

Insights from the discourse on behavioral public administration: enriching public administration research in Sri Lanka

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to bring the on-going discourse on the Behavioral Public Administration (BPA), a sub-field of public administration to the focus of the research community. The emphasis of the BPA is on the micro-perspective of individual behavior and attitudes and associated psychological processes within or between individuals which employs insights from behavioral sciences to study on individuals and groups in public administration settings. Leading scholars who contribute to this argument reveal that many theories in public administration rest on micro-foundations of individual attitudes and behavior but are seldom tested empirically. A study was carried out exploring the research publications of the scholars in the higher academic system in the disciplines of public administration, business management and human resources and to explore the extent to which cross fertilization between public administration and other fields of study had occurred basically using psychological theories and methods and vice versa. In this study public domains were used to collect data and content analytic method was used for data analysis. The findings show a lack of cross-fertilization between the disciplines of public administration and psychology related organizational/business management fields, concentration of research methods within own fields, a general lack of research publications in the system, a lack of research in the newly emerging public administration areas, such as transparency, accountability, citizen perspectives on development, public intervention on poverty alleviation etc.

Keywords: Behavioral public administration, social psychology, organizational psychology, experimentation, business management, HRD, cross fertilization

Introduction

This paper synthesizes the aspects of the on-going discourse on behavioral public administration (BPA); a sub-discipline of the field of public administration (PA), by drawing from the contributions of a number of scholars, as appeared in the relevant literature that may be of value to our scholars and practitioners in the field. As Jilke (2015), Grimmelikhuijsen, Jilke, Olsen & Tummers (2016) and Tummers, Olsen, Jilke & Grimmelikhuijsen (2016) accentuate a renewed interest on this subject has emerged recently, when the importance of gaining insights from psychology related

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subfields, such as political psychology, behavioral Economics, and industrial /organizational psychology for the development of the BPA has been recognized. As has been reported by Tummers et al., (2016) various activities under the heading of BPA, such as conferences, workshops or panel tracks for public management scholars, have been organized by the European Group of Public Administration and in the Public Management Research Conference. The *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* has played a leading role in promoting the idea for integration of psychological theories and research methods into the field of public administration. BPA is described as ‘*the analysis of public administration from the micro-level perspective of individual behavior and attitudes by drawing on insights from psychology on the behavior of individuals and groups*’ (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2016, p. 46).

BPA is defined as ‘*the interdisciplinary analysis of public administration from the micro-perspective of individual behavior and attitudes by drawing upon recent advances in our understanding of the underlying psychology and behavior of individuals and groups*’ (p. 46). This definition encompasses the elements of micro focus, where employees, managers and citizens from the public domain constitute the unit of analysis, which entails the behavior and attitudes and integration of insights from psychology and the behavioral sciences into the field of public administration. The origin of the sub field of PA behaviorism, as a distinct line of investigation goes as far back as to the 1930s, at the time of the emergence of the human relations movement. As Grimmelikhuijsen et al. (2016) indicate the most obvious early attempt could be found in the work of Herbert Simon (1947) and Dwight Waldo (1948), who argued for a closer connection between the fields of PA and psychology.

Grimmelikhuijsen et al. (2016) feature BPA as an interdisciplinary exploration of various aspects of PA. The focus of analysis in this approach is the micro level attitudes and behavioral processes i.e. citizen, employees and executives in the public sector where it is intended to study their attitudes and behaviors by incorporating insights from psychology, behavioral sciences and the experimental approach (Moynihan, 2018). The scholars are anticipative of integration of those new areas into the PA research which would help improve effectiveness of public sector performance especially, public services through the emerging evidence on citizen and public officers’ behaviors, decision making and networking (Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2016; Olsen, 2015; Tummers et al., 2016). As Bogason & Brans (2008) emphasize, the existing gap between research and practice in PA, can be bridged by incorporating the new insights from the discourse on BPA. This can be of immense use to practitioners, such as policy makers, public managers and public professionals. Policy makers in the developed countries have realized the rational and cognitive limitations of

administrators and citizens and the importance of the use of insights from psychology to encourage desired behavior and evidence based public policy development. For instance, Grimmelikhuijsen et al., (2016) report that United Kingdom has established a Behavioral Insights Team by the Cabinet Office to inform the policy makers to the limitations of the awareness of the citizen and the wisdom of using psychological insights to obtain the desired behaviors.

