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To cite this article: Carmine Sergianni, Danilo Brozović & Thomas Andersson (15 Feb 2026): Public service logic: a systematic literature review, Public Management Review, DOI: [10.1080/14719037.2026.2631749](https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2026.2631749)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2026.2631749>



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Published online: 15 Feb 2026.



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Public service logic: a systematic literature review

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ABSTRACT

The high level of interest in public service logic has increased the number of studies using this research stream. However, the unclear position of public service logic presents challenges in delineating its role within public administration management research. Thus, this paper systematizes the existing research, identifies the main research themes, and proposes several future research directions. This research provides a structured synthesis of the literature on public service logic, mapping its key conceptual and thematic configurations. The results show that although public service logic integrates the concepts of service and service-dominant logic, it is configured as a unique, distinct logic.

ARTICLE HISTORY Received 24 April 2025; Accepted 9 February 2026


KEYWORDS Public service logic; value creation process; value proposition; public service ecosystem; public value

1. Introduction

Public service logic (PSL) (S. P. Osborne 2018) is an emerging perspective linked to service studies, including service logic (Grönroos 2006), service-dominant logic (Vargo and Lusch 2008), and position value creation as a fundamental element of public service provision (S. P. Osborne, Nasi, and Powell 2021). At its centre is understanding the nature of public services as processes of ‘service’ rather than ‘production’ (Cui and Aulton 2023).

PSL offers an innovative perspective on public services, focusing on users’ role, who create value by integrating resources in their public services use. Proponents contrast it with new public management (Alford 2016; S. P. Osborne 2018), particularly its goods-dominant logic, which views public services as ‘goods’, and emphasize value creation in public service organizations (PSOs) (Engen et al. 2021).

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 Supplemental data for this article can be accessed online at <https://doi.org/10.1080/14719037.2026.2631749>

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New public management scholars promote a linear approach to public service management, focusing only on the internal efficiency of PSOs. However, a PSL perspective argues that value is co-created with the involvement of users and third parties (S. P. Osborne 2018), with PSOs facilitating the value creation process.

Public administration and management literature is interested in the theoretical development of PSL. Thus, it is of growing interest among public administration and management researchers who explore PSL to study the dynamics of value creation in public contexts.

However, Trischler et al. (2023) highlight a high level of confusion regarding the positioning and contribution of PSL. They attribute this confusion to the fact that the literature combines the concepts of service and service-dominant logic without clearly reflecting on their theoretical roots and compatibility with PSL. This lack of analysis has contributed to a heterogeneous body of literature characterized by diverse conceptual emphases and analytical approaches to the role of PSL in public administration and management research. Consequently, PSL literature has accumulated numerous concepts and co-concepts (i.e. co-production, co-design, co-creation, co-destruction) that stem from different perspectives, creating a conceptual 'jungle'.

Accordingly, Trischler et al. (2023) clarify how service and service-dominant logic have influenced the development and positioning of PSL, highlighting the use of concepts and co-concepts from the literature.

However, although they theoretically synthesize service-related concepts in PSL and propose four premises that 'position Public Service Logic as a mid-range theoretical framework that is capable of adopting the service ecosystem as an analytical lens to study public service' (Trischler et al. 2023, 25), a holistic and structured view of PSL remains lacking. Thus, there is a need to more clearly outline its definition, identify its core elements, systematically analyse the progress made in the literature on related concepts and co-concepts, and identify areas of unexplored research.

Therefore, this research aims to examine both conceptual and empirical contributions to PSL to clarify its theoretical foundations, analyse how the concept has been applied and developed across different contexts, and identify future research directions. To achieve this aim, a systematic literature review – a structured method for collecting and synthesizing existing research (Baumeister and Leary 1997) – is employed, and a bibliometric analysis conducted to highlight the thematic structure of and intellectual relationships among studies (Donthu et al. 2021).

This research contributes to the public administration and management literature by proposing categories for analysing PSL literature, providing a detailed overview of advances therein, and analyses how each category contributes to this body of knowledge. Furthermore, based on the systematic

literature review, new research directions and unexplored areas are identified.

The paper is structured as follows. First, the theoretical foundations of PSL are presented. Second, an overview is provided of the included studies and methodology, and the analytical process used to identify relevant papers for this research is described. Third, the review results are presented, highlighting the main macro categories the literature to date focuses on, and a bibliometric analysis of the included studies is conducted. Finally, future research directions are noted, and the analysis results are discussed.

2. Value in public administration and management research: origins and evolution of the public service logic perspective

Over the past few decades, the academic debate within the public administration and management literature has profoundly transformed. Initially, the principles of new public management dominated; however, now, the focus has shifted to more participatory and citizen-centred approaches. New public management, inspired by private sector management practices, emphasized applying business tools and market-based mechanisms to the public sector, viewing citizens as customers and prioritizing outputs and efficiency (Hood 1991). In contrast, the emergence of the PSL framework (S. P. Osborne 2018) marks a significant theoretical and conceptual departure from this managerialist tradition. PSL literature challenges the fundamental assumptions of new public management: rather than positioning users as passive recipients or consumers of services, they are redefined as active co-creators of value. This perspective reshapes the understanding of public service delivery, moving from transactional logics towards a relational, context-sensitive approach that emphasizes the importance of user experience and societal impact.

By centring value co-creation as a core organizing principle, PSL literature contributes to a broader rethinking of public management theories. It introduces a dynamic and interactive view of public service delivery in which value is not produced by PSOs but is co-created through ongoing interactions between multiple actors (Alford 2016; S. P. Osborne 2018). In this way, PSL pushes the boundaries of public administration and management theory and aligns it with the broader field of service research, particularly the service-dominant (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2016) and service logic (Grönroos 2006; Grönroos and Voima 2013) perspectives. These frameworks converge on the idea that value is not embedded in outputs but emerges from the use of services, a view PSL integrates into the public sector context.

Both service and service-dominant logic are widely used as foundational theoretical frameworks to guide and support the analysis of PSL. Their theoretical relevance provides a solid conceptual basis for deepening

understanding of value co-creation processes in public service contexts. While service logic emphasizes the direct interaction and value realized in the service encounter, service-dominant logic adopts a more systemic and networked perspective, focusing on integrating resources between multiple actors. Together, these frameworks enrich the analytical lens through which PSL interprets the dynamics of value co-creation in the public sphere. [Table 1](#) outlines the key concepts of service and service-dominant logic and how they inform the theoretical architecture of PSL.

Table 1. Service and service-dominant logic perspectives.

Concept	Service logic	Service-dominant logic
Value-in-use	Value is only created when the customer uses the product (or resource) (value-in-use) (Grönroos 2006).	Value resides in the use of the good or service (value-in-use) (Vargo and Lusch 2004).
Value proposition	Introduces <i>value promise</i> (Grönroos 2006), a company's implicit or explicit promise to its customers about the value they will receive from using a service or product.	Companies cannot create value in isolation, but provide <i>value propositions</i> (Vargo and Lusch 2004, 2008) through which they contribute to the value creation process.
Value creation	Value creation is the value created by the customers using the product or service (Grönroos and Voima 2013).	The systemic nature and involvement of multiple actors in the value creation process is emphasised (Vargo and Lusch 2016).
Value co-creation	Value co-creation only occurs when two parties interact directly and gain opportunities to co-create value jointly (Grönroos and Voima 2013).	Value is always co-created by multiple actors including the beneficiary, all actors are resource integrators, and value is always subjectively determined by the beneficiary through his or her use experience (Vargo and Lusch 2016).
Co-production	Co-production is not explicitly addressed, although customer participation is recognised as an important element in service delivery.	Co-production is a concept that emerged from Normann and Ramírez (1993). It refers to consumers' involvement in service design, management, delivery, and evaluation. In 2006, the terminology was revisited and the term 'co-creation' was adopted. Co-production was emphasised as an optional part of co-creation.
Ecosystem	The service logic approach focuses on the dyadic relationship between the company and customer (Grönroos and Voima 2013).	Adopts an ecosystem approach by focusing on the entire context in which value is created, involving a complex network of public, private, and social actors (Vargo and Lusch 2016).
Criticism	Criticized for being too limited and not fully considering all the ways in which value can be created, including processes that occur outside explicit interaction (Vargo and Lusch 2016)	Accused of normalising 'value' as a positive outcome of market interactions, neglecting issues such as power inequalities among consumers (Hietanen, Andéhn, and Bradshaw 2018).

