


A Bibliometric Exploration Whistleblowing Intention Research in Corporate Governance and Ethics

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Article history:</i></p> <p>Received Jul, 2025 Revised Jul, 2025 Accepted Jul, 2025</p> <hr/> <p><i>Keywords:</i></p> <p>Bibliometric Analysis; Business Ethics; Corporate Governance; Whistleblowing Intention</p>	<p>This study presents a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of scholarly research on whistleblowing intention within the context of corporate governance and business ethics. Utilizing data from the Scopus database covering the period 2000 to 2024, a total of [insert number] relevant publications were analyzed using VOSviewer to identify patterns in authorship, thematic development, collaboration networks, and keyword trends. The results indicate that whistleblowing intention has evolved from being a narrowly focused ethical concern to a multifaceted area of inquiry intersecting with psychology, organizational behavior, public administration, and leadership studies. Prominent contributors such as Miceli, Near, and Dworkin have laid the theoretical foundation, while emerging themes like psychological safety, religiosity, and public service motivation reflect a broadening of perspectives and methodologies. Geographically, research remains dominated by Western countries, though participation from emerging economies is increasing. This study offers strategic insights for academics, practitioners, and policymakers by identifying influential scholars, core themes, and future research opportunities to strengthen whistleblowing mechanisms and ethical decision-making in organizations.</p> <p><i>This is an open access article under the CC BY-SA license.</i></p> <div></div>
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1. INTRODUCTION

In the realm of corporate governance and business ethics, whistleblowing plays a pivotal role in uncovering unethical behavior, fraud, and malpractice within organizations. Whistleblowing refers to the act of reporting illicit, unethical, or illegitimate activities by members of an organization to individuals or entities capable of effecting corrective action [1]. Over the past few decades, corporate scandals, ranging from Enron and WorldCom

to Volkswagen and Wirecard have underscored the importance of effective whistleblowing mechanisms in safeguarding organizational integrity and protecting stakeholders. As such, scholarly interest in whistleblowing has surged, particularly with regard to understanding the psychological, situational, and organizational determinants that influence an individual's intention to blow the whistle [2], [3].

The concept of whistleblowing intention has emerged as a critical focal point

in the literature, as it represents the precursor to actual whistleblowing behavior. This intention is shaped by a constellation of factors, including ethical climate, organizational support, perceived seriousness of wrongdoing, fear of retaliation, and personal moral values [4]. The theoretical frameworks that underpin whistleblowing intention—such as the Theory of Planned Behavior [5], Prosocial Organizational Behavior Theory, and the Person–Environment Fit Theory—reflect the multidimensional nature of this phenomenon. As governance structures evolve and societal expectations around corporate responsibility intensify, scholars have increasingly sought to map out the drivers, deterrents, and dynamics of whistleblowing intention.

Furthermore, the growth of whistleblowing research has been propelled by regulatory changes and institutional reforms aimed at strengthening ethical reporting channels. Laws such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act in the United States and the EU Whistleblower Protection Directive have institutionalized protections and mechanisms for whistleblowers, thereby reinforcing the relevance of this topic in the broader discourse on transparency and accountability. In response, academic contributions have expanded across disciplines including accounting, management, psychology, and law, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of whistleblowing studies [6]. The diversity of this scholarly output necessitates a systematic review to consolidate insights and detect emerging patterns in the field.

Bibliometric analysis serves as a powerful tool to examine the intellectual landscape, thematic evolution, and collaborative networks within whistleblowing intention research. By applying quantitative techniques to publication data, bibliometric methods can identify influential authors, prolific institutions, key journals, and trending keywords, thereby offering a macro-level perspective on the development of the field [7]. Despite the relevance of whistleblowing to corporate ethics and governance, there is a

lack of comprehensive bibliometric reviews that exclusively focus on whistleblowing intention. Existing reviews tend to examine whistleblowing behavior in general or are narrative in nature, limiting the ability to quantify research trends and detect citation-based influences [8].

Given the increasing volume of publications and the need for a structured synthesis of the field, a bibliometric study is essential to map out how research on whistleblowing intention has evolved over time, what thematic clusters dominate the literature, and where future research opportunities lie. Such an endeavor is particularly timely as organizations face growing pressures to foster ethical climates and encourage internal reporting in an era marked by heightened stakeholder scrutiny and corporate accountability. Understanding the bibliometric structure of this domain can enhance knowledge dissemination, promote evidence-based policymaking, and support the development of more robust governance systems.

