PUBLIC SERVICE LOGIC: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW AND FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

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Abstract

Public Service Logic (PSL) has emerged as a prominent topic in contemporary discussions on the fundamentals of public service delivery, challenging the mainstream principles dominated by New Public Management (NPM). Essentially, PSL is grounded in a service-dominant approach, while NPM follows a product-dominant approach. This distinction implies that public services should focus on co-creating value rather than relying solely on one-sided product delivery. This study aims to systematically analyze the literature on PSL through a systematic literature review method. The review is crucial for understanding the dynamics and trajectory of PSL research, as well as identifying existing research gaps to inform future research agendas.

INTRODUCTION

In the dynamic transformation of the public sector, amidst rapid and unprecedented pressures, a deep understanding of Public Service Logic (PSL) theory becomes crucial for identifying and applying best practices in the provision and delivery of public services across various sectors. PSL presents a distinct perspective from the traditional public service logic, arguing that public services are not mere products but rather value exchanges, emphasizing that public service is an interactive process between service providers and recipients aimed at co-creating value. In this logic, the focus shifts from the mere provision of products or services to how values are understood, generated, and delivered to society (Osborne, 2018).

The foundation of Public Service Logic (PSL) lies in integrating service management elements with public administration theory (Osborne & Strokosch, 2013). They propose a model centered on user-driven innovation and co-production of public

services, aiming to enhance service delivery through active engagement with service users. This model is rooted in the service management perspective, which emphasizes the importance of interactive relationships in creating value for service users (Gronroos, 2019; Vargo & Lusch, 2008).

In advancing the understanding and application of Public Service Logic (PSL), it is essential to explore how the integration of service management and public administration perspectives can facilitate value creation through co-creation with service users. This approach challenges traditional perspectives by underscoring the importance of understanding service users as collective citizens rather than isolated individuals (Osborne, 2021). Furthermore, this approach considers the intangible and heterogeneous processes involved in the delivery of public services and the need to differentiate between various types of public services within the context of "serviceness" (Sonderskov & Ronning, 2021; Strokosch & Osborne, 2020).

Since its introduction by Osborne in 2018, PSL has experienced significant development, with numerous theoretical and empirical articles emerging. Several findings suggest that the application of PSL theory may not be fully contextual for non-European countries (Kinder & Stenvall, 2023). Further studies have explored the applicability of PSL in the public sector, examining its compatibility with existing public administration theories, such as street-level bureaucracy (Lipsky, 1980; Sonderskov & Ronning, 2021). These studies highlight the need for PSL to account for the unique context of the public sector, including the role of public values and potential conflicts between user needs and political decisions.

Other findings reveal that the theoretical foundation for studying the ecosystemic nature of value creation in PSL is underdeveloped (Trischler et al., 2023). Moreover, PSL is criticized for neglecting important contextual factors and not adequately supporting the development of broader services in the public sector (Sonderskov & Ronning, 2021).

However, there remains a lack of a comprehensive systematic literature review to map the progress of studies, leaving a gap that needs to be addressed. Therefore, through the use of a systematic literature review method, this research aims to delve into how

PSL can be applied to enhance the effectiveness and quality of public services in its research trends, highlight gaps in the existing lirterature, and propose future research directions. This systematic review is expected to make a significant contribution to the existing body of literature, offer new perspectives, and identify future research directions in the field of Public Service Logic (PSL).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a systematic literature review method, which involves a structured, accountable, and explicit process for reviewing research literature (Gough et al., 2012). The primary objectives of a systematic literature review are twofold: first, to identify and synthesize existing knowledge. Systematic reviews aim to identify and synthesize current knowledge on a specific topic or research objective, allowing researchers to gain a comprehensive understanding of the scientific body of work relevant to the subject under investigation. Second, to determine areas for further research. Systematic reviews also aim to identify gaps in existing knowledge, highlight unresolved questions, and point to necessary directions for future research to deepen understanding in the field (Dekkers et al., 2022). Therefore, this research seeks to review various studies on Public Service Logic to uncover trends, research gaps, and future research directions.

Literature Identification

This study will utilize the Scopus scientific publication database, which is widely recognized as representative in identifying research subjects, particularly within Public Administration and Public Management studies, where the majority of research is affiliated with Scopus-indexed journals. Several leading academic journals use this database as an important metric for evaluating their scholarly impact, including *Public Management*, *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, and *Public Administration Review*. Thus, exploring this database is essential, as it encompasses key metrics across top-tier journals in Public Administration and Public Management studies. In conducting this exploration, the researcher will not limit the search to specific

journals but will search for the keyword "Public Service Logic" in the titles, abstracts, and/or keywords of all articles retrieved. All records will be downloaded in CSV format and selected according to the study's requirements.

