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A systematic review of the link between public service motivation and ethical outcomes

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ABSTRACT

Preventing unethical behaviour is a concern across cultures and is important for sustaining integrity and stakeholder trust in governance regimes. Encouraging self-regulation of ethical behaviour and accountability of public sector personnel has attracted multidisciplinary attention. A large body of literature has examined the link between public service motivation (PSM) and public personnel's enactments of various ethics-related behaviours. Scholars disagree, however, about whether PSM is significantly associated with ethics-related outcomes. Following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines, we conducted a systematic literature review of 59 articles focusing on the PSM-ethics linkage to provide an integrated summary of how PSM affects ethical outcomes. We conclude that the empirical evidence addressing the PSM-ethics linkage is growing, but the mechanisms by which PSM influences ethical behaviour are not yet clear. In this article, we use prosocial organisational behaviour (POB) model to explain how PSM can influence ethical outcomes for public sector employees based upon our systematic literature review.

KEYWORDS

ethical behaviour; public service motivation; systematic review; prosocial organisational behaviour model; whistleblowing

Introduction

Preventing corruption and cultivating ethical conduct within the public sector are essential for the proper functioning of society and are key expectations of citizens. It is imperative for public servants to prioritise the well-being of citizens by acting in their best interests and exercising public authority with unwavering integrity and transparency, as “[p]olitically corrupt or irresponsible bureaucracy” is a problem of public administration (Bertelli & Lynn, 2006, p. 43). Empirically, there is a large body of literature indicating that corruption is associated with many negative outcomes, such as lower political and public trust (Ares & Hernández, 2017; Semukhina & Reynolds, 2014), reduced economic growth rate (Gründler & Potrafke, 2019; Mo, 2001) and less political legitimacy (Bauhr & Nasiritousi, 2012). Due to both normative and empirical considerations, how to combat general wrongdoing or corruption and foster good governance has become a compelling issue.

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Scholarship offers three solutions for holding public employees accountable for preventing wrongdoing and refraining from unethical behaviours. The first potential ethical accountability solution is to increase political control over the bureaucracy (Brehm & Gates, 1999; Weingast & Moran, 1983). Most of the literature discusses how to reduce information asymmetry between bureaucrats and their constituents through monitoring either inputs or outputs. Political control is effective at preventing unethical behaviour through fear of sanction (Miller, 2005). The focus of monitoring outputs aligns with the second main perspective, which is performance management (Rubin, 2015). Performance management has a dual-purpose role. On the one hand, it primarily intends to improve the efficiency of government or at least create “an image of effective and efficient government” (Moynihan, 2008, p. 68). On the other hand, it generates information to help various principals to control the agents in the bureaucracy (Heinrich & Marschke, 2010). We identify performance management as the second potential ethical accountability solution, given that prioritising ethics-related performance indicators can provide rewards for ethical behaviours, compared to preventing unethical behaviour through punishments.

The third potential ethical accountability solution comes from the theory of public service motivation (PSM). This perspective sheds light on preventing and combating wrongdoing from the angle of public personnel management. This perspective suggests recruiting and retaining people with high PSM to serve the public because it is difficult to change people’s baseline qualities and reasoning, even with socialisation (Oberfield, 2014). In short, hiring high-PSM individuals promises to reduce unethical behaviours through social-psychological mechanisms guiding the behaviour of public employees (Nieto-Morales & Ríos, 2021; North & North, 1992; Stewart, 1985).

In this systematic review, we focus on the PSM-ethics linkage because empirical research is increasingly testing this linkage and the theoretical connection between PSM and ethical behaviours is underdeveloped. This systematic review summarises the current state of empirical research on the PSM-ethics linkage and provides a theorisation of the connection between PSM and ethical behaviour in hopes of supporting future research on this topic. Addressing the theoretical gap in the relationship between PSM and ethical behaviour is important since theoretical bases can help researchers to include control variables to isolate original effects of PSM on ethical outcomes. Thus, clear theoretical bases help generate future empirical studies on this topic, which will allow us to further examine the usefulness of this approach to combating unethical behaviours.

The contributions of this systematic review are three-fold. First, our synthesis draws attention to how PSM is theoretically related to ethical behaviours. By examining when and why PSM predicts ethical behaviour at the individual level, we better understand if recruiting individuals with PSM is a theoretically valid strategy for reducing unethical behaviours and predicting future ethical bureaucratic behaviours. Second, this systematic review integrates extant empirical studies testing the PSM-ethics linkage to synthesise a mechanism for this linkage. We decompose this linkage through three mediators based on the literature reviewed: corruptibility, tolerance for unethical behaviour, and attitudes towards procedural justice. These proposed mechanisms contribute to our knowledge of how to increase desired ethical behaviours, specifically whistleblowing, and how Miceli et al.’s (2008) pro-social organisational behaviour (POB) model can be integrated into these efforts. Third,

this study sheds light on new research questions concerned with ensuring bureaucratic accountability for ethical behaviour in the process of public service delivery.

In what follows, we first briefly review research on PSM and ethical behaviour and then introduce two theoretical bases to explain pathways between PSM and ethical behaviour: cognitive moral development theory and the POB model. We also explain the strategy and criteria used to search and code articles. In the next section, we introduce descriptive findings on the PSM-ethics linkage. Then, focusing on whistleblowing, which has received the most attention in current empirical studies on this linkage, we present three propositions that explain the potential theoretical foundations between PSM and whistleblowing. Using our findings on the PSM-ethics linkage, we conclude by identifying future research directions.

PSM and ethical behaviour

PSM, which has been tested as a criterion to recruit “good people” to the public sector, is defined as “an individual’s predisposition to respond to motives grounded primarily or uniquely in public institutions” (Perry & Wise, 1990, p. 368). Based on this definition, Kim et al. (2013) have developed four subdimensions of PSM: attraction to public service, commitment to public value, self-sacrifice, and compassion. Evidence from the literature shows that PSM can be a valid predictor of hiring qualified applicants based on two theoretical pathways. Multiple studies have given empirical attention to the fact that high PSM employees outperform low PSM employees in terms of ethical behaviour (Bellé, 2013; Camilleri & Van Der Heijden, 2007; Petrovsky et al., 2014; Ritz et al., 2016). Furthermore, multiple studies have explored the positive relationship between PSM and ethics-related behaviours (e.g., reporting wrongdoing, whistleblowing, and maintaining professionalism) amongst public employees Brewer & Selden, 1998; Caillier, 2017; Cho & Song, 2015; Davis et al., 2020; Potipiroon & Wongpreedee, 2020; Tavares et al., 2021; Wright et al., 2016). Hence, our expectation that PSM predicts ethics-related outcomes is strongly supported by literature on ethical behaviour at work.

