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Organisational Behaviour

COURSE CODE: M23PA05DE

Postgraduate Programme in Public Administration

Discipline Specific Elective Course

Self Learning Material



SREENARAYANAGURU
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The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

Vision

To increase access of potential learners of all categories to higher education, research and training, and ensure equity through delivery of high quality processes and outcomes fostering inclusive educational empowerment for social advancement.

Mission

To be benchmarked as a model for conservation and dissemination of knowledge and skill on blended and virtual mode in education, training and research for normal, continuing, and adult learners.

Pathway

Access and Quality define Equity.

Organisational Behaviour

Course Code: M23PA05DE

Semester - IV

Discipline Specific Elective Course
Postgraduate Programme in Public Administration
Self Learning Material
(With Model Question Paper Sets)



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ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOUR

Course Code: M23PA05DE

Semester- IV

Discipline Specific Elective Course
Postgraduate Programme in Public Administration

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Edition
March 2026

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ISBN 978-81-998406-4-5



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Dear learner,

I extend my heartfelt greetings and profound enthusiasm as I warmly welcome you to Sreenarayanaguru Open University. Established in September 2020 as a state-led endeavour to promote higher education through open and distance learning modes, our institution was shaped by the guiding principle that access and quality are the cornerstones of equity. We have firmly resolved to uphold the highest standards of education, setting the benchmark and charting the course.

The courses offered by the Sreenarayanaguru Open University aim to strike a quality balance, ensuring students are equipped for both personal growth and professional excellence. The University embraces the widely acclaimed "blended format," a practical framework that harmoniously integrates Self-Learning Materials, Classroom Counseling, and Virtual modes, fostering a dynamic and enriching experience for both learners and instructors.

The University aims to offer you an engaging and thought-provoking educational journey. The MA programme in Public Administration provides an in-depth understanding of modern governance challenges and solutions. It integrates cutting-edge theory with real-world applications, emphasizing innovative approaches to public service delivery. The curriculum spans strategic planning, policy analysis, public sector economics, and governance-related spheres. Through these, learners cultivate advanced problem-solving and decision-making skills. This programme also equips future leaders to drive positive change in public institutions, NGOs, and international bodies. The Self-Learning Material has been meticulously crafted, incorporating relevant examples to facilitate better comprehension.

Rest assured, the university's student support services will be at your disposal throughout your academic journey, readily available to address any concerns or grievances you may encounter. We encourage you to reach out to us freely regarding any matter about your academic programme. It is our sincere wish that you achieve the utmost success.



Regards,
Dr. Jagathy Raj V.P.

01-03-2026

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BLOCK 1

Organisational Behaviour

Introduction to Organisational Behaviour

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- describe the fundamental concepts and nature of Organisational Behaviour
- aware of the interdisciplinary foundations of Organisational Behaviour
- analyse human behaviour at the individual, group, and organisational levels and its impact on organisational effectiveness
- comprehend the significance of OB in improving productivity

Background

Public administration in the 21st century operates in a highly complex socio-political environment marked by rising citizen expectations, digital governance reforms, service delivery challenges, and the need for accountable and transparent institutions. India's administrative machinery is one of the largest in the world, employing over 32 million public sector workers (Labour Bureau, 2022), ranging from central and state civil services to local bodies and frontline departments. The performance of this vast system depends not only on rules, procedures, and hierarchical structures but significantly on the behaviour, motivation, attitudes, and interaction patterns of public employees. Reports by NITI Aayog (2021) repeatedly emphasise that behavioural barriers like low motivation, weak coordination, resistance to change, and communication gaps are major causes of administrative inefficiency, often more than the absence of resources. This makes Organisational Behaviour (OB) critical for understanding how human factors shape governance outcomes.

In recent years, major governance reforms such as Digital India, the Goods and Services Tax (GST), Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), Mission Karmayogi, and decentralisation through Panchayati Raj Institutions have highlighted the importance of behavioural insights in public administration. For example, Mission Karmayogi's Capacity Building Commission stresses the need for competencies like empathy, collaboration, emotional

intelligence, and ethical behaviour in civil servants. Public service delivery also relies heavily on frontline worker behaviour as seen in health, education, police, and revenue departments, where citizen satisfaction is directly influenced by interpersonal sensitivity and organisational culture. Therefore, understanding OB enables future administrators to manage teams effectively, navigate bureaucratic dynamics, reduce conflicts, lead reforms, and build citizen-centric governance systems, making it an essential foundation for anyone pursuing a career in public administration.

Keywords

Organisational Behaviour, Motivation, Organisational Culture, Teamwork, Leadership

Discussion

If you walk into any government office, say a revenue department, a district collectorate, a municipal corporation, or a public health centre, you will notice that even though the tasks, rules, and procedures are the same for everyone, the way people behave is often surprisingly different. Some employees happily help citizens, some avoid responsibility, some excel quietly, while others struggle even in simple tasks. This variation in human behaviour is what makes organisations living systems rather than mechanical structures. Understanding these behavioural patterns, i.e., why people work the way they do, what motivates them, how they respond to supervisors, how teams function, and why conflicts emerge, is the foundation of Organisational Behaviour (OB). For Public Administration learners, OB is essential because no policy, reform, or public service delivery can succeed without understanding the people behind it.

1.1.1 Organisational Behaviour

► Examines how people behave within organisations

Organisational Behaviour (OB) is a field of study that examines how people behave within organisations i.e., why they think, feel, and act the way they do, and how their behaviour affects organisational effectiveness. Every organisation, whether a government department, a private company, a hospital, or a non-profit institution, is made up of people. Their actions, attitudes, motivations, and interactions determine whether the organisation succeeds or struggles. OB helps us



understand these human factors in a systematic and scientific way. At its core, Organisational Behaviour is concerned with the understanding, prediction, and control of human behaviour in organisational settings. This means OB does not merely describe how employees behave; it also attempts to explain the reasons behind those behaviours, predict how individuals and groups are likely to behave in certain situations, and suggest ways to influence behaviour so that both organisational goals and employee well-being are achieved.

Organisational Behaviour (OB) is the systematic study of human behaviour within organisational settings. According to Stephen P. Robbins, OB is *“a field of study that investigates the impact that individuals, groups, and structure have on behaviour within organisations.”*

According to Fred Luthans, “Organisational behaviour is directly concerned with the understanding, production and control of human behaviour in organisations.”

1.1.1.1 Relevance of Understanding O.B

Organisations, whether public institutions, private firms, NGOs, or government departments, are not simply collections of rules, machines, and procedures. They are living social systems composed of individuals and groups, each with their own needs, emotions, motivations, skills, and attitudes. Even the most technically perfect strategy or policy cannot succeed unless the people responsible for implementing it understand it, accept it, and believe in it. This is why understanding Organisational Behaviour (OB) becomes essential for administrators, managers, and leaders: it provides the tools to make human performance align with organisational goals.

► Organisations as social systems

1. Improving Productivity

Understanding OB helps organisations identify what factors motivate employees to perform better and what obstacles lower productivity. For example, Herzberg’s Motivation-Hygiene Theory shows that recognition, meaningful work, and responsibility improve performance more than salary alone. A real case can be seen in India’s Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTTC), which introduced recognition programmes and skill-enhancement training for drivers, resulting in improved punctuality and reduced accidents. The

► Motivation and productivity

lesson is simple: when organisations understand human needs and attitudes, productivity naturally rises.

2. Enhancing Teamwork

► Teamwork and collaboration

Modern organisations rely heavily on teams such as project teams, task forces, departmental units, and cross-functional groups. OB concepts such as group dynamics, communication patterns, and norms help teams collaborate effectively and reduce misunderstandings. For instance, the success of ISRO's Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM) is frequently cited in management books because engineers, scientists, and administrators worked as a single cohesive unit despite tight deadlines and resource constraints. Effective teamwork was possible because the organisation nurtured trust, open communication, and mutual respect. These are the key elements emphasised in OB literature.

3. Providing Effective Leadership

► Leadership and human behaviour

Leadership is not only about authority; it is about understanding people, influencing behaviour, and inspiring commitment. OB provides insights into different leadership styles such as transformational, democratic, or situational leadership, helping leaders choose the right approach based on context and people involved. A real example is Dr. E. Sreedharan's leadership in DMRC, where his transformational style, combined with discipline and integrity, created a strong organisational culture and high employee morale. His leadership demonstrates that when leaders understand human motivation and emotions, organisational performance significantly improves.

4. Reducing Conflicts

► Conflict management skills

Conflicts are inevitable in any organisation due to differences in goals, values, perceptions, and interests. OB equips managers with skills in negotiation, communication, emotional intelligence, and conflict-resolution techniques, helping them manage disagreements constructively rather than destructively. A practical example can be observed in the Employee-Management conflicts in Air India (2012), where poor communication and mistrust between pilots and management led to strikes and operational losses. Later, using structured dialogue and conflict-resolution committees, the organisation restored cooperation. It illustrates how understanding behaviour can prevent conflicts from escalating.



5. Managing Organisational Change

► Managing organisational change

Change, whether it is technological, structural, or policy-related, often triggers fear, resistance, or uncertainty among employees. OB explains why people resist change and provides strategies like participative decision-making, clear communication, training, and emotional support to manage transitions smoothly. In the public sector, a clear example is the rollout of e-governance systems in Kerala, where initial resistance from employees was reduced through workshops, hands-on training, and continuous support. When organisations understand behavioural responses to change, reforms become more effective and less stressful.

6. Creating a Positive Organisational Culture

► Organisational culture and values

Organisational culture shapes “how things are done” within an institution, such as values, norms, rituals, communication style, and expectations. OB helps leaders understand culture and design practices that foster trust, respect, fairness, and innovation, which in turn attract talent and improve long-term performance. A well-known case is Infosys, which invested in transparent communication, ethical practices, and employee development from its early years, creating a culture that encouraged innovation and professionalism. Public Administration students can also observe this in the Kerala Police’s “Janamaithri Police” initiative, where a culture of empathy and citizen engagement transformed public-police relations.

► Human side of organisations

Understanding OB is crucial because it reveals the human side of organisations, such as the fears, motivations, strengths, and emotions that influence performance. Whether the goal is to improve productivity, enhance teamwork, lead effectively, reduce conflict, manage change, or build a healthy culture, OB provides evidence-based tools grounded in decades of research. Organisations succeed not just through plans and rules but through people, and OB helps administrators make human behaviour an asset rather than a barrier.

1.1.1.2 Nature of Organisational Behaviour

Organisational Behaviour (OB) possesses several distinctive characteristics that explain how it functions as a field of study and a practical tool for administrators and managers. These

characteristics highlight OB's scientific foundation, human focus, and adaptability to real-world organisational challenges. Understanding these features helps public administrators engage better with employees, manage teams effectively, and build responsive institutions.

1. Behavioural Science

► Scientific and multidisciplinary approach

OB is rooted in behavioural sciences such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, and management science, making it a multidisciplinary field. It relies on systematic methods, including research studies, surveys, experiments, observation, and real-life case analysis, to understand workplace behaviour. For example, Elton Mayo's Hawthorne experiments are considered foundational in OB. They demonstrated how social and psychological factors influence productivity. Because it uses established scientific methods, OB provides reliable insights rather than mere assumptions about human behaviour.

2. Multilevel Analysis

► Levels of organisational behaviour

OB examines behaviour at three interconnected levels: the individual, the group, and the organisation. At the individual level, it explores aspects like personality, motivation, and perception, which explain why people behave differently despite identical conditions. At the group level, OB studies teamwork, leadership, communication, and power dynamics. These are the factors essential for departments in government institutions or public sector organisations. At the organisational level, it analyses culture, structure, and processes, helping leaders understand how institutional systems shape behaviour and performance.

3. Goal-Oriented

► Behaviour aligned with goals

A key characteristic of OB is that it is fundamentally goal-driven. Its insights help organisations enhance employee satisfaction, improve productivity, and support effective decision-making. For instance, many public service programmes in India such as Mission Karmayogi, use behavioural principles to improve civil servants' efficiency and citizen-orientation. By aligning human behaviour with organisational objectives, OB enables institutions to function more effectively and deliver better outcomes.

4. Humanistic Approach

► Humanistic view of employees

OB adopts a humanistic view, recognising that employees are not just economic resources but individuals with emotions, values, and aspirations. This perspective emphasises dignity, welfare, development, and motivation, valuing people as assets rather than cost factors. Companies like Infosys and Tata Group and public institutions like ISRO demonstrate this approach through employee-centred policies, training programmes, and welfare benefits that enhance commitment and performance. By prioritising human needs, OB helps build more ethical, empathetic, and sustainable organisations.

5. Dynamic in Nature

► Dynamic and adaptive nature

Organisations operate in environments that are constantly changing due to technological, social, and economic developments. As a result, OB is dynamic; it evolves to address new realities such as remote working patterns, digital communication, workplace diversity, emotional intelligence, and cross-cultural teams. For example, after the COVID-19 pandemic, many government and corporate organisations adopted hybrid work models, requiring new approaches to motivation, supervision, and employee engagement. This adaptability makes OB a continuously relevant discipline for modern administrators.

1.1.1.3 Scope of Organisational Behaviour

The scope of Organisational Behaviour (OB) is broad and interdisciplinary, drawing insights from psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, economics, and management. It aims to understand human behaviour in organisational settings and use this knowledge to improve organisational effectiveness, employee well-being, and workplace harmony. OB helps administrators analyse how individuals think and act, how groups function, and how organisations can be structured and managed for better performance. The following areas represent the major components within the scope of OB:



Fig. 1.1.1 Scope of Organisational Behaviour

1. Individual Behaviour

OB begins with the study of individuals because every organisation is made up of people with unique personalities, values, perceptions, and attitudes. Understanding individual differences helps predict job performance, employee satisfaction, commitment, absenteeism, and decision-making patterns. For example, personality frameworks such as the Big Five Model are widely used in both corporate and public-sector recruitment to match candidates with suitable job roles. OB also examines how individuals interpret their environment, i.e., how biases, perceptions, and cognitive limitations influence decision-making and interpersonal interactions. Concepts such as learning, motivation, and emotional intelligence help organisations design better training, evaluation, and communication systems that enhance personal and job performance.

► Individual behaviour in organisations

2. Group Behaviour

Since modern organisations function through teams and committees, OB places strong emphasis on understanding group dynamics. Group norms, i.e., shared expectations about acceptable behaviour, shape cooperation, communication, and work discipline. Roles define the expected behaviour patterns for individuals within groups, helping structure responsibilities and authority. In public administration, for instance, the success of a district disaster-management team depends on

► Group dynamics and leadership

clearly defined roles and strong group norms that support quick coordination. Team building is another important part of OB. It involves improving communication, trust, and collaboration within teams to enhance collective performance, as seen in cross-functional project teams in government missions like Digital India. OB also examines conflict within groups, focusing on how disputes arise and how they can be resolved using negotiation, mediation, and collaborative problem-solving. Leadership is a core component, OB studies different leadership styles and their influence on team motivation and organisational outcomes. For example, transformational leadership is known to encourage innovation and commitment in both public and private organisations.

3. Organisational Structure

► Organisational structure and design

This area of OB examines how organisational design influences behaviour, communication, and performance. Structure determines how work is divided, how authority flows, and how decisions are made. A well-designed structure helps reduce confusion, improve accountability, and support organisational goals. Clear job roles and responsibilities ensure that employees understand what is expected of them, reducing duplication of work and role conflict. In government departments, for example, the distinction between administrative, clerical, and field roles helps maintain coordination and service delivery. OB also focuses on workflow design, communication channels, and the degree of centralisation or decentralisation in decision-making, all of which directly influence organisational efficiency.

4. Processes and Practices

► Organisational processes and communication

OB analyses the key processes that make an organisation function smoothly, such as communication, decision-making, learning, and motivation. Effective communication ensures that accurate information flows freely between individuals and teams, enabling collaboration and reducing misunderstandings. For example, during crisis situations such as pandemic management includes clear communication channels between health workers, administrators, and public officials are crucial. Decision-making is another vital organisational process. OB examines how decisions are made, what biases influence choices, and how groups can make better decisions through structured techniques. These insights help organisations

develop rational, data-driven decision-making practices that lead to better problem-solving and planning.

5. Organisational Culture

► Organisational culture and values

Organisational culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, and norms that guide how employees behave and make sense of their roles. A strong and positive culture creates a sense of identity and belonging, influencing motivation, ethical behaviour, and work performance. For example, the culture of professionalism and integrity in organisations like ISRO or the Tata Group contributes to high employee commitment and loyalty. Practices such as mentoring, recognition, rituals, and informal norms reveal how culture shapes daily work behaviours. By understanding cultural patterns, administrators can build environments that support teamwork, innovation, and employee well-being.

6. Change Management

► Change management in organisations

No organisation operates in a static environment; change is constant due to technology, policy reforms, globalisation, and social expectations. OB studies how organisations can implement change smoothly, from planning and communicating the need for change to managing employee resistance. Effective change management involves helping employees transition from the current state to a desired future state through training, dialogue, incentives, and supportive leadership. For instance, when public-sector institutions adopt digital work processes, employees often require training and support to reduce anxiety and resistance. OB provides tools for making such transitions successful.

7. Organisational Development

► Organisational development and well-being

Organisational Development (OD) focuses on planned interventions and strategies designed to improve organisational effectiveness and employee well-being. Techniques such as sensitivity training, team development, coaching, survey feedback, and job redesign help organisations adapt and grow. Promoting work–life balance is a vital OD practice, helping employees reduce stress and achieve personal and professional fulfilment. Similarly, fostering diversity and inclusion enhances creativity, problem-solving, and organisational adaptability. Well-being programmes such as mental health counselling,



fitness activities, and stress-management workshops contribute to healthier and more productive workplaces.

The scope of OB covers all aspects of human behaviour in organisational contexts, from individuals and groups to broader structures, processes, and cultural systems. By integrating behavioural science with management principles, OB helps institutions create environments where employees feel motivated, supported, and aligned with organisational goals. This makes OB a vital field for public administrators, managers, and leaders who aim to build efficient, responsive, and people-centric organisations.

1.1.1.4 Significance of OB

Organisational Behaviour plays a crucial role in strengthening the functioning of public institutions, improving service delivery, and fostering a professional administrative culture. Public administration involves dealing with diverse stakeholders such as citizens, politicians, employees, and multiple departments, making behavioural understanding essential for effective governance. OB enables administrators to understand human needs, predict behaviour, manage teams, reduce conflicts, and ensure efficient policy implementation.

1. Improves Administrative Efficiency

► Administrative efficiency improvement

One of the primary contributions of OB in public administration is the improvement of administrative efficiency. Public organisations often depend heavily on employee cooperation, commitment, and motivation to implement policies effectively. By understanding motivational theories such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's two-factor theory, and equity theory, administrators can design appropriate incentive systems, recognition programs, and work environments that encourage better performance. In Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), well-structured motivation strategies lead to improved punctuality, higher productivity, and reduced absenteeism. As a result, OB helps create efficient administrative processes that make better use of public resources and ensure the timely delivery of services.

2. Enhances Leadership and Decision-Making

OB plays a crucial role in shaping leadership behaviour in government institutions. Public administrators are often

► Leadership and decision-making

required to make decisions that affect large populations, and OB provides them with tools to adopt more participative, transparent, and ethical leadership styles. The principles of servant leadership, for example, encourage administrators to prioritise citizen welfare, listen actively, and make decisions that reflect fairness and accountability. OB also enhances decision-making by helping administrators understand how biases, perception, and group dynamics influence choices. By applying these insights, civil servants can make informed, unbiased, and ethical decisions that strengthen public trust and improve governance outcomes.

► Conflict resolution in administration

3. Reduces Conflicts

Conflicts are common in public organisations due to large hierarchies, diverse employee backgrounds, and frequent interactions between departments. OB provides insights into conflict sources, types, and resolution strategies. Administrators learn how to use negotiation, mediation, and effective communication to resolve disputes constructively. Emotional intelligence, an important OB concept, enables leaders to understand the feelings and perspectives of others, helping them manage tensions calmly and professionally. By reducing conflicts, OB ensures better coordination, smoother workflow, and a more positive organisational climate. This ultimately contributes to more efficient and harmonious public service delivery.

► Managing change and reforms

4. Facilitates Change Management

Public administration operates in an environment where reforms and innovations are frequent. Initiatives such as GST implementation, online public service delivery, digital governance, and Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) require employees to adapt to new roles, technologies, and workflows. OB helps administrators manage this transition by understanding employee resistance, planning change effectively, and communicating the benefits of change in a clear manner. It provides tools to motivate employees during periods of uncertainty, reduce fear or misunderstanding, and support them with necessary training. Effective change management not only reduces disruptions but also ensures successful adoption of new policies and systems across government departments.

5. Helps in Citizen-Centric Governance

► Citizen-centric public service

At its core, public administration is meant to serve the people, and OB helps administrators become more citizen-focused. Concepts like empathy, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal communication allow civil servants to understand citizen needs, respond politely to queries, and provide services with dignity and respect. Strengthening communication skills also improves transparency and reduces the gap between government and citizens. When employees show compassion, listen actively, and communicate clearly, public trust increases, and satisfaction with government services rises. Thus, OB helps build a governance system that prioritises citizen welfare and enhances the overall quality of public service delivery.

Real Case Illustration: Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC)

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) offers a powerful example of how OB contributes to organisational success in the public sector. Under the leadership of Dr. E. Sreedharan, DMRC developed an organisational culture rooted in discipline, integrity, and transparency. Employees were not only trained in technical skills but also in behavioural areas such as punctuality, teamwork, responsibility, safety consciousness, and communication. The organisation emphasised trust, accountability, and shared values, resulting in high employee morale and commitment. These behavioural practices helped DMRC complete large infrastructure projects on time and maintain exceptional operational efficiency. The success of DMRC demonstrates that strong organisational behaviour principles can transform a public institution into a global benchmark of excellence.

1.1.2 Interdisciplinary Nature of OB

Organisational Behaviour (OB) is not an isolated or standalone academic field. Instead, it is a rich and integrated discipline that draws its theories, methods, and insights from several established fields of study. Because human behaviour is complex, no single discipline can fully explain why people think, feel, and act the way they do in organisations. OB therefore borrows concepts from psychology, sociology, anthropology, political science, economics, and management science to offer a comprehensive understanding of individual, group, and organisational dynamics. This interdisciplinary

foundation makes OB a practical and powerful tool for public administrators, helping them manage people more effectively in complex government systems.

1. Psychology

Psychology forms the core of OB because it focuses on understanding individual behaviour like how people think, feel, and act. It provides essential theories on motivation, perception, learning, personality, and attitudes, which help administrators understand why employees behave differently under different circumstances. Psychological insights are vital for designing incentive systems, improving employee morale, and developing training programmes.

► Psychological foundations of OB

A well-known example is Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory, which distinguishes between hygiene factors (salary, working conditions) and motivators (achievement, recognition). This theory is widely applied in public administration, especially in government employee welfare schemes. For instance, many state governments have introduced "Employee of the Month" recognition systems and leadership development training because Herzberg's model shows that recognition encourages intrinsic motivation. Psychology thus helps public organisations design policies that improve individual performance and job satisfaction.

► Motivation and job satisfaction

2. Sociology

Sociology contributes to OB by focusing on group behaviour, social relationships, and collective processes within organisations. It explains how norms, roles, team structures, leadership patterns, and communication channels shape employee behaviour. Public administrations often function through committees, teams, and departmental groups, making sociological insights essential.

► Sociological perspective on groups

A relevant example is the functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) in India. These local governance bodies operate through group discussions, consensus building, social roles, and leadership dynamics among elected members. Sociological principles explain why group norms such as respect for elders, local customs, or political alliances affect decision-making and policy outcomes at the village level. Understanding such group behaviour helps administrators

► Group dynamics in governance



design better coordination mechanisms and strengthen participatory governance.

3. Anthropology

Anthropology enriches OB by studying culture, shared beliefs, rituals, values, and customs that influence behaviour within organisations. Culture shapes how employees view authority, collaboration, punctuality, hierarchy, and innovation. This is especially important in public administration, where employees come from diverse social backgrounds and serve culturally varied populations.

► Cultural influences on behaviour

► Cultural sensitivity in administration

A practical example is cultural sensitivity training for frontline workers in tribal regions. Many government schemes fail due to cultural misunderstandings between officials and local communities. When employees are trained to respect tribal traditions, communication styles, and community values, programme outcomes improve significantly. For instance, the success of maternal health programmes in Odisha's tribal districts improved when ASHA workers were trained to understand local birthing customs and rituals. Anthropology thus enables culturally inclusive public service delivery.

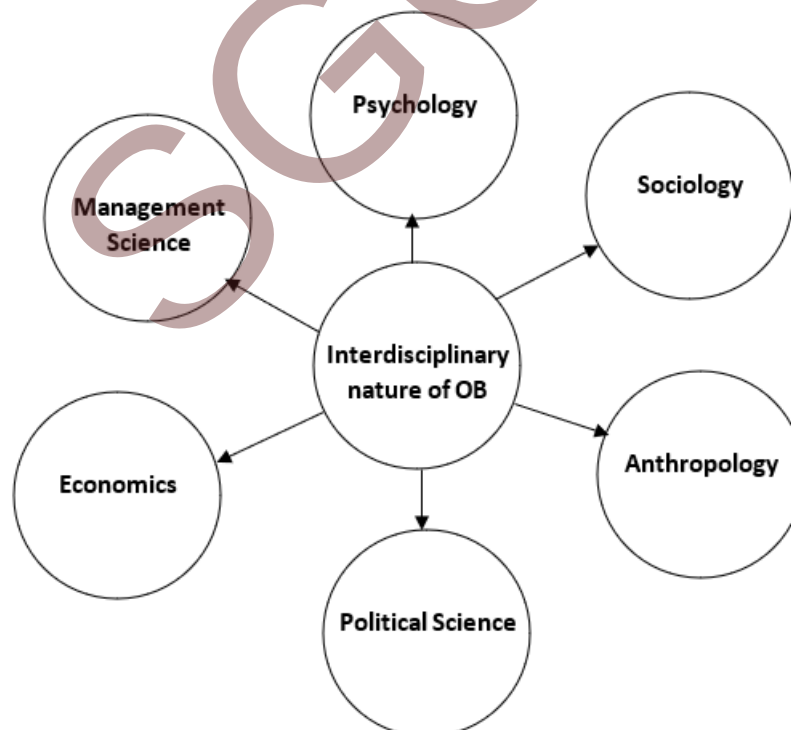


Fig. 1.1.2 Interdisciplinary Nature of OB

4. Political Science

► Power and authority dynamics

Political science adds insights into power, authority, legitimacy, organisational politics, and conflict—critical elements of administrative systems. Public organisations are deeply hierarchical, and decisions often reflect both formal authority and informal influence. Understanding these political dynamics helps administrators manage conflicts, negotiate power balances, and maintain organisational stability.

► Administrative power and conflicts

A real example is the recurring conflict between IAS and state service officers in many Indian states. These conflicts often arise not from administrative problems but from issues of rank, authority, and perceived influence. OB concepts from political science such as power dynamics and authority structures, help explain why such tensions occur and how leadership strategies or role clarity can reduce them. Thus, political science equips administrators to handle internal politics ethically and effectively.

5. Economics

► Economic incentives and behaviour

Economics contributes to OB by explaining how incentives, productivity, resource allocation, and cost-benefit decisions influence behaviour. Public administrators need to understand what motivates employees financially and how economic policies affect organisational performance.

For example, several government departments have introduced performance-linked incentives (PLI) to improve efficiency. In departments such as revenue collection, health services, and public works, incentives for meeting targets or improving service quality have shown measurable results. The economic principle that “people respond to incentives” helps administrators design fair reward systems that boost productivity without compromising public welfare. Economics also supports budgeting, pay structures, and workforce planning in public organisations.

6. Management Science

► Managerial and analytical foundations

Management science strengthens OB through its analytical focus on decision-making models, strategic planning, operations, workflow systems, and quantitative tools. It provides rational frameworks for solving complex organisational problems and designing efficient administrative processes.



A practical example is the use of Management Information Systems (MIS) in public offices. Whether tracking pension applications, monitoring NREGA attendance, handling land records, or managing hospital inventories, MIS integrates management principles such as workflow design, process mapping, and performance measurement. These tools help administrators make better decisions, predict workload, and improve service delivery. Management science thus complements OB by providing the structural and operational foundation needed for effective organisational behaviour.

1.1.3 Evolution of Organisational Behaviour

The field of Organisational Behaviour (OB) has evolved over more than a century, shaped by changes in work environments, employee expectations, and organisational needs. From early mechanical views of labour to today's emphasis on emotional intelligence, culture, and digital workplaces, OB has grown into a comprehensive discipline that helps public and private organisations function effectively. Its evolution can be understood through the following major historical phases.

1.1.3.1 Classical Management Era (1900–1930)

The earliest foundations of OB emerged during the industrial revolution, when organisations focused heavily on improving productivity and efficiency. During this period, workers were largely viewed as instruments of production rather than as individuals with emotions and social needs. Three major contributions define this era.

a. Scientific Management (Frederick Taylor)

Frederick W. Taylor's scientific management emphasised finding the "one best way" to perform a job through time-motion studies, standardisation, and close supervision. Taylor believed efficiency could be maximised by designing tasks scientifically and rewarding workers based on output. While this approach improved factory productivity, it attracted criticism for ignoring human emotions, job satisfaction, and creativity. Workers were treated like parts of a machine, which eventually led to dissatisfaction and resistance.

► Early foundations of OB

b. Administrative Theory (Henri Fayol)

► Principles of management

Henri Fayol expanded organisational thinking by proposing universal principles of management such as division of work, unity of command, authority, and discipline. His ideas helped administrators understand organisational structure and managerial responsibilities. Public administration, especially in India, still follows Fayol's principles in areas such as departmental organisation and supervisory roles.

c. Bureaucracy (Max Weber)

► Bureaucratic model of organisation

Max Weber introduced the bureaucratic model, which emphasised hierarchy, rules, impersonality, and a clear division of labour. Weber's ideas became the backbone of modern government administration. Indian civil services, including IAS, IPS, and state services, follow Weberian principles such as rule-based functioning, formal procedures, and merit-based recruitment. Although criticised for rigidity, bureaucracy provided much-needed stability and predictability in large public organisations.

1.1.3.2 Human Relations Movement (1930–1950)

The Human Relations Movement marked a major shift in organisational thinking. The famous Hawthorne Experiments (1924–1932), led by Elton Mayo at the Western Electric plant in the USA, revealed that workers are not motivated solely by monetary incentives or working conditions. Instead, social relationships, recognition, a sense of belonging, and supervisor support significantly influenced productivity.

► Human relations approach

The experiments showed that when employees felt valued and involved, their performance improved, even if physical conditions remained unchanged. This marked the beginning of understanding employees as social beings rather than mechanical performers.

► Employee welfare and morale

This era greatly influenced public organisations around the world. Indian Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) such as ONGC, SAIL, BHEL, and Coal India began implementing welfare schemes, recreational facilities, and staff development programmes. These initiatives acknowledged that improving employee morale and relationships was essential for better organisational performance. The Human Relations Movement



laid the foundation for modern HR practices like employee counselling, participative management, and grievance redressal.

1.1.3.3 Behavioural Science Era (1950–1970)

As interest in human behaviour grew, researchers from psychology, sociology, and management science expanded OB into a more scientific and research-based discipline. This period focused deeply on motivation, leadership, communication, personality, and group dynamics.

a. Motivation Theories

► Motivational theories of behaviour

Maslow's hierarchy of needs explained how human needs progress from basic survival to self-actualisation. Herzberg's two-factor theory differentiated between hygiene factors and motivators. These frameworks helped administrators understand what truly drives employees.

b. McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y

► Theory X and Y

Douglas McGregor's Theory X assumed employees are lazy and dislike responsibility, while Theory Y proposed that employees are self-motivated and capable of creativity. These ideas influenced leadership styles across government departments. Many modern Indian administrators adopt a Theory Y approach, encouraging teamwork, innovation, and participative decision-making rather than strict authority.

c. Leadership and Group Behaviour Research

► Group behaviour and leadership studies

The Ohio State and Michigan leadership studies, group dynamics research by Kurt Lewin, and communication theories by Chester Barnard helped organisations understand group processes more clearly. As public institutions expanded, understanding group behaviour became essential for coordinating large bureaucratic units.

1.1.3.4 Modern OB (1970–Present)

From the 1970s onward, OB evolved into a comprehensive and dynamic discipline. Organisations began to recognise that behaviour is influenced by multiple interacting factors such as people, technology, environment, culture, and structure. This led to the development of several modern approaches.

a. Systems Approach

► Systems approach to organisation

This approach views an organisation as an open system with interdependent parts such as employees, departments, technology, and environment. Public administration adopted this approach to understand how changes in one unit (e.g., digitisation of records) affect the entire system (e.g., service delivery speed, employee workload, transparency).

b. Contingency Approach

► Contingency approach to management

The contingency approach argues that no single management style or organisational structure is universally effective. Instead, decisions should depend on the situation. Administrators use this approach when handling diverse issues like urban governance, district administration, crisis management, or disaster relief, each needing different leadership styles and organisational responses.

c. Focus on Culture and Organisational Development

► Modern organisational behaviour focus

Modern OB emphasises organisational culture, value systems, teamwork, change management, and continuous improvement. Techniques like training, sensitivity workshops, counselling, and organisational development interventions help improve government functioning.

d. Emotional Intelligence & Stress Management

► Emotional intelligence in administration

Public servants today face heavy workloads, political pressure, and public expectations. Emotional intelligence, self-awareness, empathy, and stress management methods are now essential skills taught in administrative training academies such as LBSNAA.

e. Diversity and Inclusion

► Diversity and inclusion focus

Modern OB recognises the importance of diversity such as gender, caste, culture, disability, and generational differences. Government offices now adopt inclusive policies, anti-discrimination rules, and workplace equality programmes.

f. Technology, AI, and Digital Workplaces

► Technology and behavioural change

With the rise of digital governance, OB now incorporates technology-driven behavioural changes. The shift to e-office



systems, virtual meetings, biometric attendance, and AI-driven public services demands that employees adapt to new ways of working.

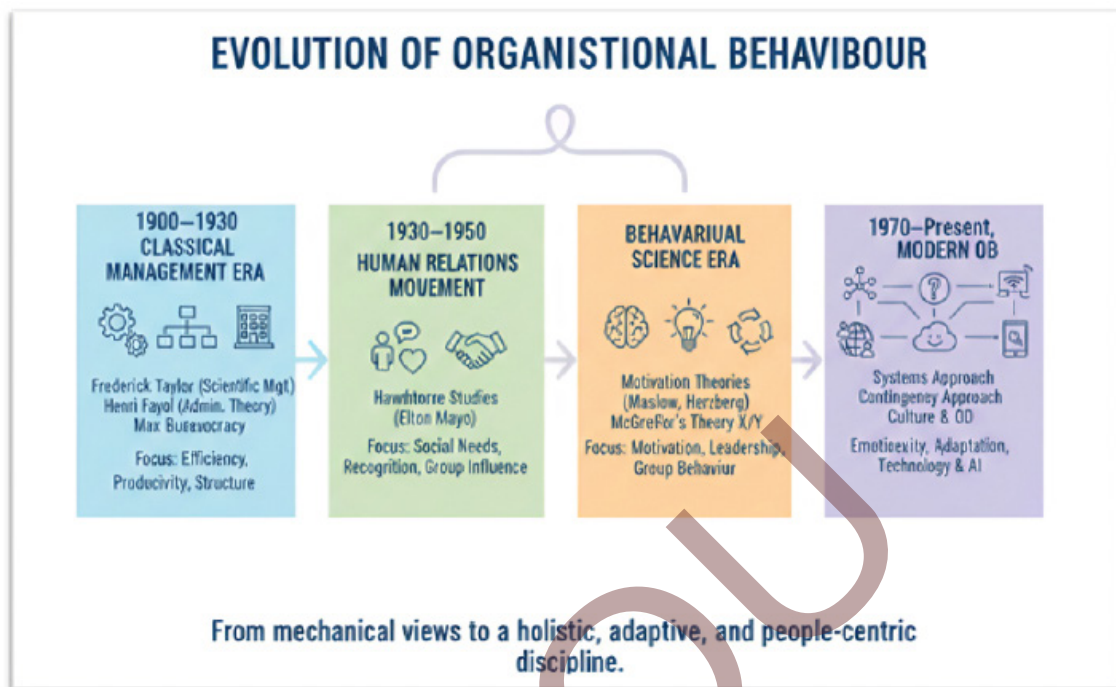


Fig. 1.1.3 Evolution of Organisational Behaviour

CASE STUDY: Behaviour Change in Public Health Sector – The Tamil Nadu Model

Background

Tamil Nadu has long been recognised as one of India's best-performing states in public health delivery. Its achievements of high immunisation coverage, low maternal mortality rate, and efficient primary healthcare did not emerge overnight. Behind these outcomes lies a strong focus on organisational behaviour (OB) practices within the health system. Since the early 2000s, the Government of Tamil Nadu has been strengthening behavioural aspects of its workforce, especially nurses, medical officers, primary health centre (PHC) staff, and field workers. The health system adopted a professional culture emphasising communication, teamwork, accountability, and continuous training.

Problems Faced

Despite its relatively strong health infrastructure, the state faced several organisational behaviour challenges in the early years:

► Organisational
behaviour challenges

1. **Limited Interpersonal Communication:** Many nurses and frontline workers lacked soft-skill training for interacting with patients, leading to dissatisfaction and miscommunication, especially among rural and tribal populations.
2. **Low Team Coordination:** PHCs often operated in silos. Doctors, nurses, and health inspectors worked individually, leading to duplication of tasks and delays in service delivery.
3. **Motivation and Career Stagnation:** Before reforms, delays in promotions and unclear career progression reduced employee morale and organisational commitment.
4. **Weak Accountability Mechanisms:** Inconsistent documentation, absenteeism, and lack of performance monitoring created gaps in patient care, especially in remote areas.
5. **Increasing Work Stress:** Growing patient load, long working hours, and administrative pressures caused stress and burnout among healthcare workers.

These challenges showed the urgent need for organisational behaviour interventions to strengthen the human side of public healthcare.

Solutions Implemented

Tamil Nadu implemented a series of innovative OB-based practices to transform its health workforce:

1. **Structured Training in Interpersonal and Behavioural Skills:** The state introduced regular training sessions on communication, empathy, counselling, and community engagement. Nurses were trained on how to speak politely, reassure anxious patients, and handle sensitive cases such as maternal health and child nutrition.
2. **Team-Based Decision Making:** Weekly and monthly team meetings became mandatory at PHCs and district hospitals. Doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and health inspectors collaboratively reviewed cases, monitored

outbreaks, discussed logistics, and divided responsibilities. This improved coordination and reduced role ambiguity.

► Innovative OB-based practices

3. **Timely Promotions and Transparent Career Path:** A significant policy reform ensured faster and more predictable promotions for nurses, medical officers, and health staff. This increased job satisfaction, lowered attrition, and strengthened organisational commitment.
4. **Strengthening of Accountability and Performance Monitoring:** Tamil Nadu promoted a culture of discipline and responsibility through digital monitoring tools, patient feedback systems, and regular supervisory visits. Clear roles and guidelines helped reduce absenteeism and improve reliability.
5. **Cultivating Empathy and Patient-Centric Culture:** Healthcare workers were encouraged to treat patients with dignity, especially vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, elderly citizens, and children. Hospitals introduced patient help desks, grievance redressal mechanisms, and awareness programmes on respectful maternity care.

Outcome

► Creating a positive work climate

These behavioural interventions created a positive work climate across Tamil Nadu's health sector. According to a World Bank study, the state's superior performance in health indicators is closely linked to its strong organisational culture—marked by teamwork, motivation, accountability, and patient-centric behaviour. Tamil Nadu today serves as a model for other Indian states seeking to improve public health delivery through organisational behaviour reforms.

► Bridges the gap between administrative theory and real human behaviour

Organisational Behaviour is a critical foundation for Public Administration because it bridges the gap between administrative theory and real human behaviour. Understanding OB helps administrators manage teams effectively, handle conflicts, lead reforms, motivate employees, and build a citizen-friendly governance system. As government organisations evolve in response to digital governance, globalisation, and social expectations, OB becomes even more important in shaping capable, responsive, and ethical public institutions.

Summarized Overview

This unit introduces students to the fundamental principles, nature, scope, and significance of Organisational Behaviour (OB), explaining how human behaviour influences organisational performance. It highlights OB as a multidisciplinary field drawing insights from psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, political science, and management science. The unit discusses how OB functions at individual, group, and organisational levels, examining elements such as personality, motivation, leadership, communication, organisational culture, and structure. Students learn how OB evolved from classical management theories to modern concepts that emphasise human relations, emotional intelligence, employee well-being, and digital workplaces. The significance of OB in public administration is strongly emphasised, showing how behavioural insights improve teamwork, decision-making, conflict resolution, change management, and citizen-centric governance. A real-world case study—the Tamil Nadu Public Health Model—illustrates how behavioural interventions such as training, teamwork, accountability, and motivation can transform public service delivery. Overall, the unit reinforces that organisations succeed not just through systems and rules but through people, and understanding OB is crucial for building efficient and humane institutions.

Self-Assessment

1. Explain the nature of Organisational Behaviour and discuss its relevance in modern administrative systems.
2. Describe the interdisciplinary foundations of OB and explain how each discipline contributes to understanding workplace behaviour.
3. Discuss the evolution of OB from the classical management era to the modern behavioural approach.
4. Analyse the significance of OB in public administration with suitable examples from Indian government institutions.
5. Using the Tamil Nadu Public Health case study, evaluate how behavioural interventions can improve organisational performance.



Assignments

1. Visit a local organisation (government office, hospital, or company) and prepare a report analysing its organisational culture and employee behaviour.
2. Interview two employees from different departments of an organisation and compare their perceptions of leadership and motivation.
3. Conduct an observation study of teamwork during a group activity or departmental meeting and identify group norms, communication patterns, and role clarity.
4. Prepare a case analysis on any public-sector reform programme (e.g., e-governance, DBT, district administration initiative) by identifying OB principles applied in the reform.
5. Design a short organisational development intervention (e.g., stress-management workshop, teamwork training, motivation plan) for improving employee well-being in a public institution.

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Suggested Reading

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU

UNIT

2

Forms of Organization

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- explain the different forms of organisations and their relevance in public administration and business environments
- describe the 4P Model and evaluate how Purpose, People, Process, and Physical Resources shape organisational functioning
- comprehend major organisational structures and assess their suitability for different administrative contexts

Background

Organisations form the structural backbone of modern administrative and economic systems, shaping how public services, businesses, and social institutions operate. In India alone, over 1.5 crore registered enterprises (MSME Ministry, 2024) and more than 3.2 million government employees (Government of India, 2023) work within diverse organisational forms ranging from ministries and public-sector undertakings to partnerships, cooperatives, and corporations. As economies expand and governance becomes increasingly complex, understanding how organisations are formed, structured, and managed becomes essential. Global trends also highlight the importance of organisational design research by McKinsey (2022) shows that companies with well-aligned structures are 3 times more likely to outperform their peers in efficiency and service delivery.

In public administration, organisational structure directly influences how programmes such as the Smart Cities Mission, Swachh Bharat, or Digital India achieve results across thousands of decentralised units. Case studies like ISRO, which executed Chandrayaan-3 at a fraction of global costs, and Amul, which empowers 3.6 million dairy farmers through a cooperative form, demonstrate how organisational design affects innovation, coordination, and societal impact. As future managers and administrators, MBA students

must understand these organisational foundations to effectively analyse institutions, improve decision-making systems, and design structures capable of delivering value in dynamic environments.

Keywords

Organisation structure, Formal organisation, 4P Model, Matrix structure, Partnership

Discussion

Organisations, whether government ministries, municipal councils, cooperatives, or corporate firms, are the backbone of modern administrative systems. In public administration, understanding how organisations are designed, structured, and operated becomes essential because most governmental tasks (policy implementation, service delivery, welfare schemes, regulatory functions) depend on how well an organisation is arranged. This unit explores the foundational concepts of organisational forms, the 4P model of organisational bases, various types of organisations (formal, informal, sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation), and the meaning and significance of organisational structure. The discussion is enriched with public-sector illustrations, real case studies like ISRO, Amul Cooperative, LIC, Indian Railways, and insights from scholars such as Herbert Simon, Max Weber, and Peter Drucker.

1.2.1 Bases of Organisation - The 4P Model

► 4P model of organisation- Purpose, People, Process, and Physical Resources

The 4P Model—Purpose, People, Process, and Physical Resources offers a simple yet powerful lens to understand how organisations originate and function. It is widely discussed in public administration and management literature, including works by Herbert Simon (Administrative Behaviour), Peter Drucker (Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices), and Luther Gulick (PODSCORB principles). The model helps explain why organisations differ and how they align their internal functions with external expectations. In public administration, the 4P framework is particularly helpful because government organisations deal with diverse tasks, complex hierarchies, and accountability to citizens.



Fig. 1.2.1 4P Model

1.2.1.1 Purpose

► Purpose of an organisation explains why it exists

The purpose of an organisation explains why it exists. Its mission, long-term goals, core values, and the public or societal needs it seeks to fulfil. According to Peter Drucker, a clear purpose acts as the organisation's "guiding star," influencing how structures and strategies evolve. In public administration, purpose is often defined by legislation, national priorities, or constitutional obligations. Government departments such as the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare operate with the defined purpose of strengthening public health systems, reducing disease burdens, and implementing national programmes like the National Health Mission. Their policies, staffing, and budgets all flow from this central purpose.

Example – Swachh Bharat Mission (2014)

The Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) was created with a clear purpose of eliminating open defecation, improving sanitation, and promoting behavioural change across rural and urban India. Its multi-level organisational structure, covering national, state, district, and block offices, was designed specifically to support

this mission. The clarity of purpose enabled systematic resource allocation, mass mobilisation, and measurable outcomes such as the construction of over 100 million toilets.

1.2.1.2 People

► Human resources that give life to an organisation

The people element refers to the human resources that give life to an organisation, such as individuals who bring skills, motivation, experience, and interpersonal relationships. Scholars like Herbert Simon emphasise that decisions, actions, and innovations depend largely on the behaviour and competence of people within the system. In public administration, people include civil servants, field officers, contractual staff, technical experts, and even citizens as stakeholders.

► Trained officers

Government machinery depends on trained officers from services such as IAS, IPS, IFS, as well as frontline workers like health inspectors, Anganwadi workers, and panchayat staff. Their day-to-day actions, like policy implementation, grievance handling, and public service delivery, shape governance outcomes.

Case Illustration – ISRO

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) offers a powerful example of the People dimension. The success of Chandrayaan-3 (2023) resulted from coordinated teamwork involving propulsion experts, landing-module specialists, mission controllers, and quality-testing teams. Their technical expertise and collaborative work culture, built over decades since the era of Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, demonstrate how human capability strengthens an organisation's reliability.

1.2.1.3 Process

► Organisational processes and procedures

Processes are the rules, procedures, workflows, and formal systems that shape how organisational goals are achieved. Luther Gulick and Lyndall Urwick emphasised in classical administrative theory that well-designed processes reduce ambiguity and make administration more efficient. In government, processes ensure transparency, accountability, and uniformity in decision-making across departments. Most public organisations rely on clearly defined standard operating procedures (SOPs), financial and audit rules, rules of business,

and regulatory frameworks. These processes ensure that decisions are taken systematically rather than arbitrarily.

Example – Right to Information (RTI) Process

The RTI Act institutionalised a clear process: acknowledgement of a request within 48 hours in urgent cases, response within 30 days, and a formal appeal mechanism. This structured process ensures transparency, reduces corruption, and empowers citizens to hold officials accountable. The predictability of the workflow is central to the Act's successful implementation across states.

1.2.1.4 Physical Resources

► Material and infrastructural support

Physical resources include financial capital, buildings, equipment, technology, materials, and infrastructural facilities that enable the organisation to function. Public-sector organisations rely on a wide range of assets from hospitals and schools to data centres and transport systems. The availability, allocation, and management of these resources deeply influence an organisation's performance. For example, public hospitals require diagnostic equipment, beds, ambulances, oxygen supply systems, and medicines. Similarly, the Indian Railways depend on locomotives, tracks, signalling infrastructure, maintenance depots, and station facilities. And digital India initiatives require large-scale ICT infrastructure such as broadband networks, Aadhaar servers, Common Service Centres (CSCs), and secure data systems.

Case – Kerala Health Department during COVID-19

During the COVID-19 outbreak, Kerala's Health Department demonstrated effective management of physical resources. The state quickly mobilised hospitals, ICU beds, testing laboratories, PPE kits, and community health centres. Equally important was its use of digital tools such as the "Covid Jagratha" portal for real-time tracking, which showcased the integration of physical and technological resources to manage a public-health emergency.

1.2.2 Types of Organisations

Organisations may take multiple forms depending on purpose, ownership, structure, and the nature of operations. This unit describes the most commonly studied forms.



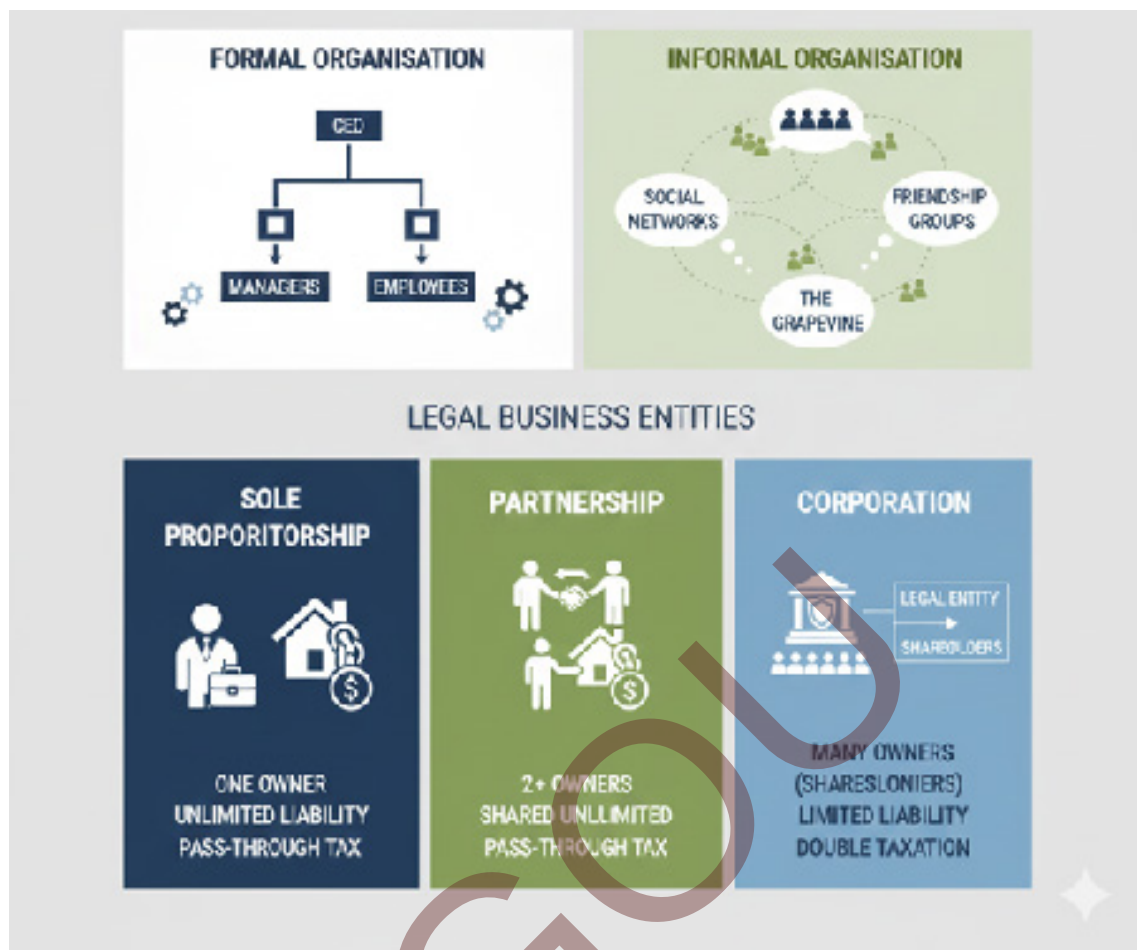


Fig. 1.2.2 Types of Organisations

1.2.2.1 Formal Organisation

► Formal organisational structure

A formal organisation refers to a consciously created and officially structured arrangement of roles, responsibilities, and authority within an institution. It is designed to ensure coordinated behaviour among members so that organisational goals can be efficiently achieved. Max Weber's theory of bureaucracy provides the most influential explanation of this concept, emphasising elements such as hierarchy, specialised division of labour, written rules, and impersonality. In public administration, the formal organisation helps maintain order, predictability, and uniformity across large and complex government systems.

Formal organisations are deeply embedded in India's governance and administrative landscape. Central and State Government departments operate through formal hierarchies, rules of business, and documented procedures. Public Sector

► Institutionalised administrative systems

Undertakings (PSUs) like BHEL, SAIL, and ONGC follow structured recruitment, departmental specialisation, and formal reporting systems to manage large-scale operations. Similarly, regulatory bodies such as SEBI, RBI, and TRAI function with codified powers, professional staff, and institutional procedures to ensure financial and economic stability. At the local level, Panchayati Raj Institutions also represent formal structures with elected representatives, defined powers, and written administrative norms.

Characteristics of Formal Organisation

1. Hierarchical Structure

► Clearly defined hierarchy

A formal organisation operates through a clearly defined hierarchy where positions and authority are arranged from higher to lower levels. Each level supervises the one below it, ensuring accountability and direction. This chain of command helps avoid confusion and establishes who is responsible for what decisions. Weber argued that such a hierarchy is essential for stability and discipline in administrative systems.

2. Clear Rules and Procedures

► Rely on written rules, guidelines, and procedures

Formal organisations rely on written rules, guidelines, and procedures to regulate behaviour and decision-making. These rules ensure consistency and fairness, especially in government departments where public interest is involved. Because procedures are standardised, employees know exactly how tasks should be performed. This formal rule-based approach reduces arbitrariness and enhances transparency.

3. Defined Authority

► Prevents overlaps, conflicts, and confusion

Each position in a formal organisation carries a specific level of authority, enabling smooth functioning and coordinated action. Defined authority prevents overlaps, conflicts, and confusion about who is empowered to take decisions. In public administration, this extends from ministers to secretaries to section officers, ensuring clarity in command. Authority is tied to the office, not the individual, reflecting Weber's principle of impersonality.

4. Job Descriptions

► Assigned duties and responsibilities

Employees in formal organisations are assigned specific duties and responsibilities based on their qualifications and organisational needs. Job descriptions clarify what tasks are expected, how performance is evaluated, and where accountability lies. This specialisation supports efficiency because individuals develop expertise in their roles. For example, accounts officers focus on financial matters, while technical officers handle engineering responsibilities.

5. Documentation and Records

► Systematic written records

A formal organisation maintains systematic written records of decisions, transactions, and administrative actions. These documents support continuity, enable audits, and act as legal proof of government decisions. Record-keeping is crucial in public administration because it ensures historical traceability and transparency. Weber considered documentation one of the pillars of modern bureaucracy.

Case Illustration– Indian Railways

Indian Railways stands as one of the world's largest and most complex formal organisations, illustrating the principles of bureaucracy in action. With nearly 1.2 million employees, the organisation relies on a well-defined structure comprising zones, divisions, and departments such as traffic, engineering, mechanical, and accounts. The hierarchical chain begins at the Railway Board, followed by 17 zones, and then 68 divisions, each with clearly assigned responsibilities. Its ability to transport 23 million passengers every day and manage heavy freight logistics reflects how a strong formal organisational design enhances coordination, efficiency, and reliability.

1.2.2.2 Informal Organisation

► Emerges naturally from the social interactions, shared experiences, and personal relationships

An informal organisation emerges naturally from the social interactions, shared experiences, and personal relationships that develop among employees within a formal structure. Unlike the formal organisation, it is not created through official orders or documented procedures; rather, it evolves spontaneously as individuals communicate, cooperate, and build trust. Chester Barnard, in 'The Functions of the Executive (1938)', argued that informal groups are essential because they foster cooperation, strengthen communication, and ensure that formal instructions

are carried out effectively. In public administration, informal networks often fill gaps left by rigid bureaucratic rules, making day-to-day functioning smoother and more adaptive.

Characteristics of Informal Organisation

1. Based on Personal Relationships

- Friendships, shared interests, personal rapport, or common backgrounds

Informal organisations grow from friendships, shared interests, personal rapport, or common backgrounds among employees. These relationships influence how people support each other, share information, and collaborate beyond their formal duties. Unlike formal structures, informal ties cut across departments and hierarchies. They play an important role in reducing workplace stress and improving cooperation.

2. No Official Rules

- No written rules, standard procedures, or official authority patterns

An informal organisation has no written rules, standard procedures, or official authority patterns. Its functioning is flexible and guided by human emotions, group comfort, and context-specific needs. Because it operates outside formal rulebooks, it can adapt quickly to changing situations. This flexibility often compensates for the rigidity found in bureaucratic systems.

