



Leader and peer influence: Unraveling the impact of ethical and unethical behaviors on civil servants' motivation in the Kyrgyz Republic

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01 Research motivation: ethical/unethical leadership

- The ethical behavior of civil servants is critical for providing high-quality public services and implementing public policies effectively.
- Ethical leadership increases employee commitment, PSM, organizational citizenship behavior, and willingness to report unethical behavior of others (Hassan et al., 2014; Schwarz et al., 2016; Tuan, 2016).
- However, few studies have examined the consequences of ‘**unethical**’ leadership behaviors in public organizations (Hassan, 2019).
- Example: unethical leadership behavior - **Corruption**.

01 Research motivation

- The Kyrgyz Republic ranks as 140th corrupted country among 180 countries on the Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index in 2022.
- World Economic Forum's Executive Opinion Survey reported that corruption is the most significant barrier to business in Kyrgyzstan, and businesspeople have minimal trust in the government and its politicians (World Economic Forum 2018).
- Recently, the Kyrgyz government has made significant efforts to combat corruption.
- Adoption of a digitalization framework and a detailed plan for Kyrgyzstan's digital transformation, automating various governmental procedures and services.
- A significant body of new legislation was enacted in 2019, including the criminal code, the code of offenses, the criminal procedure code, the code of violations, and laws on probation and the principles and procedures for applying amnesty (France and Kukutschka, 2022).
- Joined numerous international anti-corruption efforts, such as the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative, the Open Government Partnership, and the Istanbul Anti-Corruption Action Plan (France and Kukutschka, 2022).

01 RESEARCH MOTIVATION: Motivation to serve the public

Another significant concern within public organizations is the absence of civil servants' motivation to serve the public, which poses a significant challenge to delivering high-quality public services, particularly in developing countries (Belrhiti, 2020).

Although competent specialists and adequate staff are essential, they alone prove insufficient to achieve organizational goals in public organizations.

Past studies have examined the antecedents of civil servant's motivation to serve the public, accounting for various factors, such as

- job satisfaction,
- reward satisfaction,
- organizational structures,
- transactional and transformational leadership (Homberg et al., 2015; Westover and Taylor, 2010; Schott and Pronk, 2014; Bottomley et al., 2014).
- Ethical leadership behavior → motivation to serve the public.

03 Contribution

1. Unethical behavior

NO empirical examination of the link between **unethical leaders' behaviors** and **civil servant' work motivation**

3. Developing country

Most empirical studies on unethical behaviors in public organization has concentrated on the cases of developed countries, resulting in **limited empirical research on the cases of developing countries.**

2. Peers

In addition to leaders' functions, we consider **the roles of 'peers' or colleagues** in public organizations as other actors who might influence civil servants' motivation to serve the public

4. Empirical research

Most studies rely on traditional survey technique, which may suffer from **response biases.** Vignette experiment, third-person scenarios are employed to restrict socially desirable responses.

02 Objective

This study evaluates how civil servants' motivation to serve the public is influenced by their leaders' and peers' corrupt/corruption-free behaviors

04 Hypothesis/ethical leadership

- The social learning theory suggests that people learn **from observing and emulating the attitudes, values and behavior of role models** in their environment (Bandura, 1977).
- Past studies claim that based on the social learning theory, leaders can improve their subordinates' motivation to serve the public **by acting as role models and emphasizing significance of serving the public** (Schwarz et al., 2016; Tuan, 2016).
- Ethical leadership increases organizational culture of honesty
dedication to the public service
(Engelbrecht, 2014) **build trust within the organization**
- Supportive workplace atmosphere characterized by **trust** increases **Motivation** (Nguyen et al. 2015)

Hypothesis 1: The information of leaders' **CORRUPTION-FREE behavior increases civil servants' motivation to serve the public**

04 Hypothesis/unethical leadership

- Several studies report that when **a leader behaves unethically**, the subordinates tend to **lose trust** in the leader as well as in the integrity of the organization, exhibit **less commitment to the organization**, and increase intention of leaving the organization (Fehr et al., 2020).
- Similar to the case of ethical behavior, the social learning theory suggests that subordinates may learn from observing and emulating their leaders' unethical behavior as an **immoral role model** due to the leaders' administrative power, which may also **reduce the motivation** to serve the public diligently and sincerely.