Ethical behaviour is robustly defined in the literature, with some scholars defining it broadly as individuals or organisations engaged in “non-corrupt work or business practice” (Lindgreen, 2004, p. 31). In the context of the public sector, Felix et al. (2015) defined ethics as “the road map of moral conduct” (p. 71) used by managers, specifying that unethical behaviour involves producing detrimental effects for citizens”. (p. 110) and ethical behaviour includes “being honest, obeying the law and whistle-blowing” (Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007, p. 1610), while unethical behaviour includes “corruption, misappropriation of assets, abuse of power, and misconduct of duties” (Johari et al., 2020, p. 133), and also “lying, cheating, and stealing as well as behaviours that reach or exceed some minimal moral standard and are normally considered to be ethical” (Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007, p. 1610). These definitions highlight that ethical rules are rooted in shared societal norms and that unethical behaviours can hurt the widespread legitimacy of organisations. Ethical conduct by bureaucrats is relevant to the integrity of governance as unethical behaviour decreases public trust in governments (Ares & Hernández, 2017; Chang & Chu, 2006; Morris & Klesner, 2010; Seligson, 2002; Semukhina & Reynolds, 2014) and political legitimacy (Bauhr & Nasiritousi, 2012; Jackson et al., 2014).

Social psychology foundations of the PSM-Ethics link

In this section, we introduce the POB model to assist our review, which aims to help develop the causal chain connecting PSM to ethics-related outcomes. Before explaining the POB model, it is essential to explore cognitive moral development theory, which serves as a framework for understanding comprehensive ethical behaviours. Cognitive moral development theory suggests that moral judgement is the main predictor of ethical behaviour (Kohlberg, 1981; Rest, 1986). Rest (1986) explains cognitive moral development in four stages: 1) having an awareness of the moral issue, 2) making moral judgements, 3) establishing an ethical intention, and 4) involving ethical behaviours. Many empirical studies have examined the effect of moral judgements on ethical behaviours (Liyanaarachchi & Newdick, 2009; Wimalasiri et al., 1996). PSM as a predictor of ethical conduct can be interpreted within the general model of ethical behaviour offered by cognitive moral development theory. A meta-analysis of the antecedents of unethical behaviour (Belle & Cantarelli, 2017) ironically supports the relevance of examining the effect of PSM across multiple studies, because they found that greed and egocentrism increase unethical behaviour in the reviewed samples. We assume, then, that people with high PSM have lower levels of greed and egocentrism. Thus, our PSM-ethical behaviour review helps validate whether PSM is a positive cause of increased ethical behaviour.

However, one study suggests that moral judgement is insufficient for fully predicting ethical behaviours in organisations with respect to complex actions such as whistleblowing (Liyanaarachchi & Newdick, 2009). After reviewing current studies on the relationship between PSM and ethical outcomes, we focus on whistleblowing as a primary outcome of ethical behaviour. Our focus on whistleblowing stems from its prominent role as an observed variable in our systematic review, as well as its proactive nature in correcting wrongdoings. Applying Rest's (1986) moral cognitive development theory, Miceli et al. (2008) developed the POB model with a specific emphasis on whistleblowing. While cognitive moral development theory describes and predicts comprehensive ethical behaviours, POB model explicates the decision-making process behind whistleblowing in an organisation (see Figure 1). According to the POB model, when organisational members encounter activities that appear suspicious as potential wrongdoings, they undergo a decision sequence before deciding to blow the whistle. The initial phase involves determining whether the employee perceives the activity as wrongful. If the employee perceives wrongdoing but finds that no corrective or reporting actions are undertaken, they progress to the second phase, which involves assessing whether the organisation's response demonstrates unresponsiveness or demoralisation of employees. Based on their perception of organisational signalling and demoralisation, the employee then contemplates several questions in the third phase. The first two questions involve determining whether the responsibility falls within their duties and whether reporting the wrongdoing can effectively halt it. Lastly, whistleblowing is considered when the expected benefits for the whistleblower outweigh alternative options such as informal reporting, or even inaction (Miceli et al., 2008).

In this systematic review, we answer the following questions: Which samples, measures, variables, and methods are used to examine the connection between PSM and ethical outcomes, and what are the potential mediators or moderators of this

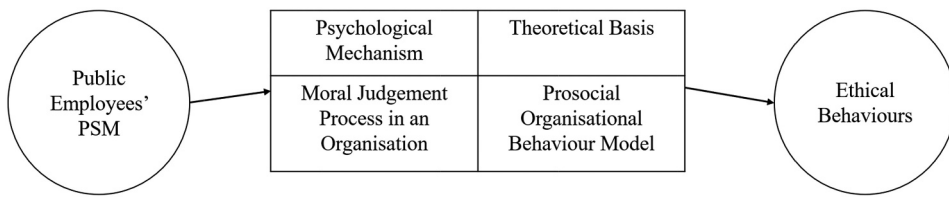


Figure 1. Hypothesized pathways from PSM to ethical behaviour.

relationship? After addressing these questions in the descriptive findings section, we propose three ways of explaining how PSM facilitates whistleblowing, a proactive behaviour combating corruption. We then integrate these three propositions with the POB model.

Methods

We used guidelines provided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), which lays out standards for communicating the literature search and analysis process in a transparent and replicable way. We complied with PRISMA's 27-item checklist in our examination of empirical studies addressing the link between PSM and ethical behaviour. This section explains our eligibility criteria design, search strategy, selection process, data collection process, and coding strategy.

Literature search

Our searches were conducted in two settings: electronic databases and public administration journals. For public administration journals, we searched the *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *Public Administration Review*, *Public Administration*, *International Public Management Journal*, *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, *American Review of Public Administration*, *Public Management Review*, *Public Personnel Management*, *Governance*, and *Public Performance & Management Review*. These journals were selected because they are major outlets for PSM research. We used the online databases *JSTOR*, *SCOPUS*, *ScienceDirect*, and *Wiley Online*, and subsequently used Google Scholar to double-check the comprehensiveness of our search.

We implemented 35 different Boolean searches, using every combination of one of five terms from a list of terms representing PSM (i.e., public service motivation, public service altruism, public service ethic, prosocial motivation, and public employee motivation) "AND" one of seven terms representing corruption and ethical behaviour (i.e., corruption, corruptibility, dishonesty, dishonest behaviour, whistleblowing, ethical behaviour, and unethical behaviour). Each article was coded by two coders independently. A third coder compared the coding results and further re-coded an article if the results were not consistent between the first two coders.

Eligibility criteria for the systematic review

Studies were included if they met all the following criteria:

- Concepts: The research should incorporate both PSM and ethics-related constructs.
- Publication status: We only included peer-reviewed journal articles.
- Article Type: We included both empirical and theoretical articles for the systematic review.
- Language: We only included English articles.
- Year of publication: We included articles published between January 1997 and August 2021.

Study selection

We filtered the literature resulting from our search down to a final set of 59 articles, including 44 empirical articles and 15 theoretical articles. This process is described, with sample sizes, in [Figure 2](#).

We recorded the total number of results for each search, and read abstracts to determine if the articles should be included in our eligibility review process, and subsequently began coding and reading articles to determine eligibility for inclusion.

Coding

We coded information about each study, including PSM operationalisation measures, design and methodology, elements of the data (e.g., organisational sector, country, and sample size), and the type of ethics-related variables in the articles.

Descriptive findings

This systematic review provides descriptive findings about the PSM-ethics linkage and examines the implications of the existing research. In this section, we summarise trends in academic publications on the PSM-ethics linkage by journal outlet, national context, research design, and method of analysis, especially considering studies on Asia and the Pacific Islands. Then, we focus on measurement operationalisations and predictive relations.

General trends and features of current studies

The PSM ethics link has been an important and growing topic in mainstream public administration journals (see [Figure 3](#)). Specifically, articles published in the *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* and *American Review of Public Administration* each account for 11.9% and 10.2%, whereas *International Public Management Journal* and *Public Administration Review* articles each account for 8.5% (see [Table 1](#)).

