Advanced International Journal for Research (AIJFR)
E-ISSN: 3048-7641 ● Website: www.aijfr.com ● Email: editor@aijfr.com

Bureaucratic Failure and Human Dignity: Evaluating the Mahaprayan Scheme through the Lens of the Jitu Munda Tragedy

Mr. Amit Kumar Tripathy[1], Dr. Bibhuti Bhusan Nayak[2]

[1]Research Scholar, [2]ICSSR Post-Doctoral Fellow
[1,2]Department of Public Administration
Utkal University, Odisha

Abstract

This article examines the socio-legal dimensions of the incident, situates it within the broader context of rural banking systems in India and analyzes its implications for policy reform and human dignity in administrative processes. The study adopts a qualitative case-study approach using secondary sources and media reports. The article suggests that structural illiteracy, procedural rigidity and weak institutional communication contributed significantly to the crisis. The article concludes with recommendations for simplifying death claim procedures by improving grassroots financial governance systems and strengthening monitoring mechanisms and logistical support is essential for improving service delivery under the scheme.

Key Words: Bureaucratic Failure, Financial Inclusion, Social Justice, Human Rights, Mahaprayan Scheme, Health Policy and Social Security

1. The Context

The Mahaprayan [1]Scheme is a welfare initiative launched by the Government of Odisha in 2016 to provide free transportation of dead bodies from government hospitals to the residence of deceased persons, particularly benefiting economically weaker sections. This paper critically assesses the objectives, implementation, benefits, and challenges of the scheme. This article uses a qualitative case study approach to highlight that while the scheme addresses issues of dignity and humanitarian support in death, its effectiveness is affected by infrastructural gaps, vehicle maintenance issues, and administrative inefficiencies. The case of Jitu Munda [2]from Keonjhar district, Odisha, India, represents one of the most disturbing recent examples of bureaucratic breakdown and its impact on marginalized populations. In April 2026, Munda exhumed and carried the skeletal remains of his deceased sister to a bank branch in an attempt to prove her death and access her modest savings. This extreme act drew national and international attention, raising questions about financial inclusion, administrative rigidity, and the accessibility of documentation-based governance systems. Public welfare schemes in India play

[1] Mahaprayan Scheme introduced by the Government of Odisha in August 2016 to carry dead bodies due to lack of affordable transportation facilities.

[2] A tribal poor of Keonjhar District of Odisha who carried the skeletal remains of his deceased sister to a bank branch in an attempt to prove her death and access her modest savings

a crucial role in ensuring social security and dignity for vulnerable populations. One such initiative is the Mahaprayan Scheme introduced by the Government of Odisha in August 2016. The scheme emerged in response to public outrage over incidents where poor families were forced to carry dead bodies due to lack of affordable transportation facilities. The scheme aims to provide free hearse services from government hospitals to the homes of deceased individuals, ensuring dignity in death. It is implemented through designated vehicles stationed in government hospitals and medical colleges across Odisha.[3]

The intersection of poverty, illiteracy, and bureaucratic systems often produces situations where administrative procedures unintentionally exclude the very populations they are designed to serve. The case of Jitu Munda in Odisha, India, exemplifies this contradiction. In April 2026, Munda, a tribal resident of Keonjhar district, reportedly exhumed and carried the skeletal remains of his deceased sister to a bank branch after repeated attempts to withdraw her savings failed due to the absence of a death certificate and required legal documentation[4] This incident sparked widespread debate regarding the rigidity of institutional processes in India’s banking system and the challenges faced by rural citizens in navigating formal documentation requirements. The case also raises ethical questions about dignity, administrative empathy, and state responsibility in ensuring accessible governance. The Administrative lacunas of today’s societies are at its peak .Due to massive workload, hectic working hours, corrupt attitude and biasness of service providers, the life of poor people at its stake. The Jitu Munda case is a shocking example of bureaucratic failure and social neglect in rural India. The incident took place in April 2026 in Dianali village of Keonjhar district, Odisha. Jitu Munda, a poor tribal man belonging to the Ho/Munda community, exhumed the skeletal remains of his deceased sister, Kalra Munda, and carried them nearly 3 kilometers to a local branch of Odisha Grameen Bank to prove that she had died.

