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# SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW: CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC ENTREPRENEURSHIP ISSUES IN PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS OVER THE LAST TWO DECADES

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## *Abstract*

Public Entrepreneurship (PE) has been used as a mechanism to transform Public Sector Organizations (PSOs). It has been used in both developed and developing economies to increase PSO productivity through the effective and efficient use of public scarce resources and adequate budget execution planning. This paper presents a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with the goal of collecting related research and identifying gaps in PE studies in order to visualize novel ideas for future studies. A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was performed, and 91 journal articles published in the last two decades (2002-2022) were extracted from six databases: Emerald, Elsevier, Sage, Wiley, Taylor and Francis, and Springer. The findings of the study revealed that PE is an important driver of PSO sustainability through the effective and efficient use of public scarce resources, which comprise approximately 16% of the articles reviewed. For future research, this SLR identifies knowledge gaps in classifications, context, theory, and content.

**Keywords:** Public Entrepreneurship, Public Sector Organizations, Productivity, Sustainability, Systematic Literature Review

## Introduction

Public entrepreneurship (PE) has become a source of concern in modern societies around the world as public organizations and other public settings at the local and high

governmental levels have streamlined their activities to encourage effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery (Bernier & Hafsi, 2007; Van Vuuren, 2016; Aligica, 2021). Every public sector organization (PSO) desires public entrepreneurs, particularly political and bureaucratic entrepreneurs because they motivate the creation and implementation of creative initiatives that will bring about public service change (Mack *et al.*, 2008; Melissanidou & Johnston, 2019; Keppeler, 2022).

PE/Public Sector Entrepreneurship (PSE) was recognized as an approach that encourages innovation in PSO and improves the establishment and implementation of policies aimed at meeting public desires. More scholarly articles on PE have been published over the last two decades (Fernando, 2006; Muslihin *et al.*, 2019; Haque, 2020). It has been observed that the adoption of PE principles has led to improvements in PSO service delivery as well as the invention of novel technologies and methods of administration that improve people's well-being (Bartlett & Dibben, 2002; Kearney *et al.*, 2008; Olumekor, 2022).

The concept of PE has gained traction in North America and Europe, particularly in the United States of America (USA) and England, where it has been used to broaden organizational domains and prospects through extensive resource utilization (Roberts, 2006; Montiel-Méndez & del Carmen Álvarez-Castañón, 2019; McSweeney & Safai, 2020). Despite the importance of PE in the public domain, it appears to be less popular in Asia and Australasia, with little or no use in South America and Africa. However, this can be attributed to the untamed bureaucratic nature and the complexity of the public structure's working environment (Edwards *et al.*, 2002; Margarian, 2013; Buitelaar *et al.*, 2022).

PE creates chances for PSOs to flourish. The adoption of PE has led to improvements in the economic development and growth of societies through enhancing the level of efficient and effective utilization of resources, which improves populace satisfaction; it promotes the formation of new ventures or initiatives that are directed to improved local welfare; and it has also been examined that it has led to the restoration of public organizations through boosting public service efficiency and enhancing best practices (Zerbinati & Souitaris, 2005; Bailey, 2021; Tremml, 2021).

Taking into account the issues raised on PE thus far, the current study examined 91 peer-reviewed English articles published between 2002 and 2022 in six databases, namely Elsevier, Emerald, Sage, Springer, Wiley, Taylor & Francis. The total number of articles that were downloaded and utilized for the research is shown in Table 1. However, few SLR on PE were found (Llewellyn & Jones, 2003; Ali *et al.*, 2019; Mohammed *et al.*, 2021), and none used the Aromataris & Pearson (2014) and Denyer & Transfield (2009) medical research technique SLR. The current study is organized as follows: introduction, research methodology, the third section discusses the outcomes of the definitions/classifications of PE, theories used, and modern conception of PE. Finally, future research directions were proposed.