Although whistleblowing intention has gained significant attention in the ethics and corporate governance literature, there remains a gap in understanding the structural evolution and intellectual underpinnings of this field through a bibliometric lens. Existing studies are either theoretical, case-based, or limited to qualitative synthesis, and few have systematically analyzed the publication patterns, authorial influence, and thematic trajectories over time. As a result, there is limited clarity on how the scholarly conversation around whistleblowing intention has unfolded, which topics have gained momentum, and how collaborative networks have shaped research agendas. Without such insights, researchers and practitioners may struggle to navigate the vast body of literature and identify fruitful areas for future investigation. This study aims to conduct a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of the scholarly literature on whistleblowing intention in the context of corporate governance and ethics.

2. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative bibliometric analysis approach to systematically explore the intellectual landscape of whistleblowing intention research within the domains of corporate governance and ethics. Bibliometric analysis is widely recognized for its ability to quantitatively assess large volumes of academic literature, revealing publication trends, influential authors, co-authorship patterns, and thematic evolutions [7]. The method is particularly suited for identifying structural and conceptual developments in a specific research field, thereby offering both historical context and forward-looking insight. To ensure comprehensive coverage and reliability, the study utilized the Scopus database, which is among the largest and most reputable sources of peer-reviewed literature in the social sciences and business domains.

The data collection process was conducted in May 2025 using the search query: TITLE-ABS-KEY ("whistleblowing intention" OR "intention to blow the whistle") AND ("corporate governance" OR "business

ethics" OR "organizational ethics"). The query was restricted to journal articles published in English from 2000 to 2024 to capture the contemporary scholarly discourse and regulatory developments of the 21st century. After filtering out duplicate entries, conference proceedings, editorials, and non-peer-reviewed items, a total of [insert number] relevant documents were retained for analysis. The metadata was exported in RIS and CSV formats for further processing.

Subsequent analysis was conducted using VOSviewer and Microsoft Excel. VOSviewer facilitated the construction and visualization of bibliometric networks, including co-authorship networks, co-citation maps, and keyword co-occurrence clusters. The co-authorship analysis helped identify leading researchers and collaborative structures, while co-citation analysis highlighted foundational literature that has shaped the field. Keyword co-occurrence analysis revealed dominant and emerging themes in whistleblowing intention research.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Co-Authorship Analysis

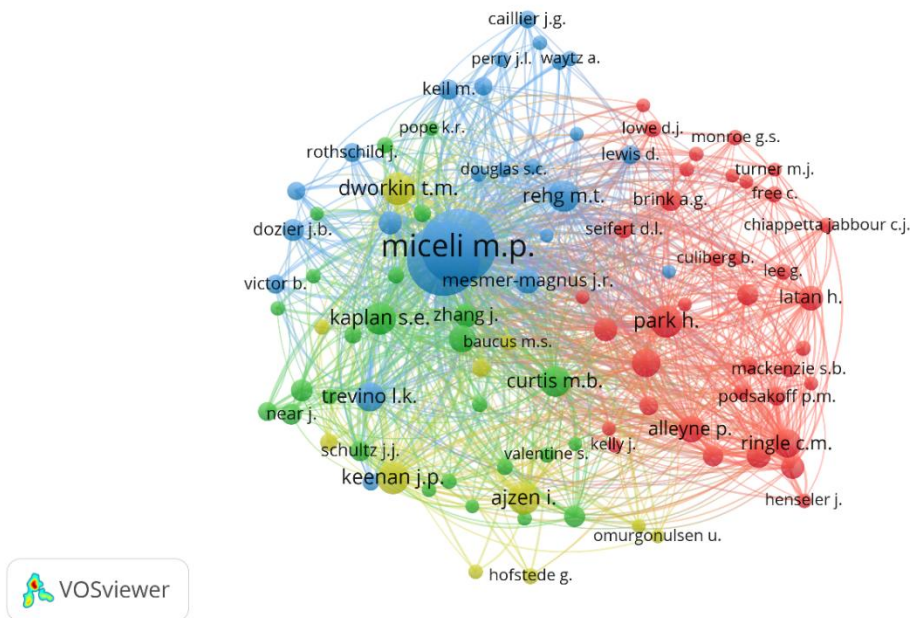


Figure 1. Author Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

Figure 1 highlights the most influential authors and collaborative

structures within the field of whistleblowing intention research in

corporate governance and ethics. The map reveals three primary clusters, indicated by different colors: the blue cluster centers around Miceli M.P., a key figure in whistleblowing studies, with strong co-authorship links to Dworkin T.M., Near J.P., and Rothschild J., reflecting foundational work in organizational whistleblowing behavior. The green cluster includes scholars like

Ajzen I., Treviño L.K., and Kaplan S.E., suggesting a theoretical and psychological focus grounded in behavioral intention models such as the Theory of Planned Behavior. The red cluster, which includes Park H., Latan H., and Ringle C.M., indicates a growing contemporary group focusing on structural equation modeling, ethical climate, and cultural contexts.