Literatures Screening and Eligibility

After all records are cleaned to remove or merge duplicates, the article metadata will be screened using the following criteria:

1. **Language**: Only articles published in English will be included.

2. **Publication Status**: Only journal publications will be considered, while proceedings, books, reports, and other types of publications will be excluded.

3. **Publication Year**: All publication years will be initially reviewed, but only publications from 2017 onwards will be considered, as PSL first emerged in that year. Additionally, 2023 will be set as the final year of publication to ensure the inclusion of the most complete data.
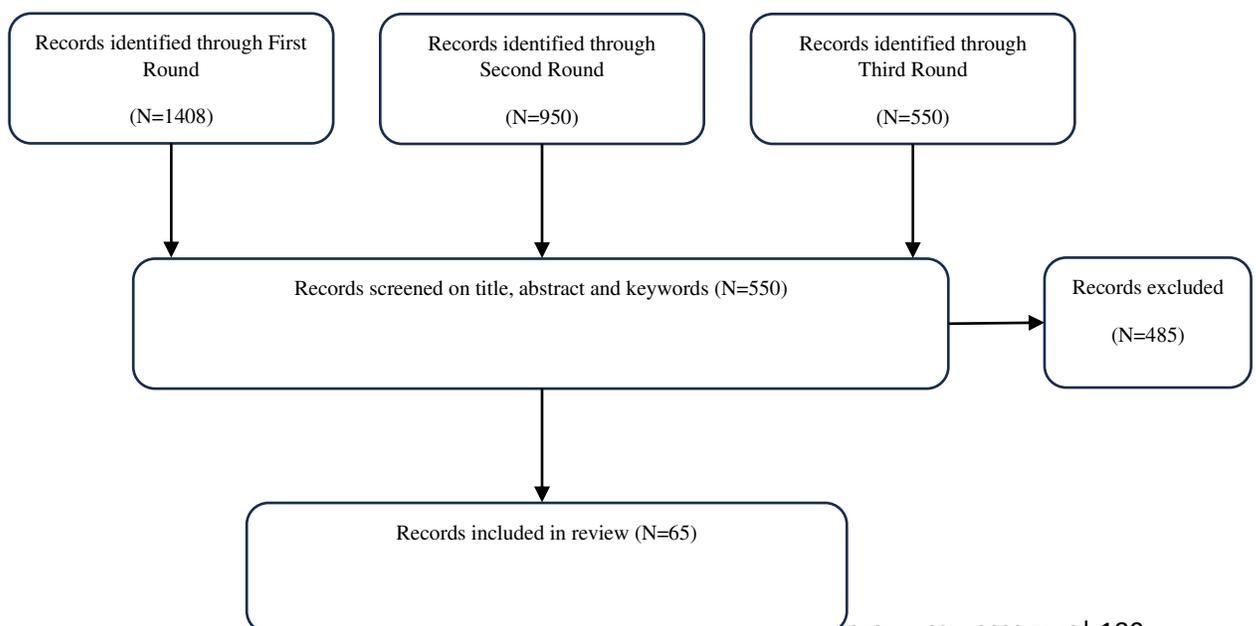
Search Strategy

The researchers accessed Scopus Database on 22 Agustus 2024 and employed several steps of query:

1. In the first round, the researcher searched the Scopus database using the terms "public service logic" in English and found 1,408 documents found articles. Researchers implement the query: TITLE-ABS-KEY (public AND service AND logic) AND PUBYEAR > 2016 AND PUBYEAR < 2024 AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English"))

2. In the second round, the researcher limited the source type to "Journal" and the document type to "article", and set the publication stage to "final", resulting in 950 documents being found. Researchers implement the query: TITLE-ABS-KEY (public AND service AND logic) AND PUBYEAR > 2016 AND PUBYEAR < 2024 AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE , "final")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English"))

3. In the third round, the researcher narrowed down the subject areas to: "Business, Management and Accounting", "Social Sciences", "Economics, Econometrics and Finance", "Arts and Humanities", and "Psychology". After applying the keyword "public service logic", 550 documents were found. Researchers implement the query: TITLE-ABS-KEY (public AND service AND logic) AND PUBYEAR > 2016 AND PUBYEAR < 2024 AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE , "final")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "BUSI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "SOCI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "ECON") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "ARTS") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "PSYC")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English"))

4. The final step, authors screened the title, abstract and keywords using the term public service logic or service dominant logic or value creation or co-production, erased 485 and sustain 65 articles for final analysis (see Graph 1).