Theoretical Discourse and Concept of Administrative Failure

Administrative failure refers to the inability of public institutions or administrative systems to implement policies, deliver services, maintain accountability, or achieve intended outcomes. It may result from organizational, political, economic, or human factors.

Theories Explaining Administrative Failure

Max Weber's Bureaucratic Theory

According to Weber, bureaucracy functions effectively through hierarchy, rules, specialization, and merit-based recruitment. Administrative failure occurs when: Excessive red tape delays decision-making, rigid procedures reduce adaptability, Poor coordination exists among departments and officials prioritize rules over public needs. (Max Weber 1947).

Variables: Bureaucratic rigidity, Rule compliance, Organizational efficiency

[3] The Economic Times, 2016

[4] The Guardian, 2026

Principal–Agent Theory

This theory explains the relationship between policymakers (principals) and administrators (agents). Administrative failure arises when: Agents pursue personal interests rather than public goals, Information asymmetry exists between principals and agents. Monitoring and accountability mechanisms are weak. (James Q.Wilson 1989).

Variables: Accountability, Transparency, Monitoring mechanisms, Goal alignment

New Public Management (NPM) Theory

Associated with reforms emphasizing efficiency, performance measurement, and market-oriented governance. Administrative failure may occur when: Performance indicators are poorly designed, Excessive privatization weakens public accountability, Managers focus on outputs rather than outcomes. (Christopher Hood 1991).

Variables: Performance management. Service quality, Efficiency, Customer orientation

Institutional Theory

Institutional theory argues that administrative behavior is shaped by formal and informal institutions. Failure occurs when: Institutions are weak or unstable, Corruption becomes institutionalized and Organizational norms discourage innovation. Douglass North (1990).

Variables: Institutional capacity, Organizational culture, Regulatory effectiveness, Corruption levels

Systems Theory

Administration is viewed as an interconnected system of inputs, processes, outputs, and feedback. Administrative failure results from: Poor resource allocation, inadequate feedback mechanisms, Weak coordination among subsystems, Environmental pressures exceeding organizational capacity. (David Estan 1948)

Variables: Resource availability, Coordination, Feedback systems, Environmental adaptability

Diagrammatic Representation

Diagrammatic Representation

```
┌────────────────────────────────┐
│    │ Bureaucratic Rigidity │    │
├────────────────────────────────┤
│    │ Political Interference │   │
├────────────────────────────────┤
│         │ Corruption │         │
├────────────────────────────────┤
│    │ Resource Constraints │     │
├────────────────────────────────┤
│       │ Poor Leadership │       │
├────────────────────────────────┤
│   │ Institutional Weakness │    │
└────────────────────────────────┘
                │
                │
                ▼
 ┌──────────────────────────────┐
 │   │ Organizational Factors │   │
└────────────────────────────────┘
                │
                │
                ▼
┌────────────────────────────────┐
│   │ Administrative Failure │    │
│              │ │               │
│        │ • Inefficiency │       │
│    │ • Poor Service Delivery │  │
│       │ • Policy Failure │      │
│   │ • Lack of Accountability │  │
└────────────────────────────────┘
```

The case of Jitu Munda

The case of Jitu Munda from Keonjhar district, Odisha, India, represents one of the most disturbing recent examples of bureaucratic breakdown and its impact on marginalized populations. In April 2026, Munda exhumed and carried the skeletal remains of his deceased sister to a bank branch in an attempt to prove her death and access her modest savings. This extreme act drew national and international attention, raising questions about financial inclusion, administrative rigidity, and the accessibility of documentation-based governance systems. This article examines the socio-legal dimensions of the incident, situates it within the broader context of rural banking systems in India, and analyzes its implications for policy reform and human dignity in administrative processes. The intersection of poverty, illiteracy, and bureaucratic systems often produces situations where administrative procedures unintentionally exclude the very populations they are designed to serve. The case of Jitu Munda in Odisha, India, exemplifies this contradiction. In April 2026, Munda, a tribal resident of Keonjhar district, reportedly exhumed and carried the skeletal remains of his deceased sister to a bank branch after repeated attempts to withdraw her savings failed due to the absence of a death certificate and required legal documentation (The Guardian, 2026).This incident sparked widespread debate regarding the rigidity of institutional processes in India’s banking system and the challenges faced by rural citizens in navigating formal documentation requirements. The case also raises ethical questions about dignity, administrative empathy, and state responsibility in ensuring accessible governance.

