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ETHICAL BEHAVIOUR AND INTEGRITY AMONG EMPLOYEES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR: A CRITICAL REVIEW

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Abstract:

This systematic review synthesises and analyses current research on ethical behaviour and integrity among public sector employees. Despite the growing emphasis on ethics in public administration, there remains a significant gap in consolidating the diverse factors influencing ethical conduct and integrity. Employing the Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) approach, a comprehensive search of Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) was conducted using the keywords (1) ethical behaviour, (2) employee, and (3) public sector. The final dataset included (n = 44) relevant articles meticulously reviewed and validated by experts. These articles were categorised into four coherent themes: (1) factors influencing ethical behaviour and integrity in the public sector; (2) challenges and barriers to ethical behaviour and integrity; (3) the leadership role as well as trust with regard to enhancing ethical behaviour; and (4) the implementation and prevention of ethical issues. Key findings indicate that ethical leadership, organisational culture, personal dispositions, education, professionalism, and holistic approaches are vital to fostering ethics in public service, and comprehensive initiatives are needed to address systemic and individual barriers to ethical conduct and integrity.

Keywords:

Ethical Behaviour, Integrity, Public Sector

Introduction

Ethical behaviour and integrity play a crucial role in the efficient functioning of organisations, particularly within the public sector, where employees are entrusted with delivering essential services to the public and can greatly influence society. Therefore, it is imperative to ensure that public sector employees uphold high ethical standards and demonstrate integrity. The purpose of this systematic literature review (SLR) is to provide a comprehensive comprehension of the intricate issues associated with ethical behaviour and integrity among public sector employees. Specifically, this review aims to identify the factors that influence ethical conduct, highlight the key challenges and barriers that may hinder it, and propose strategies to promote ethical behaviour and integrity within public sector organisations.

A recent poll conducted by The Mandarin's Australia reveals that the majority of participants (88.4%) reported encountering instances where civil servants compromised integrity or exhibited ethical concerns in the past year, with a significant proportion (34.69%) encountering such occurrences on a weekly basis. The survey findings also revealed that nearly half of the respondents (44.85%) held a negative perception of the public sector's standing in the community twelve months ago, a sentiment that has persisted, with 45.8% currently perceiving the public sector unfavourably (Coade, 2023). Furthermore, Transparency International conducted a study which disclosed that within the Pacific region, comprised of countries like Papua New Guinea and Fiji, a notable proportion (61%) of civil servants perceive corruption as a prevailing issue within their respective public sectors (Transparency International, 2021). Additionally, Transparency International's research encompassing 17 Asian countries, including Nepal, Thailand, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, India, South Korea, Malaysia, and Japan among others, elucidated that three out of four people regard government corruption as a significant problem in their nations (Transparency International, 2020).

Furthermore, a study conducted by the World Bank discovered that corruption imposes a substantial economic burden on developing nations, amounting to an annual cost of approximately \$2.6 trillion, equivalent to approximately 5% of global GDP (Hartmann & Ferreyra, 2022). This alarming estimation emphasises the adverse consequences of ethical misconduct on both economic progress and public confidence in governmental institutions. These distressing trends are indicative of the urgent necessity to address integrity and ethical concerns in the public sector on a global scale. Essential measures to restore public trust and ensure the integrity of public services include the reinforcement of ethical frameworks, the enhancement of transparency in the public sector, and the cultivation of a culture rooted in ethical leadership.

The motivation for undertaking this study arises from the escalating incidence of integrity-related issues in public service bureaucracies, including widespread corruption and deficiencies in governance and financial management. Previous research has underscored the harmful effects stemming from the lack of integrity, thereby highlighting the imperative to examine the influence of accountability, risk management, and managerial commitment on the implementation of integrity practices within the public sector. Moreover, the discourse surrounding the concept of "good governance" has gained considerable scholarly attention within the realms of public integrity and public values, underscoring the mounting significance of effective governance for generating organisational value.

The systematic literature review (SLR) aims to investigate the challenges faced by public sector employees in upholding high ethical standards and preserving integrity in their professional endeavours. Additionally, it seeks to explore the impacts of ethical conduct and integrity on the performance of public sector organisations. By identifying the gaps in the current body of literature, this review will also offer recommendations for future research endeavours. Previous studies have indicated that issues related to integrity have become widespread across public service bureaucracies, with corruption permeating various departments and agencies within the public sector (Islam et al., 2023; Shabir & Muazzam, 2022; UNODC, 2023; van Steden, 2020). The absence of integrity may lead to deficiencies in governance and oversight, resulting in inadequate financial management and instances of fraud (Johari, Alam, et al., 2020).

Consequently, it is crucial to analyse how accountability, risk management, and managerial dedication impact the implementation of integrity practices in the public sector. The discussion surrounding 'good governance' is gaining importance in the literature on public integrity and public values, though defining the term is complex. It is essential to recognise that effective governance is indispensable for organisational value generation. Furthermore, the private sector has undergone significant transformations by prioritising good governance to enhance reputation, value, and overall image (Herasymiuk et al., 2020; Said et al., 2020; van Steden, 2020).

Recent research has indicated that ethical behaviours by leaders have a significant impact on the well-being of employees by reducing bitterness in the workplace. This correlation is mediated by employees' core self-evaluation, which has the potential to either substitute for or enhance the effects of leaders' ethical behaviours (Saleem et al., 2022). Studies have also demonstrated a strong negative association between Public Service Motivation (PSM) and the propensity to engage in corrupt behaviour, as well as a positive association with altruistic conduct. Thus, high levels of PSM can serve as a predictor of ethical behaviour among employees in the public sector (Gans-Morse et al., 2022). Furthermore, the influence of socially responsible leadership on employees' passion for their work is mediated by the presence of psychological safety. This underscores the importance of cultivating a psychologically safe environment that fosters ethical behaviour and integrity among employees (Kyambade et al., 2024). In order for formalised ethical policies and initiatives to shape ethical behaviour effectively, these policies must be supported by the demonstration of high ethical standards at the organisational level (Juras et al., 2022). Moreover, the development and implementation of ethical codes and scenario-based training have been found to have a significant impact on employees' ethical behaviour. This approach plays a crucial role in normalising ethical behaviour and preparing employees to make ethical choices in challenging situations (Rodda et al., 2020).