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Finally, importantly, PSL did not emerge in isolation. It was derived from the public service-dominant logic developed by S. P. Osborne, Radnor, and Nasi (2013), which represented an early and incomplete stage of theoretical development later refined as PSL developed. Indeed, public service-dominant logic 'is no longer either a necessary or a sufficient term for this body of public management theory' (S. P. Osborne 2018, 225). Therefore, to reflect its maturation into a distinct approach, Osborne suggests that it be replaced with the more appropriate PSL. The PSL approach is preferred because public service-dominant logic overemphasized co-production (S. P. Osborne 2018). Although this concept provides important insights into the public management field and continues to be used in the literature, PSL focuses more on the co-creation of value. Specifically, whereas public service-dominant logic treated co-production as a process in which the service user played a marginal role limited to contributing time and effort (Alford 2016), with the service process initiated by PSOs (S. P. Osborne, Radnor, and Nasi 2013; S. P. Osborne, Radnor, and Strokosch 2016), PSL emphasizes value co-creation, affording the user a central role in the service process (S. P. Osborne 2018).

For these reasons, this study focuses explicitly on PSL as the most appropriate and theoretically mature framework for analysing contemporary debates on value creation in public services.

3. Methodology

This research adopts a systematic literature review, as per Paul and Criado (2020), to explore developments related to PSL. The study combines a theory-driven search strategy with an inductively informed qualitative analysis of the content of selected studies, and a bibliometric analysis to further examine the structure of the literature.

The review process aimed to identify conceptual and empirical publications contributing to the development, application, and refinement of PSL. Systematic searches were conducted in the Web of Science and Scopus databases using the keyword 'Public Service Logic' (S. P. Osborne 2020; S. Osborne, Maria, and Tie 2024; Sønderskov and Rønning 2021), focusing on titles, abstracts, and keywords. This term was adopted as the sole search criterion to limit the review to contributions explicitly grounded in a PSL framework, thereby avoiding dispersion into adjacent approaches. The search period covers the years from 2018, when S. P. Osborne (2018) first introduced the term, to 2025.

Studies were selected guided by the PRISMA criteria following Rethlefsen et al.'s (2021) guidelines. After the initial search, a preliminary screening of abstracts was conducted to exclude publications in which PSL did not play a central role or that fell outside the scope

of public administration and management research. The remaining articles were then analysed through an inductively informed qualitative approach, based on in-depth reading to identify recurring concepts, co-concepts, and thematic patterns explored empirically and theoretically. During the full-text assessment, 15 publications were excluded because they did not provide theoretical advances related to PSL. A further 4 publications were excluded as they were outside the fields considered for the study. Finally, 58 studies were included in the review (see Appendix 1).

The systematic literature review began with a thorough reading of the selected studies to identify emerging concepts and themes without pre-defining rigid analytical categories. Each selected article was carefully examined to identify key concepts, including definitions, theoretical frameworks, methodologies, and key findings. During this process, recurring themes and similarities across studies were identified, allowing common analytical elements to emerge.

These emerging concepts were then organized into three analytical categories: value proposition, value creation process, and public service ecosystem. After the initial categorization, the process was refined through a critical review to ensure consistency and coherence in assigning articles to their respective categories. Studies addressing more than one topic were flexibly assigned to more than one category.

To organize the information collected in a structured way, a summary matrix was developed, including the author (s), year of publication, methodology, key findings, and contribution of each article to the field (see Table 2). This matrix provided an overview of the reviewed literature, facilitated comparison across studies and supported the identification of key patterns and research gaps.

Accordingly, publications in the first category focus on the conceptualization of value proposition, those in the second category examine value creation processes in the public sector, and those in the third category analyse the context in which these dynamics emerge and their role within broader public service ecosystems.

To complement the systematic literature review and enhance the robustness of the results, a bibliometric analysis of the identified publications was conducted. Bibliometrics can be defined as a set of methods for summarizing and mapping research within a given field by examining relationships among publications, authors, and concepts (Zupic and Čater 2015). Aligned with established methodological guidelines (e.g. Donthu et al. 2021; Haustein and Vincent 2015; Zupic and Čater 2015), the dataset used for the bibliometric analysis in this study corresponds to the 58 publications included in the systematic review.

Table 2. Overview of studies included.

Author	Journal	Aim	Category	Home Country	Methodology	Sector
S. P. Osborne (2018)	PMR	Replace public service dominant logic with PSL to better represent the theoretical evolution of public management.	VCP	n.a.	Conceptual	n.a.
Skálén et al. (2018)	AJOPA	Extend a PSL-based framework	VP/VCP	Sweden	Qualitative (case study)	Care Services (Primary Care)
E. M. Eriksson (2019)	PMR	Explore the concept of representative co-production and broaden the scope of PSL	VCP	Sweden	Mixed methods (Research project)	Care Services (Healthcare)
Petrescu (2019)	PMR	Incorporate the service ecosystems view into PSL	PSE	n.a.	Conceptual	n.a.
E. Eriksson et al. (2020)	PMR	Explore the potential of coordinated value propositions in PSL	VP	Sweden	Qualitative (case study)	Care Services (Healthcare)
Strokosch and S. P. Osborne (2020)	P&P	Understand value creation from a service ecosystem perspective	VCP/PSE	Scotland	Qualitative (case study)	Technical Services (Social Security)
Strokosch and Stephen (2021)	n.a. (book chapter)	Explore co-production in different narratives of reform	VCP	n.a.	Conceptual	n.a.
E. Eriksson et al. (2021)	AJOPA	Explore the impact of turbulent times on the health ecosystem	PSE	Sweden	Qualitative (case study)	Care Services (Healthcare)
Engen et al. (2021)	PMR	Explore value co-destruction in PSL from an ecosystem perspective	VCP	Sweden	Qualitative (case study)	Technical Services (Social Insurance and Tax)
Skarli (2021)	AS	Explore how cognitive impairments affect co-creation processes and how service providers can manage this issue	VCP	Norway	Qualitative (case study)	Technical Services (Municipal Services)
Jenhaug (2021)	IJOPA	Explore how value co-creation and value co-destruction affect value outcomes for family carers	VCP	Norway	Qualitative (case study)	Care Services (Family Care)
S. P. Osborne et al. (2021)	PM&M	Explore the implications of PSEs for public service management practice	PSE	n.a.	Conceptual	n.a.
Rösler et al. (2021)	AS	Understand the factors hindering value co-creation in PSEs	VCP	n.a.	Qualitative (case study)	Technical Services (Public Transport)

(Continued)



Table 2. (Continued).