Hypothesis 2: The information of leaders' **CORRUPT behavior decreases civil servants' motivation to serve the public**

04 Hypothesis/peer's influence

- The social learning theory is applicable.
- **Peers' behavior can serve as a benchmark for assessing suitable conduct through social comparison** (Chiaburu & Harrison, 2008; Duijn et al., 2019).
- For example, Zhao et al., (2018) indicates individual's behavior is influenced **by the behavior and characteristics of his or her peer.**
- Individual's behavior may change through **social interactions with peers(1)** (Durlauf and Young 2001, Bramoullé et al. 2014).
- Moreover, If civil servants in the public organization engage in unethical behavior, such as bribery from private entities, then **unethical climate (2)** is created within the organization.
- In such environment, civil servants' commitment to public services would be undermined.

04 Hypothesis/peer's influence

Hypothesis 3: The information of PEERS' corruption-free behavior increases civil servants' motivation to serve the public.

Hypothesis 4: The information of PEERS' corrupt behavior decreases civil servants' motivation to serve the public.

04 Hypothesis

- Goal framing theory explains individuals' behavior in reaching their goals. It also explains the role of social contexts in making distinct overarching goals, consequently shaping individuals' cognitions, behaviors, and decision-making. (Lindenberg, 2008; Silitonga et al., 2019).
- Three types of goals: hedonic, normative and **gain goal**.
- The gain goal is an individual's achievement of resources, such as money and status.
- When civil servant's focus on gain goal leader's and peer's rejection of bribery may discourage to take part in bribery they have less chance to get additional resources.
- Social learning theory → leader's and peer's reject bribery → civil servant reject bribery → no additional income → motivation to work decreases.

04 Hypothesis

- Leader's and peer's reject bribery -> ethical organizational climate-> difficult to get a bribery -> less income-> motivation work decreases.
- This can also be connected to the explanation of classical economic theory that self-interested individuals are demotivated to accomplish specific tasks if they lose monetary benefits at their work (Ki, 2022).
- This leads to a situation where civil servants, particularly those with strong gain-oriented objectives, **lose opportunities to fulfill their gain goal** or acquire informal financial rewards through bribery.
- Therefore,

Hypothesis 1a: The information of **LEADERS' corruption-free behavior decreases civil servants' motivation to serve the public.**

Hypothesis 3a: The information of **PEERS' corruption-free behavior decreases civil servants' motivation to serve the public.**

04 Hypothesis

- As hypothesized in H1, H2, H3, H4 **leaders and peers** may influence to civil servant's motivation .
- When considering whether a leader or a peer holds **greater influence** as an actor, we can consider Belrhiti et al. (2020) suggestion that different leadership philosophies have a significant impact on motivation of employees, since followers perceive their superiors as having **authority and influence**.
- **Leader's power is more effective** because they **have authority** to decide about reward or punishment that are imposed on subordinates (Treviño,2005).

Hypothesis 5: The information of leaders' corruption-free behavior increases civil servants' motivation to serve the public more than that of peers' corrupt behavior.

Hypothesis 6: The information of leaders' corrupt behavior decreases civil servants' motivation to serve the public more than that of peers' corrupt behavior.

05 Methodology

A vignette experiment is a research method where people are given a short description or scenario (the "vignette") and asked how they would react or what they think about it. This helps researchers study people's attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors in specific situations.

Example:

Imagine a study about how people respond to different job applicants. Researchers might create several vignettes that describe a job candidate in different ways:

1.Vignette A: "Alex is a recent college graduate with a degree in marketing. He has internship experience but no full-time job history."

2.Vignette B: "Jamie is a recent college graduate with a degree in marketing. She has a year of experience working full-time at a well-known company."

Participants might read these vignettes and then answer questions like:

- How likely would you be to hire this candidate?