[Table 2](#) indicates that the United States remains the most frequently used research sample on the PSM-ethics link (27.3%), followed by Spain (6.8%), China (4.5%), India (4.5%), and South Korea (4.5%). Although PSM research began in the United States context, research on the PSM-whistleblowing link has been globally

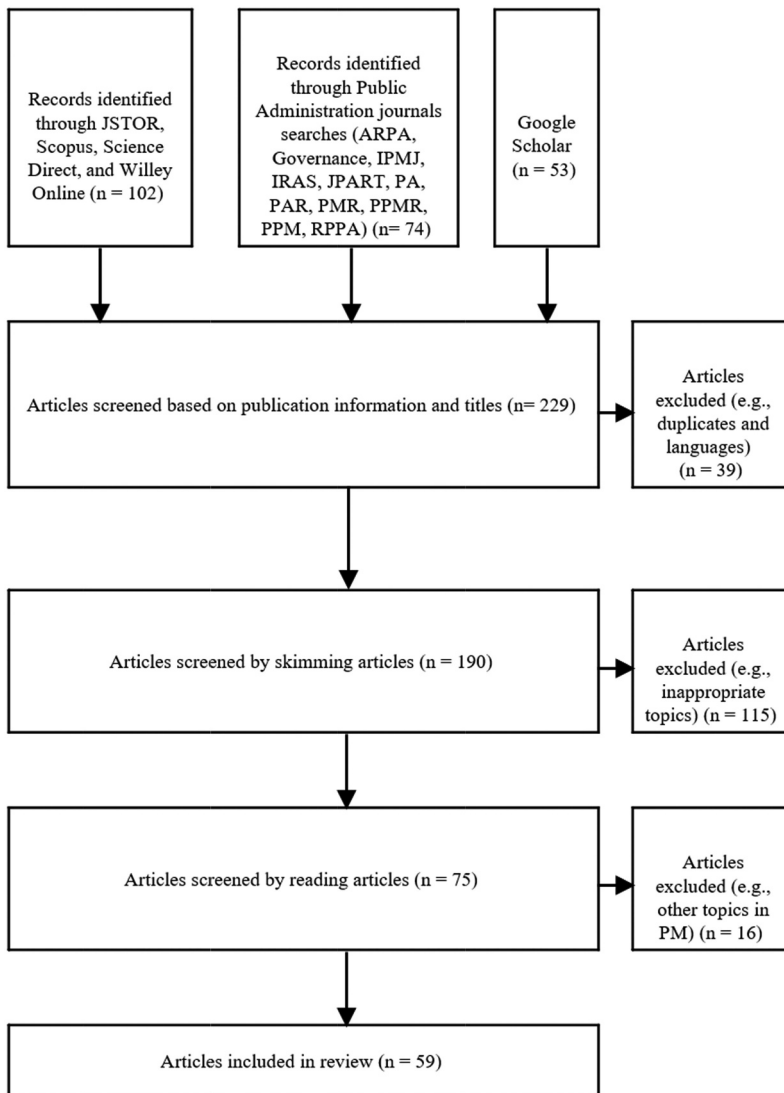


Figure 2. PRISMA flow diagram.

studied. Empirical articles from Asia-Pacific countries (29.55%) and European countries (29.55%) outnumber those from the United States (27.27%). The relationship between PSM and ethics is widely studied in Asia-Pacific countries across diverse regions. Research articles originate from East Asian countries (e.g., China and South Korea), Central Asian countries (e.g., Kazakhstan, Pakistan, and Iran), South Asian countries (e.g., India and Thailand), and Australia. Most of the articles (81.8%) studied public employees rather than employees in the private sector or the non-profit sector (see Table 3).

Regarding research designs implemented in the selected articles (see Table 3), most utilise cross-sectional surveys (61.4%) and share concerns with common method bias. Mixed-method studies (18.2%) follow the cross-sectional survey

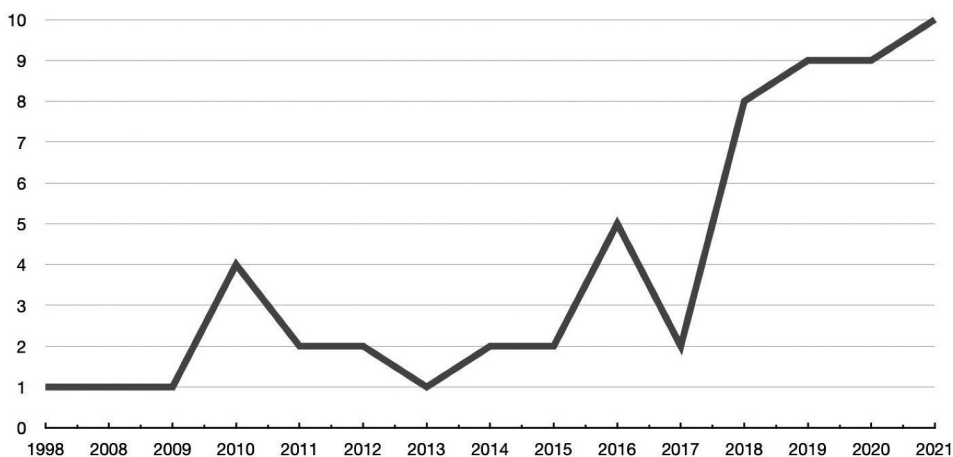


Figure 3. Articles categorised by year of publication.

Table 1. Articles categorised by journal.

Journal	Freq.	%
Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory	7	11.9%
American Review of Public Administration	6	10.2%
International Public Management Journal	5	8.5%
Public Administration Review	5	8.5%
Public Personnel Management	3	5.1%
Evidence-Based HRM	2	3.4%
International Review of Administrative Sciences	2	3.4%
International Review of Public Administration	2	3.4%
Journal of Behavioural Public Administration	2	3.4%
Public Administration	2	3.4%
Public Management Review	2	3.4%
Review of Public Personnel Administration	2	3.4%
Asia Pacific Journal of Public Administration	1	1.7%
Australian Journal of Public Administration	1	1.7%
Canadian Public Administration	1	1.7%
Comparative Political Studies	1	1.7%
Economics & Politics	1	1.7%
Frontiers in Psychology	1	1.7%
Geopolitics, History, and International Relations	1	1.7%
Governance	1	1.7%
International Journal of Human Resource Management	1	1.7%
International Journal of Sciences: Basic and Applied Research	1	1.7%
Journal of Public Affairs Education	1	1.7%
Journal of Public Budgeting, Accounting and Financial Management	1	1.7%
Korean Journal of Policy Studies	1	1.7%
Public Management Researches	1	1.7%
Public Administration and Development	1	1.7%
Public Integrity	1	1.7%
Public Performance & Management Review	1	1.7%
Regulation & Governance	1	1.7%
Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization	1	1.7%
Total	59	100%

Note: Theoretical and empirical articles are included.

studies in frequency, analysing the effect of PSM based on both qualitative interviews and quantitative datasets. Most of research articles with mixed-method designs utilise qualitative analyses as a supplementary component to cross-

Table 2. Articles categorised by research sample and site (empirical articles = 44; theoretical articles = 15).