Author	Journal	Aim	Category	Home Country	Methodology	Sector
Sønderskov and Rønning (2021)	AS	Analyse the gap between arguments derived from PSL and theories about street-level bureaucracy	VCP	n.a.	Conceptual	n.a.
S. P. Osborne and Strokosch (2021)	GPPAG	Examine the importance of the resilience of PSOs in strategic orientation based on value creation in users' lives.	VCP	n.a.	Conceptual	n.a.
Landi and Russo (2022)	PMR	Analyse the influence of co-production on public service performance	VCP	Italy	Quantitative (regression analysis)	Technical Services (Municipal Services)
Trischler and Westman Trischler (2022)	PMR	Examine developments in digitalisation, user experience, and service design from an ecosystem perspective	PSE/VCP	n.a.	Conceptual	n.a.
E. Eriksson et al. (2022)	BJOM	Analyse the influence of value configurations on value propositions through collaboration	VP	Sweden	Qualitative (case study)	Care Services (Healthcare)
S. Osborne et al. (2022)	GPPAG	Explore the virtual co-design of services	VCP	Scotland	Qualitative (case study)	Care Services (Elderly Care)
Desmarchelier et al. (2022)	REEMS	Explore public service innovation networks for social innovation	VP/VCP	Europe (various countries)	Qualitative (case study)	Cross-sector
Palumbo and Manesh (2023)	PMR	Investigate the interplay between public service co-production and public value co-creation	VCP	n.a.	Conceptual	n.a.
Skarli (2023)	PMR	Explore different actors' involvement in value co-creation processes	VCP	Norway	Qualitative (case study)	Care Services (Healthcare)
Komulainen et al. (2023)	IJOPSM	Examine how the customer value approach can be applied in the management of public healthcare services.	VP	Finland	Qualitative (case study)	Care Services (Healthcare)
Kinder and Stenvall (2023)	PMR	Criticises significant aspects of PSL	VCP	n.a.	Conceptual	n.a.
Gyllenhammar, Eriksson, and Löfgren (2023)	PMR	Understand co-creation and destruction when various actors are involved in the public sector	VCP	Sweden	Qualitative (case study)	Technical Services (Welfare Service)

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued).

Author	Journal	Aim	Category	Home Country	Methodology	Sector
Leite (2023)	PMR	Understand the impact of virtual reality on private value dimensions in public healthcare	VCP	Brazil	Qualitative (case study)	Care Services (Healthcare)
Trischler et al. (2023)	PMR	Develop PSL to capture the ecosystemic nature of value creation in the public services context	PSE	n.a.	Conceptual	n.a.
Nasi and Choi (2023)	PMR	Understand the adoption of design practices for citizen strategic orientation	VCP	Southern Europe	Mixed methods (case study)	Technical Services (Municipal Services)
Cui and Aulton (2023)	PMR	Understand the concept of value in public services	VP	n.a.	Qualitative (case study)	Technical Services (Carbon reduction projects)
Rasmussen, Skjærving, and Burau (2023)	IJASP	Understand how co-production is perceived and practised in public health	VCP	Denmark	Qualitative (case study)	Care Services (Healthcare)
E. Eriksson and Andersson (2024)	PMR	Understand PSL practices in contexts imbued with a new public management logic	VCP	Sweden	Qualitative (case study)	Care Services (Healthcare)
Virtanen and Jalonen (2024)	PMR	Provide an integrated conceptual framework to understand public value creation flows	VCP	n.a.	Conceptual	n.a.
Danielsson and Westrup (2024)	PMR	Examine value as a thick concept in public services	VP	Sweden	Qualitative (case study)	Technical Services (Municipal Services)
Sancino and Tasselli (2024)	PMR	Understand management practices that enable the co-creation of value within PSEs in the context of disruption	PSE/VCP	Italy	Qualitative (case study)	Technical Services (Municipal Services)
Røhnebak et al. (2024)	PMR	Understand how value propositions are created and adapted to citizens' needs	VP	Europe (various countries)	Qualitative (case study)	Cross-sector
Ulvin et al. (2024)	AS	Explore value propositions and facilitation of the value creation process in the public sector	VP	Norway	Qualitative (case study)	Technical Services (Supported Housing)

(Continued)



Table 2. (Continued).

Author	Journal	Aim	Category	Home Country	Methodology	Sector
Jiang and Fan (2024)	PMR	Explore the value co-creation process of service users interacting with PSOs in the co-production of public services	VCP	China	Quantitative (case study)	Technical Services (Municipal Services)
Oftedal (2024)	NSWR	Understand activation services through a PSL lens	VCP	n.a.	Conceptual	n.a.
Zyzak and Martinussen (2024)	PMR	Explore the role of digital technologies in value co-creation	VCP	Norway	Quantitative (case study)	Care Services (Healthcare)
Skållén, Engen, and Jenhaug (2024)	PMR	Understand public value conflicts in the PSEs	PSE	n.a.	Conceptual	n.a.
Strokosch and Osborne (2024)	n.a. (book chapter)	Understand value creation from a PSL perspective	VP/VCP	n.a.	Conceptual	n.a.
S. Osborne, Maria, and Tie (2024)	n.a. (book chapter)	Understand the importance of a PSL lens and value creation in a vaccination programme	VCP	n.a.	Conceptual	n.a.
Patrucco et al. (2024)	PMR	Propose the integration of PSL into public procurement	VCP	n.a.	Conceptual	n.a.
Medina-Molina, Pérez-Macías, and Rey-Tienda (2024)	IRPNM	Understand how public policies and interactions between actors influence value co-creation and co-destruction in the urban mobility ecosystem	VCP	Europe (various countries)	Quantitative (generalized analytic induction and necessary condition analysis)	Technical Services (Urban Mobility)
Gong and Yang (2024)	PMR	Understand how public service organisations' strategies influence the value creation process	VCP	China	Quantitative (multilevel analysis)	Technical Services (Cultural Services)
Skållén and Trischler (2024)	PMR	Propose the public services as practices framework	VCP	n.a.	Conceptual	n.a.
Iodice et al. (2024)	n.a. (book chapter)	Understand the importance of collaboration in defining citizen-driven value propositions in grassroots museums	VP	Various countries	Qualitative (case study)	Technical Services (Cultural Services)
Skållén, Bankel, and Kaluza (2025)	PMR	Understand the benefits of value co-creation in public services	VCP	Sweden	Qualitative (case study)	Care Services (Social Insurance)

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued).

Author	Journal	Aim	Category	Home Country	Methodology	Sector
Ghezuzzi et al. (2025)	IJOA	Understand the mechanisms of co-production of health and social care services	VCP	Italy	Qualitative (case study)	Care Services (Health and Social care)
Sergjanni and Gesualda (2025)	n.a. (book chapter)	Understand the impact of chatbots on the value creation process in public cultural institutions	VCP	Italy	Qualitative (case study)	Technical Services (Cultural Services)
Hafer and Hossain (2025)	PMR	Understand how individual characteristics influence perceptions of public value	VP	USA	Quantitative (OLS regression)	Technical Services (State and Local Government)
Hasche and Höglund (2025)	IPMJ	Explore how public service organisations interact with their users to facilitate value creation	VP	Sweden	Qualitative (case study)	Technical Services (Public Employment)
Leite et al. (2025)	PMR	Understand how the digitalisation of teaching in higher education affects private value	VCP	United Kingdom	Qualitative (case study)	Technical Services (Higher Education)
Skarli and Stokke (2025)	PMR	Understand how situated learning can develop professionals' value co-creation skills	VP	Norway	Qualitative (case study)	Technical Services (Welfare Service)
Rønshaugen, Magnussen, and Sønderskov (2025)	PMR	Explore how power influences value co-creation in street-level interactions.	VCP	Norway	Qualitative (case study)	Technical Services (Welfare Service)
Naveed, Farooqi, and Salman (2025)	IJOPSM	Explore value co-destruction within PSEs	PSE/VCP	Pakistan	Qualitative (case study)	Technical Services (Electricity Service)
Yu and Gerber (2025)	PA	Understand the co-provision of disaster-related services in the US	VCP	USA	Quantitative (Survey)	Technical Services (Higher Education)
Naveed (2025)	AJOA	Understand how dynamic interactions in the ecosystem contribute to value co-destruction	PSE/VCP	Pakistan	Qualitative (case study)	Technical Services (Electricity Service)

PMR: Public Management Review; AJOPA: Australian Journal of Public Administration; P&P: Policy and Politics; AS: Administrative Sciences; IJOA: International Journal of Public Administration; PM&M: Public Money & Management; GPPAG: Global Public Policy and Governance; BJOM: British Journal of Management; REEMS: Revue Européenne d'Économie et Management des Services; IJOPSM: International Journal of Public Sector Management; IJSASP: International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy; NSW: Nordic Social Work Research; IRPNM: International Review on Public and Nonprofit Marketing; IPMJ: International Public Management Journal; PA: Public Administration.