Graph 1. Selection Process

Records identified through First Round (N=1408)

Records identified through Second Round (N=950)

Records identified through Third Round (N=550)

Records screened on title, abstract and keywords (N=550)

Records excluded (N=485)

Records included in review (N=65)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

After all records have been filtered, the researcher will begin the analysis process, which consists of trend analysis, research gap analysis, and future research direction analysis. The trend analysis will focus on five key areas: the number of publications, distribution of publications, country distribution, keyword usage, and the use of methodologies and classification of findings. These five trend areas will then be followed by a research gap analysis to identify critical gaps in the literature. Ultimately, these gaps will inform the future research direction analysis, which will suggest potential areas for future research based on the identified gaps.

Graph 2. The Number of Publication
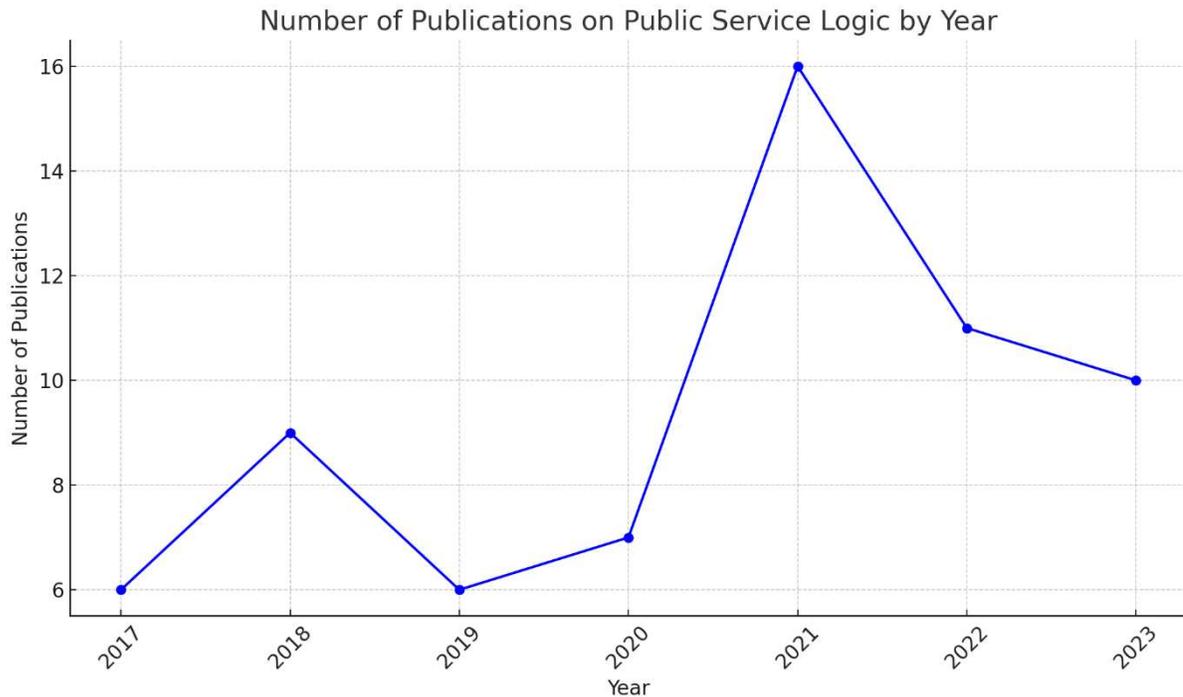
Source: Scopus, 2024

The graph 2 illustrates the development of publications on Public Service Logic (PSL) from 2017 to 2023. Research in PSL began modestly in 2017 with six publications. Interest grew in 2018, with the number of contributions rising to nine. However, in 2019, publications dipped slightly back to six, indicating a temporary

stabilization. In 2020, the field saw renewed interest or emerging trends, leading to a small increase to seven publications. A significant surge occurred in 2021, with 16 publications, marking a peak in both academic and practical engagement with PSL. After this peak, 2022 saw a slight decrease to 11 publications, possibly reflecting a shift towards consolidation or a focus on quality over quantity. By 2023, the downward trend continued with 10 publications, suggesting that while PSL remains relevant, its explosive growth phase may have slowed.