05 Methodology

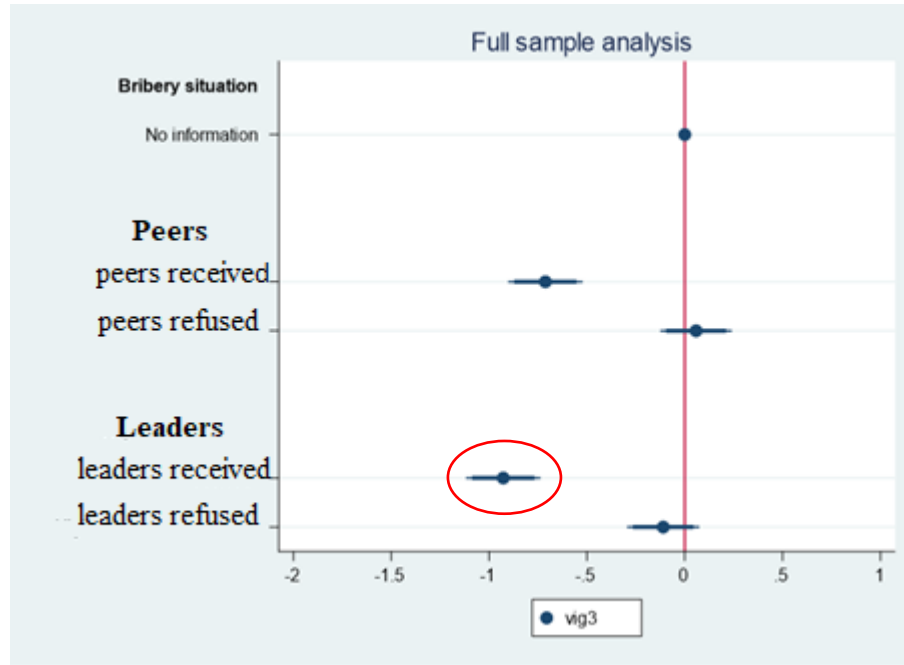
- Total sample is 1325 government employees from 23 organizations;
- The sample was stratified by gender and organization – 34% response rate, 738 women and 587 men.
- We pre-tested the vignette scenarios twice: first a group of 200 public employees in January 2023 and next 144 public employees in February 2023. Remarks and incomprehensible phrases were taken into account and the vignette story was redesigned;
- The study was conducted during summer in August 2023 online by using a survey software called Qualtrics;
- Collaboration of economic policy research institute under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Kyrgyz Republic;

Target population and sample

Table 1. Target population and sample

	Target population			Sample		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Finance	982 25,7%	525 13,7%	457 12,0%	325 24,6%	179 13,6%	146 11,1%
Economy and commerce	356 9,3%	150 3,9%	206 5,4%	131 9,9%	52 3,9%	79 6,0%
Resources and infrastructure	479 12,5%	246 6,4%	233 6,1%	151 11,4%	83 6,3%	68 5,1%
Public administration or others	2002 52,4%	791 20,7%	1211 31,7%	714 54,0%	272 20,6%	442 33,5%
Total	3819 100,0 %	1712 44,8%	2107 55,2%	1321 100,0 %	586 44,4%	735 55,6%

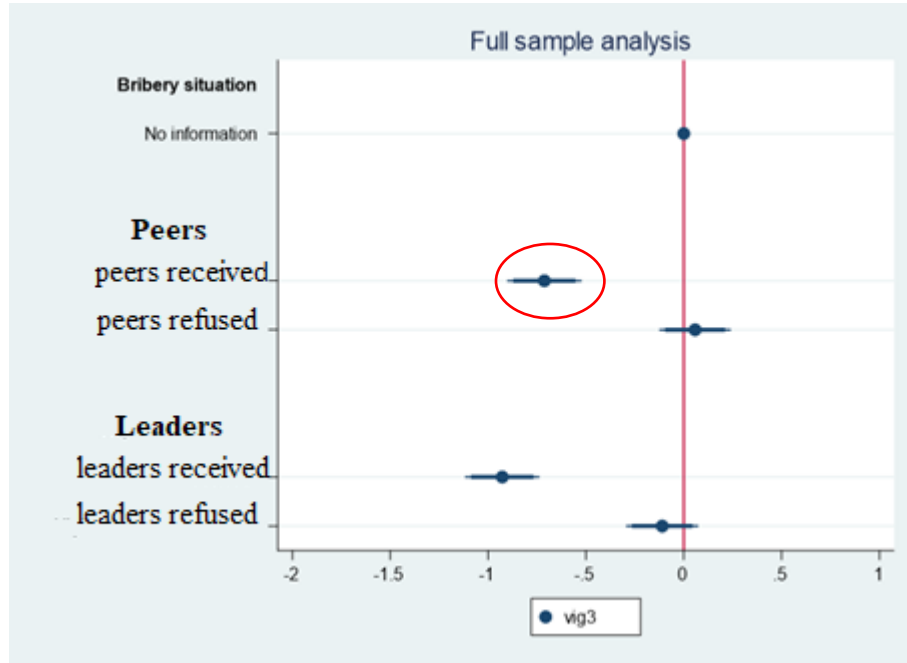
06 Results



Hypothesis 1: The information of **LEADERS' corruption-free** behavior increases civil servants' motivation to serve the public -> **does not supported**

Hypothesis 2: The information of **LEADERS' corrupt behavior** decreases civil servants' motivation to serve the public -> **supported**.