VCP: Value Creation Process; VP: Value Proposition; PSE: Public Service Ecosystem; PSL: Public Service Logic; PSO: Public Service Organization.

Source: Authors' elaboration.

Bibliographic data were retrieved from the Web of Science database, which provided complete records for 53 of the included publications, a sufficient number for the analysis. The data were analysed using VOSviewer, a software tool for constructing and visualizing bibliometric networks (van Eck, Waltman, and Jan 2010).

The bibliometric analysis focused on three complementary techniques, namely the analysis of keyword co-occurrence, co-citations, and co-authorship. These techniques enable examining (i) the main thematic orientations and research trajectories characterizing the field (keywords), (ii) influential contributions and intellectual linkages within the literature (co-citations), and (iii) collaboration patterns among researchers (co-authorship). The insights derived from the bibliometric analysis are discussed in the following section reporting the findings of the study.

4. Findings

This section discusses the findings of the systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis. The analysis of the reviewed literature reveals three analytical categories through which research grounded in PSL has developed. The bibliometric analysis illustrates the results of the keywords, co-citation, and co-authorship analyses.

4.1. Overview of studies included

This section describes the reviewed publications. The graphical representation in Appendix 2 supports and complements the analysis here.

This research considered 58 publications between 2018 and 2025, showing a clear upward trend in the number of studies over time. From 2018 to 2020, the number of publications was limited, with only two publications per year. However, from 2021 onwards, the number increased significantly with 9 publications that year, marking a turning point in the academic community's interest in the topic. The positive trend continued in 2022, with 5 publications, followed by another peak in 2023, with 10 studies published. With 17 publications, 2024 represents the highest number thus far. The 11 publications in 2025 confirm steady and continuous growth in recent years.

First, regarding delineating content into the three categories of value proposition, value creation process, and public service ecosystem, most studies focus on the value creation process, which includes concepts such as co-creation, co-production, co-design and co-destruction. This reflects an interest in the mechanisms by which value is created (or destroyed) through the interaction between users and PSOs. Second, others explore the value propositions offered by PSOs and their implications for users. Third, several articles focus on the public service ecosystem, an area that analyses the

broader ecosystem in which public services operate, including actor networks, resources, and processes that work together to deliver value to the community. Importantly, many studies are cross-cutting and analyse several categories simultaneously, confirming that these should not be considered separate entities but as mutually influencing elements.

Regarding academic journals, the most influential is *Public Management Review* with 31 publications, underlining its centrality in the academic debate. Next was *Administrative Sciences* with 4 publications; the *Australian Journal of Public Administration* with 3; and the *International Journal of Public Administration*, *International Journal of Public Sector Management*, and *Global Public Policy and Governance* with 2 publications each. The other journals (see [Table 2](#)) have 1 publication each.

Geographical distribution refers to the geographical context in which the empirical studies were conducted. The countries with the highest number of empirical studies are Sweden (11) and Norway (7), indicating a strong empirical focus on these contexts in the PSL literature.

For methodology, qualitative approaches predominate, with 32 studies based on case studies, confirming the interest in understanding phenomena in specific, real-life contexts. Furthermore, 17 conceptual papers offer theoretical contributions and critical reflections. Only 7 studies adopt a quantitative approach. Two papers combine qualitative and quantitative methods, suggesting a still limited trend in the use of mixed approaches.

Finally, the areas of greatest interest in the empirical literature reviewed are technical services (24 publications), care services (15) and cross-sector analyses (2). These areas highlight the academic community's focus on management and innovation in essential public services. [Table 2](#) summarizes the studies in the systematic literature review.

4.2. Category 1: value proposition

Based on the systematic analysis of the reviewed literature, this category captures contributions focusing on how PSOs formulate and adapt value propositions to facilitate value creation. In the PSL literature, the formulation of value propositions by PSOs is considered crucial for facilitating value creation, which users then process and integrate (S. P. Osborne 2018) through their direct experiences with the service (value-in-use) and in relation to how well the service outcomes align with their needs and expectations (value-in-context) (Leite et al. 2025).

Recent literature on PSL emphasizes the need to consider different elements when defining the value proposition. Specifically, as elaborated below, it is essential to (i) integrate both the private value and public value dimensions (Skálén, Engen, and Jenhaug 2024) and (ii) adopt an ecosystemic approach (Trischler et al. 2023). From this perspective, while individual

PSOs can facilitate value creation for individual users (private value), at the ecosystem level, organizations work together as mediators in the value creation process for society (public value) (Trischler et al. 2023).

From a bibliometric perspective, this dual focus is reflected in the later analysis of keyword co-occurrence. In [Figure 1](#), the yellow cluster highlights the linkage between value, public value, and private value, underscoring the centrality of these dimensions in structuring discussions around value proposition in the PSL literature. Therefore, studies on PSL have focused on understanding both the concept of value and role of value propositions in PSOs. The concept of value is inherently complex and interpreted differently by stakeholders, making shared understanding essential (Danielsson and Westrup 2024). Their case study of a Swedish municipal service showed how value emerges as a ‘thick concept’ – encompassing multiple meanings and perspectives – rather than a single, simplified definition. This complexity reflects the multidimensional nature of value, which varies depending on stakeholder needs and expectations.

This complexity also emerges in the distinction between private and public value (Skålén, Engen, and Jenhaug 2024; Trischler et al. 2023). While private value benefits individuals, public value is consumed collectively and benefits society (Alford and O’Flynn 2009). Although PSL research has highlighted the importance of investigating public value (E. Eriksson et al. 2020; S. Osborne et al. 2022; Petrescu 2019; Trischler and Westman Trischler 2022), its understanding remains limited (S. P. Osborne, Nasi, and Powell 2021; Skålén and Trischler 2025). For Sønderkov and Rønning (2021), PSL fails to adequately capture the role of public policy and public value, focusing mainly on user interaction and therefore not effectively supporting the servitisation of public services – the process through which services evolve in response to complex societal needs. In response, Skålén, Engen, and Jenhaug (2024) examined conflicts over public value in public service ecosystems, showing that public value is a variable concept shaped by different stakeholder perspectives. These differences lead to conflicts that can either hinder or stimulate innovation and change depending on how they are managed. To advance understanding, they propose five propositions on public value conflicts, offering a conceptual contribution to the debate. Similarly, Komulainen et al. (2023) argue that PSOs must adapt to dynamic societal needs, and that adopting a holistic approach to value can improve service provision and governance.