This trend indicates that Public Service Logic (PSL) has undergone fluctuating levels of scholarly interest, reaching a significant peak in 2021. The slowed pace in 2022 and 2023 may suggest that the theoretical foundation for exploring the ecosystemic nature of value creation within PSL remains underdeveloped (Trischler et al., 2023). This could point to inherent limitations in the current framework or signal that PSL is still in the process of evolving into a fully developed approach.
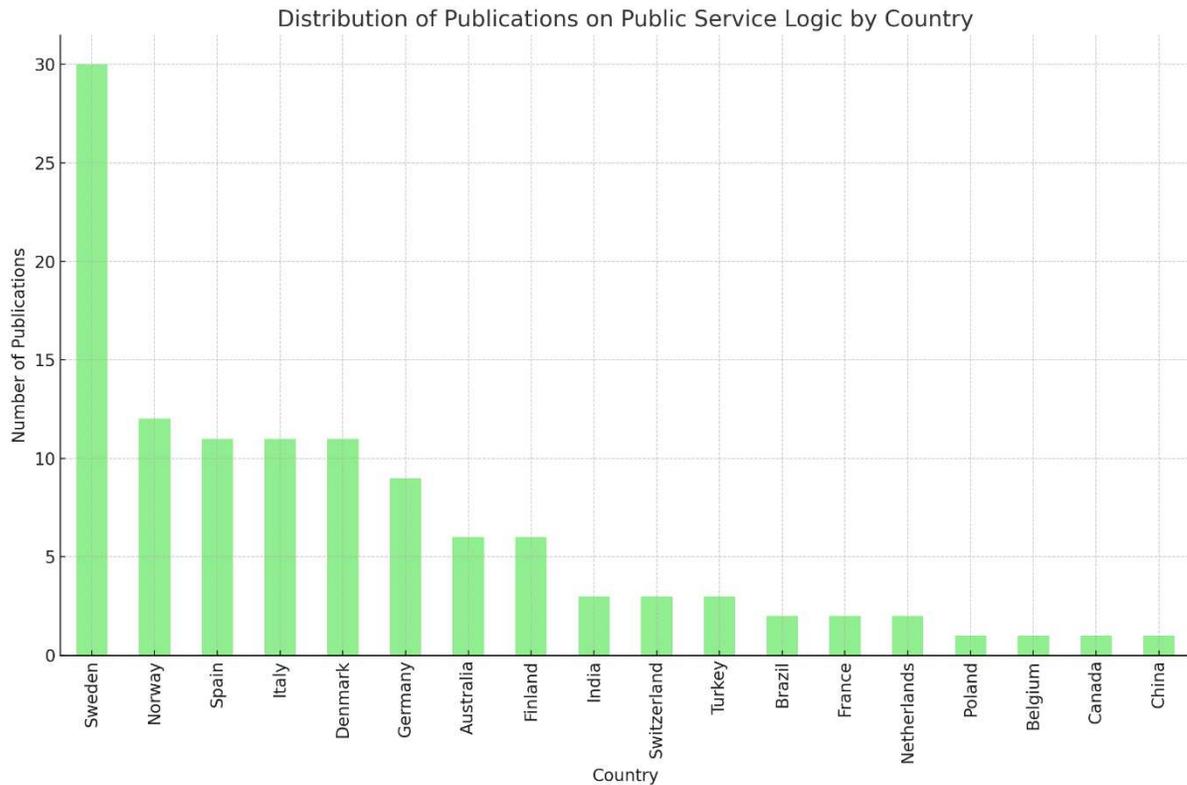
Graph 3. Distribution of Publication
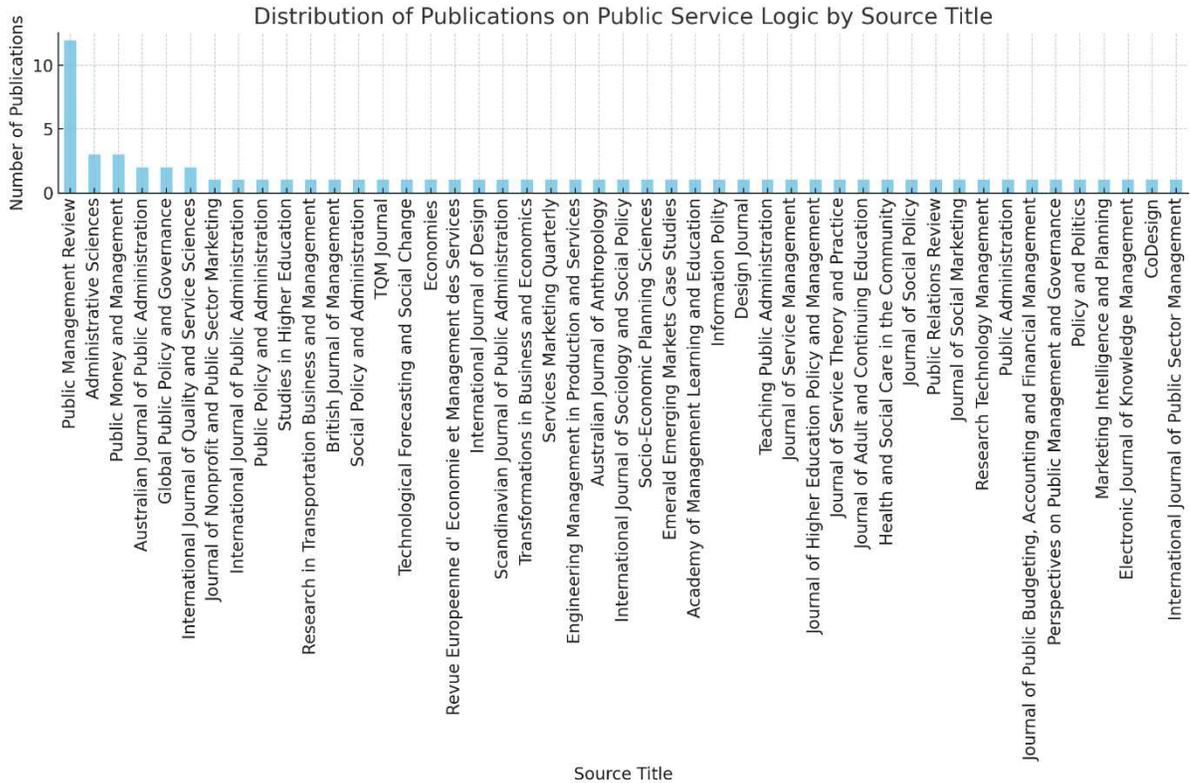
Source: Scopus, 2024