3. Helps Communication

- Facilitate faster and smoother communication

Informal networks facilitate faster and smoother communication compared to formal channels, which may involve multiple levels of approval. Colleagues often rely on informal conversations, phone calls, or quick discussions to clarify doubts or share updates. This improves coordination and reduces delays in administrative work. Many scholars describe this as the “grapevine” that strengthens organisational responsiveness.

4. Generates Group Norms

- Norms influence how employees approach tasks, share responsibilities, and support one another

Informal groups create their own norms, which are shared expectations about behaviour, work ethics, and cooperation. These norms influence how employees approach tasks, share responsibilities, and support one another. Sometimes, these standards can reinforce positive behaviour such as mutual help and discipline; at other times, they may lead to resistance against unpopular policies. Understanding these norms helps managers predict group behaviour.



5. Provides Emotional Support

► Social and emotional needs of employees

Informal organisations fulfil the social and emotional needs of employees, offering friendship, trust, and a sense of belonging. These bonds help reduce workplace stress and improve morale, especially in high-pressure government offices. Emotional support encourages teamwork and motivates employees to go beyond their formal job descriptions. Barnard emphasised that such support is indispensable for maintaining cooperative systems.

► Ensuring administrative continuity

In public-sector settings such as a district collectorate, informal networks often play a crucial role in ensuring administrative continuity. Clerks, assistants, and section staff frequently share tips, past experiences, and unofficial but practical steps that help move files efficiently. These informal ties help new employees learn procedures that may not be clearly documented or may vary across departments. Such spontaneous collaboration enhances coordination and helps resolve routine bottlenecks more quickly than formal structures alone.

Case Example – Delhi Metro

In the early years of Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) operations, informal groups were instrumental in improving daily functioning. Station controllers, customer service assistants, and technical staff often discussed solutions informally during shift changes or breaks. These interactions helped them manage passenger rush, crowd movement, and minor operational glitches even before formal SOPs were revised. The management later incorporated many of these practical insights into updated protocols, showing how informal systems can strengthen formal organisational performance.

1.2.2.3 Sole Proprietorship

► Business owned, controlled, and managed entirely by a single individual

A sole proprietorship is a form of business owned, controlled, and managed entirely by a single individual. It is the simplest and oldest form of business organisation, commonly preferred for small-scale and local enterprises. Because the owner alone assumes all responsibilities and enjoys all profits, this structure is highly flexible and easy to establish. Management scholars such as C.B. Gupta and P.N. Varshney note that sole proprietorships dominate retail trade, personal services, and micro-enterprises in developing economies.

Characteristics

1. Single Ownership

- Entirely owned by one person

In a sole proprietorship, the business is entirely owned by one person, who provides the initial capital and bears full responsibility for decision-making. This unified ownership structure eliminates conflicts that may arise among partners or shareholders. The owner's personal involvement ensures close supervision and strong commitment to business operations. Such ownership is especially suited for small shops, service providers, and home-based enterprises.

2. Unlimited Liability

- The owner's liability is unlimited

One of the defining features of a sole proprietorship is that the owner's liability is unlimited, meaning personal assets may be used to settle business debts if necessary. While this increases financial risk, it also enhances credibility with lenders who trust personal accountability. For small enterprises requiring quick credit from local banks or informal lenders, unlimited liability often becomes an accepted part of operating risk. This characteristic is commonly highlighted in business law literature, including works by Dr. S.C. Sharma.

3. Direct Control

- The owner exercises complete and direct control

The owner exercises complete and direct control over business operations, strategic decisions, pricing, and customer relations. This lack of hierarchical structure enables rapid decision-making and hands-on management. Direct control enhances efficiency because the owner is closely involved in day-to-day activities and can adjust plans quickly. This aspect is especially advantageous in competitive markets where customer preferences change rapidly.

4. Quick Decisions

- Decisions can be made swiftly

Since the proprietorship structure avoids layers of consultation and approval, decisions can be made swiftly. Whether it is purchasing inventory, responding to market changes, or addressing customer complaints, the owner can act immediately. This agility gives sole proprietorships a competitive advantage over larger and more bureaucratic organisations. Scholars like P.K. Jain emphasise that speed and flexibility are key strengths of this form of business.



Sole proprietorships are highly significant in the context of public administration because many government welfare and entrepreneurship schemes directly target small, individual-owned businesses. Programmes such as PM-SVANidhi, Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana (PMRY), and Mudra Loans aim to promote self-employment among street vendors, artisans, shopkeepers, tailors, and other micro-entrepreneurs. These schemes provide subsidised loans, digital support, skill training, and market access to strengthen local livelihoods. Supporting sole proprietors helps governments achieve inclusive growth, reduce unemployment, and stimulate local economies.

Example

A Fair Price Shop (FPS) or ration shop operating under the Public Distribution System (PDS) is commonly managed as a sole proprietorship. The dealer is the single owner responsible for procurement, distribution, stock maintenance, and customer interaction, even though the shop functions under strict government regulation. The government sets prices, supply quotas, and operational rules, but daily functioning is carried out independently by the sole proprietor. This model combines individual entrepreneurship with public welfare objectives.

1.2.2.4 Partnership

► Voluntary association of two or more individuals

A partnership is a voluntary association of two or more individuals who come together to run a business and share its profits, losses, and managerial responsibilities. The partnership is created through a mutual agreement (written or oral), known as the partnership deed, which outlines rights, duties, and profit-sharing ratios. In India, partnerships are governed by the Indian Partnership Act, 1932, which defines partners as agents of the firm and of one another. Scholars such as P.N. Reddy and H.R. Appanaiah emphasise that partnerships combine the strengths and resources of multiple individuals, making them suitable for small and medium enterprises.

Types of Partnerships

1. General Partnership

► All partners participate actively

In a general partnership, all partners participate actively in managing the business and share unlimited liability. This means each partner is personally responsible for the debts and

obligations of the firm. General partnerships are preferred for small businesses where trust and close cooperation are essential. They provide operational flexibility but also expose partners to higher financial risk.

2. Limited Partnership

- Both general partners and limited partners

A limited partnership includes both general partners (with unlimited liability) and limited partners (whose liability is restricted to their capital contribution). Limited partners usually do not participate in day-to-day management, making this structure suitable for investors seeking safety along with returns. This type balances the need for managerial control with the need for additional capital. It is recognised in many countries, although less common in India compared to LLPs.

3. LLP (Limited Liability Partnership)

- Combines the operational flexibility of a partnership with the limited liability protection of a company

An LLP is a modern business structure that combines the operational flexibility of a partnership with the limited liability protection of a company. Under the LLP Act, 2008, partners are not personally liable for the misconduct or negligence of other partners, making it safer than a general partnership. LLPs are widely used by professionals such as lawyers, architects, consultants, and start-ups. They also enjoy advantages like perpetual succession and simpler compliance requirements compared to companies.

The Government of India encourages partnership-based ventures through the Startup India initiative, which offers tax benefits, funding support, innovation hubs, and simplified compliance. Many start-ups operate as partnerships or LLPs because these forms require less regulatory burden compared to companies. Partnerships allow founders to pool their expertise such as technical, managerial, or financial to create scalable business models. This administrative support strengthens India's entrepreneurial ecosystem.

4. Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs)

- Government partners with private firms to deliver public services

PPPs represent a collaborative model where the government partners with private firms to deliver public services, infrastructure, and utilities. These partnerships combine public accountability with private sector efficiency, helping accelerate projects in roads, airports, metro rail, and energy sectors. The



government benefits from specialised knowledge, investment, and innovation from private partners. PPPs are widely discussed in works by M. Ravindra and the World Bank for their role in modern governance.

5. Cooperative–Business Partnerships (e.g., Amul)

► Empower communities and strengthen rural economies

The Indian government supports cooperative–business partnerships to empower communities and strengthen rural economies. Amul, for example, operates as a cooperative but functions through strong managerial partnerships between farmers, societies, and professionals. These models ensure that producers receive fair prices while benefiting from efficient processing, marketing, and distribution. Such partnerships have transformed rural industries by merging community participation with professional management.

Case Study – Amul Cooperative Model

The Amul model, created under the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF), demonstrates how cooperative structures can function like partnerships between millions of farmers and a professional management system. Over 3.6 million dairy farmers contribute milk daily through village societies spread across 18,500+ villages in Gujarat. These societies operate democratically, but at the operational level, farmers and managers work in close partnership to ensure quality, pricing, logistics, and marketing. This collaborative model enabled India to achieve the status of the world’s largest milk producer, a transformation documented in Verghese Kurien’s autobiography, *I Too Had a Dream*.

1.2.2.5 Risk vs. Reward: Sole Proprietorship and Partnership

► A key factor in choosing a form of business organisation

The relationship between risk and reward is a key factor in choosing a form of business organisation. In a sole proprietorship, the owner bears all the business risk, including financial losses, legal liabilities, and operational failures. However, this high level of risk is matched by maximum reward, as the proprietor enjoys complete control over the business and retains 100% of the profits. Quick decision-making and direct ownership motivate the sole proprietor to take calculated risks to increase returns.

In contrast, a partnership involves shared risk, as losses, liabilities, and responsibilities are distributed among two or more partners according to the partnership agreement. Since the risk is spread, the individual burden on each partner is lower. However, the reward is also shared, meaning profits must be divided among partners. While this reduces individual earnings compared to sole proprietorship, partnerships often benefit from pooled capital, combined skills, and shared expertise, which can improve overall business performance and stability.

Thus, sole proprietorship suits individuals willing to take high risk for high reward, while partnerships are better for those preferring moderate risk with shared rewards and responsibilities.

1.2.2.6 Corporation

A corporation is a legally constituted organisation that exists as a separate entity distinct from its owners or shareholders. This separation gives the corporation its own legal rights, such as owning property, entering into contracts, and suing or being sued, independent of the individuals associated with it. Corporations are typically formed under specific statutes, such as the Companies Act, 2013 in India, which outlines their formation, governance, and dissolution. Management scholars such as James Horne and P. Chandra emphasise that corporate entities are essential for large-scale operations requiring significant capital, continuity, and structured governance.

- Exists as a separate entity distinct from its owners or shareholders

Characteristics

1. Separate Legal Identity

A corporation is recognised as a legal “person,” distinct from its shareholders, allowing it to own assets, incur liabilities, and enter into contracts independently. This feature protects shareholders from being personally liable for corporate actions. The corporate identity continues even when ownership changes through share transfer. This principle is well established in corporate law literature and reinforced through judicial precedents, such as the landmark UK case *Salomon v. Salomon & Co. Ltd.* (1897).

- Protects shareholders from being personally liable for corporate actions

2. Perpetual Succession

Perpetual succession means that a corporation continues to exist regardless of changes in ownership, membership, or

► Corporation continues to exist

management. Even if shareholders die, resign, or transfer their shares, the corporation's legal existence remains unaffected. This makes corporations highly stable institutions suitable for long-term projects and capital-intensive industries. Government corporations, in particular, benefit from this continuity when delivering essential services.

3. Professional Management

Corporations rely on professional managers who are trained in finance, operations, marketing, and governance to run day-to-day activities. Shareholders elect a Board of Directors, and the board appoints executives who bring specialised skills and managerial expertise. This separation between ownership and management allows corporations to scale operations efficiently. Business scholars such as Peter F. Drucker highlight that professional management is a key reason corporations dominate modern economies.

4. Limited Liability

► Shareholders are liable only up to the value of their investment in the corporation's shares

Limited liability ensures that shareholders are liable only up to the value of their investment in the corporation's shares. Their personal assets are protected even if the corporation faces financial distress or legal claims. This feature encourages wider participation in capital markets and enables corporations to raise large volumes of funds from the public. Limited liability has been a major driver behind the growth of modern joint-stock companies.

Examples in the Public Sector

Public sector corporations in India are established either through Acts of Parliament or under the Companies Act, depending on their nature and purpose. Examples include:

- Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) – a statutory corporation fully owned by the government until its partial disinvestment through the 2022 IPO.
- Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) – a leading engineering and manufacturing corporation under the Ministry of Heavy Industries.

- ▶ National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) – one of India's largest power generation companies.
- ▶ Air India (until its 2022 privatisation) – a government-owned corporation providing national and international air transport services.

These corporations combine commercial functions with public welfare objectives, making them central to India's mixed-economy model.

Case Study – LIC of India

The Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), established in 1956 under the LIC Act, is one of the most trusted financial institutions in the country. With over 250 million policyholders, LIC's success rests on a well-structured organisational design, strong hierarchical systems, and rigorous regulatory compliance under the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI). Its emphasis on customer service, actuarial planning, and risk management has helped it maintain public confidence for decades. LIC's robust corporate governance and nationwide network of branch offices illustrate how public corporations achieve long-term stability and social impact while functioning within a formal legal framework.

1.2.3 Organisation Structure

Just like the hospital needs a clear system to treat patients effectively, every organisation needs a well-designed structure to operate smoothly. Organisation structure is the blueprint that tells everyone what to do, how to do it, and whom to report to. Organisation structure refers to the formal arrangement of jobs, authority, communication channels, and responsibilities within an organisation. It determines how decisions are made, how tasks are coordinated, and how different units interact to achieve organisational goals.

1.2.3.1 Relevance/Importance of Organisation Structure

1. **Ensures clarity in roles:** A well-designed organisation structure clearly defines what each employee is expected to do. It specifies duties, responsibilities, and reporting re-



► Defines what each employee is expected to do

relationships so that workers know exactly where their role begins and ends. When employees understand their roles, there is less duplication of work and fewer tasks that remain unattended.

Example: In a multi-speciality hospital, the roles of cardiologists, nurses, technicians, emergency doctors, and administrative officers are clearly defined. Because duties are well separated, the emergency team can act quickly, the lab team handles tests, and the doctor focuses on diagnosis. This clarity saves time and improves the quality of care.

► Prevents misunderstandings, delays, and power struggles

2. **Reduces confusion:** Confusion occurs when authority and decision-making rights are not clear. A formal structure outlines who has the power to make decisions, approve budgets, provide instructions, and resolve conflicts. This prevents misunderstandings, delays, and power struggles. When communication channels are well defined, employees know whom to approach for decisions or support.

Example: The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation assigns a single project head for each construction phase. All teams such as civil engineering, safety, signalling, and operations, report to this project head. Because the decision point is clear, teams avoid misunderstandings and issues are solved quickly.

► Reduces delay

3. **Improves efficiency and speed:** An effective structure groups people according to their skills and organises work in a way that reduces delay. Short reporting lines, specialised teams, and streamlined processes help in faster problem-solving. Organisations that align structure with workflow usually achieve better productivity and quicker turnaround times.

Example: Toyota's Production System is known worldwide for speed and efficiency. Its structure supports specialised roles on the assembly line and clear responsibility for each stage of production. This arrangement reduces wastage, minimises waiting, and has helped Toyota achieve one of the fastest production cycles in the automobile industry.

4. **Enhances coordination:** Coordination means making different departments or units work together smoothly.

► Structured team interaction

Organisation structure includes formal mechanisms such as committees, cross-functional teams, and liaison officers that help departments cooperate. This is especially important in large organisations where marketing, finance, human resources, operations, and research must work together towards a single goal.

Example: In the construction and expansion of the Delhi Metro, technical consultants, project engineers, safety officers, and operations teams coordinate through dedicated project offices. This structured team interaction ensured that construction phases were completed efficiently and safely.

► Linking authority with responsibility

- 5. Helps in accountability and control:** Structure creates accountability by linking authority with responsibility. When a particular person or team is responsible for an outcome, it becomes easy to evaluate performance. Managers can set targets, monitor progress, give feedback, and take corrective action. This helps maintain discipline and ensures that tasks are completed as planned.

Example: Amazon follows the concept of the two pizza team, which means a small team that can be fed with two pizzas. Each team owns a particular product or service from beginning to end and is fully accountable for its performance. This clear ownership prevents blame shifting and increases responsibility and innovation.

► Flexible and scalable structure

- 6. Supports growth and smooth functioning:** As organisations grow, they expand into new regions, introduce new products, or create new departments. A flexible and scalable structure helps them grow without losing control. A strong structure prevents chaos, supports smooth daily functioning, and allows the organisation to adjust as size and strategy change.

Example: ISRO operates through multiple specialised research centres, mission units, and project offices. This structure allows the organisation to handle several missions at the same time. It has helped ISRO maintain high-quality, low-cost space missions such as Chandrayaan 2 and Chandrayaan 3, and also supported continuous organisational growth.

1.2.3.2 Major Types of Organisation Structures

A. Line Structure

A line structure is the most traditional form of organisational design, where authority flows vertically from the top level to the lowest operational layer. Every subordinate reports directly to one superior, ensuring a clear chain of command and well-defined responsibility. This structure is simple, rigid, and easy to understand, making it ideal for organisations where discipline, quick decision-making, and centralised control are essential. Because decisions move through a single authority line, there is little scope for confusion or conflict, although it may become inflexible in large and dynamic environments. A classic example is the Police Department, which operates through a strict hierarchical order. The chain of command typically follows DGP → IGP → SP → DSP → Inspectors, enabling fast communication, effective enforcement, and disciplined operations across districts and states.

► Traditional form

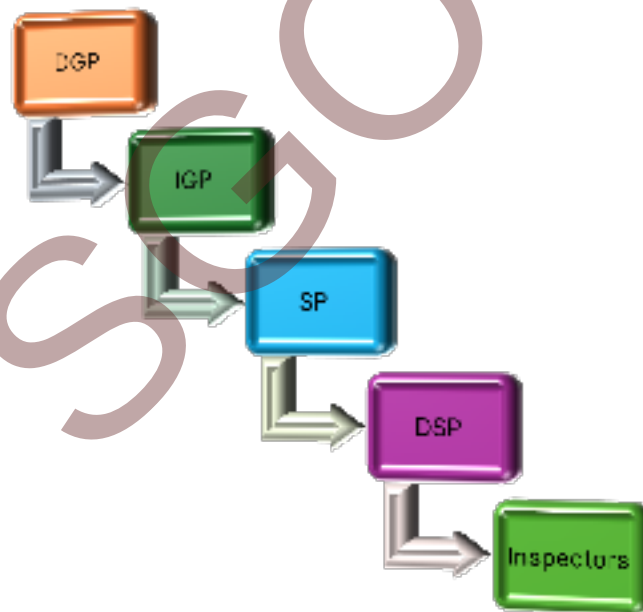


Fig. 1.2.3 Organisation Structure of Police Department (Line Structure)

B. Functional Structure

► Divides the organisation into specialised units

A functional structure divides the organisation into specialised units based on key functions such as Human Resources, Finance, Operations, Engineering, or Administration. Each functional unit is led by an expert in that domain, ensuring professional handling of tasks, improved efficiency, and high-

quality decision-making. This arrangement allows employees to develop deeper expertise and reduces duplication of work. However, communication across departments may become slow due to functional silos. In the public sector, Municipal Corporations are typical examples of functional structuring. They operate through specialised departments such as Health, Sanitation, Engineering, Revenue, and Town Planning, each led by officers with technical or administrative expertise. This functional division helps municipal bodies deliver urban services efficiently and manage complex civic operations.

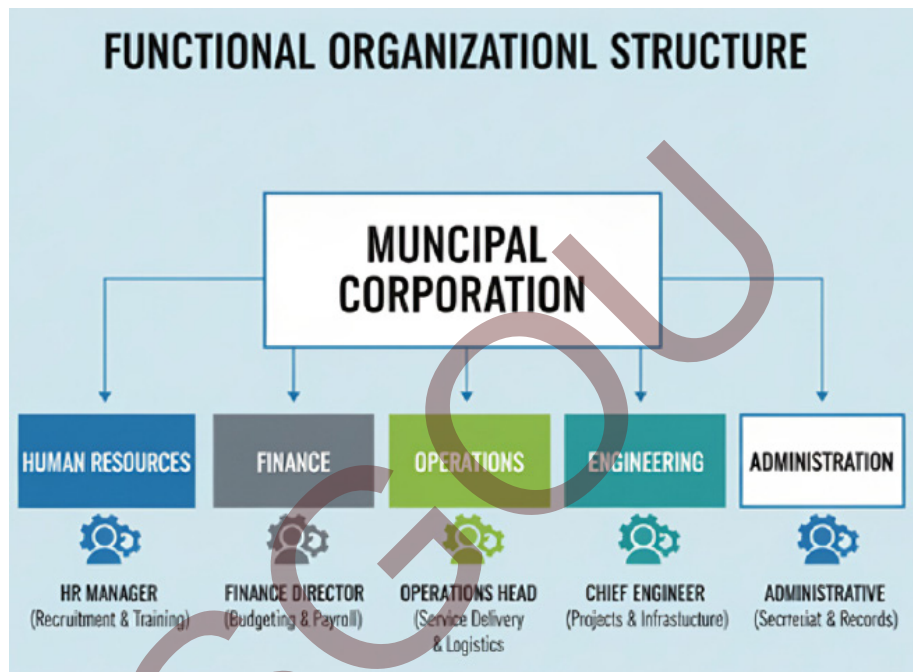


Fig. 1.2.4 Functional Organisational Structure of Municipal Corporation

C. Line and Staff Structure

- Combines the clear authority of line managers with the specialised knowledge of staff experts

The line and staff structure combines the clear authority of line managers with the specialised knowledge of staff experts. Line managers exercise decision-making power and maintain accountability for achieving organisational objectives, while staff specialists provide advisory support, research inputs, and technical guidance. This model helps organisations balance operational control with professional expertise, improving the quality of decisions. However, conflicts may arise if staff members exert undue influence or if line officers ignore expert advice. A prominent example is the Ministry of Finance, where IAS officers hold line authority over budgeting, policy implementation, and financial administration, while economists, legal advisors, chartered accountants, and domain

specialists function as staff personnel. Their expert analysis assists in drafting financial legislation, designing tax policies, and evaluating economic reforms.

D. Matrix Structure

► Blends functional and project-based authority

A matrix structure blends functional and project-based authority by allowing employees to report to two supervisors simultaneously: a functional manager and a project manager. This dual authority system encourages interdisciplinary collaboration, efficient resource sharing, and faster completion of complex projects. The matrix approach is highly flexible and suitable for innovative, large-scale, or time-bound missions. However, it may create confusion if roles are not clearly defined. A strong example is the Smart Cities Mission, where city engineers and planners report both to the Municipal Commissioner, who heads functional departments, and to the Project Management Unit (PMU) overseeing smart city projects. This structure enables cities to integrate administrative routines with project-specific innovations, ensuring better coordination across technology, infrastructure, and governance initiatives.

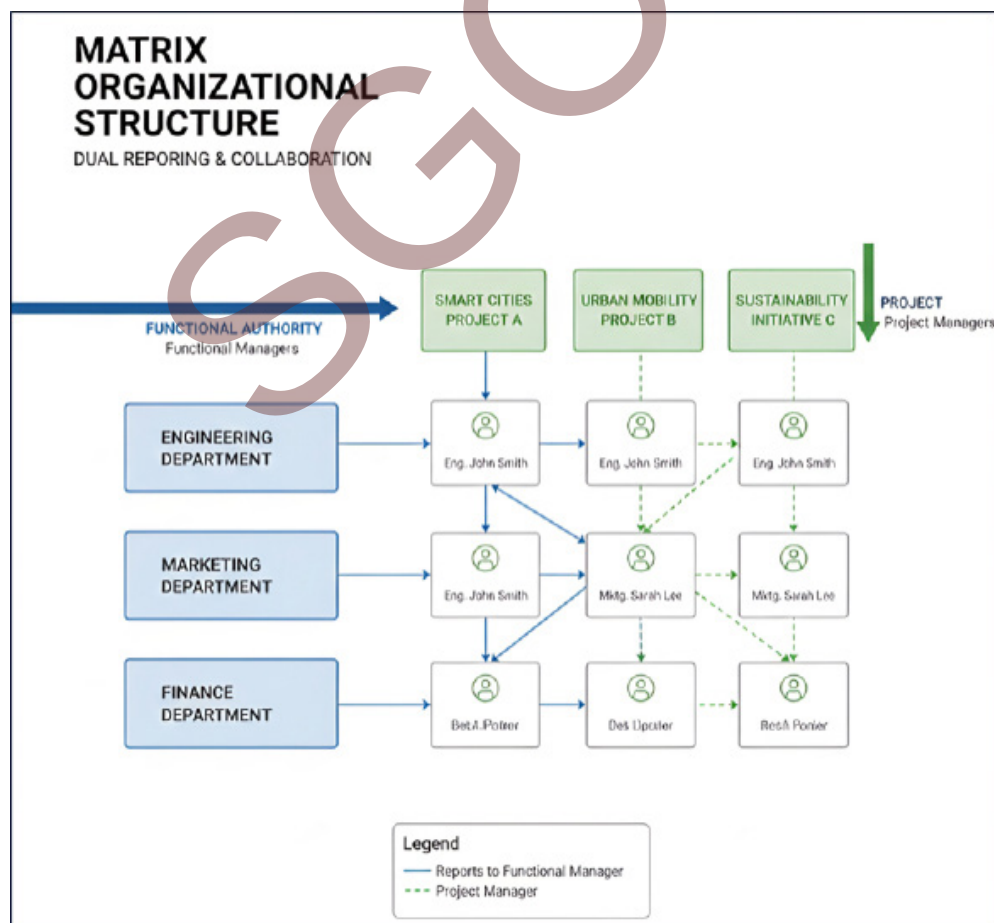


Fig. 1.2.5 Matrix Structure

E. Divisional Structure

- Organises the organisation into semi-autonomous units

A divisional structure organises the organisation into semi-autonomous units based on product lines, geographic regions, or customer groups. Each division operates like a separate entity with its own objectives, resources, and management team, although the overarching organisation provides strategic guidance. This model allows for better focus, accountability, and quick adaptation to local needs. It is particularly useful for large organisations offering diverse services across different regions. A public-sector example is BSNL, which functions through multiple telecom circles such as Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu. Each circle manages its local operations, customer service, and network maintenance, while the corporate headquarters coordinates national-level strategy and policy.

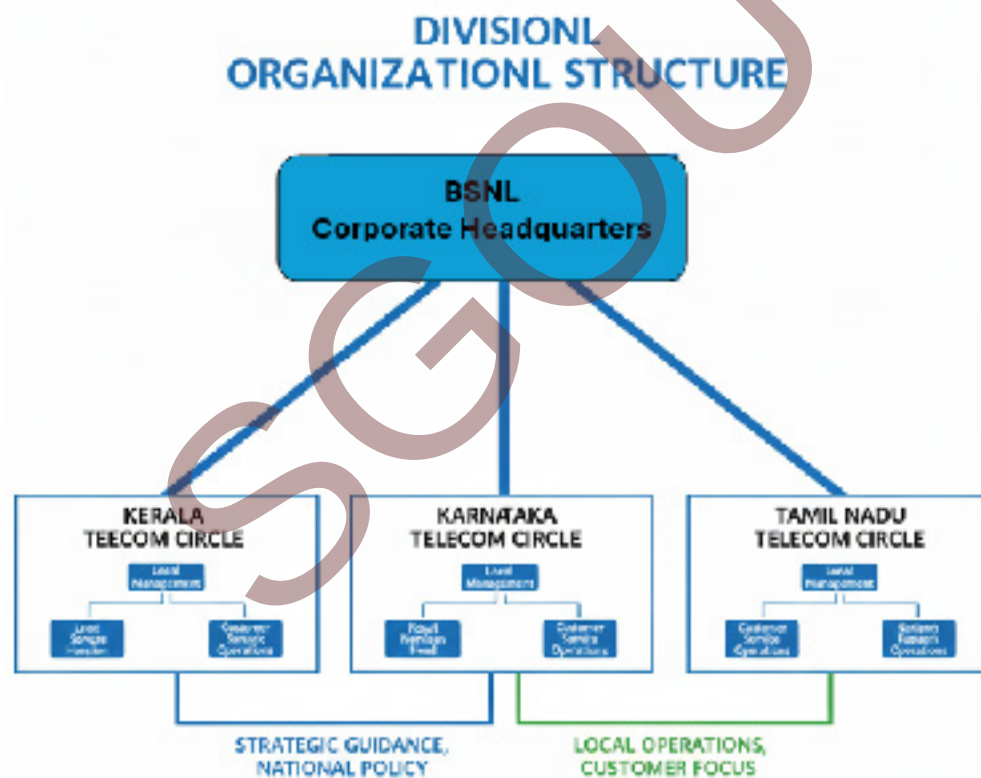


Fig. 1.2.6 Divisional Organisational Structure of BSNL

F. Network Structure

- Relies heavily on outsourcing, partnerships, and digital integration

The network structure is a modern organisational form that relies heavily on outsourcing, partnerships, and digital integration. Instead of performing all activities internally, the central organisation coordinates with multiple external agencies, vendors, and service providers. This structure offers flexibility,

cost efficiency, and scalability, especially in technology-driven and service-oriented systems. The Aadhaar ecosystem is a leading example of a network structure in public administration. It involves coordination between UIDAI, Registrars, Enrolment Centres, private agencies, and IT vendors. UIDAI functions as the central hub, while external partners handle enrolment, data processing, authentication services, and technological support. This network-based design enables Aadhaar to operate at a massive scale, supporting digital governance and public service delivery across India.

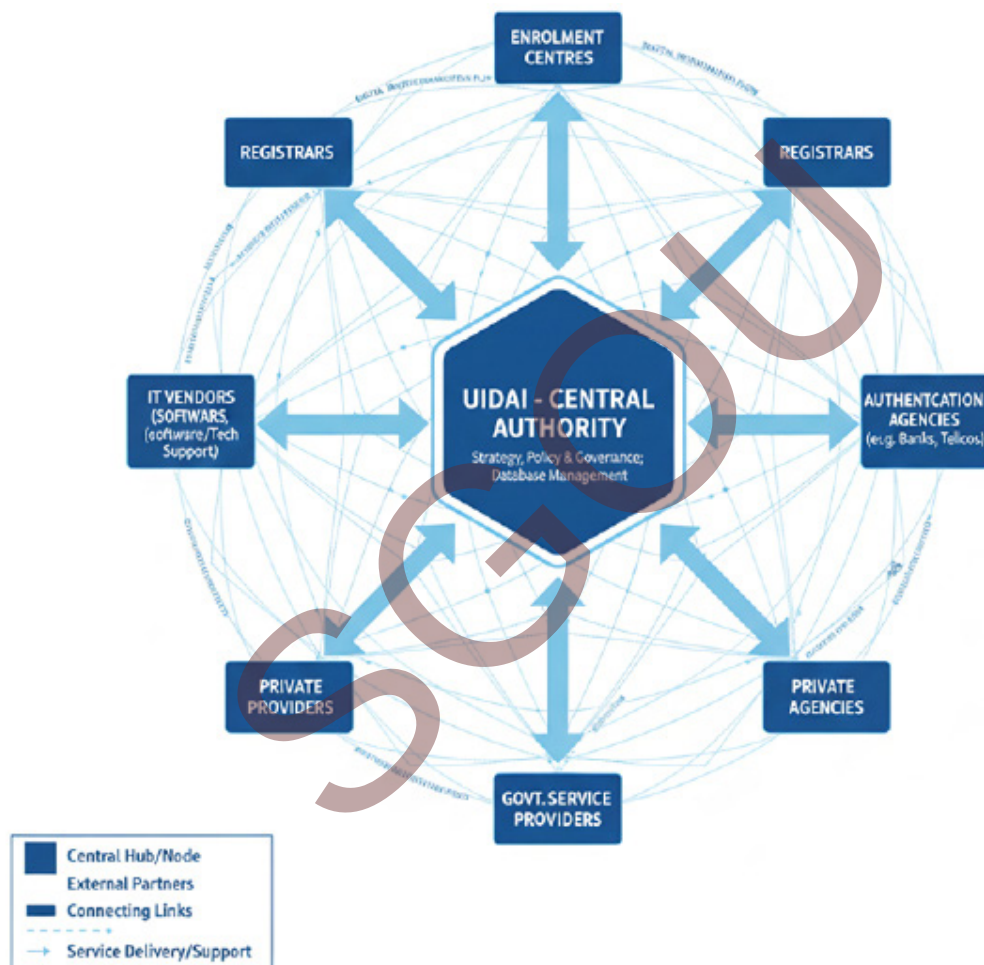


Fig. 1.2.7 Network Organisational Structure – Aadhaar Ecosystem

Case Studies

Case 1: ISRO – Functional + Project Structure

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is often cited in management literature for its effective hybrid organisational structure, which blends both functional and project-based elements. ISRO's various research centres, such as the Vikram

Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC), and the Space Applications Centre (SAC)—operate as functional units, specialising in specific domains like propulsion, satellite systems, or mission integration. Alongside these permanent functional divisions, ISRO forms temporary, goal-specific project teams for each mission, such as Mars Orbiter Mission, Chandrayaan series, and Gaganyaan. This hybrid structure ensures deep technical expertise while enabling time-bound coordination across multiple departments. A striking outcome of this design is the ability to complete complex missions at remarkably low costs. The Chandrayaan-2 mission, implemented at around ₹978 crore, was significantly cheaper than comparable lunar missions by NASA or ESA. Scholars such as R. Aravamudan in *ISRO: A Personal History* note that ISRO's cooperative culture and flexible organisational design make it one of the most efficient public-sector science organisations globally.

Case 2: Delhi Metro – Line & Staff Structure

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) is a powerful real-world example of the success of a Line and Staff organisational structure in public infrastructure. DMRC used a strict and disciplined hierarchical line authority, where decision-making powers rested with project managers and senior engineers. At the same time, the organisation engaged highly specialised staff consultants, such as the Japanese firm JARTS and experienced engineering advisers, who provided expert guidance on signalling, safety, and civil engineering. This allowed the line managers to take timely decisions while relying on sophisticated technical advice. The result was exceptional: Delhi Metro's Phase I was completed ahead of schedule and within expected cost, an achievement rarely seen in large Indian public works. Management scholars often refer to E. Sreedharan, the former Managing Director of DMRC, who emphasised professionalism, punctuality, and decentralised decision-making elements that strengthened both the line and staff components of the structure. Today, the Delhi Metro is studied in public-administration courses as a benchmark for efficient urban infrastructure management.

Case 3: Amul – Cooperative Organisation (Anand Pattern)

Amul, established in 1946 under the leadership of Tribhuvandas Patel and later Dr. Varghese Kurien, follows



the celebrated Anand Pattern Cooperative Model, which is frequently discussed in development economics and rural management texts such as *I Too Had a Dream* by Dr. Kurien. This three-tier organisational structure includes village cooperative societies, district unions, and a state-level federation (GCMF). At the village level, farmers collectively own and operate the cooperative; district unions manage processing plants and logistics; and the state federation oversees marketing, branding, and distribution under the Amul label. This structure ensures democratic participation, transparency, and equitable profit distribution. The impact has been remarkable: Amul helped lift over 3.6 million dairy farmers from poverty by ensuring fair pricing, eliminating middlemen, and building India into the world's largest milk producer. Its success is globally recognised, and the Amul model is taught at Harvard Business School, the FAO, and top public-policy schools as an example of how organisational design can transform rural economies.

Understanding organisational forms helps public administration students analyse how government bodies, cooperatives, NGOs, and private entities operate. The 4P model highlights the foundations of organisational design. Formal and informal structures explain real workplace behaviour, while ownership forms like sole proprietorship, partnership, and corporation influence regulatory and administrative decisions. Organisation structure such as line, functional, matrix, network, determines how efficiently public services are delivered. With real cases such as ISRO and Amul, students gain practical insights into how theoretical frameworks translate into administrative realities.

Summarized Overview

This unit introduces learners to the fundamental concepts of organisational forms and structures, especially within the context of public administration. It explains how organisations are built upon the 4P Model—Purpose, People, Process, and Physical Resources, which together determine how institutions function and deliver services. The unit discusses different types of organisations, including formal and informal systems, sole proprietorships, partnerships, corporations, and cooperatives, highlighting their characteristics and relevance in governance and business environments. A significant focus is placed on organisational structure, describing how authority, responsibility, and communication are arranged through models such as line, functional, line-and-staff, matrix, divisional, and network structures. Through public-sector case studies such as ISRO, Delhi Metro, and Amul, the unit demonstrates how organisational

design influences coordination, efficiency, accountability, and overall performance. By understanding these concepts, learners gain foundational insight into how governmental and non-governmental organisations operate and why structure plays a critical role in ensuring effective administration.

Self-Assessment

1. Explain the 4P Model of organisation with suitable examples from public-sector institutions.
2. Compare and contrast formal and informal organisations and discuss their significance in administrative functioning.
3. Describe the major types of organisational structures and analyse how each influences communication and decision-making.
4. Discuss the role of organisational structure in improving accountability and efficiency in government departments.
5. Examine the organisational forms of ISRO, Delhi Metro, and Amul, and explain how their structures contributed to their success.

Assignments

1. Select a local government department (e.g., Municipality, Police Station) and prepare an organisational chart showing its hierarchical structure.
2. Conduct a field interview with any small business owner to understand how sole proprietorship or partnership structures influence daily managerial decisions.
3. Review an organisational workflow (e.g., hospital emergency process or RTI request processing) and identify how “process” in the 4P Model impacts performance.
4. Visit a cooperative society or study one online (e.g., dairy, credit society) and prepare a short report on how the cooperative structure supports member participation.
5. Analyse any public-sector project (e.g., Smart City Mission) and evaluate how matrix or network structures are used to coordinate multiple stakeholders.



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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU



Key Concepts of Organisational Behaviour

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- explain the concepts of hierarchy, decentralisation, and line-and-staff relationships in organisational behaviour with appropriate administrative examples.
- analyse how structural features such as authority, reporting relationships, and division of responsibilities influence efficiency and accountability in public organisations.
- describe the advantages and limitations of hierarchical, decentralised, and line-and-staff systems in different public-sector contexts.

Background

Public administration and organisational management in India operate within one of the world's largest and most complex administrative systems, employing over 30 million personnel across Union, State, and Local Governments. As government responsibilities continue to expand, ranging from public health and digital governance to infrastructure and disaster management, the structural design of organisations has become central to ensuring efficiency, accountability, and responsiveness. Concepts such as hierarchy, decentralisation, and the line-and-staff system form the core of this structural foundation. Hierarchy provides a clear chain of command across multiple layers. Decentralisation empowers over 2.6 lakh Panchayats and 4,700+ urban local bodies to take decisions closer to citizens, following the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments. Line-and-staff arrangements allow modern public institutions to combine operational authority with professional expertise, a necessity in technical domains such as health, transport, and public finance.

In the last decade, India's administrative landscape has undergone a significant transformation driven by digitalisation, participatory governance, public-sector reforms, and increasing citizen expectations. Large public organisations like Indian Railways, which manages operations for over 23 million daily passengers, and national health institutions such as AIIMS, demonstrate how structural principles directly influence service quality, coordination, and innovation. Similarly, decentralised systems like those in Kerala and Tamil Nadu have shown measurable improvements in public health outcomes, local planning, and crisis management. Understanding the organisational behaviour behind these structures equips MBA learners to analyse how authority, expertise, and decision-making are distributed and how effective structural design can strengthen governance in both public and corporate sectors.

Keywords

Hierarchy, Decentralisation, Line and Staff, Authority Structure, Public Administration

Discussion

Organisation Behaviour (OB) in public administration is shaped by fundamental structural principles that determine how authority flows, how decisions are taken, and how roles are distributed. Understanding concepts such as hierarchy, decentralisation, and line-and-staff relationships is essential because government institutions, from ministries to district administrations, operate through large, complex, and interdependent systems. These principles influence efficiency, accountability, communication, and the overall performance of public organisations. This unit discusses these concepts in detail, along with Indian public-sector illustrations, global comparisons, and insights from classical and modern administrative scholars such as Max Weber, Luther Gulick, Henri Fayol, Herbert Simon, and Peter Drucker.

1.3.1 Hierarchy

► Structured arrangement of positions in an organisation

Hierarchy refers to the structured arrangement of positions in an organisation from highest authority to lowest. Max Weber (1947), in *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation*, described hierarchy as the backbone of bureaucratic administration, where every office is placed in a clearly defined order of authority. In simple terms, hierarchy determines “who reports to whom” and ensures that responsibilities are allocated in a predictable, orderly manner.



In public administration, hierarchy is essential because government organisations must handle large populations, financial responsibilities, laws, public safety, and essential services. A hierarchical chain of command reduces ambiguity, promotes discipline, and creates a stable working environment.

1.3.1.1 Features of Hierarchy

1. Scalar Chain

► Uninterrupted line of authority

The scalar chain refers to the uninterrupted line of authority that runs from the highest level of an organisation to the lowest. Max Weber, in his classic work *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation* (1947), emphasised that formal bureaucracies rely on a graded hierarchy where each level is clearly linked to the next. This chain ensures that orders, information, and decisions travel systematically, reducing confusion and maintaining discipline.

Example: In the Ministry of Home Affairs, instructions flow from the Home Secretary to Joint Secretaries, then to Deputy Secretaries, followed by Under Secretaries, and finally to Section Officers and clerical staff. During national security reviews, this structured flow allows sensitive information to pass securely through predefined levels, ensuring both accountability and order.

2. Unity of Command

► Every employee receives instructions from only one immediate superior

Unity of command means that every employee receives instructions from only one immediate superior. Henri Fayol, in *General and Industrial Management* (1949), highlighted this as a fundamental principle because multiple bosses can lead to conflicting orders and role confusion. A single reporting line creates clarity, reduces workplace conflict, and ensures employees understand whose instructions take priority.

Example: In the Indian Police Service, a Sub-Inspector reports only to the Circle Inspector, not simultaneously to multiple senior officers. This becomes crucial during daily law-and-order duties. For instance, in managing crowd control during festivals because officers must respond quickly without waiting for directions from multiple sources.

3. Clear Division of Authority

- Defined scope of power and responsibility

Hierarchy divides authority in such a way that each level has a defined scope of power and responsibility. Higher officials typically focus on strategy and policy formulation, middle managers handle coordination and supervision, and lower-level staff carry out field-level or operational tasks. This division prevents overlaps, ensures smooth workflow, and helps in evaluating performance at each tier.

Example: In Indian Railways, the Railway Board sets national policies, Divisional Railway Managers supervise operations within a division, and Station Masters implement tasks such as train scheduling, passenger management, and safety at the station level. This structured authority distribution allows the Railways to operate daily services for over 23 million passengers efficiently.

4. Formal Relationship

- Impersonal relationships between positions based on rules

Hierarchy establishes formal, impersonal relationships between positions based on rules, regulations, and written job descriptions. These relationships are governed by organisational manuals, conduct rules, and service guidelines rather than personal preferences or informal networks. Weber called this the “impersonality” of bureaucracy, which helps maintain fairness and objectivity.

Example: In the Union Health Ministry, a Senior Medical Officer interacts with an Under Secretary according to written procedures regarding public health programmes. Their communication, whether about vaccination logistics or disease surveillance follows formal channels, ensuring transparency and accountability rather than personal discretion.

5. Specialisation Through Levels

- Ensure smooth functioning

A hierarchical structure enables each level to specialise in tasks appropriate to its competencies. Senior levels focus on policy formation, long-term planning, and interdepartmental coordination. Middle levels specialise in supervision, troubleshooting, and resource allocation. Lower levels specialise in executing field tasks and interacting directly with citizens. This layered specialisation helps large organisations function smoothly despite complexity.



Example: During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare demonstrated clear level-wise specialisation:

- ▶ The central level formulated national guidelines and coordinated with states.
- ▶ The state health directorates supervised hospitals and ensured resource distribution.
- ▶ The district and PHC levels implemented testing, vaccination, and community outreach.

This multi-level specialisation contributed significantly to India's ability to administer over 2 billion vaccine doses, demonstrating the utility of hierarchical functioning in large-scale public health efforts.

1.3.1.2 Advantages of Hierarchy

1. Clear Reporting Relationships

- ▶ Reduces confusion and prevents overlapping duties

Hierarchy creates unmistakable reporting lines, helping every employee understand who their superior is and what their own responsibilities are. This clarity reduces confusion and prevents overlapping duties, especially in large public organisations where thousands of employees are involved. Example: In the Income Tax Department, an Income Tax Inspector reports to the Income Tax Officer, who in turn reports to the Assistant Commissioner. This clean reporting ladder ensures smooth assessment procedures and accountability in tax collections.

2. Ease of Supervision and Control

- ▶ Supervision becomes easier when authority and responsibility are clearly aligned

With a well-defined chain of command, supervisors can closely monitor the performance of their subordinates. Henri Fayol emphasised that supervision becomes easier when authority and responsibility are clearly aligned. Public-sector organisations with strict hierarchical structures often maintain better discipline and operational order. Example: State Police Departments rely heavily on hierarchy for maintaining discipline. A Superintendent of Police can easily supervise Circle Inspectors and Sub-Inspectors because the chain of command is straightforward and respected.

3. Strong Accountability

► Links authority with responsibility

Hierarchy links authority with responsibility, making it easier to identify who is accountable for decisions or failures. Each level of the structure knows what it is answerable for, enabling better evaluation and performance management. Example: In district administration, if a welfare pension disbursement is delayed, responsibility can be traced from the Village Officer to the Block Development Officer, and ultimately to the District Collector. This hierarchical accountability system helps maintain administrative integrity.

4. Predictability and Stability

► Stability to organisation

A hierarchical system is grounded in rules, procedures, and established routines. This brings stability to organisational functioning, which is crucial for public institutions dealing with essential services such as health, policing, sanitation, and public finance. Example: Municipal Corporations rely on stable hierarchical routines for waste collection, water supply, and issuing trade licenses. Predictability in procedures ensures consistency in service delivery to citizens.

5. Ideal for Large Organisations

► Handle complex tasks and large workforces

Large ministries, PSUs, and public utilities require a structured framework to handle complex tasks and large workforces. Hierarchy acts as an organising mechanism that makes large-scale coordination possible. Example: Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL) employs over 30,000 people across India. Its hierarchical structure—from Board of Directors to plant-level supervisors, helps manage its engineering, manufacturing, and power-equipment operations efficiently.

1.3.3 Limitations of Hierarchy

1. Risk of Delay Due to Long Chains of Approval

► Slow down decision-making

The presence of many layers in a hierarchy can slow down decision-making. Files and proposals often pass through multiple desks before approval, increasing administrative delay, sometimes referred to as “red tape.” Example: In public works departments, procurement approvals for projects may move from the Executive Engineer to the Superintending Engineer, then to the Chief Engineer, and finally to the department secretary, delaying project execution by weeks or months.



2. Possibility of Communication Distortion (“Upward Filtering”)

► Distortion in communication

Information travelling upward through many levels can get filtered, softened, or altered intentionally or unintentionally. Herbert Simon noted that bureaucratic communication is prone to distortion as subordinates often relay information that they believe superiors want to hear. Example: In disaster management, field staff might under-report flood damage to avoid criticism, causing higher authorities to make flawed resource-allocation decisions. Such filtered communication weakens crisis response.

3. Can Lead to Rigidity and Resistance to Innovation

► Slow to adapt to new ideas or technologies

Hierarchical organisations rely heavily on rules, which can make them slow to adapt to new ideas or technologies. Employees at lower levels may hesitate to innovate because decision-making is concentrated at the top. Example: Prior to the Digital India reforms, many government departments found it difficult to shift from manual files to e-office systems because hierarchical inertia made officials comfortable with traditional paperwork. This resistance slowed administrative modernisation.

4. Fewer Opportunities for Collaboration Across Units

► Reduces horizontal communication

Hierarchy tends to create silos, with employees interacting mostly within their own departments or levels. This reduces horizontal communication and makes cross-functional collaboration difficult. Example: Before the introduction of integrated command-and-control centres under the Smart Cities Mission, departments such as traffic police, municipal health, and public works often worked independently, resulting in duplication of efforts and a lack of coordination during emergencies or city management tasks.

Case Study: Indian Railways – Hierarchical Efficiency

Indian Railways (IR) is one of the world’s largest public-sector organisations, operating a network that spans over 68,000 route kilometres, transporting nearly 23 million passengers and more than 1.1 billion tonnes of freight annually (Indian Railways Annual Report, 2023). Managing such an extensive system requires a robust hierarchical structure that clearly defines authority, responsibility, and communication channels.

Over the years, Indian Railways has relied on a structured chain to maintain order, ensure punctuality, and uphold safety standards across the country. The following is the hierarchy of the Indian Railway.

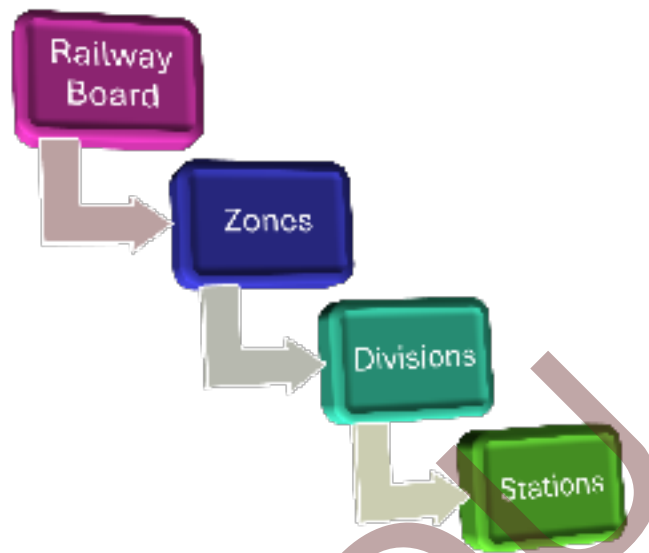


Fig. 1.3.1 Hierarchy of Indian Railway

Railway Board at the Apex

At the top sits the Railway Board, now integrated into the Ministry of Railways as per the 2021 restructuring. It sets national policies, allocates budgets, approves projects, and ensures safety compliance across the network. The Chairman and senior members oversee technical domains such as traction, traffic, infrastructure, signalling, and finance. Their decisions influence the functioning of all zones, ensuring a unified direction for the entire railway system.

Zonal Administration: Bridging National and Regional Needs

Indian Railways is divided into 18 zones, each headed by a General Manager (GM). Zones like Northern Railway, Southern Railway, and Eastern Railway manage operations across large geographical territories. Zonal offices implement policies issued by the Railway Board, coordinate inter-state train services, and ensure the functioning of core departments such as engineering, mechanical, electrical, signal & telecom, and commercial operations. Example: The South Western Railway Zone, headquartered at Hubballi, has used zonal-level coordination to successfully implement the “Zero Accident

Mission” through real-time monitoring of track maintenance and strict enforcement of operational protocols.

Divisions: The Operational Backbone

Each zone is further divided into 68 divisions, led by Divisional Railway Managers (DRMs). Divisions are responsible for day-to-day operations such as train scheduling, crew management, rolling-stock maintenance, and station-level supervision. They also respond quickly to disruptions such as track failures, power breakdowns, or passenger emergencies. Example: During Cyclone Fani (2019), the Khurda Road Division of East Coast Railway demonstrated efficient hierarchical coordination by suspending vulnerable services, evacuating coaches, and restoring tracks within 48 hours—minimising disruption to millions of passengers.

Stations: Frontline Implementation

At the base of the hierarchy are station-level authorities, including Station Masters, Deputy Station Masters, and station staff. They manage crowd movement, signalling operations, security coordination, and customer-service tasks. The station level is where policies and procedures designed at higher levels are translated into action. Example: At major junctions such as New Delhi, Chennai Central, and Howrah, station staff coordinate with divisional control rooms to ensure punctual departures, crowd safety on platforms, and timely maintenance of signalling systems.

Impact of Hierarchy on Efficiency and Safety

1. Improved Punctuality

A CAG Performance Audit (2022) noted that zones with stronger internal monitoring systems and direct hierarchical supervision achieved better average punctuality scores. Clear reporting relationships between DRMs, control rooms, and stationmasters reduced delays associated with crew changes, platform allocation, and rake management.

2. Enhanced Safety Practices

Safety in railways depends heavily on strict compliance with rules. IR’s hierarchical discipline, particularly in departments like Civil Engineering and Signal & Telecom, has helped

reduce track defects and signal failures. Between 2010 and 2022, India witnessed a 70% reduction in consequential train accidents, attributed largely to hierarchical enforcement of safety protocols (Railway Safety Review Committee Reports).

3. Better Crisis Response

Hierarchy enables coordinated and rapid response during accidents, floods, or natural disasters. Example: Following the Balasore Train Accident (2023), the Railway Board, East Coast Zone, and Cuttack Division acted quickly to mobilise rescue teams, restore tracks within 51 hours, and resume operations, an achievement praised nationally.

4. Operational Consistency Across India

Despite diverse terrain, weather conditions, and passenger volumes, the hierarchical procedure ensures consistent application of rules across zones. This uniformity helps maintain fairness, safety, and reliability, regardless of whether the train runs through a remote village station or a metropolitan hub.

Conclusion

The Indian Railways case demonstrates that hierarchy, when combined with professional specialisation and accountability mechanisms, becomes a powerful tool for managing large public organisations. The structured chain of command allows IR to coordinate thousands of trains daily, maintain high safety standards, and respond swiftly to disruptions. As India moves toward modernisation through initiatives like Kavach signalling technology, station redevelopment, and high-speed rail, the hierarchical framework continues to provide stability and direction to the world's fourth-largest railway system.

1.3.2 Span of Control

► Number of subordinates directly supervised by one manager

Span of control refers to the number of subordinates directly supervised by one manager. It is a crucial element in determining the shape of the organisational hierarchy. Depending on whether the span is narrow or wide, an organisation may develop a tall hierarchy or a flat hierarchy, each having distinct managerial and mathematical implications.



► A manager supervises only a few subordinates

1.3.2.1 Narrow Span of Control (Tall Hierarchy)

A narrow span of control exists when a manager supervises only a few subordinates, typically 3–6 employees. This structure results in a tall hierarchy with many levels of management.

Managerial Implications

- i. Managers can exercise close supervision and tight control, which is useful when tasks are complex or employees are inexperienced.
- ii. Decision-making tends to be slower due to multiple levels of authority.
- iii. Communication may get distorted as messages pass through many layers.

Mathematical Implication

For example, if each manager supervises 4 subordinates, an organisation with 256 employees would require 4 hierarchical levels ($4 \times 4 \times 4 \times 4 = 256$). As the number of employees increases, the number of managerial layers increases rapidly, leading to higher administrative costs.

Suitable for:

- i. Defence services
- ii. Traditional manufacturing units
- iii. Organisations requiring strict discipline and control

► A manager supervises a large number of subordinates

1.3.2.2 Wide Span of Control (Flat Hierarchy)

A wide span of control exists when a manager supervises a large number of subordinates, often 10–20 employees. This results in a flat hierarchy with fewer managerial levels.

Managerial Implications

- i. Encourages employee autonomy and empowerment.
- ii. Faster communication and quicker decision-making due to fewer levels.
- iii. Managers must rely more on delegation and self-management by employees.

Mathematical Implication

If a manager supervises 16 subordinates, the same organisation with 256 employees can function with just 2 hierarchical levels ($16 \times 16 = 256$). This significantly reduces the number of managers required, lowering overhead costs.

Suitable for:

- i. IT firms and startups
- ii. Knowledge-based and creative industries
- iii. Organisations using technology and teamwork

1.3.2.3 Comparison of Narrow and Wide Span of Control

Table 1.3.1 Comparison of Narrow and Wide Span of Control

Basis	Narrow Span (Tall Hierarchy)	Wide Span (Flat Hierarchy)
Number of subordinates	Few (3–6)	Many (10–20)
Hierarchical levels	More	Fewer
Supervision	Close and direct	General and delegated
Communication	Slower	Faster
Cost of management	High	Lower
Employee autonomy	Low	High

There is no universally ideal span of control. The appropriate span depends on factors such as nature of work, employee competence, use of technology, and management philosophy. Modern organisations increasingly prefer wider spans and flatter structures to improve efficiency and flexibility, while traditional organisations continue to rely on narrow spans for control and discipline.

1.3.3 Decentralisation

Decentralisation refers to the transfer of authority, responsibility, and resources from higher levels of government

- Transfer of authority, responsibility, and resources from higher levels of government or management to lower levels

or management to lower levels. According to Pradeep K. Sharma (2010), it is a democratic tool that brings decision-making closer to the people and improves responsiveness in administration. In organisational behaviour, decentralisation allows lower-level employees or units to make decisions on issues within their competence. In government, it empowers local bodies such as Panchayats, Municipalities, and District Administrations.

Example: Kerala's Decentralised Planning

Kerala's People's Plan Campaign (1996) is a famous example of decentralisation in practice.

- About 35–40% of state plan funds were transferred to local bodies.
- Gram Panchayats were empowered to plan and implement their own development projects.
- Citizens took part in local budgeting and prioritising needs.

As a result, Kerala saw improvements in public health, local infrastructure, and community participation, making it a model of democratic decentralisation globally.

Decentralisation shifts authority from the top levels of government to the grassroots, allowing quicker decisions, local innovation, and greater participation. Through this structure, illustrated as a tree spreading decision-making to its branches, governance becomes more responsive, efficient, and people-centered.

1.3.3.1 Forms of Decentralisation

1. Political Decentralisation

- Transferring authority to elected local governments so that citizens and their representatives participate directly in decision-making

Political decentralisation involves transferring authority to elected local governments so that citizens and their representatives participate directly in decision-making. In India, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments (1992) institutionalised Panchayats and Municipalities as units of self-governance with constitutional status. This form of decentralisation strengthens local democracy by giving citizens the power to elect leaders who plan and implement development programmes. Example: Kerala's Panchayati Raj system, supported by Gram Sabhas

and ward committees, empowers citizens to influence local planning and budgeting, making grassroots democracy more vibrant.