Building on this, Skålén and Trischler (2025) developed the public services as practices framework, conceptualizing public services as bundles of value co-creation practices. This approach considers private and public value simultaneously, distinguishing templates (design intentions of services) and performance (their actual delivery). While templates always aim to co-create value, performance can result in both value co-creation and value co-

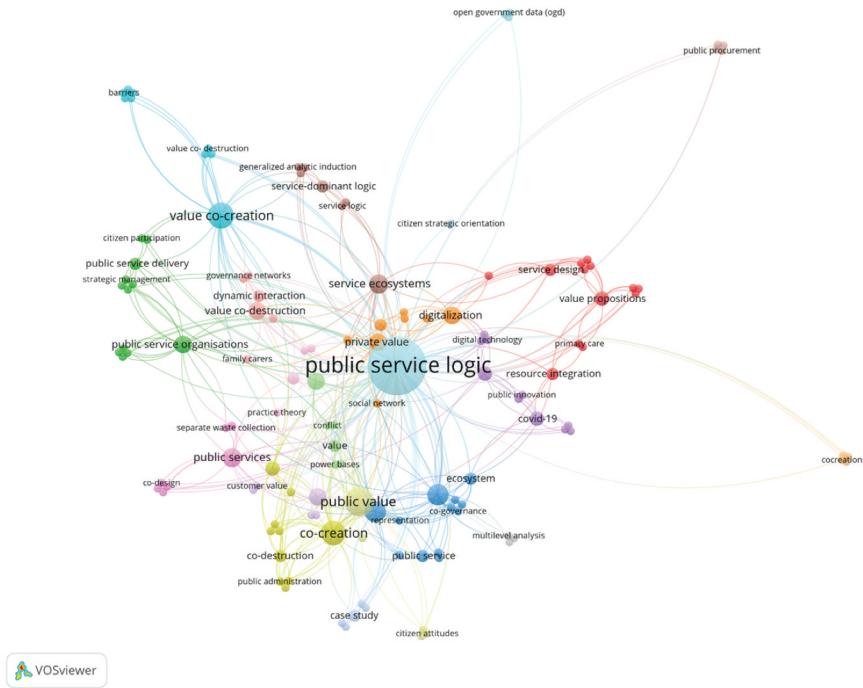


Figure 1. Results of the keyword analysis. Source: VOSviewer.

destruction. By integrating both value domains and recognizing the role of performance, the framework helps overcome the limitations of PSL and offers conceptual tools to better understand and manage conflicts over public value in public service ecosystems.

Furthermore, to understand the development of value proposition, multiple and distinct value configurations must be recognized (E. Eriksson et al. 2022). These configurations are not static; they are shaped by and intertwined with both intra- and inter-organizational processes. At the intra-organizational level, internal dynamics like organizational culture, structure, and interactions between different departments or teams can influence value configurations. These internal factors play a crucial role in shaping how value is perceived. Inter-organizational processes involve the relationships and collaboration between different PSOs and with external stakeholders including users, private sector partners, and other government agencies. These interactions can further refine or redefine the value proposition, making them useful in the public context. By linking these configurations to both internal and external processes, the authors highlight the complex and dynamic nature of value creation in public services, suggesting that effective value proposition emerges from the

continuous interaction between an organization's internal mechanisms and its wider network of relationships. Cui and Aulton (2023) propose a framework that breaks down the concept of value into distinct concepts, enabling precise terminology and a more in-depth analysis of the dynamics of value creation.

In addition, Røhnebæk et al. (2024) focused on the creation and adaptation of value propositions within PSL, highlighting the framing and reframing processes required to develop and modify them in response to user needs. Here, it is also important to consider collaborative public management (Iodice et al. 2024) and public service innovation, which concerns PSOs' creation or development of innovative value propositions (E. Eriksson et al. 2020). Eriksson et al.'s (2020) case study from the Swedish health sector showed that the increasingly complex challenges PSOs face require the adoption of collaborative and innovative approaches to improve service provision.

Testing S. P. Osborne and Strokosch's (2013) public service innovation framework, Skälén et al. (2018) suggested that facilitation, co-creation, and value creation processes, alongside the iteration between problem-finding and problem-solving practices, drive innovation in public services. This approach emphasizes public service innovation as a collaborative process involving PSOs, their staff, and users. This concept is further explored with the introduction of public service innovation networks for social innovation, which examines how such networks facilitate innovation and value creation in public services (Desmarchelier et al. 2022). Aligned with this perspective, Skarli and Stokke (2025) demonstrate that situated learning can enhance professionals' competence in value co-creation methods, thereby promoting value facilitation.

Finally, Ulvin et al. (2024) discuss the importance of the expectation-reality mitigation approach in the public services context. This approach focuses on PSO's management of user expectations in the value proposition and value creation process.

From a bibliometric perspective, the prominence of value proposition in the PSL literature is reflected in the later analysis of keyword co-occurrence. In [Figure 1](#), the red cluster (bottom right) addresses issues of value proposition and service design, emphasizing the importance of how public services are conceived and structured.

Collectively, these studies provide an in-depth and integrated view of value proposition and explore the dynamic nature thereof in public service provision. They emphasize that PSOs do not create value, but play the role of facilitators, providing value proposition. They also highlight the importance of a user-centred approach, coordination between organizations and theoretical development as key elements in improving policy and practice in public service management.

4.3. Category 2: value creation process

This category captures contributions from the reviewed literature focusing on how value is created, co-created and, in some cases, co-destroyed through interactions among PSOs, users and other actors.

4.3.1. Co-production

In PSL literature, co-production refers to the voluntary or involuntary involvement of public service users in any stage of the design, management, provision and/or evaluation of public services (S. P. Osborne, Radnor, and Strokosch 2016). Thus, PSL provides a way of looking at the concept of co-production that emphasizes users' intrinsic and contextual participation and suggests that value is co-produced through interactions between users and PSOs. Here, the practical implications require effective management of service encounters, relationship building, development of specific skills, and a pragmatic approach to value creation (Strokosch and Stephen 2021). PSL studies have deepened the debate by empirically testing the link between co-production and PSOs' performance and understanding how it is perceived and practised according to these organization's existing norms and objectives. For example, Landi and Russo (2022) analysed the impact of high co-production intensity on public service performance, focusing on waste collection services in Italian municipalities. Through a survey of public managers and official data on waste collection, they showed that PSOs with a positive attitude towards co-production tend to achieve better results in terms of separate waste collection on average. This underlines the importance of studies investigating the influence of co-production on PSOs' performance and highlights the crucial role of co-production in improving public service quality. Furthermore, a study on co-production in Danish health services indicated that co-production can generate conflicting perceptions, but these can be combined and balanced through networking strategies that facilitate mutual understanding (Rasmussen, Skjerning, and Burau 2023). This study also highlights how co-production is highly contextual, reflecting the dynamic interaction between the logics and contextual management of the actors involved. Similarly, Nasi and Choi (2023) introduce the concept of 'citizen engagement' in PSL studies to highlight the importance of engaging citizens in meeting their expectations and needs. Their empirical analysis of the municipal services of a European local government highlight how the engagement of PSOs can improve understanding of problems, stimulate innovation, and ensure that public services are responsive to society's needs, reflecting the co-production principle of PSL. They also identify several design strategies to help achieve strategic user orientation, including empathizing with users' needs, the co-production of solutions and using design thinking methods to address engagement challenges.

Furthermore, Yu and Gerber (2025) demonstrate that the simple availability of resources and ideas by users is not sufficient to guarantee their participation in services. Other conditions are essential, like leadership, managerial skills and reducing information asymmetries. Finally, Palumbo and Manesh's (2023) framework can guide managers involved in co-production. This framework provides insights into best practices and potential challenges in implementing co-production initiatives, highlighting the importance of collaborative efforts in public service provision.

4.3.2. Co-design

PSL literature on co-production also paid attention to the co-design phase of public services, which consists of a collaborative process in which various actors including citizens, end-users, professionals and organizations work together to co-design solutions that meet community needs more effectively and innovatively (S. Osborne et al. 2022).

PSL increasingly focuses on the impact of digital technologies and virtual environments on co-design. The development of digital technologies has radically changed how public services are designed and provided, creating new opportunities for user engagement (Trischler and Westman Trischler 2022). A qualitative study on the co-design of local neighbourhood services for vulnerable older people in Scotland confirmed these technological tools as not simply means to facilitate communication or information gathering, but also as catalysts for deeper interaction between the actors involved in the co-design process (S. Osborne et al. 2022).

One key observation is that although service outcomes may vary according to context and specific circumstances, users' active involvement in co-design significantly impacts the value of these services in their lives (S. P. Osborne et al. 2021). This value is both tangible, in terms of improving the services themselves, and intangible, such as improving users' digital skills and increasing their trust in public institutions. The use of virtual environments for co-design enables overcoming geographical and time barriers, allowing for more inclusive and diverse participation.