Methodological approaches

As the scholars underscore much of the behavioral research within PA with its explicit focus on individuals, is particularly well suited for applying an experimental approach as a method for empirical investigation complementing the methodological tool-kit of PA scholars' psychological methods, such as experimental manipulations and psychometrics (Bouwman & Grimmelikhuijsen, 2016) and measurement techniques (e.g., Tummers 2012; Grimmelikhuijsen et al., 2016). Experiments are well suited to studying individuals and groups as the unit of analysis (Borros, 2010). These methods have not been widely used in PA research until recently (James, Jilke & Van Ryzin, 2017). The experimental approach entails the use of different forms of interventions/treatments in studying public organizations, public managers and service recipients. Simon used experimentation widely in his research together with mathematical models (Borrows, 2010).

New trends and adaptations of psychological theories

As Grimmelikhuijsen et al. (2016) suggest, PA scholars have received influence from the field of psychology, which are public management-related topics. Such topics that are listed in (P. 45) are: public leadership and motivation (Bellé, 2015), transparency and trust in public organizations (Grimmelikhuijsen & Meijer, 2014), public service competition and choice (Jilke, 2015), the role of information (Baekgaard & Serritzlew 2016), public perceptions on governments (Olsen, 2015). As Grimmelikhuijsen et al. (2016) explain these studies have applied psychological methods, such as experimental manipulations and psychometrics to study PA related issues. Psychological researchers in turn relate their theories to the PA field. An example they relate is the use of psychological models like the job-demands resources model (J-DR) to study public service motivation (PSM) (e.g. Bakker, 2015). As Grimmelikhuijsen et al. suggest the foci of BPA being individuals PA scholars need to borrow insights from psychology to study human motivation, cognitive and affective processes of judgment and decision-making.

Research Problems

Based on the comments of Grimmelikhuijsen et al. (2016) about the lack of integration and cross-fertilization between the fields of PA and psychology in terms of sharing theories, methodologies and toolkits, a need arises to explore whether scholars in the disciplines of public administration have adopted psychology informed theories and methods, such as motivational theories and methodologies, tool kits and whether scholars in the HR and business management related disciplines have espoused PA theories and methodologies. As previous in depths studies are almost non-available for reference in this respect, the following research questions are raised for a limited investigation.

- 1) To what extent do the academic staff /scholars in the discipline of public administration in the higher academic system of Sri Lanka adopt psychology informed theories, methods and toolkits to study phenomena in the context of public administration, as reflect in their research publications?

- 2) To what extent do the academic staff/scholars in the disciplines of human resources and business management in the higher academic system of Sri Lanka adopt public administration related theories, methods and toolkits to study phenomena in the context of organisational psychology, as reflect in their research publications?

Subjects

The unit of analysis of this study is the corpus of research publications made by the academic staff/scholars in the disciplines of PA *vis-à-vis* that of the HR and business management related disciplines in the higher academic system of Sri Lanka. For the purpose of parsimony, out of the myriad of sub fields of PA, the focus of this study was centered on ‘organization and management’ aspect in the PA domain with special focus on behavioral aspects of PA which included public personnel management, public leadership, employee motivation, public service delivery and individual and group performance, in relation to which publications were made by scholars in the disciplines of PA In the higher academic system. To study these two aspects comparatively in terms of the level of adoption of methods and cross-fertilization between PA and psychology, ‘human resources and business management (HRBM)’ was used as a proxy to represent the organizational psychology aspect, represented by the academic centers under various name boards, such as business administration, HRM, management and organizational studies, management studies, management, business management and management and entrepreneurship. One of the higher

academic centers were excluded from the analysis due to its technical orientation rather than psychological. Only the research articles based on empirical studies were selected for analysis in this study. The criterion for selecting research publications for analysis was employee and sub-group attitudes and behaviors within an organizational setting. The organizations under review within the system of public sector included all the public institutions, provincial councils, local governments and semi government institutions including public banks and higher academic centers. For the purpose of confidentiality, the identities of the respective organizations and higher academic centers were withheld.