Background of the Case

According to multiple reports, Jitu Munda had visited the bank several times to withdraw approximately ₹19,000–₹20,000 belonging to his deceased sister[5]. The funds represented savings accumulated from small-scale livestock activities. However, he was unable to access the account due to the absence of legally issued death certificate and heir documentation.

After repeated unsuccessful attempts and alleged lack of clarity in communication from bank officials, Munda resorted to exhuming his sister’s remains and carrying them to the bank as proof of death [6]. The act was widely circulated in the media and triggered public outrage, leading to administrative intervention and eventual release of the funds after proper documentation was processed. The bank later stated that procedures were followed correctly and attributed the incident to lack of awareness on the part of the account claimant[7]. However, investigative reports suggested that communication gaps and procedural inflexibility contributed significantly to the escalation of the situation[8].

[5] Onmanorama, 2026

[6] The Daily Star, 2026
[7] AFP, 2026
[8] NDTV, 2026

Advanced International Journal for Research (AIJFR)
E-ISSN: 3048-7641 ● Website: www.aijfr.com ● Email: editor@aijfr.com

Key Aspects of the Case:

The Incident: In a similar incident Dana Majhi's wife, Amang Dei, died of tuberculosis at District Headquarters Hospital, Bhawanipatna. Lacking money for private transport, Majhi carried her wrapped in cloth.

Outcome & Impact: The incident garnered global media attention. Following this, Majhi's daughters were enrolled in a residential school, he received financial aid, a new house, and a motorbike.

Systemic Failure: The case revealed a severe lack of immediate medical assistance and ambulance services for the poor, prompting improvements in Odisha's rural ambulance network.

Related Incidents: The case brought to light similar incidents in Odisha, where victims' families were compelled to carry dead bodies due to a lack of transport facilities.

Recent Parallels: In April 2026, the present incident occurred in Keonjhar where Jitu Munda was forced to transport his deceased sister's body to a bank to show proof of death to access funds, triggering renewed criticism.

2. Overview of Literature

Bureaucracy and Social Exclusion Max Weber's theory of bureaucracy emphasizes rational-legal authority and standardized procedures. However, scholars have noted that excessive procedural rigidity can lead to "bureaucratic exclusion[9]," especially in developing economies where literacy rates are uneven and institutional awareness is limited.

RBI Reports on Financial Inclusion, 2024 studies on rural banking highlight that documentation requirements such as death certificates, succession certificates, and nominee verification often create barriers for low-income households .These barriers are intensified in tribal and remote regions where administrative infrastructure is weak.[10]

The theory of street-level bureaucracy, developed by Michael Lipsky, explains how frontline officials exercise discretion in ways that significantly shape citizens' access to public services. When rules are applied mechanically without considering social realities, vulnerable populations frequently experience exclusion.

Max Weber: Bureaucracy as Rational Administration Weber viewed bureaucracy as the most efficient form of organization based on hierarchy[11], specialization, rules, and merit-based recruitment. According to him, bureaucratic administration promotes predictability, efficiency, and accountability. However, later scholars noted that excessive adherence to rules can transform bureaucracy into an inflexible system. Weber's model provides the benchmark against which administrative failures are often evaluated.

[9] Bureaucracy and Social Exclusion Max Weber's by Weber, 1947
[10] RBI Reports on Financial Inclusion, 2024 studies on rural banking

[11] A system in which people or things are ranked in order of status, power, or importance

Robert K. Merton: Goal Displacement and Trained Incapacity Merton argued that bureaucratic officials often become excessively attached to rules and procedures. This leads to "goal displacement," where compliance with rules becomes more important than achieving organizational objectives. Such rigidity can result in administrative inefficiency and citizen dissatisfaction. Administrative failure occurs when procedures are prioritized over public welfare.

Michel Crozier: Bureaucratic Rigidity Crozier emphasized that bureaucracies develop rigid structures that resist change and innovation. Excessive centralization and rule-bound behavior create delays, poor communication, and ineffective decision-making. He viewed administrative failure as a consequence of organizational inflexibility. Failure emerges from the inability of institutions to adapt to changing circumstances.