The graph 3 illustrates the distribution of publications on Public Service Logic (PSL) across various journals. *Public Management Review* emerges as the leading platform for PSL research, hosting 12 publications, which positions it as a central hub for discourse in this area. *Administrative Sciences* and *Public Money and Management* follow, each with 3 publications, indicating their significance but less dominant role in PSL research. Journals such as the *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, *Global Public Policy and Governance*, and the *International Journal of Quality and Service Sciences* contribute 2 publications each, reflecting their relevance in more specialized aspects of the PSL discourse. The remaining publications are distributed across a variety

of journals, each contributing one publication. This diversity underscores the interdisciplinary nature of PSL research, which spans fields such as public administration, public policy, and management.

Although the graph does not provide a year-to-year breakdown by journal, the broad distribution of publications across numerous journals demonstrates that PSL research is not restricted to a particular set of outlets. Instead, it encompasses a range of disciplines, highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of the field. According to the latest summary from (Mills et al., 2023)(Mills et al., 2023), there is a pressing need to advance the evaluation and extension of PSL across various domains.

Graph 4. Country Distribution

Source: Scopus, 2024

The graph 4 illustrates the distribution of Public Service Logic (PSL) publications by country, revealing varying levels of research activity. Sweden leads with 30 publications, reflecting a strong focus on PSL research, likely driven by the country's progressive public administration practices and active academic community. Following closely, Norway, Spain, Italy, and Denmark each contribute 11 to 12 publications, indicating significant engagement in PSL research, possibly supported by active public sector research groups. Germany, with 9 publications, also plays a notable role, benefiting from its well-established tradition of public administration research. Australia and Finland contribute 6 publications each, showcasing their involvement in the global PSL research community. Emerging interest in PSL can be seen in India, Switzerland, and Turkey, with 3 publications each. Brazil, France, and the Netherlands show more limited participation, each with 2 publications. Meanwhile, countries like Poland,

Belgium, Canada, and China, with only 1 publication each, indicate that PSL research is still in its early stages in these regions.

The distribution of PSL research shows a strong concentration in European countries, particularly in Scandinavia, while countries like Australia and India demonstrate the global reach of PSL concepts, albeit with varying levels of research intensity. This broad geographical spread indicates that PSL is not limited to a specific region but is of global academic interest. However, Public Service Logic remains a more prominent topic in Europe, with limited engagement in regions like Asia and South America. This observation highlights two important points: first, the growth of PSL research in Europe signals the need for further development in Asia and South America; second, the relatively minimal research in these regions presents an anomaly. Given their collectivist traditions, one might expect countries in these regions to engage more actively with PSL research, as opposed to the more individualistic Western contexts where PSL has gained traction.

Moreover, scholars argue for moving beyond the divergence–convergence debate by examining how administrative practices, relationships, and the impacts of policy and reform actually differ in practice, rather than simply testing Western academic frameworks (Van Der Wal et al., 2021). This underscores a critical trend in Asian governance, which is shifting from merely being a recipient of Western governance models to becoming an innovator of local knowledge and solutions (Wang & Liu, 2018).

More detail, the relevance of Public Service Logic (PSL) in the Indonesian context is significant, given the country's distinct governance system and socio-cultural makeup. Indonesia's collectivist society, where community collaboration and mutual assistance are emphasized, aligns well with PSL's focus on co-creation and service user engagement. PSL encourages public service organizations to understand citizens as active participants, rather than passive recipients of services—a concept that resonates with Indonesia's traditions of gotong royong (communal cooperation). However, the limited research on PSL within Indonesia suggests an untapped potential for exploring how these principles could be adapted to address local governance challenges, such as

improving public service delivery in diverse regions, enhancing bureaucratic efficiency, and fostering greater public trust in government institutions.