2. Administrative Decentralisation

- Distributing administrative responsibilities to field offices, district administrations, block-level units, and local authorities

Administrative decentralisation involves distributing administrative responsibilities to field offices, district administrations, block-level units, and local authorities. It includes deconcentration (shifting workload to lower offices) and delegation (granting decision-making powers to subordinate authorities). This improves operational efficiency because decisions can be taken closer to where services are delivered. Example: District Collectors in India have independent authority over disaster management, health coordination, and land administration, demonstrating administrative decentralisation within the state government machinery.

3. Fiscal Decentralisation

- Gives local governments the financial resources

Fiscal decentralisation gives local governments the financial resources and authority required to perform their functions effectively. This may include tax-sharing arrangements, grants-in-aid, local revenue mobilisation, and budgeting powers for municipal bodies and panchayats. The 14th and 15th Finance Commissions emphasised greater fiscal transfers to local bodies to strengthen grassroots governance. Example: Under the 15th Finance Commission (2021–26), local bodies in India received enhanced tied and untied grants for water supply, sanitation, and public health, allowing Gram Panchayats to undertake local infrastructure projects independently.

4. Market Decentralisation

- Encourage flexibility and competition

Market decentralisation occurs when governments use outsourcing, public–private partnerships (PPPs), or contracting arrangements to provide public services. Instead of performing every function internally, governments collaborate with private firms, NGOs, or cooperatives to increase efficiency, reduce costs, and improve innovation. This approach reflects New Public Management principles that encourage flexibility and competition in public service delivery. Example: The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) uses PPP models for station management, facility services, and feeder bus operations, demonstrating how private participation can complement public-sector expertise.



1.3.3.2 Advantages of Decentralisation

1. Faster Decision-Making

- Useful for time-sensitive issues

When authority is delegated to lower levels, decisions can be made quickly without waiting for approvals from distant higher offices. This is especially useful for time-sensitive issues such as repairing local infrastructure, managing school needs, or responding to public health concerns. Example: During the COVID-19 pandemic, district administrations in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka acted rapidly to establish containment zones and local health facilities because they had decentralised operational powers.

2. Better Knowledge of Local Needs

- Closer understanding of community-specific issues

Local governments have a closer understanding of community-specific issues, cultural practices, and socio-economic conditions. This allows them to design projects that are more relevant and effective for their citizens. Example: In Rajasthan, many Gram Panchayats prioritised water conservation structures under MGNREGA because they understood local scarcity conditions better than distant state authorities.

3. Enhanced Citizen Participation

- Brings government closer to the people

Decentralisation brings government closer to the people, enabling citizens to participate through Gram Sabhas, ward committees, and community-based monitoring. Such participation increases transparency and strengthens democratic accountability. Example: Kerala's Gram Sabhas actively engage citizens in deciding local development priorities, leading to high levels of public trust in local governance.

4. Innovation at the Grassroots

- New ideas suited to their region

Local leaders often experiment with new ideas suited to their region, fostering innovation in service delivery, resource management, and community mobilisation. Decentralisation gives them the flexibility to adapt strategies independently. Example: Sikkim's Panchayats initiated local organic farming policies well before the state adopted organic agriculture as a statewide mission, showing how grassroots decisions can influence larger policy frameworks.

5. Reduced Pressure on Top Management

► Improves overall administrative effectiveness

When local units handle routine service delivery, state and central levels can focus on policy formulation, major infrastructure, and national priorities. This division of responsibilities improves overall administrative effectiveness. Example: Local bodies managing sanitation, waste collection, and street lighting free state governments to focus on broader issues like industrial development, energy policy, and interstate coordination.

6. Improved Accountability and Service Delivery

► More accountable for performance

Since citizens interact directly with local authorities, service providers become more accountable for performance. Decentralised monitoring reduces corruption, increases responsiveness, and ensures timely service delivery. Example: Karnataka's decentralised school management committees monitor teacher attendance and mid-day meals, leading to improvements in student retention and basic education quality.

1.3.3.3 Challenges of Decentralisation

1. Insufficient Capacity at Lower Levels

Many local governments lack skilled staff, technical expertise, or adequate infrastructure to manage devolved responsibilities effectively. Capacity constraints lead to delays, inefficiencies, and dependence on higher authorities. Example: Several Gram Panchayats in Bihar and Jharkhand struggle with limited technical expertise to implement water supply or sanitation projects, leading to uneven service delivery.

2. Risk of Local Elite Capture

Decentralisation can sometimes empower dominant groups at the local level, wealthy families, caste elites, or political networks who may misuse power for personal gain. This undermines democratic participation and equitable distribution of resources. Example: Studies in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh have shown that in some villages, sarpanch positions are informally controlled by local elites, limiting genuine participation of marginalised groups.

3. Lack of Financial Autonomy

Many Panchayats and Municipalities depend heavily on state grants because their own revenue sources are limited or poorly managed. Without adequate funds, local governments cannot plan or execute essential services effectively. Example: Urban local bodies in states like Assam and Odisha face revenue shortages due to low property tax collection, affecting municipal services such as drainage maintenance and waste management.

4. Uneven Performance Across Regions

Decentralisation produces highly varied results depending on state capacity, political commitment, and administrative culture. Some states develop strong, empowered local institutions, while others devolve powers only on paper. Example: Kerala and Karnataka show strong decentralised governance, while many North Indian states still maintain centralised administrative control, leading to wide disparities in local development outcomes.

5. Coordination Challenges with Higher Authorities

Decentralised units must still interact with state departments, line ministries, and central schemes. Poor coordination can lead to duplication, delays, or conflicting instructions. Example: Implementation of national housing schemes such as PMAY-G often faces delays because state and district authorities do not synchronise beneficiary lists, technical approvals, and fund releases.

► Important challenges

Example: Panchayati Raj System

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment (1993) institutionalised decentralisation in India. Today:

- Over 2.6 lakh Panchayats operate across India.
- More than 31 lakh elected representatives, including 14 lakh women (MoPR, 2023).
- Panchayats receive funds through State Finance Commissions and Central schemes such as MGNREGA, PMAY-G, and NRLM.

Panchayats handle local issues such as sanitation, drinking water, rural roads, health outreach, and agricultural development. Kerala's decentralised planning (People's Plan Campaign, 1996) is a landmark example, allocating 35–40% of state plan funds to local bodies for preparing grassroots development plans.

Case Study: Decentralised Public Health in Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu has long been recognised as one of India's most effective states in public health governance, largely because of its strongly decentralised administrative structure. The state operates through a three-tier health system, Primary Health Centres (PHCs), Health Sub-Centres, and District Hospitals supported by district-level health committees and empowered local bodies. Tamil Nadu's approach reflects the principles emphasised by the National Health Mission (NHM) and is consistent with public administration research that highlights decentralisation as a driver of responsive service delivery. Over several decades, Tamil Nadu has decentralised staffing decisions, procurement of essential supplies, and health-service planning to district and block levels, allowing frontline units to operate with autonomy.

District-Level Health Committees: The Core of Decentralised Governance

Each district in Tamil Nadu has a functioning District Health Society (DHS), chaired by the District Collector and comprising health officials, local-body representatives, and medical administrators. These bodies take decisions on local staffing needs, fund allocation, and public health interventions without waiting for state-level approvals. Block-level committees further decentralise responsibilities by overseeing PHCs and community health programmes. This multi-layered system ensures that health services respond directly to the needs of each locality rather than applying a uniform statewide approach.

Rapid Pandemic Response: Local Empowerment in Action

When COVID-19 struck in early 2020, Tamil Nadu's decentralised system allowed the state to respond faster than many others. District Collectors were authorised to establish local triage centres to screen symptomatic patients, reducing the burden on tertiary hospitals. Local health teams partnered with municipal bodies to initiate door-to-door fever surveillance,



especially in high-risk zones. District administrations set up mobile testing units, a model later replicated in other states to reach rural and semi-urban regions. Chennai Corporation, under its "Fever Surveillance Camps", conducted thousands of daily tests through localised clusters. This grassroots-level intervention was possible because local bodies had the authority to deploy resources, procure protective equipment, and mobilise community volunteers without heavy bureaucratic delay.

Community-Level Outreach and Contact Tracing

Tamil Nadu strengthened decentralisation by empowering village health nurses, ASHA workers, and urban health volunteers to undertake contact tracing, symptom surveillance, and awareness campaigns. These workers, familiar with local communities, could identify at-risk individuals more accurately than state-level officials. Example: In districts like Madurai and Coimbatore, local village nurses conducted household visits and coordinated isolation measures, contributing significantly to early detection. This community-driven model became one of Tamil Nadu's strengths, admired by national health experts.

Impact on Health Outcomes

According to the National Health Mission (2021), Tamil Nadu's decentralised decision-making contributed to a COVID-19 case fatality rate significantly lower than the national average, a testament to the effectiveness of local-level autonomy in public health emergencies. The state's PHC network remained functional during the pandemic, delivering maternal health services and immunisation through decentralised micro-planning. District-level autonomy also helped hospitals manage oxygen supplies, bed allocation, and resource distribution more efficiently than centralised systems would allow.

Why Tamil Nadu's Decentralised Model Worked

- ▶ Local autonomy enabled rapid crisis management.
- ▶ Strong district leadership, especially empowered Collectors, facilitated daily coordination between departments.
- ▶ Integration of municipal bodies and rural panchayats ensured continuous monitoring.

- ▶ Community health workers were utilised intelligently for ground-level outreach.
- ▶ Continuous state support and capacity-building ensured that decentralised units had adequate resources.

Conclusion

Tamil Nadu's decentralised health administration demonstrates how a well-designed distribution of authority can strengthen public health systems. The COVID-19 response showed that when decision-making power is closer to the people, governments can react swiftly, communicate effectively, and save lives. The Tamil Nadu experience aligns with broader academic literature, including works by M. Ravichandran and K. R. Thankappan, which argues that decentralised governance improves health outcomes by enhancing local accountability and responsiveness. This case stands as a model for other states seeking to build resilient, citizen-centric health systems.

1.3.4 Line and Staff

The line and staff concept explains how organisations balance direct authority with specialised expertise. In classical administrative theory, particularly in the writings of Luther Gulick and Lyndall Urwick, the distinction between line and staff is essential for understanding how modern public organisations function efficiently. Gulick's well-known POSDCORB model (Planning, Organising, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting, Budgeting) emphasised that while line managers hold operational authority, they rely heavily on staff specialists for technical, advisory, and analytical support. This combination ensures that decisions are both administratively sound and professionally informed.

▶ How organisations balance direct authority with specialised expertise

▶ Direct chain of command running through an organisation

Line Authority: Line authority refers to the direct chain of command running through an organisation, the people who make decisions and ensure that work gets done. Line managers are responsible for achieving organisational goals, maintaining discipline, and guiding the daily operations of their units. Example: In a district administration, the District Collector exercises line authority over revenue officers, tahsildars, and village administrative officers while implementing land reforms, disaster management, or election procedures. Their decisions are binding on subordinates because they sit directly in the hierarchical chain of authority.



► Advisory or technical in nature

Staff Authority: Staff authority is advisory or technical in nature, helping line managers perform their duties more effectively. Staff units do not issue direct orders to operational employees but provide specialised input such as planning, research, legal advice, financial analysis, IT support, or personnel management. Example: In the same district administration, the District Statistical Officer, IT Cell, or Legal Officer serve as a staff unit. They analyse data, offer expert guidance, and draft reports that help the Collector make informed decisions, but they do not command revenue inspectors or field staff.

► Line executives ensure discipline, direction, and implementation, while staff specialists ensure technical accuracy and policy coherence

Modern public administration is too complex to rely solely on hierarchical authority. The diversity of government tasks, ranging from public health and transport to digital services and environmental regulation, requires a mix of authority and expertise. Line executives ensure discipline, direction, and implementation, while staff specialists ensure technical accuracy and policy coherence. This dual structure prevents overburdening line officers and promotes evidence-based decision-making.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, district health officers (line) handled immediate actions like containment and hospital coordination, while epidemiologists and data experts (staff) generated infection forecasts and protocol guidelines. The synergy ensured an effective public response. The line and staff concept remains fundamental to public administration, especially in large and complex systems. Gulick's insight that operational authority must be supported by expert advice continues to guide modern governance. Whether in ministries, public-sector undertakings, police departments, or district administrations, the combination of line authority and staff expertise helps governments deliver efficient, accountable, and technically sound public services.

1.3.4.1 Characteristics of Line and Staff Officials

A. Line Officials

1. Hold Formal Authority

Line officials occupy positions within the direct chain of command and therefore exercise formal, legally recognised authority over subordinates. Their power is derived from statutes, organisational rules, and administrative hierarchy, giving them the right to issue orders and enforce compliance. Classical

theorists like Max Weber emphasised this form of rational-legal authority as the foundation of modern bureaucracy. Example: A District Collector holds statutory authority under the CrPC, Land Revenue Code, and various state acts to issue binding administrative orders.

2. Responsible for Achieving Organisational Goals

Line officials are accountable for the core tasks of the organisation, whether maintaining law and order, ensuring public service delivery, or implementing government schemes. They translate organisational objectives into operational actions and supervise their execution in the field. Their performance directly affects outcomes, hence they carry higher responsibility and visibility within the system. Example: A Police Superintendent (SP) is responsible for crime control, public safety, and maintaining law and order within the district.

3. Directly Supervise Subordinates

Line officials maintain day-to-day oversight of employees working under them, ensuring that instructions are implemented correctly and efficiently. They conduct inspections, allocate work, evaluate performance, and initiate disciplinary action when required. This direct supervision helps maintain organisational discipline and operational continuity. Example: A Hospital Superintendent supervises doctors, nurses, administrative staff, and ward units to ensure the smooth functioning of a district hospital.

► Characteristics of Line Officials

4. Examples of Line Officials

Line positions are visible in every branch of public administration, like revenue, police, health, municipal governance, and public-sector enterprises. These officials manage the operating core of the organisation and are responsible for service delivery. They deal with citizens, resolve disputes, and coordinate multiple field units. Example: District Collectors, Police Superintendents, and Hospital Superintendents are classic line officials who exercise direct authority over their departments.

B. Staff Officials

1. Provide Expert Inputs

Staff officials offer specialised knowledge that helps in planning, policy-making, and technical problem-solving. Their expertise supports complex decision-making, especially in areas requiring scientific, legal, or technical competence. They do not command subordinates directly but influence decisions through their professional insights. Example: A legal advisor in a ministry interprets laws and rules for senior officers, ensuring that decisions comply with constitutional and statutory requirements.

2. Conduct Research, Analysis, and Technical Advice

Staff units undertake studies, prepare analytical reports, collect data, and identify alternative solutions to administrative problems. They help organisations adopt evidence-based strategies rather than relying solely on experience or routine practice. Their research strengthens policy formulation and long-term planning. Example: An economic adviser in the Finance Ministry analyses budget proposals, assesses financial risks, and provides forecasts that guide national fiscal policy.

3. Facilitate Decision-Making

Although staff officials do not have command authority, their contributions shape the quality and effectiveness of decisions made by line executives. They clarify issues, evaluate options, and ensure that technical aspects are fully understood before action is taken. This support reduces errors and improves administrative efficiency. Example: Engineers in the Public Works Department prepare feasibility studies and technical estimates, enabling senior line officials to approve projects confidently.

► Characteristics of Staff Officials

4. Staff Roles and Responsibilities

Staff roles are found across government, including audit departments, planning cells, IT units, scientific advisory boards, legal wings, and research divisions. They support various ministries and field offices by offering specialised services that generalist administrators may not possess. Their presence ensures a balance between authority and technical expertise. Example: Auditors in the Comptroller and Auditor General's

(CAG) office, IT specialists in e-governance projects, and engineers in municipal corporations are key staff officials who strengthen administrative outcomes.

1.3.4.2 Advantages of the Line and Staff System

1. Enhances Quality of Decision-Making

The combination of authoritative line officials and knowledgeable staff experts results in more balanced, well-informed decisions. Line managers bring operational experience, while staff specialists contribute analytical insights, ensuring decisions are both practical and technically sound. This synergy is especially valuable in areas such as disaster management, budgeting, and public project planning. Example: During the rollout of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), line administrators relied heavily on staff economists, IT experts, and legal specialists to refine implementation.

2. Provides Professional Expertise

Staff officials supply the specialised knowledge that generalist administrators may not possess, such as engineering skills, financial modelling, legal interpretation, or scientific analysis. Their expertise helps organisations deal with complex and technical issues that require precision. This reduces errors and strengthens the scientific and professional base of public policy. Example: In municipal corporations, engineers and town planners guide line officials on urban infrastructure design, zoning regulations, and environmental impact assessments.

3. Enables Line Officers to Focus on Core Functions

By delegating research, analysis, and technical evaluations to staff units, line officials can concentrate on leadership, supervision, and operational execution. This division of labour prevents managerial overload and increases administrative efficiency. It also ensures that routine or specialised tasks do not divert line officials from their primary responsibilities. Example: In a district administration, the Collector can focus on coordination and governance while relying on staff officers for tasks like statistical analysis, IT support, and legal vetting.

4. Encourages Innovation and Problem-Solving

Staff specialists often bring fresh perspectives and up-to-date professional knowledge, helping organisations innovate



and adopt new approaches. Their technical background allows them to experiment with new systems, tools, or methods that enhance organisational performance. This promotes continuous improvement and modernisation. Example: In public-sector units like NTPC or ONGC, R&D staff teams develop innovations in energy efficiency and environmental management that support frontline operational units.

5. Supports Large, Technical Organisations Such as Ministries and PSUs

► Important advantages

Complex organisations with wide-ranging functions need both direct authority and specialised competence. Line–staff structures make it possible to manage vast systems by distributing operational control and expert advice across multiple units. This creates a balanced organisational setup suited for ministries, departments, and public enterprises dealing with technical tasks. Example: Indian Railways functions smoothly because line authorities manage operations while staff units like the Railway Design and Standards Organisation (RDSO) provide technical research and engineering expertise.

1.3.4.3 Limitations of the Line and Staff System

1. Risk of Conflict Between Line and Staff (Role Confusion)

Differences in roles and authority may lead to friction, especially when staff specialists suggest changes that line managers are reluctant to implement. Confusion about “who decides” and “who advises” can create tension and slow down work processes. Without clear guidelines, staff may feel overstepping is possible, while line managers may feel undermined. Example: In some ministries, planning units and operational wings occasionally clash over policy priorities and implementation strategies.

2. Staff May Feel Undervalued; Line Managers May Resist External Advice

Staff officials, despite their expertise, may feel that their contributions are not adequately recognised because they lack direct authority. Conversely, line managers may undervalue staff recommendations, especially if they believe that specialists do not fully understand ground realities. This psychological barrier can weaken cooperation and reduce the usefulness of technical advice. Example: Engineers in urban local bodies sometimes

find their technical suggestions ignored by senior administrative officers, resulting in poorly designed infrastructure projects.

3. Decision Delays if Coordination Is Poor

► Limitations

The system requires effective coordination between line and staff units; otherwise, decision-making becomes slow and fragmented. Multiple layers of consultation, file movement, and vetting may lead to unnecessary delays. When communication channels are weak, even routine approvals can get stuck between advisory and operational offices. Example: In public-sector undertakings, project proposals often slow down when finance, legal, and technical wings do not synchronise their reviews with operational units.

1.3.4.4 Managing Line–Staff Conflicts

► Managing conflicts

Line–staff conflicts commonly arise due to unclear authority relationships, role overlap, and differences in perspectives between line managers, who are responsible for core operational decisions, and staff specialists, who provide expert advice. Effective management of these conflicts begins with clearly defining roles, responsibilities, and limits of authority so that staff personnel understand their advisory role and line managers retain final decision-making power. Open and continuous communication helps build mutual respect and reduces misunderstandings. Training programmes that promote inter-departmental collaboration and awareness of each other's functions also minimise friction. Finally, top management should act as a mediator when conflicts arise, ensuring that expert advice is considered without undermining line authority, thereby maintaining organisational harmony and efficiency.

Case Study: Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC)

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) is widely regarded as one of India's most successful public-sector organisations, and much of its efficiency is attributed to its well-designed line-and-staff organisational structure. In DMRC, the line authorities, including Project Directors, Chief Engineers, and Operations Heads, form the core command responsible for planning, construction, and daily operations. They hold decision-making power and shoulder responsibility for project execution, safety, and service delivery.



Supporting these line officers are highly specialised staff units, such as international consultants (notably JARTS – Japan Rail Technical Service), signalling and telecommunications experts, safety and quality auditors, and administrative analysts. These staff teams do not directly implement projects but provide expert advice, data-driven insights, and technical guidance. For instance, JARTS provided critical guidance on rolling stock procurement, track alignment, and electric traction systems under the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)-funded phases of the project.

This organisational combination significantly contributed to DMRC completing Phase I ahead of schedule—a rarity in large Indian infrastructure projects known for delays. Staff specialists aided line managers in adopting advanced technologies such as Communication-Based Train Control (CBTC), automated fare collection, and world-class safety practices. At the same time, the strong command chain ensured fast decision-making, limited bureaucratic delays, and smooth on-ground coordination.

Former Managing Director E. Sreedharan repeatedly emphasised that DMRC’s structural discipline enabled “technical decisions to be taken correctly and timely,” as staff experts ensured accuracy while line officers ensured accountability. The synergy also supported DMRC in achieving international benchmarks: punctuality above 99%, minimal construction accidents, and rapid expansion across NCR.

Overall, DMRC’s line-and-staff model demonstrates how professional expertise combined with clear authority lines can dramatically enhance efficiency, quality, and public service delivery in large-scale infrastructure organisations.

Case Study 2: AIIMS – Health Administration

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, is India’s premier medical institution, known for its complex administrative structure that blends line management with staff specialisation to deliver high-quality healthcare. At AIIMS, line officers include the Director, medical superintendents, additional medical superintendents, and heads of clinical departments. These leaders manage hospital operations, patient flow, emergency response, academic activities, and personnel allocation. They serve as the organisational backbone responsible for implementing policies and ensuring continuity of care.

Parallel to the line hierarchy are the staff specialists like biomedical engineers, health economists, IT professionals, biostatisticians, infection-control experts, and quality assurance teams. These units provide crucial analytical, technical, and advisory support. For example, biomedical engineers ensure the maintenance and calibration of ventilators, imaging systems, and high-end diagnostic equipment. Health economists contribute to cost-effectiveness studies that influence hospital procurement and budgeting decisions, while IT teams maintain electronic health records and telemedicine platforms.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the effectiveness of this structure became highly visible. The line management at AIIMS had to rapidly scale up isolation wards, ICU beds, and emergency services. However, the technical input required for such expansion came from staff experts. Biomedical engineering teams ensured oxygen manifold optimisation, installation of high-flow oxygen devices, and uninterrupted functioning of ventilators. Data analytics teams developed dashboards to track bed availability, case trends, and clinical outcomes. IT specialists supported tele-consultation systems, reducing overcrowding and ensuring continuity of care for non-COVID patients.

According to the AIIMS Annual Report (2021), this coordinated effort led to a significant increase in ICU capacity, faster treatment turnaround times, and improved patient triage efficiency. Staff specialists enabled evidence-based decision-making, while line officers ensured rapid execution. This integrated structure proved essential for crisis management and highlights how modern healthcare institutions rely on both administrative authority and specialised technical expertise to function effectively.

Hierarchy, decentralisation, and line-and-staff systems form the core of organisational behaviour in public administration. Hierarchy creates order and accountability; decentralisation enables faster, locally informed decisions; and line-and-staff relationships bring together authority with professional expertise. Understanding these principles equips students to analyse real-world administrative structures and to assess how public-sector organisations can be strengthened to deliver services more effectively.

Summarized Overview

This unit explores three foundational structural concepts that shape organisational behaviour in public administration—hierarchy, decentralisation, and the line-and-staff system. It explains how hierarchy establishes clear authority, reporting relationships, and accountability within government institutions; how decentralisation promotes participation, local decision-making, and responsiveness by shifting powers closer to citizens; and how line-and-staff arrangements integrate operational authority with specialised expertise in modern administrative systems. Through real Indian examples such as District Administration, Panchayati Raj Institutions, Indian Railways, Tamil Nadu's decentralised health model, DMRC, and AIIMS, the unit demonstrates how these structural principles influence efficiency, innovation, communication, and service delivery. By understanding these concepts, learners gain deeper insight into how public organisations operate and how administrative structures can be designed to improve governance.

Self-Assessment

1. Explain the concept of hierarchy in public administration and discuss its features with suitable examples from Indian government systems.
2. Describe the different forms of decentralisation and analyse how each form contributes to responsive and participatory governance.
3. Discuss the line-and-staff system in modern organisations and evaluate how it balances authority with technical expertise.
4. Using examples, critically examine the limitations of hierarchical structures in large public organisations.
5. Analyse the case studies of DMRC and AIIMS to illustrate the operational significance of an effective line-and-staff structure in public service delivery.

Assignments

1. Visit any local government office (municipality/panchayat/village office) and prepare a report identifying hierarchical levels and their functions.
2. Select a public service (e.g., drinking water supply or waste management) and map how responsibilities are distributed across state, district, and local bodies.

3. Interview two government officials, one holding a line position and one a staff position and document how their roles differ in authority, responsibility, and decision-making.
4. Analyse a recent government initiative (Digital India, Smart Cities, MGNREGA, etc.) and evaluate how decentralisation influenced its implementation and outcomes.
5. Choose a department or institution and redesign its structure using hierarchy, decentralisation, and line-and-staff principles to solve an identified administrative bottleneck.

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Suggested Reading

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU

BLOCK 2

Perception and Attitude



UNIT 1

Introduction to Perception and Attitudes

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- explain the meaning of perception and analyse how personal, organisational, and environmental factors shape administrative judgement
- identify common perceptual errors and evaluate their impact on decision-making in public organisations
- describe the components and sources of attitudes and assess how they influence public service behaviour and outcomes
- discuss the determinants of job satisfaction and examine its role in improving employee performance and citizen-centric governance

Background

Public administration today operates in an environment defined by rapid policy changes, increasing citizen expectations, and complex socio-economic challenges. Studies by the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA, 2022) show that nearly 65% of administrative decisions involve interpreting incomplete information, making perception a central factor in how managers understand situations and respond to them. Similarly, global surveys such as the Gallup State of the Global Workplace Report (2023) reveal that only 23% of employees worldwide feel actively engaged at work, highlighting how attitudes and job satisfaction directly affect productivity, motivation, and ethical behaviour. In government agencies where service delivery, transparency, and citizen trust are crucial, these behavioural dimensions become especially important.

Understanding perception and attitudes helps future managers recognise why individuals interpret the same situation differently and why administrative outcomes vary across departments. Research on organisational behaviour consistently shows that positive employee attitudes reduce conflicts, improve teamwork, and enhance decision

quality. Likewise, job satisfaction studies in the Indian public sector (DoPT, 2020) indicate that departments with high satisfaction levels report 30–40% higher service responsiveness and significantly lower absenteeism. The behavioural insights discussed in this unit therefore, equip MBA learners with the analytical tools needed to manage people effectively, reduce bias, and strengthen the human side of governance.

Keywords

Perception, Attitudes, Job Satisfaction, Decision-Making, Perceptual Errors

Discussion

Public organisations operate in environments where administrators constantly interpret information, interact with citizens, and make decisions. How a public servant perceives a situation or forms an attitude toward a policy, colleague, or community directly influences governance. For instance, a District Collector responding to a flood, a nurse in a government hospital handling patient grievances, or a municipal officer evaluating urban development proposals, all rely on perception and attitude to act effectively. Understanding these behavioural processes is critical in public administration because they shape decision-making, job satisfaction, employee performance, and ultimately public service delivery.

2.1.1 Perception

► Mental process

Perception is the mental process through which individuals select, organise, and interpret information to create their own subjective understanding of reality. As Robbins and Judge (2019) explain, people rarely respond to events exactly as they occur; instead, they respond according to how they *perceive* them. This means perception acts like a “filter” shaped by personal experiences, beliefs, and emotions. In administrative settings, this filter determines how officers interpret citizen behaviour, policy priorities, departmental issues, and even political signals.

For example, when a citizen approaches a government office with a complaint, one officer may perceive the person as “angry and unreasonable,” while another sees them as “distressed and in need of support.” The same factual situation produces



different administrative responses due to varied perceptions. This is why perception is central to organisational behaviour in public administration.

2.1.1.1 Relevance of Perception in Public - Administration

Perception plays a crucial role in how public administrators interpret rules, respond to situations, and evaluate people. Government work often involves complex problems where information is incomplete or time-sensitive, making perceptual judgment essential. Administrators rely on perception to judge the intent of citizens, assess urgency, interpret policy instructions, and address conflicts within teams.

1. Interpretation of Rules, Policies, and Citizen Behaviour

Administrators frequently interpret laws and circulars based on how they perceive their flexibility and purpose. For instance, during welfare disbursements, some district officials perceive rules as enabling support for vulnerable groups, while others view them strictly as procedural constraints. Research by Nigam (2011) on Indian welfare administration shows that administrators who perceive rules as “citizen-centric” implement programmes more effectively than those who see rules as rigid boundaries. This demonstrates how perception directly shapes public service outcomes.

2. Response to Crises

Crisis situations such as floods, disease outbreaks, or law-and-order issues demand quick perceptual judgement. During the 2018 Kerala floods, district collectors in Alappuzha and Ernakulam perceived early warning signs more seriously than others and initiated evacuation sooner, saving thousands of lives (Kerala Disaster Management Authority Report, 2019). Their perception of risk was different from neighbouring districts that delayed action, revealing how perception drives administrative responsiveness. In crises, the ability to accurately interpret signals becomes a lifesaving administrative skill.

3. Evaluation of Subordinates

Performance appraisal is heavily influenced by the supervisor's perception of an employee's commitment, competence, and

behaviour. A field-level worker who communicates less may be perceived as “disinterested,” even though they may be efficient and focused on their tasks. Luthans (2011) notes that perceptual biases such as the halo effect and stereotyping commonly affect evaluations in public-sector bureaucracies. When perception is inaccurate, it leads to unfair ratings, demotivation, and organisational conflict.

4. Management of Interpersonal and Departmental Conflict

- Plays a crucial role in how public administrators interpret rules, respond to situations, and evaluate people

Conflicts in public organisations often stem not from actual issues but from how individuals perceive each other’s intentions. For example, in several municipal corporations, engineers perceive finance officers as “rigid,” while finance officers perceive engineers as “extravagant.” Studies by the Indian Institute of Public Administration (2017) note that such misperceptions obstruct collaboration in project implementation. When administrators accurately perceive the motives and constraints of others, conflicts become easier to resolve.

2.1.1.2 Values Influencing Perception

- Beliefs that guide individuals

Values are enduring beliefs that guide individuals in judging what is desirable, important, or morally right. According to Milton Rokeach (1973), values act as internal standards that influence how people interpret events and make administrative decisions. Because values differ across individuals, two officers may perceive the same policy proposal or citizen grievance in very different ways. In public administration, values influence how administrators approach fairness, discipline, service delivery, and ethical decision-making.

2.1.1.2.1 Types of Values Influencing Perception

1. Terminal Values

- Long-term goals or desirable end states that individuals aim to achieve

Terminal values refer to long-term goals or desirable end states that individuals aim to achieve. Examples include national security, social equality, public welfare, harmony, and a corruption-free society. Public administrators who prioritise terminal values tend to interpret policies in ways that support long-term societal outcomes. For instance, a district magistrate who values social equality may perceive caste-related grievances with heightened seriousness and take proactive measures to ensure fairness.

2. Instrumental Values

► Preferred ways of behaving, such as honesty, discipline, empathy, responsibility, and courage

Instrumental values describe the preferred ways of behaving, such as honesty, discipline, empathy, responsibility, and courage. These values influence how administrators perform their duties on a day-to-day basis. An administrative officer who values discipline may perceive late reporting or incomplete files as serious lapses, while one who prioritises compassion may emphasise supportive guidance rather than punishment. Luthans (2011) notes that instrumental values significantly shape leadership behaviour and communication patterns in bureaucratic settings.

Example: Value-Based Perception in Policing

Consider two police officers handling the same complaint from a migrant worker alleging wage theft. An officer who values fairness and social justice may perceive the complaint as a serious violation requiring immediate intervention. Another officer who strongly values hierarchy and authority may view the situation as a routine labour dispute and respond less urgently. Studies by the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPRD, 2020) show that officers with strong citizen-centric values are more likely to adopt problem-solving approaches rather than punitive or dismissive ones. Thus, values shape how officers perceive situations and how they act upon them.

2.1.1.3 Factors Affecting Perception

► Influenced by a combination of personal traits, environmental conditions, and characteristics of the people or objects being observed

Perception does not occur in isolation; it is influenced by a combination of personal traits, environmental conditions, and characteristics of the people or objects being observed. Robbins & Judge (2019) emphasise that perception is a dynamic psychological process shaped by both internal dispositions and external cues. In public administration, where officials constantly interpret citizen needs, employee behaviour, and policy instructions, understanding these factors is essential for improving judgement, fairness, and administrative effectiveness. The following factors help explain why different administrators may respond differently to the same situation.

1. Personal Factors

Personal factors refer to the internal characteristics of an individual that shape how they notice, interpret, and evaluate information.

a. Past Experience

- Influence how individuals perceive current situations

Previous experiences strongly influence how individuals perceive current situations. For instance, an officer who has frequently encountered fraudulent welfare claims may become overly cautious and perceive even genuine applications as suspicious. Luthans (2011) notes that past experiences create mental shortcuts that help quick decision-making but may also lead to biased interpretations. In public administration, this can affect fairness in service delivery, especially when dealing with marginalised groups.

b. Personality (Introversion, Authoritarianism, etc.)

- Affect how people interpret social and organisational events

Personality traits affect how people interpret social and organisational events. An introverted administrator may perceive frequent staff interactions as overwhelming, while an extroverted leader may interpret the same environment as collaborative and healthy. Similarly, authoritarian personalities often perceive dissent as disloyalty, whereas democratic personalities interpret it as constructive feedback. Studies in administrative psychology show that personality influences communication, conflict handling, and leadership style.

c. Motivation

- Directs attention and shapes perception

A person's motives shape what they pay attention to and how they interpret it. An officer motivated by public service values may perceive citizen complaints as opportunities to improve governance. Conversely, an individual with strong career ambitions may focus more on tasks that enhance visibility or appraisal outcomes. According to Maslow (1954), motivation directs attention and shapes perception by highlighting information that aligns with personal goals.

d. Emotional State

- Emotional regulation is crucial for accurate administrative perception

Emotions such as stress, anxiety, excitement, or frustration influence perception significantly. A supervisor under emotional strain may misinterpret a subordinate's neutral behaviour as disrespectful or careless. During high-pressure events such as election management or disaster response, emotional overload can distort risk perception and lead to errors in judgement. Research in organisational behaviour suggests that emotional regulation is crucial for accurate administrative perception.



2. Environmental Factors

These are external conditions in the workplace that influence how individuals perceive situations.

a. Time Pressure

- Time pressure can sharpen focus but also increase perceptual errors

When decisions must be taken quickly, individuals rely more on intuition and perception rather than detailed analysis. In public administration, tasks such as law-and-order decisions or emergency evacuations often occur under time pressure. For example, during the COVID-19 vaccination drive, field officers had to quickly interpret citizen turnout patterns to adjust deployment of teams. Time pressure can sharpen focus but also increase perceptual errors.

b. Workload

- Affects the ability to process information accurately

Heavy workload affects the ability to process information accurately. When officers handle multiple files, deadlines, and meetings simultaneously, they may perceive routine issues as irritants or threats. Studies from the Indian Institute of Public Administration (2018) show that overload leads to selective perception, where officials pay attention only to urgent matters and overlook important but less urgent tasks. This can compromise service quality and employee relations.

c. Organisational Culture

- Shape how individuals interpret events

The shared norms, values, and practices of an organisation shape how individuals interpret events. For example, in a culture that rewards strict compliance, officers may perceive flexibility as risky or inappropriate. In contrast, organisations promoting innovation and collaboration encourage members to see change as an opportunity. Research by Peters and Waterman (1982) highlights that strong organisational cultures create common perceptual frames, reducing ambiguity in decision-making.

3. Target Characteristics

These refer to features of the person, object, or event being observed, which influence the perceiver's interpretation.

a. Social Status

People often perceive individuals of higher social or professional status as more competent or credible. In public

offices, officers may unconsciously give more weight to complaints from influential citizens than from daily-wage workers. Studies on administrative behaviour show that status-based perception can contribute to unequal treatment in grievance redressal. Addressing such bias requires ethical training and sensitivity.

b. Appearance

First impressions based on physical appearance, attire, or grooming affect perception. For instance, a neatly dressed visitor may be perceived as trustworthy, while a poorly dressed person may be judged as less credible. Such perceptions are particularly problematic in welfare offices, where economically disadvantaged citizens often need the most support. Luthans (2011) calls appearance-based judgment a “perceptual shortcut” that administrators must consciously monitor.

c. Behaviour

A person’s behaviour, like tone of voice, body language and assertiveness, strongly influences perception. A citizen who speaks loudly due to frustration may be misperceived as disrespectful or aggressive. Conversely, a calm and articulate citizen may be perceived as more genuine even if their claim is weak. Behavioural cues often trigger immediate perceptual interpretations, which administrators must learn to evaluate objectively.

d. Group Identity (Caste, Profession, Gender, Regional Background, etc.)

Group identity shapes perception through stereotypes and generalisations. An officer may perceive members of certain occupational groups (e.g., drivers, labourers, traders) based on preconceived notions rather than individual behaviour. Studies on public administration in India (Dwivedi & Bhargava, 1967) highlight how caste and community identities subtly influence bureaucratic perceptions. Such biases can lead to unequal administrative treatment and must be addressed through training and reflective practice.

► Features of the person, object, or event being observed

Case Study: Perception in Disaster Response – Kerala Floods (2018)

During the 2018 Kerala floods, district administrations played a crucial role in rescue operations. In several districts,



officers perceived the severity of the crisis early due to signals from community workers, water-level data, and citizen reports. District officials who perceived the situation as “high-risk” initiated rapid evacuations, leading to lives saved. Meanwhile, delays in perception in other regions resulted in slower response. This case shows how perception guides public decision-making during emergencies.

2.1.1.3 Perceptual Errors

Perception is not always an accurate reflection of reality. Stephen P. Robbins, in his book ‘*Organisational Behaviour*’, explains that individuals frequently rely on shortcuts or mental assumptions to make sense of complex information. While these shortcuts save time, they often distort judgment and lead to biased administrative decisions. For public administrators, recognising these perceptual errors is essential for fairness, efficiency, and ethical governance because their work affects citizens directly. The following are the various types of perceptual Errors.

► Not always an accurate reflection of reality

► Occurs when individuals pay attention only to information that aligns with their existing beliefs or expectations

1. Selective Perception

Selective perception occurs when individuals pay attention only to information that aligns with their existing beliefs or expectations. This means they unconsciously filter out details that contradict their assumptions, leading to an incomplete or biased understanding. In public administration, selective perception can result in overlooking important citizen needs, emerging risks, or alternative viewpoints.

Example: A municipal engineer accustomed to dealing with drainage problems may focus mainly on complaints related to waterlogging because they fit his prior experience. As a result, he may ignore or downplay emerging issues such as waste segregation failures or mosquito-breeding hotspots, even though these require equal administrative attention.

2. Halo Effect

► Forming an overall favourable impression about a person based on one positive trait

The halo effect refers to forming an overall favourable impression about a person based on one positive trait. This error leads supervisors to overestimate the individual’s competence or performance in unrelated areas. As Robbins notes, this often affects performance appraisals, promotions, and task allocation in public organisations.

Example: If a clerk is known for impeccable punctuality, a supervisor may assume the clerk is also efficient, detail-oriented, and reliable in all tasks—even when their record in documentation or citizen service delivery is only average. This can skew rewards and responsibilities within the department.

3. Horn Effect

- One negative characteristic colours the entire perception of a person

The horn effect is the opposite of the halo effect: one negative characteristic colours the entire perception of a person. This often leads to unfair evaluations, exclusion from important tasks, and weakened morale. Public administration settings—especially hierarchical offices—are particularly vulnerable to this phenomenon because impressions travel quickly through informal networks.

Example: An employee who struggles with communication due to shyness might be perceived as incompetent, disinterested, or hesitant, even though their technical skills or fieldwork performance may be excellent. Over time, this misperception can limit their opportunities for training or leadership roles.

4. Stereotyping

- Lead to discriminatory behaviour and poor administrative judgement

Stereotyping involves assigning characteristics to individuals based solely on their membership in a social, cultural, or occupational group. Though stereotypes simplify information processing, they lead to discriminatory behaviour and poor administrative judgement. Luthans (2011) points out that stereotyping is one of the most persistent errors in public-sector behaviour because of diverse citizen identities.

Example: During digital-governance initiatives, administrators may assume that rural citizens lack digital literacy and therefore avoid involving them in participatory platforms. However, experiences from states like Kerala and Gujarat show that rural communities adapt well when given proper training—revealing how stereotypes can hinder effective policy implementation.

5. Attribution Errors

- Can cause unfair treatment of citizens and subordinates

Attribution theory explains how people determine the causes of behaviour, either by attributing it to internal factors (personal traits, motives, abilities) or external factors (situational pressures, resource constraints, environmental barriers). Perceptual errors



occur when individuals misattribute behaviour, often by placing too much emphasis on internal causes and ignoring situational realities. This phenomenon is known as the fundamental attribution error. In public administration, attribution mistakes can cause unfair treatment of citizens and subordinates.

- a. **Internal Attribution:** This occurs when behaviour is explained by personal characteristics. Example: A late beneficiary for a welfare payout may be labelled irresponsible or lazy.
- b. **External Attribution:** This occurs when behaviour is explained by external circumstances. Example: The same beneficiary may actually be late due to poor transport connectivity, absence of public buses, or family health emergencies.

Field studies conducted by the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) show that officers often misinterpret delayed responses from tribal communities as apathy, whereas the real cause is long travel distances and limited digital access. Such attribution bias leads to misunderstandings, tension, and unequal treatment unless administrators consciously examine situational factors.

2.1.1.4 Perception and Decision-Making

► Powerful lens that guides administrative judgement

Decision-making in public administration rarely occurs in a vacuum. Administrators often rely on their perceptions, i.e., how they interpret situations, people, or data, rather than on fully objective information. As Herbert A. Simon explains in his seminal work *Administrative Behaviour* (1997), public officials operate under bounded rationality, meaning their decisions are shaped by limited time, incomplete data, and cognitive shortcuts. Instead of identifying the “best” solution, they settle for a “satisficing” one that seems reasonable from their viewpoint. Thus, perception becomes a powerful lens that guides administrative judgement, especially in complex and uncertain environments.

2.1.1.4.1 How Perception Shapes Decisions

1. Perception influences how problems are diagnosed

Public officials interpret problems based on what they notice, understand, and prioritise. If an officer perceives a situation as a

crisis, they may push for immediate action even when long-term planning is required. For example, a municipal commissioner who perceives garbage accumulation primarily as a “collection issue” may ignore structural problems like inefficient route planning or lack of segregation facilities.

2. Determines which solutions are prioritised

Administrators choose among alternatives based on perceived feasibility, urgency, or political acceptability. Their mental models shape which options appear more practical. A district collector may give priority to road repairs in areas they perceive as “high traffic,” even if data suggests that rural interior roads have a greater safety risk.

► Influence of perception in decision making

3. Affects risk assessment

Perception heavily influences how risky a decision seems. If an official perceives a project as politically sensitive or financially uncertain, they may avoid innovative solutions. For instance, many early e-governance projects in India were initially delayed because administrators perceived digital systems as risky and unfamiliar compared to traditional file-based processes.

4. Shapes ethical judgement

How administrators perceive fairness, accountability, or responsibility affects moral decisions. A procurement officer who perceives a vendor's long association with the department as a sign of reliability may overlook ethical concerns, thereby compromising objectivity. Ethical choices are therefore deeply tied to personal interpretations rather than purely procedural rules.

Example: Delhi Metro Station Planning (DMRC)

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC), known for its efficiency and people-centric design, relied heavily on perceptual assessments while designing new metro stations. Engineers conducted field observations to understand how commuters perceive walking distance, which often feels longer in poorly lit or crowded areas, even when the actual distance is short. Planners also studied how passengers perceived safety around staircases, escalators, and station entrances. These



insights led to improvements such as clearer signage, brighter lighting, wider walkways, and better last-mile connectivity. The example reflects Simon's idea that real-world administrative choices often rely on subjective interpretations rather than purely technical data.

2.1.1.4.2 Common Decision-Making Errors Due to Perception

Cognitive biases, i.e., systematic errors in thinking, regularly influence public policies and administrative decisions. Psychologists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, in their work on behavioural decision theory (*Judgment under Uncertainty*, 1974), explain how such biases distort rational choices.

1. Confirmation Bias

Administrators tend to favour information that supports their existing beliefs and ignore contradictory data. For example, if an officer believes that “private contractors are inefficient,” they may highlight only the failures and overlook successful public-private partnerships.

2. Overconfidence

Decision-makers often overestimate their knowledge or predictive accuracy, leading to risky choices. A classic example is when state departments launch large-scale welfare schemes without adequate piloting because officials are confident that past successes can be easily replicated.

3. Anchoring Bias

Initial information becomes a reference point that unduly shapes later decisions. In budget discussions, the previous year's expenditure often becomes an anchor, causing departments to propose increments or cuts relative to that number rather than conducting a fresh needs assessment.

► Errors in decision making

4. Availability Bias

Administrators judge the importance of an issue based on how easily examples come to mind. After a highly publicised flood event, for instance, disaster management funds may be disproportionately allocated to flood control, even if drought is a more pressing long-term threat in that region.

5. Escalation of Commitment

Officials sometimes continue investing in failing projects because they have already committed time, money, or political capital. This occurs frequently in large infrastructure projects where initial cost estimates were unrealistic, yet withdrawal becomes politically or institutionally difficult.

These biases influence decisions across public administration—from drafting policies and allocating budgets to selecting candidates in recruitment processes. Understanding perceptual errors allows administrators to adopt more reflective, evidence-based approaches.

2.1.5 Attitudes

► Shape how individuals behave within public organisations

Attitudes play a central role in shaping how individuals behave within public organisations. Gordon Allport (1935), in his classic definition, describes attitude as a learned predisposition to respond positively or negatively to a person, object, or situation. In the context of administration, attitudes influence what employees feel, how they think, and what they intend to do in different work scenarios. Because attitudes are learned rather than innate, they can be shaped through training, organisational climate, and leadership.

2.1.5.1 Components of Attitude (ABC Model)

1. Affective Component

The affective component is the emotional reaction a person has toward something or someone. For example, an employee may feel stressed or anxious when dealing with tight deadlines or unexpected audits. These feelings strongly influence overall job satisfaction and motivation levels. Researchers like Stephen P. Robbins emphasise that emotions play a powerful role in workplace behaviour, often overriding rational judgement.

2. Behavioural Component

► ABC Model

The behavioural component reflects the intention or tendency to act in a particular manner. For instance, a staff member who feels overwhelmed may start avoiding meetings or delaying communication with colleagues. These actions represent the outward expression of internal feelings and thoughts. In public organisations, behavioural attitudes affect teamwork, punctuality, and responsiveness to citizen needs.



3. Cognitive Component

The cognitive component involves the beliefs, opinions, or knowledge an employee holds about their work environment. For example, if a clerk believes that “the department is inefficient due to outdated systems,” this belief shapes their motivation and approach to tasks. Cognitive attitudes are influenced by past experiences, organisational structure, and the information employees receive. They often form the foundation upon which feelings and behaviours develop.

2.1.5.2 Sources of Attitude

1. Family and Upbringing

Family environment plays a foundational role in shaping values such as honesty, respect, and discipline. Individuals raised in households that emphasise punctuality and responsibility often carry these attitudes into their professional lives. Early socialisation, therefore, becomes a long-term influence on workplace behaviour.

2. Organisational Culture

The culture of an organisation, its norms, rituals, and leadership style, significantly shape employee attitudes. When employees work in a respectful and transparent environment, they tend to develop positive attitudes toward their roles. Conversely, rigid or authoritarian cultures can foster negativity and resistance to change.

3. Social Norms

Employees are influenced by what society expects from public servants, such as fairness, integrity, and courtesy. When these norms are strong, they shape positive attitudes toward public service and citizen welfare. In societies where corruption is normalised, however, negative attitudes may become more prevalent.

► Sources that shape attitude

4. Work Experiences

Positive experiences like recognition, training opportunities, and supportive colleagues lead to favourable attitudes. Repetitive negative experiences, such as work overload or unfair treatment, generate frustration and withdrawal. Over time, daily work experiences become key determinants of morale.

5. Leadership Behaviour

Leaders set the emotional tone of the organisation through their behaviour and communication style. Supportive leaders who provide feedback and encourage participation foster positive attitudes among employees. On the other hand, autocratic or indifferent leadership often results in low morale, hostility, or disengagement.

2.1.5.3 Attitudes in Public Administration

► Positive and negative attitude

Attitudes are especially important in public administration because civil servants interact directly with citizens and policy implementation. A positive attitude helps administrators listen carefully, respond respectfully, and solve problems efficiently, thereby strengthening public trust. Research in public-sector management shows that positive employee attitudes contribute to higher citizen satisfaction, smoother operations, and reduced workplace conflict. In contrast, negative attitudes manifest as unnecessary bureaucracy, delays in file movement, apathy, and sometimes corrupt practices.

A clear example can be seen in frontline government offices such as the Passport Seva Kendras. After reforms and training focused on customer friendliness, employees' attitudes improved, resulting in quicker processing and fewer complaints. This demonstrates how attitude shifts can directly transform public service delivery.

2.1.6 Job Satisfaction

► When an individual's job experiences match their expectations and personal values

Job satisfaction refers to the positive emotional state that emerges when an individual's job experiences match their expectations and personal values. Edwin Locke (1976), in his widely cited work on the Range of Affect Theory, explains that satisfaction arises when the outcomes of a job align with what the employee considers important. In public administration, job satisfaction is not just a personal matter; it directly influences service quality, ethical behaviour, and administrative efficiency. Satisfied employees tend to show greater commitment and integrity, reducing errors and delays in service delivery.

2.1.6.1 Determinants of Job Satisfaction

1. Nature of Work

The type of work employees perform has a major influence on how satisfied they feel. Tasks that are meaningful, varied, and



challenge employees intellectually lead to higher enthusiasm. In public agencies, roles that allow officers to engage with citizens, solve problems, or participate in policy processes often generate fulfilment. Conversely, repetitive clerical tasks may reduce motivation if they lack autonomy.

2. Salary and Benefits

Fair and competitive compensation plays a crucial role in shaping job satisfaction. While public-sector salaries may not always match private-sector levels, timely payment, health insurance, pensions, and allowances contribute positively. Employees who perceive compensation as equitable tend to express higher organisational loyalty. Financial insecurity, on the other hand, quickly lowers morale.

3. Leadership Style

Leadership is one of the strongest predictors of job satisfaction. Supportive, participative, and transformational leaders help employees feel valued and involved in decision-making. When supervisors communicate clearly and recognise efforts, employees develop trust and a sense of belonging. Rigid or authoritarian leadership styles often create fear, poor morale, and withdrawal.

4. Work Environment

► Determining Job Satisfaction

Physical and psychological work conditions shape day-to-day experiences. Clean offices, adequate resources, and safe working spaces contribute to a supportive environment. In addition, respectful communication and freedom from harassment foster emotional well-being. Poor infrastructure or hostile environments quickly generate dissatisfaction.

5. Opportunities for Growth

Employees feel more satisfied when they have chances to learn new skills, attend training programmes, or advance in their careers. Public organisations that offer regular capacity-building initiatives create a sense of progression and purpose. When promotion systems are transparent, employees remain motivated. Lack of growth opportunities, however, leads to stagnation and frustration.

6. Relationship with Colleagues

Positive relationships with peers make the workplace collaborative and less stressful. Supportive colleagues share knowledge, cooperate during workload peaks, and help maintain a friendly atmosphere. Strong interpersonal bonds often compensate for structural challenges in the organisation. Conversely, conflict-ridden teams experience burnout and inefficiency.

7. Work–Life Balance

Balanced working hours and flexibility contribute significantly to job satisfaction, especially in demanding public roles. Employees who can manage personal responsibilities alongside work commitments feel healthier and more stable. Public-sector reforms that introduce flexi-timings, childcare support, or leave options enhance well-being. Poor work–life balance often leads to absenteeism and declining performance.

2.1.6.2 Exit–Voice–Loyalty–Neglect (EVLN) Framework

The Exit–Voice–Loyalty–Neglect (EVLN) framework a managerial diagnostic tool, explains how employees typically respond to job dissatisfaction. It helps managers diagnose employee behaviour and choose appropriate corrective actions.

1. Exit

Exit refers to employees leaving the organisation or actively searching for alternative employment. High exit behaviour signals serious dissatisfaction related to pay, workload, leadership, or career growth.

Managerial insight: Rising turnover is a clear warning sign that requires immediate policy or leadership intervention.

2. Voice

Voice involves employees expressing concerns, suggestions, or complaints with the intention of improving the situation. This is a constructive and desirable response.

Managerial insight: Managers should encourage voice through open-door policies, grievance mechanisms, and participative decision-making.

- Explains how employees typically respond to job dissatisfaction

3. Loyalty

Loyal employees remain committed to the organisation despite dissatisfaction, hoping conditions will improve. While loyalty reflects trust, prolonged unresolved issues may later convert loyalty into exit or neglect.

Managerial insight: Managers must recognise loyalty and respond proactively before patience wears out.

4. Neglect

Neglect occurs when employees reduce effort, show absenteeism, make more errors, or mentally withdraw from work. This is a passive but harmful response to dissatisfaction.

Managerial insight: Declining performance and engagement often indicate unresolved job satisfaction issues.

Managerial Use of the EVLN Framework

Managers can use the EVLN framework to identify early warning signs, understand employee reactions, and design targeted HR interventions. Encouraging voice and addressing issues early helps prevent exit and neglect, thereby improving job satisfaction, performance, and organisational stability.

2.1.6.3 Job Satisfaction in the Public Sector: Facts & Evidence

- Satisfied employees show better compliance with procedures and lower absenteeism, directly improving service delivery

A study conducted by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) in 2020 found that employees who worked under supportive supervisors reported 40% higher job satisfaction, indicating the central role of leadership. Research by the AIIMS Nursing Research Unit (2021) highlighted those public-sector nurses under participative leadership experienced higher satisfaction and significantly lower burnout levels. Local government studies similarly reveal that satisfied employees show better compliance with procedures and lower absenteeism, directly improving service delivery. These findings underscore that job satisfaction has measurable impacts on administrative integrity and efficiency.

Case Study: Improving Job Satisfaction – Bengaluru Municipal Corporation (BBMP)

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) experienced declining staff morale due to heavy workloads, limited recognition, and inadequate training. Between 2017 and 2022, a series of reforms were introduced, including structured training modules, wellness activities, counselling support, and performance-linked rewards. A survey conducted by the Administrative Training Institute (ATI), Mysuru, showed a 30% increase in job satisfaction, along with improved teamwork and faster grievance redressal by frontline staff. The case illustrates how strategic human-resource interventions can transform employee attitudes, strengthen service delivery, and enhance public trust.

Summarized Overview

This unit explores the behavioural foundations of public administration by examining the roles of perception, attitudes, and job satisfaction in shaping administrative behaviour and public service delivery. Public administrators operate in complex and dynamic environments where decisions are rarely based on complete or perfectly objective information. Instead, how officials perceive situations, people, and policies significantly influences their judgement, actions, and effectiveness in governance.

The unit begins with a discussion on perception, defined as the mental process through which individuals select, organise, and interpret information to construct their understanding of reality. In public administration, perception affects how rules are interpreted, how citizens' behaviour is understood, how subordinates are evaluated, and how crises are managed. Differences in perception explain why administrators may respond differently to similar situations, such as welfare implementation or disaster response. The unit also highlights how values, both terminal values (long-term societal goals) and instrumental values (preferred modes of conduct), shape perceptual judgement and influence administrative decisions.

Further, the unit analyses the factors affecting perception, including personal factors like experience, personality, motivation, and emotional state; environmental factors such as workload, time pressure, and organisational culture; and characteristics of the target, including social status, appearance, behaviour, and group identity. These influences often lead to perceptual errors such as selective perception, stereotyping, halo and horn effects, and attribution biases, which can result in unfair treatment and poor decision-making if left unexamined.

The unit then connects perception with decision-making, emphasising the idea of bounded rationality. Administrative choices regarding problem diagnosis, risk assessment, ethical judgement, and policy prioritisation are shaped by subjective interpretations rather than purely rational analysis. Understanding perceptual biases helps administrators make more balanced and evidence-informed decisions.