**Table 1: Number of Papers Downloaded from Databases**

| Database | Number of Papers |
|---|---|
| **1. Emerald** | 26 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **2.** | **Elsevier** | 5 |
| **3.** | **Sage** | 9 |
| **4.** | **Springer** | 23 |
| **5.** | **Taylor & Francis** | 20 |
| **6.** | **Wiley** | 8 |
| **Total** | | 91 |

Source: Authors' review

**Research Methodology**

The goal of this SLR is to identify relevant literature in PE, specifically in the areas of development, implementation, and outcomes. Aromataris and Pearson (2014) and Denyer and Transfield (2009) medical research methodologies were used in this study. These research review methods provide unbiased and reproducible processes such as identifying, synthesizing, and analyzing academic publications through extensive database searches and applying criteria for inclusion and exclusion that conform to the research objectives. Figure 1 summarizes the steps taken in preparing this review.

This research employed a systematic approach to seeking, examining, studying, and coordinating literature (Aromataris & Pearson, 2014). The searches and selection standards for journal choice employed in the SLR are detailed in Table 1. In 'titles only,' search for the terms 'public entrepreneurship,' creation, execution, and impact. The initial search approach was to find journals from proprietary databases. Among the databases chosen are Emerald, Elsevier, Sage, Springer, Taylor & Francis, and Wiley.