The implications of further integrating PSL research in Indonesia could be profound, especially in reforming the public sector to be more responsive to the needs of its citizens. By adopting PSL frameworks, Indonesian public services could move toward more citizen-centric models, which would contribute to ongoing decentralization efforts and improve service delivery in rural and remote areas. Furthermore, PSL's focus on service co-production could complement Indonesia's shift towards more participatory governance, aligning with current policy agendas to increase public involvement in decision-making processes (Aspinall et al., 2021; Wisnu Pradana, 2022). Thus, PSL presents an opportunity for Indonesia not only to enhance its public service system but also to contribute to the global conversation on governance innovation.

Graph 4. Keywords Analysis
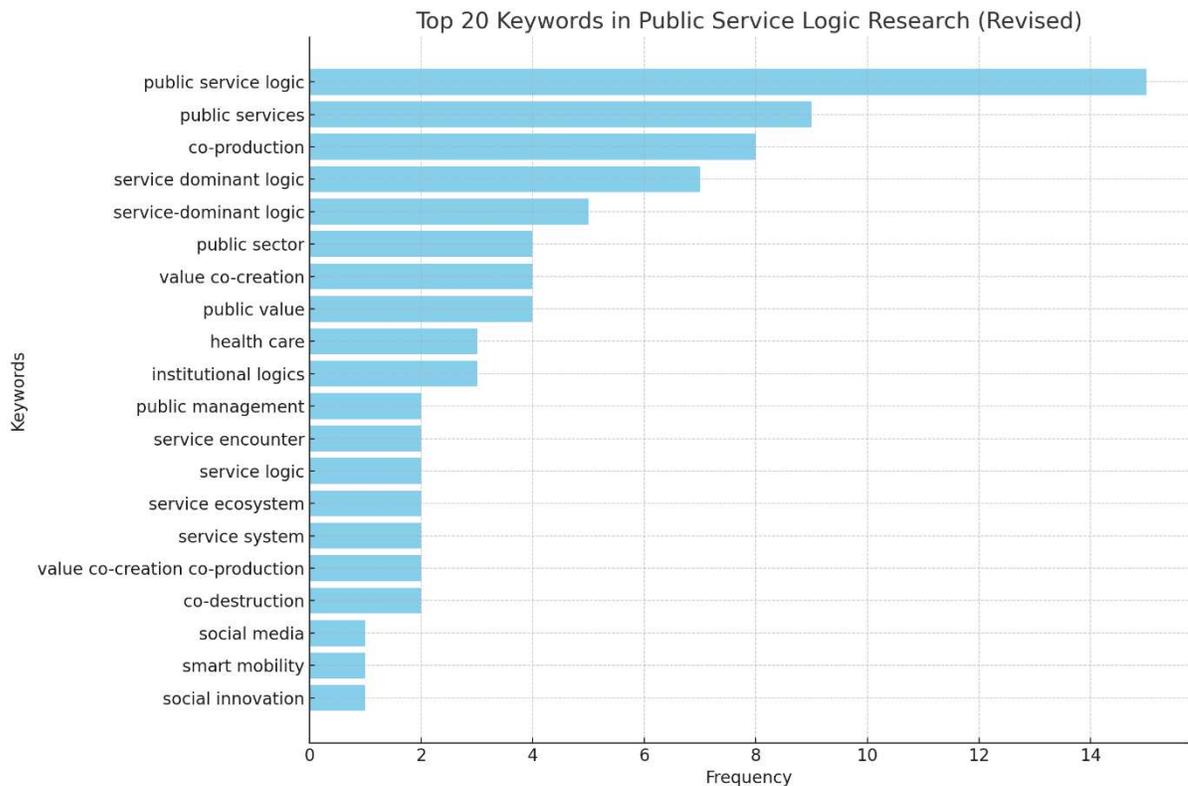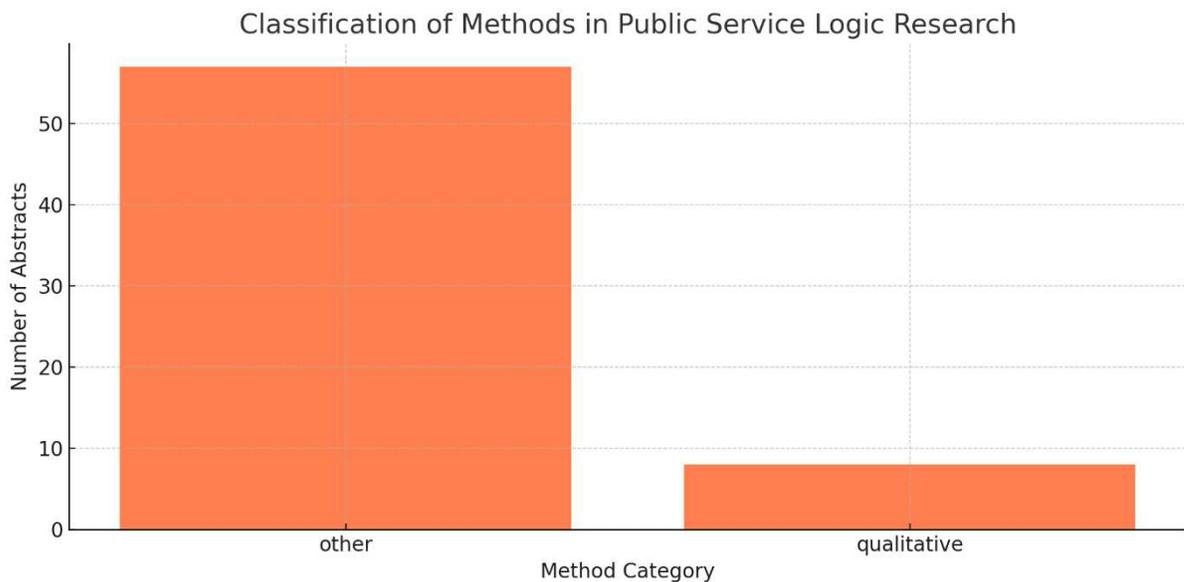