This SLR aims to contribute to the existing literature by examining the factors that influence the integrity of civil servants in public service delivery. The review will provide insights into how organisations can improve integrity to ensure efficiency and dependability in public sector services.

Literature Review

Ethical behaviour and integrity are fundamental components of governance in the public sector, embodying adherence to moral principles and the consistency between actions and values (Giacalone et al., 2016; Grojean et al., 2004; Krylova et al., 2017; Miller & Schlenker, 2011). The roots of ethical behaviour and integrity can be traced back to ancient civilisations, where codes of conduct were established to regulate the behaviour of rulers and officials (George, 2015). In contemporary times, the significance of ethical behaviour and integrity has escalated due to the increasingly intricate nature of public sector operations and the need for accountability and transparency.

Numerous studies have examined the correlation between ethical leadership and the reporting of unethical issues in the public sector. For instance, Dinh et al. (2020) revealed the positive associations between ethical leadership, peer relationships, affective commitment, fairness, and the reporting of unethical issues in the public sector. Perlman et al. (2021) found that local governments predominantly employ compliance-based and integrity-based training strategies, with compliance-based training becoming more prevalent. Accordingly, the study recommends integrating values and public interest topics into ethics training programmes to foster ethical behaviour.

The cultural context represents another crucial factor in promoting ethical conduct. Budhiraja and Modi (2021) determined that the perception of a power distance culture moderates the relationship between a manager's virtuousness, ethical behaviour, and unethical behaviour, underscoring the significance of considering cultural context in promoting ethical conduct. Moreover, external influences can impact ethical behaviour. Mauri-Rios et al. (2020) explored the impact of political influence on journalism and found that political influence significantly affects journalism; however, journalists do not succumb to political pressure. This highlights the resilience of ethical behaviour in the face of external pressures.

Several studies have also emphasised the importance of comprehensive integrity systems in promoting ethical behaviour. Hoekstra et al. (2023) introduced a framework for a complete integrity system and assessed its implementation in European cities. Their findings underscored the significance of comprehensive integrity systems, and they provided recommendations for administrative practice and future research. A study conducted by Loke et al. (2022) elucidated the ethical work climate (EWC) among public sector auditors in Malaysia, accentuating the positive influence of EWC on work-related ethical behaviour. The author also underscored the role of organisational culture in shaping individual conduct. Meanwhile, Atiya et al. (2023) conducted a study to investigate the role of trust in the leader (TIL) as a mediator between job engagement (JE) and leader moral integrity (MI). The results indicated that TIL partially mediates the relationships between JE and MI, thereby emphasising the importance of leadership in promoting MI and JE.

In another study, Sajari et al. (2023) examined the factors that influence ethics and integrity in the Malaysian public sector. The study highlighted the significance of chief integrity officers (CIOs) in fostering an ethical climate. In a similar vein, Johari et al. (2020) analysed the impact of accountability, risk management, and managerial commitment on the implementation of integrity practices within the Malaysian public sector. The study identified statistically significant relationships between integrity practices and these aforementioned factors.

Concurrently, Khanal et al. (2022) investigated the integrity of civil servants in providing public services in Nepal. The findings indicated that integrity was positively correlated with adherence to regulations, timely and efficient service delivery, responsiveness, and adequate salary. However, it was negatively affected by prior network connections and bribery.

To conclude, this literature review encompasses a comprehensive range of studies that explore ethical behaviour and integrity in the public sector. The factors considered include leadership, training, cultural context, external influences, and institutional systems. Therefore, organisations and governments should adopt a multifaceted approach that includes leadership development, training programmes, cultural awareness initiatives, and comprehensive integrity systems to promote ethical behaviour and integrity.

Material and Methods

Identification

The process of selecting appropriate papers for this report consists of three main phases in the systematic review. The initial phase involves identifying keywords and searching for relevant terms using resources such as encyclopaedias, dictionaries, thesauruses, and previous studies. After identifying the relevant keywords, search strings were formulated for both the Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) databases, as detailed in Table 1. In the initial phase of the systematic review, a total of 1,609 papers were obtained from both databases as part of the current research effort.

Table 1: The Search Strings

Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (("ethical behavior" OR "ethical behaviour" OR "ethical conduct" OR "professional ethics" OR "integrity") AND ("employee" OR "worker" OR "staff" OR "personnel") AND ("public sector" OR "government" OR "civil service" OR "public administration")) AND PUBYEAR > 2017 AND PUBYEAR < 2024 AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "SOCI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "BUSI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "ECON") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "PSYC") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "DECI") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "MULT") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA , "HEAL")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE , "final")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English")))
Web of Science (WoS)	("ethical behavior" OR "ethical behaviour" OR "ethical conduct" OR "professional ethics" OR "integrity") AND ("employee" OR "worker" OR "staff" OR "personnel") AND ("public sector" OR "government" OR "civil service" OR "public administration") (All Fields) and 2023 or 2022 or 2021 or 2019 or 2020 or 2018 (Publication Years) and Article (Document Types) and English (Languages) and Public Administration or Business Economics or Government Law or Psychology or Social Sciences Other Topics or Behavioral Sciences (Research Areas)

Screening

During the screening phase of a systematic review, the process involves examining a collection of potentially relevant research materials to identify content that aligns with the predetermined research question(s). During the screening phase, research items are selected based on content-

related criteria, while any duplicate papers are removed from the initially searched papers. In the initial screening phase, 1,497 publications were excluded, and in the subsequent stage, 112 papers were evaluated using distinct inclusion and exclusion criteria specific to this research. The initial focus of this study was the examination of literature, specifically research papers, as they serve as the main source of practical advice. The research focused exclusively on studies within the field of public administration, as the primary objective was to investigate how ethical behaviour and integrity are perceived and addressed within this sector. The research deliberately excluded publications in the form of general reviews, meta-synthesis, systematic reviews, meta-analysis, books, chapters, book series, and conference proceedings. The time frame of 2018-2023 was chosen to focus on the most recent and relevant studies that reflect the current state of knowledge on ethical behaviour and integrity in the public sector, as this period has seen significant global efforts to combat corruption and promote good governance. Furthermore, the review was limited to English-language publications. Ultimately, five publications were excluded due to duplication criteria.