The latter part of the unit focuses on attitudes and job satisfaction. Attitudes influence how public employees think, feel, and behave at work, while job satisfaction affects motivation, commitment, integrity, and service quality. By examining their sources and outcomes, the unit underscores the importance of supportive leadership, positive organisational culture, and meaningful work in strengthening administrative performance and public trust.

Self-Assessment

1. Explain the relevance of perception in public administration and discuss how it influences crisis management and policy implementation.
2. Describe the ABC Model of Attitudes with examples from public-sector workplace situations.
3. Discuss any four perceptual errors and analyse their implications for fairness and efficiency in government decision-making.
4. Examine the determinants of job satisfaction and explain how they shape employee morale in public organisations.
5. Using examples, discuss how attitudes and job satisfaction influence citizen satisfaction and the quality of public service delivery.

Assignments

1. Observe a government office (physically or through reports) and prepare a short report analysing how administrators' perceptions influence citizen service delivery.
2. Interview a public-sector employee and document their affective, behavioural, and cognitive attitudes toward their job.

3. Select a real public-sector case where a decision went wrong due to perceptual bias. Analyse the type of bias and suggest corrective strategies.
4. Conduct a survey (sample size 5–10 employees) on determinants of job satisfaction and present the findings in a table or chart.
5. Perform a role-play simulating interactions between a citizen and a public official, demonstrating how attitudes and perception shape communication and outcomes.

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Suggested Reading

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

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Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- explain the concepts, types, and significance of group dynamics in public organisations using real public-sector examples
- aware of various types of communication and evaluate their role in administrative coordination, citizen engagement, and service delivery
- identify structural, behavioural, and technological barriers to communication and assess their impact on organisational efficiency

Background

Public organisations today operate in increasingly complex environments, requiring coordinated action among diverse teams, departments, and stakeholders. According to the Government of India's *Capacity Building Commission Report (2022)*, more than 85% of public-service tasks involve team-based interactions, whether in district administration, disaster management, health services, policing, or large-scale national programmes. Studies in administrative behaviour also show that nearly 70% of communication failures in government departments arise not from technical issues but from behavioural and interpersonal barriers, highlighting the critical role of group dynamics and communication skills for effective governance. As India expands digital governance, decentralised service delivery, and community participation, the significance of interpersonal processes, teamwork, and clear communication has grown substantially.

The importance of communication became especially evident during national programmes such as the COVID-19 vaccination drive, where over 3.27 lakh frontline teams were coordinated across states through structured communication, demonstrating how clarity and teamwork directly impact public outcomes. Similarly, large public operations like elections, disaster management, and welfare delivery increasingly depend on cohesive group functioning and efficient communication channels—formal, informal,

verbal, non-verbal, and digital. Against this backdrop, Unit 2 equips learners with the behavioural foundations necessary to understand how groups work, why communication succeeds or fails, and how administrators can build more collaborative, responsive, and citizen-centric public organisations.

Keywords

Group dynamics, formal communication, informal groups, behavioural barriers, organisational coordination

Discussion

Modern public organisations rarely function through individuals working alone. Government departments, municipal corporations, district administrations, panchayats, public hospitals, police units, and Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) all operate through groups i.e., teams of people who interact, share responsibilities, coordinate tasks, and influence each other. The behaviour of individuals inside groups is often very different from their behaviour in isolation. Understanding group dynamics, therefore, becomes essential for effective public administration, as much of organisational success depends on team cohesion, communication, collaboration, and conflict resolution.

2.2.1 Concepts and Importance of Group Dynamics

► How individuals become psychologically interconnected through shared norms and mutual influence

The term Group Dynamics was first introduced by social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1947), who explained it as the set of forces that shape how groups behave, interact, and perform. These forces include communication patterns, leadership influence, member roles, decision-making processes, and conflict-handling approaches. Group dynamics is not merely about people being together; it is about how individuals become psychologically interconnected through shared norms and mutual influence. In any organisation, these dynamics determine whether a group becomes highly productive or falls into dysfunction.

A group is more than a physical collection of individuals; it is a social system where members share common goals, expectations, and behavioural rules. Each member plays a

specific role, such as coordinator, contributor, blocker, or facilitator, which collectively shapes the group's effectiveness. These interdependent roles help the group maintain balance and move towards shared objectives. For example, in a hospital emergency unit, doctors, nurses, technicians, and administrators coordinate their roles to deliver seamless patient care.

2.2.1.1 Importance of Group Dynamics

1. Enhances Team Performance

- Improve cooperation, reduce misunderstandings, and enable faster decision-making

Strong group dynamics improve cooperation, reduce misunderstandings, and enable faster decision-making. When members trust one another and communicate openly, they are more willing to contribute ideas and take collective responsibility. For instance, the Toyota Production System emphasises team-based problem-solving, where small groups use Kaizen practices to improve operations, resulting in high productivity and quality.

2. Encourages Creativity and Innovation

- Healthy interactions

Groups with healthy interactions create an environment where diverse viewpoints are welcomed, enabling innovative solutions. Psychological safety is an important element of group dynamics that allows members to challenge ideas without fear. Google's Project Aristotle (2016) found that teams with better interpersonal relations and open dialogue generated significantly higher creative output.

3. Helps in Conflict Management

- Address conflicts constructively

Positive group dynamics allow conflicts to be identified early and addressed constructively rather than suppressed. Groups with clear norms and open communication can transform disagreements into learning opportunities. For example, the Apollo 13 NASA team managed intense conflict and pressure by relying on structured communication and clear role allocation, ultimately resolving a life-threatening crisis.

4. Strengthens Organisational Culture

- Organisational values

Groups act as carriers of organisational values, norms, and behaviours. When group dynamics are strong, employees internalise organisational culture more easily and feel a sense of belonging. Companies like Infosys and Tata Consultancy



Services use team-based onboarding and project groups to integrate new employees into the work culture smoothly.

5. Supports Effective Decision-Making

► Collective intelligence

A well-functioning group benefits from collective intelligence, where pooled knowledge leads to better decisions compared to individual judgment alone. Good dynamics ensure all members participate, reducing the risk of groupthink or dominance by a few voices. For example, successful jury deliberations in the justice system depend heavily on balanced participation and respectful communication.

6. Improves Motivation and Morale

► Supportive relationship

Healthy group dynamics create supportive relationships where members feel valued and motivated. Teams with mutual respect experience higher job satisfaction and lower turnover. In many Indian start-ups, such as Zomato and Swiggy, team bonding sessions, collaborative meetings, and open forums help maintain morale during periods of rapid scaling.

Case Study: The Mumbai Dabbawalas – A Model of Group Dynamics and Teamwork

The Mumbai Dabbawalas represent one of the most celebrated examples of effective group dynamics, demonstrating how disciplined teamwork, shared values, and strong organisational culture can produce world-class service without reliance on advanced technology. Originating in the 1890s, the Dabbawala system has grown into a collective of around 5,000 semi-literate delivery workers who transport nearly 200,000 lunchboxes every day across one of the world's most congested urban environments. Their success has been studied by Harvard Business School, the Indian Institute of Management (Ahmedabad), and global logistics scholars for its unique efficiency and exceptionally low error rate, often cited as “one mistake in 16 million deliveries.”

At the heart of their excellence is group cohesiveness, built upon a strong sense of identity and belonging. All Dabbawalas belong to the same cooperative society and share the collective mission of delivering meals on time. This shared purpose fosters deep trust, mutual respect, and voluntary cooperation among members. Their organisational norms, such as punctuality,

discipline, humility, and service commitment, are deeply internalised and passed down through generations. These norms allow them to function smoothly even without written instructions, formal supervision, or hierarchical control.

Another crucial factor is clear role differentiation. Each Dabbawala knows exactly when to collect, sort, transport, exchange, and deliver lunchboxes. Their simple but robust coding system, using colour symbols and alphanumeric marks, ensures that every member understands their task within the broader logistics chain. Because responsibilities are well structured and predictable, each worker fits seamlessly into the group's operational rhythm.

The Dabbawalas also exemplify informal leadership and peer regulation. Instead of relying on strict managerial control, members monitor one another through shared accountability and collective pride. When disruptions like train delays, monsoons, or citywide events occur, the group's adaptability, supported by strong internal communication, ensures service continuity. The Dabbawala model demonstrates that effective group dynamics rooted in trust, shared goals, cohesive culture, and disciplined roles can rival and even surpass complex, technology-driven logistics systems. Their story remains a benchmark for public administration and management students studying teamwork, coordination, and organisational behaviour.

2.2.1.2 Types of Groups in Public Administration

Public administration relies on a wide variety of groups to carry out governmental functions, deliver services, and ensure coordination across departments. These groups may be formally created by organisational policies or may emerge informally through workplace interactions. Understanding the nature of formal and informal groups helps administrators manage teams effectively, build cooperation, and improve service outcomes.

1. Formal Groups

Formal groups are officially created by government departments or agencies to achieve specific administrative objectives. These groups have defined roles, hierarchies, meeting schedules, and reporting structures, and they function according to rules laid down in acts, manuals, government orders, or office procedures. Because their authority comes

► Officially created



from the organisation, their tasks align with policy goals and public service mandates.

Examples:

- i. **District Disaster Management Committee (DDMA):** Constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, the DDMA includes the District Collector, heads of line departments, police, medical officers, and technical experts. This committee coordinates rescue, relief, and rehabilitation activities. During the 2018 Kerala floods, the DDMA in Ernakulam played a crucial role in organising shelters, boat rescues, and supply chains, illustrating how formal groups ensure structured crisis management.
- ii. **Police Patrol Teams:** These are formal groups assigned specific beats and duties as per departmental orders. Patrol teams in cities like Delhi or Mumbai follow structured schedules and standard operating procedures (SOPs). Their formal organisation ensures accountability, response readiness, and public safety.
- iii. **Audit Inspection Teams:** In departments such as the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) or state audit directorates, formal inspection teams examine financial records, compliance, and performance. Their structured approach, based on audit manuals, ensures transparency and accuracy in public spending.

Formal groups play an essential role in ensuring legal compliance, coordination across departments, and achievement of programmatic goals in public administration.

2. Informal Groups

Informal groups emerge spontaneously through social interactions, shared interests, or workplace proximity. These groups are not officially created by the organisation, but they exert a strong influence on morale, communication, and organisational culture. Informal relationships often help employees share knowledge, provide emotional support, and resolve day-to-day challenges.

► Emerge spontaneously

Examples:

- i. **Nurse Peer Groups:** In hospitals such as AIIMS or state medical colleges, nurses often form peer groups for sharing clinical experiences, supporting each other during stressful shifts, and coordinating patient care informally. Research in hospital administration shows that strong informal nurse networks improve teamwork and reduce burnout.
- ii. **Clerical Staff Networks:** In district collectorates or municipal offices, clerical staff often form informal networks to exchange information about procedures, deadlines, or software updates. These networks help new staff learn organisational routines and navigate bureaucratic processes effectively.
- iii. **Office Lunch Groups:** Employees from different sections often meet during lunch breaks, creating informal channels of communication. Although casual, these groups help break departmental silos and can improve cooperation on inter-sectional work. For instance, in many municipal corporations, informal lunch groups have helped staff coordinate better during major drives like property tax collection or election duty.

Informal groups, though unofficial, significantly influence productivity, cooperation, and workplace climate. When properly understood and positively engaged, they complement formal groups and enhance overall administrative effectiveness.

2.2.1.3 Importance of Group Dynamics in Public Organisations

Public organisations function through teams, committees, and interdepartmental groups, making group dynamics central to their effectiveness. Whether delivering health services or coordinating national programmes, the quality of interaction among employees determines how efficiently goals are achieved. Strong group dynamics create synergy, reduce friction, and ensure that diverse individuals work cohesively toward public objectives.

► Achieving Objectives



1. Enhances Coordination and Efficiency

- Enhances both speed and accuracy

Large-scale government responsibilities such as elections, the census, disaster management, and public health campaigns require thousands of officials to act in synchrony. Effective group dynamics ensure clear communication, well-defined roles, and timely sharing of information, which reduces duplication of efforts and operational delays. For example, during the 2021 national COVID-19 vaccination drive, district task forces in states like Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan coordinated supply chains, field teams, and data entry staff through strong team-based planning. Such well-synchronised group functioning enhances both speed and accuracy in public service delivery.

2. Improves Decision-Making

- Increases the legitimacy of administrative decisions

Groups draw upon diverse knowledge, making decisions richer and more reliable than those made individually. Committees in public administration often include officers from technical, legal, financial, and field-based backgrounds, enabling a holistic assessment of issues. For example, a district-level Road Safety Committee may include police officers, transport officials, engineers, and health department representatives, ensuring multidimensional decisions. This collective intelligence reduces errors and increases the legitimacy of administrative decisions.

3. Builds Supportive Work Culture

- Healthy work environment

Positive group norms such as respect, cooperation, punctuality, and willingness to share knowledge contribute to a healthy work environment. When employees feel supported by their peers, they exhibit higher motivation and organisational commitment. For instance, studies in public hospitals show that nurse teams with strong internal support experience fewer conflicts and lower absenteeism. Group culture acts as a buffer against workplace stress and fosters long-term retention.

4. Facilitates Problem-Solving and Innovation

- Creative problem-solving during a critical period

Groups are naturally better at brainstorming and analysing problems because they bring varied experiences and perspectives. In public administration, innovative solutions often emerge from cross-functional teams that combine technological, administrative, and community insights. A notable example is the “COVID War Rooms” established in Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Delhi, where multidisciplinary

teams, including data analysts, doctors, municipal officers, and volunteers, worked together to manage beds, oxygen, and emergency responses. Their collaborative efforts led to rapid, creative problem-solving during a critical period.

5. Reduces Stress and Enhances Job Satisfaction

► Emotional and professional support

Public administrators frequently deal with heavy workloads, public pressure, and emotional stress, especially in sectors such as policing, healthcare, and revenue administration. Supportive group environments help employees share responsibilities, express concerns, and receive emotional and professional support. For example, police station teams with strong camaraderie report lower levels of job stress and better coping mechanisms during festivals, protests, and emergencies. When employees feel valued by their peers, overall job satisfaction increases significantly.

Case Study: Election Management Teams in India (Expanded – 300 words)

India conducts the world's largest democratic exercise, with more than 900 million eligible voters and over 1 million polling booths across rural, urban, remote, and conflict-prone regions. The management of such a vast operation relies heavily on well-functioning election teams composed of presiding officers, polling officers, police personnel, Booth Level Officers (BLOs), transport teams, and local volunteers. The success of the electoral process is not merely a result of procedures and rules but of strong group dynamics that allow diverse individuals to coordinate smoothly under challenging conditions.

Election teams operate in high-pressure environments where delays or miscommunication can affect voter turnout or compromise neutrality. Groups must synchronise activities such as setting up polling booths, managing queues, verifying voter identity, ensuring law and order, and transmitting results. According to the Election Commission of India's General Elections Report 2020, polling teams with strong internal communication and mutual trust resolved on-ground conflicts 32% faster and recorded significantly fewer procedural errors. Teams with a supportive internal culture were also more effective at managing tense situations, such as crowd surges or allegations of malpractice.

Real examples highlight this importance. During the 2019 Lok Sabha elections in Kerala, a presiding officer team in Wayanad used WhatsApp groups to coordinate transport delays caused by heavy rain, ensuring polling began on time. In Jharkhand, local volunteers helped police teams manage long queues in Maoist-affected areas, showcasing the power of community-based teamwork. Similarly, in Gujarat, well-trained BLO networks enabled smooth voter verification in tribal regions where digital connectivity was low.

The functioning of election teams demonstrates that group cohesion, trust, and clear communication are critical to administrative efficiency. In high-stress environments like elections, well-coordinated groups outperform even well-designed procedures, ensuring transparency, neutrality, and smooth democratic functioning.

2.2.2 Communication

► Transmission of information, sharing of ideas, expression of emotions, and coordination of decisions

Communication is the foundation on which all group processes operate in public organisations. Chester Barnard, in his classic work *The Functions of the Executive* (1938), argued that no organisation can exist unless its members are able to communicate effectively. Communication enables the transmission of information, sharing of ideas, expression of emotions, and coordination of decisions, all of which are essential for public administrators who work in complex, multi-layered bureaucracies. Without clear communication, even the most well-designed policies can fail during implementation.

Communication in public administration is not merely about sending messages, it is about achieving mutual understanding. Whether it is a district collector issuing instructions to departments, a health worker explaining vaccination procedures, or a police team managing a crowd, the clarity and accuracy of communication determine administrative efficiency. Effective communication reduces ambiguity, improves cooperation, and enhances public trust in government institutions.

2.2.2.1 Types of Communication

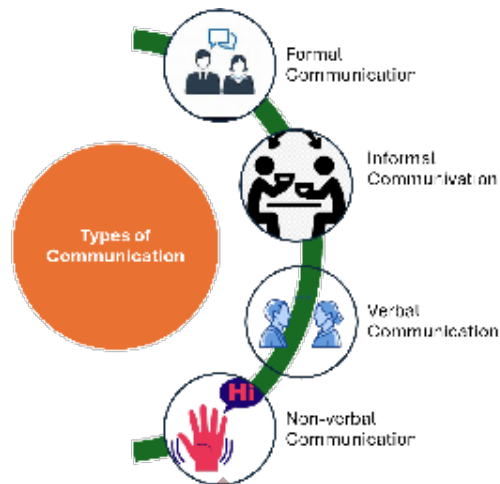


Fig. 2.2.1 Types of Communication

2.2.2.1.1 Formal Communication

► Flow of information through officially recognised channels

Formal communication refers to the flow of information through officially recognised channels within the organisation. It follows established rules, hierarchical structures, and documentation procedures, making it predictable and authoritative. Public organisations depend heavily on formal communication because it ensures accountability and clarity in administrative actions.

Examples:

- i. Circulars from the Ministry of Health, which provide standardised instructions for disease surveillance or vaccination campaigns.
- ii. File movements in the Secretariat, where decisions progress through notings, approvals, and signatures.
- iii. Police wireless messages, which communicate lawful orders and public safety alerts.
- iv. Official emails, used for departmental coordination, policy communication, and record-keeping.

Characteristics of Formal Communication

1. Documented

Formal communication is always recorded in some form, such as files, circulars, memos, office notes, email trails, or

► Ensures transparency

digital entries in e-office systems. This documentation serves multiple purposes. First, it ensures transparency by creating a verifiable trail of instructions, decisions, and approvals. In public administration, where accountability to citizens, legislatures, and audit bodies is essential, maintaining written communication becomes a safeguard against ambiguity and misuse of authority. Second, documentation supports institutional memory. Officers often transfer frequently, and recorded communication allows successors to understand earlier decisions and maintain continuity. Third, documentation helps during grievance redressal, vigilance inquiries, and Right to Information (RTI) requests, as it provides concrete evidence of what actions were taken and why.

Example: When a District Collector issues an order regarding flood relief compensation, it is documented through a written government order. This ensures that beneficiaries, auditors, and future officers can verify the decision and its basis.

2. Structured

► Information flows systematically

Formal communication follows a well-defined hierarchical structure, ensuring information flows systematically from senior officers to subordinates and vice versa. This structure is critical in government systems where authority, responsibility, and accountability are explicitly allocated. Messages travel through designated channels, for example, when the Section Clerk drafts a note, the Section Officer reviews it, the Under Secretary clears it, and senior officials approve it. The structured nature prevents confusion, ensures that instructions carry legitimate authority, and avoids conflicts arising from bypassing hierarchy. It also supports procedural fairness because every stage of decision-making follows prescribed rules laid down in business rules, office manuals, or departmental standing orders. Even during urgent situations, the structure ensures clarity about who issues instructions and who implements them.

Example: In the Secretariat, a policy note on school education cannot directly jump from a junior clerk to the Principal Secretary; it follows the structured communication ladder, preserving order and responsibility.

3. Reliable

Formal communication is considered highly reliable because it passes through authorised channels and gets validated at multiple

► Gets validated at multiple stages

stages. This reduces the risk of distortion, misunderstanding, or unauthorised alterations. Every communication—whether a memo, an instruction, or an approval—carries signatures, dates, file numbers, or digital authentication, leaving very little room for misinterpretation. Reliability is crucial in public administration, where the accuracy of information affects budgeting, service delivery, law enforcement, and public welfare schemes. Since formal communication is vetted by officers at different levels, it ensures that content is fact-checked, legally compliant, and aligned with government objectives. Furthermore, the reliability of formal communication provides confidence to citizens, other departments, and external agencies interacting with the government.

Example: Police wireless messages sent through authorised channels are reliable because they follow standard formats and verification protocols, ensuring that field officers do not misinterpret critical instructions related to law and order.

4. Slower

► More time required for decision-making

One of the major limitations of formal communication is its slower speed. Because information must pass through multiple layers of administrative scrutiny, approvals, and documentation, delays are common. Each file must be examined, commented upon, and cleared by different officers, which increases the time required for decision-making. The slowness is more pronounced in large bureaucracies where hierarchical levels are many and workloads are heavy. While this delay ensures careful examination, it sometimes hampers urgent actions or real-time coordination. Digitisation through e-office systems has reduced delays, but hierarchical approvals still take time. In time-sensitive contexts—such as disaster response, election emergencies, or health outbreaks—formal communication alone may not be sufficient, which is why administrators often supplement it with faster informal channels.

Example: A proposal for repairing a damaged bridge may take weeks to move from the Public Works Department (PWD) Section Officer to the Chief Engineer because of file reviews, technical checks, and budget approvals, illustrating the slow pace of formal communication.

2.2.2.1.2 Informal Communication

► Personal relationships, social interactions, and unofficial networks

Informal communication flows through personal relationships, social interactions, and unofficial networks within the organisation. It emerges naturally when employees discuss work, share concerns, or clarify doubts. Although not officially controlled, it plays a major role in improving cooperation and internal cohesion.

Examples:

- i. Conversations in corridors that help officers share updates about ongoing projects.
- ii. WhatsApp groups among staff, widely used in district administrations for real-time coordination.
- iii. Peer discussions among clerks, nurses, or field staff to clarify procedures.

Advantages of Informal Communication

1. Fast

► Operates through direct conversations

Informal communication is significantly faster than formal channels because it operates through direct conversations, instant messaging apps, or casual interactions. Employees can share information quickly without waiting for file movement or hierarchical approval. In public administration, this speed is crucial during fieldwork, emergencies, or daily coordination, where immediate clarification can prevent delays. For example, during vaccination drives, health workers often used informal WhatsApp updates to coordinate crowd flow and resource availability in real time.

2. Builds Relationships

► Strengthen interpersonal relationships

Informal communication helps strengthen interpersonal relationships among employees by encouraging open dialogue, friendliness, and mutual trust. When staff interact freely outside strict hierarchical boundaries, they develop a sense of belonging and teamwork. This improved rapport creates a more positive work environment and reduces workplace tension. In government offices, for instance, informal tea-break conversations often help officers from different sections

understand each other's challenges, improving cooperation during inter-departmental projects and joint field duties.

3. Clarifies Doubts

Informal communication allows employees to clarify doubts quickly and comfortably, especially when formal instructions are lengthy or complex. Staff may hesitate to ask superiors for clarification through official channels, but informal conversations with peers or seniors make it easier to seek help. This reduces errors and improves understanding of procedures. For example, junior clerks in many district collectorates often learn file drafting rules by informally consulting experienced colleagues, making their work more accurate and efficient.

► Reduces errors

Risks in Informal Communication

1. Rumours

A major risk of informal communication is the spread of rumours, as information is shared without verification or documentation. This can create confusion, mistrust, or panic among employees, especially during sensitive administrative periods such as transfers, promotions, or policy changes. Rumours may negatively affect morale or disrupt workflow. For example, false informal messages about changes in election duty assignments have, at times, led to unnecessary anxiety among polling staff before official instructions were issued.

► Information is shared without verification

2. Misinterpretation

Because informal communication lacks structure, precision, and written records, messages are easily misunderstood or partially conveyed. Tone, assumptions, or incomplete information may distort the original meaning, leading to incorrect actions or expectations. In public administration, such misinterpretation can cause operational problems, especially in time-bound functions. For instance, a casually communicated verbal instruction about revised meeting timings may be misunderstood by field officers, causing delays or absenteeism if the message is not interpreted correctly.

► Easily misunderstood

2.2.2.1.3 Verbal Communication

Verbal communication refers to the use of spoken words to exchange information, clarify instructions, express emotions,



► Direct form of communication

or resolve issues. It is the most immediate and direct form of communication because feedback is instantaneous, questions can be asked, explanations can be offered, and misunderstandings can be corrected in real time. Public administrators rely heavily on verbal communication in situations demanding speed, empathy, and clarity, especially when dealing with citizens or frontline staff. Because tone, pace, and choice of words play a vital role, verbal messages often carry emotional and relational meaning that written communication cannot fully convey.

Applications of Verbal Communication

- i. **Public Hearings:** Verbal communication plays a crucial role in public hearings where officials interact directly with citizens to understand their problems, expectations, and grievances. Spoken dialogue allows administrators to ask follow-up questions, clarify ambiguous issues, and assess the urgency of complaints. The tone and empathy demonstrated during these interactions strongly influence citizen trust in government. For example, during Gram Sabhas in Kerala, officials use open verbal discussions to gather local insights, enabling more responsive and inclusive decision-making.
- ii. **Emergency Responses:** In emergencies such as fires, floods, road accidents, or law-and-order situations, verbal communication becomes indispensable because it enables quick, clear, and actionable instructions. Firefighters, police personnel, and disaster-management teams rely on shouted commands, radio messages, and rapid verbal coordination to save time and ensure safety. A delay of even a few seconds can change outcomes. For instance, during the 2018 Kerala floods, rescue teams coordinated boat movement and evacuation routes primarily through verbal and wireless communication.
- iii. **Grievance Redressal:** Verbal communication shapes the quality of grievance redressal, as the tone, politeness, and clarity of an officer's speech directly affect citizen satisfaction. Public grievances often involve anxiety or frustration, and a respectful verbal response can calm emotions and build confidence in the system. Clear explanations also help citizens understand procedures and timelines. In MeeSeva and e-District centres, staff trained in effective verbal interaction report fewer conflicts and higher satisfaction ratings from citizens seeking government services.

► Verbal communication remains a cornerstone of public administration

Example: During election training sessions, presiding officers receive verbal briefings from Returning Officers and Master Trainers. These spoken explanations allow trainees to ask doubts, practice procedures, and understand critical steps such as sealing Election Voting Machines (EVMs) or managing queues, much more effectively than by reading rulebooks alone. This demonstrates why verbal communication remains a cornerstone of public administration.

2.2.2.1.4 Non-Verbal Communication

► Expressed without spoken words

Non-verbal communication refers to all forms of communication expressed without spoken words, including gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, posture, tone of voice, physical distance, and body movements. Mehrabian's classic research (1971) emphasised that as much as 93% of emotional meaning in interpersonal interactions is conveyed through non-verbal cues rather than actual words. This highlights how a message is delivered can be more impactful than the message itself.

► Create a supportive environment

In public administration, non-verbal communication plays a critical role because citizens often judge the fairness, empathy, and professionalism of officials based on behaviours they observe rather than on formal statements. A respectful tone, steady posture, and attentive body language convey sincerity and build trust, especially when citizens are anxious, frustrated, or vulnerable. Many interactions in government offices—such as grievance hearings, medical consultations, police inquiries, or welfare verifications—require sensitivity, and non-verbal cues help create a supportive environment.

► Negative non-verbal behaviour

Conversely, negative cues such as avoiding eye contact, folded arms, sighing, dismissive gestures, or a harsh tone can create perceptions of indifference or bias. Even if the verbal message is correct, negative non-verbal behaviour can damage public confidence and increase citizen dissatisfaction. This makes non-verbal competence a core component of effective public service delivery. Administrators who are aware of their body language often handle conflicts better, calm tense situations, and deliver decisions more professionally.

Case Example: Non-Verbal Behaviour in Public Hospitals

A study conducted at AIIMS, New Delhi (2019) observed that patient satisfaction was significantly higher when nurses

and medical staff displayed positive non-verbal communication. Even when waiting times were long, behaviours such as smiling, nodding, gentle gestures, and maintaining eye contact helped patients feel respected and cared for. The study concluded that non-verbal signals had a stronger impact on patient trust than the content of verbal explanations.

For example, a nurse who explains a delay calmly with a reassuring expression is likely to gain more patient cooperation than a nurse who gives the same explanation hurriedly or with irritation. These findings underline that the perceived quality of public service, whether in hospitals, police stations, or welfare offices, is shaped not only by policies and procedures but also by the emotional signals conveyed during interactions. This makes the mastery of non-verbal communication essential for all public administrators.

2.2.3 Barriers to Communication

► Barriers distort messages, delay decisions, create misunderstandings, and reduce administrative efficiency

Even in well-structured public organisations, communication does not always flow smoothly. Barriers arise from organisational design, personal attitudes, cultural differences, and technological limitations. These barriers distort messages, delay decisions, create misunderstandings, and reduce administrative efficiency. In public administration, where officials interact with citizens, coworkers, and multiple government agencies, communication barriers can directly affect service delivery, grievance redressal, and crisis management.

Barriers to communication may be structural (hierarchical layers, red-tapism), psychological (stress, prejudice, selective perception), social (status differences, cultural norms), or technological (poor connectivity, outdated systems). Recognising these barriers is the first step toward building a responsive and citizen-friendly administrative system.

2.2.3.1 Noise

► Can occur at any stage of the communication

Noise refers to any disturbance, both internal or external, that interferes with the accurate transmission or interpretation of a message. It can occur at any stage of the communication process and may be physical, emotional, or semantic. In public administration, noise is a common barrier because officials often work in high-pressure, noisy, or fast-changing environments where miscommunication is likely. Noise not only distorts

information but can also lead to incorrect decisions, tension between departments, and dissatisfaction among citizens.

2.2.3.1.1 Types of Noise in Public Administration

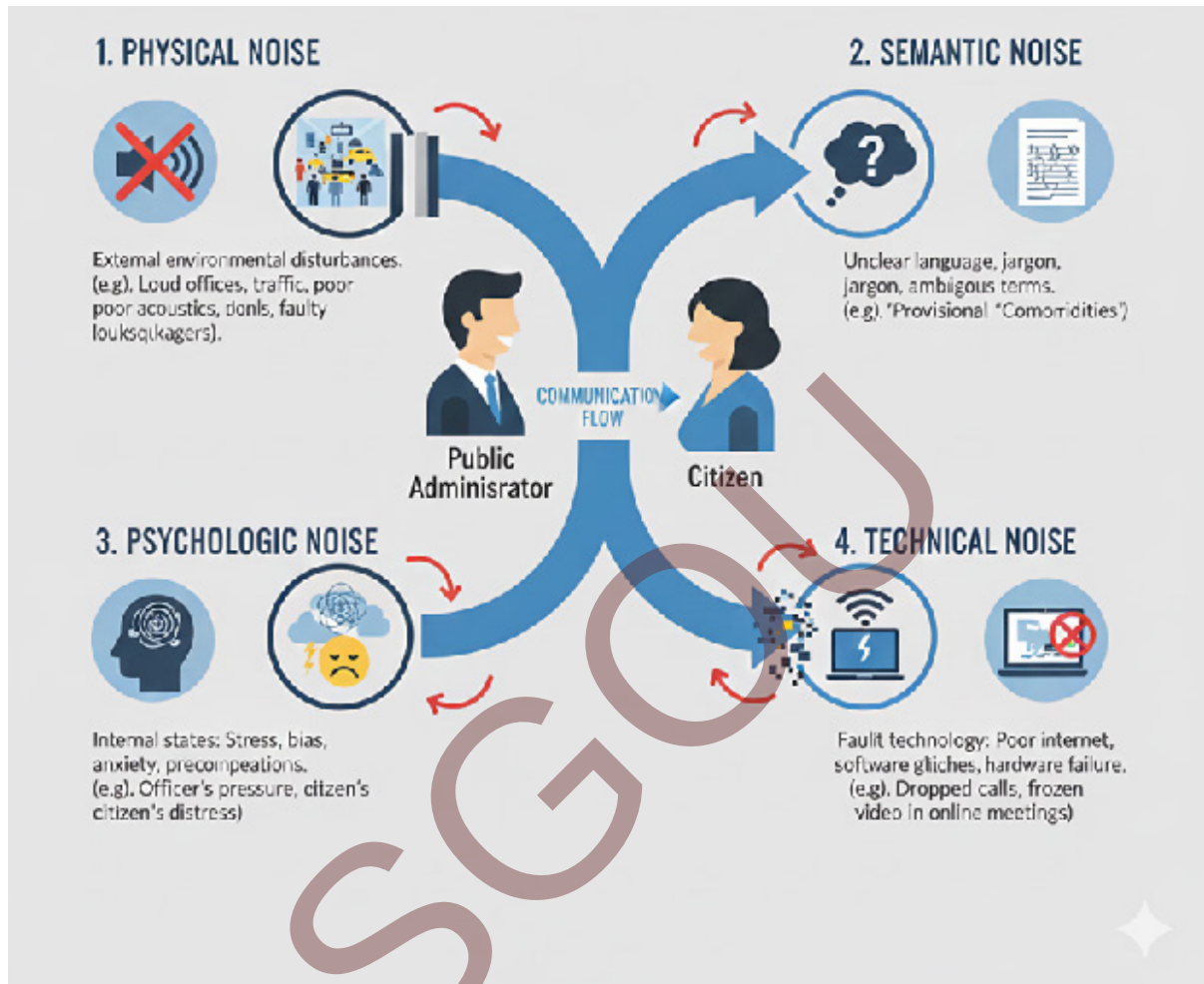


Fig. 2.2.2 Types of Noise in Public Administration

1. Physical Noise

Physical noise refers to external environmental disturbances that interfere with the clear transmission or reception of a message. In public administration, this is common in crowded offices, busy hospitals, police stations, public grievance counters, and field locations where officers interact with citizens. Loud surroundings, traffic noise, overcrowded waiting areas, or poor room acoustics can make it difficult for both parties to hear and interpret information correctly. Even factors like malfunctioning loudspeakers during public meetings or disturbances during field inspections can disrupt communication. Example: During election duty briefings in rural areas,

► External environmental disturbances



presiding officers often struggle to hear instructions clearly because sessions are held in noisy school halls or open grounds. This sometimes leads to procedural errors on polling day, demonstrating how physical noise affects administrative accuracy.

2. Semantic Noise

► Jargon-heavy communication

Semantic noise occurs when misunderstandings arise due to unclear language, unfamiliar terminology, or ambiguous expressions used by the communicator. In bureaucracy, many government terms such as “provisional approval,” “notification pending,” “beneficiary verification,” or “routine transfer” may not be easily understood by citizens or junior staff. Jargon-heavy communication creates confusion and weakens service delivery, especially when dealing with rural populations or first-time service seekers. Example: A citizen applying for a welfare scheme may misinterpret “documents not in order” as a rejection, even though the officer simply requires missing attachments. Similarly, during health campaigns, technical terms like “comorbidities” or “RT-PCR threshold value” created confusion among frontline staff during COVID-19, showing how semantic noise can hinder clarity.

3. Psychological Noise

► Arises from internal states

Psychological noise arises from internal states such as stress, anxiety, emotional tension, prejudices, or preconceived notions that distort how messages are sent or received. In public organisations, officers often work under pressure, which affects attentiveness and interpretation. Citizens approaching government offices may also be anxious, causing them to misunderstand clear instructions. Biases such as assumptions based on caste, gender, socio-economic background, or profession can further distort communication. Example: A revenue officer dealing with land disputes may misinterpret a farmer’s loud tone as aggression rather than stress. Similarly, a citizen whose pension is delayed may fail to understand an officer’s explanation due to emotional distress. These psychological interferences often lead to escalations or complaints that could have been avoided with empathy and patience.

4. Technical Noise

► Occurs when communication is disrupted by faulty or inadequate technology

Technical noise occurs when communication is disrupted by faulty or inadequate technology. In today's digital public administration environment, communication depends heavily on internet connectivity, online portals, video conferencing tools, wireless systems, and telecommunication devices. Poor signal strength, outdated hardware, software glitches, and malfunctioning microphones can distort communication and delay decisions. Example: During the COVID-19 pandemic, district-level coordination meetings were frequently held online. Many field officers faced poor internet connectivity in rural areas, causing broken audio, frozen video, or dropped calls. This forced them to miss crucial updates on bed availability, oxygen supply, or containment protocols, demonstrating how technical noise can directly impact public safety and administrative coordination.

Noise, therefore, is more than a minor disturbance; it is a major obstacle that can undermine administrative efficiency, accuracy, and public trust. Effective communication requires identifying these disruptions and adopting clear, simple, and well-supported channels to minimise their impact.

Example: Cyclone Warning Communication Failure (Odisha, 1999)

The 1999 Odisha Super Cyclone is one of India's most tragic examples of communication failure in disaster management. Although meteorological alerts were issued in advance, the warnings did not effectively reach many coastal and fishing communities. A major problem was that semantic noise messages were delivered in English and technical meteorological terms, which local residents could not understand. Additionally, technological noise played a critical role, as several radio towers, telecommunication lines, and public address systems malfunctioned due to heavy winds and inadequate maintenance.

Many villages received vague or late information, leaving people unsure about the severity of the approaching cyclone. As a result, thousands continued fishing or stayed in unsafe homes rather than moving to shelters. The lack of clear, local-language communication contributed to an enormous human toll of over 10,000 deaths, according to government reports. This tragedy led to significant reforms, including multilingual early-warning systems, improved radio networks, community volunteers, and

the establishment of the Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA). The case illustrates how communication barriers can directly influence public safety and administrative effectiveness.

2.2.4 Grapevine

The grapevine refers to the informal, unofficial communication network that exists naturally within every organisation. Unlike formal channels, the grapevine flows freely without hierarchy, often moving through friendships, social groups, or shared workspaces. In public administration, the grapevine is powerful because government offices are highly social environments where employees exchange information quickly. Sometimes, even before formal orders are issued. While the grapevine cannot replace official communication, it strongly influences morale, attitudes, and organisational climate.

► Flows freely without hierarchy

2.2.4.1 Characteristics of Grapevine Communication

1. Fastest Communication Route

The grapevine spreads information much faster than formal channels because it uses personal connections and casual conversations. Employees often share news during tea breaks, in corridors, or through WhatsApp groups, allowing messages to circulate instantly. In large government departments, where files take time to move, informal networks often carry updates before official memos arrive. This speed makes the grapevine an important but unpredictable communication source.

► Spreads information much faster

2. Can Carry Rumours

A major drawback of the grapevine is its vulnerability to rumours and misinformation. Since the communication is informal and unregulated, facts often get mixed with assumptions, leading to exaggerated or distorted messages. In public offices, rumours about transfers, promotions, or administrative changes can cause anxiety among staff. If not addressed early, rumours can lead to confusion and reduce trust in formal communication.

► Vulnerability to rumours and misinformation

3. Often Accurate but Unverified

Interestingly, grapevine information is frequently accurate because it reflects real-time discussions, observations, or

- Does not pass through official scrutiny

insider knowledge. However, it remains unverified since it does not pass through official scrutiny or documentation. Employees may learn about upcoming policy changes, new schemes, or administrative decisions through the grapevine before receiving formal notification. The challenge lies in distinguishing genuine insights from unconfirmed speculation.

- Mirror the feelings of employee

4. Reflects Employee Sentiments

The grapevine is a mirror of employee feelings, concerns, and workplace culture. It reveals what employees discuss privately, whether they feel motivated, threatened, confused, or enthusiastic about organisational developments. For administrators, understanding the grapevine is useful for gauging morale and identifying emerging problems. When employees discuss issues informally, it signals topics that may need managerial attention.

Example in the Public Sector

When a state government considers restructuring departments, such as merging welfare boards, creating new districts, or introducing digital systems, information often spreads rapidly through informal networks long before official announcements. Clerical staff might learn about potential repostings from colleagues in other offices; nurses may hear about new shift patterns through peer groups; police personnel often discuss transfer possibilities in informal WhatsApp circles. This can reduce anxiety if the information is positive or clearly communicated, but it may also escalate panic when employees fear job changes or workload increases. Effective leaders monitor grapevine conversations and provide timely formal clarification to prevent misinformation from affecting administrative morale.

- Behavioural barriers are subtle and often unintentional

2.2.5 Behavioural Barriers

Behavioural barriers arise from human emotions, attitudes, personality traits, and interpersonal dynamics that interfere with effective communication. Unlike structural or technological barriers, behavioural barriers are subtle and often unintentional, yet they have a powerful impact on organisational functioning. In public administration, where teamwork, coordination, and citizen interaction are central, behavioural barriers can delay decisions, increase conflict, and reduce administrative efficiency. Understanding these barriers helps administrators

develop emotional intelligence and foster healthier workplace communication.

2.2.5.1 Common Behavioural Barriers

1. Lack of Trust

When individuals do not trust one another, communication becomes guarded, incomplete, or distorted. Employees may withhold information, suspect motives, or avoid collaboration, making group functioning difficult. In government offices, a lack of trust between senior and junior staff often leads to delays in file movement or hesitation in sharing honest feedback. Trust is essential for smooth coordination, especially in multi-departmental projects.

2. Status Differences

Public organisations have clear hierarchies, and differences in rank or authority can create communication gaps. Subordinates may feel intimidated and avoid expressing concerns openly, while senior officials may assume that lower-level staff should simply follow instructions. This reduces upward feedback and prevents problems from being addressed early. Status distance is often higher in traditional bureaucratic settings, making communication formal and strained.

3. Prejudices and Stereotypes

► Different types of behavioural barriers

Preconceived notions based on caste, gender, class, region, or profession create biased interpretations of communication. Stereotypes influence how messages are received, for example, assuming field workers are “careless” or citizens from certain communities are “demanding.” Such biases lead to unfair treatment, misjudgement, and tension within teams. In public service, overcoming stereotypes is essential for equity and ethical governance.

4. Poor Listening Habits

Poor listening occurs when individuals interrupt, ignore details, draw premature conclusions, or listen only to respond rather than understand. This leads to miscommunication and errors, especially in procedural tasks or citizen-facing services. In public administration, where instructions must be precise,

poor listening can cause operational mistakes. Effective listening is, therefore, a crucial administrative skill.

5. Aggressive or Rude Behaviour

Aggressive communication, such as shouting, sarcasm, or dismissive comments, creates a hostile work atmosphere and discourages open dialogue. Employees may become fearful or defensive, reducing cooperative problem-solving. In public-facing offices, rude behaviour damages institutional reputation and erodes citizen trust. Maintaining courtesy and composure is essential for service delivery.

6. Emotional Outbursts

Strong emotions such as anger, frustration, or anxiety disrupt rational communication. When individuals react emotionally, they may misinterpret messages, respond impulsively, or escalate conflicts unnecessarily. Public-sector work often involves high stress, making emotional control critical. Training in emotional intelligence helps administrators manage pressure effectively.

Example: Municipal Office Interdepartmental Conflict

In many urban local bodies, behavioural barriers severely affect coordination between engineering, health, sanitation, and finance departments. For instance, engineering staff may perceive finance officers as “obstructionist,” while finance teams may view engineers as “overspending” or “impatient.” These mutual perceptions create ego clashes, reluctance to share information, and avoidance of joint meetings. As a result, infrastructure projects like road repairs, water supply upgrades, and drainage work often get delayed not due to technical challenges but because interpersonal mistrust and status-based communication gaps block smooth collaboration. Addressing these behavioural barriers through team meetings, transparency measures, and leadership intervention significantly improves municipal performance.

2.2.6 Overcome Communication Barriers in Public Administration

Effective communication is vital for smooth governance, coordination, and citizen service delivery. Public organisations face structural, behavioural, and technological barriers, but

these can be overcome through deliberate administrative practices. The following strategies help improve clarity, reduce conflict, and strengthen institutional trust.

1. Use Simple, Clear Language

Public administrators must avoid technical jargon and use straightforward language to ensure their messages are understood by colleagues, frontline workers, and citizens. Clear instructions reduce operational errors and improve compliance. For example, during COVID-19, district administrations that used simple, step-by-step public advisories saw better citizen response than those issuing highly technical bulletins. Clarity increases accessibility and reduces the chances of misinterpretation.

2. Encourage Feedback

Feedback allows administrators to confirm whether the message was correctly received and understood. When employees or citizens are invited to ask questions, it reduces assumptions and helps identify gaps in communication. Regular feedback sessions in departments, such as weekly review meetings, improve mutual understanding. This approach strengthens a culture of openness and continuous improvement.

3. Promote Transparency to Reduce Rumours

Transparency reduces dependence on grapevine communication and minimises rumours that can cause anxiety among employees. When leadership communicates decisions promptly and clearly, informal speculation declines. Public departments that publish circulars or FAQs on time experience fewer misunderstandings. Open dissemination of information builds organisational trust and stability.

4. Train Employees in Active Listening

Active listening helps staff understand messages fully before responding. It reduces conflicts caused by assumptions or incomplete attention. Workshops on listening techniques, such as paraphrasing, maintaining eye contact, and avoiding interruptions, improve workplace relationships. In citizen-facing offices, active listening greatly enhances service satisfaction.

► Strategies to improve clarity, reduce conflict, and strengthen institutional trust

5. Use Multilingual Communication for Citizens

India's linguistic diversity requires public institutions to communicate in multiple languages to ensure inclusivity. Notices, public campaigns, and digital messages should be available in regional languages for wider reach. Government programmes such as Swachh Bharat and Digital India achieved higher participation where multilingual materials were used. Multilingual communication prevents exclusion and increases policy effectiveness.

6. Adopt Digital Tools

Using digital platforms like official emails, dashboards, e-office systems, and verified WhatsApp groups helps streamline communication and reduce delays. Digital tools provide documentation, real-time updates, and transparency. For example, many state secretariats use e-file systems to track file movement, reducing the communication gap between departments. Technology strengthens reliability and reduces physical barriers.

7. Develop Emotional Intelligence Among Administrators

Emotional intelligence enables administrators to manage stress, understand others' emotions, and communicate calmly in difficult situations. Training in empathy, self-awareness, and conflict management helps reduce behavioural barriers such as anger, prejudice, and misinterpretation. Administrators with high emotional intelligence handle citizen grievances and interdepartmental issues more effectively. This enhances workplace harmony and service delivery.

8. Encourage Cross-Departmental Meetings

Cross-departmental meetings break silos and create shared understanding among teams. Joint discussions allow officials from engineering, finance, health, and planning departments to coordinate their efforts and avoid duplication. Such interactions reduce status barriers and clarify expectations across units. Many successful urban governance initiatives, such as Smart City Missions, depend on regular interdepartmental coordination meetings.



Summarized Overview

This unit focuses on the central role of group dynamics and communication in public administration, emphasising how group behaviour, communication flows, and interpersonal processes influence administrative efficiency. The unit begins by explaining the concept, importance, and practical relevance of group dynamics through organisational examples and public-sector case studies. It highlights how formal and informal groups shape coordination, decision-making, innovation, and organisational culture. The unit then explores communication in detail, including formal, informal, verbal, and non-verbal modes, along with their relevance to administrative functioning. Attention is also given to barriers such as noise, behavioural constraints, and technological challenges, supported by real administrative failures like the Odisha Super Cyclone (1999). The unit concludes with strategies for overcoming communication barriers through clarity, feedback, transparency, multilingual communication, emotional intelligence, and digital tools. Collectively, the unit equips learners with the behavioural and communicative competencies required for effective teamwork and governance in the public sector.

Self-Assessment

1. Explain the concept of group dynamics as introduced by Kurt Lewin and discuss its importance in public administration with suitable examples.
2. Distinguish between formal and informal groups in public organisations, highlighting their functions and impact on administrative performance.
3. Describe the different types of communication used in public administration and analyse their advantages and limitations.
4. What are the major barriers to communication in public organisations? Provide real administrative examples to support your answer.
5. Discuss the role of non-verbal communication in public service delivery and explain how it influences citizen trust and administrative effectiveness.

Assignments

1. Visit a local government office or public institution and observe the functioning of a formal group or committee. Prepare a report analysing roles, communication patterns, and group dynamics.

2. Conduct an audit of formal and informal communication flows within a chosen public-sector organisation and identify gaps or barriers.
3. Examine a real disaster or administrative incident (e.g., Odisha Super Cyclone, 1999) and analyse how communication barriers contributed to administrative failure.
4. Design a role-play based on a citizen grievance scenario and assess the impact of verbal and non-verbal communication on service outcomes.
5. Create a proposal for integrating digital tools (e-office, email, dashboards, WhatsApp groups) to streamline communication in a district or municipal office.

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU

UNIT

3

Group Behaviour

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- explain the concepts, properties, and significance of groups in organisational functioning, particularly in public-sector environments
- comprehend the role of teamwork in improving administrative coordination, problem-solving, and public service delivery
- analyse major leadership theories and models, and apply them to real administrative situations
- describe the Managerial Grid Model to assess leadership styles and identify pathways to improve citizen-focused and team-based leadership effectiveness

Background

Modern public-sector organisations, from municipal bodies and district administrations to national-level institutions, function primarily through groups rather than individual effort. Studies in organisational behaviour show that nearly 70–80% of administrative tasks in government settings require coordinated group action, whether in disaster management teams, health-care units, election machinery, or policy committees. In India, large-scale public programmes such as the General Elections (with over 10 million personnel involved), the 2020 COVID-19 surveillance teams, and mass vaccination drives covering more than 1.8 billion doses have demonstrated that effective group behaviour, teamwork, and leadership are essential for administrative success. Groups influence communication flow, morale, decision-making, coordination efficiency, and ultimately the quality of services delivered to citizens.

As public administration becomes increasingly complex due to digital governance, rapid urbanisation, citizen participation, and multi-stakeholder programmes, the need



to understand how groups function has grown significantly. MBA students preparing for administrative, managerial, or development-sector roles must therefore develop the ability to analyse group dynamics, manage teams, and adopt leadership styles suited to diverse and high-pressure environments. This unit provides that foundation by explaining the behaviour of groups, the importance of teamwork, and the relevance of leadership theories and models such as the Managerial Grid in strengthening public-sector efficiency and accountability.

Keywords

Group behaviour, teamwork, leadership styles, Managerial Grid, public administration

Discussion

Public organisations from district administration and municipal corporations to state secretariats and national institutions, function through groups rather than isolated individuals. Whether it is an emergency response team, a hospital ward unit, an election management team, or a policy drafting committee, group behaviour shapes organisational outcomes. Understanding how groups operate, why teamwork matters, and how leadership influences group performance is essential for effective governance and administrative efficiency.

2.3.1 Meaning of Group in Organisations

► Two or more individuals who interact regularly, share common objectives, and coordinate their efforts through interdependent roles and mutual influence

In organisational settings, a group refers to two or more individuals who interact regularly, share common objectives, and coordinate their efforts through interdependent roles and mutual influence. Robbins and Judge (2019) describe a group as a social unit in which members not only work together but also perceive themselves as part of a collective, guided by shared norms, expectations, and responsibilities. Groups form the backbone of organisational functioning because most administrative tasks, such as planning, budgeting, implementing programmes, and resolving public issues, require collaborative action rather than isolated work. In public-sector organisations, groups often operate in dynamic, high-pressure environments, where clear communication, trust, role clarity, and coordination are essential for achieving policy goals and ensuring efficient service delivery.

Examples of Groups in Public Administration

- i. **District Disaster Management Team:** Constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005, this group includes the District Collector, police officers, medical officers, engineers, and community representatives who coordinate rescue, relief, and rehabilitation efforts during disasters.
- ii. **Police Anti-Trafficking Unit:** A specialised group within state or district police formed to investigate trafficking cases, work with NGOs, rescue victims, and coordinate legal procedures. Their success depends on close cooperation among officers, social workers, and legal experts.
- iii. **Panchayat-Level Water Management Committee:** Formed at the village level to monitor water usage, maintain local infrastructure, and plan conservation activities. This group works collectively to ensure sustainable water management through community participation.
- iv. **Hospital Infection-Control Committee:** A multidisciplinary group comprising doctors, nurses, microbiologists, and administrative staff responsible for enforcing infection-prevention protocols, monitoring outbreaks, and training hospital personnel.

2.3.1.1 Properties of a Group

1. Norms

Norms refer to the shared rules, expectations, and behavioural standards that guide how members act within a group. These norms may emerge informally or be formally established through procedures, codes, or organisational culture. They create predictability, reduce conflict, and help members align with collective expectations. Example: In IAS district planning committees, norms such as punctuality, preparation through documentation, and evidence-based decision-making shape the efficiency and seriousness with which development proposals are evaluated.

► Emerge informally
or be formally



2. Roles

- Clear role allocation reduces ambiguity

Roles define the specific functions, responsibilities, and expected behaviours assigned to each member in a group. Clear role allocation reduces ambiguity, enhances coordination, and ensures that tasks are performed by individuals with appropriate expertise. When roles are well understood, groups respond faster and more accurately to organisational needs. Example: In a Primary Health Centre (PHC), the doctor acts as the clinical leader, the nurse handles patient care and triage, the pharmacist manages medicine storage and distribution, and the ASHA worker focuses on community outreach and mobilisation.

3. Status

- Stems from seniority, expertise, rank, or respect earned through performance

Status refers to the relative social or professional standing a member holds within the group. Higher-status members often have greater influence over decisions, communication flow, and conflict resolution. Status may stem from seniority, expertise, rank, or respect earned through performance. Example: In police field teams or investigative units, senior officers' suggestions are typically given priority, shaping the direction of case strategy and operational planning.

4. Cohesiveness

- Enhances trust, morale, and coordination

Cohesiveness is the degree to which group members feel connected, unified, and motivated to remain part of the group. High cohesiveness enhances trust, morale, coordination, and voluntary cooperation, especially during high-pressure tasks. Cohesive groups are more committed to shared goals and demonstrate lower conflict and turnover. Example: Kerala's local government sanitation teams displayed strong cohesiveness during the 2018 Nipah virus outbreak, enabling rapid containment efforts through mutual support and clear internal communication.

5. Size

- Affects participation, decision-making, creativity, and speed of work

Group size significantly affects participation, decision-making, creativity, and speed of work. Smaller groups tend to be quicker, more cohesive, and easier to coordinate, whereas larger groups offer broader perspectives and greater knowledge diversity. The choice of size depends on the complexity and purpose of the task. Example: A five-member audit team can efficiently conduct field

inspections, while larger advisory committees are more suitable for policy-level consultations involving multiple stakeholders.

6. Communication Patterns

► Pathways and methods through which information flows

Communication patterns refer to the pathways and methods through which information flows within the group, including vertical, horizontal, formal, informal, and digital channels. Effective communication patterns ensure clarity, reduce errors, and improve coordination, especially in time-sensitive administrative situations. Groups with multiple communication channels are better able to respond to crises or evolving conditions. Example: Election Commission teams often rely on simultaneous communication routes such as official memos, wireless sets, WhatsApp groups, and control room updates to guarantee rapid and accurate information transfer during polling.

7. Group Goals

► Clear and measurable goals

Group goals define the shared purpose or outcomes that members collectively strive to achieve. Clear and measurable goals provide direction, promote accountability, and motivate members toward coordinated action. When goals are well-defined, groups can evaluate progress and adjust strategies effectively. Example: A municipal solid waste management team may set a target to reduce landfill load by 40% through segregation, composting, and decentralised waste processing initiatives.

2.3.1.2 Role of Groups in Public Administration

► Collective action

Groups are indispensable to public administration because most governmental functions require collective action rather than individual effort. They support problem-solving by bringing diverse knowledge, experiences, and perspectives together, which helps generate more comprehensive and practical solutions to administrative challenges. Groups also act as a coordinating mechanism, ensuring that complex tasks such as large-scale events, national programmes, or crisis responses are executed in a structured and synchronised manner. In public systems where multiple departments interact, groups help manage conflicts, facilitate interdepartmental consultations, and strengthen participatory governance through committees, councils, and task forces.



1. Problem-Solving

Groups enable systematic brainstorming, allowing members from different functional backgrounds to propose solutions that are richer than those generated individually. This is especially useful in government settings where social, economic, and technical issues intersect. Joint problem-solving also improves acceptance of decisions among stakeholders.

2. Coordination

Large-scale public events and missions such as the Kumbh Mela, general elections, census operations, and disaster responses require dozens of departments to work together. Groups ensure that responsibilities are clearly divided, timelines are synchronised, and decisions are communicated uniformly. This coordinated group functioning reduces errors and enhances operational efficiency.

3. Conflict Resolution

Committees and working groups provide structured platforms for addressing conflicts between departments, communities, or stakeholders. They facilitate dialogue, negotiate interests, and help reach consensus on issues such as land acquisition, service distribution, and resource allocation. Their collective approach helps maintain administrative neutrality and fairness.

4. Decision-Making

Task forces, advisory panels, and expert committees bring together specialised knowledge from health, law, engineering, finance, and social sectors. Such multidisciplinary decision-making helps government bodies evaluate issues holistically and reduces the risk of biased or incomplete judgments. This leads to more informed and credible administrative outcomes.

5. Service Delivery

Public services such as healthcare, policing, education, public transport, water supply, and sanitation rely heavily on group-based functioning. Frontline teams work in interconnected units where every role contributes to the overall citizen experience. Effective group coordination directly improves service quality, responsiveness, and coverage in the field.