Coding Category	Frequency	Percentage
Research samples from empirical studies		
The United States	12	27.3%
Spain	3	6.8%
Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands	2	4.5%
China	2	4.5%
India	2	4.5%
South Korea	2	4.5%
51 developing countries	1	2.3%
Australia	1	2.3%
Brazil	1	2.3%
Chile	1	2.3%
Denmark	1	2.3%
Denmark, Singapore, Sweden, United Kingdom, Germany, Morocco, Egypt, Algeria, Indonesia, and Thailand	1	2.3%
Europe	1	2.3%
German and the United Kingdom	1	2.3%
Iran	1	2.3%
Jamaica	1	2.3%
Kazakhstan	1	2.3%
Kazakhstan and Pakistan	1	2.3%
Netherlands	1	2.3%
Pakistan	1	2.3%
Poland	1	2.3%
Russia	1	2.3%
Russia and Ukraine	1	2.3%
Taiwan	1	2.3%
Thailand	1	2.3%
The United States and the United Kingdom	1	2.3%
Ukraine	1	2.3%
Research sites from theoretical studies		
The United States	6	40%
Australia	1	6.7%
Canada	1	6.7%
Israel	1	6.7%
Japan and the United States	1	6.7%
Romania	1	6.7%
South Korea	1	6.7%
The Netherlands	1	6.7%
The United Kingdom	1	6.7%
The United States and South Korea	1	6.7%

Note: Research sites from theoretical articles are determined by the authors' institutions.

sectional data analysis, providing valuable insights into the underlying mechanisms at play. More recent articles have expanded the use of experiments, including lab, field, and survey experiments (11.4%). By using these experimental methods, researchers aim to identify causality between PSM and ethics variables.

Table 4 indicates the analytical methods used in empirical studies. Multilevel structural equation modelling (SEM) or multilevel regression (23.9%) is the most frequently used method of analysis. Multilevel analysis has the advantage of testing the effects of organisational characteristics and individual variables at the same time. Confirmatory and exploratory factor analysis (21.1%) follow multilevel analysis, being often used as preliminary analyses. The included articles also use SEM (18.3%), logistic regression (12.7%), and multiple regression (8.5%). Those methods are more in line with the survey methods, which are widely used in empirical studies.

Table 3. Regions, Sectors, and designs of empirical articles ($n = 44$).

Coding Category	Frequency	Percentage
Region		
Asia Pacific countries	13	29.55%
European countries	13	29.55%
The United States	12	27.27%
Comparison between different regions	3	6.82%
South American countries	2	4.55%
Others [unspecified]	1	2.27%
Sector		
Public	36	81.8%
Public and Private	7	15.9%
Other (several sectors)	1	2.3%
Research design		
Cross-Sectional Survey	27	61.4%
Mixed	8	18.2%
Experiment (survey, field, lab)	5	11.4%
Multiple-Wave Survey	3	6.8%
Qualitative	1	2.3%

Table 4. Analytical methods on empirical articles.

Methods	Frequency	Percentage
Multilevel OLS/Multilevel SEM	17	23.9%
Factor analysis (EFA, CFA)	15	21.1%
Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)	13	18.3%
Logistic regression	9	12.7%
Multiple regression	6	8.5%
ANOVA	3	4.2%
Means Test, T-Test	3	4.2%
Linear regression	1	1.4%
Qualitative-other	1	1.4%
Qualitative-content analysis	1	1.4%
Fuzzy-set qualitative analysis	1	1.4%
Partial least square (PLS)	1	1.4%
Total	71	100%

Note: multiple classifications per study are allowed.

Table 5. PSM measures and uses on empirical articles ($n = 44$).

Coding Category	Frequency	Percentage
PSM measures		
PSM original (Perry, 1996) short form adaptations	19	43.2%
PSM international (Kim et al., 2013) 16-item original or short form adaptations	12	27.3%
Prosocial Motivation (Grant, 2008)	1	2.3%
PSM new form (Vandenabeele & Penning de Vries, 2016)	1	2.3%
Others	11	25.0%
PSM variable use		
Antecedent	31	70.5%
Mediator	7	15.9%
Moderator	3	6.8%
Outcome	3	6.8%

Research operationalizations and constructs

Regarding operationalisations of PSM (see Table 5), survey measures originally from Perry, (1996), as well as subsequent short form adaptations, account for 43.2%, followed by Kim et al's (2013) PSM international measure and its adaptations (27.3%). More recent articles tend to use measures from Kim et al. (2013), suggesting convergence of the PSM

instrument of choice for researchers. A quarter of the studies adopted other instruments to capture PSM indirectly. For example, Brewer and Selden (1998) used survey questions asking US federal civil servants about the degree to which a wrongful activity is associated with the public interest. Kwon (2014) adopted intrinsic motivation as a proxy for PSM, and Pande and Jain (2014) used personal values for measuring PSM. As Table 5 shows, PSM is used as an antecedent (70.5%), mediator (15.9%), or moderator (6.8%) in existing empirical studies. This suggests that PSM has been treated as an important antecedent of reducing ethical misconduct.

Studies in which PSM is the independent variable can be categorised into two main clusters: research on (1) the positive effect of PSM on ethical behaviours and intentions, including whistleblowing, and (2) the mitigating effect of PSM on negative outcomes, such as corruptibility, dishonesty, and unethical judgements. Current literature suggests that bureaucrats with high PSM are *more* likely to blow the whistle and report wrongdoings (Brewer & Selden, 1998; Caillier, 2017; Cho & Song, 2015; Cooper, 2021; Davis et al., 2020; Heine et al., 2021; Jeon, 2017; Junitasari & Ariyanto, 2018; Lavena, 2016; Prysmakova & Evans, 2020; Tavares et al., 2021; Wright et al., 2016). Among ethical outcome variables, whistleblowing is the most widely used variable (36.4%) (see Table 6). Meanwhile, existing studies indicate that a high level of PSM mitigates public employees' corruptibility, dishonesty, and unethical judgement. The empirical articles reviewed here study diverse variables, including corruption and dishonesty (18.2%), desire for monetary rewards (11.4%), and others. Higher PSM predicts a higher propensity of ethical behaviour and less likelihood of unethical judgements or behaviour through a stronger interest in the public interest, including equity, fairness, justice, and self-sacrifice (Maesschalck et al., 2008). For instance, speaking up poses a risk of retaliation in the workplace and forgoes long-term self-interest, including promotions and employment (Brewer & Selden, 1998; Cho & Song, 2015; Wright et al., 2016). The summary of findings from systematic review articles are shown in Table 7.

However, the results of how PSM affects unethical reasonings are mixed. Ripoll and colleagues draw attention to the dark side of PSM on unethical judgement (Ripoll & Breugh, 2019; Ripoll & Schott, 2020). Based on a vignette survey fielded in Spain, Ripoll and Schott (2020) found that high levels of PSM are positively associated with the sacrifice of integrity during the administration process. PSM can promote justification of unethical behaviours for the sake of "public interest". Even though procedural justice is technical and value-free, the content of the public

Table 6. Ethical variables on empirical articles ($n = 44$).