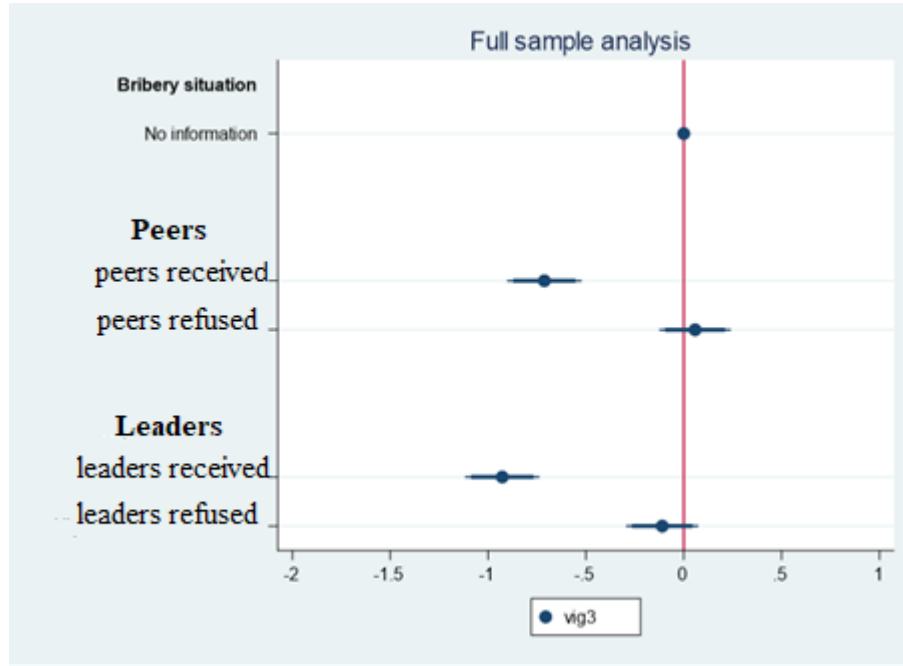
06 Results



Hypothesis 3: The information of **PEERS' corruption-free** behavior increases civil servants' motivation to serve the public -> **does not supported**

Hypothesis 4: The information of **PEERS' corrupt behavior** decreases civil servants' motivation to serve the public - > **supported**.

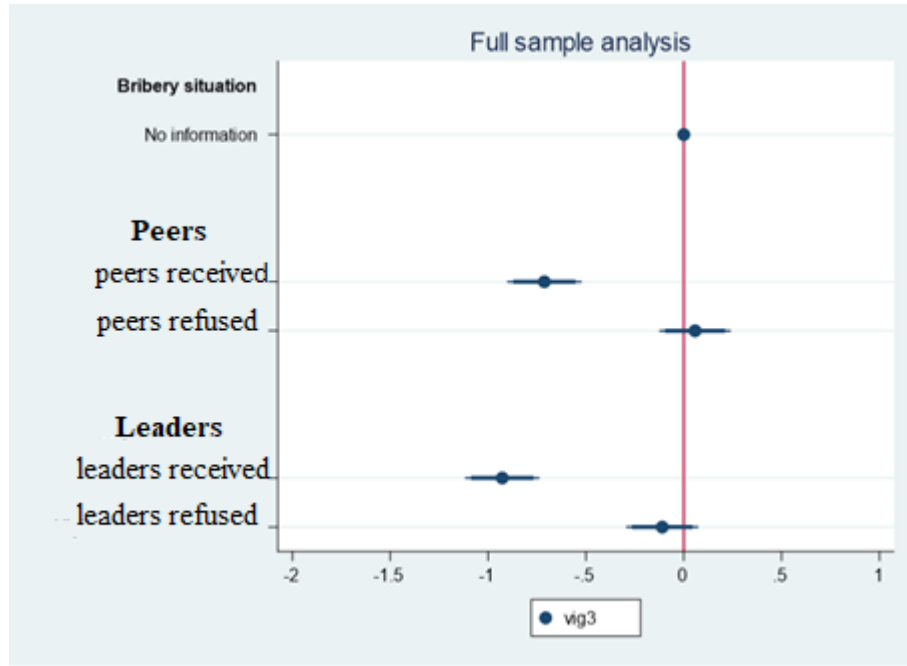
06 Results



Hypothesis 1a: Leaders' corruption-free behavior decreases motivation -> **does not supported.**