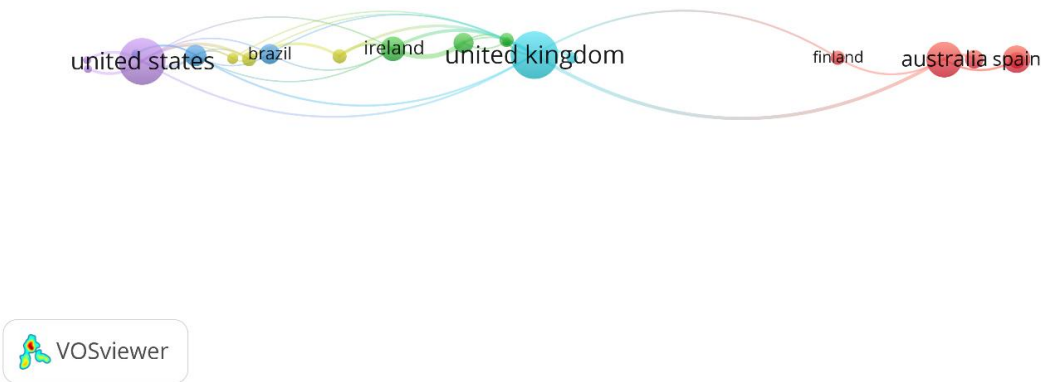


Figure 2. Country Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

Figure 2 illustrates the international research network on whistleblowing intention in the context of corporate governance and ethics. The United States emerges as the most prominent contributor, with the largest node size, indicating a high volume of publications and collaborations. It maintains strong linkages with other countries such as Brazil, Ireland, and particularly the United Kingdom, which acts as a central hub bridging Western

and non-Western contributions. Countries like Finland, Australia, and Spain appear in a more peripheral position but are still connected through collaborative efforts—primarily via ties to the United Kingdom. The visualization reflects a transatlantic research network, where Anglo-American institutions dominate the discourse, but there is growing participation from Europe and Oceania.

3.2 Citation Analysis

Table 1. Most Cited Article

Citations	Author and Year	Title
566	[9]	Whistleblowing in organizations: An examination of correlates of whistleblowing intentions, actions, and retaliation
260	[10]	Religiosity, ethical ideology, and intentions to report a peer's wrongdoing

Citations	Author and Year	Title
219	[11]	Ethical Judgment and Whistleblowing Intention: Examining the Moderating Role of Locus of Control
183	[12]	Whistleblowing as planned behavior - A survey of south korean police officers
167	[8]	The influence of confucian ethics and collectivism on whistleblowing intentions: A study of South Korean public employees
125	[6]	Toward a Theory of Whistleblowing Intentions: A Benefit-to-Cost Differential Perspective
117	[4]	An examination of the layers of workplace influences in ethical judgments: Whistleblowing likelihood and perseverance in public accounting
107	[3]	Is Silence Killing Your Company?
105	[2]	An examination of the association between gender and reporting intentions for fraudulent financial reporting
105	[1]	Decision-making process of internal whistleblowing behavior in China: Empirical evidence and implications