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Whistleblowing behaviour and intention	16	36.4%
Corruption and dishonesty	8	18.2%
Desire for monetary rewards	5	11.4%
Willingness to accept unethical behaviour	4	9.1%
Ethical behaviour and intention	3	6.8%
Unethical and deviant behaviour	2	4.5%
Bribery	1	2.3%
Prosocial rule-breaking behaviour	1	2.3%
Unethical pro-organisational behaviour	1	2.3%
Voluntary self sacrifice	1	2.3%
Others	2	4.5%

Table 7. Summary of findings from systematic review articles.

Year	Empirical Studies	Antecedents	Mediator or Moderator	Outcomes	Simplified Findings
1998	Brewer & Selden	PSM (Regard for public interest)		Whistle blowing (Report the incident)	The whistle blowers in the federal service are motivated by concern for the public interest. They are high performers, and report high levels of achievement, job commitment, and job satisfaction.
2011	Liu & Tang	PSM	The love of money (Moderator)	Job satisfaction	Individuals with a strong love of money have a significantly stronger relationship between PSM and job satisfaction.
2011	Rayner et al.			Measure of public service ethos	The authors validate a measurement strategy for public service ethos.
2014	Kwon	Extrinsic motivation for public service, Intrinsic motivation (e.g., PSM)		Bureaucrats' corruptibility	The bureaucrats' intrinsic motivation (e.g., PSM) and extrinsic motivation are negatively associated with their corruptibility.
2014	Pande & Jain	Personal values (Hedonism-PSM)	Financial condition of the family of government servants (Mediator)	Corruption permissiveness	At high dissatisfaction with the family's financial condition, corruption permissiveness increases with an increase in the value of tradition, but it decreases with an increase in hedonism.
2015	Caillier	Transformational leadership	Organisational commitment, PSM (Mediator)	Whistleblowing	Organisational commitment partially and positively mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and whistle-blowing attitudes.
2015	Cho & Song	PSM, Perceived personal costs, Education on whistleblowing	Perceived personal costs (Mediator)	Whistleblowing Intention	Personal costs decrease whistleblowing intention, whereas PSM and education on whistleblowing increase the intention. Organisational support and protection contribute to enhancing whistleblowing intention by reducing perceived personal costs.
2016	Wright et al.	Supervisor PSM	Supervisor ethical leadership, Subordinate PSM (Mediator)	Willingness to report ethical problems	Supervisors with high PSM are perceived by their subordinates as exhibiting ethical leadership, supervisors exhibiting higher ethical leadership increases subordinates' level of PSM and that subordinates with high PSM express a higher willingness to report unethical behaviour within their agency.
2016	Vogel et al.	PSM, Abusive supervision	Employment sector (Moderator)	Deviant workplace behaviours	Abusive supervision is positively associated with employee deviance, whereas PSM is negatively related to deviant behaviours. The relationship between PSM and employee deviance is stronger in the public and non-profit sector.
2016	Lavena	PSM, Several indicators of organisational culture		Whistleblowing	Whistleblowing is positively associated with norm-based and affective work motives of PSM, but negatively associated with several factors of organisational culture.
2017	Jeon	PSM, Fear of retaliation, Situational factors		Internal versus external whistleblowing	Public employees with high PSM select external whistleblowing channels. Education on whistleblowing and fair treatment increase the likelihood of internal whistleblowing.

(Continued)

Table 7. (Continued).

Year	Empirical Studies	Antecedents	Mediator or Moderator	Outcomes	Simplified Findings
2017	Caillier	PSM, Fear of retaliation	The severity of wrongdoing (Moderator)	Whistleblowing	Seriousness of wrongdoing strengthens the positive relationship between PSM and internal whistleblowing.
2018	Bednarczuk	Government employment (PSM, Public service identity)		Voting turnout overreporting	Having public service identity increases the likelihood of bureaucrats' report that they have voted in elections when they actually had not. However, PSM has vague effect.
2018	Hsieh	PSM	Love of money (Moderator)	Job satisfaction	Love of money is negatively correlated with PSM. The positive relationship between PSM and job satisfaction is stronger when LOM is low.
2018	Junitasari & Ariyanto	PSM, Ethical climate, Machiavellianism		E-whistleblowing	Ethical climate, PSM, and Machiavellianism have positive effects on e-whistleblowing intentions.
2018	Pedersen et al.	PSM, Political ideology		Attitudes towards remuneration	Left-wing politicians mean a dislike of high pay, and chairperson wants extra compensation.
2018	Christensen & Wright	PSM		Ethical Behaviour	This paper failed to find the relationship between PSM and ethics.
2018	Ugaddan & Park	Trustful leadership, Organisational justice	PSM, Extrinsic motivation (Mediator)	Whistleblowing intention	PSM positively and partially mediates the relationship of trust in leadership and organisational justice and whistle-blowing intention.
2019	Kim & Im	PSM, Corruption tolerance		Government performance	The results indicate that government performance is positively tied to PSM and corruption tolerance.
2019	Olsen et al.	PSM, Macro-level corruption		Dishonesty	Behavioural dishonesty is strongly negatively correlated with PSM. Country-level indicators of corruption is strongly correlated with the average behavioural dishonesty among prospective public employees.
2019	Zhang et al.	PSM	Work stress, Person-Organisation fit (PO fit) (Mediator)	Corruptibility	PSM increases PO fit, and PO fit decreases corruptibility. PSM has an insignificant effect on work stress, but work stress increases corruptibility.
2019	Mussagulova et al.	Pursuing external rewards, Desire for job security, Love of Money		PSM	A desire for job security relates positively to PSM, whereas a desire for monetary rewards and love of money correlate negatively with PSM.
2019	Ripoll	Goal clarity	PSM (Mediator)	Acceptance of unethical behaviours	Goal clarity directly increases the PSM and indirectly reduces the acceptance of unethical behaviours by eliciting PSM.
2019	Ripoll & Breaugh	Job security, Financial stress	PSM, Work motivations (Mediator)	Unethical judgement	PSM and work motivation influence unethical judgements, and perceived economic stressors play an indirect role through their relationship with work motivations.

(Continued)

Table 7. (Continued).

Year	Empirical Studies	Antecedents	Mediator or Moderator	Outcomes	Simplified Findings
2019	Scheetz & Wilson	Organisation type	Affective commitment (Mediator), PSM (Moderator)	Whistleblower	Not-for-profit employees are more likely to report fraud and that reporting intention does not differ significantly by the moderator of PSM.
2019	Meyer-Sahling et al.	Activating PSM	PSM level (Moderator)	Willingness to report ethical problems	PSM activation enhances willingness to report ethical problems. PSM may promote ethical behavioural intention.
2020	Montazeri & Ghasemi	PSM	Employees' commitment (Mediator)	Administrative corruption	PSM decreases administrative corruption by improving employees' commitment. PSM has a positive and direct effect on administrative corruption.
2020	Weißmüller et al.	PSM		Prosocial rule-breaking behaviour (PSRB behaviour)	High-PSM individuals are more likely to engage in PSRB behaviour.
2020	Ripoll & Schott	PSM	Individuals' identification with the public values (e.g., efficiency) (Moderator)	Unethical judgement	Individuals with high PSM are more likely to justify an integrity violation if they identify with efficiency.
2020	Davis et al.	Role clarity	PSM (Mediator)	Whistleblowing	Role clarity increases PSM and whistleblowing. However, increased PSM by role clarity has a negative relationship with whistleblowing.
2020	Prysmakova & Evans	Gender	PSM (Mediator)	Whistleblowing	Female employees with High PSM are less inclined to report misconduct of supervisors than male counterparts.
2020	Bashir & Hassan	PSM, Ethical leadership, Performance-based rewards		Corruption	Ethical leadership and performance-based rewards are negatively correlated with corruption, but PSM does not show significant relationship with corruption.
2020	Ripoll & Ballart	Basic needs satisfaction	PSM, External motivation (Mediator)	Unethical behaviour	The satisfaction of basic psychological needs reduces unethical behavioural intention by eliciting PSM. Basic needs satisfaction are not related to external motivation, but external motivation increase unethical behaviour.
2020	Potipiroon & Wongpreedee	Organisational ethical climate	PSM, Psychological safety (Mediator)	Whistleblowing	Ethical climate increases individuals' PSM and psychological safety. The increased PSM and psychological safety increase internal and external whistleblowing.
2021	Wright & Christensen	PSM		Ethical intention	PSM can predict ethical intention, even though PSM may not predict ethical behaviour.
2021	Tavares et al.	PSM	Gender (Moderator)	Frequency of whistleblowing, Retaliation	PSM is more predictive of whistleblowing for females than for males.
2021	Gans-Morse et al. (2021b)	PSM		Public sector preference, Tendency for corruption	PSM increases public sector preference. Students who prefer a public sector career display less willingness to cheat or bribe in experimental games as well as higher levels of altruism.