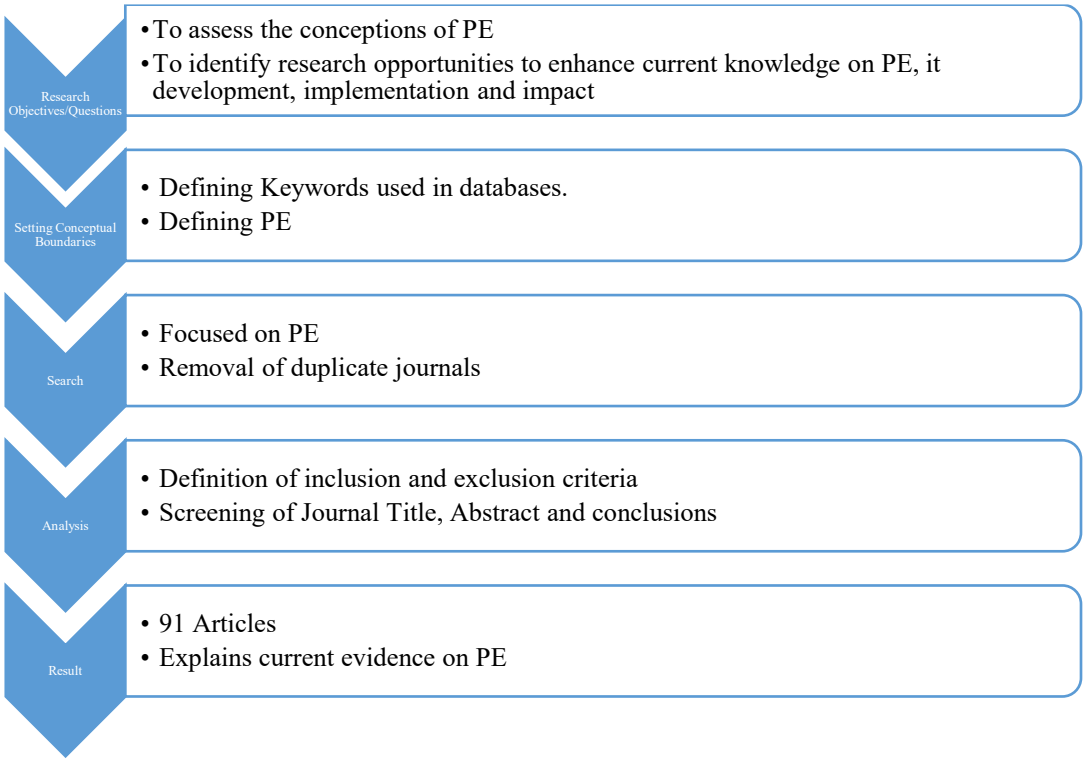


Figure 1: Summary of SLR Process

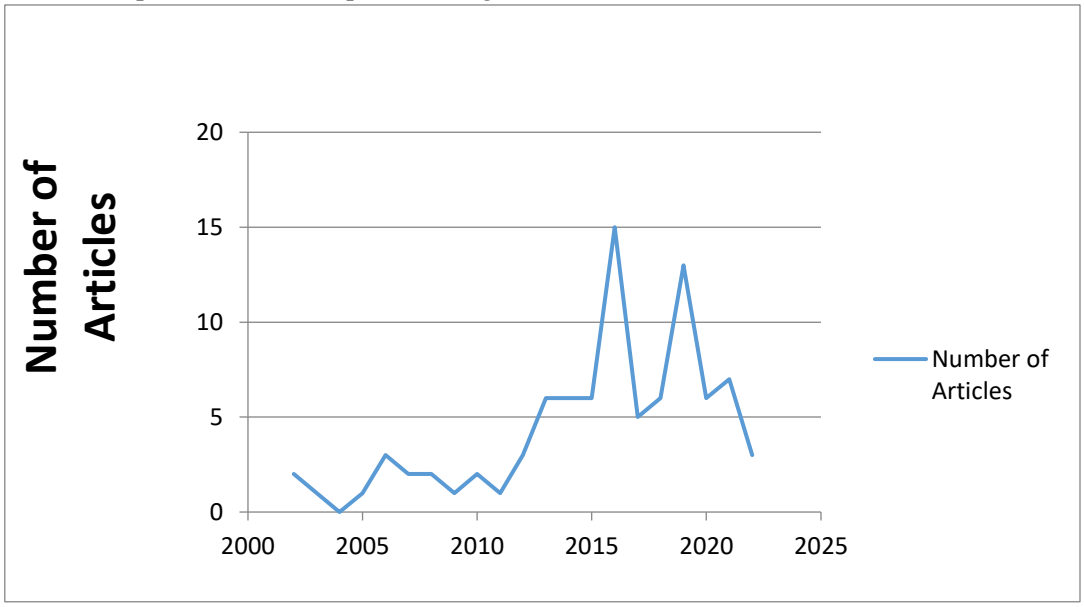
**Table 2: Criteria for Selection**

| Criterion | Inclusion | Exclusion | Justification |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Relevance to the objectives of the study** | Journals with focus on PE | Papers without core focus on PE | Provide information that will serve as an answer to the review questions. |
| **Language of publication** | English | All other languages | Constraints of the research group |
| **Date of publication** | Up December, 2022 | None | There were no restrictions. |
| **Databases** | Emerald, Elsevier, Sage, Springer, Taylor & Francis and Wiley | Articles that were not found in the specified databases were removed. | To provide a quality assessment for the journals being used |
| **Type of Publication** | Peer-reviewed journal articles | Press articles; books, book chapters, theses, reports, and working papers | These were excluded due to lack of peer review. |
| **Types of Research** | Theoretical, empirical and literature Review | None | All types were employed. |
| **Disciplines** | Every subject area | None | The majority of the research reviewed was either published in the social sciences, humanities, IT, management, or entrepreneurship. |

Source: Authors' review

An analysis template was employed to collect basic information on each of the variables under consideration. A method of deductive research was used to analyze the downloaded journals. The data gathered to achieve the review's objectives includes the title of the publication, the authors, the year of publication, the primary finding of the research, and findings relevant to PE. Table 3 provides an overview of almost all of the selected studies. The majority of studies

have been released in 2016, suggesting that scholars are concerned about PE. The most recent decades of publication are depicted in Figure 2.




Source: Authors' review

**Table 3: PE Perceptions**

| Research Articles | Databases | Objectives |
|---|---|---|
| **(Luke & Verreyne, 2006)** | Emerald | Provides an explanatory model for the basis of entrepreneurship in public sector. |
| **(Urban & Nkhumishe, 2019)** | Emerald | Provides an explanation on how entrepreneurship can be promoted in the public sector. |
| **(Marie, 2016)** | Elsevier | Examines the basis for the transformation of private entities to public owned enterprises. |
| **(Nowński *et al.*, 2020)** | Elsevier | Explores the link between public support for entrepreneurship and individuals' entrepreneurship intention |
| **(Smith, 2012)** | Sage | Seeks to explain the determinants of PE in PSO |
| **(Rossiter & Smith, 2017)** | Sage | |
| **(Demircioglu & Chowdhury, 2021)** | Springer | Examine leadership behaviours in the quest the PE development in PSO |
| **(Hayter, 2015)** | Springer | Explored motivations of entrepreneurship amongst academia in Universities |
| **(Edwards *et al.*, 2002)** | Taylor & Francis | Assessed the role played by PE in transforming the public service philosophy and general life style of communities |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **(Barnett *et al.*, 2021)** | Taylor & Francis | Examined municipal entrepreneurship as a means of encouraging service delivery in local governments. |
| **(Bernier & Hafsi, 2007)** | Wiley | Examined cyclical theory as a new approach to the development of PE in PSO |
| **(Klein *et al.*, 2013)** | Wiley | Studied the role of PE in adjusting the public servants in the provision and maintenance of public organizations. |

**Result**

In this section, we present the outcomes of an in-depth evaluation of the studied PE definitions, theories that encourage the creation, application, and effect of PE, past research directions, and scholars' current focus.