Herbert A. Simon: Bounded Rationality Simon challenged the assumption that administrators always make rational decisions. He argued that decision-makers operate under conditions of limited information, limited time, and cognitive constraints. As a result, they "satisfice[12]" rather than optimize decisions. Administrative failures often arise because public officials cannot process all relevant information before making decisions.

Michael Lipsky: Street-Level Bureaucracy Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucracy focuses on frontline public officials such as teachers, police officers, and welfare workers. He argued that resource constraints, workload pressures, and discretion lead frontline officials to develop coping mechanisms that may distort policy implementation. Citizens experience government primarily through these officials. Administrative failure [13]occurs when frontline bureaucrats implement policies in ways that exclude or disadvantage citizens. The actions of local officials and institutional actors illustrate how bureaucratic discretion and procedural rigidity can undermine human dignity.

Kenneth J. Meier: Political Failure and Bureaucratic Constraints Meier and colleagues argue that many governance failures stem not from bureaucracy itself but from political institutions. Governments often provide unclear policy goals, inadequate resources, and conflicting directives. Bureaucrats therefore struggle to implement policies effectively. Administrative failure is often linked to broader political and institutional failures.

Ahrum Chang and Gene A. Brewer: Contemporary Review of Bureaucratic Failure Their systematic review of street-level bureaucracy highlights that frontline officials operate within complex environments characterized by scarce resources, competing demands, and extensive discretion. Administrative outcomes depend heavily on how these officials interpret and apply policies. Failures in service delivery are often products of organizational constraints rather than individual incompetence.

Kumar & Singh, 2023 Financial Inclusion Challenges in Rural India Despite significant progress in expanding banking services, financial inclusion in rural India continues to face obstacles

[12] choosing a solution that is "good enough" rather than spending excessive time and energy searching for the absolute optimal choice. Coined by economist Herbert Simon in 1956.
[13] breakdown of organizational processes, governance structures, or management systems.

such as illiteracy, lack of digital access, and procedural complexity. Research indicates that marginalized communities often rely on informal guidance rather than official communication channels, leading to misunderstandings.

Cause of Administrative Failure in major Theories
The literature identifies several major causes of administrative failure

Scholar	**Main Cause of Failure**
Max Weber	Departure from rational bureaucracy
Robert K. Merton	Rule obsession and goal displacement
Michel Crozier	Organizational rigidity and resistance to change
Herbert Simon	Bounded rationality and imperfect decision-making
Michael Lipsky	Street-level discretion and resource constraints
Kenneth Meier	Political failures and inadequate institutional support
Chang & Brewer	Complex frontline implementation challenges

`The literature demonstrates that administrative failure is a multidimensional phenomenon. Weber's framework highlights the ideal bureaucracy, while Merton and Crozier expose the dysfunctions of excessive formalism. Simon explains failures through decision-making limitations, Lipsky focuses on frontline implementation problems, and Meier emphasizes political and institutional constraints. Together, these perspectives provide a strong theoretical foundation for analyzing incidents such as the Jitu Munda case and evaluating welfare schemes like the Mahaprayan Scheme, where procedural rigidity, inadequate institutional responsiveness, and governance deficits may undermine human dignity and public service delivery.

The Jitu Munda case reflects these systemic gaps, where institutional processes failed to bridge the information divide.

3. Methodology and Objective of the Paper

This article uses a qualitative case study approach. Data was collected from secondary sources, including verified news reports, investigative journalism, and policy commentary easy, research paper and books by different authors. The objective is to analyze the structural and institutional factors that contributed to the incident rather than to evaluate individual culpability.

Objectives of the Mahaprayan Scheme

The major objectives of the scheme include:

- To provide **free and dignified transportation of dead bodies** from hospitals.
- To support **economically weaker sections** who cannot afford private hearse services.
- To ensure **timely availability of mortuary transport** in government health facilities.
- To uphold **human dignity in post-death care services**.

Analysis and Discussion

Administrative Failure

The case highlights weaknesses in last-mile governance:

- Delay in obtaining or processing death-related documentation.
- Poor coordination between banking, revenue, and local administrative systems.
- Lack of proactive assistance for vulnerable citizens.

