problem because it was done outside of working hours. These results indicate that awareness of

the importance of maintaining civil servant neutrality in political contests is quite strong among respondents.

Based on the survey results, the majority of respondents (88%) stated they refused to attend internal political party activities, even if invited by close colleagues, citing their role as general participants. This attitude reflects a good understanding of the principle of impartiality, which requires civil servants to be neutral, impartial, and distance themselves from all forms of practical political activity.

Conversely, 12% of respondents chose to attend, citing their role as casual observers. Even without directly expressing support, attendance at political party activities can still raise public perceptions that cast doubt on the civil servant's neutrality. This has the potential to undermine the integrity and professionalism of civil servants in carrying out their public service duties. Therefore, it can be concluded that the majority of civil servants within the Bandung City Development Planning Agency (BAPPELITBANG) understand and apply the principle of impartiality as part of their professional ethics, which must be upheld.

This survey illustrates the responses of new civil servants to assigned tasks while not yet fully competent. Of the 50 respondents, 90% chose to participate in training and learn from mentors, demonstrating a professional attitude and aligning with the principles of civil servant ethical competence. In civil servant professional ethics, competence is not only about technical skills, but also the moral responsibility to continuously learn, be honest about one's abilities, and not jeopardize the organization's performance. This majority choice demonstrates a commitment to carrying out duties responsibly and ethically.

Conversely, 10% of respondents who continued to carry out their duties without understanding or delegated work to other staff members potentially violated ethics because it could lead to errors or burden coworkers. These actions demonstrate a lack of professional responsibility as civil servants. Overall, the survey results indicate that the majority of civil servants understand the importance of learning before acting to ensure ethical and quality public service.

Ethical decision making refers to the ability of civil servants (ASN) to choose the most appropriate course of action when faced with a moral dilemma, taking into account ethical codes, policy impacts, values of justice, and the public interest. In this study, ethical decision-making is viewed as the result of internalizing the ethical competencies possessed by ASN. If ethical competency is the "asset" that shapes ways of thinking and behaving, then ethical decision-making is the tangible "product" seen in practice.

The research findings also indicate that the ethical decision-making of ASN at the Bandung City Research and Development Agency (Bappelitbang) is considered good. Respondents' decisions in situations involving ethical dilemmas demonstrate a tendency to uphold the values of justice, transparency, and accountability despite facing certain pressures or limitations. The four situations used to measure ethical decision-making

(Situations 4, 7, 8, and 10) demonstrate that ASN are able to consider the impact of their actions on the public interest.

Table 2. Ethical Decision Making

| Situation                 | Question                                                                                                                                              | Criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 (Decision Making)       | You've noticed that one of your fellow civil servants at BAPPELITBANG tends to prioritize requests from certain community groups. What's your stance? | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 68% Expressing objections directly</li> <li>2. 30% Allowing them to do so because they won't be harmed</li> <li>3. 2% Doing the same for the sake of work harmony</li> </ol>                |
| 7 (Affirmative Action)    | In the planning forum, you were asked to allocate more program resources to minority groups to ensure equity. What would be your preference?          | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 92% Support as long as it aligns with data, needs, and equity</li> <li>2. 6% Transferring the program to the general public</li> <li>3. 2% Rejection due to perceived unfairness</li> </ol> |
| 8 (New Public Management) | In an effort to increase efficiency, you were asked to exclude the public from planning discussions to expedite the process. What did you do?         | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 86% Continue to involve the community as part of transparency.</li> <li>2. 10% Agree to expedite the process.</li> <li>3. 4% Convey information only to local elite figures.</li> </ol>     |
| 10 (Transparency)         | You were asked not to make your performance evaluation report public for fear of drawing criticism. How did you respond?                              | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 68% Submit it to a higher official for a decision</li> <li>2. 28% Keep the document and don't share it</li> <li>3. 4% Let another team decide, I'm neutral</li> </ol>                       |

Table 2 shows that 68% stated that they would raise objections directly if they knew that a fellow civil servant tended to prioritize requests from certain community groups. This attitude reflects courage and commitment to the principles of fairness and integrity in public service. Meanwhile, 30% of respondents chose to remain silent because they felt they were not personally affected, indicating a passive attitude toward ethical violations in the workplace. Only 2% chose to follow suit to maintain workplace harmony, a decision that risks normalizing practices inconsistent with civil service values. These results indicate that the majority of civil servants continue to uphold the values of professionalism and courage in maintaining the neutrality and integrity of the institution.