Source: Scopus, 2024

The analysis of keywords provides valuable insights into the core themes and focus areas within Public Service Logic (PSL) research. The most dominant keyword, *Public Service Logic*, underscores its central role in the field, with its frequent use across multiple publications reflecting the growing recognition of PSL as a distinct approach to public sector management and service delivery. Close behind is *Service-Dominant Logic*, which signifies the influence of the broader service-dominant logic framework on PSL. Originally developed in marketing, this framework has been adapted to the public sector, emphasizing co-creation of value and the service-oriented nature of public administration. Another key term, *co-production*, highlights the increasing focus on collaborative processes between public service providers and citizens. This concept is fundamental to PSL, where active participation from users in service design and delivery is crucial for achieving public value.

The themes emerging from the analysis also point to a practical application of PSL principles. The frequent mention of *public services* indicates a focus on sectors such as healthcare, education, and social services, where researchers are exploring how PSL can transform service delivery and management. The concept of *value co-creation* further emphasizes the collaborative creation of value through interactions between service providers and users, marking a shift away from traditional, top-down service models. Finally, keywords related to *innovation* suggest that PSL is being viewed as a driver of innovation in public services, aligning with broader efforts to address public sector challenges through creative and user-centered approaches.

Public Service Logic (PSL) is an emerging and increasingly influential approach in public administration and service delivery. At its core, PSL shifts the focus from traditional, provider-centric models to a more collaborative, value-oriented perspective. The most prominent themes in PSL research, as revealed by keyword analysis, include co-production, value co-creation, and service-dominant logic. These concepts emphasize the importance of engaging citizens as active participants in the design and delivery of public services, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and relevance of these services. As PSL continues to evolve, it is likely to play a key role in shaping the future of public

services, promoting more responsive, user-centered approaches that are better suited to the complexities of modern governance and society (Virtanen & Jalonen, 2023). The keyword analysis underscores the centrality of concepts like co-production and value co-creation in this evolving discourse, pointing to a future where public services are increasingly co-designed with the communities they serve.

Graph 5. Methods Classification

Source: Scopus, 2024

The graphs 5 classify the "Method" and "Findings" sections of PSL research abstracts into distinct categories, offering insights into the research methodologies employed in the field. Qualitative methods emerge as the most commonly used, reflecting the exploratory nature of PSL research, with interviews and case studies playing a central role in understanding complex, context-dependent phenomena like public service delivery. Case studies, in particular, are frequently employed either independently or as part of broader qualitative approaches, highlighting the need for context-specific insights in PSL research. These studies allow for in-depth examination of how public service logic operates in real-world scenarios.

Quantitative methods, though less prevalent than qualitative approaches, are also widely used. Through surveys, experiments, and statistical analyses, researchers aim to generalize findings across various contexts, providing empirical support for theoretical frameworks. Mixed methods, though less common, are also present, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches to triangulate findings and offer a more comprehensive understanding of PSL issues. Finally, literature reviews are the least represented, used primarily to synthesize existing research or to provide a foundation for new empirical studies. This diverse range of methodologies underscores the complexity and interdisciplinary nature of PSL research.