Moreover, co-design in digital environments offers a unique opportunity to experiment with new forms of interaction and collaboration that would be difficult to achieve in traditional settings. Creating virtual spaces where users can interact in real time, share ideas, and collaboratively develop solutions paves the way for a more agile and responsive way of designing public services. This approach enriches the user experience and contributes to creating significant value during the production of the service itself, transforming public service design and delivery (S. Osborne et al. 2022).

In summary, these studies confirm that a positive attitude towards co-production and co-design and active community involvement are essential steps in the process of improving public services.

4.3.3. Co-creation

The term ‘co-creation’ appears frequently in the PSL literature; however, studies often employ various related co-concepts – such as co-production, co-design and co-destruction – to analyse value creation processes in public services. As a result, ‘co-creation’ is not always used as a distinct analytical concept, but rather as an umbrella term encompassing different forms of actor involvement in value creation (Trischler et al. 2023). The PSL scholarship argues that ‘value may be created through the use/consumption of a public service, either be at the nexus of interaction with the PSOs (value co-creation) or by the service user themselves, through resource integration with their needs (value creation)’ (S. P. Osborne, Nasi, and Powell 2021, 644). To understand this co-concept in a public context, Virtanen and Jalonen (2024) argue that it is crucial to first understand public value creation flows, as this process is dynamic and continuous, and involves elements such as (i) effective leadership, (ii) user perception, and (iii) collaborative practices (Patrucco et al. 2024).

Public leadership emerges as a key factor in facilitating value co-creation, and the alignment of stakeholder roles and expectations becomes crucial in reducing conflict and optimizing co-creation. User perception is another key factor in value co-creation. PSL literature emphasizes the importance of considering user perceptions to facilitate public (Hafer and Hossain 2025) and private co-creation (Gong and Yang 2024). Here, organizational strategies can significantly impact these perceptions, influencing the perceived quality of the service and overall satisfaction.

Finally, collaborative practices that involve users in public service provision have been explored in depth (Skålén, Bankel, and Kaluza 2025). Their qualitative study on social insurance services in Sweden demonstrates that such involvement constitutes a significant workload for users.

Furthermore, the interactions between frontline employees in PSOs and users must be considered (Gyllenhammar, Eriksson, and Löfgren 2023). User needs, which are often more complex than the structure the service system can manage, require careful management and strategic planning aimed at their satisfaction (S. P. Osborne and Strokosch 2021). Frontline employees’ role is important here, as they are at the centre of interactions that can both create and destroy value, highlighting the complexity and sensitivity of the co-creation process (E. Eriksson and Andersson (2024); Rønshaugen, Magnussen, and Sønderskov (2025). Another relevant aspect emerging in the PSL literature (Skarli 2021, 2023) is the impact of cognitive disabilities on public service users, particularly in the health sector. Skarli (2021) states that cognitive disabilities can significantly affect users’ ability and motivation to actively participate in co-creation processes, highlighting the need for a more attentive and personalized approach by service providers. These providers

must address the challenges and improve their collaboration with vulnerable users to ensure that all stakeholders effectively perceive the value created.

This value co-creation process is facilitated by the digitalization process PSOs are undergoing (Sergianni and Gesualda 2025; Zyzak and Martinussen 2024), as Leite's (2023) analysis shows of the impact of the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality in healthcare services. This study confirms the significant potential of technology in improving results, creating more immersive environments, and increasing the concentration capacity of public operators. Another key element emerging in this context is the use of digital platforms for the co-creation of public services. Jiang and Fan (2024), analysing a digital platform used by a municipal service in China, noted that users' active participation on these platforms improves the quality and effectiveness of public services, and strengthens their trust in institutions, promoting greater transparency and accountability within the PSL framework. However, co-creation in digital transformation processes presents both barriers and opportunities, and public managers must carefully manage emerging difficulties (Rösler et al. 2021). Similarly, in a study of the Swedish Public Employment Service, Hasche and Höglund (2025) found that digitalization, if not balanced by adequate human support, can both facilitate and hinder value creation – especially for the most vulnerable users. They propose various premises to guide public managers in addressing these challenges.

Finally, recent studies have criticized the theoretical framework of PSL and its value co-creation approach, highlighting its idealistic nature. In particular, Kinder and Stenvall (2023) argue that PSL overemphasizes users' subjective evaluation, neglecting the tangible and material aspects related to the production and distribution of public value. This approach is considered limited because it reduces public employees' role to simple facilitators who co-create value with PSOs without recognizing their active and autonomous contribution to value creation.

In summary, value co-creation in public services requires a combination of strong collaboration between different actors and attention to user needs, with digital transformation playing an increasingly important role. Interaction between stakeholders is crucial to overcome challenges and exploit opportunities in the co-creation process, and to ensure that the value created is sustainable and positively perceived by all stakeholders.

4.3.4. Co-destruction

According to PSL literature, to understand a first driver of value destruction, public services should be analysed along two dimensions: their contributions to private and public value creation (Engen et al. 2021). These two dimensions can either coincide, contributing to both public and private value, or conflict, leading to the destruction of private value. This happens when

public service users who participate in the value co-creation process of public value consume their own resources, reducing private value (Ofstedal 2024). To prevent this, public value must be aligned with private value creation. In addition, Engen et al. (2021) identify other causes and drivers of value destruction in public services, including (1) lack of transparency, (2) operational errors, (3) lack of bureaucratic competence, (4) failure to provide an adequate service and (5) inappropriate use of resources by one or more actors.

Building on these insights, Naveed, Farooqi, and Salman (2025) examine value co-destruction from an ecosystemic perspective. They demonstrate that it arises not only from interactions between a PSO and user, but also from the interplay of multiple actors including regulators and providers. This suggests that co-destruction stems from both individual failures and systemic inefficiencies, such as conflicting governance mechanisms, and user behaviours. Thus, value destruction must be analysed at the level of the entire public service ecosystem (Naveed 2025).

Finally, Jenhaug (2021) challenges the predominantly positive view of PSL by analysing value destruction through the role of family caregivers. The author argues that these caregivers' personal experiences should be examined, highlighting the importance of considering the co-destruction of value in PSL studies to better understand the collaboration between the parties involved.

In summary, value co-destruction is becoming increasingly important in PSL studies, highlighting how numerous factors can decrease the perceived value of the actors involved in the interaction process. This insight underlines the need to consider not only the positive aspects of cooperation, but also the dynamics that can lead to negative outcomes for the parties involved. From a bibliometric perspective, the centrality of co-creation and co-destruction processes within PSL is reflected in the later analysis of keyword co-occurrence. In [Figure 1](#), a prominent cluster (blue cluster) links co-creation and co-destruction as core themes structuring the literature.

4.4. Category 3: public service ecosystem

Based on the systematic analysis of the reviewed literature, this category captures contributions focusing on the broader public service ecosystem within which value propositions are formulated and value creation processes unfold.

The relevance of the ecosystem lens in PSL is reinforced by the later analysis of keyword co-occurrence. In [Figure 1](#), the right blue cluster highlights themes related to public service ecosystems, governance, and institutional arrangements, reflecting the increasing attention paid to the broader contextual conditions in which value creation processes unfold.