Screening Eligibility

In the third step of the study, 107 articles were prepared and reviewed for eligibility. The titles and key content of the articles were carefully reviewed to ensure their compliance with inclusion criteria and alignment with the study's research objectives. Consequently, 63 articles were excluded because they were outside the field, had titles that were not significantly related to the study's objective, or had abstracts unrelated to the study's aims. Ultimately, 44 articles were deemed suitable for review, as summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: The Selection Criterion

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English	Non-English
Timeline	2018 – 2023	< 2018
Literature type	Journal (Article)	Review, Book, Conference,
Publication Stage	Final	In Press
Subject Area	Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, Business, Management and Accounting, Economics, Econometrics and Finance	Besides Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, Business, Management and Accounting, Economics, Econometrics and Finance

Data Abstraction and Analysis

Data abstraction refers to reducing a data set to a simplified representation of the whole. It is commonly used in object-oriented programming (OOP) and database management systems (DBMS) to hide the complexities of the underlying data and associated operations. In the present study, data abstraction was used to select relevant articles for review. A total of 84 articles were prepared and reviewed for eligibility, and 63 reports were excluded because they were outside the field, had titles that were not significantly related to the study's objective, or had abstracts that were not associated with the study's aims. Finally, 44 articles were deemed suitable for review. To ensure the integrity of the findings, two management specialists

conducted the examinations. The expert evaluation phase ensured the clarity, significance, and sufficiency of each sub-theme by establishing domain validity. Modifications were made at the author's discretion, taking into account feedback and comments from the experts.

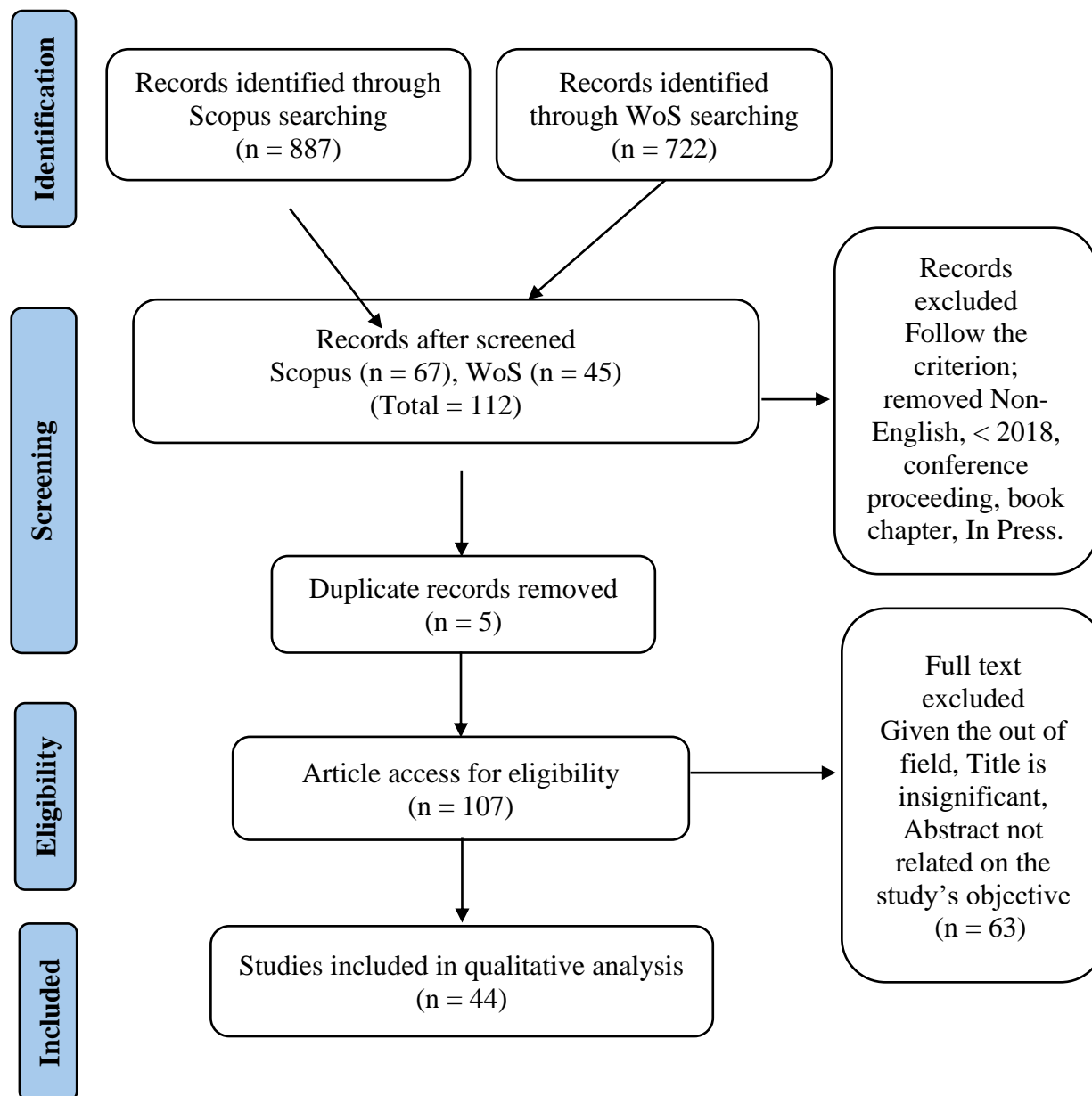


Figure 1: Flow Diagram With Regard To The Proposed Search Study (Moher et al., 2009)

Result and Finding

Based on the search technique, 44 articles were extracted and analysed. The theme identification process involved a thorough analysis of these articles, which were carefully read and coded to identify patterns and concepts related to ethical behaviour and integrity in the public sector. The four main themes emerged from this process and were not predetermined

but rather grounded in the data, ensuring that they accurately reflected the content of the included studies. The themes were identified through an iterative process of coding, categorisation, and theme development, which involved multiple readings of the articles and ongoing refinement of the theme labels. Note that all articles were classified according to these four main themes, which are Factors Influencing Ethical Behaviour and Integrity in the Public Sector (15 articles), Challenges and Barriers to Ethical Behaviour and Integrity (10 articles), The Role of Leadership and Trust in Promoting Ethical Behaviour (14 articles), and Implementation and Prevention of Ethical Issues (15 articles). Some articles were found to address multiple themes, and therefore, were coded accordingly. The details of these themes are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3: The Research Article Findings Are Based On The Proposed Search Criterion