A state-level inquiry later found preliminary evidence of negligence by bank officials. (The New Indian Express)

Procedural Rigidity vs. Human Realities

The banking system requires legal proof of death to prevent fraud and ensure proper transfer of assets. While this requirement is justified, its implementation in rural contexts often lacks flexibility. In Munda's case, the inability to obtain a death certificate prevented lawful access to a small inheritance, resulting in extreme distress.

This demonstrates a disconnect between procedural design and ground realities. Administrative systems assume universal literacy and access to documentation, which is not the case in many rural regions.

Communication Failure

Reports suggest that Munda had visited the bank multiple times but did not receive clear guidance on required documentation [14] this indicates a breakdown in institutional communication. Effective governance requires not only rules but also comprehensible explanations for citizens unfamiliar with legal procedures.

Socioeconomic Vulnerability

Munda belonged to a tribal community in Odisha, a group historically facing socioeconomic marginalization. Such communities often lack access to legal support, transportation, and administrative literacy. This vulnerability amplifies the impact of bureaucratic rigidity.

Ethical Dimensions

From an ethical standpoint, the incident raises questions about dignity in governance. While institutions must enforce rules, they also bear responsibility for ensuring that procedures do not result in dehumanizing outcomes. The act of carrying human remains to a bank symbolizes extreme desperation and systemic failure.

[14] NDTV, 2026.

Institutional Response

Following public outrage, authorities expedited documentation and released the funds [15]. Some reports also indicate that the banking institution defended its adherence to procedure while acknowledging the distress caused[16]. This dual response highlights the tension between compliance and compassion in administrative systems.

Human Dignity and Service Delivery

Perhaps the most significant issue was not only the documentation problem but the apparent absence of empathetic intervention. Reports noted that after the incident, officials and bystanders did not immediately arrange transportation or assistance for Jitu Munda despite the extraordinary circumstances. (Onmanorama)

Stakeholder Analysis

The table highlights the roles of different stakeholders and the challenges observed in their responses. Overall, it suggests that most institutions acted reactively rather than proactively, while external scrutiny from the media eventually increased public accountability

Stakeholder	Role	Observed Issue	Analysis
Bank officials	Process account settlement	Alleged procedural rigidity and inadequate guidance	Bank officials were responsible for facilitating account settlement but were criticized for adhering strictly to procedures without providing sufficient assistance or clear guidance to the affected individual. This indicates a gap between regulatory compliance and customer-centric service delivery.
Local administration	Issue certificates and welfare support	Delayed intervention	The local administration had the authority to provide essential documentation and welfare assistance but reportedly responded only after the situation had escalated. This reflects weaknesses in timely grievance redressal and coordination with other agencies.
Community institutions	Social support network	Later imposed purification requirements	Community institutions initially functioned as sources of social support but subsequently imposed social or cultural conditions for reintegration. This illustrates how traditional norms can complicate recovery and social inclusion following a crisis.
Government agencies	Oversight and accountability	Reactive rather than preventive response	Government agencies became involved after the issue attracted wider attention instead of preventing or identifying the problem earlier. This suggests limitations in monitoring

[15] The Guardian, 2026
[16] AFP, 2026.

			mechanisms, early intervention, and institutional accountability.
Media	Public accountability	Brought national attention to the issue	The media played a significant watchdog role by highlighting the issue at the national level. Its coverage increased public awareness, prompted institutional responses, and strengthened accountability, demonstrating the importance of investigative journalism in governance.

Overall Analysis

The table indicates that institutional responses were largely reactive, with delays in administrative support and limited coordination among stakeholders. Procedural rigidity within formal institutions, delayed administrative action, and community-level social practices collectively contributed to the persistence of the problem. In contrast, media intervention served as the primary catalyst for public scrutiny and institutional action. The findings underscore the need for more citizen-centred service delivery, proactive administrative mechanisms, stronger inter-agency coordination, and preventive oversight to address similar situations effectively.