Procedure

Data on respective disciplines and identities of the higher academic center members/academics, designations, details of publication of research articles were obtained from the public domain which included respective higher academic center websites, Research Gate and Google Scholar. Publications included research articles appeared in higher academic center research journals, indexed and peer reviewed and non – indexed peer reviewed journals, papers presented in local and international seminars. The data on publications made during the period from 2015 to 2019 were considered for analysis. Selection criteria of articles for analysis were as follows: regarding multi author research papers the principle author was credited with the ownership but where the principle author was external to the higher academic system, the article was credited in favor of the higher academic center member. Only organizational behavior related empirical research papers were taken into consideration. However, in relation to the PA related higher academic centers, articles carrying PA related themes located in public contexts were selected for analysis in order to compare those with HRM, business and management related articles. The qualitative research method with data tabulation and limited coding was used. Content analytic procedure was followed in data analysis as instructed in Miles & Huberman (1974).

Results

Preliminary analysis

The results of the content analytic procedure which addressed the proposed research questions raised are delivered from here onwards. The data extracted from the sources mentioned previously were analyzed using several descriptive tables given below.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics

Higher Academic centers	Disciplines	No. of scholars	No. of Professors/ As. professors	Senior lecturers/lecturers	Probationary lecturers	PhD	MSc./MBA/MPhil
A	Human resources	10	3	07	0	7	3
	Management and Organization Studies	13	3	05	5	8	4
B	Human resources	08	0	02	6	01	05
	Management studies	07	0	01	6	01	06
C	Human Resource Management	14	0	13	1	03	10
	Management & Entrepreneurship	12	1	08	3	02	10
D	Public Administration	08	1	07	0	4	5
	Business administration	22	0	17	5	6	12
	Human resources	13	3	09	1	10	2
E	Human Resource Management	28	3	18	7	11	15
F	Organizational studies	06	0	05	1	01	04
	Human Resource Management	03	1	02	0	01	02
G	Business Management	12	0	08	4	03	09
	Management Science	15	1	10	4	05	09
H	Public Administration	04	0	04	0	02	02
	Human Resource Management	11	0	07	4	03	08
J	Management	11	1	09	1	05	01
K	Business management	12	0	10	2	06	06
	Human Resource Management	02	0	02	0	00	02
L	Management	17	2	14	1	09	04
M	Business Management	10	0	08	2	02	07
Total		238	19	166	53	90	125

Table 1 illustrates the basic statistics of the total strength of the academic staff in the selected higher academic centers within the system subject to the study (except one technical academic center). The total number of academic staff in the eleven higher academic centers is 238 which comprises of 19 professors, 166 senior lecturers/lecturers, 53 probationers, among whom are 90 PhD holders and 125 MPhil, MSc/MBA holders. Out of the total number of academic staff the percentages of professorial staff, senior/lecturers, PhD and MPhil, MSc/MBA holders for the community constitute 7.9%, 69.7%, 22.2%, 37.8% and 52.5% respectively. The total

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strength of PA, HRM and business management (as percentages out of the total) disciplines are 5%, 37% and 57.5% respectively, indicating the comparatively lesser strength in the discipline of PA compared to others within the system.

Table 2 Yearly publications in journals and presentations at seminars

Serial No	Year of publication	Number of articles published in indexed and peer reviewed journals	percentage	Number of articles published non indexed peer reviewed journals	percentage	Number of articles presented at academic center seminars	Number of articles presented at international seminars
1	2015	10	14	6	10	20	12
2	2016	20	29	14	24	02	16
3	2017	14	20	14	24	06	05
4	2018	15	21.4	17	29	22	07
5	2019	11	15.7	8	13	-	16
		70	100	59	100	50	56

Due to the multiple indexations of journal articles it was not possible to display all the sources in tabular form. According to Table 2 number of articles published in indexed and peer reviewed and non-indexed peer reviewed journals during the period of study were 70 and 59 respectively.