Accordingly, PSL studies argue that value creation is not the responsibility of a single actor but occurs within interactive service ecosystems that include several actors given the challenges associated with public value. Indeed, several studies have emphasized the fundamental importance of context in the value creation process (Medina-Molina, Pérez-Macías, and Rey-Tienda 2024), highlighting that it occurs in a public service ecosystem where multiple actors collaborate to create value (Petrescu 2019). Therefore, to better understand this phenomenon, an ecosystem approach is adopted, which analyses how the interactions and relationships between different actors in an ecosystem shape the value co-creation process. A qualitative analysis of the value creation process in the Scottish social security service ecosystem showed that value co-creation is highly dependent on the alignment of objectives between the actors involved, strategic direction, and adoption of a participatory approach (Strokosch and S. P. Osborne 2020). That study argued that an ecosystem approach highlights networks of actors, their interactions, and collaboration as key elements for effective value creation. Consequently, not only individual PSOs, but the entire stakeholder network must be considered and involved in the co-creation process to achieve optimal results. Similarly, Trischler et al. (2023) propose the service ecosystem as an analytical framework to study value co-creation, offering a multi-actor approach that facilitates value proposition and supports public service users in creating value. For them, PSL, while remaining a mid-range theoretical framework, must evolve to incorporate the service ecosystem as a primary analytical lens for understanding public value creation, recognizing the mediating role of PSOs in this process. Furthermore, digitalization and service design are two key dynamics influencing public management within these ecosystems, and the PSL framework must be able to evolve to respond to these emerging challenges. This also highlights the importance of actors operating effectively at three levels of the ecosystem – micro, meso, and macro levels – and need to understand how to influence these levels more effectively (S. P. Osborne et al. 2021).

To this end, Sancino and Tasselli's (2024) qualitative analysis of Italian municipal services developed the Appreciate-Engage-Facilitate model to help public managers understand and support value creation at all levels of service ecosystems. They also identified seven essential practices to maintain the functionality of the public service ecosystem even during crises. These practices, considered as sets of interrelated practices fundamental to ensuring ecosystem resilience, include creating new digital structures, expanding collaboration with new actors, regulating the intensity of interactions with volunteers, modifying roles and responsibilities, and using storytelling techniques and digital media to effectively communicate and motivate value co-creation. These practices show how managers adapt their strategies to foster collaboration, innovation and communication during a crisis.

Furthermore, E. Eriksson et al. (2021) examined the impact of turbulent periods such as the COVID-19 pandemic on the Swedish health ecosystem, finding that crisis times highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the public service ecosystem. They demonstrated that the pandemic accelerated collaboration between actors, facilitating the integration of resources such as knowledge and expertise across organizational and professional boundaries. However, these collaborations focused mainly on traditional providers, excluding the potential contribution of users and other actors. Therefore, the pandemic acted as a ‘game changer’, challenging traditional ways of working in the public sector and accelerating reforms that had stalled. However, this shift suggests promoting a more integrated and collaborative approach involving a wider range of actors including users. This finding is supported by the co-occurrence of keywords, where the purple cluster in [Figure 1](#) shows the COVID-19 pandemic as a major driver of change and experimentation.

Similarly, S. Osborne, Maria, and Tie (2024) examined the pandemic vaccination programme from a PSL perspective, confirming the importance of an ecosystem approach that considers the ability to effectively collaborate and interact. This approach recognizes the dynamics between the actors involved and their values and beliefs. The authors suggest that to be effective, a vaccination programme must be integrated into this complex ecosystem, recognizing and addressing the various perspectives and potential tensions between private and public value.

In summary, the public service ecosystem analysis highlights the importance of collaboration between multiple actors for value co-creation and existence of diverse PSOs with different characteristics, and provides a solid theoretical framework to improve understanding of value creation processes in public services.

4.5. Thematic structure of public service logic

The results of the keyword co-occurrence analysis provide a cross-sectional view of the thematic structure of the PSL literature. The main insights of this analysis have been integrated into the previous discussion of the three analytical categories – value proposition, value creation process and public service ecosystem – where they were used to support and contextualize the qualitative findings. Furthering this, the keyword analysis here makes visible the underlying thematic configuration of the literature and shows how recurring concepts cluster around the core analytical areas identified through the systematic review.

First, as expected, PSL emerges as the core reference point of the keyword analysis, reflecting the inclusion criteria adopted for the review. More importantly, the analysis reveals the main thematic clusters shaping the

literature in this field. Second, as anticipated in the analysis of the emerging categories, several groups are identified: (i) The blue cluster (top left) focuses on the concepts of co-creation and co-destruction of value, emphasising the dual outcomes of value creation processes. (ii) The green cluster (top left) focuses on PSOs and the organisational and managerial aspects of service delivery. (iii) The red cluster (bottom right) addresses issues of value proposition and service design, emphasising the importance of how services are conceived and structured. (iv) The bottom right blue cluster focuses on the concept of ecosystems. (v) The yellow and (vi) orange clusters capture the distinction between public and private value-two separate but interconnected research strands. (vii) The purple cluster (top right) highlights the theme of innovation in public services, with the COVID-19 pandemic an important driver of change and experimentation. (viii) Finally, the brown cluster (top) reflects the theoretical foundations, linking service logic to the broader theoretical pillars of service and service-dominant logic. Overall, the study highlights the vitality and potential for growth of this emerging field as scholars continue to expand and consolidate its conceptual and empirical foundations.

4.6. Citation structure of public service logic

The co-citation analysis provides a transversal perspective on the intellectual structure underpinning the PSL literature. While previous sections focused on the main conceptual and thematic patterns emerging from the qualitative synthesis and keyword analysis, the co-citation analysis elucidates the theoretical foundations and scholarly traditions most frequently mobilized together across studies. Thus, it does not introduce additional thematic categories, but helps clarify how the literature is intellectually organized and how different research strands are connected. The analysis shows the presence of several co-citation clusters, each reflecting distinct but interconnected intellectual influences (Figure 2).

The green cluster contains the most frequently cited and foundational contributions to PSL, including the work of S. P. Osborne (2018), Skålén et al. (2018), E. M. Eriksson (2019), and S. P. Osborne, Nasi, and Powell (2021). These articles are considered the key theoretical references in the PSL field. These articles introduced the key concepts underlying the field and are established as essential theoretical references. Their central position in the network and high number of links with other nodes confirm the fundamental role of the research field.

The blue cluster focuses on conceptual development related to the public service ecosystem perspective. The articles included here (e.g. S. P. Osborne, Nasi, and Powell 2021; Trischler and Westman Trischler 2022) build on the original ideas by offering a more systemic and relational perspective. Thus,



Figure 2. Results of the co-citation analysis. Source: VOSviewer.

the blue cluster links the established theoretical foundation (green) and subsequent developments (red).

The red cluster comprises the most recent contributions, which apply and develop the foundational concepts in specific contexts. These include studies on digital innovation, smart governance, and adapting PSL to new sectors (Cui and Aulton 2023; Kinder and Stenvall 2023; Røhnebæk et al. 2024; Virtanen and Jalonen 2024). This cluster therefore reflects the most dynamic and applied phase of the debate, and aims to consolidate and expand the empirical scope of the original theoretical framework.

4.7. Collaboration patterns in public service logic

The co-authorship analysis complements the thematic and intellectual mapping of the literature by examining patterns of collaboration among scholars contributing to PSL research. The aim is to link researchers who have written a paper together, offering insights into patterns of collaboration and the social dynamics within a research domain (Zupic and Čater 2015). Figure 3 presents the results of this analysis.

Figure 3 highlights a research stream characterized by a relatively open and diversified authorship structure. While collaboration patterns are still emerging, the co-citation analysis indicates a growing degree of intellectual interconnectedness, as many authors actively refer to each other's work. Rather than indicating problematic fragmentation, this pattern is consistent with the early-stage development of a research stream in which new scholars continue to enter the field and contribute to its conceptual expansion.

The most relevant groupings are the green group centred around Stephen Osborne; purple group connected to the green group and centred around Kristy Strokosch; blue group centred around Per Skålén and linked to the orange group, which includes researchers like Jakob Trischler and is characterized primarily by common affiliation; and red group centred around Erik Eriksson, which focuses on topic including collaboration in PSL. The other clusters in Figure 3 correspond to small groups of authors who have produced one or a few co-authored works.



Figure 3. Results of the co-author analysis. Source: VOSviewer.

Table 3. Future research areas and research questions.