Implications for Policy

- **Simplification of Death Claim Procedures**
- Governments should consider simplified verification mechanisms for small-value claims in rural areas, including community verification systems or expedited local authority certification.
- **Strengthening Administrative Outreach**
- Banks and public institutions must invest in grassroots-level communication, including multilingual assistance and field officers trained in rural engagement.
- **Digital and Documentary Bridging**
- While digital governance is expanding, offline alternatives must remain robust for populations lacking digital access or literacy.
- **Training in Administrative Empathy**
- Public servants should receive training in communication sensitivity and crisis handling to prevent escalation of distress among vulnerable citizens.

Assessment of the Scheme

Positive Outcomes

- The scheme ensures **dignity in death**, especially for poor and rural families.
- It reduces the **financial burden** of transporting deceased persons.
- It strengthens **public health infrastructure services**.
- It complements other welfare schemes like the Harischandra Yojana.[17]

Challenges and Limitations

Despite its noble intent, several implementation issues have been identified:

[17] A scheme “Harischandra Sahayata” has been lunched in CMRF during August 2013 for providing financial assistance to poor and destitute for conducting the last rites of their family member and for cremation of unclaimed dead bodies.

- **Vehicle breakdowns and poor maintenance**, leading to service disruption.
- **Inadequate monitoring mechanisms** at district hospital levels.
- **Delayed response time** in remote areas.
- Dependence on a limited number of vehicles in high-demand hospitals.
- Reported cases where families had to resort to **private or informal transport methods** due to unavailability of vans (Times of India, 2025).

Implementation Structure

- The scheme is operated under the supervision of the Health and Family Welfare Department of Odisha, with vehicles managed in coordination with district administrations and hospital authorities. According to official reports, hearse vans are stationed at district headquarters hospitals and major medical institutions, including medical colleges (Hindustan Times, 2016).
- Initially, multiple vehicles were deployed across districts to ensure accessibility. However, maintenance and operational continuity have remained critical concerns.

4. Discussion

The Mahaprayan Scheme represents an important step in strengthening Odisha's social welfare framework. It reflects the government's commitment to ensuring dignity in death, a fundamental humanitarian principle. However, its effectiveness is constrained by infrastructural and administrative bottlenecks. Human dignity is the idea that every person deserves respect, fair treatment, and recognition of their inherent worth. Administrative systems—government agencies, public services, and institutions—are expected to protect and promote this dignity. When these systems fail, citizens often suffer not only material losses but also humiliation, exclusion, and loss of trust. Administrative failure occurs when public institutions are unable to perform their duties effectively.

Common examples include:

- Delays in providing essential services.
- Corruption and misuse of authority.
- Lack of accountability and transparency.
- Discrimination in access to public benefits.
- Poor implementation of laws and policies.

To protect human dignity, governments should:

- Strengthen accountability mechanisms.
- Improve transparency and reduce corruption.
- Ensure citizen participation in decision-making.
- Train public officials in human rights and ethical governance.
- Create accessible complaint and grievance systems.

From a Policy Perspective

The scheme demonstrates that welfare programs require not only financial allocation but also efficient service delivery systems, real-time monitoring, Strengthen accountability mechanisms, Improve transparency and reduce corruption, Ensure citizen participation in decision-making, Train public officials in human rights and ethical governance, Create accessible complaint and grievance systems and maintenance infrastructure. Without these, even well-designed schemes may fail to achieve intended outcomes.

A discussion of the Jitu Munda incident in Odisha became a powerful symbol of administrative insensitivity and bureaucratic failure. Jitu Munda, a tribal resident of Keonjhar district, reportedly exhumed and carried the skeletal remains of his deceased sister to a bank after repeated difficulties in accessing money from her account. The incident generated national outrage and prompted intervention by authorities and the National Human Rights Commission. The case raised serious questions about whether public institutions are serving citizens with dignity, especially vulnerable communities. (The New Indian Express)

At the same time, the incident revived debate about the effectiveness of Odisha's Mahaprayan Scheme, a government initiative intended to ensure dignified transportation of deceased persons from government health institutions to their homes. Critics drew parallels with earlier cases, including the widely discussed Dana Majhi case, arguing that welfare schemes often fail at the point of delivery. (The Indian Express)