No.	Authors	Journal	Title	WoS	Scopus	Remarks
1.	Konadu et al. (2023)	International Journal of Ethics and Systems	A model for enhancing the relationship between work performance and integrity	/		• Factors Influencing Ethical Behaviour and Integrity in the Public Sector
2.	Ahmed (2020)	Accountability in Research	Academic integrity: strategies and challenges for Asia and the Middle East		/	• Factors Influencing Ethical Behaviour and Integrity in the Public Sector
3.	Shindika & Cheteni (2023)	Ethics in Progress	An application of the corporate virtue scale to examine managers' perceptions of ethical behaviour in public organisations and service provision		/	• Factors Influencing Ethical Behaviour and Integrity in the Public Sector
4.	Borri & Getha-Taylor (2019)	Public Integrity	Automation in the public sector: efficiency at the expense of equity?	/		• Challenges and Barriers to Ethical Behaviour and Integrity
5.	Meyer-Sahling & Mikkelsen (2022)	Review Of Public Personnel Administration	Codes of ethics, disciplinary codes, and the effectiveness of anti-corruption frameworks: evidence from a survey of civil servants in Poland	/		• Factors Influencing Ethical Behaviour and Integrity in the Public Sector
6.	Stelmokienė & Endriulaitienė (2020)	Business: Theory and Practice	Congruence between ideal and real leader. What matters more in today's work world: ethical behavior of a leader or productivity?		/	• The Leadership Role and Trust in Enhancing Ethical Behaviour

No.	Authors	Journal	Title	WoS	Scopus	Remarks
7.	Triggs (2019)	Wisconsin Law Review	Don't whistle while you work: Wisconsin's vanishing protections for public employee whistleblowers	/		• Challenges and Barriers to Ethical Behaviour and Integrity
8.	Zulaikha et al. (2021)	Accounting	Effect of attitudes, subjective norms and behavioral controls on the intention and corrupt behavior in public procurement: fraud triangle and the planned behavior in management accounting		/	• Challenges and Barriers to Ethical Behaviour and Integrity
9.	Plischoff-Varas & Lagos-Machuca (2021)	Revista de Administracao Publica	Effect of training on reflection about ethics and corruption		/	• Challenges and Barriers to Ethical Behaviour and Integrity
10.	Vie (2022)	Science and Engineering Ethics	Empowering the research community to examine misconduct and promote research integrity and ethics: new regulation in Scandinavia		/	• The Leadership Role and Trust in Enhancing Ethical Behaviour
11.	Yusni & Sigalingging (2021)	International Journal of Cyber Criminology	Encryption as the legal protection against cybercrimes associated with digital land certificates in Indonesia		/	• Implementation and Prevention of Ethical Issues
12.	Dinh et al. (2020)	Management Science Letters	Ethical behaviors and willingness to report misconduct in the public sector		/	• Factors Influencing Ethical Behaviour and Integrity in the Public Sector

No.	Authors	Journal	Title	WoS	Scopus	Remarks
13.	Guo et al. (2023)	Frontiers in Psychology	Ethical leadership and workplace behavior in the education sector: the implications of employees' ethical work behavior		/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors Influencing Ethical Behaviour and Integrity in the Public Sector • The Leadership Role and Trust in Enhancing Ethical Behaviour
14.	Rasli et al. (2020)	Problems and Perspectives in Management	Examining the integrity behavior challenges of enforcement officers in Malaysian local government		/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges and Barriers to Ethical Behaviour and Integrity • Implementation and Prevention of Ethical Issues
15.	Sajari et al. (2023)	Journal of Islamic Accounting and Business Research	Factors influencing the level of ethics and integrity in the Malaysian public sector		/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors Influencing Ethical Behaviour and Integrity in the Public Sector
16.	Exmeyer (2020)	Public Integrity	Inside job: exploring the connection between whistleblowing and perceptions of procedural justice	/	/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation and Prevention of Ethical Issues
17.	Onyango (2020)	African Studies Quarterly	Inter-institutional trust and multi- agency networks in anti-corruption efforts in public administration in Kenya		/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Leadership Role and Trust in Enhancing Ethical Behaviour

No.	Authors	Journal	Title	WoS	Scopus	Remarks
18.	Makwae (2021)	Records Management Journal	Legal frameworks for personnel records management in support of accountability in devolved governments: a case of Garissa county government		/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Role of Leadership and Trust in Promoting Ethical Behaviour • Implementation and Prevention of Ethical Issues
19.	Baljija & Rustemi (2021)	NISPAcee Journal of Public Administration and Policy	Measuring whistleblowing perceptions among the civil service of the Republic of Kosovo		/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethical Issues' Implementation and Prevention
20.	Khusnah & Soewarno (2022)	ABAC Journal	Mediation effects of moral reasoning and integrity in organisational ethical culture on accounting fraud prevention		/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Role of Leadership and Trust in Promoting Ethical Behaviour
21.	Batsi & Karamanis (2019)	Management Research and Practice	Mobbing at work: experiences in the Greek public sector	/		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges and Barriers to Ethical Behaviour and Integrity
22.	Odilla (2020)	Politics and Governance	Oversee and punish: understanding the fight against corruption involving government workers in Brazil		/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges and Barriers to Ethical Behaviour and Integrity • Implementation and Prevention of Ethical Issues
23.	Partheymueller et al. (2022)	Electoral Studies	Participation in the administration of elections and perceptions of electoral integrity	/		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Leadership Role and Trust in Enhancing Ethical Behaviour

No.	Authors	Journal	Title	WoS	Scopus	Remarks
24.	Adekanmbi & Ukpere (2022)	Journal of Governance and Regulation	Perceived workplace fairness, ethical leadership, demographics, and ethical behaviors		/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Leadership Role and Trust in Enhancing Ethical Behaviour
25.	El-adaway & Jennings (2022)	Science and Engineering Ethics	Professional and organisational leadership role in ethics management: avoiding reliance on ethical codification and nurturing an ethical culture		/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors Influencing Ethical Behaviour and Integrity in the Public Sector • The Role of Leadership and Trust in Promoting Ethical Behaviour
26.	Raído et al. (2020)	Translation and Interpreting Studies	Professional, ethical, and policy dimensions of public service interpreting and translation in New Zealand		/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors Influencing Ethical Behaviour and Integrity in the Public Sector • The Role of Leadership and Trust in Promoting Ethical Behaviour
27.	Andersson & Ekelund (2022)	Administration and Society	Promoting ethics management strategies in the public sector: rules, values, and inclusion in Sweden		/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors Influencing Ethical Behaviour and Integrity in the Public Sector • The Leadership Role and Trust in Enhancing Ethical Behaviour