2.3.1.3 Importance of Groups

- Enhance efficiency, encourage specialisation, and support collaborative governance

Groups are vital to public organisations because they enhance efficiency, encourage specialisation, and support collaborative governance. When responsibilities are distributed according to skill and expertise, administrative processes become faster and more reliable. Groups also enhance accountability by ensuring that decisions are transparent and shared, reducing individual-level errors or biases. Furthermore, group support systems help reduce burnout, especially in high-pressure roles like policing, disaster management, and healthcare.

1. Improve Administrative Efficiency

Groups streamline complex tasks by dividing them into manageable functions and coordinating efforts across members. This reduces duplication of work and accelerates decision-making.

2. Enable Specialisation Through Role Distribution

By assigning roles according to expertise, like legal, technical, financial, or field operations, groups enhance competence and output quality. Members contribute their strengths, making administrative actions more professional and precise.

3. Enhance Accountability

Group-based decisions undergo peer review and internal scrutiny, reducing the chances of arbitrary action. Collective responsibility improves transparency and strengthens procedural fairness.

4. Strengthen Collaborative Governance

Groups open space for participation from citizens, civil society, technical experts, and departmental representatives. Shared governance leads to better policy acceptance and improved trust in public institutions.

5. Improve Morale and Reduce Burnout

Supportive groups provide emotional backing and workload sharing, which is crucial in stressful public roles. This enhances employee satisfaction and reduces turnover.

6. Facilitate Innovation and Adaptability

Groups encourage idea-sharing and experimentation, especially in mission-mode initiatives. Multidisciplinary teams adapt faster to crises and technology-driven reforms.

Case Study: Chennai Corporation COVID-19 “Fever Survey Teams” (2020)

During the first wave of COVID-19 in 2020, the Greater Chennai Corporation launched an extensive “fever surveillance” programme to detect early symptoms and isolate cases before transmission escalated. Over 12,000 field workers were deployed across the city in small neighbourhood-level groups comprising public health nurses, sanitary inspectors, volunteers, and local representatives. Each team followed clear micro-plans: door-to-door symptom checks, rapid referral to clinics, and real-time data reporting through mobile applications. The high cohesiveness of these teams, combined with clearly defined roles and daily coordination meetings, enabled the early identification of clusters in dense urban zones. As a result, Chennai’s positivity rate, which was among the highest in early June 2020, witnessed a significant decline by mid-2020. The success of these teams demonstrated how coordinated group behaviour can transform local public health outcomes during a crisis.

2.3.2 Teamwork

► Coordinated and cooperative efforts

Teamwork refers to the coordinated and cooperative efforts of individuals who work interdependently to achieve shared goals that cannot be accomplished effectively by working alone. In public administration, teamwork is essential because government tasks often involve complex social, economic, and infrastructural challenges that require collective expertise. Effective teams combine diverse skills, perspectives, and responsibilities, leading to faster problem-solving and more reliable service delivery. When teamwork is strong, administrative units function smoothly, adapt quickly to crises, and maintain high levels of public trust.

2.3.2.1 Importance of Teamwork in Public Administration

1. Complex Tasks Require Collaboration

Many public challenges such as urban flooding, disaster management, epidemic control, traffic regulation, and welfare

► Create integrated solutions

delivery, are multidimensional and cannot be handled by a single department. Teamwork brings together engineering, health, revenue, police, and local bodies to create integrated solutions. Without such collaboration, government responses become fragmented and inefficient.

2. Faster Decision-Making

► Reducing administrative delays

Teams allow information to move quickly across members, reducing administrative delays. When roles and responsibilities are clear, teams can take collective decisions without passing every issue through lengthy hierarchical channels. This is especially critical during emergencies, elections, or time-bound development projects.

3. Better Public Service Delivery

► Coordinated teamwork

Coordinated teamwork improves the quality, speed, and reliability of services delivered to citizens. For instance, when doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and community health workers function as a cohesive team, the patient's journey from diagnosis to treatment and follow-up is seamless. Such integrated service benefits are difficult to achieve when individuals work in isolation.

4. Enhances Trust and Cooperation

► Fosters interpersonal relationships

Teamwork fosters interpersonal relationships, mutual respect, and shared responsibility. Members become more willing to support one another, ask for help, and share resources, leading to a positive administrative culture. This cooperative environment reduces workplace conflicts and strengthens organisational cohesion.

5. Reduces Workload and Stress

► Shared responsibility

Public administration roles, especially policing, disaster response, emergency health care, and municipal services, are physically and emotionally demanding. When tasks are distributed across a team, the burden on individuals reduces significantly. Shared responsibility not only lowers stress but also prevents burnout and improves long-term performance.

► Community-centric solutions

6. Promotes Innovation

Diverse teams generate more creative ideas than individuals working alone. Collaboration enables brainstorming,



experimentation, and adaptation based on field realities. Many administrative innovations emerge when team members combine technical knowledge with local insights, leading to practical and community-centric solutions.

Example: Mission Kakatiya (Telangana)

Mission Kakatiya is a notable example of teamwork driving large-scale rural development. Launched by the Government of Telangana, the programme aimed to restore nearly 46,000 irrigation tanks that had deteriorated over decades. Its success depended on coordinated teamwork among irrigation engineers, panchayat staff, self-help group (SHG) members, farmers' associations, and local volunteers. Engineers handled technical restoration, while panchayat teams managed community mobilisation and local logistics; SHG members assisted with record-keeping, awareness campaigns, and labour coordination. The collective effort revived tank ecosystems, improved groundwater recharge, and significantly increased agricultural productivity across rural Telangana. Mission Kakatiya demonstrates how well-organised teamwork can transform natural resource management and deliver measurable socio-economic impact.

2.3.3 Leadership

Leadership refers to the ability to influence, guide, and motivate individuals or groups toward achieving organisational goals (Northouse, 2018). In public administration, effective leadership is fundamental because government systems operate in dynamic environments involving multiple stakeholders, political pressures, and complex social challenges. Public-sector leaders shape governance quality, institutional reforms, service delivery efficiency, and citizen trust. Whether managing crises, implementing welfare schemes, or improving organisational culture, leadership plays a central role in determining the success and legitimacy of administrative actions.

2.3.3.1 Leadership Models Relevant to Public Administration

1. Trait Theory

Trait Theory proposes that leaders possess certain inborn qualities, such as confidence, intelligence, integrity,

► Innate personality attributes

perseverance, and communication skills, that predispose them to leadership roles. This model suggests that leadership is more about innate personality attributes than acquired skills. While the theory helps identify desirable leadership characteristics, it has limitations because it overlooks the influence of organisational culture, training, and situational demands. In public administration, many effective leaders develop their abilities through experience rather than being “born leaders,” highlighting the theory’s partial applicability.

2. Behavioural Theories

► Observable actions and behaviours of leaders

Behavioural theories shift the focus from inherent traits to observable actions and behaviours of leaders. According to this perspective, leadership effectiveness depends on what leaders do, such as their ability to plan, communicate, motivate, delegate, and build relationships. Two influential behavioural styles are:

- Task-oriented leadership, which emphasises structure, deadlines, procedures, and productivity.
- Relationship-oriented leadership, which focuses on empathy, support, team morale, and interpersonal trust. In public administration, a balanced approach is crucial because officers must meet deadlines while maintaining strong relationships with employees and citizens.

3. Contingency Theories

► No single leadership style works in all situations

Contingency theories argue that no single leadership style works in all situations; effectiveness depends on context, task complexity, team characteristics, and environmental pressures. Public administrators often shift their leadership approach based on urgency and stakeholder involvement. For example, a District Collector may adopt an authoritarian style during disaster response, where quick decisions are crucial, but use a participative or consultative style during policy formulation, where community input is vital. These theories recognise the need for flexibility in administrative leadership.

4. Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership involves inspiring followers by articulating a compelling vision, fostering innovation, building trust, and encouraging personal and organisational growth. Transformational leaders focus on long-term change

► Long-term change rather than routine task completion

rather than routine task completion, making them ideal for reform-oriented public administration. A notable example is E. Sreedharan, whose visionary leadership at the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) transformed not only the project's execution but also institutional culture through discipline, transparency, and ethical professionalism. Such leadership leads to high motivation, improved performance, and sustained organisational excellence.

5. Transactional Leadership

► Effectively in large bureaucratic systems

Transactional leadership emphasises structured tasks, clear expectations, and the use of rewards and penalties to ensure compliance. This model works effectively in large bureaucratic systems where rules, procedures, and measurable outcomes are important. In Indian public administration, transactional elements are visible in performance-based evaluations, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), vigilance mechanisms, and reward structures for high-performing teams. While transactional leadership ensures discipline and consistency, it may not promote innovation unless paired with transformational elements.

2.3.4 Managerial Grid Model (Blake and Mouton, 1964)

► Practical tool for assessing and improving leadership approaches

The Managerial Grid Model developed by Blake and Mouton (1964) is one of the most influential frameworks for understanding leadership behaviour in organisations. The model evaluates leaders on two key dimensions - Concern for People and Concern for Production/Task, each rated on a scale from 1 (low) to 9 (high). By plotting these dimensions on a grid, the model identifies five core leadership styles that reflect how leaders balance employee welfare with organisational goals. In public administration, where service delivery depends on both human sensitivity and operational efficiency, the grid provides a practical tool for assessing and improving leadership approaches.

2.3.4.1 Two Dimensions of the Grid

i. Concern for People (1–9)

This dimension reflects the extent to which a leader values employees' needs, well-being, motivation, and development. A high score indicates a people-sensitive leader who prioritises

relationships, communication, and morale, while a low score indicates minimal attention to staff welfare. In government settings, concern for people is crucial because officers often work with diverse teams facing stress, public pressure, and long hours.

ii. Concern for Production/Task (1–9)

This dimension measures how strongly a leader focuses on performance, targets, procedures, and administrative results. A high score indicates an emphasis on efficiency, deadlines, and output, while a low score reflects weak task orientation. In public administration, task concern becomes critical during missions such as elections, census operations, disaster relief, and health campaigns.

2.3.4.2 Five Main Leadership Styles

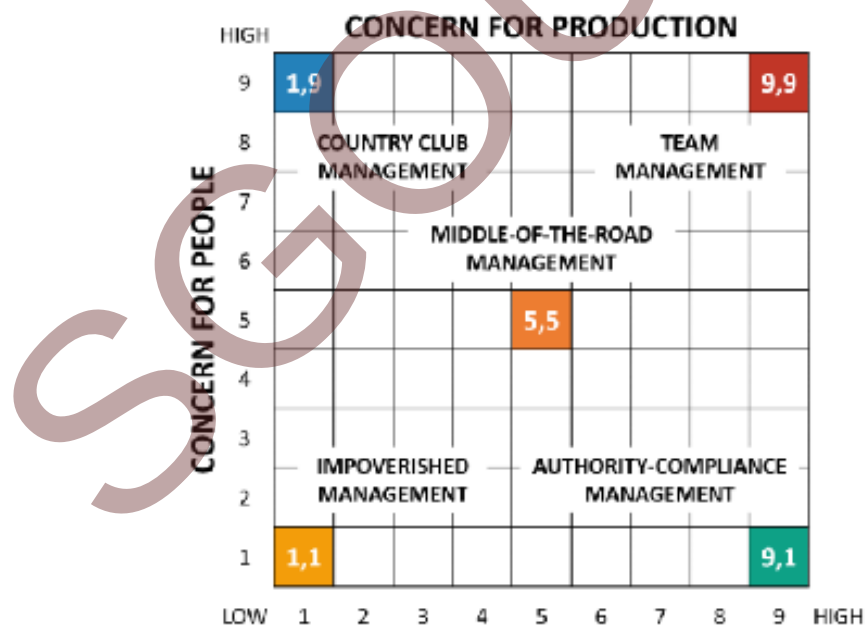


Fig. 2.3.1 Managerial Grid

Below is an expanded description of each style with improved public-sector examples.

Impoverished Management (1.1, Low People–Low Task)

► Minimal concern for both employees and work outcomes

Leaders with this style show minimal concern for both employees and work outcomes. They avoid responsibility, rarely intervene in problems, and contribute little to team

motivation or organisational progress. Such leadership often leads to inefficiency, demoralisation, and administrative delays. Example: A disengaged office head who avoids making decisions, neglects staff issues, and allows files to pile up without supervision.

Country Club Management (1.9, High People–Low Task)

- Service delays and poor citizen satisfaction

This style emphasises maintaining a friendly, comfortable environment while neglecting task requirements and performance pressures. While morale may initially be high, productivity and accountability decline over time due to a lack of direction. In public administration, this can result in service delays and poor citizen satisfaction. Example: A hospital superintendent who focuses heavily on staff welfare and informal relationships but overlooks patient grievances, hygiene gaps, or performance metrics.

Task Management (9.1, High Task–Low People)

- Prioritise efficiency, rules, deadlines, and outcomes

Task-oriented leaders prioritise efficiency, rules, deadlines, and outcomes, often at the expense of employee needs. They may rely on strict supervision, command-and-control methods, and rigid enforcement of procedures. This style is effective during crises but may lead to stress and lower morale if used continuously. Example: An emergency control room officer during floods or cyclones who issues strict orders and demands immediate compliance to maintain operational control.

Middle-of-the-Road Management (5.5, Moderate People–Moderate Task)

- Maintain a balance between team relationships and task accomplishment

Leaders using this style try to maintain a balance between team relationships and task accomplishment, but often at a moderate or average level. While it avoids extreme conflict or stress, it may also result in mediocre performance and lack of innovation. Many routine administrative units operate within this middle zone because it offers stability without requiring major changes. Example: Typical mid-level administrative leadership in departments where smooth functioning is maintained but without a strong drive for reform or performance enhancement.

Team Management (9.9, High People–High Task)

Team Management is considered the ideal leadership style because it combines strong task orientation with high

► Ideal leadership style

concern for people. Leaders using this approach motivate employees, encourage participation, set clear goals, and ensure high-quality performance. This style promotes innovation, trust, and long-term administrative excellence. Example: Effective District Collectors during COVID-19 who ensured strict implementation of containment measures while motivating medical teams, volunteers, and frontline staff through empathy and communication.

The Managerial Grid is valuable for public administrators because it provides a systematic way to identify and reflect on their leadership style, enabling targeted improvement. It encourages leaders to strive for the 9.9 Team Management style, which aligns closely with citizen-centric governance, collaborative decision-making, and ethical administration. By balancing people-centric sensitivity with task efficiency, administrators can enhance employee morale, reduce conflict, and improve service outcomes. The model ultimately helps strengthen organisational competence and public trust in government institutions.

Table 2.3.1 Summary of the Five Main Leadership Styles

Style	Description	Example in Public Administration
1.1 Impoverished Management	Low concern for people and tasks. Minimal effort.	A disengaged office head who avoids responsibility.
1.9 Country Club Management	High concern for people, low for tasks. Friendly but inefficient.	A hospital superintendent overemphasising staff comfort but ignoring patient complaints.
9.1 Task Management	High concern for tasks, low people focus. Strict, authoritarian.	Emergency control room officer during disasters.
5.5 Middle-of-the-Road	Balanced but moderate concern for both.	Most routine administrative leadership.
9.9 Team Management	High concern for tasks and people. Ideal leadership style.	Effective District Collectors during COVID-19 who motivated teams while ensuring strict task completion.

2.3.4.3 Importance of Managerial Grid in Public Administration

The Managerial Grid is highly relevant in public administration because it helps administrators understand how their concern for people and their concern for tasks combine to shape their leadership behaviour. Public managers often work in complex environments where they must balance policy implementation, service delivery, and staff welfare. The grid provides a simple but powerful framework to reflect on these competing priorities and improve their approach.

i. Helps administrators identify their leadership style:

The Grid enables public administrators to pinpoint where they fall among the five leadership styles from Impoverished (1,1) to Team Leadership (9,9). By locating themselves on this matrix, officers gain insight into their natural tendencies, such as whether they focus more on completing tasks or on maintaining staff relationships. This self-awareness is the first step towards leadership improvement, especially for officers managing multidisciplinary teams, field units, or public-facing departments.

ii. Encourages balanced, citizen-centric leadership:

Public administration requires balancing efficiency with empathy. The Managerial Grid promotes the ideal of a balanced (9,9) leadership style, where administrators combine high productivity orientation with genuine concern for staff and citizens. Such a balanced approach is crucial for citizen-centric governance, where officers must deliver services efficiently while ensuring dignity, transparency, and fairness in dealings with the public.

iii. Improves group morale and administrative efficiency:

When administrators adopt leadership styles that value both people and performance, team morale improves significantly. Staff members feel supported, motivated, and clear about their roles, which reduces conflicts and coordination issues. As morale rises, administrative units experience better communication, faster decision-making, and higher productivity. In practice, many successful public projects from municipal sanitation drives to district-level e-governance initiatives have shown that a supportive, task-oriented leadership style enhances overall administrative efficiency.

► Concern for people and concern for tasks combine to shape their leadership behaviour

Summarized Overview

This unit explains the dynamics of group behaviour, teamwork, and leadership within public-sector organisations, emphasising how collective functioning shapes administrative efficiency. It explores fundamental concepts such as the meaning, properties, and importance of groups, illustrating how norms, roles, cohesiveness, communication patterns, and group goals influence organisational performance. The unit highlights the role of coordinated teams in solving public problems, responding to crises, and delivering essential services. Leadership theories like trait, behavioural, contingency, transformational, and transactional are discussed to show how administrative leaders guide teams in complex environments. The Managerial Grid Model by Blake and Mouton is introduced as a practical diagnostic tool that helps public administrators balance concern for people with concern for tasks. Through real public-sector examples, the unit demonstrates that effective group behaviour, strong teamwork, and balanced leadership are essential for citizen-centric governance, innovation, and high-quality service delivery.

Self-Assessment

1. Explain the concept of a group in organisations and discuss the key properties that influence group behaviour.
2. Describe the importance of teamwork in public administration using suitable examples from government programmes.
3. Analyse major leadership theories and evaluate their relevance in contemporary public-sector organisations.
4. Discuss the five leadership styles in Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid Model with real administrative illustrations.
5. Examine how group cohesion, communication patterns, and role clarity affect administrative performance and service delivery.

Assignments

1. Select a government department (e.g., Health, Police, Revenue) and prepare a short report analysing how teams are structured and how their coordination affects service delivery.



2. Observe any local public institution (hospital, municipality, collectorate) and identify norms, roles, and communication patterns within one functional group.
3. Conduct a brief interview with a public-sector employee to understand their leadership experiences and compare their responses with one leadership theory.
4. Map a real public-sector project (e.g., Swachh Bharat, voter enrolment drive, flood relief operation) and evaluate the teamwork components involved.
5. Use the Managerial Grid to assess the leadership style of an officer (real or hypothetical) and recommend strategies to move toward a 9,9 Team Management style.

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU



BLOCK 3

Personality and Interpersonal Skills

UNIT 1

Introduction to Personality

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- explain the concept and key features of personality in the context of public administration
- analyse major personality theories and approaches relevant to administrative behaviour
- identify the determinants of personality and their influence on public servants
- comprehend the concept of personality development in real administrative situations and governance practices

Background

In modern organisations, especially in complex and people-intensive sectors, human behaviour has emerged as a critical determinant of organisational performance. Studies in organisational behaviour indicate that nearly 60–70% of managerial effectiveness is influenced by behavioural and interpersonal competencies, rather than technical knowledge alone. Managers and administrators are required to work in diverse teams, handle pressure, make ethical decisions, and lead change in dynamic environments shaped by globalisation, digital transformation, and increasing stakeholder expectations. As a result, understanding personality, that is, understanding the relatively stable patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving, has become a central concern in management education and practice.

For learners, the study of personality provides a scientific foundation to understand individual differences in leadership styles, motivation, stress management, communication, and decision-making. Empirical research across industries shows that personality traits such as conscientiousness and emotional stability are strong predictors



of job performance, leadership success, and organisational commitment. In the Indian context, where managers often operate in culturally diverse, high-pressure, and resource-constrained environments, knowledge of personality theories helps future managers align individual behaviour with organisational goals. This unit therefore, lays the conceptual groundwork for analysing managerial behaviour and developing effective, ethical, and emotionally intelligent leaders.

Keywords

Personality, Trait Theory, Type A and Type B, Emotional Intelligence, Personality Development

Discussion

Personality plays a significant role in shaping administrative behaviour, decision-making, and interactions within public sector institutions. Whether an officer manages a welfare scheme in a rural panchayat or coordinates disaster relief at the district level, their characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaviour determine how effectively they respond to challenges. Over time, administrative theorists, from Max Weber to Chester Barnard, have emphasised that, beyond formal structures, human behaviour is the real driving force behind organisational performance. Thus, understanding personality is indispensable for students of Public Administration, as it helps decode why individuals act the way they do and how their traits influence organisational outcomes.

3.1.1 Concept of Personality

► Latin word persona

The term “personality” derives from the Latin word persona, which refers to the masks used in ancient theatre. In modern behavioural sciences, personality refers to the consistent patterns of behaviour, thoughts, and emotions that distinguish one individual from another (Robbins & Judge, 2019). It is relatively stable, though it may evolve gradually over time through life experiences.

Gordon Allport (1961) described personality as “a dynamic organisation within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine characteristic behaviour and thought.” Raymond Cattell (1965) viewed personality as “that which

permits a prediction of what a person will do in a given situation.”

3.1.1.1 Key Features of Personality

1. **Uniqueness:** Personality is marked by individuality, meaning no two administrators behave or respond in the same way, even when placed in identical organisational environments. This uniqueness arises from differences in upbringing, values, experiences, cognitive styles, and emotional tendencies. As a result, in public administration, officers develop their own characteristic ways of leading teams, resolving conflicts, and managing public service delivery.
2. **Consistency:** A central feature of personality is behavioural consistency. Although people adapt to changing circumstances, their core behavioural patterns, such as how they communicate, make decisions, negotiate, or handle stress, remain relatively stable over time. In administrative settings, this consistency enables colleagues and citizens to form expectations about an officer’s approach to work, which in turn affects trust and coordination.
3. **Psychological and Physical Components:** Personality is shaped by both internal psychological processes and external biological traits. Psychological components include motives, attitudes, beliefs, and learned behaviours, whereas physical components include temperament, energy levels, and genetic predispositions. For administrators, these elements combine to influence leadership style, interpersonal relations, and work efficiency. For instance, an officer’s natural temperament may shape how calmly they handle pressure, while their learned behavioural patterns determine how empathetically they interact with the public.

Example:

When two Assistant District Magistrates (ADMs) are assigned a similar task, such as implementing the Swachh Bharat Mission in their districts, their approaches may differ significantly due to their unique personality profiles.

- One ADM with an extroverted and proactive disposition may prioritise community mobilisation, door-to-door awareness campaigns, and collaboration with local NGOs.
- Another ADM with a more introverted, analytical, and detail-oriented personality may focus on structured planning, meticulous documentation, data monitoring, and strict compliance with operational guidelines.

Despite working toward the same policy goal, their distinct personalities shape how they strategise, communicate, and motivate teams. This variation illustrates how personality differences influence administrative effectiveness and public service outcomes.

3.1.2 Types of Personality

Personality has been classified in multiple ways, reflecting the diverse perspectives of psychologists across time. Some models emphasise biological temperament, while others focus on stable traits, behavioural patterns, or cognitive styles. Understanding these classifications helps public administrators recognise individual differences in behaviour, teamwork, decision-making, and leadership potential within government organisations.



Fig. 3.1.1 Types of Personality

3.1.2.1 Type Approaches

Type approaches represent some of the earliest attempts to categorise human personality. These models propose that people can be grouped into fixed “types,” each showing a distinct and predictable pattern of behaviour. Although modern psychology considers these systems somewhat rigid, they still offer useful insights into understanding human behaviour in administrative environments.

3.1.2.1.1 Hippocrates’ Temperament Types (Ancient Classification)

► classifications based on the balance of bodily fluids or “humours

Hippocrates (460–370 BCE), often regarded as the father of medicine, proposed one of the earliest personality classifications based on the balance of bodily fluids or “humours.” While scientifically outdated, his typology remains influential for understanding broad behavioural tendencies.

- a. **Sanguine (enthusiastic, social):** Individuals with a sanguine temperament tend to be cheerful, lively, and optimistic. They are often good communicators and excel in roles requiring interaction with the public. A sanguine officer may perform exceptionally well in public-facing roles, such as community outreach during health drives, mobilising volunteers for disaster preparedness, or leading citizen engagement for government schemes.
- b. **Choleric (ambitious, leader-like):** Choleric individuals are task-oriented, determined, and natural leaders. They typically make decisions quickly and are assertive in implementing policies. A choleric administrator may thrive in high-pressure or mission-mode projects, such as election management, rapid infrastructure development, or crisis response, where quick action and strong direction are needed.
- c. **Melancholic (thoughtful, analytical):** Melancholic personalities are detail-oriented, organised, and reflective. They prefer planning, analysis, and systematic execution of tasks. A melancholic officer may excel in policy analysis, budgeting, drafting reports, preparing district development plans, or monitoring program performance underschemes like the National Health Mission.

- d. **Phlegmatic (relaxed, peaceful):** Phlegmatic individuals are calm, patient, and cooperative. They avoid conflict and often act as stabilising forces within teams. A phlegmatic officer may be effective in mediation roles, handling citizen grievances, maintaining office harmony, and managing routine administrative functions that require patience and diplomacy.

Relevance of Hippocrates' Temperament Types in Modern Administrative Behaviour

Though ancient, Hippocrates' typology continues to reflect behavioural patterns observed in real-life administrative settings:

- i. District Collectors show differing styles when conducting public hearings; some are warm and interactive (sanguine), others firm and decisive (choleric).
- ii. Officers tasked with preparing disaster management plans may adopt either an analytical approach (melancholic) or a calm, coordinated approach (phlegmatic).
- iii. Variation in leadership styles among administrators often reflects these underlying temperamental tendencies.

While contemporary personality theories are more nuanced, these ancient categories provide a simple and intuitive foundation for understanding the diversity of personalities working in public sector organisations.

3.1.2.1.2 Carl Jung's Personality Types

Carl Gustav Jung (1921), one of the most influential psychoanalysts in modern psychology, proposed a foundational theory of personality based on psychological preferences. According to Jung, people differ not only in their outward behaviour but also in how they gain energy, process information, and make decisions. These differences create consistent patterns of personality that influence how individuals work, communicate, and lead.

► psychological preferences

Jung's typology later became the basis for the widely used Myers–Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), one of the most popular personality assessment tools in organisational and administrative settings worldwide. Jung identified three core

dimensions. They are Introversion vs Extroversion, Thinking vs Feeling, and Sensing vs Intuition.

a. Introversion vs. Extroversion

This dimension describes the source of a person's psychological energy.

i. Introverts

Introverted individuals focus inward, gain energy from solitude, and prefer reflective thinking before taking action. They are comfortable working independently and often excel at tasks that require concentration, analysis, and careful planning. The following are the characteristics of Introverts.

- i. Reserved communication style
- ii. Thought-oriented decision-making
- iii. Preference for structured, quiet work settings

An introverted officer may be more effective in roles such as policy drafting, programme monitoring, data analysis, budget examination, or preparing district-level reports. They are likely to contribute through depth of insight, accuracy, and careful evaluation of alternatives.

ii. Extroverts

Extroverts draw energy from social interaction, communication, and active engagement with people and the environment. They thrive in dynamic situations and prefer working through conversations, meetings, and collaborative activities. The following are the characteristics of extroverts.

- i. Expressive and outgoing
- ii. Quick to engage with stakeholders
- iii. Skilled at networking and persuasion

Extroverted officers often perform exceptionally well in public-facing tasks, such as leading public meetings, coordinating health campaigns, supervising field teams, interacting with the media, or mobilising communities during development programmes.

► Three core dimensions

b. Thinking vs Feeling

This dimension captures how people evaluate information and make decisions.

i. Thinking Types

Thinking-oriented individuals rely on logic, objectivity, and principles. They emphasise fairness through consistency and adherence to rules or policies. The following are the characteristics of Thinking Types.

- i. Analytical decision-making
- ii. Focus on facts and evidence
- iii. Preference for clear criteria and rational arguments

A thinking-type officer may excel in areas such as enforcement, auditing, procurement decisions, disciplinary actions, or resource allocation situations requiring neutrality and rational judgment.

ii. Feeling Types

Feeling-oriented individuals consider values, emotions, and the impact of decisions on people. They prioritise harmony and interpersonal relationships. The following are the characteristics of the feeling type.

- i. Empathetic and considerate
- ii. Sensitive to people's needs
- iii. Skilled at resolving conflicts

A feeling-type administrator may be highly effective in citizen grievance redressal, social welfare programmes, community development, or situations requiring negotiation and emotional understanding (e.g., handling rehabilitation after natural disasters).

c. Sensing vs Intuition

This dimension explains how people prefer to gather and interpret information.

i. Sensing Types

Sensing personalities focus on concrete facts, present realities, and practical details. They prefer structured procedures

and hands-on experience. The following are the characteristics of the sensing type.

- i. Detail-oriented
- ii. Practical and realistic
- iii. Strong at compliance and routine administration

Sensing-type officers are often efficient in field inspections, documentation, record management, rule-based implementation, or tasks requiring accuracy and procedural clarity.

ii. Intuitive Types

Intuitive individuals look for patterns, possibilities, and long-term implications. They enjoy innovation, creative problem-solving, and strategic thinking. The following are the characteristics of the intuitive type.

- i. Visionary and imaginative
- ii. Comfortable with abstract ideas
- iii. Focus on future possibilities

An intuitive officer may excel in policy innovation, project design, strategic planning, or piloting digital governance initiatives (e.g., e-governance platforms, data-driven dashboards).

Example: During the implementation of a District Health Awareness Campaign, two officers may approach their roles differently:

- A highly introverted officer may prefer working behind the scenes, analysing health data, preparing IEC (Information, Education, Communication) materials, drafting campaign guidelines, and ensuring accurate reporting.
- An extroverted officer may take charge of public outreach, leading street plays, supervising ASHA workers, interacting with community groups, addressing local media, and motivating citizens to participate.

These differences reflect Jung's principle that people operate from preferred psychological modes, which shape their style of administration and leadership.

3.1.2.1.3 Type A and Type B Personalities

Personality plays a vital role in shaping human behaviour within organisations, particularly in the public sector, where administrators interact with diverse stakeholders, work under pressure, and are accountable to society. In the study of Organisational Behaviour, understanding personality types helps explain differences in work styles, decision-making patterns, leadership approaches, stress management, and performance outcomes.

One of the most influential personality classifications was proposed by Dr. Meyer Friedman and Dr. Ray Rosenman, cardiologists who initially developed the Type A and Type B personality theory while studying stress-related heart disease. Over time, this framework became widely adopted in management and public administration studies to analyse behaviour in organisational settings.

Although originally developed in medical research, the theory gained prominence in organisational behaviour because it helps explain:

- i. Work pressure handling
- ii. Leadership styles
- iii. Time management
- iv. Stress and burnout
- v. Interpersonal relations in organisations

In public administration, where officers often work under political pressure, public scrutiny, and time-bound targets, this classification is particularly relevant.

Type A Personality

A Type A personality refers to individuals who are highly competitive, achievement-oriented, time-conscious, and ambitious. Such individuals constantly strive for excellence and feel uncomfortable with delays or inefficiency.

Key Characteristics of Type A Personality

Type A individuals typically exhibit the following traits:

- i. Strong sense of urgency and time pressure
- ii. High levels of ambition and competitiveness
- iii. Desire to achieve targets quickly
- iv. Impatience with delays and inefficiencies
- v. Multitasking behaviour
- vi. Aggressive or assertive communication style
- vii. High commitment to work goals

Type A Personality in Public Administration

► Thrive in crisis management situations

In public administration, Type A personality officers are commonly found in roles that demand speed, precision, and high performance under pressure. Such officers thrive in crisis management situations, where immediate decisions and rapid coordination are required to control emergencies like pandemics, law-and-order issues, or public safety threats. In revenue collection departments, Type A administrators focus strongly on meeting financial targets, improving tax compliance, and reducing arrears within fixed deadlines. Similarly, in election administration, these officers work efficiently to adhere to strict timelines, ensure logistical readiness, and manage large-scale operations involving personnel, security, and technology. In disaster management authorities, Type A personalities play a critical role by coordinating relief measures, mobilising resources quickly, and enforcing standard operating procedures during floods, cyclones, or earthquakes. They are also well-suited to target-driven government programmes, such as vaccination campaigns, infrastructure projects, or welfare delivery schemes, where success is measured by quantifiable indicators such as coverage, completion rates, or output figures. Overall, Type A officers are highly result-oriented, prefer measurable and time-bound outcomes, and contribute significantly to administrative efficiency, particularly in situations that demand urgency and high accountability.

► Individuals who are calm, patient, tolerant, and reflective

Type B Personality

A Type B personality refers to individuals who are calm, patient, tolerant, and reflective. They approach work with balance and are less affected by time pressure or competition.



Key Characteristics of Type B Personality

Type B individuals generally show the following traits:

- i. Relaxed approach to work
- ii. Patience and emotional stability
- iii. Tolerance towards others' opinions
- iv. Focus on quality rather than speed
- v. Cooperative and empathetic behaviour
- vi. Lower stress levels
- vii. Ability to listen and reflect

In public administration, Type B personality officers are especially effective in roles that require patience, empathy, and sustained interaction with the public. They perform well in community engagement activities, where building trust, encouraging participation, and understanding local needs are essential for successful policy implementation. In welfare administration, Type B officers focus on ensuring benefits reach intended beneficiaries, paying close attention to social realities and individual circumstances rather than merely meeting numerical targets. Their calm and tolerant approach makes them well-suited for grievance redressal mechanisms, as they are willing to listen carefully to citizens' complaints, mediate conflicts, and provide fair and humane solutions. In social justice departments, such officers work towards inclusiveness by addressing the concerns of marginalised and vulnerable groups with sensitivity and commitment. Similarly, in rural development programmes, Type B administrators emphasise consensus-building, cooperation with local institutions, and community ownership of development initiatives. Overall, Type B officers prioritise long-term social impact, participatory governance, and inclusive administration, thereby strengthening public trust and the human face of governance.

Example: During COVID-19 vaccination drives, Type A officers were often observed to push for quick target achievements, while Type B officers focused more on community confidence-building.

3.1.2.2 Trait Approaches

Trait Approaches refer to a group of theories in psychology and organisational behaviour that explain personality by

► Group of theories in psychology and organisational behaviour

identifying and measuring enduring personal characteristics, known as traits, which influence an individual's behaviour across different situations. According to this approach, people differ from one another because they possess different combinations and intensities of traits such as honesty, confidence, sociability, emotional stability, or discipline. These traits are considered relatively stable over time and help predict how a person is likely to behave in work and social settings.

In organisational and public administration contexts, the trait approach is used to understand why some individuals perform better in certain roles, show leadership qualities, handle stress effectively, or interact positively with the public. For example, a public servant with high conscientiousness is likely to be organised and rule-oriented, while someone with high agreeableness may excel in welfare administration or grievance redressal. Overall, the trait approach provides a systematic and scientific method to analyse personality and is widely applied in recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and leadership development in public organisations.

3.1.2.2.1 Big Five Personality Model

► Five broad and stable traits

The Big Five Personality Model, developed by Costa and McCrae, is the most widely accepted and empirically supported framework for understanding personality in organisational and administrative studies. The model explains personality through five broad and stable traits, such as Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism, each of which influences how individuals behave at work and interact with others. In public administration, this model is particularly useful for understanding administrative effectiveness, leadership behaviour, stress management, and public service delivery.

1. Openness refers to curiosity, creativity, and openness to new experiences. Public administrators high in openness are more willing to adopt innovative practices, support digital governance initiatives, and implement new policy tools such as e-services, online grievance portals, and data-driven decision-making systems.
2. Conscientiousness denotes discipline, responsibility, and organisation, which are essential traits for public servants who must comply with rules, manage files, meet deadlines, and ensure accountability. Officers with high con-

scientiousness are known for their strict adherence to procedural norms and ethical standards.

3. Extraversion is associated with sociability, assertiveness, and energy. In public administration, extraverted officers perform effectively in public relations, community mobilisation, election management, and inter-departmental coordination, where frequent interaction with citizens and stakeholders is required.
4. Agreeableness reflects cooperation, compassion, and concern for others, making it highly relevant in conflict resolution, welfare administration, and public service settings that require empathy, negotiation, and teamwork.
5. Neuroticism, on the other hand, refers to emotional instability and a tendency to experience stress, anxiety, or mood swings. High levels of neuroticism may hinder an officer's ability to cope with crises, such as disasters or emergencies, where emotional stability and calm decision-making are crucial.



Fig. 3.1.2 Big Five Personality Model

A relevant case illustration can be drawn from studies conducted on Indian Administrative Service (IAS) probationers at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA). These studies found that high levels of conscientiousness, combined with moderate extraversion, were strong predictors of effective performance during field training.

This evidence highlights the practical value of the Big Five Personality Model in predicting administrative competence and underscores its importance in recruitment, training, and leadership development in public administration.

Case Illustration:

A study conducted on Indian Administrative Service (IAS) probationers at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) highlighted the practical relevance of the Big Five Personality Model in public administration training. The findings revealed that probationers who scored high on conscientiousness demonstrated better discipline, responsibility, adherence to rules, and effective task completion during field training. Additionally, those with moderate levels of extraversion were more successful in interacting with local communities, coordinating with officials, and managing field-level responsibilities. This combination enabled probationers to balance procedural efficiency with interpersonal effectiveness, resulting in superior overall performance during administrative training assignments.

3.1.2.3 Psychoanalytic and Humanistic Approaches

1. Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory

► Interaction among three core components of the human mind

Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory explains personality as the result of the interaction among three core components of the human mind: the Id, the Ego, and the Superego. Each component plays a distinct role in shaping behaviour, decision-making, and emotional responses. This theory is useful in organisational behaviour as it helps understand internal psychological conflicts that influence workplace behaviour, including in public administration.

Id

► Basic instinctual drives

The Id is the most primitive part of personality and represents basic instinctual drives such as desire, aggression, self-interest, and the urge for immediate satisfaction. It operates on the pleasure principle, seeking instant gratification without considering rules, ethics, or consequences. In public administration, the id may manifest indirectly through personal ambitions, desire for power, recognition, or emotional reactions such as anger or frustration. Although administrators are expected to act professionally, instinctive impulses persist at an unconscious



level, making self-control and emotional regulation essential for ethical public service.

Ego

► Rational and practical component of personality

The Ego serves as the rational and practical component of personality, operating according to the reality principle. Its role is to balance the demands of the id with the constraints of the external world, including laws, institutional rules, and situational realities. In public administration, the ego enables administrators to take pragmatic decisions, manage limited resources, negotiate political pressures, and resolve administrative challenges effectively. For example, when strict rule enforcement may cause public hardship, the ego helps officers identify workable alternatives within legal limits.

Superego

► Moral and ethical dimension of personality

The Superego represents the moral and ethical dimension of personality, formed through socialisation, education, and internalisation of societal values. It acts as an internal moral compass, guiding individuals to follow rules, laws, and ethical standards. In public administration, the superego is reflected in adherence to constitutional values, service conduct rules, integrity, impartiality, and accountability. It restrains unethical behaviour and encourages administrators to act in the public interest, even when faced with personal or political pressures.

Importance of Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory in Public Administration

Freud's psychoanalytic theory is important in public administration because it explains the internal psychological conflicts administrators face while performing their duties. Public officials constantly balance personal impulses (id), practical administrative realities (ego), and ethical obligations (superego). Understanding this interaction helps in improving ethical decision-making, stress management, leadership behaviour, and emotional intelligence among civil servants. The theory also highlights the need for training in self-awareness, integrity, and professional ethics, making it highly relevant to developing responsible, emotionally balanced public administrators.

2. Humanistic Approach

► Developed by Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow

The Humanistic Approach to personality, developed by Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow, views individuals as inherently good and capable of growth, self-development, and self-direction. Unlike theories that focus solely on instincts or traits, the humanistic perspective emphasises human potential, free will, and motivation. In organisational behaviour, this approach highlights how a supportive environment can help individuals realise their abilities and perform effectively, which is highly relevant in public administration. The following are the key concepts upon which the Humanistic Approach is based on;

Self-Actualisation

► Highest level of human development

Self-actualisation refers to the highest level of human development, where individuals realise their full potential and use their talents meaningfully. Maslow placed self-actualisation at the top of his hierarchy of needs. In public administration, officers who are self-actualised seek purpose beyond salary or promotion and are motivated by public service values, innovation, and social impact. Such administrators strive to improve governance systems, introduce reforms, and deliver services more effectively for the benefit of society.

Personal Growth

► Continuous process of learning

Personal growth is a continuous process of learning, skill development, and self-improvement. The humanistic approach argues that individuals grow best in environments that provide support, trust, and opportunities for development. In public organisations, training programmes, participatory leadership, decentralisation, and empowerment initiatives encourage administrators to enhance their competencies and confidence. When public servants experience personal growth, they become more adaptable, more committed, and better able to handle complex administrative challenges.

Positive Self-Concept

A positive self-concept, as emphasised by Carl Rogers, refers to how individuals perceive and value themselves. When administrators feel respected, trusted, and recognised, they develop self-confidence and emotional stability. This leads to greater initiative, responsibility, and ethical behaviour in public

service. Conversely, lack of recognition or excessive control can negatively affect self-concept and reduce motivation.

Application in Public Administration

An example of the humanistic approach in practice can be seen in the functioning of a Panchayat Secretary. When the secretary feels empowered, valued, and supported by higher authorities and the local community, they are more likely to show higher motivation, creativity, and commitment in implementing rural development initiatives. Such an environment encourages innovative solutions, active community participation, and sustainable development outcomes. Overall, the humanistic approach highlights the importance of human dignity, empowerment, and motivation in building effective and people-centred public administration.

3.1.3 Determinants of Personality

Personality does not develop from a single factor; rather, it is shaped by the continuous interaction of multiple influences over time. Behavioural scholars generally agree that personality formation results from biological, family, social, and environmental determinants. Among these, the family plays a foundational role, as it is the first and most influential social institution that introduces values, attitudes, emotional patterns, and behavioural norms. The early family environment provides the foundation for later personality development.

► Biological, family, social, and environmental determinants

3.1.3.1 Family Determinants

The family is the primary agent of socialisation and significantly influences personality development, especially during childhood. Through daily interactions, children learn acceptable behaviour, emotional responses, discipline, and moral values.

► Primary agent of socialisation

Parental behaviour has a strong impact on personality formation. Warm, supportive, and encouraging parenting tends to foster self-confidence, emotional security, and independence in children. In contrast, authoritarian or neglectful parenting may lead to fear, low self-esteem, or rebellious behaviour. In the context of future administrators, supportive parenting often contributes to balanced leadership and ethical behaviour.

► Birth order

Birth order also influences personality traits. Firstborn children are often given more responsibility and parental attention, which may lead to traits such as leadership, discipline, and accountability. Later-born children, on the other hand, tend to be more flexible, adaptable, and socially oriented, as they grow up negotiating space and attention within the family.

► Early childhood experiences

Early childhood experiences leave lasting psychological impressions. A nurturing and secure environment promotes emotional stability and positive social behaviour. In contrast, traumatic experiences such as neglect, abuse, or instability may affect confidence, trust, and stress management later in life. These early influences often shape how individuals respond to authority, responsibility, and pressure in organisational settings.

Example

A notable example of family determinants shaping personality is seen in the life of Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, former President of India. He frequently acknowledged that his disciplined upbringing, his father's emphasis on humility, simplicity, and moral values, and the supportive family environment in Rameswaram played a crucial role in shaping his calm, reflective, and ethical personality. These family-influenced traits later reflected in his leadership style, scientific career, and approach to public service, demonstrating the lasting impact of family determinants on personality development.

3.1.3.2 Societal Determinants

► Influence of society, culture, and social institutions

Societal determinants refer to the influence of society, culture, and social institutions on personality development. Social norms, cultural values, peer interactions, and institutional frameworks shape how individuals think, behave, and relate to others. These influences operate continuously throughout life and play a crucial role in forming attitudes, behavioural patterns, and interpersonal skills, especially in the context of public administration.

Collectivist Societies: In collectivist societies such as India and Japan, personality development is strongly influenced by values like cooperation, interdependence, group harmony, and respect for social hierarchy. Individuals are encouraged to prioritise group goals over personal ambitions, which fosters traits such as empathy, tolerance, and social responsibility. In public administration, officers socialised in collectivist cultures

often display a strong commitment to community welfare, consensus-building, and inclusive decision-making.

Urban Environment: An urban social environment significantly shapes personality by exposing individuals to diverse cultures, competitive workplaces, and fast-paced lifestyles. Urban settings often encourage independence, assertiveness, ambition, and competitiveness, as individuals must adapt to anonymity, performance pressures, and limited resources. In public administration, urban exposure can contribute to confidence, innovation, and efficiency, particularly in metropolitan governance and development planning roles.

Educational Institutions: Educational institutions are powerful agents of socialisation and personality development. Schools, colleges, and universities influence values, self-confidence, discipline, leadership qualities, and behavioural norms through classroom learning, peer interaction, extracurricular activities, and engagement with authority figures. Educational environments that promote participation, teamwork, and critical thinking help develop balanced and competent personalities suitable for leadership and administrative roles.

Example

The Kudumbashree programme in Kerala provides a strong example of how societal determinants shape personality. Through community-based participation, collective decision-making, and peer support, the programme has empowered women socially and economically. This supportive social environment has enhanced participants' self-confidence, communication abilities, and leadership traits, demonstrating the significant role of societal structures in positive personality development.

3.1.3.3 Environmental Determinants

Environmental determinants refer to the influence of the natural, economic, and institutional surroundings in which an individual lives and works. These factors shape personality by continuously affecting behaviour, attitudes, emotional responses, and coping mechanisms. In public administration, environmental conditions play a significant role in moulding administrators' resilience, leadership style, and decision-making abilities.

► Natural, economic, and institutional surroundings

Climate and Geography: Climate and geographical conditions influence human temperament and behavioural patterns over time. Harsh climates, difficult terrains, and remote locations often require individuals to develop patience, endurance, and emotional toughness, while moderate and stable environments may encourage relaxed and sociable traits. For public administrators, postings in geographically challenging regions, such as hilly, desert, or coastal areas, demand adaptability and physical and psychological resilience, which gradually become part of their personality.

Economic Conditions: Economic conditions strongly affect personality traits such as ambition, motivation, and willingness to take risks. Individuals raised or working in economically constrained environments often develop resourcefulness, perseverance, and problem-solving skills, while those in economically prosperous settings may foster innovation, confidence, and higher aspirations. In public administration, officers dealing with poverty alleviation, unemployment, or underdeveloped regions become more sensitive to social realities and develop pragmatic approaches to policy implementation.

Organisational Environment: The organisational environment, including leadership style, work culture, rules, and reward systems, significantly shapes administrative behaviour. Supportive and transparent organisations promote confidence, ethical conduct, and initiative, whereas rigid or politically pressured environments may encourage risk-averse or defensive behaviour. Over time, the organisational climate influences how administrators communicate, make decisions, and handle accountability.

Case Illustration: Indian Bureaucracy

In the Indian bureaucracy, officers posted in conflict-prone regions such as Jammu and Kashmir or Left-Wing Extremism-affected districts experience demanding and high-risk environments. Continuous exposure to security threats, public unrest, and political sensitivity compels them to develop resilience, adaptability, and emotional strength. Research by the Indian Police Foundation indicates that repeated exposure to such high-stress environments enhances officers' risk perception, situational awareness, and decision-making patterns, clearly demonstrating the role of environmental determinants in shaping administrative personality.

3.1.3.4 Biological Determinants (*Supplementary Factor*)

► Heredity, genetics, and neurobiological processes

Biological determinants refer to the influence of heredity, genetics, and neurobiological processes on personality development. Although this factor is not explicitly highlighted in many public administration syllabi, extensive international research in psychology and behavioural sciences indicates that biological factors play a foundational role in shaping temperament, which later interacts with social and environmental influences.

Genetic Predispositions: Genetic inheritance contributes to basic personality traits such as extroversion and introversion, emotional reactivity, intelligence, and energy patterns. Research suggests that individuals may be biologically predisposed to be more sociable, cautious, emotionally sensitive, or intellectually curious. In public administration, such inherited traits can influence career preferences, leadership styles, and communication patterns. For instance, an individual with a genetic inclination towards extroversion may perform better in public-facing roles, while those with higher cognitive abilities may excel in analytical or policy-oriented functions.

Neurobiological Factors and Stress Handling: Neurobiological factors, including brain structure, hormonal balance, and nervous system functioning, affect how individuals respond to stress, pressure, and emotional challenges. Variations in stress hormones such as cortisol influence whether a person remains calm or becomes anxious under demanding conditions. In administrative roles that involve public scrutiny, crisis management, and high accountability, these biological differences partly explain why some officers handle stress effectively while others experience emotional strain.

Interaction with Social and Environmental Factors: Biological determinants do not operate in isolation. Instead, they interact continuously with family upbringing, societal influences, and environmental conditions to shape an individual's core personality. While biology provides the initial temperament, socialisation and experience refine and modify behavioural expressions. In public administration, recognising this interaction helps in designing balanced recruitment, training, and stress-management systems that accommodate individual differences and promote administrative effectiveness.

3.1.4 Personality and Development

Personality development is the continuous, dynamic process by which an individual's behavioural patterns, emotional responses, attitudes, values, and cognitive abilities evolve over time. Personality is not fixed at birth; rather, it develops gradually through interaction with social, educational, professional, and personal experiences. In public administration, personality development is especially important because administrators must adapt to changing roles, responsibilities, public expectations, and governance challenges throughout their careers.

3.1.4.1 Processes Influencing Personality Development

1. Learning and Socialisation

Learning and socialisation are fundamental processes in personality development. From childhood onwards, individuals learn acceptable behaviour, communication styles, and social norms through family, peers, educational institutions, and society. In public administration, socialisation into service values such as neutrality, accountability, and public interest, as well as professional behaviour. Interaction with colleagues, seniors, subordinates, and citizens further refines interpersonal skills, emotional maturity, and ethical conduct.

2. Life Experiences

Life experiences, both positive and negative, play a crucial role in shaping personality. Experiences such as success, failure, hardship, leadership responsibilities, or exposure to diverse social conditions influence emotional strength, confidence, empathy, and resilience. For public servants, experiences like managing crises, working in remote areas, or handling public grievances contribute significantly to the development of patience, adaptability, and problem-solving abilities.

3. Education and Training

Education and training contribute to personality development by enhancing knowledge, critical thinking, discipline, and self-confidence. Formal education develops cognitive abilities, while professional training programmes in public administration focus on leadership skills, ethics, communication, and decision-making. Institutions such as civil service academies play a vital

role in shaping administrative attitudes, professional identity, and behavioural standards through structured learning and field exposure.

4. Work Culture and Administrative Environment

The work culture and administrative environment strongly influence personality development. A supportive, transparent, and participative organisational culture encourages initiative, responsibility, and ethical behaviour. In contrast, rigid or politically pressured environments may lead to risk-averse or defensive attitudes. Over time, the norms, leadership styles, and accountability mechanisms within public organisations shape how administrators interact, make decisions, and manage stress.

5. Self-Reflection and Personal Growth

Self-reflection and personal growth involve conscious efforts by individuals to understand their strengths, weaknesses, values, and behavioural patterns. Through reflection, feedback, and self-assessment, administrators can improve emotional intelligence, ethical sensitivity, and leadership effectiveness. In public administration, continuous self-reflection helps officers align their personal goals with public service values, fostering balanced personality development and professional excellence.

3.1.4.2 Application to Public Administration

Personality development has direct and practical relevance to public administration, as administrators are required to demonstrate leadership, emotional balance, ethical conduct, and adaptability in complex governance environments. The processes of training, field experience, emotional intelligence development, and value-based education collectively shape an effective administrative personality.

1. Training and Professional Development

Training and professional development play a crucial role in shaping the personality of public administrators. Premier institutions such as the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy (SVPNPA), Hyderabad, and the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR), Hyderabad, conduct structured personality-

development programmes for civil servants. These programmes focus on communication skills, emotional intelligence, leadership abilities, and ethical awareness. Trainees are exposed to adventure sports to develop courage, risk-taking ability, and teamwork; village immersion programmes to foster empathy, social sensitivity, and grassroots understanding; and public speaking and group exercises to enhance confidence and clarity in communication. Such training initiatives help mould balanced, confident, and socially responsive administrators.

2. Role of Administrative Experience

Administrative experience, especially field-level exposure, significantly contributes to personality development. Handling real-life challenges such as disasters, law-and-order situations, and public grievances strengthens resilience, judgment, and decision-making ability. Experience teaches administrators how to remain calm under pressure, manage uncertainty, and respond effectively to public needs.

Case Study: During the 2018 Kerala floods, IAS officer Dr. K. Vasuki, then District Collector of Thiruvananthapuram, demonstrated exemplary leadership through transparent communication, calm decision-making, and high emotional intelligence. Her ability to coordinate relief operations efficiently was the result of years of administrative experience, illustrating how field experience shapes a mature, effective administrative personality.

3. Emotional Intelligence (EI) and Personality Growth

Emotional Intelligence (EI) has emerged as a key component of personality development in public administration. According to Daniel Goleman, EI includes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. Administrators with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to manage stress, understand public emotions, and build trust with stakeholders. High EI helps officers handle grievances sensitively, reduce workplace conflicts, and promote cooperative work environments, making it an essential quality for effective governance.

4. Ethical and Value-Based Development

Ethical and value-based development forms the moral foundation of an administrative personality. Values such as



integrity, fairness, accountability, and commitment to public service guide administrators in making just and transparent decisions. Training modules on “probity in governance” for civil servants emphasise transparency, accountability, and citizen-centric behaviour. These value-oriented initiatives help inculcate ethical sensitivity and responsibility, thereby shaping a principled, trustworthy administrative personality essential to democratic governance.

Summarized Overview

This unit introduced the concept of personality and examined its significance in shaping administrative behaviour, decision-making, leadership, and interpersonal relations in public administration. It discussed major personality approaches, including type approaches (Hippocrates, Jung, Type A and Type B), trait approaches with special emphasis on the Big Five Personality Model, and psychoanalytic and humanistic theories. The unit also analysed the determinants of personality, including family, societal, environmental, and biological factors, and highlighted their combined influence on personality development. Further, it explained how personality evolves through learning, life experiences, education, work culture, and self-reflection. Finally, the unit demonstrated the practical application of personality development in public administration, focusing on training institutions, administrative experience, emotional intelligence, and ethical values, supported by real Indian case studies. Overall, the unit emphasises that effective public administration depends not only on rules and structures but also on the continuous development of administrators’ personalities.

Self-Assessment

1. Define personality and explain its key features with examples from public administration.
2. Examine the Type A and Type B personality theories and analyse their relevance to administrative roles.
3. Discuss the Big Five Personality Model and explain its application in public administration.
4. Analyse the determinants of personality with suitable Indian examples.
5. Explain how personality development contributes to effective and ethical public administration.

Assignments

1. Identify a public administrator (serving or retired) and analyse their personality traits using the Big Five Personality Model.
2. Conduct a small survey among classmates to identify Type A and Type B personality characteristics and prepare a brief report.
3. Prepare a case study on how emotional intelligence helps in grievance redressal or disaster management.
4. Observe the work culture of a local government office and write a note on how it influences administrative personality.
5. Design a short personality development programme for newly recruited civil servants, focusing on ethics and emotional intelligence.

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Suggested Reading

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

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Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- explain the core ideas of major psychoanalytical theorists and their relevance to organisational behaviour
- analyse administrative behaviour, leadership styles, and ethical dilemmas using psychoanalytical concepts
- describe Jung's, Adler's, and Berne's theories to understand personality differences, motivation, and communication in public organisations
- develop self-awareness and emotional intelligence for effective and ethical public administration

Background

Modern organisations, including public and private sector institutions, increasingly recognise that managerial effectiveness depends not only on technical skills and rational decision-making but also on a deep understanding of human behaviour. Studies in organisational behaviour indicate that nearly 60–70% of workplace issues, such as conflict, resistance to change, leadership failure, stress, and poor communication, are linked to psychological and emotional factors rather than structural or procedural problems. According to global surveys by organisations like Gallup, low employee engagement—often driven by unmet emotional and psychological needs—costs the global economy over USD 7 trillion annually. These realities highlight the importance of psychological perspectives in management education, particularly for MBA students who are future leaders and decision-makers.

Psychoanalytical theories provide a foundational framework for understanding the hidden, unconscious forces that influence behaviour at work. Unlike purely rational or economic models of management, psychoanalytical approaches explain why individuals react emotionally under pressure, misuse authority, resist organisational change, or

struggle with ethical dilemmas. In complex organisational environments characterised by competition, performance pressure, and uncertainty, managers frequently encounter stress-related issues such as burnout, anxiety, and interpersonal conflict. This unit equips MBA students with critical psychological insights drawn from the works of Freud, Jung, Adler, and Berne, enabling them to understand behaviour beyond surface actions and apply emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and ethical judgement in managerial and leadership roles.