Understanding Bureaucratic Failure

Bureaucratic failure occurs when administrative procedures become more important than the human needs they are intended to serve. In the Jitu Munda case, several institutions—the banking system, local administration, and welfare mechanisms—appeared unable to respond effectively to the circumstances of a poor tribal citizen. (Understand UPSC)

The incident highlights several dimensions of bureaucratic failure:

Excessive Proceduralism

Administrative systems require documentation such as death certificates and legal heir certificates for legitimate reasons. However, when officials focus solely on procedures without assisting citizens in meeting those requirements, governance becomes exclusionary. The case demonstrates the tension between procedural justice and substantive justice. (Under Stand UPSC)

Lack of Empathy

Public administration is not merely rule enforcement; it also involves humane treatment. Ethical analyses of the incident emphasize that officials failed to appreciate the hardship faced by an elderly, poor, and illiterate tribal citizen. (Under Stand UPSC)

Last-Mile Governance Failure

Government policies often appear effective on paper but fail during implementation. The inability to provide timely documentation, welfare support, and citizen guidance reflects weaknesses in last-mile service delivery. (Under Stand UPSC)

Delayed Responsiveness

The speed with which authorities acted after media attention suggests that solutions were available but were not activated until public outrage emerged. This raises concerns about accountability and responsiveness in governance. (The Indian Express)

Human Dignity as a Governance Principle

Human dignity is a core constitutional and human-rights value. The National Human Rights Commission described the incident as a violation of the right to live with dignity and sought reports from district authorities. (The New Indian Express)
The dignity dimension can be examined through three lenses:

- **Respect for the individual:** Citizens should not be forced into degrading actions to access lawful entitlements.
- **Equal treatment:** Marginalized communities should receive the same quality of public service as other citizens.
- **Compassionate governance:** Public institutions must recognize vulnerability and provide assistance beyond mechanical compliance with rules.

The incident illustrates how administrative indifference can transform a routine service request into a human-rights concern. (The New Indian Express)

Lessons from Jitu Munda and Earlier Cases

The comparison with the Dana Majhi incident suggests that the existence of a welfare scheme alone does not guarantee dignified outcomes. Effective implementation, accountability, and citizen-centric administration are equally important. (The Indian Express)Ethical and Governance Lessons

The case offers several lessons for public administration:

Governance Principle	**Lesson from the Incident**
Empathy	Rules should be applied with sensitivity toward vulnerable citizens.
Accountability	Officials must be answerable for service delivery failures.
Responsiveness	Grievances should be resolved before they become public crises.
Inclusion	Tribal and marginalized communities require accessible administrative support.
Human Dignity	Every public service should be evaluated by its impact on citizens' dignity.

5. Result

The Jitu Munda incident exposed serious bureaucratic failures

- Administrative procedures were applied rigidly without considering the human circumstances of a poor tribal citizen.
- Delays in issuing essential documents and the lack of assistance from public institutions forced Jitu Munda to take an extreme step to prove his sister's death.

Violation of human dignity

- The incident demonstrated how procedural formalities can undermine the constitutional value of human dignity when public officials fail to act with empathy and responsiveness.
- The incident was viewed as a gross violation of the right to live with dignity.

Systemic governance gaps

- The case revealed weaknesses in banking access, welfare delivery, death registration, and support for vulnerable communities.
- Benefits and documents that had been delayed for months were processed rapidly only after media attention and public outrage.

Assessment of the Mahaprayan Scheme

- The scheme was designed to ensure dignified transportation of deceased persons, particularly for poor families.
- However, implementation challenges, maintenance issues, and administrative lapses indicate a gap between policy intent and ground-level execution.

The study finds that the Jitu Munda incident was not an isolated event but a manifestation of systemic bureaucratic failure that compromised human dignity. While Odisha's Mahaprayan Scheme reflects a welfare-oriented approach, its effectiveness is constrained by implementation deficiencies. The research emphasizes the need for empathetic governance, administrative accountability, and efficient service delivery to protect the rights and dignity of vulnerable citizens.