**Public Entrepreneurship (PE)**

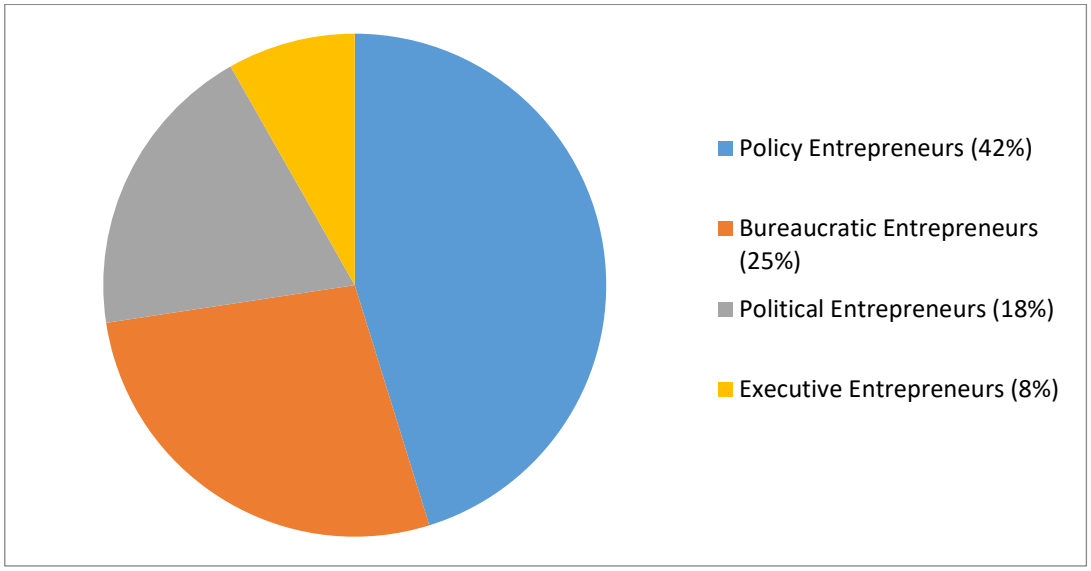
**Definitions/Classifications of PE**

Several scholars have broadly defined PE as a motivation or process that promotes PSO and improves the well-being of communities through sufficient delivery services, but they have been silent on what makes up PE classifications (Dold & van Emmerick, 2020; Barnett *et al.*, 2021). Policy entrepreneurs, political entrepreneurs, executive entrepreneurs, and bureaucratic entrepreneurs are the four types of PE (Robert & King, 1989; Malatjie *et al.*, 2017; Lindholst, 2019). A thorough examination of the articles reviewed for this study revealed that the majority of the articles (42% of the total) articulated PE in terms of policy entrepreneurship. It is known as legislative entrepreneurs who promote innovative local regulations and participate either directly or indirectly in societal legislative procedures (Banda & Kazonga, 2018; Demircioglu & Chowdhury, 2021; Khaled, 2022).Policy entrepreneurs are critical in an organization's policymaking process because they apply the outermost exertion on a system and break its strongholds, which aids in overcoming system bias.

25% of the articles examined discussed PE from the perspective of bureaucratic entrepreneurs. They are individuals or groups of individuals who do not hold any form of government position but provide services for the general public (Zikou *et al.*, 2017; Amin *et al.*, 2021). They include civil servants who present and carry out new ideas in the manner of running public-sector organizations. They value unconventional methods of accomplishing tasks over traditional methods of providing public services.

Political entrepreneurs are the third most evaluated type of PE (18%) among the articles reviewed. They are elected officials in government offices or settings who are responsible for the introduction and implementation of novel concepts that will result in the best possible delivery of services for the public (Yeazdanshenas, 2014; Xu & Carey, 2015; Johnson, 2021). They are known as entrepreneurs because they use their influence to promote creative initiatives that generate goods and services that have a direct impact on the development of the public sector (Westrup, 2013; Xing *et al.*, 2018; Grimm & Bock, 2022).