Total number of articles presented in seminars was 106 out of which 50 and 56 numbers were presented at local and international seminars respectively. Table 2 also indicates a trend of gradual slowdown of journal publications (with a peak in 2016 and gradual decrease towards 2019) by the scholars under observation. Assuming that 238 scholars were in their positions from 2015 through 2019, it transpired that around half (54%) of the scholar community actively contributed to publications in research journals during the period. Presentations made in seminars were around half (44.9%) of the academic staff. These conversely reveal that around half of the academic community are not actively engaged in research publications. However, there is a positive and encouraging trend towards publishing in indexed and peer reviewed journals compared to non - indexed peer-reviewed.

Table 3 PA and psychology related publications in disciplines in academic centers

Academic centers	Discipline	Number of scholars	public administration (PA) scholars used psychology (HRBM) related methodologies etc. to study PA related context issues	HRBM scholars used public administration methodologies etc. to study psychology (HRBM) related issues	Public administration scholars used PA themes and methodologies etc. to study PA related issues	Public administration scholars used PA methodologies etc. to study psychology (HRBM) related issues	Public administration scholars used HRBM scholars used psychology related methodologies etc. to study PA related issues	HRBM scholars used psychology	Indexed/peer & reviewed + non-indexed but peer reviewed journals	Seminars	Indexed and peer reviewed journals	Non-indexed but peer reviewed journals	
A	Human resources	10	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	0	1	1	
	Management and Organization Studies	13	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	0	0	2	
B	Human resources management	08	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	0	0	1	
	Management studies	07	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
	Human Resource Management	14	-	-	-	-	4	2	3	3	1	2	
C		12	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
D		28	-	-	-	-	20	6	28	5	12	16	
E	Public administration	08	9	-	7	-	-	-	12	4	7	5	
	Business administration	22	-	-	-	-	3	4	6	1	2	4	
	Human resources	13	-	-	-	-	15	2	30	1	19	11	
F	Organizational studies	06	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
	Human resource management	03	-	-	-	-	2	5	5	2	1	4	
G	Business management	12	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	0	1	0	
H	public administration	15	1	-	-	-	1	-	0	2	0	0	
	Management sciences	04	-	-	-	-	-	2	1	1	0	1	
I	Human resource management	11	-	-	-	-	1	-	0	1	0	0	
J	Management	11	-	-	-	-	4	2	22	1	11	11	
K	Management	12	-	-	-	-	5	9	4	1	4	0	
	Human Resource management	02	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
L	Management	17	-	-	-	-	8	6	11	3	9	2	
M	Business management	10	-	-	-	-	0	5	2	3	2	0	
	Total	23	10	-	7	-	1	62	1	130	1	70	60

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Table 3 illustrates the number of journal articles published in indexed and peer reviewed and non-indexed peer reviewed journals and presentations made in seminars in 2015 through 2019, discipline wise. During the period under review scholars have published 130 articles in journals in the above categories and have made presentations of their research papers in 107 seminars. Among those were 70 publications in indexed and peer reviewed journals and 60 in non-indexed peer reviewed journals. Furthermore, scholars in three academic centers reached the standard between 11 – 30 publication of research articles in indexed and peer reviewed journals while others achieved either below 6 publications or none. However, in an analysis carried out separately revealed that the majority (43) of journals were not within the international grading criteria and only 7 journals were within H index 4 to 41. Only three journals out of 54 were in the C grade and one was in B grade according to the 2019 Australian Business Deans Council grading criteria (ABDC).