No.	Authors	Journal	Title	WoS	Scopus	Remarks
28.	Gans-Morse et al. (2022)	Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory	Public service motivation as a predictor of corruption, dishonesty, and altruism		/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors Influencing Ethical Behaviour and Integrity in the Public Sector • The Role of Leadership and Trust in Promoting Ethical Behaviour
29.	Taibi & Ozolins (2023)	Perspectives: Studies in Translation Theory and Practice	Quality and integrity in the translation of official documents		/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors Influencing Ethical Behaviour and Integrity in the Public Sector
30.	Zikargae (2022)	Cogent Education	Risk communication, ethics and academic integrity in the process of minimising the impacts of the COVID-19 crisis in Ethiopian higher education		/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenges and Barriers to Ethical Behaviour and Integrity • Implementation and Prevention of Ethical Issues
31.	Bulale (2023)	Public Integrity	Somali passport service providers competing for bribes: which government body is taking more?	/		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation and Prevention of Ethical Issues
32.	Susanto et al. (2020)	International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change	The effect of task complexity, independence and competence on the quality of audit results with auditor integrity as a moderating variable		/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation and Prevention of Ethical Issues

No.	Authors	Journal	Title	WoS	Scopus	Remarks
33.	Yusuf et al. (2023)	Journal of Financial Crime	The effectiveness of payroll system in the public sector to prevent fraud		/	• Implementation and Prevention of Ethical Issues
34.	Johari et al. (2020)	Economics and Sociology	The effects of ethical orientation, individual culture and ethical climate on the ethical judgement of public sector employees in Malaysia		/	• Factors Influencing Ethical Behaviour and Integrity in the Public Sector
35.	Sulila & Usman (2022)	Res Militaris	The impact of bureaucratic integrity and loyalty on the government's institutional performance		/	• Implementation and Prevention of Ethical Issues
36.	Atiya et al. (2023)	International Journal of Applied Economics, Finance and Accounting	The impact of trust in the leader as a mediating variable between the moral integrity of the leader and job engagement: a field study in public sector institutions in the sultanate of Oman		/	• The Leadership Role and Trust in Enhancing Ethical Behaviour
37.	Lee (2020)	Review of Public Personnel Administration	The implications of organisational structure, political control, and internal system responsiveness on whistleblowing behavior	/		• The Role of Leadership and Trust in Promoting Ethical Behaviour • Implementation and Prevention of Ethical Issues
38.	Ghani et al. (2019)	Polish Journal of Management Studies	The influence of professional scepticism, self-efficacy and perceived ethical climate on internal auditors'	/		• Implementation and Prevention of Ethical Issues

No.	Authors	Journal	Title	WoS	Scopus	Remarks
			ethical judgment in public sector management			
39.	Zombeire et al. (2023)	Public Organization Review	The mediating role of the nexus of generative influence in the relationship between regulative framework and ethical performance in local governments	/		• Implementation and Prevention of Ethical Issues
40.	Bashir & Hassan (2020)	International Review of Administrative Sciences	The need for ethical leadership in combating corruption		/	• Factors Influencing Ethical Behaviour and Integrity in the Public Sector
41.	Palumbo & Manna (2020)	International Journal of Public Sector Management	Uncovering the relationship between whistleblowing and organisational identity: some preliminary evidence from Italian publicly owned universities		/	• Implementation and Prevention of Ethical Issues
42.	Gong et al. (2022)	Public Integrity	Unpacking public perceptions of effectiveness in anti-corruption agencies: the case of Hong Kong	/		• Challenges and Barriers to Ethical Behaviour and Integrity
43.	Perlman et al. (2021)	Journal of Public Affairs Education	What do local governments teach about in ethics training? Compliance versus integrity	/		• Challenges and Barriers to Ethical Behaviour and Integrity
44.	Jha & Singh (2023)	International Journal of Organizational Analysis	Who cares about ethical practices at the workplace? A taxonomy of employees'	/		• Factors Influencing Ethical Behaviour and Integrity in the Public Sector

No.	Authors	Journal	Title				WoS	Scopus	Remarks
			unethical management	conduct perspective	from	top			

Factors Influencing Ethical Behaviour and Integrity in the Public Sector

The articles reviewed reveal several insights into the multifaceted concept of ethical behaviour and integrity. Firstly, ethical leadership is indispensable for cultivating ethical conduct within organisations, as studies demonstrate its favourable impact on employees' ethical behaviour and its role in mitigating corruption and misconduct (Bashir & Hassan, 2020; Guo et al., 2023). Leaders should espouse ethical standards, hold employees accountable to those standards, and exemplify ethical behaviour. Furthermore, organisational culture and climate significantly influence ethics. An ethical organisational culture has a salutary effect on employee quality of life and ethical judgment (Shindika & Cheteni, 2023; Johari et al., 2020). Equitable reward systems and transparency also encourage ethical conduct (Bashir & Hassan, 2020; Dinh et al., 2020).

Additionally, personal factors like ethical orientation shape ethics. An idealistic ethical orientation positively affects public sector officers' ethical judgements (Johari et al., 2020). Public service motivation correlates with ethical behaviour (Gans-Morse et al., 2022). Moreover, ethics training and education are instrumental. Programmes on ethical leadership and conduct can promote ethical behaviour within organisations (Guo et al., 2023). Raising awareness and investing in academic integrity fosters integrity (Ahmed, 2020). Furthermore, ethical dilemmas are complex, and regulations alone are insufficient, requiring ethical leadership to establish norms and address diverse ethical situations (El-adaway & Jennings, 2022). Hence, a multifaceted approach is imperative. Finally, professionalism encourages ethics. Professional associations promote quality standards and ethics. Licensing and certifications are associated with ethical conduct (Raído et al., 2020; Sajari et al., 2023).