Executive entrepreneurs are the final type of PE classification and receive the least attention from scholars in the reviewed articles (8%). They are referred to as a person or group of people who hold governmental positions in PSO (Zampetakis & Moustakis, 2007; Wei-Loon, 2013; Gaus, 2021). They are mostly not elected to positions of power, but appointed and thus assume formal leadership in society (Kearney *et al.*, 2009; Urban & Nkhumishe, 2019).




**Underpinning Theories**

A review of the PE articles revealed that 17 theories were employed to explain the evolution of PE and its impact on PSO development. However, a significant number of studies (16%) did not adopt any theory. Grounded theory, transaction cost theory, and agency theory were all used by early scholars (Nayyar & Mahmood, 2014; Saidu *et al.*, 2016; Wang *et al.*, 2020). with the grounded theory primarily used to develop a theoretical framework for PE advancement as well as to examine employees' attitudes toward organizational changes (Najmaei & Sadeghinejad, 2016; Ekundayo, 2017; Mehmood *et al.*, 2019). The transaction cost theory was used to examine and compare the cost of achieving transitions in PSO by employing internal and external factors (Cunningham *et al*., 2016; Frisch-Aviram *et al.*, 2019; Nowiński *et al.*, 2020).The Agency theory was intended to be used to explain the interactions between agents and the principals in the cost of providing public services, as well as the need for adequate supervision of agents when public duties are delegated (Yeazdanshenas, 2014; Mohamed, 2017; Collins, 2021). Among the theories examined in the articles reviewed are the PE theory, the theory of quality of work life, the resource base view theory, the institutional theory, and the theory of business modeling. The PE theory focuses on the proper utilization of resources in the PSO through the proper usage of innovative models (Xu & Carey, 2015; Tripathi, 2017; Naldi *et al.*, 2020); the theory of quality of work life focuses on improving the working conditions of an organization's employees, which in turn leads to high organizational productivity and performance (Bartlett & Dibben, 2002; Rezaeian *et al.*, 2017; Gerhart & Feng, 2021); and the resources base view theory focuses on the proper utilization of resources by government agencies in order to achieve maximum service delivery in the public (Clark,

2016; Kulawik, 2020; Olumekor, 2022). According to institutional theory, an organization's behavior is based on predetermined standards, and any form of behavior that is not ethically aligned with the organization's goals should be avoided. Though the theory is static in nature and cannot identify the dynamic behavior of the environment and employees (Roberts, 2006; Kearney *et al.*, 2008; Moon *et al.*, 2020); the general theory of business modeling emphasizes the risk associated with investments and the need for organizations to focus on high-risk investments for future benefits (Edwards *et al.*, 2002; Margarian, 2013; Haider *et al.*, 2019). The system theory is also among the theories employed by the articles under consideration. It defines organization(s) as a whole system made up of employees, resources, and products, as well as the relationship between the variables listed (Tõnurist & Cook, 2016; OECD, 2017 McSweeney & Safai, 2020). The theory also emphasized the importance of investigating the interactions between parameters for the growth of organizations rather than examining variables separately (Rong, 2017; Montiel-Méndez & del Carmen Álvarez-Castañón, 2019; Buitelaar *et al.*, 2022). The system theory is concerned with the general overhaul of PSO by enabling driven by missions execution of services rather than antiquity methods of service delivery (Dold & van Emmerick, 2020; Kayzel, 2021). Other studies that investigated the variable relationships of PE used the following theories: good governance theory (Zikou *et al.*, 2017; Grimsley, 2021); public choice theory (Banda & Kazonga, 2018; Gordon, 2021); Asymptotic theory (Veiga *et al.*, 2020; Khaled, 2022); theory base interpretation (Urban, 2021); labour union theory (Rong, 2017; Montiel-Méndez & del Carmen Álvarez-Castañón, 2019; Naldi *et al.*, 2020); psychological theory of entrepreneurship (Tremml, 2018; Amin *et al.*, 2021); and theory of pragmatic remunicipalization (Thomas *et al.*, 2012; Barnett *et al.*, 2021).