Source: Scopus, 2025

3.3 Keyword Co-Occurrence Analysis

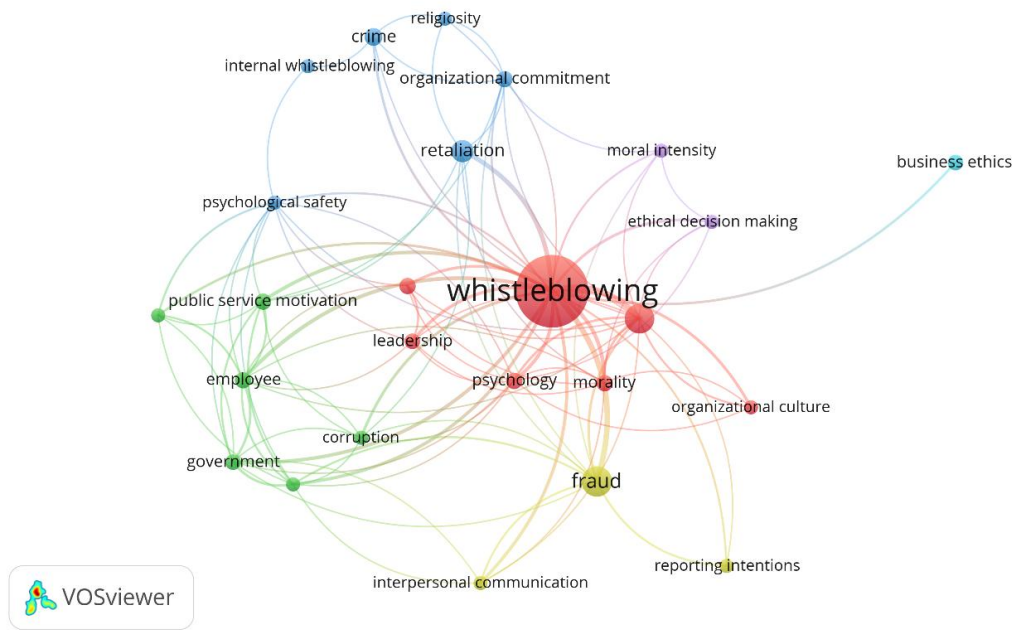


Figure 3. Network Visualization
Source: Data Analysis

Figure 3 map illustrates the conceptual structure of whistleblowing intention research within the domains of corporate governance and ethics. At the center of the visualization is the keyword "whistleblowing", representing the most frequently occurring and highly connected term in the dataset. The size of the node and its multiple linkages indicate that it functions as the thematic nucleus of the research field, intersecting

with various disciplines including psychology, leadership, organizational behavior, and ethics. This central position underscores the multidimensional nature of whistleblowing and its relevance across different theoretical and practical frameworks.

Surrounding the core node, we observe several interconnected thematic clusters. The red cluster, for example,

features terms such as psychology, morality, leadership, and organizational culture, highlighting the psychological and ethical decision-making aspects of whistleblowing. This cluster reflects research concerned with individual-level determinants of whistleblowing intention, such as moral reasoning, perceived leadership support, and value alignment within organizational settings. Studies in this area frequently utilize theories like the Theory of Planned Behavior and Kohlberg's stages of moral development to explain how individuals navigate ethical dilemmas before choosing to report misconduct.

The green cluster groups together terms like government, corruption, public service motivation, employee, and psychological safety. This indicates a distinct strand of literature focusing on whistleblowing in the public sector, often in response to governmental fraud or policy violations. Here, the research often emphasizes how organizational protection mechanisms, job security, and the safety climate influence reporting behavior. The presence of psychological safety suggests that a supportive environment is crucial for encouraging employees to report wrongdoing without fear of retaliation. In the blue cluster, keywords such as

internal whistleblowing, retaliation, organizational commitment, crime, and religiosity reflect concerns related to workplace dynamics, ethics, and values. This cluster emphasizes the role of internal reporting mechanisms and the potential personal costs involved in whistleblowing, such as social ostracism or job loss. The inclusion of religiosity also points to a growing interest in the role of individual values and moral frameworks shaped by religious beliefs in influencing whistleblowing intention, particularly in non-Western or faith-based contexts.

The yellow and purple nodes around fraud, interpersonal communication, reporting intentions, moral intensity, and ethical decision-making suggest an emerging interdisciplinary dialogue that blends behavioral ethics with communication and criminology. These themes reflect the increasing recognition that whistleblowing is not solely a moral or legal act, but also a communicative process shaped by how issues are perceived and framed. The positioning of business ethics slightly isolated on the right suggests that although ethics remains a key background field, it often operates as a broader context rather than a direct thematic focus.