Graph 6. Findings Classification
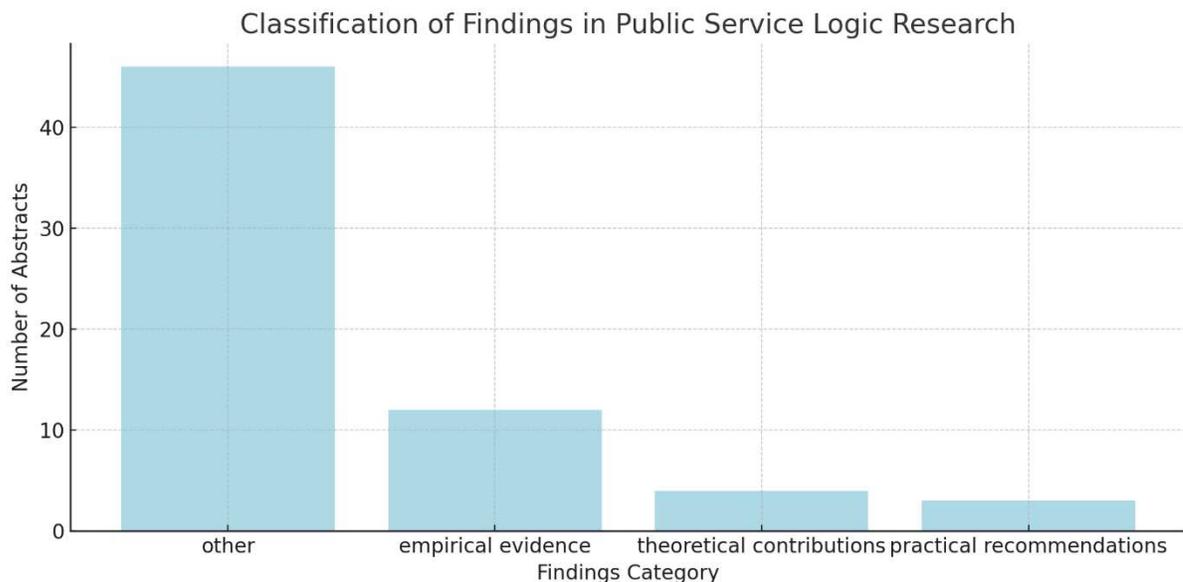
Source: Scopus, 2024

The classification of findings in PSL research reveals a predominant focus on empirical evidence, with the majority of studies prioritizing data-driven conclusions. This emphasis on empirical findings highlights the commitment to collecting and analyzing data, ensuring that research outcomes are both relevant and actionable. In addition to empirical evidence, a significant portion of findings contributes to theoretical advancements. These contributions are essential for the ongoing development of

conceptual frameworks that can guide practice in PSL, indicating a concerted effort to refine and expand the theoretical underpinnings of the field. Furthermore, many studies provide practical recommendations for policymakers, public managers, and practitioners, underscoring the applied nature of PSL research. This focus on actionable insights aligns with the field's overarching goal of enhancing public service delivery.

PSL research demonstrates considerable methodological diversity, with a strong emphasis on qualitative approaches and case studies, supported by quantitative and mixed methods. This range of methodologies reflects the inherent complexity of the public service domain, where both in-depth, context-specific insights and generalizable findings are essential. In terms of findings, PSL research strikes a balance between empirical evidence, theoretical contributions, and practical recommendations. This equilibrium indicates that PSL research not only advances academic understanding but also delivers actionable insights for practitioners. These classifications offer a clearer understanding of how PSL research is structured and what types of contributions it seeks to make, emphasizing both its methodological rigor and its practical relevance.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Public Service Logic (PSL) research highlights key trends, gaps, and future directions for the field. The number of publications reveals fluctuating scholarly interest, with a notable peak in 2021 and a slowdown in 2022 and 2023, suggesting the need for further development in the theoretical foundation of PSL. The broad distribution of publications across journals and countries indicates the interdisciplinary and global nature of PSL research, though it remains concentrated in Europe, particularly Scandinavia, with relatively limited engagement from Asia and South America. Public Service Logic (PSL) is highly relevant to Indonesia's collectivist society, offering potential to enhance citizen engagement and improve public service delivery through co-creation. By integrating PSL principles, Indonesia could reform its public sector to be more responsive and participatory, aligning with decentralization efforts and governance innovation.

The analysis of keywords reveals that PSL is shifting towards a more collaborative, value-oriented approach, with concepts like co-production and value co-creation central to the discourse. These themes point to a future where public services are increasingly designed in partnership with the communities they serve. Methodologically, PSL research employs a diverse range of approaches, primarily qualitative methods and case studies, reflecting the complexity of public service systems. The findings balance empirical evidence, theoretical contributions, and practical recommendations, demonstrating that PSL research not only advances academic knowledge but also offers actionable insights for practitioners.

This review underscores the ongoing evolution of PSL as a field, identifying both opportunities for further research and the need for greater global engagement. As PSL continues to mature, it will likely play a pivotal role in shaping more responsive and user-centered public services.

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