Additionally, 92% of respondents supported allocating a larger portion of programs to minority groups, as long as it aligns with needs data and equity goals. This majority choice indicates that the majority of civil servants within the Bandung City Research and

Development Agency (Bappelitbang) hold ethical views that align with the principles of affirmative action. This demonstrates an awareness that, in the context of public planning, minority groups, who have been under-accommodated, deserve greater attention to achieve distributive justice.

Meanwhile, 6% of respondents opted for shifting programs to the general public, and only 2% rejected this, citing injustice. This choice indicates skepticism about the affirmative approach, likely based on normative views regarding the principle of formal equality (treating everyone equally), but without considering the substantive equality that underlies affirmative action. These findings demonstrate that the majority of civil servants possess a progressive ethical understanding of inclusive policies, aligned with the public administration paradigm of social justice and responsiveness to vulnerable groups. This attitude also reflects the application of ethical values in professional policy decision-making in the public sector.

A total of 86% of respondents chose to involve the public in planning discussions despite being asked not to for efficiency reasons. This demonstrates the ethical awareness of civil servants (ASN) in upholding the principles of transparency and accountability, which are key values in NPM. While NPM emphasizes efficiency, it should not sacrifice public participation. Involving the public is not merely a formality, but part of creating a responsive and trusted government.

Meanwhile, the 10% who agreed to expedite the process without the public, and the 4% who only involved local elites indicate a potential deviation from NPM values. While intended for efficiency, this approach risks creating information gaps and diminishing the legitimacy of public policy. Overall, the survey results show that the majority of civil servants have ethical awareness to maintain a balance between efficiency and participatory principles. This demonstrates that in practice, the NPM paradigm is understood not only as performance management but also as a commitment to public ethics and public trust.

Finally, 68% of respondents chose to escalate the issue regarding the request to withhold disclosure of the performance evaluation report to a higher-ranking official so that a wise decision could be made. Meanwhile, 28% chose to keep the document and not share it with the public as requested. Only 4% stated that they remained neutral by allowing another team to make the decision. From the perspective of civil servants (ASN) in the context of transparency, these results indicate that the majority of ASN still uphold the principles of information transparency and moral responsibility by involving superiors in important decision-making. This indicates a collective awareness of maintaining public accountability, even in situations that could potentially create pressure or certain consequences.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the results of a study conducted on civil servants (ASN) at the Regional Development Planning, Research, and Development Agency (BAPPELITBANG) of

Bandung City, it can be concluded that the level of ethical competencies among civil servants is relatively good. The majority of ASN demonstrate a strong understanding of public ethics principles, particularly neutrality, impartiality, professionalism, and commitment to self-development. This is reflected in their responses to situations that test ethical capabilities, such as refusing to engage in practical political activities (Situation 6), choosing to attend training when facing new tasks (Situation 9), and demonstrating professional conduct in public interactions (Situations 1, 2, 3, and 5). This consistency in attitude indicates the internalization of moral values aligned with the provisions of Law No. 5 of 2014, and is consistent with the views of Corley (2002) and Cooper et al. (2013), who emphasize the importance of ethical knowledge, the ability to handle moral dilemmas, and critical evaluation in shaping the integrity of civil servants.

Additionally, the level of ethical decision-making among civil servants in Bandung City is also categorized as good. ASN are able to make decisions in accordance with the principles of justice, openness, and advocacy for vulnerable groups, as seen in their support for affirmative action policies (Situation 7), continuing to involve the community in the planning process despite pressure for efficiency under New Public Management (Situation 8), and openly reporting issues to superiors to maintain transparency (Situation 10). In every situation requiring moral consideration, civil servants tend to prioritize public accountability and avoid practices that could undermine public trust.

This finding underscores the direct link between ethical competencies and ethical decision-making. Civil servants with a strong foundation in ethical competencies are more consistent in making ethical decisions. This aligns with the deontological theoretical framework, which emphasizes compliance with moral obligations and ethical codes, and the teleological framework, which evaluates actions based on their benefits for public welfare. In practice, these two approaches complement each other: deontology ensures civil servants do not deviate from basic moral rules, while teleology encourages them to consider the positive consequences of every policy or action.

Overall, this study reinforces the view that strengthening ethical values within the civil service not only maintains bureaucratic integrity but also improves the quality of public decision-making. With maintained ethical competence, civil servants can serve as the primary drivers of an adaptive, responsive, transparent, and morally resilient bureaucracy amid the complexities of modern governance. Therefore, systematic efforts to internalize the principles of impartiality, neutrality, fairness, and transparency into public organizational culture are strategic steps to ensure the achievement of quality and equitable public service objectives.

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