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Table 7. (Continued).

Year	Empirical Studies	Antecedents	Mediator or Moderator	Outcomes	Simplified Findings
2021	Cooper	PSM, Merit recruitment, Promotion opportunity		Reporting corruption	PSM does not increase the willingness to report corruption. Merit recruitment and promotion opportunity increase the willingness to report corruption.
2021	Heine et al.	PSM	Risk-taking and intergroup competition (Moderator)	Voluntary self-sacrifice (e.g., whistleblowing)	Risk-taking and intergroup competition negatively moderate the positive effect of PSM on voluntary self-sacrifice, such as whistleblowing.
2021	Gans-Morse et al. (2021a)	PSM		Dishonesty, Corruption	PSM is negatively associated with corruption, but it has not significant effect on dishonesty.
2021	De Waele et al.	PSM, Social Value Orientation (SVO)		Bribery	People with higher SVO are more likely to be willing to engage in bribery, while PSM does not have a significant effect.
2021	Gans-Morse	Career preferences between public legal sector and private legal sector		Corruption (e.g., Cheat rate, Bribe, Donations), PSM	Students pursuing public sector legal careers display more willingness to cheat or bribe in experimental games as well as lower levels of PSM.
2021	Wal et al.	The country (Kazakhstan = 1, Pakistan = 0)		PSM, Love of money, Pursuit of job security, Pursuit of prestige	Lower prosocial proclivity and more aspiration for money in Kazakhstan may be partly explained by the Soviet administrative tradition, while prosocial propensity and lower concern with pay in Pakistan may be attributed to the South Asian tradition.
2021	Kim et al.	Transactional leadership, Transformational leadership	PSM (Moderator)	Unethical pro-organisational behaviour (UPB)	PSM can mitigate the positive relationship between transactional and UPB. PSM can strengthen the negative impact of transformational leadership on UPB.

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Table 7. (Continued).

Year	Theoretical Studies	Simplified Summary
2008	Shareef	Ethical values and ethical decision-making process need to be taught in public administration curriculums in the graduate school before the administrative moral hazard leads to public failure.
2009	Briggs	This article aims to examine the standards of integrity within the Australian public service through a comprehensive analysis of its ethical framework and the specific ethical issues and tensions.
2010	Rutgers	The authors should exercise caution when proposing an oath of office as a solution to address the growing dependence on private interests and motivations. Instead, it should be recognised that such reliance can potentially undermine the ethical foundations of the public service and negate any significance or purpose that an oath may hold in the first place.
2010	Grand	The concepts “knights” and “knaves” are used to classify different motivations of public employees. Knaves, are motivated primarily by self-interest, whereas knights are motivated by altruism and the desire to provide a public service.
2010	Moynihan	Modern public service recruitment, influenced by market model, has increased moral hazard and crowd out intrinsic values (e.g., PSM) that protect against exploitation.
2010	Gailmard	Developing high PSM of employees is endogenously related to personnel policies and the political position of bureaucratic agencies. Improved PSM helps mitigating principal-agent problems.
2012	Koppell & Auer	The work of H. George Frederickson is used to develop testable hypotheses regarding the spirit of public administration. Spirit-driven supererogatory behaviour or ethical spirit may be threatened by market-based reform.
2013	Wheeland	This article studies Greg Smith’s performance in Moon Township, Pennsylvania. He acted as a responsible township manager. PSM, city management professionalism, and whistleblowing are three concepts that help understand approaches to managing ethical dilemmas in this case study of Greg Smith.
2014	Ljungholm	This article primarily centres around exploring the factors that shape individuals’ decision to pursue careers in the public sector. This study examines the motivational aspects of public service and the impact of performance-related pay on their underlying motivations. It investigates the relative importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations as drivers for individuals choosing public service employment.
2016	Kim & Kim	This paper suggests applying PSM theories in preventing corruption by adding ethical dimension of PSM to corruption theories. PSM theory can be important in developing an effective anti-corruption strategy.
2016	Moloney & Chu	Institutional and cultural histories explain why substantive PSM values are not instrumentally implemented in the context of Jamaica. Including original subdimensions (i.e., civic duty, self-sacrifice, compassion, and commitment to the public interests), PSM indicators for Jamaican context include social justice.
2018	Cartier	This article addresses the question whether public commissions of inquiry have the potential for driving constructive change in ethical behaviour. This study proposes two hypotheses. The first hypothesis posits that the climate of discussion commonly observed during commissions of inquiry has a detrimental impact on the willingness of public sector members to embrace ethical changes. The second hypothesis postulates that highly politicised commissions of inquiry create a dynamic that could potentially compel governments to pursue courses of action that are not conducive to fostering constructive change in public sector ethics.
2018	Zamir & Sulitzeanu-Kenan	Public choice theory can explain ethical behaviour through a psychological lens and develop the policy implications and future research agenda. Ethical behaviour in officeholders is influenced by a combination of self-interest and social norms. Officeholders are more likely to engage in unethical conduct if they can rationalise or justify it in a way that aligns with their self-image as honest individuals.
2019	Terai & Glazer	The article suggests an economic model to assert that a special interest needs to pay a larger bribe to an accurate agent than to an inaccurate agent. The accurate agent who is biased will then more likely cause harm than does an inaccurate agent who favours the special interest. Therefore, the principal may gain more from controlling biases of an accurate agent than of an inaccurate one.
2020	Boruvka & Perry	Public motivational practices have evolved through different eras, bureaucratic model, new public management, and new public service. Over these eras, the dynamics of motivations change in the public sector.

interest can vary across individuals and organisations. Individuals who are devoted to their interpretation of public interest may encumber respect for public values, including equity, neutrality, and accountability (Maesschalck et al., 2008). We explore such nuances in the following sections.