6. Conclusion

Administrative failure is not merely a technical problem; it is a human rights and dignity issue. Effective, transparent, and citizen-centered administration is essential for ensuring that every individual is treated with respect and has equal access to public services. Protecting human dignity should therefore remain a primary goal of all administrative institutions. The Jitu Munda case is not merely an isolated incident but a reflection of systemic gaps in administrative design and implementation. It highlights the urgent need for governance systems that balance procedural integrity with human dignity. While rules are essential for institutional functioning, they must be adaptable to diverse social realities. Without such adaptability, bureaucratic systems risk alienating the very citizens they are meant to serve. This case serves as a reminder that financial inclusion is not only about access to banks but also about ensuring that institutional processes are humane, understandable, and accessible to all segments of society. The Mahaprayan Scheme of Odisha is a significant welfare initiative aimed at providing dignified and free transportation of deceased persons. While the scheme has had a positive social impact, its implementation suffers from operational inefficiencies. Strengthening maintenance systems, increasing vehicle availability, and improving monitoring mechanisms are essential for ensuring its long-term sustainability and effectiveness. The sad truth of today’s society that administrative failure remain a common aspect in remote areas. The jitu munda case is an incident of a tribal village of Keonjhar district of Odisha, which is a minerals reach district throughout the country .It, contributes highest to the GDP of the state. But the point that raise eyebrows is that it's poor and marginalized sections are still struggle to withdraw their own money. It is not only the case of negligence of bank staffs or failure of scheme that careers dead body .It is about breakdown of social system also ,lack of proper education and awareness people are live in a state of mind where they don't even aware what is good what is bad, right and wrong ,acceptable and un acceptable etc. .Therefore the administrative failure is the not only responsible by the corrupt or negligible attitudes of the officials it's due to lack of awareness by the ruled also. The study concludes that bureaucratic insensitivity, procedural rigidity, and weak implementation of welfare schemes can erode human dignity, especially among marginalized tribal communities**.**

7. Recommendations

- Citizen-centric and compassionate administration.
- Faster issuance of death certificates and welfare benefits.
- Better accountability of public officials.
- Strengthening and monitoring the Mahaprayan Scheme to ensure dignified treatment of the deceased and their families.
- Improved coordination between banks, local administration, and social welfare institutions.

References

1. Agence France-Presse. (2026). Indian man takes sister's exhumed body to bank for withdrawal.
2. Ahrum Chang and Gene A,Brewer,2022Contemporary Review of Bureaucratic Failure Department of Public Administration, Yonsei University, Seoul, South Korea
3. Christopher Hood (1991). "A Public Management for All Seasons?"
4. Crozier, M. (1964). The Bureaucratic Phenomenon. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
5. Douglass North (1990). Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance.
6. Hindustan Times. (2016, August 25). Day after man carries wife's body on shoulder, Odisha govt launches Mahaprayan scheme. https://www.hindustantimes.com
7. James Q. Wilson (1989). Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It.
8. Kenneth J. Meier, Political Failure and Bureaucratic Constraints Meier and colleagues 2019 Administration & Society
9. Kumar, R., & Singh, A. (2023). Financial inclusion and rural banking challenges in India. Journal of Development Studies, 45(2), 112–128.
10. Max Weber (1947). The Theory of Social and Economic Organization.
11. Max Weber, 1959 Bureaucracy as Rational Administration
12. Michael Lipsky, Street-Level Michael Lipsky,1980 By Russell Sage Foundation P- 272
13. NDTV. (2026). Man visited Odisha bank with sister's skeleton after being told 'no'.
14. Onmanorama. (2026). A dead sister, ₹19,000 and a failed system.
15. RBI Reports on Financial Inclusion, 2024 studies on rural banking
16. Robert K. Merton, May, 1940 Bureaucratic Structure And Personality. Authors.Social Forces, Vol. 18, No. 4.
17. Simon, H.A. 1982. Models of Bounded Rationality. 2 vols, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press
18. The Daily Star. (2026). Indian man takes sister's exhumed body to bank for withdrawal.

19. The Economic Times. (2016, August 25). Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik launches Mahaprayan scheme for hearse service. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com
20. The Guardian. (2026). Shock in India after man takes remains of his sister to bank.
21. The theory of street-level bureaucracy, developed by Michael Lipsky
22. Times of India. (2025, July 30). HC takes stock of Mahaprayan scheme at SCB. https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com
23. Weber, M. (1947). The theory of social and economic organization. Oxford University Press.