**Geographical Distribution**

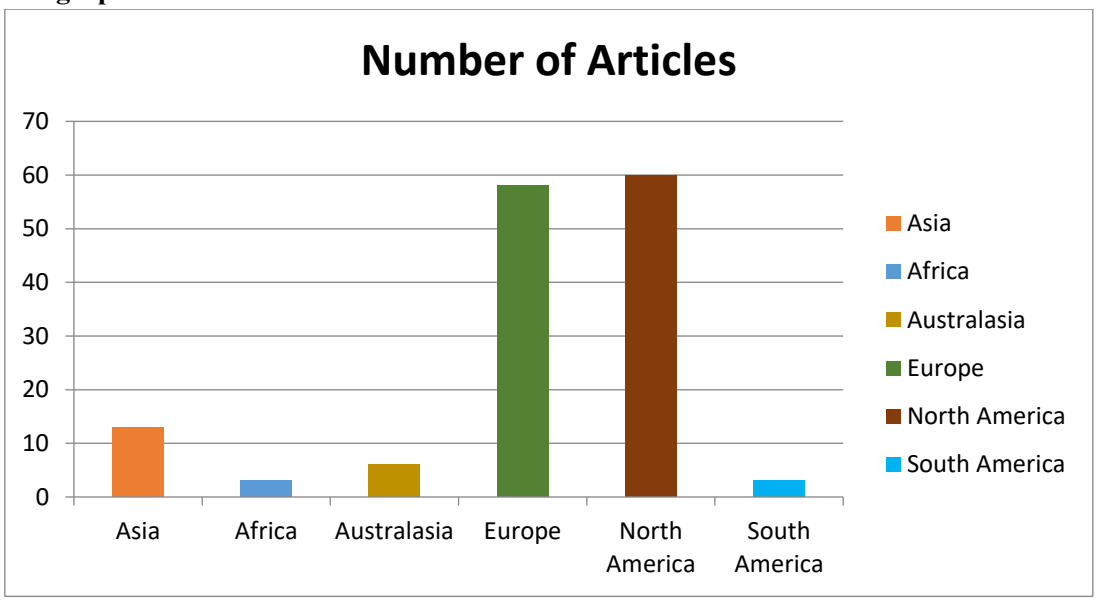



**Figure 3: Geographical Distribution of the Study**

Figure 3 depicted the six continents and 30 countries that had representation in the review. North America published the most articles (60), next to Europe (58) and Asia (13). Australasia has six, while South America and Africa have the fewest, with three each.

Table 3 depicted the socioeconomic status of each nation that participated in the review, that is, developed or developing nations placed by gross domestic product (GDP). Although developed economies had the most published research (94%) and developing economies had the fewest (6%), no studies were conducted in less developed economies. Earlier studies in developing countries have included Israel, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Brazil, Colombia, South Africa, and the Ivory Coast. The analysis also revealed that more research is needed by researchers to excavate PE in underrepresented locations, particularly in developing economies.

**Table 4: Economies distribution of the reviewed articles**

| Socioeconomic Status of Number of Publications | | Countries (Number of Publications) |
|---|---|---|
| **Developed Economies (134)** | Asia (10) | China (3); Pakistan (3); South Korea (2); Singapore (1); Turkey (1); |
| | Australasia (6) | New Zealand (3); Australia (3) |
| | Europe (58) | England (28); Greece (7); Ireland (5); Denmark (3); Switzerland (3); Sweden (2); Germany (2) Georgia (1); France (2); Romania (1); Italy (1); Poland (1); Portugal (1); Netherland (1) |
| | North America (60) | United State of America (56); Canada (4) |
| **Developing Economies (9)** | Asia (3) | Israel (1); Bangladesh (1); Sri Lanka (1) |
| | Africa (3) | South Africa (2); Ivory Coast (1) |
| | South America (3) | Brazil (2); Colombia (1) |

**Content**

Following consideration of the results, theories underpinning PE, and geographically articles explored by PE scholars, the following section will explore the accidental emphasis of the journals examined as follows:

**Conceptualization of PE**

In an attempt to conceptualize PE, 49% of the papers we reviewed studied public entrepreneurial orientations. Innovativeness, risk-taking, proactiveness, autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness are among the PE orientations investigated. 25% (out of 49% mentioned earlier) of the articles that investigated innovativeness, explained the desire for

novelty in the procedure of executing public projects. Risk-taking, proactiveness, autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness were all addressed in 24% of the articles. The objectives are to make sure that the ideas created are not left unused, but are implemented to improve citizens' livelihoods (Teixeira & Silva, 2012; Bernier, 2014; Demircioglu & Chowdhury, 2021). However, 34% of the papers examined did not consider PE.