As Table 3 further indicates, 10 articles are found in favor of '*Public administration (PA) scholars used psychology (HRBM) related methodologies etc. to study PA related context issues*' category and none in favor of '*HRBM scholars used public administration methodologies etc. to study psychology (HRBM) related issues*'. Seven articles support the category of '*public administration scholars used PA methodologies etc. to study PA related issues*', and one in support of '*public administration scholars used PA methodologies etc. to study psychology related issues*' category. There is a marginal support for the category of '*public administration scholars used psychology related methodologies etc.*' The categories of '*HRBM scholars used psychological methods to study PA context issues*' and '*HRBM scholars used psychological methods to study psychology related issues*' are supported with 63 and 159 articles, respectively.

Table 3 also shows that discipline of human resources in two higher academic centers stand out with 125 publications made by 41 scholars i.e. around three papers by each scholar, whereas in relations to HR in other higher academic centers have produced 48 articles by 33 scholars indicating an average of one article per person. In the discipline of PA, 23 scholars in the two higher academic centers have produced on average less than one article published (18 published articles). Scholars in the discipline of business and management have performed even poorly with an average less than one article (0.8). Three of such higher academic centers represented by 27 scholars had published none during the period of study. These averages were calculated in relations to published empirical studies.

Table: 4 Theories, research methods and data analysis techniques used

Serial No		Quantitative	Qualitative	Mixed methods	Case method	Theories and data analysis techniques
1	Public administration (PA) scholars used psychology (HRBM) related methodologies etc. to study PA related context issues	3	6	1	0	<p>Emerging themes in public sector research – Service quality on satisfaction, ethical intentions of employees, perceived service quality of public service, presentism, administrative preparedness, critical success factors, managerial innovation, interagency collaboration.</p> <p>Job characteristics model The Parasuraman's Gap model of service quality</p> <p>Descriptive statistics and inferential tests Distribution, correlation, regression reliability, structural equation modelling</p>
2	HRBM scholars used public administration methodologies etc. to study psychology (HRBM) related issues	-	-	-	-	-
3	Public administration scholars used PA themes and methodologies etc. to study PA related issues	4	3	2	0	<p>Emerging themes in public sector research - Public Sector Productivity, ethical leadership, solid waste management, risk reduction strategy, public value, poverty alleviation policy, household out-of-pocket healthcare expenditure</p> <p>Techniques used – Descriptive, Distribution, correlation, regression</p>
4	Public administration scholars used PA methodologies etc. to study psychology (HRBM) related issues	-	-	-	-	-
5	Public administration scholars used psychology related methodologies etc. to study psychology related (HRBM) issues	1	-	-	-	Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation coefficient analysis, simple linear regression and factor analysis
	Total	210	17	8	2	

Table 4 illustrates theories, research methods and data analysis techniques used by the scholars in their research processes. In both ‘HRBM scholars used psychology related methodologies etc. to study PA related issues’ and ‘HRBM scholars used psychology related methodologies etc. to study psychology related issues’ have favored the technique of quantitative analysis most, while scholars in ‘Public administration (PA) scholars used psychology related methodologies etc. to study PA related issues’ category have favored qualitative methodology. The last column of the table ‘Emerging themes in public sector research’ indicates contrasting themes or concepts peculiar to PA under the categories of 1, 3 and 5, for example public service quality, ethical leadership, public value, administrative preparedness, ethical intentions of employees, interagency collaboration, risk reduction strategy etc. It is also evident that concepts derived from psychology had been used in PA settings e.g. service quality on satisfaction, perceived service quality of public service etc. Evidence was found to suggest that PA scholars have used psychology related theories in studying PA related phenomena e.g. Job characteristic model and The Parasuraman’s Gap model of service quality. These are also examples for adoption of BPA approach in public management and also in contrast, these also provide constructive and critical contributions to integration between public administration and psychology. Going back to Table 3, it also supports this point in column 1 where ten articles confirm that ‘Public administration (PA) scholars used psychology (HRBM) related methodologies etc. to study PA related context issues’ and that the column 3 shows 7 articles confirm ‘Public administration scholars used PA methodologies etc. to study PA related issues’. Conversely, as 6th and 7th rows of Table 4 shows in 56 articles under ‘HRBM scholars used psychology related methodologies etc. to study PA related issues’ and in 146 articles under ‘HRBM scholars used psychology related methodologies etc. to study psychology related issues’ have overwhelmingly been used the quantitative methodology. Qualitative, mixed methods and case methods had been sparsely used. Unpredictably, none of the scholars had used other methods, such as modelling, two-study multi-method approach (i.e., an experiment and a survey), and field or laboratory experimentation as anticipated. There is also no evidence found to establish ‘HRBM scholars used public administration methodologies to study psychology related issues’ and ‘Public administration scholars used PA methodologies to study psychology related issues’ categories which are most important to establish cross fertilization of theories and methods between the fields of PA and psychology (represented in this study by HRBM). However, the PA field is substantially indebted to HRBM while HRBM