Keywords

Psychoanalysis, Unconscious mind, Personality, Leadership behaviour, Transactional Analysis

Discussion

3.2.1 Psychoanalytical Theories in Organisational Behaviour

► Individuals' inner mental world

Psychoanalytical theories explain human behaviour by focusing on individuals' inner mental world rather than only their observable actions. These theories argue that behaviour in organisations is shaped not just by rules, incentives, or formal authority, but also by unconscious emotions, personal conflicts, childhood experiences, and hidden fears. In workplaces, especially bureaucratic organisations, these internal forces often influence decision-making, leadership style, and reactions to stress in subtle yet powerful ways. Therefore, psychoanalytical theories provide deeper insights into why employees sometimes behave unpredictably or emotionally rather than rationally.

In Organisational Behaviour, psychoanalytical perspectives are useful for understanding issues such as resistance to change, misuse of power, interpersonal conflict, job stress, and emotional burnout. For instance, an employee's excessive need for control may stem from unresolved insecurity rather than organisational requirements. Unlike behavioural theories that focus on rewards and punishments, psychoanalytical theories examine why individuals respond differently to the same organisational conditions. This makes them especially relevant in complex organisations where human emotions interact with rigid structures.

► Importance in public administration

In the field of Public Administration, psychoanalytical theories hold special importance because administrators frequently operate in high-pressure, politically charged, and emotionally demanding environments. Civil servants deal with public grievances, ethical dilemmas, authority conflicts, and constant scrutiny, all of which can trigger deep psychological responses. Understanding unconscious motives helps administrators manage their own stress, avoid authoritarian tendencies, and respond empathetically to citizens and colleagues. Scholars such as Herbert Simon have also acknowledged that administrative behaviour is often bounded by psychological limitations, not pure rationality (Simon, *Administrative Behavior*).

This unit examines the psychoanalytical contributions of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, and Eric Berne, and connects their ideas to real administrative and organisational contexts. Their theories help explain leadership styles, team behaviour, organisational culture, and communication patterns in public institutions. By studying these thinkers, public administrators can develop greater self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and ethical sensitivity, which are essential for effective governance. The relevance of these theories is evident in real-world cases such as bureaucratic rigidity, leadership failure, and organisational stress in public sector institutions.

3.2.1.1 Freudian Theory of Psychoanalysis

► Unconscious mental processes

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), widely regarded as the founder of psychoanalysis, proposed that human behaviour is largely shaped by unconscious mental processes rather than deliberate and rational thinking alone. He argued that individuals are often unaware of the deeper emotional reasons behind their actions, anxieties, and conflicts. Freud's ideas challenged the assumption that people always behave logically, an insight that later became influential in organisational and administrative studies. In public administration, his theory helps explain stress, authority conflicts, leadership failures, and ethical lapses that cannot be understood solely through rules and procedures.

Freud believed that personality develops through continuous inner conflict between instinctual urges and social restraints. These conflicts, if not managed well, can result in frustration, aggression, or irrational behaviour at the workplace. Scholars of organisational behaviour have applied Freudian concepts to understand why administrators may resist change, misuse

authority, or experience emotional burnout. As noted by Herbert Simon in his book *Administrative Behaviour*, administrative decisions are often psychologically bounded rather than purely rational.

3.2.1.1.1 Structure of Personality: Id, Ego, and Superego

Freud explained personality using a three-part structure: Id, Ego, and Superego, each representing different psychological forces. These components operate simultaneously and often come into conflict, influencing behaviour and decision-making. In public administration, understanding this structure helps explain how administrators balance personal ambition, institutional demands, and ethical responsibility. This framework is particularly useful in analysing leadership behaviour and ethical dilemmas in governance.

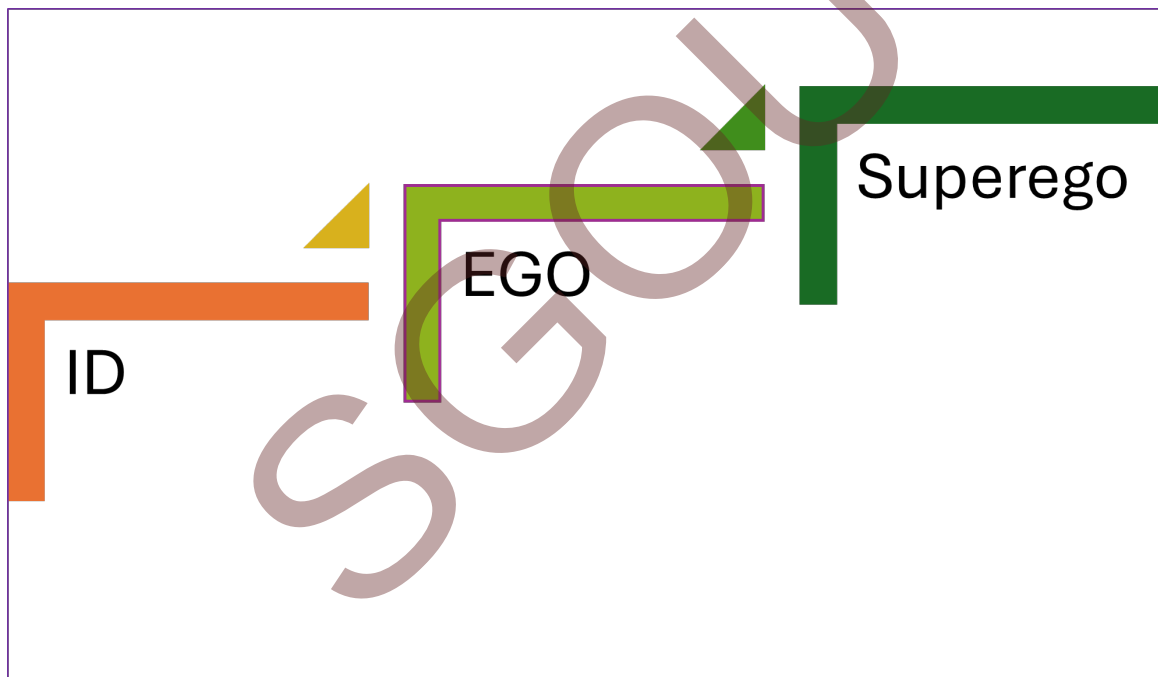


Fig. 3.2.1 Structure of Personality

Id (Instinctual Drives)

► Basic instincts

The 'Id' represents the most primitive part of personality and consists of basic instincts such as desire, aggression, and self-interest. It operates on the pleasure principle, seeking immediate satisfaction without considering laws, rules, or moral consequences. In public administration, id-driven tendencies may surface as a desire for power, status, or quick recognition, especially in competitive bureaucratic environments. For

example, an officer reacting aggressively to criticism from superiors may be unconsciously responding from the id rather than from professional judgment.

Although public servants are trained to control such impulses, Freud emphasised that the id never disappears; it remains active at the unconscious level. During periods of stress, political pressure, or crises, id impulses may temporarily dominate behaviour. Studies of administrative misconduct reveal that impulsive decisions often arise when emotional control weakens. Recognising the id helps administrators develop better emotional discipline.

Ego (Reality-Oriented Decision Maker)

► Rational and practical component

The Ego functions as the rational and practical component of personality, mediating between instinctual desires and external reality. It operates on the reality principle, ensuring that actions are taken within legal, institutional, and situational constraints. In public administration, the ego enables officers to balance personal feelings with rules, public expectations, and political realities. This is essential for effective governance and responsible leadership.

For instance, a District Collector may personally feel sympathy toward protestors (emotional impulse) but must still maintain law and order while negotiating solutions. The ego helps administrators take pragmatic decisions that serve public interest without violating legal frameworks. Strong ego functioning is reflected in calm decision-making, emotional control, and professional conduct during crises. Administrative training programmes indirectly strengthen the ego by promoting rational analysis and procedural discipline.

Superego (Moral and Ethical Control)

► Moral dimension of personality

The Superego represents the moral dimension of personality and consists of internalised values, ethics, and societal norms. It functions as an inner conscience that guides individuals toward what is right rather than what is merely convenient. In public administration, the superego is reflected in adherence to constitutional values, integrity, impartiality, and accountability. It discourages unethical shortcuts even when personal gain or political pressure is strong.

For example, whistle-blowers in public institutions often act under strong superego influence, choosing ethical responsibility over personal safety or career advancement. Historical cases of ethical administrators, such as E. Sreedharan in Indian public service, demonstrate how moral conviction guides professional conduct. A well-developed superego is essential for ethical governance and public trust. Civil service codes of conduct aim to institutionalise superego values within administrative systems.

Relevance of Freudian Theory to Public Administration

Freud's theory explains why administrators often experience psychological tension between personal ambition (id), practical constraints (ego), and ethical responsibility (superego). This internal struggle becomes more intense in environments involving political pressure, public scrutiny, and limited resources. Understanding this dynamic helps explain ethical dilemmas, stress-related disorders, and emotional exhaustion among civil servants. It also sheds light on why some officials abuse authority while others exercise restraint.

Freudian insights are indirectly reflected in modern civil service training programmes that emphasise ethics, emotional regulation, stress management, and self-control. Leadership development initiatives increasingly focus on psychological resilience and moral reasoning. By understanding unconscious motivations, administrators can improve decision-making, maintain integrity, and manage emotions more effectively. Thus, Freudian theory remains relevant for analysing administrative behaviour beyond formal rules and structures.

3.2.1.2 Carl Jung and His Contributions

Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961) was a prominent psychoanalyst who extended psychoanalytical theory beyond Freud's emphasis on repression and conflict. Jung believed that the human mind also possesses a constructive and creative dimension, enabling individuals to grow, adapt, and find meaning in their experiences. His ideas significantly influenced organisational behaviour by explaining personality differences, leadership styles, and organisational culture. For public administrators, Jung's approach offers a more balanced understanding of human behaviour that includes both emotional depth and personal development.

► Constructive and creative dimension



Jung's theories are particularly relevant in modern administrative settings where collaboration, innovation, and cultural sensitivity are essential. Public organisations often consist of individuals with diverse psychological orientations, and Jung's work helps explain these differences. His emphasis on self-awareness and integration is valuable for leadership development in governance. As noted in *Man and His Symbols*, Jung viewed psychological understanding as a path to mature and responsible behaviour.

3.2.1.2.1 Jung's Departure from Freud

Jung's major departure from Freud lay in his interpretation of the unconscious mind. While Freud viewed the unconscious primarily as a repository of suppressed desires and unresolved conflicts, Jung believed it also contained positive potential, including creativity, wisdom, and inherited psychological patterns. According to Jung, individuals are not driven solely by past trauma but are also motivated by the search for meaning and personal growth. This optimistic view made his theory more applicable to organisational and administrative contexts.

In organisational behaviour, Jung's approach helps explain why employees may seek purpose and identity in their work, beyond material rewards. For example, public servants often derive motivation from service to society, reflecting Jung's belief in meaningful work. Leadership studies have applied Jungian ideas to understand transformational leadership, where leaders inspire shared values rather than enforce authority. Thus, Jung's departure from Freud enabled psychoanalysis to shift from pathology to positive organisational development.

3.2.1.2.2 Personal and Collective Unconscious

Jung proposed that the unconscious mind operates at two interconnected levels that shape human behaviour both individually and collectively. They are the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. These layers influence attitudes, emotions, and responses in organisational settings, often without conscious awareness. In public administration, understanding these unconscious layers helps explain leadership behaviour, authority relationships, and organisational culture. Jung's framework moves beyond individual psychology to explain shared behavioural patterns within institutions.

Personal Unconscious: Individual Memories and Experiences

The personal unconscious consists of an individual's forgotten, suppressed, or emotionally charged memories formed through personal life and work experiences. These may include earlier interactions with authority, experiences of success or failure, or stressful administrative postings. For example, a public officer who previously faced public criticism or media scrutiny may become overly cautious or risk-averse in later assignments. Such reactions are not always rational but are influenced by stored emotional experiences within the personal unconscious.

In administrative work, the personal unconscious often affects leadership style and interpersonal relationships. An officer with supportive mentors may adopt a participative leadership approach, whereas one with negative supervisory experiences may become rigid or defensive. Jung emphasised that although these memories are not consciously recalled, they continue to influence behaviour. Recognising this helps administrators develop self-awareness and emotional maturity.

Collective Unconscious: Shared Human Experiences Inherited Across Generations

The collective unconscious represents a deeper psychological layer shared by all human beings, shaped by common human experiences across generations. Jung argued that this layer contains universal patterns of thought and behaviour that are inherited rather than learned. In public administration, these shared patterns influence how authority, leadership, justice, and governance are perceived by both officials and citizens. This explains why certain administrative roles carry symbolic importance beyond their legal functions.

For instance, the role of a District Magistrate or Collector is often viewed as a symbol of order, protection, and authority, even before any action is taken. Citizens may instinctively expect fairness, firmness, and moral leadership from such officials. Similarly, administrators may unconsciously adopt authoritative or paternalistic behaviour because the role itself activates deep psychological expectations. This shared perception reflects the influence of the collective unconscious in governance.

Archetypes and Their Influence on Administrative Behaviour

The collective unconscious contains archetypes such as the leader, ruler, hero, caregiver, and judge, which influence behaviour subconsciously. In public administration, leadership positions often activate these archetypes, shaping how officers understand their authority and responsibilities. For example, during natural disasters, administrators often assume the “protector” or “caregiver” archetype by coordinating relief and reassuring citizens. Such behaviour is not merely procedural but emotionally and symbolically driven.

Archetypes also shape public expectations of administrators. Citizens may expect officials to act decisively like a “ruler” or compassionately like a “caregiver,” depending on the situation. When administrators fail to meet these unconscious expectations, dissatisfaction and conflict may arise even if rules are followed. Understanding archetypes helps public officials balance authority with empathy and avoid rigid role behaviour.

Jung’s concepts of personal and collective unconscious help explain why administrative behaviour is shaped not only by rules but also by deep psychological patterns. Leadership effectiveness often depends on how well administrators manage both their personal experiences and the symbolic expectations attached to their roles. Awareness of unconscious influences helps prevent misuse of authority and encourages reflective leadership. Consequently, Jungian theory remains highly relevant for understanding organisational culture and leadership behaviour in public administration.

3.2.1.2.3 Personality Types: Introversion and Extroversion

Carl Jung classified individuals based on the direction in which they primarily channel their psychological energy. According to Jung, personality differences arise not from ability or intelligence, but from whether a person is more inward-oriented or outward-oriented in processing experiences. This distinction is especially useful in understanding behaviour, leadership style, and communication patterns in organisations. In public administration, recognising these personality types helps in assigning roles that match individual strengths.

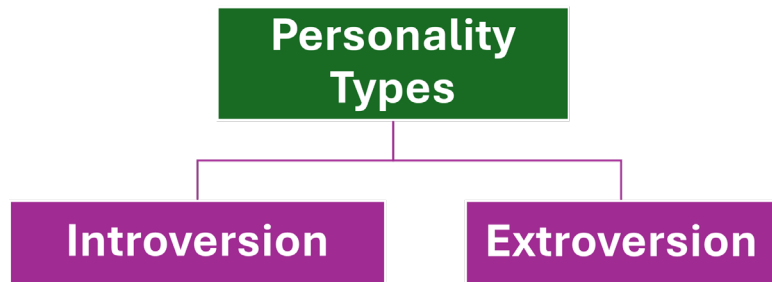


Fig. 3.2.2 Personality Types

Introverts: Reflective, Analytical, Inward-Focused

► Internal thoughts, reflection, and careful analysis

Introverted individuals tend to focus on internal thoughts, reflection, and careful analysis before acting. They prefer structured environments, detailed planning, and independent work that allows concentration and depth. In public administration, introverted officers often excel in policy formulation, legal drafting, budgeting, and data analysis. For example, officers involved in preparing Five-Year Plans or drafting government orders benefit from reflective thinking and analytical precision.

Introverted administrators may not seek public visibility but contribute significantly through intellectual and strategic work. They are often effective in research units, planning boards, and regulatory bodies where thoughtful evaluation is essential. Jung emphasised that introversion is not social withdrawal but a preference for internal processing. Proper recognition of such strengths prevents the underutilisation of capable officers.

Extroverts: Sociable, Action-Oriented, Outward-Focused

Extroverted individuals direct their energy outward and thrive on interaction, activity, and immediate engagement. They are comfortable with public speaking, negotiations, and rapid decision-making in dynamic situations. In public administration, extroverted officers perform well in public relations, disaster management, field administration, and crisis communication. For instance, district officials coordinating relief operations during floods often rely on extroverted skills to mobilise communities and liaise with multiple agencies.

Extroverted administrators are often perceived as approachable and decisive, which strengthens citizen engagement. Their outward orientation helps in conflict resolution, grievance redressal, and community outreach programmes. Jung noted that extroversion supports action and responsiveness, both of which are essential in frontline administrative roles. However, extroverts also benefit from institutional checks to ensure reflective decision-making.

Application in Administration: Role Allocation and Team Building

Understanding introversion and extroversion helps public organisations allocate roles more effectively and build balanced teams. When policy analysts, planners, and finance officers (often introverted) work alongside field officers and public communicators (often extroverted), administrative efficiency improves. Many modern civil service reforms emphasise competency-based postings that indirectly reflect Jung's insights into personality. Such psychological awareness reduces role mismatch, improves job satisfaction, and enhances organisational performance.

Administrative Relevance of Jung's Theory

Jung's psychological theories offer valuable insights into administrative behaviour by explaining how personality differences shape leadership, communication, and workplace relationships. In public organisations, where individuals from diverse backgrounds work within hierarchical systems, Jung's ideas help administrators understand both their own behaviour and that of others. His emphasis on self-awareness and psychological balance supports ethical and effective governance. As a result, Jung's theory has become influential in modern leadership development and organisational studies.

- 1. Understand Leadership Styles:** Jung's theory helps administrators understand that leadership styles vary according to personality orientation rather than competence alone. Introverted leaders may prefer thoughtful decision-making and long-term planning, while extroverted leaders may focus on visibility, engagement, and quick action. For example, senior officers working in policy think tanks often demonstrate reflective leadership, whereas district-level administrators managing public

grievances adopt more interactive styles. Recognising these differences allows organisations to appreciate multiple leadership approaches rather than promoting a single ideal model.

2. **Appreciate Diversity in Work Behaviour:** Jung's ideas encourage administrators to recognise that employees differ in how they perceive situations, process information, and respond to authority. In public offices, some officials may work best independently with data and documentation, while others thrive in team-based or field-oriented roles. Misunderstanding these differences often leads to unfair performance evaluations. By applying Jungian insights, administrators can create inclusive work environments that value diverse psychological strengths.
3. **Improve Communication and Coordination:** Effective communication in public administration depends on understanding how individuals express and interpret information. Jung's theory explains why some officers prefer written communication and detailed reports, while others rely on verbal discussion and direct interaction. For instance, coordination between planning departments and field agencies improves when communication styles are adjusted to suit different personality orientations. This psychological awareness enhances cooperation and reduces misinterpretation.
4. **Reduce Interpersonal Conflict:** Many interpersonal conflicts in public organisations arise from personality differences rather than policy disagreements. Jung's framework helps administrators recognise that conflict may result from contrasting psychological orientations, such as introversion versus extroversion. Awareness of these differences encourages tolerance and mutual respect among colleagues. As a result, administrators can resolve conflicts more effectively by addressing underlying behavioural patterns instead of assigning blame.

Jung's Theory and Modern Personality Tools

► Myers–Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)

Jung's concepts form the theoretical foundation of modern personality assessment tools such as the Myers–Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). MBTI has been widely used in leadership training programmes, including civil service and public sector



capacity-building initiatives, to improve self-awareness and team effectiveness. Governments in countries such as the United Kingdom and Singapore have incorporated personality-based training modules into administrative development programmes. These applications demonstrate the continued relevance of Jung's ideas in contemporary public administration.

3.2.1.3 Contributions of Alfred Adler

1. Individual Psychology and Social Interest

► Individual Psychology

Alfred Adler (1870–1937), a contemporary of Freud, developed Individual Psychology as an alternative approach that emphasised social relationships, purposeful behaviour, and community life. Adler rejected Freud's heavy focus on sexual instincts and unconscious repression, arguing instead that human behaviour is largely shaped by conscious goals and social context. He believed that individuals are motivated by a desire to belong and contribute meaningfully to society. This perspective makes Adler's theory particularly relevant to public administration, which is rooted in service, responsibility, and collective welfare.

Adler viewed individuals as goal-oriented and socially embedded, rather than driven solely by inner conflict. In administrative organisations, behaviour is often influenced by professional identity, social recognition, and commitment to public values. For example, civil servants working in health, education, or social welfare sectors often derive motivation from service outcomes rather than personal reward. Adler's theory thus aligns closely with the normative foundations of public service.

2. Rejection of Freud's Emphasis on Sexual Instincts

Adler strongly disagreed with Freud's view that sexual instincts are the primary drivers of human behaviour. He argued that such an explanation ignored the importance of social environment, cultural expectations, and personal purpose. According to Adler, individuals act based on how they interpret their position in society and their desire to achieve competence and respect. In public administration, this explains why officers often prioritise reputation, service record, and social impact over personal gratification.

Adler's departure from Freud made psychoanalysis more applicable to organisational and administrative contexts. Public officials are influenced by institutional roles, public expectations, and ethical norms rather than instinctual drives alone. This shift allows administrators to be seen as responsible social actors capable of self-direction. Adler's ideas, therefore, offer a more practical framework for understanding administrative behaviour.

3. Motivation to Overcome Weakness and Achieve Significance

According to Adler, individuals are motivated by a universal feeling of inferiority arising from human limitations and social comparison. This feeling is not negative; rather, it stimulates effort, improvement, and growth. In public administration, officers often strive to enhance their competence, authority, and professional standing to overcome perceived inadequacies. For instance, young probationary officers may work diligently to establish credibility and confidence within the administrative system.

► Pursuit of excellence and usefulness

Adler referred to this process as the striving for superiority, not in a dominating sense, but as a pursuit of excellence and usefulness. When guided positively, this motivation leads to innovation, responsibility, and effective leadership. However, if misdirected, it may result in authoritarianism or excessive competition. Understanding this dynamic helps administrators channel ambition toward constructive public service.

4. Social Interest and Public Service

A key concept in Adler's theory is social interest, which refers to an individual's concern for others' welfare and commitment to the common good. Adler believed that psychological health is reflected in the ability to cooperate and contribute to society. In public administration, social interest is evident in administrators who prioritise equity, inclusiveness, and citizen welfare. Examples include officials who design participatory governance programmes or ensure fair delivery of public services.

Social interest forms the ethical foundation of public service motivation. Administrators with strong social interests are more likely to act with integrity and empathy. Modern public administration theories on public service values resonate



strongly with Adler's ideas. Hence, Adler's theory provides both psychological and moral insight into administrative behaviour.

3.2.1.3.1 Key Concepts of Adler

► Inferiority, compensation and social interest

Alfred Adler's Individual Psychology is built around a few core ideas that explain human motivation in social and organisational life. Among these, inferiority, compensation and social interest are especially relevant for understanding behaviour in public administration. Adler viewed individuals as purposeful beings who strive for significance within their social environment. These concepts help explain leadership behaviour, ethical conduct, and motivation among public servants.

1. Inferiority and Compensation

Adler argued that feelings of inferiority are a universal human experience, often originating in early childhood due to physical, social, or psychological limitations. These feelings motivate individuals to compensate by developing skills, authority, or competence. In public administration, excessive assertiveness, rigid control, or domination by some officials may reflect an attempt to compensate for underlying insecurity. For example, an officer who insists on absolute control over subordinates may be unconsciously attempting to overcome feelings of inadequacy.

However, Adler emphasised that compensation can also be positive and healthy. When individuals channel their sense of inferiority into learning, hard work, and self-improvement, they develop a sense of dedication and professional excellence. Many committed public servants demonstrate this form of healthy compensation by continuously improving administrative efficiency and service delivery. Understanding this distinction helps in evaluating leadership behaviour more accurately.

2. Social Interest

► Concern for the welfare of others

Social interest is a central concept in Adler's theory, referring to an individual's genuine concern for the welfare of others and society as a whole. Adler believed that psychological health is reflected in cooperation, empathy, and a sense of social responsibility. In public administration, social interest is evident when officials prioritise public welfare over personal benefit. Administrators who design inclusive welfare policies or ensure equitable service delivery reflect strong social interest.

Public administrators with high social interest demonstrate citizen-centric governance and ethical leadership. For instance, officers implementing participatory development programmes or transparent grievance-redressal systems demonstrate a commitment to collective well-being. Such behaviour strengthens public trust and institutional legitimacy. Adler considered social interest the foundation of both effective leadership and moral responsibility.

Adler's Individual Psychology offers valuable insights into contrasting patterns of behaviour among public administrators. His theory explains why some officers misuse authority, while others adopt ethical, service-oriented leadership styles. By focusing on feelings of inferiority, compensation, and social interest, Adler provides a psychological explanation for both constructive and destructive administrative behaviour. This makes his ideas highly relevant to understanding leadership, motivation, and ethics in public administration.

3.2.1.3.2 Relevance to Public Administration

1. Misuse of Authority to Prove Superiority

According to Adler, individuals who experience strong feelings of inferiority may attempt to compensate by dominating and controlling others. In public administration, this can manifest as authoritarian behaviour, excessive use of power, or unwillingness to delegate. For example, an officer who rigidly enforces minor rules or discourages participation may be unconsciously trying to assert superiority. Such behaviour often damages morale and reduces organisational effectiveness.

► Overcompensation

Adler described this as overcompensation, where the pursuit of superiority becomes unhealthy. Rather than serving public interest, authority is used for self-validation. Understanding this psychological pattern helps institutions identify leadership problems early. It also encourages corrective measures such as mentoring and behavioural training.

2. Inclusive and Service-Oriented Leadership

In contrast, Adler believed that psychologically healthy individuals develop social interest, which directs their efforts toward collective welfare rather than personal dominance. In public administration, such officers demonstrate inclusive

leadership by encouraging participation, collaboration, and transparency. Examples include administrators who involve local communities in development planning or prioritise marginalised groups in welfare programmes. Their leadership reflects confidence without arrogance.

Service-oriented administrators focus on outcomes that benefit society rather than personal recognition. Adler viewed this orientation as the highest form of psychological maturity. Such leadership builds trust, cooperation, and long-term institutional credibility. It aligns closely with democratic governance principles.

3. Alignment with Administrative Training and Values

► Humility, teamwork, and service values

Training programmes that emphasise humility, teamwork, and service values closely reflect Adler's philosophy of Individual Psychology. Modern civil service training increasingly focuses on emotional intelligence, ethical reasoning, and collaborative problem-solving. These approaches help officers channel ambition into positive social contribution rather than personal dominance. Adler's ideas thus provide a psychological foundation for values-based administrative training.

By encouraging cooperation and social responsibility, Adler's theory supports sustainable leadership development. It helps create administrators who are both competent and compassionate. As a result, Adler's relevance to public administration extends beyond theory into practical governance.

3.2.1.4 Contributions of Eric Berne

Eric Berne (1910–1970) made a significant contribution to psychoanalytical thought by translating complex psychological ideas into a simple, practical, and observable framework. Unlike earlier psychoanalysts who focused mainly on inner conflict, Berne emphasised everyday communication and social interaction. His ideas gained wide acceptance in organisational behaviour, management training, and leadership development. In public administration, Berne's work helps explain communication patterns, authority relationships, and interpersonal conflict.

3.2.1.4.1 Transactional Analysis (TA)

Transactional Analysis (TA) is a psychoanalytical framework developed by Eric Berne to analyse how people interact

► Inappropriate ego-state interactions

in social and organisational settings. Berne believed that communication failures and conflicts arise from inappropriate ego-state interactions rather than from structural problems alone. TA is widely used in organisations because it provides a clear method for improving communication and teamwork. In public administration, TA is applied in leadership training, grievance handling, and citizen interaction.

Berne's approach is particularly useful in bureaucratic environments where hierarchical communication is common. Misunderstandings between superiors and subordinates often stem from emotional or authoritative responses rather than rational dialogue. TA helps administrators identify these patterns and adjust their behaviour. This makes it a practical tool for improving administrative effectiveness.

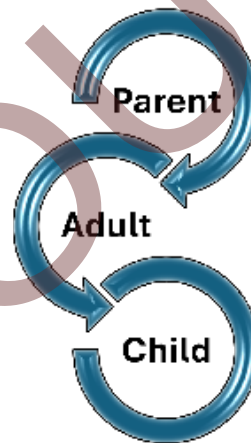


Fig. 3.2.3 Transactional Analysis

Parent (Authoritative, Rule-Oriented)

The Parent ego state reflects behaviours, attitudes, and values learned from authority figures such as parents, teachers, or supervisors. It is characterised by rule-following, discipline, and moral judgement. In public administration, the Parent state is visible when senior officers enforce rules, issue directives, or correct subordinates. For example, a departmental head strictly insisting on procedural compliance is operating from the Parent ego state.

While the Parent state is necessary for maintaining order and discipline, excessive reliance on it can suppress initiative and creativity. When administrators communicate only from a critical Parent position, it may create fear and resistance among

staff. Berne emphasised the need to balance authority with understanding. Effective administrators use the Parent state constructively rather than punitively.

Adult (Rational, Objective)

► Facts, logic, and problem-solving

The Adult ego state represents rational thinking, objective analysis, and evidence-based decision-making. It focuses on facts, logic, and problem-solving rather than emotion or authority. In public administration, the Adult state is crucial for policy analysis, budgeting, and administrative planning. For instance, an officer assessing data before implementing a welfare scheme demonstrates Adult-oriented behaviour.

Communication from the Adult ego state promotes clarity, cooperation, and mutual respect. It is especially important during negotiations, conflict resolution, and inter-departmental coordination. Berne considered the Adult state the most effective for organisational functioning. Civil service training programmes aim to strengthen this ego state through analytical and decision-making exercises.

Child (Emotional, Spontaneous)

The Child ego state reflects emotions, creativity, and spontaneous responses developed in early life. It includes feelings such as enthusiasm, fear, frustration, or excitement. In public administration, the Child state may appear when officers react emotionally to criticism, feel anxious under pressure, or show enthusiasm for innovative projects. For example, defensive reactions during audits often reflect a child's response.

Although the Child state can cause emotional reactions, it is also a source of creativity and motivation. Administrators who express empathy and innovation often draw from positive Child energy. Problems arise when decisions are made purely on emotional impulse. Berne stressed the importance of recognising and appropriately managing the Child state.

Relevance of Transactional Analysis to Public-Administration

Transactional Analysis provides administrators with a practical framework for improving communication, reducing conflict, and strengthening leadership effectiveness. By identifying ego states in themselves and others, public officials

can respond more consciously rather than emotionally. TA supports Adult-to-Adult communication, which is essential for transparent governance and collaborative administration. Hence, Eric Berne's contributions remain highly relevant in contemporary public administration.

3.2.1.4.2 Ego States in Public Administration

Eric Berne's concept of ego states provides a practical framework for understanding behaviour and communication within public organisations. In administrative settings, officials constantly shift between Parent, Adult, and Child ego states depending on the situation. Awareness of these states helps administrators manage authority, make sound decisions, and handle interpersonal interactions effectively. This framework is especially useful in hierarchical and citizen-facing public institutions.

Parent State: Strict Rule Enforcement, Disciplinary Actions

The Parent ego state in public administration is reflected in strict adherence to rules, enforcement of discipline, and corrective supervision. Senior officers often operate from this state while issuing orders, conducting inspections, or ensuring procedural compliance. For example, a departmental head initiating disciplinary proceedings for misconduct is acting from the Parent state to maintain organisational order. While necessary for governance, excessive parental behaviour may discourage initiative and open communication.

Constructive use of the Parent state promotes ethical standards and institutional stability. However, when it becomes overly critical or authoritarian, it can lead to fear and resentment among staff. Effective administrators balance firmness with understanding. Berne emphasised that the Parent state should guide rather than dominate.

Adult State: Evidence-Based Policy Decisions

The Adult ego state represents rational thinking, objectivity, and problem-solving based on facts and evidence. In public administration, this state is essential for policy formulation, budgeting, programme evaluation, and administrative planning. For instance, an officer analysing demographic data before launching a welfare scheme is operating from the Adult state. Such behaviour supports transparency and accountability in governance.



Adult-to-Adult communication improves coordination between departments and reduces misunderstandings. It is particularly important during negotiations, crisis management, and inter-agency collaboration. Berne considered the Adult state the most effective for organisational functioning. Civil service training programmes aim to strengthen this state through analytical and decision-making exercises.

Child State: Emotional Reactions, Creativity, Frustration

The Child ego state reflects emotional responses, spontaneity, and creativity rooted in early life experiences. In administrative contexts, this state may surface as frustration during public criticism, anxiety during audits, or enthusiasm for innovative projects. For example, defensive reactions to performance reviews often indicate Child-state behaviour. While such emotions are natural, unchecked Child responses can impair professional judgment.

At the same time, the Child state contributes positively to creativity, empathy, and motivation. Administrators who design innovative citizen services often draw on the positive aspects of this ego state. Problems arise when decisions are made impulsively or emotionally. Berne stressed the importance of recognising and appropriately managing the Child state.

3.2.1.5 Effective Use of Ego States in Administration

Effective administrators operate mainly from the Adult ego state, while using the Parent and Child states in a controlled and appropriate manner. The Adult state ensures balanced decision-making, emotional regulation, and rational governance. By understanding ego-state dynamics, administrators can respond thoughtfully rather than react emotionally. This leads to improved leadership effectiveness and healthier organisational environments.

1. During Grievance Hearings

Grievance hearings are sensitive administrative processes where officials interact directly with aggrieved employees or citizens. The effectiveness of grievance redressal depends largely on the ego state from which the administrator operates, as explained by Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis.

2. Parent dominance may lead to rigid decisions

When an administrator functions predominantly from the Parent ego state, decisions are based strictly on rules, procedures, and past precedents. While this ensures discipline and uniformity, it may ignore the human or contextual aspects of a grievance. For example, an officer who rejects a genuine service-related complaint by merely citing regulations, without exploring possible administrative remedies, may appear authoritarian. Such rigidity can reduce trust in the grievance redressal system and increase dissatisfaction among employees or citizens.

3. Child dominance may cause emotional responses

If the Child ego state dominates, the administrator may react emotionally rather than rationally. This can take the form of irritation when grievances are repeated, excessive sympathy leading to biased decisions, or defensiveness when questioned. For instance, an official becoming visibly annoyed during a public grievance hearing or making impulsive assurances without verification can compromise fairness and administrative credibility. Emotional responses, though human, can undermine professionalism in governance.

4. Adult dominance ensures fairness and objectivity

The Adult ego state represents rational thinking, fact-based analysis, and balanced judgement. Administrators operating from this state listen carefully to grievances, examine evidence, consult relevant rules, and communicate decisions clearly and respectfully. For example, an officer who objectively evaluates documents, considers both administrative constraints and human concerns, and provides reasoned decisions ensures justice and transparency. This approach strengthens public confidence and promotes effective grievance redressal.

Psychoanalytical theories provide deep insight into the psychological foundations of administrative behaviour. Freud explains internal conflicts and ethics; Jung highlights personality differences and leadership styles; Adler emphasises social responsibility and motivation; and Berne offers practical tools for workplace interaction. For Public Administration students, these theories enhance self-awareness, emotional intelligence, ethical judgement, and administrative effectiveness, making them indispensable to the study of organisational behaviour.



Summarized Overview

This unit explores psychoanalytical theories and their relevance to organisational behaviour and public administration. It explains how human behaviour in organisations is shaped not only by formal rules and rational processes but also by unconscious motives, emotions, personality traits, and social experiences. The contributions of Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Alfred Adler, and Eric Berne are discussed in detail to highlight different psychological perspectives on behaviour, leadership, motivation, ethics, and communication. Freud's theory explains internal conflicts through the interaction among the id, ego, and superego, offering insights into stress, misuse of authority, and ethical dilemmas in administration. Jung's concepts of personal and collective unconscious, archetypes, and personality types help in understanding leadership styles, organisational culture, and diversity in work behaviour. Adler's Individual Psychology emphasises social interest, motivation to overcome inferiority, and service-oriented leadership, aligning closely with public service values. Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis provides a practical framework for analysing communication through Parent, Adult, and Child ego states, with special relevance to grievance handling and administrative decision-making. Overall, the unit enhances self-awareness, emotional intelligence, ethical sensitivity, and leadership effectiveness among public administrators.

Self-Assessment

1. Explain the relevance of psychoanalytical theories to organisational behaviour and public administration.
2. Discuss Freud's structure of personality and analyse its implications for ethical decision-making in administration.
3. Examine Carl Jung's concepts of collective unconscious and archetypes with reference to administrative leadership.
4. Critically evaluate Alfred Adler's concept of social interest and its importance for public service motivation.
5. Describe Eric Berne's Transactional Analysis and explain how ego states influence communication in public organisations.

Assignments

1. Observe a public office or organisation and identify examples of Parent, Adult, and Child ego states in communication. Prepare a brief report.
2. Conduct a self-assessment to identify whether you are more introverted or extroverted and analyse how this may affect your leadership style.
3. Analyse a real or reported case of administrative failure or misconduct using Freudian concepts of id, ego, and superego.
4. Prepare a case study on a public administrator who demonstrates strong social interest and service-oriented leadership based on Adler's theory.
5. Design a short training module for civil servants focusing on improving Adult-to-Adult communication in grievance redressal.

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Suggested Reading

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

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Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- comprehend the concept of ego states and their psychoanalytic foundations in organisational behaviour
- analyse managerial communication and leadership styles using Child, Adult, and Parent ego states
- explain ego state awareness to improve decision-making, conflict resolution, and team management
- aware of emotional intelligence and behavioural self-regulation for effective managerial performance

Background

In contemporary organisations, managerial effectiveness is increasingly linked to behavioural competence rather than technical expertise alone. Global studies on workplace behaviour indicate that over 65% of organisational problems, including conflict, communication breakdown, leadership failure, and low employee engagement, originate from ineffective interpersonal interactions rather than structural deficiencies. According to a Gallup Workplace Report (2023), organisations with poor manager–employee communication experience 21% lower productivity and 37% higher absenteeism. These findings underline the importance of understanding behavioural patterns and psychological responses in organisational settings, especially for managers operating in complex, people-driven environments.

Transactional Analysis (TA), developed by Eric Berne, offers a practical psychological framework for analysing everyday workplace interactions through the concepts of Ego States—Child, Adult, and Parent. Unlike abstract personality theories, ego state analysis focuses on observable behaviour, communication styles, and decision-making patterns, making it highly relevant for leadership roles. In managerial contexts such as

performance appraisal, conflict resolution, negotiations, and team leadership, awareness of ego states enables managers to regulate emotions, exercise authority judiciously, and promote rational, evidence-based decision-making. This unit equips learners with behavioural insights to enhance leadership effectiveness, emotional intelligence, and organisational performance.

Keywords

Ego states, Transactional Analysis, Organisational behaviour, Managerial communication, Emotional intelligence

Discussion

3.3.1 Introduction to Ego States in Organisational Behaviour

Understanding human behaviour in organisations is a foundational concern of Public Administration, as the effectiveness of public institutions largely depends on how administrators perceive, interpret, and respond to the behaviour of individuals and groups. Unlike private organisations, public organisations operate in a complex environment characterised by bureaucratic structures, legal accountability, political oversight, public scrutiny, and social diversity. Administrators are therefore required to interact continuously with a wide range of stakeholders, including citizens, elected representatives, senior officials, subordinate staff, pressure groups, and civil society institutions. Each of these interactions involves human emotions, attitudes, expectations, power relations, and communication patterns, making the study of organisational behaviour especially significant in the public sector.

► Transactional Analysis (TA)

One of the most influential psychological frameworks for analysing interpersonal behaviour in organisations is Transactional Analysis (TA), developed by Dr Eric Berne, a Canadian-born psychiatrist, in the 1950s. Berne introduced Transactional Analysis as a practical method for understanding social interactions, communication processes, and personality dynamics. Unlike earlier psychoanalytic theories that focused primarily on unconscious processes, TA emphasises observable behaviour and day-to-day interactions, making it highly relevant for organisational and administrative contexts. Over time, TA

has been widely adopted in management studies, organisational behaviour, leadership training, counselling, and public sector capacity-building programmes.

At the core of Transactional Analysis is the concept of Ego States, which represent consistent patterns of thinking, feeling, and behaving that individuals display in different situations. According to Berne, human behaviour can be understood through three primary ego states:

- **Child Ego State** : reflecting emotional, instinctive, and spontaneous responses, closely associated with Freud's concept of the *Id*.
- **Adult Ego State** : representing rational, logical, and reality-oriented behaviour, corresponding to the *Ego*.
- **Parent Ego State** : reflecting moral values, norms, authority, and learned rules, similar to the *Super-Ego*.

► Dynamic modes of behaviour

It is important to note that these ego states are not stages of childhood development or fixed personality traits. Rather, they are dynamic modes of behaviour that individuals shift between depending on the situation, context, and nature of interaction. A senior administrator, for instance, may display an Adult ego while analysing policy data, a Parent ego while enforcing rules and procedures, and a Child ego when expressing frustration or enthusiasm. Thus, ego states coexist within every individual, regardless of age, position, or experience.

In public organisations such as government departments, local self-government institutions, public hospitals, educational institutions, and regulatory bodies, an understanding of ego states becomes especially valuable. Administrative decision-making often takes place under pressure, uncertainty, and public scrutiny. Conflicts may arise between officials and citizens, between superiors and subordinates, or among different departments. In such contexts, awareness of ego states enables administrators to recognise emotional reactions, avoid authoritarian or impulsive responses, and promote rational, fair, and empathetic communication.

Moreover, the application of ego-state analysis directly improves leadership effectiveness, conflict resolution, teamwork, grievance handling, and service delivery in the public sector. Administrators who are conscious of their own ego states and those of others are better equipped to manage stress, handle



public complaints sensitively, motivate employees, and uphold the principles of democratic and ethical governance. Hence, the study of ego states under Transactional Analysis forms an essential component of Organisational Behaviour for Public Administration students, bridging psychological insight with practical administrative action.

3.3.2 Conceptual Background: Ego States and - Psychoanalytic Roots

The concept of ego states in Transactional Analysis has its intellectual roots in classical psychoanalytic theory, particularly in Sigmund Freud's structural model of personality. Freud's model was developed to explain the internal psychological dynamics that influence human behaviour. Although Freud's ideas were originally intended for clinical analysis, they later provided a theoretical foundation for understanding behaviour in social and organisational contexts.

According to Freud, human personality is structured around three interacting components:

- **Id** : the instinctual and emotional component of personality
- **Ego** : the rational and reality-oriented component
- **Super-Ego** : the moral, ethical, and normative component

The Id represents the most primitive part of the personality and operates on the *pleasure principle*. It seeks immediate gratification of basic instincts, such as hunger, aggression, and emotional expression, without regard for social norms or consequences. In organisational settings, Id-driven behaviour may be observed when individuals react impulsively, express anger openly, resist authority, or prioritise personal comfort over organisational goals.

► *Pleasure principle*

The Ego, in contrast, operates on the *reality principle*. It mediates between the demands of the Id, the constraints of reality, and the moral standards imposed by the Superego. The Ego evaluates situations logically, delays gratification when necessary, and chooses appropriate courses of action. In administrative and organisational contexts, Ego-dominated behaviour is reflected in rational decision-making, problem-solving, planning, and the balancing of competing interests.

► *Reality principle*

► Intrapsychic

The Super-Ego represents the internalised moral standards, values, and rules acquired from parents, teachers, institutions, and society. It functions as the conscience of the individual, guiding behaviour through notions of duty, obligation, and ethical correctness. In public administration, Super-Ego influences adherence to laws, rules, codes of conduct, and professional ethics, shaping an administrator's sense of responsibility and public service values.

While Freud's structural model offered deep insights into personality development, it was largely intrapsychic, focusing on internal mental processes rather than observable social interactions. Recognising this limitation, Eric Berne reinterpreted these psychoanalytic ideas and transformed them into a more practical, behaviour-oriented framework, known as Transactional Analysis. Berne retained the core logic of Id, Ego, and Super-Ego but reframed them as Child, Adult, and Parent ego states, which could be identified through everyday communication and behaviour.

Berne's major contribution lies in shifting the focus from unconscious drives to observable transactions between individuals. He argued that ego states are not hidden mental structures but visible patterns of behaviour, speech, tone, posture, and emotional response. This made the theory particularly suitable for organisational analysis, where communication, authority, conflict, and cooperation play a central role.

In organisational and administrative settings, Berne's ego state model allows scholars and practitioners to analyse:

- a. How authority is exercised and perceived
- b. Why conflicts escalate or get resolved
- c. How leadership styles influence employee behaviour
- d. How communication failures occur in bureaucratic systems

By adapting Freud's psychoanalytic concepts into a communication-centred and situational framework, Eric Berne made ego state analysis accessible to managers, administrators, and policy practitioners. As a result, the concept of ego states became a powerful analytical tool in Organisational Behaviour, bridging psychology and public administration and offering practical insights into human behaviour within formal organisations. Let's understand each of these states in detail.

3.3.2.1 Child Ego State (Id-Oriented Behaviour)

Meaning and Nature

The Child Ego State represents the emotional, instinctive, and spontaneous dimension of human personality. It consists of thoughts, feelings, and behavioural patterns that individuals originally experienced and internalised during childhood. This ego state is closely associated with Sigmund Freud's concept of the Id, which operates on impulse, emotion, and the immediate expression of needs.

In organisational settings, the Child ego emerges when individuals respond emotionally rather than rationally to situations. Such responses are often automatic and unfiltered, shaped by earlier experiences of authority, reward, punishment, or affection. While the Child ego is commonly perceived as immature or unprofessional, it is important to recognise that it also contributes creativity, enthusiasm, and emotional energy to organisational life.

Eric Berne further classified the Child ego into two broad forms, each with distinct behavioural implications:

1. **Free Child** – This form reflects spontaneity, creativity, curiosity, playfulness, and emotional openness. It enables individuals to express ideas freely, take initiative, and engage imaginatively with problems.
2. **Adapted Child** – This form develops in response to authority and social expectations. It may appear as compliance, obedience, fearfulness, dependency, withdrawal, or, in some cases, rebellion and passive resistance.

Both forms coexist within individuals and surface depending on organisational climate, leadership style, and situational pressures.

Key Characteristics of the Child Ego State

The Child ego state is characterised by a strong emotional orientation. Its major features include:

- i. **Emotional reactions** such as anger, fear, anxiety, excitement, frustration, or enthusiasm, often expressed without conscious regulation.

- ii. **A desire for approval, recognition, or reassurance**, particularly from authority figures such as superiors or political executives.
- iii. **Resistance to authority** in the form of defiance, sarcasm, or passive non-cooperation, or conversely, **excessive dependency** on instructions and approval.
- iv. **Creativity and innovation**, especially when the Free Child is dominant, enabling fresh thinking and unconventional problem-solving.

These characteristics explain why the Child ego can be both constructive and disruptive, depending on the context and degree of control exercised by the Adult ego state.

Child Ego State in Public Administration

In public administration, Child ego behaviour frequently surfaces in emotionally charged or high-pressure situations. Bureaucratic work environments often involve tight deadlines, public criticism, political interference, and procedural rigidity, which can trigger emotional responses among officials and staff.

Child ego manifestations are commonly observed during:

- i. **Stressful work conditions**, such as disaster management, election duty, or crisis situations, where fear, anxiety, or frustration may override rational judgment.
- ii. **Grievance redressal processes**, when employees or citizens feel unheard or unfairly treated and respond emotionally rather than constructively.
- iii. **Performance appraisal and feedback sessions**, where criticism may be perceived as personal attack, leading to defensiveness, withdrawal, or resentment.
- iv. **Union negotiations and collective bargaining**, where emotional identification with group interests may result in confrontational or rebellious behaviour.

Example: Innovation at the District Level

Several District Collectors in India have successfully encouraged innovative governance practices by allowing space

for Free Child creativity within a structured administrative environment. Initiatives such as participatory budgeting, citizen hackathons, youth idea competitions, and grassroots innovation challenges are examples of ways administrators deliberately move beyond conventional bureaucratic thinking.

For instance, district-level citizen hackathons invite students, civil society members, and start-ups to propose technology-driven solutions to local governance issues such as waste management, water supply, and grievance tracking. In these settings, administrators adopt an Adult ego to evaluate feasibility and compliance with rules, while simultaneously allowing Free Child expression to generate novel ideas. This balance ensures that creativity does not descend into chaos, nor does rationality stifle innovation.

Analytical Insight

The key lesson from this case is that effective public administration does not require the suppression of emotions or creativity but rather their appropriate regulation and integration. Administrators who recognise Adapted Child reactions during grievance handling can respond with Adult ego communication, thereby restoring rational dialogue. At the same time, by consciously encouraging Free Child behaviour in suitable contexts, public organisations can become more adaptive, citizen-centric, and innovative.

Thus, the Child Ego State, when understood and managed properly, contributes not only to understanding administrative challenges but also to reimagining governance in more humane and participatory ways.

Case: Grievance Redressal in a Government Office

Grievance redressal mechanisms are a critical component of public administration, as they directly influence citizen satisfaction, trust in government, and administrative accountability. Such situations often place officials under psychological pressure, especially when grievances involve delays, service failures, or allegations of negligence. These conditions can easily activate emotional responses associated with the Child Ego State.

In a typical government office, a junior clerk is questioned by a senior officer or a grievance redressal committee regarding

delays in issuing income or caste certificates. Instead of calmly outlining procedural requirements such as verification delays, staff shortages, or technical issues with digital platforms, the employee reacts defensively. The clerk may raise their voice, attribute blame to other departments, or express resentment towards workload or public pressure. In some cases, the official may appear anxious, withdrawn, or visibly irritated.

This behaviour clearly reflects Adapted Child ego functioning, in which fear of authority, perceived threats to self-esteem, and anxiety about possible disciplinary action dominate rational communication. The employee's response is shaped not by present realities but by earlier learned reactions to authority figures, such as avoiding blame or seeking self-protection. As a result, constructive dialogue breaks down, and the focus shifts from problem-solving to emotional defence.

From an organisational behaviour perspective, such Child ego responses can escalate conflicts, delay grievance resolution, and damage the image of public institutions. When senior officers respond with a Critical Parent ego, through reprimands or harsh criticism, the interaction may further deteriorate, reinforcing fear and resistance rather than accountability.

Positive Role of the Child Ego in Public Administration

While excessive or uncontrolled Child ego behaviour can undermine administrative efficiency, it is equally important to recognise that the Child Ego State is not inherently negative. When expressed in a balanced and regulated manner, particularly as the Free Child, it becomes a valuable resource for innovation and responsiveness in public administration.

A healthy Free Child ego contributes significantly to:

- i. Policy innovation**, by encouraging administrators to think beyond rigid procedures and explore alternative solutions to complex social problems.
- ii. Community engagement programmes**, where emotional openness, empathy, and enthusiasm help build trust with citizens and marginalised groups.
- iii. Creative problem-solving in welfare schemes**, especially when standard rules fail to address ground-level realities.

3.3.2.2 Adult Ego State (Ego-Centred Behaviour)

Meaning and Nature

► Rational, logical, and reality-oriented aspect

The Adult Ego State represents the rational, logical, and reality-oriented aspect of human personality. It functions as the analytical centre of behaviour, processing information objectively and responding to situations based on facts rather than emotions or ingrained norms. In Transactional Analysis, the Adult ego corresponds closely to Freud's concept of the Ego, which mediates between instinctual impulses and moral constraints while engaging with the external environment practically.

In organisational and administrative contexts, the Adult ego operates like an information-processing system. It collects relevant data, assesses available alternatives, evaluates consequences, and selects the most appropriate course of action. Unlike the Child ego, which reacts emotionally, or the Parent ego, which responds based on learned rules or authority, the Adult ego focuses on what is appropriate in the present situation.

For public administration, the Adult ego is considered the most desirable and functional ego state, as governance fundamentally requires rational judgement, impartiality, and adherence to evidence and law. Administrative decisions often affect large populations and involve public resources; hence, emotional impulses or moral rigidity alone are insufficient for effective governance.

Key Characteristics of the Adult Ego State

The Adult ego is distinguished by several interrelated characteristics that enhance administrative competence:

- a. **Rational thinking**, enabling administrators to analyse complex problems, interpret regulations, and assess risks logically.
- b. **Objective decision-making**, free from personal bias, emotional reactions, or undue influence from external pressures.
- c. **Problem-solving orientation**, focusing on identifying root causes and workable solutions rather than assigning blame.

- d. **Emotional control**, allowing administrators to remain calm and composed during crises, public criticism, or conflict situations.
- e. **Evidence-based approach**, relying on data, research findings, reports, and expert opinion to guide policy and administrative action.

These characteristics make the Adult ego particularly relevant in environments marked by uncertainty, accountability demands, and public scrutiny.

Importance of Adult Ego in Public Administration

Public administrators are entrusted with responsibilities that require neutrality, fairness, and professionalism. The Adult ego enables them to fulfil these expectations by ensuring that decisions are guided by reason rather than impulse or prejudice. Specifically, administrators are expected to:

- i. **Interpret laws and policies objectively**, applying rules uniformly while considering contextual realities and legal provisions.
- ii. **Balance political pressure with administrative neutrality**, maintaining professional independence while remaining responsive to democratic authority.
- iii. **Make decisions based on data, rules, and public interest**, rather than personal preferences, emotional reactions, or populist demands.

For example, while implementing a welfare scheme, an administrator operating from the Adult ego will rely on eligibility criteria, socio-economic data, and budgetary constraints rather than personal sympathy or political favouritism.

Adult Ego and Principles of Good Governance

The Adult ego state forms the psychological foundation of good governance. It directly supports core administrative values such as:

- i. **Ethical governance**, by enabling reasoned moral judgement rather than rigid moralism or emotional indulgence.



- ii. **Transparency**, through clear documentation, rational explanations, and openness in decision-making processes.
- iii. **Accountability**, as decisions based on facts and rules can be justified and reviewed objectively.
- iv. **Rule of law**, ensuring that administrative action remains within legal boundaries and respects procedural fairness.

Example: Evidence-Based Policy Implementation

In implementing flagship programmes such as the Public Distribution System (PDS) and MGNREGA, administrators increasingly rely on digital records, beneficiary databases, social audits, and performance indicators. Decisions regarding the allocation of funds, beneficiary identification, and grievance redressal are made based on verified data rather than on discretion or emotional appeals. Such practices reflect Adult ego dominance, enhancing efficiency, fairness, and public trust.

In essence, the Adult Ego State represents the professional self of the public administrator. While the Child ego brings creativity, the Parent ego ensures discipline, and it is the Adult ego that integrates these elements into rational and lawful action. For students of Public Administration, understanding and cultivating Adult ego behaviour is essential for effective leadership, ethical decision-making, and responsive governance in contemporary public organisations.

The COVID-19 pandemic posed an unprecedented challenge to public administration across the world, demanding swift action under conditions of uncertainty, fear, and public anxiety. In this context, Kerala's administrative response emerged as a widely cited example of effective crisis governance, both within India and internationally. From the perspective of Transactional Analysis, Kerala's approach illustrates the dominance of the Adult Ego State, where rational judgement, evidence-based decision-making, and emotional regulation guided administrative action.

From the early stages of the pandemic, Kerala's government and administrative machinery prioritised data-driven and scientific decision-making over impulsive or authoritarian responses. Rather than succumbing to public panic or political pressure, officials relied systematically on:

- a. **Epidemiological data**, including infection rates, contact tracing outcomes, hospital occupancy, and mortality patterns, to assess the evolving situation and calibrate responses.
- b. **Expert committees**, comprising public health specialists, epidemiologists, virologists, and medical practitioners, whose recommendations informed policy decisions such as lockdown measures, quarantine protocols, and vaccination strategies.
- c. **Transparent public communication**, through daily press briefings and health bulletins, which clearly explained the rationale behind decisions, thereby reducing misinformation and public anxiety.

This approach reflects clear Adult Ego dominance, as administrators processed factual information objectively, evaluated alternative courses of action, and chose responses grounded in scientific evidence and situational realities. Emotional reactions associated with the Child ego, such as fear or denial, were consciously regulated, while rigid, punitive measures characteristic of an unchecked Parent ego were avoided wherever possible.

Adult Ego in Crisis Leadership

Kerala's COVID-19 governance also highlights the broader role of the Adult ego in administrative leadership, especially during crises. Leaders operating from a strong Adult ego state demonstrated the ability to balance empathy with rationality, authority with consultation, and urgency with procedural fairness.

Administrators exhibiting Adult ego dominance typically:

- i. **Encourage dialogue**, engaging with health professionals, local self-government institutions, civil society organisations, and the media to ensure coordinated action.
- ii. **Manage conflicts constructively**, particularly those arising between public health requirements and economic or social concerns, by facilitating negotiation and consensus.

- iii. **Use performance metrics**, such as recovery rates, testing coverage, and vaccination progress, to monitor outcomes and refine strategies.
- iv. **Promote evidence-based policymaking**, ensuring that interventions are continuously adjusted in response to new data and scientific insights.

Administrative Significance

The Kerala COVID-19 case demonstrates that effective public administration during crises does not depend solely on authority or emotional appeals but on the capacity to remain rational under pressure. Adult ego-driven leadership enhances public trust, improves compliance with government directives, and ensures that administrative actions are defensible, transparent, and accountable.