To conclude, ethical behaviour and integrity in the public sector are influenced by a complex interplay of individual, organisational, leadership style, and professional dimensions. The framework depicted in Figure 2 illustrates how these dimensions interact to shape ethical behaviour and integrity. It highlights the need for a systematic and comprehensive approach to address the complexities of ethics and cultivate integrity across the public sector. The framework serves as a guide for organisations to assess and enhance their ethical practices by considering each dimension's contribution to the overall ethical climate. By understanding the interdependencies of these dimensions, organisations can develop targeted strategies to strengthen ethical behaviour and integrity at all levels. This includes leaders exemplifying ethical conduct, organisations fostering ethical climates, individuals developing ethical judgment, and broader societal efforts to promote integrity through awareness and institutions.

Moreover, the framework presented in Figure 2 is not just a static representation but a dynamic tool that can be used to diagnose areas for improvement and to design interventions that promote ethical behaviour and integrity within the public sector. For instance, organisations can use this framework to identify gaps in their current ethical practices and implement specific training programmes, policy changes, or leadership development initiatives to address these gaps.

Furthermore, the framework underscores the importance of continuous monitoring and evaluation of ethical practices. By regularly assessing the effectiveness of implemented strategies and making necessary adjustments, organisations can ensure sustained ethical behaviour and integrity. This proactive approach not only helps in mitigating ethical breaches but also fosters a culture of continuous improvement and accountability.

In summary, the comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing ethical behaviour and integrity, along with the practical application of the framework, provides a strong foundation for public sector organisations to enhance their ethical standards. By adopting a holistic and dynamic approach, organisations can effectively navigate the complexities of ethical behaviour and integrity, ultimately leading to a more ethical and trustworthy public sector.

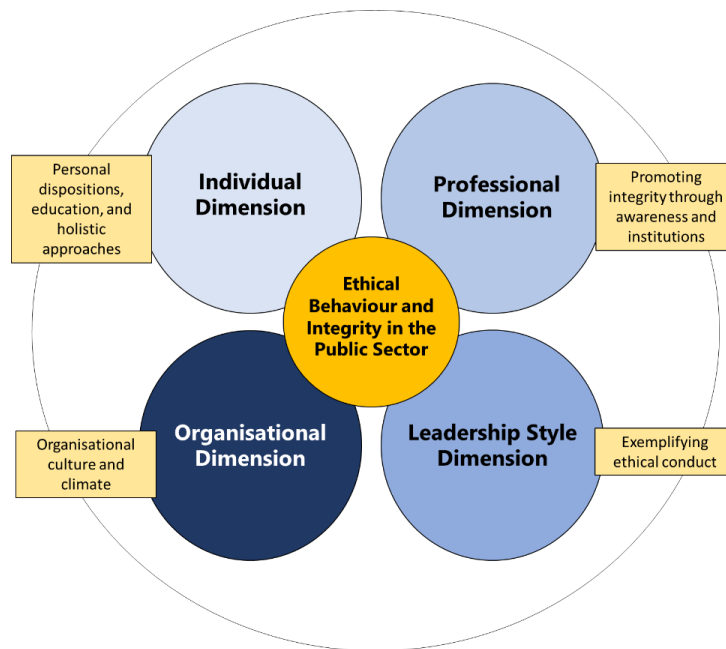


Figure 2: Factors Influencing Ethical Behaviour and Integrity in the Public Sector

Challenges and Barriers to Ethical Behaviour and Integrity

The articles reveal several systemic and individual barriers challenging ethical conduct and integrity in public service. Firstly, while automation and emerging technologies have the potential to disrupt the public workforce, there is a lack of comprehensive governance frameworks to ensure these tools align with the public service values of equal opportunity and inclusion. This gap highlights the need for research into the development and implementation of ethical guidelines for technology use in public service (Borri & Getha-Taylor, 2019). Secondly, the current legal protections for whistleblowers are insufficient, which undermines accountability and transparency. There is a pressing need to explore the specific legislative and policy changes required to provide robust safeguards for public sector whistleblowers (Triggs, 2019). Additionally, factors such as opportunity, financial incentive, and rationalisation are known to propel fraud and corruption, yet there is a need to delve deeper into the psychological, social, and organisational dynamics that enable these unethical behaviours (Zulaikha et al., 2021).

Furthermore, issues such as bias, political interference, bureaucracy, understaffing, and inadequate skills present significant challenges to local government enforcement and community relations. Investigating the root causes of these issues and their impact on public

trust and service delivery could provide insights into effective strategies for improvement (Rasli et al., 2020). Also, despite the presence of sanctions, the persistence of corruption points to the necessity of examining the effectiveness of current enforcement mechanisms and the culture of self-protection among civil servants (Odilla, 2020). Moreover, pandemic has also highlighted vulnerabilities in risk communication, academic integrity, and continuity planning in higher education, indicating an area ripe for analysis to enhance institutional resilience (Zikargae, 2022).

Additionally, public perceptions of anti-corruption agencies are contingent on organisational effectiveness, responsiveness, and trust. Research into the factors that influence these perceptions can inform efforts to strengthen these agencies' credibility and effectiveness (Gong et al., 2022). The predominance of compliance-focused ethics training over values-based approaches in local government suggests a need to evaluate the efficacy of current training methodologies and their impact on ethical behaviour (Perlman et al., 2021). Finally, barriers such as language, lack of role clarity, costs, and procurement difficulties in public sector translation services call for an examination of policy frameworks to ensure ethical and quality standards are met (Taibi & Ozolins, 2023).

In conclusion, overcoming barriers to ethics requires a comprehensive approach that includes amending laws, aligning incentives, enhancing training, communication and oversight, managing perceptions, and promoting organisational justice, as depicted in Table 4. A thorough understanding of these issues and a commitment to addressing them are indispensable for meaningfully upholding ethics and integrity across public institutions. The articles provide valuable perspectives to shape impactful reforms, and the identification of these research gaps is crucial for developing a deeper understanding of the challenges and for informing the design of effective interventions to promote ethical behaviour and integrity within the public sector. Specifically, addressing the lack of comprehensive governance frameworks for emerging technologies, improving legal protections for whistleblowers, and understanding the psychological and social dynamics of fraud and corruption are essential steps.