Hypothesis 3a: Peers' corruption-free behavior decreases motivation->**does not supported.**

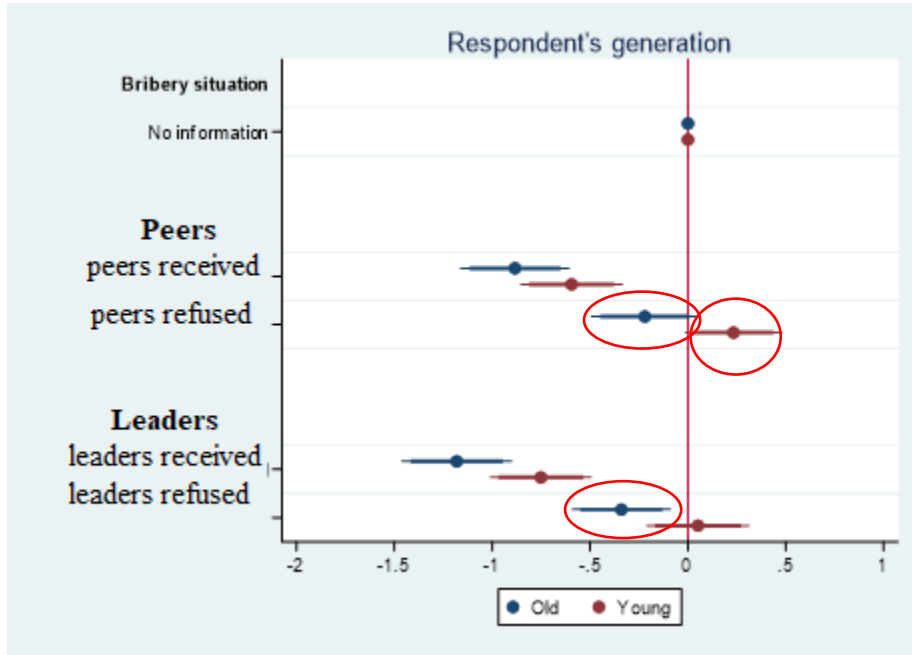
06 Results



Hypothesis 5: Leaders' corruption-free behavior increases civil servants' motivation more than that of peers' corruption-free behavior -> **does not supported**

Hypothesis 6: Leaders' corrupt behavior decreases civil servants' motivation more than that of peers' corrupt behavior - > **does not supported.**

06 Results: subsample analysis



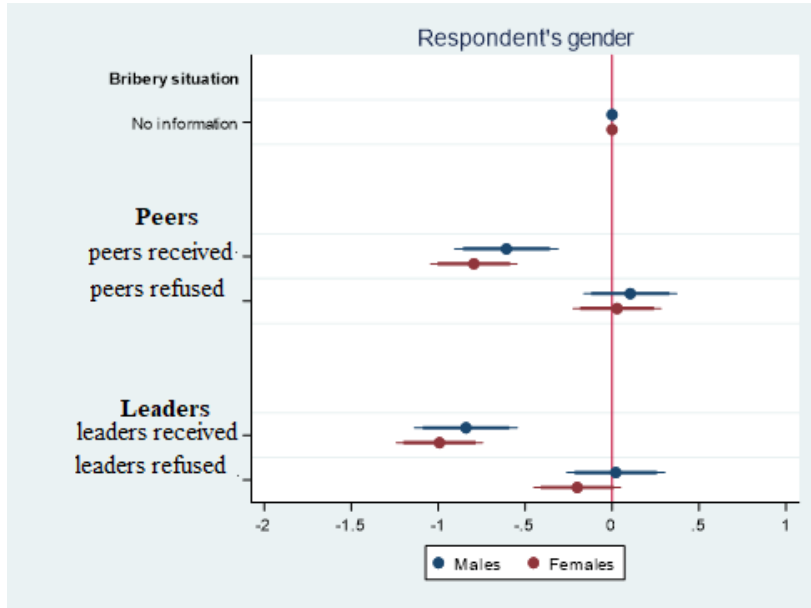
When they know that their PEERS have refused bribes the motivation of **young civil servants** exhibits a statistically **significant boost**. That supports hypothesis 3

In contrast, motivation of **older respondents** decreased under the same circumstances. This result supports hypothesis 3a.