For students and practitioners of Public Administration, this case underscores the importance of cultivating the Adult ego state as a core leadership competency. It shows how rationality, evidence, and clear communication can transform complex crises into manageable administrative challenges, reinforcing the central role of the Adult Ego State in contemporary governance.

3.3.2.3 Parent Ego State (Super-Ego-Driven Behaviour)

► Normative, moral, and authority-oriented dimension

The Parent Ego State represents the normative, moral, and authority-oriented dimension of human personality. It consists of attitudes, values, rules, ethical standards, and behavioural patterns that individuals internalise from parents, teachers, supervisors, social institutions, and cultural traditions. In Transactional Analysis, the Parent ego closely corresponds to Sigmund Freud's concept of the Super-Ego, which serves as the internal moral authority that guides judgments of right and wrong.

Unlike the Adult ego, which evaluates situations based on present facts, the Parent ego relies on pre-learned rules and value systems. It answers questions such as "*What should be done?*" or "*What is acceptable?*" rather than "*What is objectively appropriate in this situation?*". In organisational life, particularly in public administration, the Parent ego plays a crucial role in maintaining order, discipline, continuity, and ethical conduct.

Eric Berne identified two distinct forms of the Parent ego, both of which are relevant to administrative behaviour:

- a. **Nurturing Parent** – This form is supportive, protective, empathetic, and encouraging. It seeks to guide individuals, provide assistance, and ensure well-being while upholding standards.
- b. **Critical Parent** – This form is controlling, judgmental, corrective, and authoritative. It emphasises obedience, rule compliance, and discipline, often using commands, warnings, or sanctions.

Effective administration requires a balanced use of both forms, avoiding excessive rigidity or over-indulgence.

Key Characteristics of the Parent Ego State

The Parent ego is marked by several defining features that shape administrative behaviour:

- i. **Moral judgement**, reflecting internalised beliefs about duty, responsibility, fairness, and ethics.
- ii. **Assertion of authority**, through instructions, directives, orders, and supervisory control.
- iii. **Rule enforcement**, ensuring adherence to laws, procedures, service rules, and institutional norms.
- iv. **Guidance and discipline**, aimed at shaping behaviour and maintaining organisational standards.

These characteristics make the Parent ego indispensable for governance, where authority must be exercised within a moral and legal framework.

Parent Ego in Public Administration

Public administration, by its very nature, depends significantly on Parent ego functioning. Administrators are entrusted with enforcing laws, implementing policies, and regulating behaviour in society. In many administrative situations, firm authority and normative judgement are not only necessary but unavoidable.

Parent ego behaviour is especially evident in the following areas:



- i. **Law enforcement**, where officials such as police officers and magistrates exercise authority to maintain public order and ensure compliance with legal norms.
- ii. **Regulatory agencies**, including tax departments, environmental authorities, and licensing bodies, which set standards and impose penalties for non-compliance.
- iii. **Disciplinary proceedings**, where administrators investigate misconduct, issue charge memos, and enforce service rules to maintain organisational integrity.
- iv. **Policy implementation**, particularly in welfare and regulatory policies, where administrators ensure that programmes are executed according to prescribed guidelines.

Example: Disciplinary Control in Government Service

When a government servant repeatedly violates service rules, such as habitual absenteeism or misuse of official resources, the disciplinary authority initiates proceedings under applicable service conduct rules. The issuance of show-cause notices, suspension orders, or penalties reflects Critical Parent ego behaviour, which is essential for maintaining discipline and accountability within the public service.

At the same time, providing counselling, training opportunities, or workload adjustments reflects the Nurturing Parent ego, aimed at correction rather than punishment alone.

Risks of Imbalanced Parent Ego

While the Parent ego is necessary for governance, its excessive or unreflective use can create serious organisational problems. Over-dominance of the Critical Parent may lead to:

- i. Bureaucratic rigidity and red tape
- ii. Authoritarian leadership styles
- iii. Suppression of initiative and innovation
- iv. Alienation of employees and citizens

Conversely, excessive Nurturing Parent behaviour may result in lax discipline, favouritism, or erosion of accountability.

In public administration, the Parent Ego State functions as the custodian of norms, ethics, and institutional authority. When balanced with the rationality of the Adult ego and the creativity of the Child ego, it contributes to effective, ethical, and humane governance. For administrators, the challenge lies not in avoiding the Parent ego but in exercising it judiciously, ensuring that authority serves public interest rather than undermining democratic and administrative values.

Case: Enforcement of Environmental Regulations — An Illustration of Parent Ego Behaviour

Environmental governance provides a clear and practical illustration of the Parent Ego State in action within public administration. State and Central Pollution Control Boards are statutory bodies entrusted with enforcing environmental laws such as the *Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974* and the *Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981*. Their role inherently involves authority, regulation, and moral responsibility towards society and future generations.

When Pollution Control Boards issue closure notices, fines, or directions to industries that violate emission or effluent standards, they are exercising Critical Parent ego behaviour. This form of Parent ego is essential in regulatory administration, as it reinforces compliance, deters violations, and signals the seriousness of environmental norms. In such situations, leniency or emotional considerations could undermine public interest and ecological sustainability.

However, effective environmental regulation does not rely solely on punitive action. When regulatory authorities simultaneously provide technical guidance, compliance timelines, capacity-building support, or advisory services, such as recommending cleaner technologies or waste treatment solutions, they demonstrate Nurturing Parent ego behaviour. This balanced approach not only enforces the law but also helps regulated entities understand and meet environmental standards. By combining firmness with guidance, administrators ensure long-term compliance and cooperative governance rather than mere coercion.

Risks of Excessive Parent Ego in Public Administration

While the Parent ego is indispensable for maintaining order, discipline, and legality, its overuse or rigid application can



create significant administrative dysfunctions. An excessively dominant Parent ego, especially in its Critical form, often leads to outcomes that contradict the broader objectives of public administration.

Overuse of the Parent ego may result in:

- i. **Bureaucratic rigidity**, where officials adhere mechanically to rules without considering contextual realities or administrative discretion.
- ii. **Red tape**, characterised by excessive procedures, documentation requirements, and delays that frustrate citizens.
- iii. **Citizen alienation** occurs when individuals perceive public institutions as unresponsive, insensitive, or hostile.
- iv. **Authoritarian leadership**, where power is exercised through command and control rather than consultation and reasoned judgement.

Welfare Administration Example

A common illustration of excessive Critical Parent behaviour can be seen in welfare delivery systems. For instance, officials who refuse pension benefits, ration cards, or housing assistance due to minor documentation errors, such as spelling mistakes, outdated certificates, or technical glitches in digital portals, often display rigid, rule-bound behaviour. While adherence to rules is necessary to prevent misuse, an uncompromising approach may defeat the social justice and welfare objectives of public policy.

Such cases highlight the dangers of allowing the Parent ego to operate without the moderating influence of the Adult ego, which assesses feasibility and intent, and the Nurturing Parent, which prioritises citizen welfare and support.

Analytical Insight

The enforcement of environmental regulations demonstrates that authority and care are not mutually exclusive. Effective public administration requires administrators to exercise the Parent ego with sensitivity, ensuring that discipline is balanced

with guidance and empathy. When the Parent ego operates in harmony with the Adult ego's rationality and the Child ego's creativity, public organisations can uphold laws while remaining citizen-centric and development-oriented.

This balance is particularly crucial in regulatory and welfare administration, where the goal is not merely rule enforcement but the achievement of sustainable and inclusive public outcomes.

3.3.2.4 Comparative Understanding of Ego States

Table 3.3.1 Comparison of Ego States

Ego State	Core Orientation	Strengths	Risks
Child	Emotional & instinctive	Creativity, empathy	Impulsiveness, conflict
Adult	Rational & objective	Fairness, efficiency	Over-mechanisation
Parent	Normative & moral	Discipline, order	Rigidity, authoritarianism

Application of Ego States in Organisational Behaviour

The practical value of ego state analysis lies in its wide-ranging application to everyday organisational functioning. In public administration, where interpersonal relationships, authority structures, and accountability mechanisms intersect, understanding ego states enables administrators to improve leadership quality, manage conflicts effectively, and enhance organisational capacity. Transactional Analysis offers administrators a behavioural lens through which they can consciously regulate their own responses and interpret others' behaviour.

1. Leadership and Administration

Leadership in public organisations requires a careful balance between authority, rationality, and empathy. Ego states play a decisive role in shaping leadership style and administrative effectiveness.

- a. **Adult-dominant leaders ensure fairness and transparency** by making decisions based on rules, data, and public interest rather than personal bias or emotional reactions. Such leaders encourage reasoned discussion, document decisions, and remain open to review and

accountability. This approach strengthens institutional credibility and public trust.

- b. Nurturing Parent leadership builds morale** by providing guidance, support, and recognition to subordinates. Administrators who adopt this style mentor junior officials, address work-related stress, and create a supportive organisational climate without compromising standards.
- c. Limited and well-regulated Free Child behaviour promotes innovation**, particularly in problem-solving, service delivery reforms, and citizen engagement initiatives. Leaders who allow space for creative thinking and experimentation—while maintaining administrative discipline—foster adaptability and responsiveness within public institutions.

Effective leadership in public administration thus emerges not from the dominance of a single ego state but from a context-sensitive integration of Adult rationality, Parent responsibility, and Child creativity.

2. Conflict Management

Conflicts are inevitable in organisations due to differences in roles, interests, perceptions, and expectations. Ego states significantly influence how such conflicts are handled.

- a. Adult–Adult transactions reduce workplace conflicts** by focusing on facts, mutual understanding, and problem-solving. When administrators and employees engage through the Adult ego, discussions remain objective, and disagreements are addressed constructively without personalisation.
- b. Parent–Child interactions may escalate disputes**, especially when authority is exercised in a commanding or judgmental manner, and the response is emotional or defensive. Such interactions often lead to resistance, resentment, or passive non-cooperation.

For example, a supervisor reprimanding an employee harshly (Critical Parent) may provoke fear or rebellion (Adapted Child), intensifying conflict. In contrast, an Adult response—seeking explanations and jointly identifying solutions—restores functional communication. Thus, ego awareness becomes a

critical tool in grievance handling, disciplinary interactions, and labour relations.

3. Training and Capacity Building

Recognising the importance of behavioural competencies, Transactional Analysis is widely used in training and capacity-building programmes across the public sector. These programmes aim to develop administrators' emotional intelligence, communication skills, and leadership effectiveness.

Transactional Analysis is commonly incorporated in:

- i. **Civil service training academies**, to sensitise probationers and in-service officers to interpersonal dynamics and behavioural self-awareness.
- ii. **Leadership development programmes**, focusing on decision-making under pressure, conflict resolution, and ethical leadership.
- iii. **Communication workshops**, aimed at improving negotiation skills, public interaction, and team functioning.

Example: LBSNAA, Mussoorie

The Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), the premier training institution for Indian civil servants, incorporates behavioural training modules that emphasise emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and interpersonal effectiveness. Through group exercises, simulations, and reflective learning sessions, trainee officers are exposed to concepts aligned with Transactional Analysis, enabling them to understand their own behavioural patterns and adapt their communication styles to diverse administrative contexts.

The application of ego states in organisational behaviour transforms abstract psychological concepts into practical administrative tools. By consciously adopting Adult ego communication, judiciously exercising Parent authority, and encouraging constructive Child creativity, public administrators can enhance leadership effectiveness, minimise conflicts, and strengthen institutional capacity. For students of Public Administration, mastering these applications is essential

for developing both professional competence and humane governance practices.

Relevance to Public Administration Practice

Public administration is fundamentally a human-centred activity, where policies, laws, and programmes are translated into action through continuous interaction among individuals and institutions. Unlike purely technical or mechanical systems, public service operates within a social environment shaped by power relations, political expectations, public emotions, and organisational hierarchies. In this context, an understanding of ego states becomes highly relevant for effective administrative practice.

In the course of their duties, public administrators regularly interact with:

- i. **Political executives**, who set policy directions and priorities, are often influenced by electoral considerations and public opinion.
- ii. **Citizens from diverse socio-economic backgrounds**, including vulnerable and marginalised groups, whose needs, expectations, and emotional responses vary widely.
- iii. **Subordinate staff and employee unions**, with whom administrators must negotiate performance, discipline, welfare, and organisational change.

Each of these interactions involves complex communication dynamics in which emotions, authority, rationality, and moral judgement intersect. Awareness of ego states enables administrators to interpret these dynamics more accurately and respond appropriately.

Contribution of Ego State Awareness to Administrative Effectiveness

A conscious understanding of ego states supports several core dimensions of public administration:

- **Responsive governance:** Administrators who recognise emotional reactions (Child ego) in citizens or staff can respond with Adult ego communication, ensuring empathy

without losing objectivity. This improves grievance handling and service responsiveness.

- **Ethical decision-making:** Ego awareness helps administrators balance the moral guidance of the Parent ego with the rational evaluation of the Adult ego, preventing both moral rigidity and emotional bias. This balance strengthens integrity and fairness in decision-making.
- **Citizen-centric administration:** When officials avoid authoritarian Parent behaviour and instead adopt Nurturing Parent and Adult responses, citizens feel respected and heard. This enhances trust in public institutions and improves compliance and cooperation.
- **Stress management:** Administrative roles often involve high pressure, public criticism, and conflicting demands. Recognising one's own Child ego reactions—such as frustration, anxiety, or burnout—allows administrators to consciously shift to Adult ego coping strategies, promoting emotional regulation and professional resilience.

Practical Significance

In practical terms, ego state awareness equips administrators to self-regulate behaviour, manage interpersonal relationships, and adapt leadership styles to situational demands. It transforms routine administrative interactions into opportunities for constructive engagement and problem-solving.

For students and practitioners of Public Administration, the study of ego states is therefore not merely theoretical. It provides a psychological toolkit for navigating the realities of governance, enhancing both administrative efficiency and the human quality of public service.

Ego States, such as Child, Adult, and Parent, offer a powerful framework for understanding behaviour in public organisations. While the Child ego contributes creativity, and the Parent ego ensures discipline, it is the Adult ego that forms the backbone of effective public administration. A mature administrator consciously balances all three ego states to achieve administrative efficiency, ethical governance, and public trust.



Summarized Overview

This unit examines the concept of Ego States—Child, Adult, and Parent—as proposed by Eric Berne in Transactional Analysis and explains their relevance to organisational behaviour and managerial practice. It explores the psychoanalytic roots of ego states in Freud’s Id, Ego, and Superego, and demonstrates how these states influence communication, leadership style, decision-making, and conflict management in organisations. The Child ego reflects emotional and instinctive behaviour, contributing both creativity and impulsiveness. The Adult ego represents rational, objective, and data-driven behaviour, forming the foundation of effective managerial decision-making. The Parent ego embodies authority, values, rules, and ethical standards essential for organisational discipline and governance. Through practical illustrations and managerial applications, the unit highlights the importance of balancing all three ego states to achieve effective leadership, healthy workplace relationships, and organisational efficiency.

Self-Assessment

1. Explain the concept of ego states in Transactional Analysis and discuss their relevance to organisational behaviour.
2. Describe the characteristics of the Child ego state and analyse its positive and negative impact on managerial behaviour.
3. Why is the Adult ego state considered most desirable for managerial decision-making? Illustrate with examples.
4. Discuss the role of the Parent ego state in maintaining discipline and ethical standards in organisations.
5. Examine how an imbalance of ego states can lead to organisational conflict and inefficiency.

Assignments

1. Observe a workplace interaction (real or simulated) and identify the ego states involved. Prepare a brief analytical note.
2. Conduct a self-assessment to identify your dominant ego state and reflect on its impact on your leadership style.
3. Analyse a workplace conflict case and explain how Adult-to-Adult communication could resolve it.

4. Design a short training session for managers on using ego state awareness to improve team communication.
5. Prepare a case study showing how excessive Parent or Child ego behaviour can negatively affect organisational performance.

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Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.

SGOU

BLOCK 4

Authority and Stress Management



UNIT 1

Introduction to Authority

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- explain the concept, nature, and significance of authority in organisations and public administration
- differentiate between authority and power and analyse their implications for organisational behaviour
- identify and evaluate various types of authority and their application in administrative systems
- analyse the role of delegation of authority in improving efficiency, accountability, and stress management

Background

Authority forms the backbone of organisational functioning and governance in both public and private sectors. In modern organisations, especially in public administration, clearly defined authority structures are essential for decision-making, coordination, accountability, and service delivery. According to the OECD (2021), nearly 60% of administrative inefficiencies in public organisations are linked to unclear authority relationships and weak delegation mechanisms, leading to decision delays and increased occupational stress. In large bureaucratic systems like India's public administration, authority is constitutionally and legally derived, making its proper understanding critical for managerial effectiveness and ethical governance.

Empirical evidence further suggests that inappropriate exercise or excessive centralisation of authority significantly contributes to employee stress and burnout. The World Health Organisation (2020) reports that public sector employees experience stress levels 20–25% higher than those in the private sector, primarily due to high accountability pressures combined with limited decision-making autonomy. Against this backdrop, this unit introduces MBA students to the conceptual foundations of authority,

its types, and delegation mechanisms, enabling them to understand how authority can be exercised responsibly to enhance organisational efficiency while minimising stress and role conflict

Keywords

Authority, Delegation, Accountability, Organisational Stress

Discussion

4.1.1 Introduction

► Formal basis for governance

Authority is one of the most fundamental and indispensable concepts in organisational behaviour and public administration. Every administrative system, whether democratic or authoritarian, centralised or decentralised, rests on the effective and legitimate exercise of authority. In public organisations, authority provides the formal basis for governance by clearly defining who has the right to make decisions, issue directives, enforce rules, and allocate public resources. It establishes hierarchical relationships, clarifies roles and responsibilities, and ensures coordinated action among diverse departments and officials. Without a clearly defined authority, administration tends to become disorganised and inefficient; decisions are delayed, rules are inconsistently applied, and responsibility for success or failure becomes blurred. In such situations, accountability, an essential principle of democratic administration, is seriously weakened, leading to public dissatisfaction and administrative paralysis.

► Derived from statutes, rules, or organisational charts

At the same time, authority in public administration is not merely a technical or legal construct derived from statutes, rules, or organisational charts. It also possesses strong psychological, social, and ethical dimensions. The way authority is exercised, whether rigidly or flexibly, coercively or persuasively, has a profound impact on employee morale, motivation, job satisfaction, and organisational climate. Excessive centralisation of authority may create fear, conformity, and stress, while poorly defined authority can lead to confusion, role conflict, and frustration among employees. Empirical studies by the OECD (2021) highlight that ineffective authority structures are a significant cause of administrative stress, role ambiguity,



and burnout in public sector organisations, particularly where accountability is high, but decision-making autonomy is limited. Moreover, the ethical use of authority plays a crucial role in building public trust; misuse or arbitrary exercise of authority undermines legitimacy and weakens citizens' confidence in government institutions.

In this context, a systematic understanding of authority becomes essential not only for achieving organisational efficiency but also for managing stress and promoting humane, ethical governance. This unit therefore introduces the meaning and nature of authority, explains its major types as observed in public organisations, and examines the concept of delegation of authority with special reference to public administration. By doing so, it seeks to equip students with both conceptual clarity and practical insight into how authority can be exercised responsibly, effectively, and sensitively within complex administrative systems.

4.1.2 Concept of Authority

► Legitimate right to command

Authority refers to the legitimate right to command, make decisions, and expect compliance from others within an organisation. It is a formal and institutionalised concept, rooted in the recognised structure of the organisation rather than in personal influence or coercion. Authority enables coordination of activities, enforcement of rules, and achievement of organisational objectives. In administrative systems, authority provides the legal and moral justification for superiors to issue directives and for subordinates to accept and act upon them.

Classical sociologists and administrative theorists have provided influential definitions of authority. Max Weber viewed authority as “the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons.” This definition highlights two important elements: the legitimacy of the command and subordinates' willingness to obey. Authority, therefore, is not mere power or force; it depends on acceptance by those over whom it is exercised. Similarly, Herbert A. Simon defines authority as the “power to make decisions that guide the actions of others.” Simon's perspective emphasises decision-making and administrative rationality, suggesting that authority serves as a mechanism for coordinating individual actions toward organisational goals.

► Distinctive characteristics

In the context of public administration, authority has certain distinctive characteristics that differentiate it from authority in private organisations. First, it is legal in nature, derived from the Constitution, statutes, rules, and regulations. Public officials exercise authority within clearly defined legal boundaries, and any misuse is subject to judicial review. Second, authority is hierarchical, flowing downward through formally established ranks and positions, ensuring clarity in command and control. Third, authority is impersonal, meaning it is attached to the office rather than the individual occupying it; when an officer is transferred, the authority remains with the position. Finally, authority in public administration is accountable, as officials are answerable not only to their superiors but also to legislatures, courts, audit institutions, the media, and the general public.

A clear illustration of this concept can be seen in the role of a District Collector. The Collector has the authority to issue orders related to law and order, disaster management, land revenue administration, and coordination of departmental activities. This authority does not arise from personal competence, seniority, or charisma, but from the statutory powers vested in the office by law. When exercised lawfully, ethically, and responsibly, such authority ensures administrative efficiency, public safety, and effective governance. However, when misunderstood or misused, it can lead to resistance, stress, and erosion of public trust, underlining the importance of a sound conceptual understanding of authority in public administration.

4.1.3 Authority vs Power

While the terms authority and power are often used interchangeably in everyday language, they are conceptually distinct in organisational behaviour and public administration. Understanding this distinction is essential for analysing leadership behaviour, administrative effectiveness, and sources of organisational stress. Authority is a formal, legally recognised right, whereas power is the capacity to influence the behaviour of others, whether or not that influence is formally sanctioned.

Table 4.1.1 Difference between Authority and Power

Basis	Authority	Power
Nature	Legitimate, formal, and institutional	May be formal or informal in nature
Source	Derived from official position, laws, rules, and organisational structure	Derived from personality, expertise, influence, political backing, or control over resources
Legitimacy	Legally and socially recognised as rightful	May or may not be recognised as legitimate
Acceptance by Subordinates	Generally accepted and obeyed willingly	Obedience may be due to fear, pressure, or personal influence
Basis of Compliance	Compliance based on rules and official duty	Compliance based on persuasion, pressure, or dependence
Stability	Relatively stable as long as the position exists	Often unstable and dependent on circumstances
Accountability	Subject to legal, administrative, and public accountability	Often lacks clear accountability mechanisms
Example in Public Administration	Order issued by a District Collector under the service rules	Political pressure exerted by an influential leader or group
Impact on Organisation	Ensures discipline, coordination, and predictability	Can support authority or create conflict and stress if misused

► Balance between authority and power

The distinction between authority and power has important implications for public administration. Authority without legitimacy, such as when orders are perceived as unfair, arbitrary, or unethical, often leads to resistance, low morale, and compliance only in form rather than in spirit. Conversely, power without authority, such as political interference or informal pressure, can lead to misuse, ethical dilemmas, and heightened stress among public officials forced to act outside established rules. Effective administration, therefore, requires a careful balance between authority and power, where formal authority is exercised with legitimacy and supported by ethical influence, ensuring both administrative efficiency and organisational well-being.

In public administration, authority without legitimacy often results in resistance, low morale, and mechanical compliance, while power without authority leads to misuse, ethical conflicts, and stress among officials. Effective governance requires a balanced integration of legitimate authority with responsible

and ethical use of influence, ensuring both administrative efficiency and public trust.

4.1.4 Importance of Authority in Public Administration

Authority occupies a central place in public administration because it provides the formal foundation for administrative action to be organised and implemented. In large, complex bureaucratic systems, authority is essential for coordinating numerous departments, agencies, and officials performing specialised functions. Clearly defined authority relationships enable different units of government to work together toward common policy goals, reduce duplication of work, and prevent administrative confusion. Without authority, collective action in public organisations becomes fragmented and ineffective.

► Maintaining discipline and compliance with rules

Authority is also vital for maintaining discipline and compliance with rules within the administrative machinery. Public administration functions within a legal-rational framework where adherence to laws, rules, and procedures is mandatory. Authority empowers superiors to enforce standards of conduct, ensure compliance with service rules, and correct deviations through disciplinary mechanisms. This contributes to organisational stability and predictability, which are essential for fair and impartial governance. When authority is weak or unclear, rule violations increase, leading to inefficiency and erosion of administrative integrity.

► Quick and decisive decision-making

Another crucial function of authority is its role in facilitating quick and decisive decision-making, particularly during emergencies and crises. Situations such as natural disasters, public health emergencies, and law-and-order problems demand prompt action and clear command structures. During the COVID-19 pandemic, administrative authorities exercised extraordinary powers under laws such as the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 and the Disaster Management Act, 2005. These legal provisions enabled governments to impose lockdowns, regulate movement, mobilise resources, and coordinate inter-departmental responses. The experience demonstrated how clearly vested authority can save lives and ensure effective crisis management when time and coordination are critical.

Authority is equally important for fixing responsibility and accountability in public administration. When authority is clearly assigned, it becomes possible to identify who is responsible

for specific decisions and actions. This clarity is essential for legislative oversight, audit, judicial review, and public scrutiny. Accountability mechanisms function effectively only when authority and responsibility are properly aligned. However, the pandemic experience also revealed that excessive centralisation or arbitrary use of authority can generate stress among officials and resentment among citizens. Therefore, while authority is indispensable for effective governance, it must be exercised judiciously, transparently, and ethically to maintain public trust and ensure humane administration.

4.1.5 Types of Authority

Authority in organisations can be classified in different ways. In public administration, the following types are especially relevant.

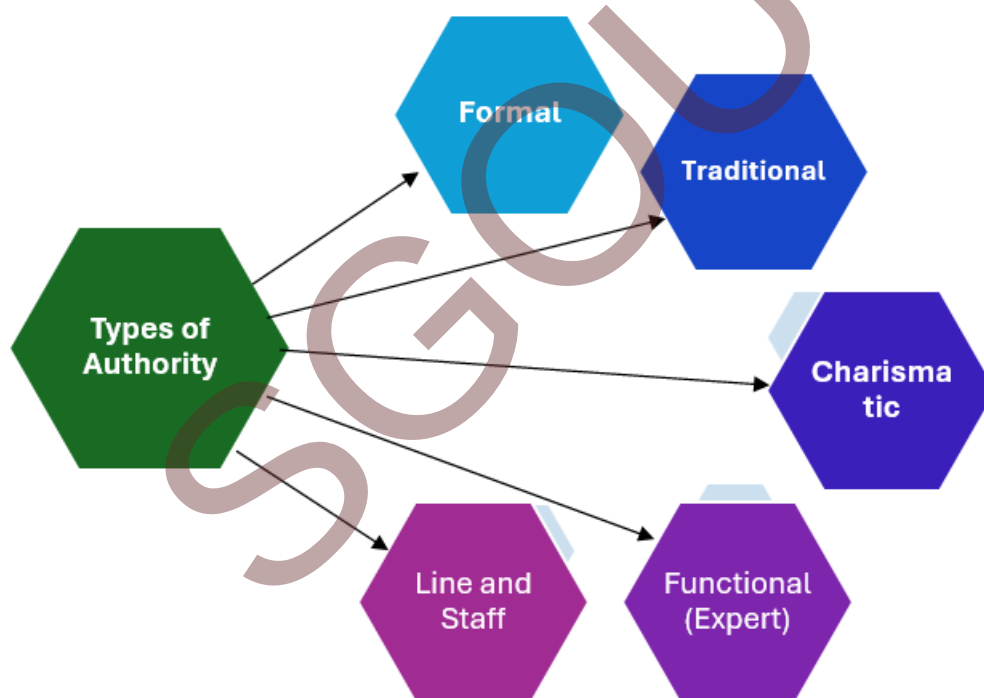


Fig. 4.1.1 Types of Authority

4.1.5.1 Formal Authority

Formal authority is the authority officially granted by organisational rules, laws, or constitutional provisions. It is the most common and recognised form of authority in public administration and flows downward through the hierarchical structure of the organisation. This type of authority provides the

► Officially granted

legal foundation for administrative action and enables officials to perform their duties within clearly defined limits.

Characteristics

1. **Clearly defined** : The scope, powers, and responsibilities of formal authority are precisely laid down in statutes, service rules, manuals, and organisational charts. This clarity helps avoid role ambiguity and overlap of functions.
2. **Legally enforceable** : Orders issued under formal authority have the force of law, and non-compliance can lead to disciplinary or legal action. This ensures compliance and administrative discipline.
3. **Attached to office** : Formal authority is linked to the position or office, not to the individual occupying it. When an officer is transferred or replaced, the authority automatically passes to the successor.
4. **Limited by rules and procedures** : The exercise of formal authority is constrained by laws, administrative rules, and established procedures, preventing arbitrary or excessive use of power.

Example:

A Secretary to Government has the authority to approve and process policy proposals, issue departmental instructions, and allocate resources within the jurisdiction of their department, but cannot exercise authority beyond the powers conferred by law.

Max Weber emphasised that modern bureaucracy depends heavily on formal-legal authority, which ensures predictability, uniformity, and rationality in administrative functioning by subjecting all actions to established rules rather than personal discretion.

4.1.5.2 Traditional Authority

► Arises from customs, traditions, and long-established social practices

Traditional authority is the authority that arises from customs, traditions, and long-established social practices. It is rooted in the belief systems of a society and is accepted because “it has always been so.” In public administration, traditional authority continues to play a role, particularly in societies



where historical institutions and customary practices coexist with modern bureaucratic systems.

Characteristics

1. **Derived from historical acceptance** : Authority is accepted because it is sanctioned by long-standing traditions and social norms rather than by formal laws.
2. **Often unwritten** : The rules governing traditional authority are usually informal and based on customs, rituals, or conventions rather than codified statutes.
3. **Resistant to change** : Since it is deeply embedded in social values and collective memory, traditional authority tends to resist reform and modernisation.

Examples in Administration

- a. **Village headmen or traditional councils** influence local governance, dispute resolution, and community decision-making, especially in rural and tribal areas.
- b. **Ceremonial authority of constitutional heads** such as Governors, whose roles are shaped by conventions, customs, and established practices in addition to constitutional provisions.

While traditional authority can enhance legitimacy and social acceptance, especially at the grassroots level, it may sometimes conflict with democratic values and legal-rational authority. Over-reliance on tradition can hinder administrative reforms, equality before the law, and accountability. Therefore, in modern public administration, traditional authority must be carefully balanced with constitutional principles and rule-based governance.

4.1.5.3 Charismatic Authority

► Arises from the personal qualities, charisma, moral leadership

Charismatic authority arises from the personal qualities, charisma, moral leadership, or exceptional abilities of an individual rather than from a formal position or legal rules. This type of authority is based on the devotion and trust that followers place in a leader, often inspired by their vision, integrity, or demonstrated competence. In public administration,

charismatic authority operates largely as an informal source of influence, complementing or, at times, transcending formal authority.

Characteristics

- a. **Based on personality and inspiration** : Authority flows from the leader's personal appeal, credibility, and ability to inspire confidence among followers.
- b. **Emotion-driven** : Obedience is often motivated by emotional attachment, admiration, or belief in the leader's mission rather than by formal obligation.
- c. **Often temporary** : Charismatic authority tends to be unstable and short-lived, as it depends heavily on the continued presence and personal influence of the leader.

Example:

Leaders such as E. Sreedharan, popularly known as the *Metro Man of India*, wielded strong informal authority through their integrity, technical expertise, and commitment to public service. Despite operating within rigid bureaucratic structures, his personal credibility enabled him to secure cooperation from multiple agencies and stakeholders, ensuring the timely completion of major infrastructure projects.

Max Weber cautioned that charismatic authority is inherently unstable and must eventually be institutionalised, that is, transformed into formal rules, procedures, or organisational structures, to ensure continuity and prevent administrative breakdown once the charismatic leader exits the system.

4.1.5.4 Functional (Expert) Authority

► Arises from specialised knowledge, professional competence

Functional authority, also known as expert authority, is the authority that arises from specialised knowledge, professional competence, or technical expertise in a particular field. Unlike formal authority, which is derived from position and hierarchy, functional authority is based on an individual's or agency's recognised expertise and ability to provide technically sound guidance. In modern public administration, where governance has become increasingly complex and knowledge-driven, functional authority plays a critical role in informed decision-making and effective policy implementation.



Characteristics

- a. **Based on specialised knowledge and skills** – Authority is derived from professional qualifications, technical training, and subject-matter expertise.
- b. **Limited to a specific functional area** – Functional authority does not extend across the entire organisation but is confined to particular domains such as finance, health, environment, or technology.
- c. **Advisory as well as directive in nature** – In certain areas, expert authority may be advisory, while in others it can involve issuing binding technical instructions.
- d. **Increasingly important in modern governance** – As public policies become more technical, reliance on expert authority has grown significantly.

Examples in Administration:

- a. **Finance officers** exercising control over public expenditure to ensure compliance with financial rules and fiscal discipline.
- b. **Public health officials** issuing technical guidelines and protocols during pandemics, such as COVID-19, based on epidemiological evidence.
- c. **Environmental experts and regulatory bodies** set pollution standards and regulate industrial activities to protect ecological sustainability.

According to World Bank studies, technical or expert authority has expanded considerably in contemporary governance systems, particularly in sectors such as healthcare, environmental regulation, climate policy, and digital administration. While functional authority enhances evidence-based policymaking and administrative efficiency, excessive reliance on experts without democratic oversight can raise concerns about transparency and accountability. Hence, effective public administration requires a balanced integration of expert authority with legal authority and public accountability mechanisms.

4.1.5.5 Line and Staff Authority

Line and staff authority represent two important forms of authority within organisational structures, particularly in public administration. Understanding the distinction between them is essential to ensuring smooth functioning, effective coordination, and reduced organisational stress.

Line Authority

1. Direct command over subordinates – Line authority refers to the power to issue orders and expect compliance from subordinates within the hierarchical chain of command.
2. It flows vertically from top to bottom and is directly related to the achievement of organisational objectives.
3. Officers exercising line authority are responsible for planning, decision-making, execution, and supervision.

Example:

A District Collector exercising authority over a Tahsildar in matters of revenue administration, law and order, or disaster management illustrates line authority in public administration.

Staff Authority

Staff authority involves providing expert advice, analysis, and support to the line but does not include the power to issue binding orders. Staff officers assist line executives by offering legal, technical, planning, or policy-related guidance. Their authority is functional, advisory and consultative rather than hierarchical.

► Providing expert advice

Example:

A Law Officer advising on the legal implications of administrative decisions or a Planning Officer providing technical inputs for development schemes exercises staff authority.

Misunderstanding and poor coordination between line and staff authority are a major source of organisational stress, role conflict, and interpersonal tension in public administration. Line officers may perceive staff advice as interference, while

staff officers may feel undervalued if their expertise is ignored. Effective administration requires clear role definitions, mutual respect, and collaborative decision-making to harmonise line command with staff expertise.

4.1.6 Delegation of Authority

Delegation of authority is the process by which a superior assigns responsibility and grants subordinate the necessary authority to perform specific tasks or functions, while retaining ultimate accountability for the outcomes. It is an essential managerial practice that enables the smooth functioning of large and complex organisations, especially in public administration, where responsibilities are wide-ranging and multifaceted. Delegation does not mean abdication of responsibility; rather, it involves sharing work and authority in a controlled and systematic manner.

► Definition of delegation

According to Louis A. Allen, delegation is “the dynamic process by which a manager follows up his authority by distributing work among people.” This definition highlights delegation as an ongoing and purposeful activity that strengthens managerial effectiveness by ensuring that tasks are performed at appropriate levels within the organisation. Through delegation, senior administrators focus on policy formulation and strategic decision-making, while operational responsibilities are handled at lower levels.

In public administration, delegation is particularly essential due to the following reasons:

- a. **Increasing workload** : The expanding role of the state in areas such as welfare administration, infrastructure development, and regulatory governance makes it impossible for senior officials to handle all tasks personally. Delegation helps distribute work efficiently.
- b. **Complex governance challenges** : Modern governance involves coordination across departments, levels of government, and stakeholders. Delegation enables specialised and decentralised handling of complex administrative issues.
- c. **Need for timely decisions** : Public administration often requires quick responses, especially during emergencies,

service delivery, and implementation of schemes. Delegating authority to field-level officials reduces delays and enhances responsiveness.

Effective delegation improves administrative efficiency, develops leadership capacity among subordinates, and reduces stress at higher levels of administration. However, inadequate delegation or excessive centralisation of authority can lead to decision bottlenecks, role overload, and organisational stress, highlighting the importance of delegation as a core principle of sound public administration.

4.1.6.1 Elements of Delegation

Delegation of authority is not a single act but a systematic process involving three interrelated elements. For delegation to be effective, all three elements must be present and properly aligned. The absence or weakness of any one element makes delegation incomplete and ineffective, leading to confusion, inefficiency, and administrative stress.

1. Assignment of Duties

► Clearly specifying the tasks to be performed

The first element of delegation is assigning duties or responsibilities to subordinates. This involves clearly specifying the tasks to be performed, the objectives to be achieved, and the expected standards of performance. In public administration, clarity in duty assignment is essential to avoid role ambiguity and function overlap. For example, assigning a Tahsildar the responsibility of land record verification or disaster relief coordination ensures clarity in administrative functioning. Without a clear definition of duties, subordinates may be uncertain about their roles, leading to delays and inefficiency.

2. Grant of Authority

► Necessary power to carry out the assigned duties

The second element is the grant of authority, which refers to providing subordinates with the necessary power to carry out the assigned duties. Authority must be commensurate with responsibility; a subordinate cannot be held responsible for a task without being given adequate authority to make decisions, issue instructions, or access resources. In public administration, this may include financial powers, supervisory authority, or decision-making discretion within prescribed limits. Inadequate authority results in frustration, dependency on superiors, and procedural delays.



3. Creation of Accountability

The third element of delegation is the creation of accountability, meaning subordinates are answerable to their superiors for the performance of assigned duties. At the same time, the superior remains ultimately accountable for the delegated work. Accountability ensures that delegated authority is exercised responsibly and within legal and ethical boundaries. In public administration, accountability is reinforced through reporting systems, audits, legislative oversight, and performance evaluations.

► Balanced integration of duties, authority, and accountability

Effective delegation requires a balanced integration of duties, authority, and accountability. If duties are assigned without authority, subordinates become powerless; if authority is granted without accountability, it leads to misuse; and if accountability exists without clarity of duties, it creates stress and conflict. Hence, all three elements must function together to ensure efficient, ethical, and stress-free administration.

4.1.6.2 Importance of Delegation in Public - Administration

Delegation plays a crucial role in the effective functioning of public administration, especially in large and complex governmental systems such as India's. It involves the systematic transfer of responsibility and authority from higher to lower levels of administration while retaining ultimate accountability at the top. Sound delegation strengthens administrative machinery and improves governance outcomes.

1. Reduction of Stress and Workload at Senior Levels

Effective delegation significantly reduces the pressure on senior administrators by distributing tasks among competent subordinates. Top-level officials are often burdened with policy formulation, coordination, and oversight responsibilities. By delegating routine and operational tasks, senior officers can focus on strategic planning and long-term governance issues. This not only prevents decision fatigue but also minimises stress and burnout among higher officials.

2. Improvement in Administrative Efficiency

Delegation enhances efficiency by ensuring that decisions are taken at the most appropriate level. When authority is

decentralised, files move faster, decisions are taken closer to the point of implementation, and administrative delays are reduced. Field-level officers, being familiar with local conditions, can respond more promptly and effectively. This leads to quicker service delivery and better utilisation of administrative resources.

3. Development of Leadership Capacity among Junior Officers

Delegation serves as an important tool for leadership development in public services. When junior and middle-level officers are entrusted with responsibility and authority, they gain practical exposure to decision-making, problem-solving, and people management. This experience builds confidence, competence, and administrative maturity, preparing them for higher responsibilities in the future and ensuring leadership continuity in the public sector.

4. Encouragement of Initiative and Innovation

Delegation fosters a sense of ownership and accountability among subordinate officers. When officials are empowered to make decisions, they are more likely to show initiative, creativity, and innovative thinking in addressing administrative challenges. This is particularly important in public administration, where rigid procedures often discourage experimentation and flexibility.

5. Empirical Support: Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC)

The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) in India has strongly emphasised the need for decentralisation and effective delegation. The Commission observed that excessive centralisation of authority leads to delays in decision-making, procedural bottlenecks, and increased stress among senior officers. It also highlighted that overburdened higher officials are more prone to burnout, which adversely affects administrative efficiency and the quality of governance. The ARC recommended empowering lower levels of administration to promote responsiveness, efficiency, and citizen-centric governance.

In sum, delegation is not merely an administrative convenience but a strategic necessity in public administration.

By reducing workload at the top, improving efficiency, nurturing future leaders, and promoting innovation, effective delegation contributes to responsive, efficient, and sustainable governance.

Case Study: Disaster Management at District Level (India) – Kerala Floods, 2018

The Kerala floods of 2018 stand as a significant example of how effective delegation of authority can strengthen public administration during emergencies. Faced with unprecedented rainfall, large-scale population displacement, and severe infrastructure damage, District Collectors played a pivotal leadership role by adopting a decentralised delegation approach to disaster management. Instead of centralising all decisions at the district headquarters, authority and responsibility were strategically distributed among various administrative units.

Delegation of Responsibilities

a. Revenue Officers for Relief Camps

Revenue officers were delegated the authority to establish, manage, and supervise relief camps. They were responsible for identifying safe locations, arranging shelter, food supplies, drinking water, clothing, and maintaining records of displaced persons. This ensured that victims received immediate basic necessities without procedural delays. Local-level decision-making helped in faster rehabilitation and reduced suffering among affected populations.

b. Health Officials for Medical Response

Health department officials were entrusted with full responsibility for emergency medical services. This included setting up mobile medical units, organising vaccination drives, preventing the outbreak of epidemics, ensuring sanitation in relief camps, and coordinating ambulance services. Delegation enabled rapid medical interventions, which prevented secondary disasters such as disease outbreaks and public health crises.

c. Local Self-Government Bodies for Logistics

Local self-government institutions such as panchayats and municipalities were delegated authority over logistics management. They coordinated transport, distribution of relief materials, volunteer mobilisation, community kitchens, and

local resource utilisation. Their familiarity with local geography and communities ensured effective last-mile service delivery and better coordination with civil society organisations and volunteers.

Administrative Outcomes of Delegation

This decentralised model of delegation produced several positive administrative outcomes:

- i. **Quick Decision-Making:** Decisions were taken at operational levels without waiting for district-level approvals, ensuring speed and responsiveness.
- ii. **Reduced Stress on Top Administrators:** District Collectors were relieved from micromanagement and could focus on coordination, inter-departmental communication, and liaison with the state government and disaster response forces.
- iii. **Improved Coordination:** Clear division of authority among departments improved inter-agency cooperation and reduced confusion and duplication of efforts.
- iv. **Efficient Resource Utilisation:** Local officers used available resources effectively based on ground realities, avoiding wastage and misallocation.
- v. **Citizen-Centric Governance:** Relief operations became more responsive to the actual needs of affected communities.

Administrative Significance

This case clearly demonstrates that delegation is critical during emergencies. In disaster situations, centralised control often leads to bottlenecks, delays, and administrative overload. The Kerala floods example shows that when authority is delegated appropriately, the administrative system becomes more flexible, resilient, and adaptive. Delegation transforms the bureaucracy from a rigid hierarchical structure into a responsive service-delivery mechanism capable of managing crises effectively.

► Critical during emergencies

Conclusion

The Kerala floods of 2018 illustrate that delegation is not only a managerial principle but a life-saving administrative strategy in public administration. By empowering revenue officials, health authorities, and local self-government bodies, District Collectors ensured rapid response, effective coordination, and efficient service delivery. This case study highlights delegation as a core pillar of disaster governance and emergency administration in India.

4.1.6.3 Barriers to Effective Delegation

Despite its importance, delegation in public administration often faces several practical and psychological barriers. These obstacles limit administrative efficiency, overload senior officials, and weaken institutional performance. Understanding these barriers is essential for improving governance and organisational effectiveness.

a. Fear of Loss of Control

One of the most common barriers to delegation is the fear among seniors that delegating authority may dilute their control over decisions and outcomes. Many administrators believe that personal involvement ensures better quality and accountability. This mindset leads to excessive centralisation, micromanagement, and reluctance to share authority, resulting in delays and stress at higher levels.

b. Lack of Trust in Subordinates

Effective delegation requires confidence in subordinates' competence, integrity, and judgment. In public administration, senior officers may hesitate to delegate due to concerns about mistakes, misuse of authority, or lack of experience among junior staff. This lack of trust discourages empowerment, reduces morale, and prevents capacity building within the organisation.

c. Rigid Rules and Procedures

Public administration operates within a framework of laws, rules, and formal procedures designed to ensure accountability and transparency. However, excessive procedural rigidity often

restricts flexibility in delegation. Strict hierarchical controls, detailed approval processes, and rule-bound decision-making discourage initiative and slow down administrative action, especially during time-sensitive situations.

d. Inadequate Training and Skill Gaps

Delegation is ineffective when subordinates lack the necessary skills, knowledge, or exposure to handle assigned responsibilities. Inadequate training in decision-making, leadership, financial management, or crisis handling makes senior officers reluctant to delegate. This creates a vicious cycle where a lack of delegation limits learning opportunities, further weakening administrative capacity.

e. Administrative Consequences of Poor Delegation

These barriers collectively increase administrative stress and create operational bottlenecks. Senior officials become overburdened with routine matters, while lower-level officers remain underutilised. Decision delays, reduced innovation, low morale, and ineffective service delivery are common outcomes of ineffective delegation.

Overcoming barriers to effective delegation requires a change in administrative mindset, capacity-building initiatives, and procedural reforms. Building trust, investing in training, and allowing controlled flexibility within rules can help transform delegation into a powerful tool for efficient, responsive, and sustainable public administration.

4.1.6.4 Delegation and Accountability

► Foundational principle of Delegation

Delegation in public administration is inseparably linked with the concept of accountability. While authority may be transferred to subordinates to ensure efficiency and speed in administration, ultimate responsibility always rests with the superior officer. This foundational principle is often expressed as: *“Authority can be delegated, but responsibility cannot be abdicated.”*

1. Meaning and Significance

When a superior delegates authority, the subordinate is empowered to make decisions and perform tasks within

defined limits. However, the superior remains answerable for the outcomes of those decisions. This ensures continuity of accountability in a hierarchical administrative system and prevents the diffusion of responsibility, which could otherwise weaken governance.

2. Accountability to the Legislature

Senior public officials and political executives are accountable to the legislature for administrative actions and policy implementation. Even if decisions are taken by delegated officers, explanations must be provided by the head of the department or the minister concerned. Parliamentary questions, debates, and committee reviews reinforce this accountability.

3. Judicial Accountability

Courts hold senior administrators accountable for the legality and fairness of administrative actions. In cases of maladministration, violation of rights, or abuse of power by subordinates, the superior may be required to justify decisions, demonstrate due supervision, and ensure corrective action. Delegation does not absolve the superior from legal responsibility.

4. Accountability to Audit Institutions

Audit bodies such as the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) in India scrutinise financial decisions and administrative procedures. Even when financial powers are delegated, the department head remains responsible for ensuring compliance with rules, propriety, and the efficient use of public funds.

5. Accountability to Public Opinion

Public administration operates under constant public scrutiny through media, civil society, and citizens. Failures or lapses at the subordinate level often reflect on senior leadership, affecting public trust and credibility. This social accountability further reinforces the superior's responsibility despite delegation.

6. Role Stress and Administrative Implications

This dual responsibility of delegating authority while retaining accountability—often creates significant role stress for senior administrators. Fear of adverse scrutiny may lead to

over-centralisation or reluctance to delegate. Therefore, **clarity in authority structures**, well-defined limits of delegation, transparent procedures, and effective monitoring mechanisms are essential to balance efficiency with accountability.

Delegation and accountability must operate together to ensure responsible governance. While delegation enhances administrative efficiency, accountability safeguards public interest. Clear role definitions, proper supervision, and institutional support can reduce role stress and enable effective delegation without compromising responsibility in public administration.

4.1.6.5 Authority and Stress: A Brief Link

Authority structures in public administration have a direct and significant impact on the stress levels experienced by public officials. When authority is improperly defined, inadequately delegated, or inconsistently exercised, it creates organisational strain that affects both individual well-being and administrative effectiveness.

1. Role Ambiguity

Improper authority structures often lead to role ambiguity, in which officials are unclear about the scope of their powers, responsibilities, and decision-making limits. When officers are unsure about “who is authorised to do what,” they experience anxiety and hesitation in performing their duties. This uncertainty increases psychological stress and reduces confidence in administrative functioning.

2. Role Conflict

Role conflict arises when officials receive contradictory instructions from multiple superiors or when accountability is high, but authority is limited. In public administration, officers are frequently answerable to political executives, senior bureaucrats, audit agencies, and the public simultaneously. Without clear authority structures, balancing these competing expectations can be stressful and lead to frustration and burnout.

3. Decision Paralysis

Lack of clear authority often leads to decision paralysis, in which officers delay or avoid taking decisions out of fear of blame, disciplinary action, or judicial scrutiny. When accountability is



high but discretionary authority is restricted, officials prefer to pass files upward rather than exercise judgment. This not only increases stress but also slows administrative processes and weakens governance outcomes.

4. Emotional Exhaustion

► Unclear authority, excessive scrutiny, and fear of repercussions

Continuous exposure to unclear authority, excessive scrutiny, and fear of repercussions contributes to emotional exhaustion among public sector employees. Over time, this leads to reduced motivation, disengagement, and lower job satisfaction. Emotional exhaustion is a key component of occupational stress and can impair both individual performance and organisational morale.

Reports by the World Health Organisation (WHO) indicate that public sector employees often experience higher stress levels compared to those in other sectors. This is largely due to the combination of intense accountability pressures, public scrutiny, and limited discretionary authority. Officials are held responsible for outcomes even when they lack adequate authority, resources, or autonomy to effectively influence outcomes. These findings highlight that authority is not merely a structural concept but a critical determinant of occupational stress in administration. Clearly defined authority, appropriate delegation, and alignment between responsibility and power help reduce stress, improve decision-making, and enhance administrative confidence.

Understanding authority is the foundation for effective stress management in public administration. Well-designed authority structures minimise role ambiguity and conflict, encourage timely decision-making, and protect officials from emotional exhaustion. By aligning authority with responsibility, public administration can promote both administrative efficiency and the psychological well-being of its workforce.

Summarized Overview

This unit provides a comprehensive introduction to the concept of authority with particular reference to organisational behaviour and public administration. It explains the meaning and nature of authority, distinguishes authority from power, and highlights its importance in ensuring discipline, coordination, accountability, and effective decision-making. The unit elaborates on various types of authority, such as formal, traditional,

charismatic, functional, and line and staff authority, which illustrate their relevance in modern administrative systems. It further examines the delegation of authority, its elements, importance, barriers, and its relationship with accountability and stress. By integrating theoretical insights with practical examples and case studies, the unit equips learners with a clear understanding of how authority and delegation influence organisational performance and employee well-being.

Self-Assessment

1. Define authority and explain its key characteristics in public administration.
2. Distinguish between authority and power with suitable administrative examples.
3. Discuss the different types of authority and their relevance in modern organisations.
4. Explain the concept of delegation of authority and examine its importance in public administration.
5. Analyse the relationship between authority structures and occupational stress in organisations.

Assignments

1. Study a public organisation and identify how authority is structured and delegated. Suggest improvements.
2. Prepare an authority–responsibility chart for a medium-sized organisation.
3. Analyse a real-life administrative failure caused by poor delegation of authority.
4. Compare authority structures in a public sector and a private sector organisation.
5. Write a brief report on how improper authority distribution can lead to managerial stress.

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Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- explain the concept, nature, and stages of stress in organisational settings
- identify different types of stress and analyse their impact on employee performance and well-being
- evaluate individual-level and organisational-level stress management strategies
- aware of stress management techniques to improve managerial effectiveness and organisational sustainability

Background

Stress has emerged as one of the most critical challenges in modern organisations, particularly in the public sector, where employees operate under intense accountability, political pressure, and public scrutiny. The World Health Organisation (2020) estimates that 30–40% of public sector employees worldwide suffer from work-related stress, leading to reduced productivity, absenteeism, burnout, and mental health disorders. In India, studies by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) indicate that government and administrative employees experience higher levels of chronic stress due to role overload, role ambiguity, and high responsibility without corresponding authority. Such stress not only affects individual well-being but also undermines organisational efficiency and ethical governance.

Understanding stress, its stages, types, and management strategies is therefore essential for future managers and administrators. Research shows that organisations implementing structured stress management programmes experience 20–25% improvement in employee productivity and job satisfaction. This unit equips MBA students with conceptual clarity and practical insights into stress management at both individual and organisational levels, enabling them to handle complex work environments effectively and sustainably.

Keywords

Stress, Burnout, Eustress, Organisational Stress, Stress Management

Discussion

4.2.1 Introduction

Stress has become an unavoidable feature of modern organisational life, particularly in public administration, where officials operate under constant pressure from political executives, media scrutiny, judicial oversight, and public expectations. Unlike private organisations, public institutions must balance efficiency with legality, accountability, and social equity. This complex environment makes public administrators especially vulnerable to occupational stress.

► Work - related stress

According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2020), work-related stress affects nearly 30–40% of public sector employees globally, leading to reduced productivity, absenteeism, mental health problems, and burnout. In India, a survey conducted by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) found that administrative and government employees show higher levels of chronic stress due to workload, role ambiguity, and accountability pressures. Understanding stress, its stages, types, and management strategies is therefore essential for effective organisational behaviour and sustainable public administration.

4.2.2 Concept of Stress

Stress refers to the psychological and physiological response of an individual to demands, pressures, or challenges that exceed their perceived capacity to cope effectively. It is important to note that stress does not arise merely from the existence of pressure or demanding situations; rather, it emerges from the individual's perception of and reaction to those demands. The same situation may therefore be stressful for one person and manageable for another, depending on personal resilience, experience, and available support systems.

Hans Selye, a pioneer in stress research, defined stress as “the non-specific response of the body to any demand placed upon it.” This definition highlights the biological dimension of



stress, emphasising that the human body responds in a similar physiological manner—through hormonal and nervous system changes—regardless of whether the demand is positive (such as a promotion) or negative (such as excessive workload). Selye's contribution also underscores that prolonged or unmanaged stress can lead to physical and psychological exhaustion.

► Definition of stress

From a behavioural and organisational perspective, Stephen P. Robbins defines stress as “a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint, or demand related to what they desire, and for which the outcome is perceived as both uncertain and important.” This definition of uncertainty, perceived importance, and personal expectations in shaping stress responses.

In the context of public administration, stress is especially pronounced due to the unique nature of governmental work. Administrators often operate in environments characterised by high public visibility and strict accountability norms. Stress arises not only from heavy workload and time pressures but also from structural and systemic factors such as high accountability without commensurate authority, frequent political interference in administrative decision-making, intense public criticism and media scrutiny, and complex ethical dilemmas coupled with legal oversight. These factors create persistent psychological pressure, as administrators must simultaneously balance efficiency, legality, ethics, and public interest.

Thus, stress in public administration is deeply embedded in organisational structures, authority relationships, and governance systems. Understanding stress as a multidimensional concept, encompassing physiological, psychological, and organisational elements, is essential for designing effective stress management strategies and promoting administrative efficiency, ethical decision-making, and employee well-being.

4.2.3 Stages of Stress

Hans Selye proposed the General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) to explain how individuals respond to stress over time. According to Selye, stress is not a single event but a process that unfolds in three distinct stages: Alarm, Resistance, and Exhaustion. These stages describe the body's physiological and psychological responses to prolonged stressors. The GAS model is especially relevant in organisational and public

administration contexts, where stress often persists over long durations.

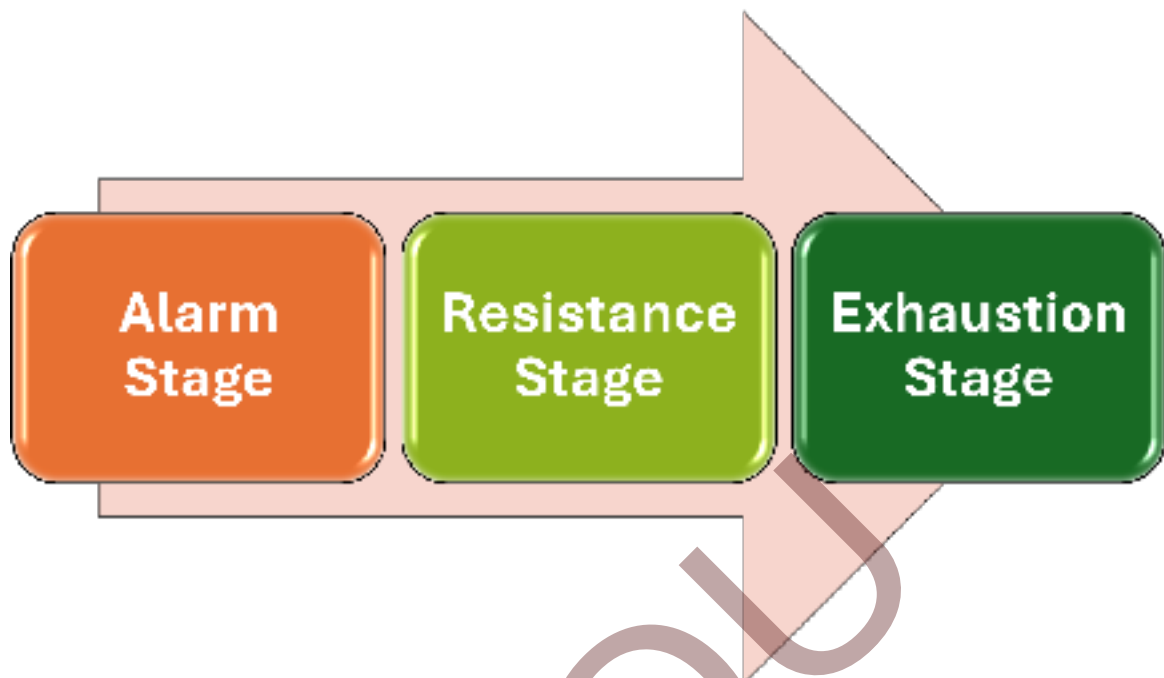


Fig. 4.2.1 Stages of Stress

4.2.3.1 Alarm Stage

► Initial response to a stressor

The Alarm Stage is the body's immediate, initial response to a stressor. At this stage, the individual becomes aware of the threat or demand, and the body activates its defence mechanisms. This response is commonly described as the “fight or flight” reaction, mediated by the release of stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol. The purpose of this stage is to prepare the individual to face the challenge quickly and effectively.