Moreover, tackling issues such as bias, political interference, and inadequate skills requires targeted strategies to enhance public trust and service delivery. The persistence of corruption despite sanctions calls for a critical evaluation of enforcement mechanisms and the culture within civil services. The pandemic has underscored the need for robust risk communication and continuity planning, particularly in higher education. Public perceptions of anti-corruption agencies hinge on their effectiveness and trustworthiness, necessitating research into the factors that shape these perceptions. Additionally, the shift from compliance-focused to values-based ethics training in local government could significantly impact ethical behaviour. Addressing barriers in public sector translation services through improved policy frameworks is also fundamental.

In summary, a comprehensive and adaptable approach is essential to navigate the complexities of ethical behaviour and integrity in the public sector. By addressing these challenges through targeted reforms and continuous evaluation, public institutions can foster a culture of ethics and integrity, ultimately leading to more trustworthy and effective governance.

Table 4: Summary of Challenges and Barriers to Ethical Behaviour and Integrity

Initiatives	Key Factors
Amend laws	Updating laws to align with ethical standards
Align incentives	Aligning incentives to promote ethical behaviour
Enhance training	Providing training to develop ethical acumen
Communication and oversight	Establishing communication channels and oversight mechanisms
Manage perceptions	Managing perceptions to promote ethical behaviour
Promote organisational justice	Fostering a culture of organisational justice

The Role of Leadership and Trust in Promoting Ethical Behaviour

Leadership is indispensable for cultivating ethical conduct, as studies demonstrate its favourable impact on employees' ethical behaviour and role in mitigating misconduct (Bashir & Hassan, 2020; Guo et al., 2023). Leaders must not only communicate ethical standards but also hold employees accountable and exemplify ethics themselves. Empowering research institutions to self-regulate norms while providing oversight for severe misconduct encourages researcher integrity, avoiding insensitive, lagging legalistic approaches (Vie, 2022). Furthermore, organisational commitment mediates the impact of ethical leadership on ethical behaviour, highlighting the importance of ethics training programmes (Guo et al., 2023).

However, the literature reveals gaps in understanding the mechanisms through which ethical leadership shapes organisational culture and the ways in which this, in turn, influences individual ethical behaviour. There is a need to examine the specific attributes of ethical leadership that are most effective in different public sector contexts. Additionally, the relationship between trust and ethical behaviour in public administration requires further exploration, particularly in the context of anti-corruption reforms where low commitment, distrust, and poor coordination can undermine efforts (Onyango, 2020).

The absence of clear personnel records policies in some county governments points to a lack of clarity in responsibilities and ethical issues, suggesting that compliance with records laws is a critical area for promoting accountability (Makwae, 2021). Moreover, while moral reasoning and integrity, shaped by ethical culture, are known to prevent fraud, there is a need to investigate how values-based training can be optimised to alter perspectives on misconduct effectively (Khusnah & Soewarno, 2022). Furthermore, Partisanship's influence on poll workers' integrity perceptions, despite their higher election confidence compared to voters, indicates a research gap in how recruitment models can mitigate the impact of partisanship on the integrity of electoral processes (Partheymueller et al., 2022).

Workplace fairness and ethical leadership are recognised as encouraging public service ethics, yet the specific strategies leaders can employ to mandate and exemplify ethical conduct require further investigation (Adekanmbi & Ukpere, 2022). Additionally, while nuanced ethical situations necessitate leaders to establish appropriate norms beyond rules, the current

understanding of how leaders can effectively navigate these complex scenarios is limited (El-adaway & Jennings, 2022). Professional associations are known to promote translator ethics and quality, but research into the mechanisms by which these associations can more effectively prevent unethical conduct is needed (Raído et al., 2020).

In conclusion, the role of leadership and trust in promoting ethical behaviour is paramount within the public service. The framework depicted in Figure 2, along with the insights from Tables 4 and 5, underscores the necessity of a multifaceted approach that encompasses individual, organisational, and systemic levels. Leaders play a pivotal role in this schema; they must not only communicate ethical standards but also embody these principles in their conduct and foster a culture that prioritises fairness and integrity. Empowering institutions, as highlighted in Table 5, is essential for creating an environment where ethical behaviour is the norm and integrity is woven into the fabric of public service. Aligning incentives with ethical outcomes and professionalisation of the workforce are also key strategies that contribute to a robust ethical framework. These approaches are supported by the initiatives outlined in Table 4, such as amending laws to reflect ethical standards, enhancing training to develop ethical acumen, and promoting organisational justice to instil trust and ethical behaviour.

The interplay between leadership and trust is further emphasised by the individual, organisational, and leadership style dimensions presented in Figure 2. Leaders who exemplify ethical conduct and establish trust within their organisations set the tone for others to follow, thereby reinforcing the ethical behaviour and integrity at the core of public service. Understanding the role of leadership and trust in promoting ethical behaviour is crucial because it lays the groundwork for developing strategies that enhance ethical practices across the public sector. The identified gaps in the current body of research underscore the need for continued exploration into how these themes can be better understood and integrated into public service institutions. By addressing these gaps, it is possible to inform strategies that not only promote ethical behaviour but also strengthen the overall ethical foundation of public service, ensuring that integrity remains at the forefront of public governance. This comprehensive approach will help build a more ethical, trustworthy, and effective public sector.

Table 5: Summary of The Role of Leadership and Trust in Promoting Ethical Behaviour

Level	Approach	Description
Individual	Leadership	Leaders must communicate standards, model conduct, and foster fair cultures.
Organisational	Empowerment	Empowering institutions and aligning incentives encourage integrity.
Systemic	Professionalisation	Professionalisation upholds ethics in public service.

Implementation and Prevention of Ethical Issues

Digitalisation has significantly increased cybersecurity risks, necessitating the implementation of robust safeguards such as encryption, comprehensive employee training on prevention, and enhanced data protections to secure customer information and prevent

breaches (Yusni & Sigalingging, 2021). However, there is a research gap in understanding the most effective cybersecurity training methods for employees and the long-term effectiveness of such training. Additionally, the role of organisational culture in cybersecurity compliance is an area that warrants further exploration.