When they know that their LEADERS have refused bribes the motivation of older respondents decreased which supports hypothesis 1a.

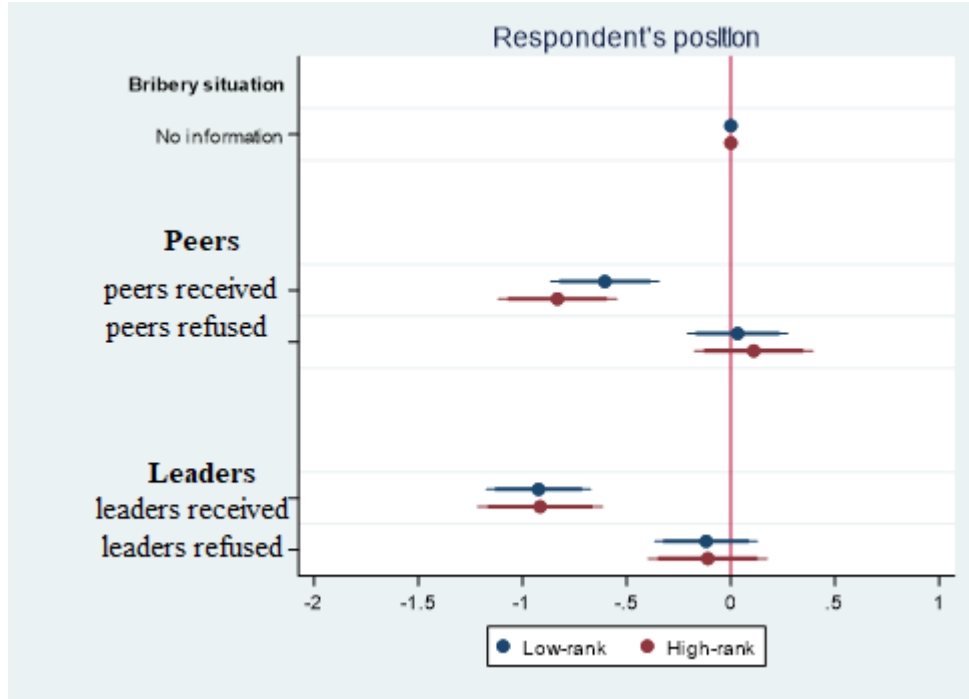
Prepare regression table

06 Results: subsample analysis



No significant difference

06 Results: subsample analysis



No significant difference.

Limitations

This research has some limitations. We do not use Perry's (1996) scales for assessment of civil servants public service motivation encompassing a range of evaluative aspects, such as policy making, commitment to the public interest, social justice, civic duty, compassion, and self-sacrifice (Meyer-Sahling, 2021).

Instead, we ask a question directly how hypothetical servants' motivation to serve the public will change after presenting corrupt and corruption-free behavior of leaders and colleagues.

This might result in an inaccurate assessment of the extent to which the civil servant's motivation to serve the public is affected after being presented with the scenario.

07 Conclusion

The knowledge itself that the corrupt actions of both leaders and peers can diminish civil servants' motivation to serve the public, and acknowledging their potential to influence those around them, individuals will likely be more careful about their unethical behaviour in the future.

We can suggest:

Strengthening Ethical Standards: Implement clear ethical guidelines and standards for behaviour at all levels of government. This can include regular training on ethics and integrity.

Performance Incentives: Develop incentive programs that reward integrity and public service commitment, fostering a culture of accountability and ethical conduct.

07 Conclusion

Transparency Initiatives: Increase transparency in decision-making processes and financial transactions to build trust and deter corrupt practices.

Leadership Training: Provide training programs for leaders focused on ethical leadership and the importance of setting a positive example for their teams.

Peer Review Systems: Introduce peer review mechanisms where civil servants can evaluate each other's performance and ethical behavior, promoting a culture of mutual accountability.

THANK YOU FOR
YOUR ATTENTION