Category	Future research area	Future research questions
Value proposition	<p>Understand the concept of public value and mediating role of PSOs in the value creation process (S. P. Osborne, Nasi, and Powell 2021)</p> <p>Investigate the impact of digital technologies on the value proposition of public services (S. Osborne et al. 2022; Trischler and Westman Trischler 2022)</p> <p>Explore the influence of collaboration policies for the development of a joint value proposition from an ecosystemic perspective (E. Eriksson et al. 2020)</p>	<p>How is public value defined and perceived within the public service logic framework, and what are the main dynamics that influence its creation by society?</p> <p>How do PSOs mediate the public value creation in different public service contexts?</p> <p>What is the impact of digital technologies on the effectiveness of public service value proposition?</p> <p>What are the challenges and opportunities of integrating digital technologies to improve public service value proposition?</p> <p>How can the use of digital technologies promote the personalisation of public services and thus increase public value?</p> <p>How do collaboration and user feedback influence the value proposition?</p> <p>What is the role of alliances and collaborative networks between actors in developing sustainable and efficient value propositions from an ecosystem perspective?</p> <p>How can cross-sector collaborative strategies improve public value creation and foster greater integration between public services, businesses, and citizens?</p> <p>What collaborative governance models are most effective for managing resources in an ecosystem context?</p>

(Continued)



Table 3. (Continued).

Category	Future research area	Future research questions
Value creation process	<p>Examine the role of social context, user characteristics, and service type in value creation processes (E. M. Eriksson 2019)</p> <p>Explore the user perspective of value creation processes, as research has often focused only on PSOs (Rasmussen, Skjerving, and Burau 2023)</p> <p>Empirically investigate the impact of co-production (and co-design) on different levels of value (private, public) and whether there are conflicts between them (E. M. Eriksson 2019)</p> <p>Investigate the impact of digital technologies on value creation processes in public services (Rosler et al. 2021; Leite 2023; Jiang and Fan 2024; Zyzak and Martinussen 2024)</p> <p>Empirically explore the concept of co-creation and co-destruction in various public contexts (Engen et al. 2021)</p>	<p>How do co-creation, co-design, co-production, and co-destruction processes manifest in different public contexts (e.g. education, security, environment)?</p> <p>What contextual variables influence co-creation and co-production in different public service sectors?</p> <p>How do actors' social and professional backgrounds influence co-production and co-creation processes in public services?</p> <p>What are the differences in the contribution of users and staff to co-production according to the type of public service (e.g. social, health, education)?</p>
		<p>How does the co-production of public services affect perceived value at the individual, group, and public levels?</p> <p>Are there conflicts between public and private values within co-production processes and how can these be resolved?</p> <p>What are users' expectations and perceptions of co-creation and co-production processes in public services?</p> <p>How can the inclusion of the user perspective improve the outcomes of co-production and co-creation?</p> <p>How do digital technologies facilitate or hinder co-creation and co-production processes in public services?</p> <p>What are the potentials and limitations of digital technologies for improving the effectiveness of value co-creation in public services?</p> <p>What factors determine value co-creation in different public service contexts, and how do they vary by service type?</p> <p>How can value co-destruction be avoided in co-creation and co-production processes in public services?</p>

(Continued)

Table 3. (Continued).

Category	Future research area	Future research questions
Public service ecosystem	<p>Explore the processes of value co-creation in a public service ecosystem, analysing how the dynamics of interdependence between actors and resources influence the creation of public and private value (Petrescu 2019)</p> <p>Understand how digital technologies affect the structure and dynamics of the public service ecosystem, facilitating or hindering value co-creation (Trischler and Westman Trischler 2022)</p> <p>Analyse the perspectives of PSOs and other actors in the public service ecosystem, how they interact with each other, and the collaborative dynamics of value creation (Strokosch and S. P. Osborne 2020).</p> <p>Explore how the concept of the public service ecosystem can be used as an analytical tool to understand value co-creation processes (Trischler et al. 2023)</p>	<p>How do value co-creation processes develop in a public service ecosystem, and what factors influence their effectiveness?</p> <p>How do interactions between PSOs and other ecosystem actors influence value creation in public services?</p> <p>How do digital technologies facilitate value co-creation in a public service ecosystem and what are the implications at the micro, meso, and macro levels?</p> <p>What are the main barriers and opportunities arising from integrating digital technologies into the public service ecosystem?</p> <p>What are the perceptions of PSOs and other stakeholders (citizens, private organisations, etc.) regarding their roles and contributions in the public service ecosystem?</p> <p>How do the relationships between PSOs and other stakeholders influence the outcomes of value co-creation in public services?</p>

Source: Authors' elaboration.

5. Public service logic: a research agenda

The findings confirm that PSL is still a young research field and highlight several areas of research that remain underexplored (Table 3). Although the concept has gained traction since S. P. Osborne's (2018) seminal contribution, the literature has yet to reach a stage of theoretical maturity or broad empirical validation.

The co-citation analysis shows the existence of a cluster of papers representing the fundamental principles of PSL and that the field requires further investigation. This suggests that PSL has successfully established several key conceptual pillars, leaving space for further development. Further research is therefore needed to refine its theoretical nuances, broaden its empirical applications, and strengthen the evidence base to consolidate PSL as a unique strand of public management studies, distinct from service and service-dominant logic.

For each category emerging from the literature review, Table 3 outlines future research areas and related research questions.

Table 2 clarifies that the concepts and co-concepts identified in the literature review on PSL require further exploration. Existing empirical studies focus mostly on the Swedish context and healthcare sector, using predominantly qualitative methodologies. Thus, the empirical analysis of PSL must be broadened to different geographical and sectoral contexts and employ more diverse methodological approaches including quantitative and mixed methods (see Appendix 2).

Furthermore, although emerging concepts and co-concepts should be treated as rigid and distinct categories, they can interact and influence each other. Therefore, an integrated research approach is essential to explore these interactions and contribute to a more holistic understanding of value creation processes in the public sector.

6. Concluding discussion

This study aimed to systematically review the growing body of literature on PSL by integrating conceptual and empirical contributions. The findings highlight that despite the relatively recent introduction of PSL, the literature has already developed along a set of clearly identifiable analytical lines. Specifically, the review shows that research on PSL converges around three interrelated analytical categories: the value proposition, value creation process, and public service ecosystem. Together, these categories provide a structured understanding of how scholars have conceptualized and examined value creation in public services.

Across these categories, the review reveals both convergence and diversity. On the one hand, there is a shared emphasis on understanding public

services as processes of value creation involving multiple actors, rather than as the delivery of predefined outputs. On the other, studies differ in how they conceptualize value and operationalize co-concepts. This combination of common analytical concerns and heterogeneous approaches reflects the flexibility of PSL as a framework, and explains why the literature can appear dispersed when viewed without systematic organization.

The bibliometric analysis provides a complementary perspective reinforcing the results. Importantly, the thematic clusters emerging from the bibliometric analysis closely correspond to the three analytical categories derived from the systematic review. The clusters point to a set of interconnected research trajectories centred on value propositions, value creation processes and the role of public service ecosystems. This alignment suggests that the categories identified in this study reflect underlying structures in the PSL literature.

Finally, the bibliometric mapping highlights the breadth of concepts and co-concepts through which these shared concerns are explored. The frequency of terms emerging from the keyword analysis illustrates how scholars draw on a common conceptual vocabulary while adapting it to different empirical contexts and research questions. This finding helps reconcile perceptions of fragmentation in the literature with evidence of an active and cumulative scholarly conversation.

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank the Editor of *Public Management Review*, Professor Stephen Osborne, and the anonymous reviewers for their detailed expert insights and feedback, which greatly improved the quality of the article.

Furthermore, the authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to Krister Johansson and Henrik Levin from the University of Skövde Library for their invaluable support with the bibliometric analysis, and to the Service Research Center (CTF) at Karlstad University for the intellectual exchange that helped shape the main ideas in this article.

Disclosure statement

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

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