The lack of comprehensive legal protections for whistleblowers is another critical issue that undermines accountability and transparency, enabling misconduct. Strengthening whistleblower laws is essential to safeguard integrity (Triggs, 2019). Research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of existing whistleblower protections and to identify the barriers that prevent potential whistleblowers from coming forward. Additionally, fraud risks continue to be a concern despite existing controls, due to loopholes that allow misconduct to persist. Enhanced supervision, reporting, compensation, and training are necessary to address these gaps (Yusuf et al., 2023; Zulaikha et al., 2021). Investigating the reasons behind the persistence of fraud, even with controls in place, and the impact of different types of compensation on ethical behaviour could provide valuable insights.

Moreover, local government issues such as bias, understaffing, and inadequate skills weaken enforcement and damage community relations. Developing capabilities is crucial for prevention (Rasli et al., 2020). There is a need to delve into the specific skill deficits and biases that affect local government operations and how these can be effectively addressed through targeted training and recruitment strategies. Also, civil servants' tendencies to protect themselves and the uneven enforcement of regulations obstruct anti-corruption efforts, indicating the necessity for holistic reforms (Odilla, 2020). Research into the factors that contribute to self-protective behaviours and the disparities in enforcement could inform the development of more equitable and effective anti-corruption measures.

Furthermore, the pandemic has exposed deficiencies in risk communication, academic integrity, and continuity planning in higher education, calling for urgent improvements (Zikargae, 2022). This situation presents an opportunity to study the gaps in current risk communication strategies and the factors that compromise academic integrity during crises. Public perceptions of anti-corruption agencies are influenced by their effectiveness, responsiveness, and trustworthiness - factors that must be consciously strengthened (Gong et al., 2022). Understanding the determinants of public trust in these agencies could guide efforts to enhance their credibility and effectiveness. Likewise, compliance-focused ethics training is often less impactful than values-based approaches in preventing ethical issues (Perlman et al., 2021). Finally, the absence of translation standards and oversight facilitates unethical conduct. Regulation and professionalisation are necessary to maintain quality and ethics (Taibi & Ozolins, 2023). Studying the impact of different regulatory frameworks and professional standards on translation ethics could help to establish best practices in this field.

In conclusion, as Table 6 illustrates, the implementation and prevention of ethical issues require concerted efforts across various levels to amend laws, align incentives, enhance oversight, training, communication, hiring practices, manage perceptions, and promote organisational justice. A sustained commitment and multifaceted initiatives are crucial to curtail misconduct, uphold integrity standards, and cultivate ethical cultures in public service. Understanding these themes is important as they lay the groundwork for developing strategies that enhance ethical behaviour and integrity within the public sector. The gaps identified in the current body of research underscore areas where additional inquiry could yield valuable

insights to inform these strategies and strengthen the ethical infrastructure of public service institutions. Specifically, addressing cybersecurity risks through effective training and organisational culture, improving legal protections for whistleblowers, and understanding the persistence of fraud despite controls are essential steps.

Moreover, tackling local government issues such as bias, understaffing, and inadequate skills requires targeted strategies to enhance enforcement and community relations. The pandemic has highlighted the need for robust risk communication and continuity planning, particularly in higher education. Public perceptions of anti-corruption agencies hinge on their effectiveness and trustworthiness, necessitating research into the factors that shape these perceptions. Additionally, the shift from compliance-focused to values-based ethics training in local government could significantly impact ethical behaviour. Addressing the absence of translation standards through improved regulation and professionalisation is also important.

In summary, by focusing on targeted reforms, continuous evaluation, and the development of effective strategies, public institutions can effectively prevent ethical breaches and promote a culture of integrity. This will ultimately lead to more trustworthy and effective governance, ensuring that ethical standards are upheld across all levels of public service.

Table 6: Summary of Implementation and Prevention of Ethical Issues

Issue Category	Description	Mitigation Strategies
Cybersecurity Risks	Amplified by digitalisation, necessitating safeguards to secure data and prevent breaches	Implement encryption, train employees, enhance data protections
Whistleblower Protections	Current legal protections are deficient, enabling misconduct	Strengthen whistleblower laws to promote accountability and transparency
Fraud Risks	Persist despite controls due to loopholes	Enhance supervision, reporting, compensation, and training
Local Government Issues	Bias, understaffing, and inadequate skills undermine enforcement and community relations	Develop capabilities to aid prevention
Civil Servants' Self-Protection and Uneven Enforcement	Obstruct anti-corruption efforts	Implement holistic reforms

Discussion and Conclusion

The SLR on ethical behaviour and integrity among employees in the public sector has provided a comprehensive analysis of the factors that influence ethics within this critical field. The review has underscored the pivotal role of leadership and organisational culture in shaping ethical conduct, as well as the influence of personal dispositions, education, professionalism, and holistic approaches. It has also brought to light the various systemic and individual barriers that challenge the maintenance of ethical standards, such as the impact of automation and

emerging technologies, insufficient legal protections for whistleblowers, and the persistent issues of fraud and corruption. Furthermore, the review has highlighted the essential role of leadership and trust in promoting ethical behaviour and the overarching importance of trust and integrity in public administration.

The findings of this SLR have significant implications for the next steps that should be taken by public sector entities, policymakers, and researchers. As a field, there is a pressing need to translate these insights into actionable strategies that can effectively address the identified challenges. This involves not only implementing and reinforcing cybersecurity measures and robust whistleblower protections but also enhancing supervision, reporting, and training systems to prevent misconduct. Regulation and professionalisation must be pursued to ensure that ethical standards are upheld across all levels of public service.

The importance of this endeavour cannot be overstated. Ethical behaviour and integrity are the bedrock of public trust and the legitimacy of public institutions. Without a strong ethical foundation, public sector entities risk losing the confidence of the citizens they serve, which can lead to a breakdown in the effectiveness of governance and the delivery of services. Therefore, it is crucial that the field of public administration continues to foster an environment where ethical behaviour is not only expected but ingrained in the very fabric of the organisation.

In conclusion, this SLR has provided valuable insights into the complex nature of ethics in the public sector and has identified key measures for the implementation and prevention of ethical issues. The study has highlighted the necessity for comprehensive initiatives to address systemic and individual barriers to ethical conduct and integrity. Moving forward, the field must focus on developing and implementing robust ethical frameworks, fostering a culture of integrity, and ensuring that all public sector employees are equipped with the knowledge and skills to act ethically. By doing so, public sector organisations can ensure that they not only uphold ethics and integrity but also enhance the public's trust and confidence in their operations. This commitment to ethical excellence is essential for the advancement of public administration and the effective governance of society.

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