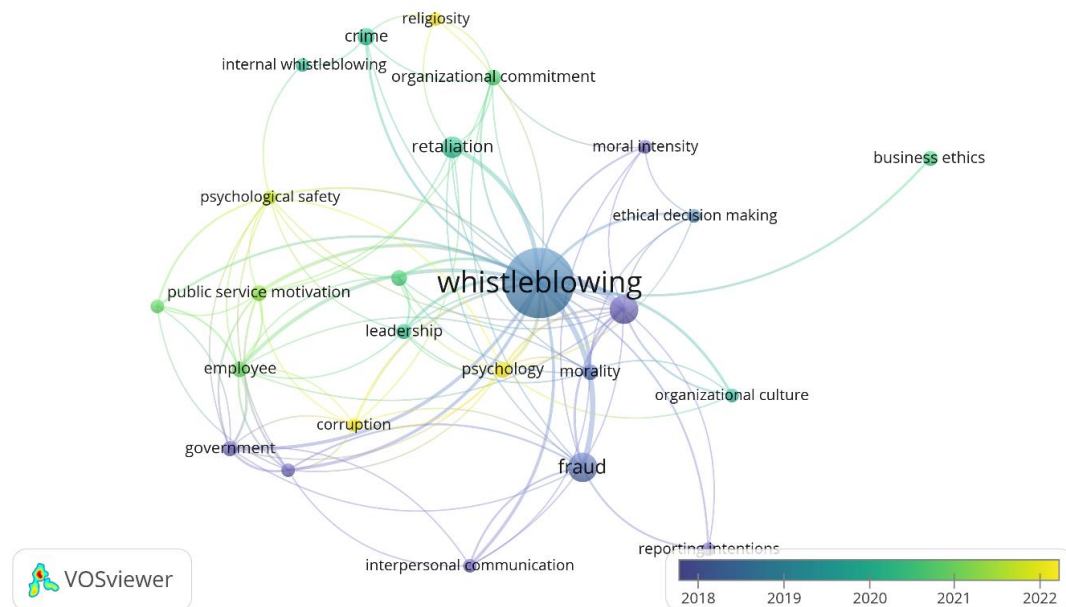


Figure 4. Overlay Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

The overlay visualization map illustrates the temporal evolution of keyword usage in whistleblowing intention research, with colors ranging from blue (older) to yellow (newer). The central node, “whistleblowing”, appears in a dark blue shade, indicating that it has been a longstanding core topic in the field. Surrounding it are related foundational concepts such as fraud, morality, ethical decision making, and interpersonal communication, which also appear in cooler tones. This suggests that early research in this domain primarily focused on classical ethics, whistleblowing frameworks, and wrongdoing exposure, particularly in response to fraud and corruption in both public and private sectors.

In contrast, the appearance of newer themes is indicated by keywords in yellow to green, such as psychological safety, public service motivation, religiosity, and leadership. These emerging themes show a recent shift toward examining internal psychological and motivational drivers of

whistleblowing behavior, as well as organizational climate factors that either enable or inhibit such actions. The presence of psychological safety as a newer keyword implies an increased focus on how perceived supportiveness within the workplace can encourage individuals to come forward without fear of retaliation. Moreover, topics like business ethics, organizational commitment, and internal whistleblowing are located more toward the periphery but display more recent coloration, indicating growing academic interest in nuanced and applied aspects of whistleblowing. These trends reflect an expanding discourse beyond legal and moral considerations to include organizational behavior, cultural context, and leadership ethics. The temporal layering presented in this visualization not only reveals how the field has evolved but also highlights potential research frontiers that are gaining momentum in the post-2020 academic landscape.