Key Features

- i. Increased heart rate and blood pressure
- ii. Rapid breathing and heightened sensory awareness
- iii. Feelings of anxiety, fear, or excitement
- iv. Heightened emotional and cognitive alertness

Although this stage may involve discomfort, it can be beneficial in the short term, as it sharpens focus and enhances performance in emergencies.

Example: When a District Magistrate receives sudden instructions to manage a law-and-order crisis, such as communal

tension or a natural disaster, there is an immediate surge of anxiety and alertness. The official becomes highly focused, reacts quickly, and mobilises resources efficiently. This short-term stress can improve decision-making and responsiveness, provided it does not persist for too long.

4.2.3.2 Resistance Stage

► Adapt to the stress

If the stressor continues beyond the initial shock, the individual enters the Resistance Stage. In this phase, the body attempts to adapt to the stress and maintain normal functioning despite continued pressure. Physiological arousal remains elevated, but the individual appears outwardly calm and in control. Psychological coping mechanisms are actively employed to manage demands.

Key Features

- i. Sustained effort to cope with stress
- ii. Reduced emotional reactions compared to the alarm stage
- iii. Continued high levels of energy consumption
- iv. Apparent normal functioning despite internal strain

While performance may remain stable during this stage, the body and mind are operating at a higher cost. Prolonged resistance without adequate recovery can gradually weaken physical and psychological resources.

Example: During extended election duty, public officials work long hours under constant vigilance and political sensitivity. Over time, they adapt to the pressure by adjusting routines and suppressing emotional reactions. Although efficiency is maintained, fatigue accumulates, and stress begins to affect well-being, concentration, and work–life balance.

4.2.3.3 Exhaustion Stage

The Exhaustion Stage occurs when stress continues for a prolonged period without sufficient relief or recovery. At this stage, the body's adaptive resources are depleted, and the individual can no longer cope effectively. Both physical and psychological breakdowns may occur, leading to serious health and performance issues.

Key Features

- i. Chronic physical fatigue and weakness
- ii. Emotional exhaustion and burnout
- iii. Decline in motivation, concentration, and efficiency
- iv. Increased susceptibility to illnesses, anxiety, and depression

This stage is particularly dangerous in organisational settings, as it not only affects individual health but also reduces administrative effectiveness and decision-making capacity.

A study by the Indian Administrative Service Association (2019) reported a rise in cases of hypertension, depression, sleep disorders, and professional burnout among senior civil servants. Continuous engagement in crisis management, public scrutiny, and high-stakes decision-making without adequate institutional support or recovery mechanisms was identified as a major cause of exhaustion-related stress.

In summary, the General Adaptation Syndrome highlights that stress progresses through predictable stages. While short-term stress may enhance performance, prolonged stress without intervention leads to exhaustion and serious consequences. Understanding these stages is crucial for public administration, as it underscores the need for organisational support systems, delegation, stress management training, and periodic relief to sustain administrative efficiency and employee well-being.

4.2.4 Types of Stress

Stress in organisations can be classified into different types based on its source, duration, and impact on individual performance and well-being. In public administration, these forms of stress often coexist and interact with each other due to complex organisational structures, high accountability, and continuous public scrutiny. Understanding the different types of stress helps administrators and policymakers design appropriate coping and intervention mechanisms.

► Positive, constructive stress

4.2.4.1 Eustress (Positive Stress)

Eustress refers to positive, constructive stress that motivates individuals and enhances performance. It arises when challenges



are perceived as achievable and meaningful, encouraging individuals to stretch their abilities and improve competence. Eustress is generally short-term and associated with enthusiasm, creativity, and high levels of engagement.

Examples:

- i. Challenging or prestigious assignments
- ii. Opportunities for promotion or career advancement
- iii. Leadership of time-bound or high-visibility projects

Moderate levels of stress can improve alertness, concentration, and efficiency. The well-known Yerkes–Dodson Law demonstrates that performance increases with stress up to an optimal level, after which excessive stress leads to a decline in effectiveness. In public administration, eustress is often experienced during reform initiatives, special missions, or innovative governance projects.

4.2.4.2 Distress (Negative Stress)

Distress is harmful stress that occurs when demands exceed an individual's coping capacity for a prolonged period. Unlike eustress, distress leads to anxiety, dissatisfaction, reduced performance, and adverse health outcomes. It is often chronic and emotionally draining.

Examples:

- i. Excessive workload and unrealistic deadlines
- ii. Harassment, discrimination, or unfair treatment
- iii. Continuous political pressure and interference

In public administration, distress is more common due to rigid hierarchical systems, procedural constraints, limited autonomy, and constant accountability without proportional authority. Persistent distress can lead to absenteeism, poor decision-making, and increased errors in administrative functions.

4.2.4.3 Role-Related Stress

Role-related stress arises when there is confusion or conflict regarding job expectations and responsibilities. It is particularly prevalent in public organisations where officials are expected to perform multiple functions simultaneously.

► Confusion or conflict regarding job expectations

Major Causes

- i. **Role ambiguity:** Lack of clarity about duties, authority, or expectations
- ii. **Role conflict:** Incompatible or contradictory demands from different authorities
- iii. **Role overload:** Excessive responsibilities beyond an individual's capacity

Example: A Block Development Officer tasked with welfare scheme implementation, election management, disaster response, and routine administrative duties may face conflicting priorities and time pressures. Such overlapping roles can lead to frustration, anxiety, and reduced effectiveness, contributing significantly to occupational stress.

4.2.4.4 Occupational Stress

Occupational stress refers to stress arising from the broader organisational and work environment rather than individual roles alone. It is shaped by institutional practices, resource availability, and administrative culture.

Sources of Occupational Stress

- i. Poor or unsafe working conditions
- ii. Inadequate staffing and resource constraints
- iii. Excessive paperwork and bureaucratic delays
- iv. Lack of recognition and career progression

According to the OECD (2021), occupational stress is one of the leading causes of early retirement, absenteeism, and declining job satisfaction in public services across many countries. Inadequate institutional support and slow administrative reforms often intensify this form of stress.

4.2.4.5 Burnout

► Long-term consequence

Burnout is a severe and long-term consequence of prolonged exposure to stress, particularly distress and occupational stress. It represents a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion that reduces an individual's ability to function effectively at

work. Burnout is not a sudden condition but develops gradually over time.

Key Indicators

- a. Emotional exhaustion and detachment from work
- b. Cynicism and negative attitudes towards service and citizens
- c. Reduced sense of professional achievement and efficacy

Burnout is increasingly reported among frontline public servants, including police officers, healthcare administrators, revenue officials, and social welfare workers. Continuous public interaction, crisis management, and lack of recovery time make these roles especially vulnerable. If unaddressed, burnout can undermine organisational performance, public trust, and the overall quality of governance.

In conclusion, different types of stress affect public servants in distinct ways, ranging from motivating eustress to debilitating burnout. Recognising these forms of stress is essential for developing effective organisational policies, promoting employee well-being, and ensuring sustainable and efficient public administration.

4.2.5 Stress Management Strategies

► Systematic efforts

Stress management involves systematic efforts at both individual and organisational levels to reduce, prevent, and cope with stress arising from work-related and personal factors. Since stress can negatively affect employees' physical health, psychological well-being, and job performance, adopting well-planned stress management strategies is essential for sustaining productivity and overall organisational effectiveness.

4.2.6 Individual-Level Stress Management Strategies

Individual-level stress management strategies focus on enhancing an employee's personal capacity to cope with stress through behavioural, physical, emotional, and social interventions. These strategies equip individuals to manage work pressures more effectively and maintain psychological well-being despite demanding organisational environments.

4.2.6.1 Time Management and Prioritisation

Effective time management plays a crucial role in reducing role overload and work pressure. When individuals can plan, prioritise, and schedule tasks systematically, they experience greater control over their work and reduced anxiety. Techniques such as task-based scheduling, setting realistic deadlines, delegation, and breaking complex assignments into manageable units help employees avoid last-minute stress and work fatigue.

Example: Officers who adopt task-based scheduling during peak administrative periods, such as budget preparation or election duties, are better able to balance competing responsibilities. Studies indicate that such structured time management practices significantly reduce perceived stress and improve job efficiency (Luthans, 2011).

4.2.6.2 Physical Health and Lifestyle Management

► Regular physical exercise, adequate sleep, and a balanced diet

Physical health and lifestyle choices directly affect an individual's ability to cope with stress. Regular physical exercise, adequate sleep, and a balanced diet help regulate hormonal responses to stress and improve overall mental resilience. Exercise releases endorphins, which act as natural stress relievers, while proper sleep restores cognitive and emotional balance.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), engaging in at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity daily significantly reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression. For public officials who face long working hours and high responsibility, maintaining physical fitness serves as a protective buffer against chronic stress and burnout.

4.2.6.3 Emotional Intelligence and Self-Regulation

Emotional intelligence (EI) is a vital psychological resource in managing stress. Daniel Goleman highlights EI as the ability to recognise, understand, and regulate one's own emotions while effectively responding to others' emotions. Individuals with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to handle interpersonal conflicts, criticism, and performance pressure without becoming emotionally exhausted.

In the context of public administration, officers with strong emotional self-regulation demonstrate higher tolerance

to ambiguity, political pressure, and public scrutiny. Such individuals are more likely to respond calmly to stressful situations, make rational decisions, and maintain professional relationships, thereby reducing stress-related outcomes.

4.2.6.4 Mindfulness and Yoga

Mindfulness and yoga are increasingly recognised as effective tools for stress reduction and mental resilience. Mindfulness practices encourage present-moment awareness, helping individuals detach from anxiety about future outcomes or past failures. Yoga combines physical postures, breathing exercises, and meditation to promote relaxation and emotional stability.

Example: The Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) has integrated yoga and meditation sessions into its training curriculum for civil service probationers. These practices aim to enhance concentration, emotional balance, and stress tolerance, preparing future administrators to handle the psychological demands of public service more effectively.

4.2.6.5 Social Support Systems

► Support from family members, peers, colleagues, and mentors

Strong social support systems play a critical role in mitigating stress at the individual level. Support from family members, peers, colleagues, and mentors provides emotional reassurance, practical guidance, and a sense of belonging. Sharing concerns and experiences helps individuals normalise stress and reduces feelings of isolation.

Empirical studies reveal that officers with strong peer networks and mentoring relationships experience lower levels of burnout and emotional exhaustion. Informal peer discussions and mentorship enable individuals to learn coping strategies, gain perspective, and build emotional strength, thereby enhancing their capacity to manage work-related stress.

Overall, individual-level stress management strategies strengthen personal resilience and psychological well-being. When effectively practised, these strategies enable employees—especially public administrators—to cope with demanding roles while maintaining efficiency, emotional balance, and long-term professional sustainability.

4.2.7 Organisational-Level Stress Management Strategies

Organisational-level stress management strategies focus on reducing stressors embedded in organisations' structures, cultures, and functioning. By creating supportive systems, clear procedures, and healthy work environments, organisations can significantly minimise work-related stress and enhance employee well-being and performance.

4.2.7.1 Role Clarity and Job Design

► Clear job descriptions

Role ambiguity and poorly designed jobs are major sources of organisational stress. Clear job descriptions, defined responsibilities, and realistic performance expectations help employees understand what is expected of them, thereby reducing confusion and anxiety. Proper job design also ensures a balance between authority and responsibility, preventing role conflict and excessive workload.

The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (India) emphasised the need for clearer role delineation within administrative structures to reduce duplication of work and administrative overload. By streamlining functions and clarifying reporting relationships, organisations can create a more predictable and less stressful work environment.

4.2.7.2 Delegation and Decentralisation

Effective delegation and decentralisation distribute responsibilities across different levels of the organisation, preventing stress concentration at the top. When authority is shared and decision-making powers are devolved, senior officials can focus on strategic issues rather than routine operational tasks. This not only reduces workload pressure but also enhances accountability and efficiency at lower levels.

Case:

Kerala's decentralised governance model demonstrates how empowering local self-government institutions significantly reduced stress on district-level officials. By transferring planning, implementation, and financial responsibilities to local bodies, administrative burdens were more evenly shared, reducing pressure and improving administrative responsiveness.



► Leadership style

4.2.7.3 Supportive Leadership

Leadership style has a profound impact on employee stress levels. Supportive and transformational leadership, characterised by empathy, encouragement, and participative decision-making, creates a positive organisational climate. Such leaders provide guidance, recognise employee efforts, and offer constructive feedback, thereby reducing anxiety and enhancing morale.

In contrast, authoritarian leadership styles that rely on rigid control and excessive supervision often increase psychological strain, fear of failure, and employee resistance. Supportive leadership, therefore, acts as a critical organisational buffer against stress.

4.2.7.4 Training and Capacity Building

Continuous training and capacity-building initiatives help employees develop the skills and confidence required to meet job demands. When officials are adequately trained, they feel more competent and less threatened by complex tasks or changing administrative requirements. Training also enhances problem-solving abilities and stress-coping mechanisms.

According to OECD studies, officials who undergo regular training programmes experience 20–25 per cent lower stress levels compared to those without such opportunities. Thus, investment in human resource development serves as an effective long-term stress management strategy.

4.2.7.5 Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs)

Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) provide structured organisational support for managing stress, mental health issues, and personal challenges. These programmes typically include professional counselling services, wellness initiatives, stress management workshops, and crisis intervention support.

Example: The UK Civil Service introduced EAPs to support employee mental health and work-life balance. Evaluations of these programmes reported measurable improvements in employee well-being, reduced absenteeism, and enhanced job satisfaction. Such initiatives reflect the growing recognition of organisational responsibility in managing employee stress.

In summary, organisational-level stress management strategies address structural, leadership, and support-related factors that contribute to workplace stress. When effectively implemented, these strategies foster a healthier work environment, improve employee morale, and enhance overall organisational effectiveness.

4.2.8 Stress Management during Crisis: A Real - Administrative Case

Case: COVID-19 Management in Kerala

Periods of crisis place extraordinary psychological and administrative pressure on public institutions and officials. The COVID-19 pandemic represented an unprecedented stress test for governance systems worldwide. In this context, Kerala's administrative response stands out as an effective model of crisis-related stress management that balanced public health demands with administrative sustainability.

Kerala's approach combined clear and consistent communication, decentralised decision-making, and psychological support for frontline workers. Regular press briefings by senior leadership reduced uncertainty and fear among administrators and the public alike. Clear communication protocols ensured that officials at different levels received accurate information, thereby minimising confusion, panic, and decision-related stress.

Decentralised decision-making empowered local self-government institutions, district administrations, and health authorities to respond swiftly to local conditions. This reduced excessive pressure on top-level officials and distributed responsibilities more evenly across the administrative system. Simultaneously, the government prioritised psychological support mechanisms for healthcare workers, police personnel, and field-level administrators through counselling services, helplines, and peer-support initiatives.

As a result, Kerala was able to reduce burnout among frontline workers while maintaining administrative efficiency during prolonged crisis conditions. This integrated stress management approach was internationally recognised, including acknowledgement by the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2020), highlighting the importance of organisational preparedness and psychological resilience in crisis governance.



4.2.9 Stress, Ethics, and Governance

► Impact on ethical behaviour and the quality of governance

Stress has a direct and profound impact on ethical behaviour and the quality of governance. Unchecked or chronic stress impairs cognitive functioning, leading to poor judgment, impulsive decisions, and reduced ethical reasoning capacity. Under intense pressure, administrators may prioritise short-term outcomes over long-term public interest, increasing the risk of ethical lapses.

High stress levels can also contribute to authoritarian tendencies, as overwhelmed officials may resort to rigid controls, coercive practices, or the avoidance of accountability to manage administrative pressure. Such behaviours undermine democratic values, transparency, and public trust in governance institutions.

Therefore, effective stress management is not merely a welfare concern but a governance imperative. By managing stress at both individual and organisational levels, public institutions promote ethical decision-making, accountability, and participatory governance. Stress-resilient administrators are better equipped to uphold democratic principles, act with integrity, and serve the public interest even under challenging conditions.

Stress is an inevitable aspect of public administration, but it need not be destructive. Understanding its meaning, stages, and types enables administrators to recognise early warning signs and adopt effective coping mechanisms. While individual strategies enhance personal resilience, organisational strategies create supportive environments that prevent chronic stress. For public administrators, effective stress management is not a personal luxury but a professional necessity that sustains administrative efficiency, ethical conduct, and public trust.

Summarized Overview

This unit provides a comprehensive understanding of stress and stress management in organisational and public administration contexts. It explains the concept and meaning of stress, its physiological and psychological dimensions, and its relevance in modern work environments. The unit elaborates on the stages of stress using Hans Selye's General Adaptation Syndrome, highlighting how prolonged stress can lead to exhaustion and burnout. It examines various types of stress, such as eustress,

distress, role-related stress, occupational stress, and burnout. The unit further discusses individual- and organisational-level stress management strategies, including time management, emotional intelligence, leadership support, delegation, and employee assistance programmes, and emphasises the role of effective stress management in enhancing organisational performance, ethical behaviour, and employee well-being.

Self-Assessment

1. Define stress and explain its relevance in modern organisations.
2. Discuss the stages of stress as explained by the General Adaptation Syndrome model.
3. Examine different types of stress commonly experienced in public administration.
4. Analyse individual-level strategies for managing stress at the workplace.
5. Explain organisational-level stress management strategies and their importance for effective governance.

Assignments

1. Analyse a real organisational case where stress affected employee performance and suggest stress management measures.
2. Conduct a stress assessment of an organisation and identify major stressors.
3. Identify personal stress triggers and prepare a stress management plan.
4. Compare stress management practices in a public sector and a private sector organisation.
5. Design a stress management programme suitable for a government or corporate organisation.



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UNIT 3

Organisational Change

Learning Outcomes

After completing this unit, the learners will be able to:

- explain the concept, nature, and need for organisational change in public administration
- analyse models of organisational change and their application in managing reforms
- evaluate the role of organisational ethics and culture in influencing change outcomes
- describe how organisational change impacts employee stress and organisational performance

Background

Organisational change has become an unavoidable reality in contemporary organisations due to rapid technological advancements, political transitions, globalisation, and rising citizen expectations. According to the OECD (2022), governments that effectively manage organisational change demonstrate 15–25% higher service delivery efficiency and greater public trust than those with rigid administrative systems. In the public sector, reforms such as e-governance, decentralisation, performance-based budgeting, and ethics reforms have fundamentally altered traditional bureaucratic structures. However, global studies indicate that nearly 60% of organisational change initiatives fail due to employee resistance, weak organisational culture, and inadequate leadership support.

In public administration, organisational change is particularly complex because it operates within legal frameworks, democratic accountability, and ethical constraints. The World Bank (2021) reports that ineffective change management in public institutions leads to increased employee stress, reduced morale, and declining service quality. Therefore, understanding organisational change, along with the role of organisational ethics and culture, is essential for future managers and administrators. This unit equips

MBA students with conceptual clarity and practical insights to manage change ethically and sustainably while maintaining organisational stability and public trust.

Keywords

Organisational Change, Organisational Culture, Organisational Ethics, Change Management

Discussion

4.3.1 Introduction

Change is an inevitable and continuous feature of modern organisations. In public administration, change is driven by political priorities, administrative reforms, technological advancements, citizen expectations, and global pressures. Unlike private organisations, public sector organisations operate within rigid legal frameworks, making organisational change both essential and challenging. Reforms such as e-governance, decentralisation, performance-based management, and ethics reforms demonstrate how public organisations constantly adapt to changing environments.

According to the OECD (2022), governments that effectively manage organisational change show higher service delivery efficiency and greater public trust. However, poorly managed change often leads to resistance, stress, ethical lapses, and a decline in organisational performance. This unit examines the meaning and nature of organisational change, explores organisational ethics and culture, and explains how different types of culture can be created and sustained in public organisations.

4.3.2 Concept of Change

► Dynamic and continuous phenomenon

Change refers to any alteration in an organisation's existing structure, processes, behaviour, technology, or underlying values. It is a dynamic and continuous phenomenon that enables organisations to adapt to internal demands and external environmental pressures. Change may be planned, arising from deliberate managerial decisions, or unplanned, resulting from unexpected events such as political shifts, economic crises,



or technological disruptions. It can also vary in scope and intensity, ranging from incremental change, which involves gradual improvements, to radical change, which brings about fundamental transformation. Similarly, change may be short-term, addressing immediate issues, or long-term, aimed at sustained organisational development.

► Definition of change

Stephen P. Robbins defines change as “*any alteration that occurs in the work environment that affects the ways in which employees must act.*” This definition highlights the behavioural dimension of change, emphasising that organisational change ultimately requires individuals to modify their attitudes, skills, and work patterns. Thus, change is not limited to formal structures or policies but extends to how employees perceive their roles and perform their functions within the organisation.

In the context of public administration, change assumes a distinctive character due to the nature of the public sector. Unlike private organisations, public institutions operate within a framework of political authority, legal mandates, and public accountability. Consequently, change in public administration is often policy-driven, initiated to implement new government priorities or socio-economic objectives. It is typically reform-oriented, focusing on improving efficiency, transparency, responsiveness, and service delivery. Moreover, many changes are mandated by legislation or executive orders, leaving limited discretion to administrators regarding administrators with limited discretion over whether to adopt them. Public accountability further shapes change, as reforms must align with democratic values, citizen expectations, and ethical standards.

► Common examples

Common examples of change in public administration include the introduction of digital service delivery systems (e-governance) to enhance accessibility and transparency, administrative restructuring and cadre reforms to rationalise roles and improve performance, and the adoption of outcome-based budgeting, which shifts the focus from inputs and procedures to results and measurable outcomes. These examples illustrate how change in public administration is closely linked to governance reforms and the pursuit of effective, accountable, and citizen-centric administration.

4.3.3 Need for Organisational Change

Organisational change is essential for public organisations to remain effective and relevant in a dynamic administrative

environment. The major factors necessitating organisational change are explained below with clear headings and examples.

1. Technological Advancements

Technological progress significantly influences how organisations function and deliver services. Innovations such as digital record management, e-governance platforms, and AI-based decision-support systems have transformed traditional administrative processes. Public organisations must adopt new technologies to improve efficiency, accuracy, and service delivery.

Example: The introduction of online service portals in government departments allows citizens to apply for documents such as licenses or certificates without physically visiting offices. Similarly, the use of AI tools for data analysis helps governments predict resource needs and detect fraud, thereby improving decision-making.

2. Political Changes

Political transitions often bring new governments, policies, and administrative priorities. Public organisations must undergo structural and procedural changes to align with revised laws, development agendas, and governance frameworks introduced by political leadership.

Example: When a new government prioritises digital governance or social welfare reforms, ministries and departments may need to reorganise their functions, retrain staff, or create new departments to implement these policies effectively.

3. Social Demands

Changing social expectations compel organisations to become more transparent, inclusive, and citizen-centric. Increased public awareness, media scrutiny, and civic participation mean that organisations must adjust their practices to meet rising demands for accountability and responsiveness.

Example: Many public institutions now use social media platforms and public grievance redressal systems to communicate with citizens and address complaints promptly. Initiatives promoting gender equality and inclusion of marginalised groups also reflect organisational responses to social demands.

4. Global Influences

Globalisation exposes public organisations to international norms, standards, and best practices. Adopting global governance models helps improve performance, credibility, and service quality while enabling countries to meet international obligations.

Example: Public financial management reforms inspired by international standards, such as performance-based budgeting and anti-corruption frameworks, have been adopted in several countries to enhance transparency and efficiency.

According to the World Bank (2021), public organisations that resist change experience higher inefficiency and increased citizen dissatisfaction. Therefore, continuous organisational change is vital for improving public service delivery, institutional performance, and public trust.

4.3.4 Concept of Organisational Change

► Planned and systematic process

Organisational change is a planned and systematic process by which an organisation modifies its structures, policies, procedures, and work culture to improve effectiveness and adapt to internal and external pressures. Rather than being accidental or sudden, organisational change is intentional and aimed at enhancing efficiency, responsiveness, and long-term sustainability, especially important in public administration.

Organisational change involves deliberate efforts to improve organisational performance by altering internal systems, human behaviour, technology, and management practices. In public organisations, change is often driven by administrative reforms, policy shifts, technological innovation, and societal expectations for better governance and service delivery.

4.3.4.1 Kurt Lewin's Three-Stage Model of - Organisational Change

According to Kurt Lewin, organisational change is a continuous process that occurs in three interrelated stages:



Fig. 4.3.1 Kurt Lewin's Three-Stage Model of Organisational Change

1. Unfreezing – Recognising the Need for Change

Unfreezing refers to preparing the organisation for change by creating awareness about existing problems and the need to move away from old practices. This stage involves challenging established routines, attitudes, and resistance to change.

Example: In public administration, unfreezing may occur when inefficiencies in service delivery are highlighted through audit reports, citizen complaints, or performance reviews, prompting authorities to acknowledge the need for reform.

2. Changing – Implementing New Methods

The changing stage involves the actual introduction of new policies, procedures, technologies, or organisational structures. Employees begin to learn new ways of working, and management provides training, resources, and guidance to support the transition.

Example: A government department shifting from manual record-keeping to digital databases represents the changing stage, where staff are trained to use new software and workflows are redesigned.

3. Refreezing – Institutionalising the Change

Refreezing ensures that the changes are stabilised and embedded into the organisational culture. New practices become standard operating procedures, preventing a return to old methods.

Example: Once digital systems are fully adopted, rules, job descriptions, and performance evaluations are updated to reflect the new processes, ensuring long-term continuity of the reform.

Organisational Change in Public Administration

In public administration, organisational change must carefully balance multiple considerations:

- a. **Stability and continuity:** Ensuring uninterrupted public services while reforms are implemented
- b. **Legal compliance:** Adhering strictly to laws, rules, and constitutional provisions
- c. **Democratic accountability:** Remaining answerable to elected representatives, citizens, and oversight institutions

Unlike private organisations, public institutions cannot prioritise efficiency alone; they must also uphold public interest, transparency, and legitimacy.

Organisational change is a structured and essential process for improving public sector performance. Lewin's model provides a clear framework for managing change effectively, while the unique nature of public administration requires reforms to be legally sound, democratically accountable, and administratively stable.

Case Study: E-Governance Reforms in India

The Digital India Programme represents a landmark organisational change initiative undertaken by the Government of India to transform traditional public administration into a digitally empowered system. The programme aimed to replace manual, paper-based procedures with technology-driven platforms to enhance efficiency, transparency, and citizen convenience.

Background and Need for Change

Before the reforms, public service delivery in India relied heavily on manual documentation, physical file movement, and face-to-face interactions. These processes often resulted in delays, a lack of transparency, corruption risks, and inconvenience to citizens. Growing public demand for faster and more accountable governance created strong pressure for organisational change within government departments.

Key Digital Reforms Introduced

As part of the Digital India initiative, several core administrative functions were shifted to online platforms:

- a. **Income Tax e-filing:** Citizens can now file income tax returns online, reducing paperwork, human interaction, and processing delays while improving accuracy and compliance.
- b. **Online Passport Services:** Passport applications, appointment scheduling, and status tracking were digitised, significantly reducing waiting periods and improving service transparency.
- c. **Digital Land Records:** Land ownership records were computerised and made accessible online, minimising disputes, enhancing transparency, and reducing opportunities for manipulation.

Impact of Organisational Change

The introduction of e-governance reforms led to substantial improvements in administrative performance:

- a. Processing time reduced by 30–50%, enabling quicker service delivery
- b. Increased transparency through digital tracking and on-line access to information
- c. Reduced the discretionary power of officials, thereby lowering corruption and bias
- d. Improved citizen satisfaction due to ease of access and reduced physical visits to offices

Challenges and Resistance

Despite its success, the reform faced initial resistance from government employees, mainly due to fear of job displacement, lack of digital skills, and disruption of established routines. This resistance highlighted the importance of effective change management, including training, communication, and employee involvement, to ensure successful organisational transformation.

The Digital India Programme demonstrates how well-planned organisational change can modernise public administration and improve governance outcomes. While technological reforms delivered efficiency and transparency, the experience also shows that managing human resistance is crucial for sustaining long-term change in public organisations.

4.3.5 Organisational Ethics

► Values, principles, and standards of conduct

Organisational ethics refers to the values, principles, and standards of conduct that guide behaviour and decision-making within an organisation. In public administration, organisational ethics is especially significant because public officials exercise authority on behalf of citizens and manage public resources. Ethical conduct is therefore central to maintaining legitimacy, fairness, accountability, and public trust.

Ethics in public organisations ensures that decisions are taken in the public interest rather than for personal or political gain, and that power is exercised responsibly and transparently.

4.3.5.1 Ethical Foundations of Public Service

According to Denhardt and Denhardt, public service ethics emphasise values that distinguish public administration from private management. These include:

1. Integrity

Integrity refers to honesty, consistency, and moral uprightness in official conduct. Public officials are expected to act truthfully and avoid conflicts of interest.

Example: A civil servant who refuses bribes and follows rules strictly when awarding contracts demonstrates integrity.

2. Accountability

Accountability means that public officials are answerable for their actions to citizens, elected representatives, and oversight institutions.

Example: Government departments being audited by constitutional bodies and questioned in legislative assemblies reflect accountability in practice.

3. Transparency

Transparency involves openness in decision-making and easy access to information for citizens.

Example: Publishing budgets, tender details, and service delivery timelines on government websites promotes transparent administration.

4. Commitment to Public Interest

Public servants must prioritise collective welfare over personal or sectional interests.

Example: Designing welfare schemes for marginalised groups, even when politically challenging, reflects commitment to the public interest.

4.3.5.1 Importance of Organisational Ethics in Public Administration

Organisational ethics plays a crucial role in strengthening the functioning and credibility of public institutions.

1. Prevention of Corruption and Misuse of Authority

Strong ethical standards discourage bribery, favouritism, and abuse of power by clearly defining acceptable behaviour.

Example: Codes of conduct and vigilance mechanisms help detect and prevent corrupt practices within departments.

2. Enhancement of Public Confidence

When public institutions act ethically, citizens develop trust in government policies and administrative decisions.

Example: Fair and transparent recruitment processes increase public faith in the civil services system.

3. Reduction of Stress and Moral Dilemmas Among-Employees

Clear ethical guidelines help employees make decisions confidently, reducing confusion and moral conflict.

Example: Whistle-blower protection policies encourage employees to report wrongdoing without fear, reducing ethical stress.

4.3.5.2 Role of Ethical Frameworks

The Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (2023) highlights that countries with strong ethical frameworks, transparency measures, and accountability mechanisms experience significantly lower levels of administrative corruption. This underscores the importance of embedding ethics into organisational culture rather than treating it as a mere formality.

► Organisational ethics

Organisational ethics is a cornerstone of effective public administration. By promoting integrity, accountability, transparency, and commitment to public interest, ethical organisations not only prevent corruption but also strengthen democratic governance and public trust. In the long run, ethical administration leads to more stable, efficient, and citizen-oriented governance systems.

Case Study: Central Vigilance Commission (India)

The Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) was established to strengthen ethical oversight and promote integrity within public organisations in India. It serves as an apex vigilance institution responsible for monitoring corruption-related issues and reinforcing ethical standards across government departments and public sector undertakings.

Background and Purpose

Before the establishment of the CVC, vigilance mechanisms within government organisations were fragmented and often ineffective. Rising concerns over corruption, misuse of authority, and lack of accountability highlighted the need for a central, independent body to guide and supervise vigilance administration. The creation of the CVC marked a significant step towards the institutionalisation of ethics in public administration.

Key Ethical Oversight Functions

The Central Vigilance Commission strengthened organisational ethics through the following measures:

1. Preventive Vigilance

Preventive vigilance focuses on identifying systemic weaknesses and corruption-prone areas within organisations before misconduct occurs. The CVC issues guidelines to simplify procedures, reduce discretion, and improve transparency.

Example: Recommendations for transparent procurement systems and rotation of sensitive posts help minimise opportunities for corruption.

2. Ethics Awareness Programmes

The CVC actively promotes ethical values by conducting vigilance awareness campaigns, training programmes, and workshops for public officials.

Example: Vigilance Awareness Week is observed annually to sensitise employees and citizens about integrity, ethical conduct, and zero tolerance for corruption.

3. Whistle-Blower Protection

The Commission plays a crucial role in safeguarding individuals who report corruption or unethical practices, thereby encouraging ethical courage within organisations.

Example: Protection mechanisms for whistle-blowers help employees report wrongdoing without fear of victimisation, strengthening internal accountability.

Impact on Organisational Accountability

The institutionalisation of vigilance mechanisms under the CVC has significantly improved organisational accountability by:

- a. Strengthening oversight of administrative actions
- b. Promoting ethical decision-making among public officials
- c. Reducing corruption risks through preventive measures
- d. Enhancing public trust in government institutions

The Central Vigilance Commission case demonstrates how a dedicated ethical oversight body can embed values of integrity and accountability within public organisations. By combining preventive vigilance, ethics education, and whistleblower protection, the CVC has contributed to creating a more transparent and ethically responsible public administration system in India.

4.3.6 Concept of Organisational Culture

► Shared values, beliefs, norms, symbols, and everyday practices

Organisational culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, norms, symbols, and everyday practices that shape how members of an organisation think, behave, and interact. It represents the *personality* of an organisation and influences not only formal rules and procedures but also informal behaviour, attitudes, and work ethics. In public administration, organisational culture plays a decisive role in determining administrative effectiveness, service quality, and public trust.

According to Edgar Schein, organisational culture is “*a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solves its problems of external adaptation and internal integration.*”

This definition emphasises that organisational culture:

- a. Develops gradually through shared experiences
- b. Becomes deeply embedded over time
- c. Operates largely at a subconscious level
- d. Strongly influences behaviour even more than formal rules

4.3.6.1 Components of Organisational Culture

Organisational culture is expressed through several interconnected elements that guide behaviour within an organisation. Each component plays a crucial role in shaping how public organisations function and deliver services.

1. Shared Values and Beliefs

Shared values and beliefs refer to the common ideas within an organisation about what is important, desirable, and acceptable. These values act as guiding principles for decision-making

and behaviour, influencing how employees prioritise tasks and interpret rules.

Example: In public administration, values such as integrity, impartiality, service to citizens, and respect for the rule of law shape officials' conduct. An organisation that strongly values public service may prioritise citizen welfare over procedural convenience.

2. Norms and Unwritten Rules

Norms and unwritten rules are informal expectations that influence daily behaviour, even though they are not officially documented. These norms often develop over time through shared experiences and become powerful regulators of conduct.

Example: An unwritten rule that files should not be delayed beyond a certain period, even if not formally stated, encourages timely decision-making. Conversely, a norm of avoiding responsibility may lead to excessive file movement and delays.

3. Work Habits and Routines

Work habits and routines refer to the established ways of performing tasks within an organisation. They reflect “how things are usually done” and provide stability and predictability in administrative functioning.

Example: Regular staff meetings, fixed office hours, and standard operating procedures for processing applications represent work routines. While such habits ensure consistency, overly rigid routines may hinder innovation and responsiveness.

4. Communication Patterns and Leadership Styles

Communication patterns and leadership styles determine how information flows and how authority is exercised within an organisation. They influence employee motivation, coordination, and trust.

Example: In a hierarchical culture, communication tends to flow from top to bottom with limited feedback, whereas in an open and participatory culture, leaders encourage dialogue, feedback, and collaborative problem-solving. Leadership styles that promote transparency and consultation often result in higher employee morale and better service delivery.



Together, these components shape the organisational environment and influence behaviour more powerfully than formal rules alone. In public administration, nurturing positive values, constructive norms, effective work routines, and open communication is essential for building efficient, ethical, and citizen-oriented organisations.

4.3.6.2 Influence of Organisational Culture in Public Administration

Organisational culture significantly affects administrative behaviour and outcomes in the following ways:

1. Decision-Making Styles

Culture determines whether decision-making is centralised or participatory, rigid or flexible, and rule-bound or innovation-oriented.

Example: A hierarchical culture encourages strict adherence to rules and top-down decision-making, whereas a participatory culture promotes consultation, teamwork, and shared responsibility in policy implementation.

2. Attitude Towards Citizens

The cultural orientation of an organisation shapes how citizens are viewed either as passive recipients of services or as active stakeholders in governance.

Example: A service-oriented culture treats citizens as clients whose needs must be addressed efficiently and respectfully, while a bureaucratic culture may prioritise procedures over public convenience.

3. Acceptance or Resistance to Change

Organisational culture strongly influences how employees respond to reforms, technological upgrades, and innovation.

Example: Organisations with a learning-oriented and adaptive culture are more open to digital governance reforms, while rigid and tradition-bound cultures often resist change due to fear of uncertainty or loss of control.

In public administration, organisational culture must strike a balance between:

- Discipline and flexibility
- Rule compliance and innovation
- Authority and empathy

A positive organisational culture promotes ethical conduct, accountability, teamwork, and citizen-centric governance. In contrast, a negative culture can result in inefficiency, excessive red tape, low morale, and resistance to reform.

Organisational culture is a powerful yet often invisible force shaping public administration. Understanding and consciously shaping organisational culture is essential for improving decision-making, enhancing citizen satisfaction, and ensuring the successful implementation of administrative reforms.

4.3.6.3 Role of Culture in Organisational Change

Organisational culture plays a decisive role in determining the success or failure of organisational change. Since culture shapes attitudes, beliefs, and behaviour, it directly influences how employees perceive, accept, or resist change initiatives. In public administration, where procedures and traditions are deeply rooted, culture becomes a critical factor in reform efforts.

1. Culture as a Facilitator of Organisational Change

A positive and adaptive organisational culture can promote and support change by encouraging innovation, learning, and openness.

- a. Cultures that value flexibility, experimentation, and continuous improvement make employees more willing to adopt new technologies and work practices.
- b. Openness to ideas and participatory decision-making helps reduce fear and uncertainty associated with change.
- c. Trust-based cultures encourage employees to view change as an opportunity rather than a threat.

Example: Public organisations with a learning-oriented culture are more receptive to e-governance reforms, capacity-building programmes, and performance-based management systems.

2. Culture as a Source of Resistance to Change

Conversely, organisational culture can resist change when it is rigid, hierarchical, and tradition-bound.

- a. Strong attachment to established routines creates reluctance to abandon familiar practices.
- b. Fear of loss of authority, status, or job security often reinforces resistance.
- c. Overemphasis on rules and procedures discourages innovation and risk-taking.

Example: Employees accustomed to manual, paper-based processes may resist digitalisation due to lack of skills or fear of increased accountability.

3. Bureaucratic Culture and Organisational Change

A bureaucratic culture, common in public administration, emphasises hierarchy, rule compliance, standardisation, and stability. While such a culture ensures order, predictability, and continuity, it often slows reform initiatives.

- a. Excessive procedural rigidity can delay decision-making.
- b. Innovation may be discouraged due to fear of rule violations.
- c. Change efforts may face passive resistance rather than open opposition.

However, bureaucratic culture does not need to be eliminated. Instead, it must be consciously transformed by blending stability with adaptability.

4. Managing Culture for Successful Change

For organisational change to succeed, leaders must actively address cultural factors by:

- a. Promoting shared vision and clear communication
- b. Encouraging participation and employee involvement
- c. Providing training and capacity building
- d. Reinforcing new values through incentives and leadership example

Organisational culture can either enable or obstruct change. While adaptive cultures facilitate reform, rigid bureaucratic cultures often resist it. Therefore, successful organisational change in public administration requires deliberate cultural transformation, ensuring stability while actively encouraging innovation and responsiveness.

► Varies across institutions

4.3.6.4 Types of Organisational Culture

Organisational culture varies across institutions depending on their goals, structure, and environment. In public administration, different organisational cultures influence how work is performed, how decisions are made, and how reforms are implemented. The major types of organisational culture are explained below.

1. Bureaucratic Culture

Characteristics

- a. Rule-bound behaviour
- b. Hierarchical control and authority
- c. Formal communication channels
- d. Emphasis on procedures and compliance

Example: Traditional government departments operating strictly under civil service rules, where decisions move through well-defined hierarchical levels.

Merits

- a. Ensures stability, uniformity, and predictability
- b. Reduces arbitrariness in decision-making
- c. Maintains administrative continuity



Limitations

- a. Resistant to innovation and change
- b. Slow decision-making
- c. Excessive red tape may reduce efficiency and citizen satisfaction

2. Clan Culture

Characteristics

- a. Strong emphasis on teamwork
- b. Shared values and mutual trust
- c. Informal communication
- d. Strong interpersonal relationships

Example: Local self-government institutions that work closely with communities, encouraging participation and cooperation among officials and citizens.

Merits

- a. High employee commitment and morale
- b. Better coordination and collaboration
- c. Encourages participatory governance

Limitations

- a. Risk of favouritism or lack of objectivity
- b. May reduce emphasis on performance measurement

3. Market-Oriented Culture

Characteristics

- a. Strong focus on performance and results
- b. Target and outcome orientation
- c. Efficiency and competitiveness
- d. Accountability for outputs

Example: Public sector undertakings adopting performance-based appraisal systems and result-oriented management practices.

Merits

- a. Improves efficiency and productivity
- b. Encourages accountability and goal achievement
- c. Aligns organisational objectives with outcomes

Limitations

- a. Overemphasis on targets may ignore social objectives
- b. Risk of stress and unhealthy competition among employees

4. Innovative (Adhocracy) Culture

Characteristics

- a. Flexibility and adaptability
- b. Willingness to take risks
- c. Encouragement of creativity and innovation
- d. Openness to experimentation

Example: Technology-driven government agencies implementing smart governance and digital service delivery initiatives.

Merits

- a. Promotes innovation and reform
- b. Enhances adaptability to changing environments
- c. Supports modernisation and digital governance

Limitations

- a. Risk of instability and lack of standardisation
- b. Requires high skill levels and strong leadership

Each type of organisational culture has its strengths and limitations. In public administration, an effective organisation often combines elements of different cultures, maintaining bureaucratic stability while fostering innovation, teamwork, and performance orientation to achieve responsive and citizen-centric governance.

4.3.7 Creating and Sustaining Organisational Culture

► Continuous and deliberate process

Creating and sustaining organisational culture is a continuous and deliberate process. In public administration, culture must be consciously nurtured to promote ethical conduct, accountability, professionalism, and citizen-centric governance. The following mechanisms play a key role in shaping and sustaining organisational culture.

4.3.7.1 Leadership Role

Leadership is the most influential factor in shaping organisational culture. Leaders transmit values and norms through what they say, do, and prioritise.

Leaders shape culture through:

- a. **Vision:** Clearly articulating organisational goals, values, and purpose
- b. **Behavioural modelling:** Demonstrating desired behaviour through personal example
- c. **Decision-making patterns:** Showing fairness, transparency, and consistency in decisions

Ethical leadership strengthens a positive organisational culture by setting high moral standards and building trust among employees.

Example: A senior public official who follows rules strictly, treats subordinates fairly, and prioritises public interest reinforces a culture of integrity and accountability.

4.3.7.2 Recruitment and Socialisation

Recruitment and socialisation processes ensure that individuals fit into and reinforce organisational culture.

- a. Selecting candidates whose values align with organisational goals
- b. Training and orientation programmes that familiarise recruits with ethical standards, norms, and expected behaviour

- c. Mentoring and peer learning that transmit institutional values

Example: Civil services training academies emphasise values such as neutrality, integrity, impartiality, discipline, and commitment to public service, helping new entrants internalise the ethos of public administration.

4.3.7.3 Reward and Performance Systems

Reward and performance management systems play a crucial role in reinforcing desired cultural values.

- a. Linking promotions, incentives, and recognition to ethical conduct and performance
- b. Penalising unethical behaviour and rule violations
- c. Encouraging teamwork, innovation, and accountability

When employees see that ethical behaviour is rewarded and misconduct is punished, organisational culture is strengthened.

Example: Recognising officers for integrity, innovation, or exemplary public service encourages others to adopt similar behaviour.

4.3.7.4 Communication and Symbols

Communication and symbolic elements help reinforce shared values and organisational identity.

- a. Mission statements clarify organisational purpose and values
- b. Codes of conduct define acceptable behaviour and ethical standards
- c. Organisational rituals and symbols reinforce tradition and collective identity

Example: Oaths of office, observance of integrity pledges, and public display of mission statements serve as constant reminders of organisational values.

Creating and sustaining organisational culture requires consistent leadership, value-based recruitment, effective reward



systems, and clear communication. In public administration, a strong and ethical organisational culture enhances efficiency, public trust, and long-term institutional effectiveness.

4.3.7.5 Managing Cultural Change

Managing cultural change is one of the most challenging aspects of organisational reform, particularly in public administration, where traditions, routines, and established values are deeply entrenched. Since organisational culture is built over time, cultural change must be approached carefully, systematically, and sensitively.

Requirements for Managing Cultural Change

1. Gradual Implementation

Cultural change should be introduced incrementally rather than abruptly. Sudden and radical shifts can create confusion, anxiety, and resistance among employees.

- Gradual change allows employees time to understand, accept, and internalise new values
- Pilot projects and phased implementation help test reforms before full-scale adoption

Example: Introducing digital governance in phases—starting with selected departments—helps employees adjust gradually to new work practices.

2. Employee Participation

Employee involvement is essential for successful cultural change. When employees participate in planning and implementation, they develop a sense of ownership and commitment.

- a. Participation reduces fear and resistance
- b. Feedback mechanisms help refine change initiatives
- c. Collective problem-solving builds trust

Example: Consulting staff while redesigning workflows or introducing performance reforms increases acceptance and cooperation.

3. Continuous Reinforcement

Cultural change must be reinforced consistently over time to prevent regression to old habits.

- a. Training and capacity-building programmes reinforce new values
- b. Leadership behaviour must consistently reflect the desired culture
- c. Reward systems should support and sustain new norms

Example: Regular ethics training, performance reviews, and recognition of positive behaviour help institutionalise cultural change.

4. Challenges of Abrupt Cultural Change

Abrupt or poorly managed cultural change often leads to:

- a. Employee resistance and low morale
- b. Stress and uncertainty
- c. Decline in performance and service quality

Therefore, cultural change should be seen as a long-term process rather than a one-time intervention.

Effective management of cultural change requires gradual implementation, active employee participation, and continuous reinforcement. In public administration, the sensitive handling of cultural change ensures stability while enabling innovation, ultimately leading to sustainable, meaningful organisational transformation.

4.3.8 Organisational Change and Stress: A Link

Organisational change and employee stress are closely interconnected, particularly in public administration, where changes often affect job roles, authority structures, and long-established work routines. While change is necessary for organisational improvement, poorly planned or inadequately managed change can significantly increase stress among employees and negatively affect performance.

► Poorly planned or inadequately managed change



4.3.8.1 How Organisational Change Creates Stress

When organisational change is introduced without proper communication, support, or planning, it may lead to the following stress-inducing factors:

1. Job Insecurity

Change initiatives such as restructuring, digitalisation, or performance reforms can create fear of job loss, reduced relevance, or diminished status among employees.

Example: Automation of clerical tasks may cause anxiety among staff who fear redundancy or skill obsolescence.

2. Role Ambiguity

Organisational change often alters roles, responsibilities, and reporting relationships. If these changes are not clearly communicated, employees may experience confusion regarding expectations and authority.

Example: During departmental restructuring, unclear job descriptions can result in overlapping responsibilities and uncertainty.

3. Emotional Stress

Change disrupts familiar routines and comfort zones, leading to anxiety, frustration, and resistance, especially when employees feel excluded from the process.

Example: Rapid implementation of new technologies without adequate training can lead to frustration and lowered self-confidence.

4.3.8.2 Reducing Stress Through Effective Change Management

Stress associated with organisational change can be significantly reduced through participative and ethical change processes:

- a. Employee participation in decision-making increases ownership and acceptance

- b. Transparent communication reduces uncertainty and rumours
- c. Training and capacity building enhance confidence and competence
- d. Ethical leadership builds trust and reassures employees

When employees perceive change as fair, necessary, and inclusive, resistance declines and cooperation increases.

Organisational change and stress are inseparable, but stress is not an inevitable outcome. Poorly managed change intensifies job insecurity, role ambiguity, and emotional strain. In contrast, participative, transparent, and ethically guided change processes reduce stress, improve acceptance, and enable smoother organisational transformation, especially in the public sector.

Organisational change is a necessary response to evolving administrative, technological, and social demands. In public administration, change must be ethically grounded and culturally sensitive to ensure sustainability. Organisational ethics provide the moral foundation for change, while organisational culture determines its success or failure. Understanding different types of culture and strategies for creating and sustaining them equips public administrators to manage reforms effectively, reduce stress, and enhance public service delivery.

Summarized Overview

This unit examines the concept and nature of organisational change with special reference to public administration. It explains the meaning of change and organisational change, highlighting their inevitability in a dynamic administrative environment. The unit discusses the need for organisational change arising from technological advancements, political shifts, social demands, and global influences. It introduces Kurt Lewin's three-stage model of change, such as unfreezing, changing, and refreezing, as a framework for managing planned change effectively. The unit also explores organisational ethics and organisational culture, explaining their concepts, components, and importance in public administration. Different types of organisational culture, such as bureaucratic, clan, market-oriented, and innovative cultures, are analysed along with strategies for creating and sustaining a positive culture. Finally, the unit highlights the link between organisational change and stress, emphasising the need for ethical, participative, and culturally sensitive change management.

Self-Assessment

1. Define organisational change and explain its significance in public administration.
2. Discuss the major factors necessitating organisational change in public organisations.
3. Explain Kurt Lewin's three-stage model of organisational change with suitable examples.
4. Examine the role of organisational culture in facilitating or resisting change.
5. Analyse the relationship between organisational change and employee stress.

Assignments

1. Analyse a public sector reform initiative and evaluate how organisational change was managed.
2. Identify the dominant organisational culture in a public organisation and assess its impact on change.
3. Design a step-by-step change management strategy for implementing e-governance in a department.
4. Examine how ethical frameworks influence decision-making during organisational change.
5. Assess how organisational change can create stress among employees and suggest stress-reduction measures.

Reference

1. Denhardt, R. B., & Denhardt, J. V. (2015). *Public administration: An action orientation*. Cengage Learning.
2. Lewin, K. (1951). *Field theory in social science*. Harper & Row.
3. OECD. (2022). *Public governance reform*. OECD Publishing.
4. Peters, B. G. (2019). *The politics of bureaucracy*. Routledge.

5. Robbins, S. P., & Judge, T. A. (2022). *Organizational behavior* (18th ed.). Pearson.

Suggested Reading

1. Schein, E. H. (2017). *Organizational culture and leadership*. Wiley.
2. Sharma, M. P., & Sadana, B. L. (2018). *Public administration in theory and practice*. Kitab Mahal.
3. Transparency International. (2023). *Corruption perceptions index*.
4. World Bank. (2021). *Government effectiveness and reform*.
5. Yukl, G. (2013). *Leadership in organizations*. Pearson.

Space for Learner Engagement for Objective Questions

Learners are encouraged to develop objective questions based on the content in the paragraph as a sign of their comprehension of the content. The Learners may reflect on the recap bullets and relate their understanding with the narrative in order to frame objective questions from the given text. The University expects that 1 - 2 questions are developed for each paragraph. The space given below can be used for listing the questions.



SGOU

Model Question Paper Sets





SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

QP CODE:

REG. NO:

NAME:

FOURTH SEMESTER MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION DEGREE EXAMINATION

DISCIPLINE SPECIFIC ELECTIVE COURSE

M23PA05DE - ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOUR

MODEL QUESTION PAPER – SET 1

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any ten questions in a word or a sentence. Each question carries one mark.

(10X1 = 10 Marks)

1. Define Organisational Behaviour.
2. What is meant by interdisciplinary nature of OB?
3. What is hierarchy?
4. What is decentralisation?
5. What is perception?
6. Define attitude.
7. What is group dynamics?
8. What is communication?
9. What is personality?
10. Name one determinant of personality.
11. What is 'Ego' in personality theory?
12. Define authority.
13. What is delegation?
14. What is stress?
15. What is organisational culture?



SECTION B

Answer any five questions in two or three sentences. Each question carries two marks.

(5X2 =10 Marks)

16. State the significance of Organisational Behaviour.
17. Explain the scope of OB.
18. What is decision-making in organisations?
19. What are barriers to communication?
20. Explain the importance of teamwork.
21. What are the determinants of personality?
22. Explain the contributions of Carl Jung and Alfred Adler to personality theory.
23. What is delegation of authority?
24. What are types of stress?
25. What is organisational change?

SECTION C

Answer any five questions in one paragraph. Each question carries four marks.

(5X4 = 20 Marks)

26. Explain the nature of Organisational Behaviour.
27. Discuss the interdisciplinary nature of OB.
28. Explain group behaviour and its importance.
29. Describe types of communication in organisations.
30. Explain determinants of personality.
31. Describe ego states in personality theory.
32. Explain stress management strategies.
33. Discuss organisational culture and ethics.



SECTION D

Answer any three questions in two pages. Each question carries ten marks.

(3X10 =30 Marks)

34. Analyse the significance of Organisational Behaviour in improving administrative efficiency.
35. Critically analyse the role of perception and attitudes in decision-making.
36. Discuss the importance of leadership and teamwork in organisational effectiveness.
37. Evaluate the contribution of personality theories in understanding human behaviour in organisations.
38. Analyse the role of authority and delegation in administration.
39. Examine the importance of organisational culture and change in modern governance.



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FOURTH SEMESTER MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION DEGREE EXAMINATION

DISCIPLINE SPECIFIC ELECTIVE COURSE

M23PA05DE - ORGANISATIONAL BEHAVIOUR

MODEL QUESTION PAPER – SET 2

Time: 3 Hours

Max Marks: 70

SECTION A

Answer any ten questions in a word or a sentence. Each question carries one mark.

(10X1 = 10 Marks)

1. What is organisational effectiveness?
2. Name one discipline contributing to OB.
3. What is line organisation?
4. What is staff authority?
5. What is decision-making?
6. Define job satisfaction.
7. What is informal communication?
8. What is non-verbal communication?
9. Define personality traits.
10. Name any one determinants of personality.
11. What is 'Id' in psychoanalytical theory?
12. What is responsibility in administration?
13. What is work stress?
14. Define organisational ethics.
15. What is organisational change?



SECTION B

Answer any five questions in two or three sentences. Each question carries two marks.

(5X2 =10 Marks)

16. Explain the importance of OB in improving productivity.
17. What is the evolution of Organisational Behaviour?
18. What is the role of perception in behaviour?
19. What is grapevine communication?
20. What are the features of group dynamics?
21. Explain the role of society in personality development.
22. What are ego states in Transactional Analysis?
23. What are types of authority?
24. What are stages of stress?
25. What is organisational culture?

SECTION C

Answer any five questions in one paragraph. Each question carries four marks.

(5X4 = 20 Marks)

26. Discuss the evolution of Organisational Behaviour.
27. Explain the significance of OB in public administration.
28. Explain attitudes and job satisfaction.
29. Describe barriers to effective communication.
30. Discuss different types of personality.
31. Explain the contributions of Eric Berne in personality theory.
32. Explain types of stress and their impact.
33. Discuss organisational change and its importance.

SECTION D

Answer any three questions in two pages. Each question carries ten marks.

(3X10 =30 Marks)

34. Analyse the interdisciplinary nature of Organisational Behaviour and its relevance in administration.
35. Critically evaluate the role of communication systems in organisational effectiveness.
36. Analyse the importance of leadership models in managing group behaviour.
37. Examine the role of psychoanalytical theories in understanding human personality.
38. Evaluate the importance of stress management strategies in organisations.
39. Analyse the role of organisational culture and ethics in shaping administrative behaviour.



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**DON'T LET IT
BE TOO LATE**

**SAY
NO
TO
DRUGS**

**LOVE YOURSELF
AND ALWAYS BE
HEALTHY**



SREENARAYANAGURU OPEN UNIVERSITY

The State University for Education, Training and Research in Blended Format, Kerala

Organisational Behaviour

COURSE CODE: M23PA05DE

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ISBN 978-81-998406-4-5



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