Leveraging PSM-Whistleblowing research to illuminate PSM-Ethical outcomes

We encourage future research to empirically examine how PSM influences whistleblowing because this outcome has received the most attention in current PSM literature (e.g., Brewer & Selden, 1998; Caillier, 2017; Cho & Song, 2015; Davis et al., 2020; Heine et al., 2021; Jeon, 2017; Wright et al., 2016). Whistleblowing is a proactive behaviour to correct harmful practices and establish a better work environment, promoting transparency and accountability. Miceli and Near (1985, p. 4), the founders of the POB model, define whistleblowing as “[an activity of] disclosure by organisational members (former or current) of illegal, immoral, or illegitimate practices under the control of their employers to persons or organisations that may be able to effect action”. Given that the theoretical discussion about PSM and whistleblowing is modest, we believe that specifying theoretical paths from PSM to whistleblowing sheds light on how to increase the reporting of wrongdoing and better understanding PSM’s relationships with ethical behaviour of individuals.

Building on existing literature investigating the PSM-whistleblowing linkage, we propose the mechanism presented in Figure 4—three mediating pathways from PSM to whistleblowing intention – to explain how PSM predicts whistleblowing. This mechanism lays out how individual-level PSM works to increase whistleblowing intention through decreasing corruptibility and dishonesty, lowering tolerance for or acceptance of unethical behaviours, and strengthening attitudes towards procedural justice. We also acknowledge that turning whistleblowing intention into actual behaviour depends on organisational factors, including signalling and available reporting channels. Future research should examine relevant moderators at the organisational or cultural levels. We will first present three propositions that we observed from the current literature on PSM-whistleblowing linkage. Then, we will incorporate the empirical findings with the POB model.

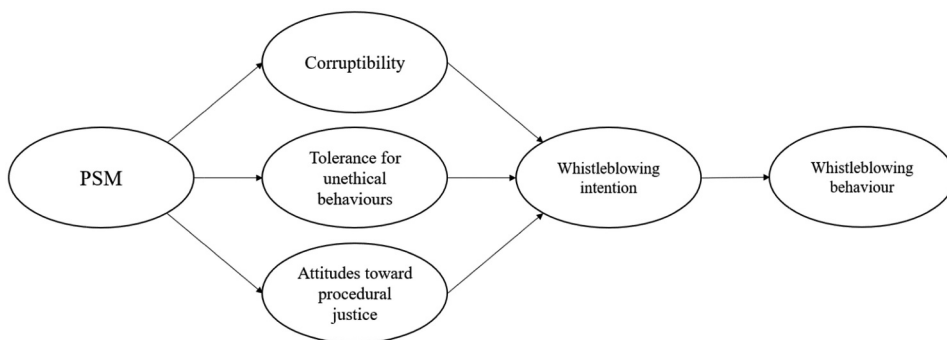


Figure 4. Theoretical linkages between PSM and whistleblowing behaviour.

PSM-Whistleblowing intention link

Proposition 1. PSM decreases individuals' propensity towards corruptibility or dishonesty; individual corruptibility decreases whistleblowing intention.

Sub-dimensions of PSM, such as commitment to public value and attraction to public service, reflect the intrinsic motivation of individuals who prioritise public interest over their personal interests. Individuals with higher PSM tend to have higher ethical obligations, leading to lower corruptibility. Several studies in the literature examine the relationship between PSM and corruptibility, willingness to engage in corruption, or general deviant behaviours (De Waele et al., 2021; Gans-Morse et al., 2021b; Pande & Jain, 2014; Kwon, 2014; Vogel et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2019). Other studies indicated that PSM also diminishes the willingness to engage in corruption and increases the willingness of altruistic behaviour (Gans-Morse et al., 2021a; Junitasari & Ariyanto, 2018; Ugaddan & Park, 2018; Wright & Christensen, 2021; Wright et al., 2016). The negative correlation between PSM and the desire for monetary rewards (Mussagulova et al., 2019) provides support for this negative association between PSM and propensity to engage in corruption. Recent studies using experimental design found that PSM is a negative predictor of dishonesty (Bellé & Cantarelli, 2019; Olsen et al., 2019). This stream of work confirms the negative correlation between PSM and corruptibility or dishonesty at the individual level.

Despite the paucity of empirical evidence investigating the influence of individual corruptibility on whistleblowing intentions in the workplace, the POB model offers valuable insights into the intricate relationships among PSM, corruptibility, and whistleblowing intention. According to the POB model, organisations may discourage whistleblowing by cultivating a rigid organisational culture that signals to employees not to report misconduct. However, commitment to public value, one of the PSM subdimensions, helps employees to overcome organisational signalling of unresponsiveness to reporting wrongdoings. If employees are committed to public value instead of their personal interests, they report wrongdoings regardless of organisational signalling to unresponsiveness. Another PSM subdimension, attraction to public service, may reduce employees' corruptibility, and in turn, it will increase the perception of employees' responsibility to act on whistleblowing. An empirical study (Brewer & Selden, 1998) suggests the evidence of those PSM's sub-dimensions, observing that PSM is positively associated with whistleblowing in the federal bureaucracy. The authors explained that public servants with a high level of PSM tend to be conscientious, so that PSM eventually increases whistleblowing intention. To corroborate the relationship, we advocate future research to develop hypotheses from corruptibility to whistleblowing intention and generate empirical evidence to test this path.

Proposition 2. Higher PSM leads to lower tolerance for unethical behaviours; unwillingness to accept unethical behaviours in the workplace increases whistleblowing intention.

We propose that two dimensions of PSM (i.e., commitment to public value and compassion) influence individual moral standards and decrease acceptance of unethical

behaviours. Unethical behaviours conflict with an individual's passion for public interest, and compassion for underprivileged groups increases ethical standards and decreases tolerance for unethical behaviours that diminish social welfare. The extent to which PSM affects individual ethical judgement has recently garnered increasing scholarly interest. Studies have found that PSM is negatively correlated with acceptance of unethical behaviours or unethical judgement among public employees (Ripoll & Breugh, 2019; Ripoll & Schott, 2020). This correlation can be moderated by many factors, such as personal financial stress (Ripoll & Breugh, 2019).

However, some people with high levels of PSM may still hold the view that unethical behaviour can sometimes promote public efficiency and safety (Ripoll & Schott, 2020). This finding suggests that the question of whether a given activity is wrongful depends on the perspective taken within the POB model (Miceli et al., 2008). If the public interest is framed as increasing efficiency or saving time instead of abiding by due process, individuals may rationalise rule breaking (Ripoll & Schott, 2020).

Demoralisation is the negative effect of wrongdoings suggested by the POB model (Miceli et al., 2012). Compassion, one dimension of PSM, may lower tolerance for unethical behaviour, and even help to overcome organisational demoralisation upon witnessing wrongdoings. For example, in the case of witnessing sexual discrimination against a fellow organisational member, an individual may be inclined to blow the whistle if they exhibit a strong sense of compassion, enabling them to overcome feelings of frustration or sadness. We suggest that future research should gather empirical evidence to test the correlation between ethical judgement and whistleblowing, as well as investigate the role of PSM.

Proposition 3. PSM drives stronger attitudes towards procedural justice; intention to foster procedural justice increases whistleblowing intention.