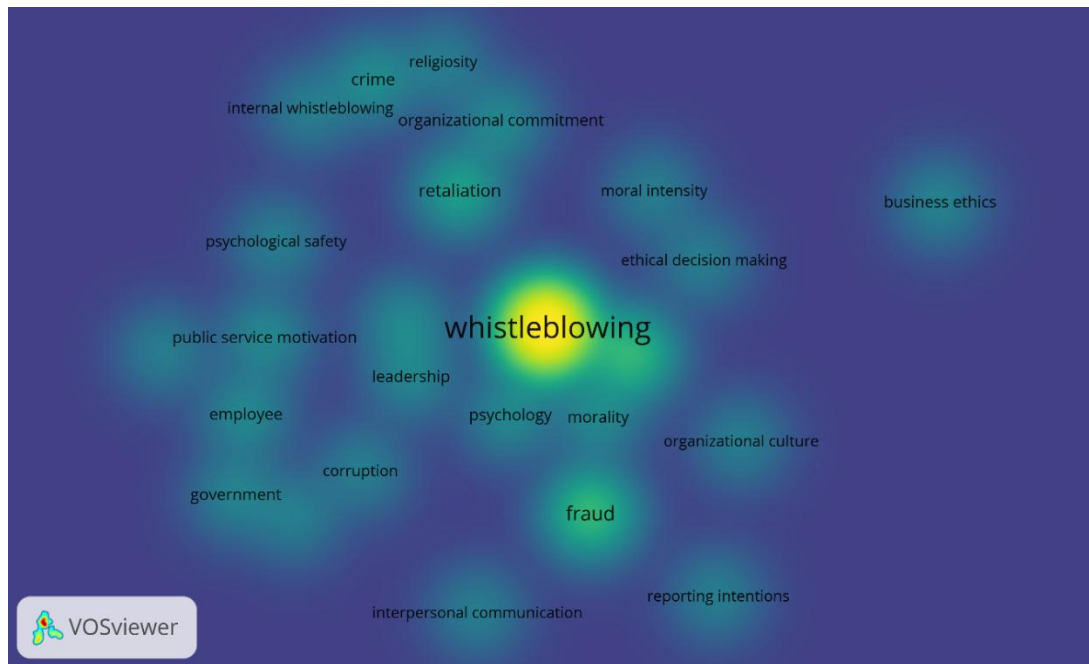


Figure 5. Density Visualization

Source: Data Analysis

The heatmap visualization reveals the density and frequency of keyword co-occurrence in whistleblowing intention research. The keyword "whistleblowing" occupies the brightest and most saturated yellow area at the center, indicating it is the most dominant and frequently discussed concept within the scholarly literature. Surrounding terms such as fraud, psychology, morality, retaliation, and ethical decision making are represented in lighter green shades, reflecting their moderate but consistent presence in the academic discourse. These keywords form the conceptual core of the field, suggesting that much of the literature has concentrated on the moral and psychological dimensions of whistleblowing, especially in relation to ethical dilemmas and organizational misconduct.

In contrast, keywords such as religiosity, internal whistleblowing, psychological safety, organizational commitment, and business ethics appear on the periphery with cooler color tones (green to blue), indicating relatively lower frequency or recent emergence. While these topics are less central, their

visibility in the heatmap points to expanding research interests that may gain traction in future studies. The spatial dispersion and density levels reflect a diversified but interconnected research landscape, with the potential for interdisciplinary growth, particularly in bridging ethics, organizational behavior, and public administration within the whistleblowing literature.

3.4 Discussion

a. Intellectual Leadership and Foundational Contributions

The co-authorship analysis clearly identifies Miceli M.P., Near J.P., and Dworkin T.M. as foundational figures in the whistleblowing literature. These authors have significantly shaped the theoretical underpinnings of whistleblowing behavior, with a focus on ethical decision-making, individual retaliation risks, and organizational justice frameworks. Their central positioning within the network reflects their roles in establishing early definitions, models, and empirical validations related to whistleblowing intention [12]. These contributions are further

complemented by more recent authors such as Park H., Curtis M.B., and Latan H., whose works extend the classical frameworks into contemporary areas such as cultural context, structural equation modeling, and leadership ethics. The presence of multiple clusters in the co-authorship network suggests that while the field has matured around several key figures, it is now branching into more diverse subfields, reflecting interdisciplinary integration across psychology, ethics, governance, and organizational behavior.

b. Geographical Distribution and International Collaboration

The country collaboration map demonstrates that research on whistleblowing intention is largely concentrated in Anglophone countries, with the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia playing leading roles in shaping the field. The United States exhibits the highest publication volume and connectivity, consistent with the origin of many corporate whistleblower protection laws, such as the Sarbanes-Oxley Act and Dodd-Frank Act, which have spurred academic interest. The United Kingdom acts as a pivotal connector between North America and other regions, with collaborations extending to countries such as Brazil, Ireland, Finland, and Spain. Notably, emerging economies such as Brazil are beginning to appear on the map, indicating a growing awareness of whistleblowing as a governance tool beyond Western contexts. However, the relative absence of Asian and African nations in the network suggests that cultural and institutional variations in whistleblowing behavior remain underexplored and ripe for future inquiry.