also demonstrates notable psychology-informed approach in relation to the context of PA as Table 3 indicates.

Table 5 Favored concepts/variables used by scholars

		Job satisfaction	Org commitment	OCB	Work life balance	Turnover	Employee	Psychological contract	Perceived org	Customer	Big 5 personality	Service quality	Leadership	QWL	Welfare	Employee	Emotional	Work family	Motivation	Job stress	Psychological
1	Public administration (PA) scholars used psychology (HRBM) related methodologies etc. to study PA related context issues	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	HRBM scholars used psychology related methodologies etc. to study PA related issues	17	7	6	10	4	4	2	2	6	4	3	4	5	2	2	3	2	0	1	0
		54	25	20	19	17	12	9	9	8	7	7	7	7	7	6	6	6	5	5	5

Table 5 shows the number of time specific psychological variables are used in published research articles by both PA and HRBM scholars. In this table 2, 3, 4 and 5 rows were eliminated due to negligibility of data. Table 5 plays an auxiliary role in further clarifying the biasness towards using psychological variables by HRBM scholars. For instance, job satisfaction is the most favored variable being used in 54 articles followed by organizational commitment (25), OCB (20) and so on. To recap, the results reported above allow us to find answers to the research questions. As regards the first question ‘*To what extent do the academic staff/scholars in the*

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discipline of public administration in the higher academic system of Sri Lanka adopt psychology informed theories, methods and toolkits to study phenomena in the context of public administration, as reflect in their research publications? the results show that PA scholars are influenced to an extent by the psychology related theories e.g. Job characteristics model, Parasuraman's Gap model of service quality (Parasuraman et al. 1985), concepts, methodologies and tools. The results also show that PA scholars have used PA methodologies to study PA related issues. Results do not provide support for PA scholars using PA methodologies to study psychology (HRBM) related issues. Also results do not support for PA scholars using psychology related methods to study psychology related (HRBM) methods etc. It is observed that PA scholars have used emerging themes such as service quality on satisfaction, ethical intentions of employees, perceived service quality of public service, presenteeism, administrative preparedness, critical success factors, managerial innovation, interagency collaboration, household out-of-pocket healthcare expenditure, ethical leadership in studying public sector related issues. Results also indicate that PA scholars have used psychology (HRBM) related methodologies etc. to study issues pertaining to PA related context where they have used a few psychological variables. Where PA scholars are dependent on quantitative data analysis techniques they have used descriptive statistics, distribution, and correlation and regression analysis. However, it is observed that PA scholars have not used PA methodologies to study psychology related issues. Also it becomes apparent that PA scholars are not largely dependent on psychology related methods to study psychology related (HRBM) issues.

With regard to the second research question: *'To what extent do the academic staff/scholars in the disciplines of human resources and business management in the higher academic system of Sri Lanka adopt public administration related theories, methods and toolkits to study phenomena in the context of organizational psychology, as reflect in their research publications?'* although it is not directly observed that the psychology related scholars have used PA methodologies per se to study psychology related issues, evidence is found to suggest that psychology related scholars have used psychological methodologies etc. to study PA related issues. It is also observed that psychology related scholars are much lenient towards using methodologies associated with psychology etc. to study psychology (HRBM) related issues. Also psychology related scholars have largely used quantitative methodologies to study issues associated with PA and they have used psychology related methodologies etc., such as quantitative methodologies to study issues associated with psychology. Also psychology related scholars have used concepts connected with psychology and

variables in studying issues of psychology rather than using PA theories and concepts in their research studies.