Compassion and self-sacrifice, two dimensions of PSM, are predictors of attitude towards procedural justice. Compassion for underprivileged groups amplifies the urge to correct social and procedural unfairness. Willingness to sacrifice personal achievement for public interest reflects preferences for procedural justice and magnifies individuals' internal impulse to correct procedural injustice for transparency. In the course of this systematic review, we have not found any study which directly tests the path from PSM to whistleblowing through attitudes towards procedural justice. However, Bashir and Hassan (2020) found that employee-reported procedural fairness is associated with fewer incidences of corruption. Norm-based and affective work motives increase the likelihood of whistleblowing in the US federal government (Lavena, 2016). Davis et al. (2020) argue that PSM could diminish whistleblowing if it is caused by egoistic motives instead of altruistic motives.

The role of self-sacrifice can be explained by the POB model, which assumes that organisational members compare the benefits and costs of whistleblowing (Miceli et al., 2008). If the member has altruistic motives, and are inclined to self-sacrifice, they are likely to overestimate the perceived benefits of whistleblowing and underestimate the subjective costs. Furthermore, employees inclined towards self-sacrifice are more likely to overcome the psychological hurdles of whistleblowing, including organisational

discouragement and demoralisation. Thus, public employees with self-sacrifice intention may serve for improving procedural justice. We recommend future researchers pursue empirical studies to test this proposition.

From whistleblowing intention to behaviour

We acknowledge that there can be a huge gap between whistleblowing intention and behaviour. Limited by practical issues in data collection on whistleblowing behaviour, more studies examined how PSM predicts whistleblowing intention rather than behaviour. In general, PSM is positively associated with whistleblowing intention or intention to report wrongdoing (Caillier, 2015; Cho & Song, 2015; Junitasari & Ariyanto, 2018; Meyer-Sahling et al., 2019; Potipiroon & Wongpreedee, 2020; Prysmakova & Evans, 2020; Ugaddan & Park, 2018; Wright & Christensen, 2021; Wright et al., 2016). However, we found a few studies directly investigated how PSM and prosocial motivation affects whistleblowing behaviour. In short, higher PSM significantly explains whistleblowing behaviour (Brewer & Selden, 1998; Caillier, 2017; Lavena, 2016; Tavares et al., 2021), although Cooper (2021) did not find a statistically significant correlation between PSM and whistleblowing behaviour in Australia. We speculate that organisational factors modify the path from PSM to whistleblowing behaviour through whistleblowing intention.

Organisational or cultural factors influence whether an individual's intention to report wrongdoing becomes actual behaviour. Drawing on the POB model suggested by Miceli et al. (2008), witnesses of wrongdoing make decisions about whether whistleblowing is their responsibility within the organisation and whether whistleblowing is available in the organisation before taking such action. Organisational culture and climate can affect employees' perception of their responsibility and competence in whistleblowing. For example, Miceli et al. (2008) found that organisational retaliatory climate hinders whistleblowing behaviour.

Even after employees decide to report wrongdoings, they should choose specific channels and ways to blow the whistle. The POB model assumes that organisational members compare the benefits and costs of available whistleblowing options (e.g., internal or external whistleblowing) (Miceli et al., 2008). At the individual level of local government employees in Thailand, Potipiroon and Wongpreedee (2020) found that an ethical workplace climate increases the likelihood of both internal and external whistleblowing through PSM and psychological safety. In terms of external whistleblowing, federal bureaucrats with high PSM tend to prefer to report wrongdoing outside rather than inside their departments (Jeon, 2017). We recommend that future researchers test the moderating effects of institutional, societal, and cultural factors on transforming whistleblowing intention into behaviour, as well as the choice of whistleblowing channels, including external or internal reporting.

Conclusion

First, we conclude from the above analysis that empirical evidence on the PSM-whistleblowing linkage is becoming more prolific, but we suggest decomposing this link to examine its mechanisms further in future research. Our analysis generated hypotheses and empirical evidence about how corruptibility or dishonesty, tolerance

for unethical conduct, and attitudes towards procedural justice mediate the PSM linkage. We offer propositions that shed light on what theoretical gaps between the constructs require causal confirmation. It is also clear in the literature that more studies focused on internal cognitive states (i.e., whistleblowing intention) rather than bureaucrat behaviour (i.e., whistleblowing behaviour). We recommend that future research: (a) utilise an experimental methodology to explore causality among the constructs in the mechanism; (b) develop and validate measurements to observe whistleblowing behaviour; (c) test management practices and institutional settings to elicit wrongdoing reports in organisations; (d) focus on how individuals' ethical standards can be shaped through socialisation processes.

Second, we found that PSM has been studied as the drive of ethical variables in diverse regions, although the original concept of PSM was developed in the United States (Perry & Wise, 1990). In particular, we found a group of empirical findings on the link between PSM and ethics in Asia Pacific and European countries. To test the generalisability of the relationship between PSM and ethics, more empirical findings are needed from other countries in Asia, Latin America countries, and African countries. By studying the role of PSM in different social and economic contexts, we can learn more about the mechanisms of the link between PSM and ethics.

For example, PSM may have different influences under authoritarian regimes compared to democratic counterparts. Over a third of the world's population lives under authoritarian regimes (Democracy Index 2021: Less than Half the World Lives in a Democracy, 2022). A small body of existing literature confirms the positive effects of PSM on ethics in mainland China (Liu & Tang, 2011), Russia (Gans-Morse et al., 2021a, 2021b), Kazakhstan (Wal et al., 2021), and other authoritarian countries. Yet, these findings raise a question on the role of PSM: Does PSM spur ethical behaviours and intentions for authoritarian or even totalitarian goals? PSM, which emphasises self-sacrifice and Communitarianism, may work in authoritarian countries, but future research should study whether PSM ultimately enhances ethical behaviours and intentions, which may be incompatible with the goals of authoritarian regimes. A potential research question along these lines would be whether Russian or Chinese public servants will blow the whistle when political leaders are involved in corruption scandals.

Lastly, longitudinal datasets should be studied to examine employees' changing work values and attitudes. Over time, individuals can reflect the values of the government, while the culture of governments also shapes individuals' beliefs. Public employees may calibrate their work values by adopting organisational norms and values and satisfy the person-organisation fit. Socialisation theory explains how employees acquire the attitudes and behaviours needed to engage in the organisation (Saks & Ashforth, 1997; Van Maanen & Schein, 1977).

From a quantitative research perspective, several articles have explored the socialisation mechanism using longitudinal datasets (Choi & Chung, 2017; Kjeldsen & Jacobsen, 2013). Other studies have focused on the relationship between PSM and whistleblowing intentions, employing survey experiments to overcome limitations associated with cross-sectional data (Ripoll & Breaugh, 2019; Ripoll & Schott, 2020). These diverse quantitative methods provide valuable insights into research on PSM and ethical behaviour.

In conclusion, this systematic review contributes to the understanding of the PSM-ethics linkage and its implications for promoting ethical behaviour in public

service. By addressing the theoretical gap and synthesising empirical research, we have shed light on the connection between PSM and ethical behaviours, particularly whistleblowing. The integration of the POB model has provided valuable insights into the pathways through which PSM can influence ethical outcomes. We have identified three mediators – corruptibility, tolerance for unethical behaviour, and attitudes towards procedural justice – that play crucial roles in this relationship. As a result, this review enhances our theoretical understanding, and offers practical implications for recruiting individuals with PSM to foster a more ethical bureaucratic culture. Future research can build upon these findings and explore innovative ways to ensure bureaucratic accountability for ethical behaviour in public service delivery.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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*Denotes an article that is included in the systematic review

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