c. Thematic Clustering and Conceptual Foundations

The keyword co-occurrence and heatmap analyses provide critical insight into the thematic structure of whistleblowing intention research. At the core lies the concept of "whistleblowing", which is frequently linked to adjacent themes such as fraud, ethics, morality, psychology, and retaliation. These connections indicate that the literature has largely focused on understanding individual-level psychological mechanisms and ethical judgments leading to whistleblowing decisions [10], [11]. The prominence of terms like fraud and corruption reflects the practical drivers of whistleblowing, particularly within corporate governance settings. These concepts are often discussed in relation to regulatory compliance, organizational justice, and ethical leadership. Importantly, the keywords morality and ethical decision making show that whistleblowing intention is typically framed not just as a procedural act, but as a moral choice influenced by perceived wrongdoings and value alignment. In the green cluster, we observe the rise of keywords such as public service motivation, psychological safety, and government, pointing to an expanding literature on whistleblowing in the public sector. This line of research often explores how civil servants' intrinsic motivation and perceived safety influence their willingness to report internal misconduct. This is a particularly promising area given the increased public scrutiny of bureaucratic accountability and transparency.

d. Emerging Trends and Research Gaps

The overlay visualization reveals a temporal shift in research

themes. While earlier studies (pre-2018) focused predominantly on fraud, corruption, and moral intensity, recent years have seen a surge in interest toward organizational culture, psychological safety, and religiosity. These trends suggest a growing recognition of the contextual and cultural influences on whistleblowing intention. For example, the emergence of religiosity as a newer keyword highlights how personal values, moral frameworks, and belief systems affect the ethical decision-making process in diverse cultural contexts. Similarly, psychological safety and leadership reflect a shift from static organizational structures to dynamic environments where climate, leadership behavior, and interpersonal trust matter. These themes are critical in understanding not only why people blow the whistle but under what conditions they feel safe and supported to do so. However, several research gaps are evident. First, developing country perspectives are significantly underrepresented in both co-authorship and thematic visualizations. Given the varying legal protections, organizational norms, and power dynamics across countries, more comparative cross-cultural studies are needed. Second, digital whistleblowing platforms, anonymous reporting tools, and the role of social media have yet to be prominently integrated into keyword networks, despite their growing relevance in contemporary reporting behavior.

e. **Methodological Contributions and Limitations**

This bibliometric study contributes methodologically by applying VOSviewer's advanced visualization techniques to map the structural and temporal evolution of whistleblowing intention literature.

Through co-authorship, keyword co-occurrence, and overlay visualizations, the study provides both a macro-level synthesis and micro-level insights into emerging scholarly trends. This structured overview helps academics and practitioners identify influential contributors, collaborative opportunities, and underexplored themes for future investigation. Nonetheless, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The study relied exclusively on the Scopus database and English-language journal articles, which may have led to the omission of relevant publications in other languages or regional databases such as SciELO or CNKI. Additionally, bibliometric methods do not capture the quality or depth of arguments, meaning highly cited papers may not always offer the most innovative or rigorous contributions. Finally, keyword co-occurrence analysis depends on author-selected keywords and abstracts, which may not fully capture nuanced content or theoretical alignments.

f. **Theoretical and Practical Implications**

The findings of this study hold important theoretical implications. The clustering of keywords around themes such as psychology, leadership, and public service motivation reinforces the need for multidisciplinary approaches in whistleblowing research. Scholars are encouraged to integrate insights from behavioral economics, institutional theory, and cultural studies to enrich our understanding of whistleblowing intention. From a practical perspective, the results suggest that organizations aiming to encourage whistleblowing behavior must focus not only on legal compliance but also on fostering ethical cultures, building psychological safety, and supporting

values-driven leadership. Policymakers, particularly in emerging economies, can benefit from these insights by designing targeted training, secure reporting mechanisms, and cultural awareness initiatives that enhance ethical conduct in both public and private sectors.

4. CONCLUSION

This bibliometric study provides a structured and comprehensive overview of whistleblowing intention research within the realms of corporate governance and business ethics. By mapping co-authorship networks, analyzing keyword co-occurrence, and visualizing thematic evolution over time, the study reveals that the field is anchored by

influential scholars and classic ethical frameworks, while simultaneously evolving toward more nuanced discussions involving psychological safety, leadership, and cultural values. The dominance of contributions from Western countries, particularly the United States and United Kingdom, highlights the need for broader geographical representation and comparative perspectives. Emerging themes such as religiosity, public service motivation, and organizational climate indicate a dynamic and expanding research agenda that increasingly integrates interdisciplinary insights. Despite its limitations, this study contributes valuable knowledge to guide future research, encourage international collaboration, and inform organizational strategies that promote ethical conduct and support for whistleblowers.

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