Discussion

As can be seen from the foregoing analysis, very limited evidence is found to suggest that PA scholars in the higher academic system are substantially influenced by psychology related theories, methods and tools. Instead, they largely confine to their methods etc. unique to their own territory and are more lenient towards qualitative methodologies including grounded method and when they want to use quantitative methods they use qualitative approach to develop scales, rather than relying upon validated psychological research scales. They have used psychology related theoretical models for their analyses to a limited extent. On the other hand, HRBM scholars though they study issues in the context of the public sector, there is no adequate evidence to suggest that they have used PA related theories, methods and toolkits in their studies. Their strong leniency towards psychological theories, methods etc. could be discerned in their work. Overall, the results of the limited study confirm the concerns of Grimmelikhuijsen, Jilke, Olsen & Tummers (2016) where they refer to a lack of cross fertilisation between the fields of PA and psychology in terms of usage of theories and methodologies and tools.

Conversely, psychological researchers could also have contributed to the methodological development of public administration. It is pertinent to revert to the advice of Grimmelikhuijsen et al. (2016) that BPA should add to their methodological toolbox much richer set of qualitative and quantitative methods, including qualitative interviews, critical incident analysis, and functional magnetic reasoning imaging, experimental logic, diary studies, field experiments, laboratory experiments, and methods focused on causal inference etc. borrowing from behavioral sciences. Grimmelikhuijsen et al. (2016) seriously suggest experimental approach to BPA with its explicit focus on individuals. However, it is observed that in this study neither psychological nor PA scholars have used experimentation in their studies. As for the PA scholars, they could have relied on experimentation: for instance, in studying ethical leadership they could have used experimentation where they can find causal relationships.

Auxiliary to the main research problems of the study, the findings make interesting revelations useful to the scholars and authorities. Considering all the higher academic centers as a single system, relatively fewer numbers of academic staff/scholars (12 as against 226) in the discipline of PA has put themselves at a disadvantageous position

in terms of proliferation of PA research at a time when it should have been most welcome. It is also inappropriate to uphold an argument for cross-fertilization considering the imbalance of the prevailing distribution of the academic staff among higher academic centers. Our attention should also be focused on the poor productivity of scholarly publications considering the strength of scholars in the observed higher academic centers. It was revealed that more or less half of the academic staff has not actively engaged in research publications in the respective areas. The discipline of HR apart, majority of other disciplines have published either one or statistically insignificant number of articles during the period under investigation. Even a number of PhD degree holders were continuously on the side of the non-contributors. This situation has to be rectified by the authorities of the higher academic centers and provide encouragements to the scholars to publish in A or B (ADBC rated) journals and peer reviewed and indexed journals.

Our findings in this study commensurate with the observations in Grimmelikhuijsen et al. (2016) that smaller share of psychology informed articles are found in their review of articles in *Public Administration Review (PAR)*. Grimmelikhuijsen and others recommend areas, such as e-government, network governance, accountability where insights from psychology can be considered. In this study it is observed that the PA scholars who have studied topics, such as public value of e-government and e-procurement, have used qualitative methodology including grounded research. Grimmelikhuijsen et al. (2016) warn infrequent development of scales by the researchers themselves, leaving some important PA concepts without thoroughly testing measurement scales and also place greater emphasis on measurement that can help BPA. Furthermore, the above areas may be suited to study BPA, as those directly concern individual citizens' attitudes and behaviors in a public sector context.

It is pertinent to draw our attention to the on-going debate in the PA literature, in BPA in particular, on the knowledge creation/building or theory building process through quantitative methodology including experimentation, also known as basic research, which is intended to expand our knowledge (Hedrick et. al. 1993) and the applied practitioner focused research by using qualitative methodology, which are heavily reliant on case studies. Qualitative methodology also known as applied research, which mainly use case method in contrast, expands our understanding of a specific problem to find solution for that problem.