Five percent (5%) of the articles examined referred to private equity as PE (Smith, 2012; Catney & Henneberry, 2015; Syam *et al.*, 2018). They explain the importance of private-public collaboration in providing public services (Clark, 2016; Strow & Strow, 2018). Accountability was explored as a means of conceiving PE in four percent (4%) of the papers reviewed. The goal is to ensure the embrace of accountability and an eagerness to be visible in the delivery of public services (Smith, 2014; Najmaei & Sadeghinejad, 2016; Ekundayo, 2017). Social networking (3%), economic facilitation and regulation (2%), and civil-political service agency (1%) are other PE conceptualizations. All of these conceptualizations are aimed at improving understanding of PE and its adoption by PSO for improved performance. None of the articles reviewed examined public service motivation (PSM) as a part of PE, which is critical in the process of investigating PE conceptualization. PSM is defined as an individual's desire to provide services to the public in order to make a difference in society (Bozeman & Su, 2015; Salter, 2019; Acker, 2020). The more passionate people are, the more creative they will be in providing public services.

**PE impact on PSO**

The influence of PE on the growth of society is the study's next topic. PE's overall expected roles include effective and efficient service delivery (Seo & Chung, 2012; Rossiter & Smith, 2017; Kulawik, 2020). PE encourages proper project planning and execution (Roberts & King, 1989); it promotes transparency in PSO through proper documentation of resource inflows and outflows in public budgeting (Rivera & Landahl, 2019; Olumekor, 2022); through skill management and advancement, PE is inclined to serve as a medium for proper skill placement where needed and continual education of public players in order to ensure improved staff performance in the PSO (Carnes *et al.*, 2019; Demircioglu & Chowdhury, 2021). Ritz *et al.* (2020) emphasized PE is anticipated to instill trust in the public at large because people see the value in the taxes that they pay when funds are used wisely (Klein *et al.*, 2013; Al-Dhaafri & Alosani, 2020). 43% of the articles that investigated PE studied the impact that PE possesses on PSO. PE was studied in 16% of the articles in terms of efficiency and effectiveness in the use of the government's scarce resources. This will aid in the prevention of waste and the attainment of better results (Bloch & Bugge§, 2013; Deslatte & Swann, 2020). 12% of the articles rated sufficient or adequate planning as a means for accomplishing public sector goals. The crucial role of PE in this regard is that it aids in the selection of the best resource combination to achieve the maximum social benefit (Ostrom & Ostrom, 1965; Ali *et al.*, 2019). Nine percent investigated transparency in the public sector. It constitutes one of the benefits of reading PE articles. It entails the development of friendly policies and the provision of adequate information to citizens. Five percent of the papers investigated skill management as a role played by PE. It aids in the recruitment of capable employees who will aid in the

provision of satisfactory services for the public at large (Alexandrescu *et al.*, 2014; Mehmood *et al.*, 2019; Buitelaar *et al.*, 2022). A large proportion of the papers we reviewed (57%) did not address the implications of PE in the public sector.

**Discussion**

The main finding of this SLR reveals that PE has had an impact on the growth of PSO also and different regions (advanced countries) that have utilized it in the course of their operations. Thus, despite all of the benefits of PE, it is of little to no application in less developed countries. This is because PE has different perceptions and measurements in conceptualization. Researchers studying the impact of PE are frequently confronted with the difficulty of public actors' casual attitude toward the establishment and adoption of PE within PSO.

The second primary outcome of the PE review reveals two critical phases: PE conceptualization and its impact on PSO. Innovativeness has the most articles in the PE conceptualization, then risk-taking, proactiveness, autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness. The civil-political agency contains the fewest, and none of the articles examined PSM. This demonstrates that PE is regarded as the generation of new ideas that will result in the formation of new organizations or the enhancement of the services of existing ones (Thomas *et al.*, 2012; Tremml, 2018; Anis *et al.*, 2020). Risk-taking, proactiveness, autonomy, and aggressive competition are also required because they encourage resource commitment with boldness in the effort of satisfying public welfare (Arnold, 2019; Dold & van Emmerick, 2020). PSM was not taken into account when conceptualizing PE. However, it is significant because it reveals employees' desire to serve the public while also preventing resource waste (Zikou *et al.*, 2017; Vandenabeele & Schott, 2020). As a result, there is a desire to conduct more research into PSM when talking about PE issues.

In terms of the impact of PE on PSO, many of the papers we reviewed express the role of PE in terms of its efficacy and effectiveness in meeting public sector objectives. A significant number of the articles focused on proper planning and transparency. Few of the articles examined skill management, which is critical to an organization's functionality. Additional study on PE is required, particularly in the discipline of skill management.

**Impact study**

In the opinion of Mohammed *et al.* (2021), there were a greater number of conceptual articles than empirical articles in terms of PE studies. Scholars place a greater emphasis on understanding PE and the challenges surrounding it (Banda & Kazonga, 2018; Asseburg & Homberg, 2020; Kayzel, 2021). The implication is that few ideas for impact studies will be provided. As a result, additional empirical investigations should be carried out to improve public understanding of the adoption of PE to maximize public satisfaction.

**Prosperity in Context**

Low-income countries were distinguished by an elevated degree of bureaucracy in terms of public service delivery, as well as the difficulty of resources being available and utilization (Audretsch & Link, 2019; Grimsley, 2021; Khaled, 2022). More research in these areas is

needed because it will open up the region to contemporary concepts on the productive management of government services for the region's economic development. Expanding PE research around the world will go a long way toward improving the quality of PSO services, especially when it comes to spending public restricted funds (Baumgartner et al., 2013; Christensen *et al.*, 2017; Parrey, 2021). For example, Xu and Carey (2013) investigated PE to be a tool for economical and technological advancement in Africa. Reviewing historical data from the OECD, IMF, and the World Bank, the study finds that African countries' economic and technological growth of the public sector finance will go hand in hand with PE adoption. The current study calls for additional research in this area in order to have a strong governance system for improved service delivery.

**Future Research**

The present research indicates opportunities for future PE researchers. As summarized in Table 5, these fields concentrate on relevant research gaps.

**Table 5: Future Research on PE**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Classification** | **Extensive research on PE groupings for greater comprehension in developing countries and around the world.**<br>**The connection between PE classifications and PSO administration.**<br>**More verifiable research on PE classifications is needed. PSO efficiency** |
| **Content** | PSOs in less developed countries can adopt a broader definition of PE.<br>The need for PSM in PE to investigate employees' enthusiasm for offering services to the general public.<br>Factors that act as a bridge between PE and PSOs performance.<br>The relationships between PE variables and the efficacy of public organizations. |
| **Theory** | Improved theories that explain PE in PSO.<br>Entrepreneurial and management theories that best articulate the concept of PE.<br>An additional empirical investigation of the suggested conceptual framework.<br>To better explain PE, combine theories from various disciplines. |
| **Context** | The present and potential state of PE use in developing economies.<br>Comparative studies on the development of PE in PSO throughout countries.<br>Ascertain the environmental factors influencing PE. |

**Conclusion**

The goal of this research was to acknowledge intellectual articles and significant contributions to the discipline of PE. The SLR has provided a summary of present issues concerning PE and its applicability. The research team obtained 91 journal articles from six databases: Emerald,

Elsevier, Sage, Wiley, Taylor and Francis, and Springer. The findings revealed that a large number of the papers did not employ any theory and relied heavily on qualitative research methods. The study found that North America had the most papers, whilst less developed economies were underrepresented in the analysis. We attributed this to the localities' bureaucratic nature and the region's deficiency of public scarce resources. Policy entrepreneurship was the dominant concept in the discussion, next to bureaucratic entrepreneurship, political entrepreneurship, and executive entrepreneurship. The articles did not adequately address the issues related to the determinants of PE. This paper summarizes the current debate in order to propose a framework for understanding future PE research.

The study adds to the understanding of PE in general-purpose and public-sector sustainability. According to the study, PE in PSO requires proper mentoring in order to maximize public sector output. The study's findings are important for public-sector stakeholders and policymakers because they will comprehend the value of using contemporary administrative processes to maximize public output.

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