Furthermore, there has been a continuous argument on the usefulness of quantitative methodology for studying PA research for testing and extending psychological and

PA theories and concepts, as well as developing new theories and concepts (Tummers, 2019). The opponents of the quantitative methodology warn that in using measurements researchers may encounter issues, such as social desirability bias (Kim & Kim, 2016) and common source bias (Favero & Bullock 2015). They further illustrate that many PA studies are prone to various measurement errors, such as questionnaire wording, overly complicated questions, data coding, and estimation etc. Gill (1999) suggests that the hypothesis testing employed commonly in PA and other social science fields is flawed logically and interpretively.

Moynihan (2018) spells out that the experimentation which has the ability to offer causal insights, has long been known but rarely used in PA research. However, currently, there has been a heavy emphasis on using experimentation in BPA research, at both lab and field level (see Bouwman & Grimmelikhuijsen, 2016) while some rejects this idea (see Tummers, 2019). Critics have warned of the disadvantages of over-reliance on experiments (Moynihan, 2018) and its lack of external generalizability (Deaton and Cartwright, 2016; Angrist & Pischke, 2010). Those weaknesses can be minimised by carrying out multiple experiments in multiple settings (Angrist & Pischke, 2010).

Recommendation

As Jilke (2015) advocates that the PA scholars in the higher academic system should be familiar with many theories of PA embedded in such micro-foundations of individual attitudes and behavior e.g. *e*-service delivery on citizen behavior and attitudes (West, 2004). Also HRBM scholars related to organizational psychology should combine their theories with the field of PA for future cross-fertilization of the two disciplines. PA scholars should undertake BPA related research projects and try to draw not only on the best available knowledge within PA but also from state-of-the-art knowledge from psychology. As Simon (1947) postulated the PA researchers must contribute to psychology and psychology should learn from PA which he characterized as a two-way street.

Several PA scholars who have been recognized with providing advocacies to strengthen the BPA research process have come out with some useful recommendations. PA scholars may focus on the major PA theories and areas recommended for integrating psychological processes which include public leadership and motivation, transparency, public service competition and choice, performance information, trust of civil servants, transparency, public accountability,

e-government, network governance etc. It will be useful for the PA scholars here to undertake original or replicating work on the following PA related theories and concepts that have been studied by scholars using a BPA approach. Those include: accountability (Schillemans, 2016), representative bureaucracy (Ricucci et al., 2016), bureaucratic reputation (Lee & Van Ryzin, 2019), red tape (DeHart-Davis & Pandey, 2009), and discretion (Thomann et al., 2018). Major areas of PA theories include the theory of authority (Barnard, 1938), Public Service Motivation theory (Perry, 2000) and administrative leadership (Van Wart, 2003). Psychology related theories that may be useful for PA scholars include prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979), and choice overload hypothesis (Iyengar & Lepper, 2000).

Grimmelikhuijsen et al. (2016) advice to develop usable knowledge by conducting high-quality research on topics on demand by practitioners, such as public sector performance. Also, despite the emergence of many new themes under the new public management (NPM) and the post neoliberalism, areas, such as accountability, transparency, social justice etc. coming under the purview of good governance movement, and poverty alleviation as well as sustainable development (under the UN engineered interventions) still remain largely unattended by PA scholars. Especially, citizen perceptions on these areas as well as impacts of the related policies have to be addressed. Anyhow, capacity development of the discipline of PA in the higher academic system is important for the proliferation of PA and BPA related research in Sri Lanka.

To conclude, BPA research should not be left with the academic scholars alone but a large number of scholars who are qualified in theory and research methodology remain in the public institutions who can combine with the academia to undertake particularly practice related research and policy research and make joint publications. This will help the PA scholars to identify real world issues for study, rather than lenient to undertaking abstract research and they should seriously consider to undertake field level experimentation. In this regard the academia – practitioner collaboration research projects have to be encouraged.

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