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Citizens' Inclusion in Public Services: A Systematic Review of the Public Administration Literature and Reflection on Future Research Avenues

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ABSTRACT

Despite a resurgence of interest in social equity, citizens' inclusion in public services has attracted limited attention in the public administration literature so far, having often remained in the background of studies focusing on citizens' participation and representative bureaucracy. To fully comprehend and enhance the role of public administration in promoting inclusive public services and building inclusive societies, it is necessary to prioritize citizens' inclusion in public services as a central phenomenon. A first step in this direction is assessing existing knowledge and identifying new research avenues. Drawing on the "name, blame, claim" framework, this systematic literature review of 119 studies extends public administration scholarship by mapping and analyzing knowledge of citizens' inclusion in public services and identifying ways forward to strengthen the research and practice in this area.

ABSTRACT

Nonostante il tema dell'equità sociale sia oggetto di crescente interesse, l'inclusione dei cittadini nei servizi pubblici ha attratto una attenzione limitata nella letteratura che studia le pubbliche amministrazioni, essendo affrontata prevalentemente in modo indiretto dagli studi relativi alla partecipazione dei cittadini e la burocrazia rappresentativa. Per meglio capire e rafforzare il ruolo delle amministrazioni pubbliche nel promuovere l'inclusività dei servizi pubblici e della società, è necessario porre l'inclusione dei cittadini al centro dell'attenzione dei nostri studi. Un primo passo in questa direzione consiste nel mappare la conoscenza esistente, e identificare future linee di ricerca. Ispirandosi al framework "name, blame, claim" (che richiede di dare un "nome" ad un fenomeno, identificarne le cause, per poi identificare soluzioni e azioni concrete), questa review sistematica della letteratura, basata su 119 studi, contribuisce agli studi di pubblica amministrazione mappando ed analizzando la conoscenza esistente in materia di inclusione dei cittadini nei servizi pubblici, e identificando possibili linee di ricerca futura.

1 | Introduction

Rising inequities in increasingly diverse societies have led to a demand for heightened consideration of social equity in public services to correct existing imbalances and achieve fair and just treatment for all (Cepiku and Mastrodascio 2021; Stivers et al. 2023). Research in public administration has documented how citizens who belong to social identity groups that have a history of discrimination (women, people of color, LGBTQ, individuals with disabilities, older adults, religious minorities,

immigrants, people with accents, etc.) are more likely to experience various forms of exclusion in their interactions with public services (Pandey et al. 2023; Nisar 2018; Pedersen, Stritch, and Thuesen 2018; Andersen and Guul 2019). As calls have been advanced for scholars to pay renewed attention to issues of social equity and justice (McCandless et al. 2022; Pandey et al. 2023; Stivers et al. 2023; Martínez Guzmán, Jordan, and Joyce 2024), the multifaceted and arguably ambiguous nature of social equity—connecting issues of diversity, inclusion, fairness, and accessibility—has been highlighted (Guy and McCandless 2012; McCandless et al. 2022; Martínez Guzmán, Jordan, and Joyce 2024; Yeo and Jeon 2023), suggesting a need for further articulation of these concepts in the public administration literature (Cepiku and Mastrodascio 2021; Blessett et al. 2019).

In this context, the inclusion of citizens—defined as a condition where "people of all identities and many styles can be fully themselves while also contributing to the larger collective, as valued and full members" (Ferdman 2017, 235)—has been emphasized as a relevant area of exploration and intervention, and as a way of recognizing diversity as an integral part of equitable public services (Sabharwal, Levine, and D'Agostino 2018; Mor Barak 2011; McCandless et al. 2022). Despite this, it does not appear to have attracted direct, explicit attention in extant public administration literature (McCandless et al. 2022). In the public administration literature, inclusion has been explicitly studied with reference to public sector employees and workplace settings (e.g., Yeo and Jeon 2023) and thus with an organizational focus. In particular, studies of representative bureaucracy have highlighted its potential for fostering social equity (Riccucci and Van Ryzin 2016), yet remaining focused on administrative processes and bureaucrats' characteristics and perspectives. More recently, calls have been raised to overcome the limits of the current focus on the "administrative" side when exploring issues of social equity, and to pay renewed attention to citizens' direct experiences with public services (Pandey et al. 2023; Nisar 2018).

This article aims to provide a systematic review of how citizens' inclusion in public services is addressed in the public administration literature. The review encompasses 119 studies addressing this topic in public administration and management journals since 2000. In framing the analysis, the review uses the "name, blame, claim" framework, advanced by Sheppard, Lewicki, and Minton (1992) and Gooden (2008, 2015b) to outline how public administration literature engages with citizens' inclusion in public services. The article, therefore, asks the following research questions: (1) How is citizens' inclusion in public services discussed (name)? (2) What is currently known about the factors (or lack thereof) that shape (or hinder) citizens' inclusion in public services (blame)? and (3) What steps and actions are suggested to promote citizens' inclusion in public services (claim)?

The review combines bibliometric and qualitative analyses to identify the meanings, barriers, and suggested actions that citizens' inclusion in public services take, as discussed particularly in studies of participation and representative bureaucracy, which have predominantly attracted attention in the public administration literature. The analysis also identifies future research avenues that underscore a theoretical and methodological emphasis on citizens' inclusion and the role of public services and institutions in shaping it. The review extends public administration

scholarship by mapping and analyzing current knowledge of citizens' inclusion in public services and identifying ways to strengthen the research and practice in this area.

1.1 | Understanding Citizens' Inclusion: Conceptual Framework

Social equity was proposed as an important pillar in public administration studies during the 1968 Minnowbrooke Conference, as emphasized in Frederickson's (1971) seminal contribution, which invited public administration scholars to actively engage in removing barriers to equitable services and policies. As highlighted by Guy and McCandless (2012, S6), "[e]quity as a concept evolved from a philosophical (social contract) to a structural (constitutional) to an administrative (social equity) concern." Focusing on the latter, and particularly in the context of public services, social equity considerations would require procedural fairness, equitable availability and provision of services, equal outcomes for all groups of citizens, and the guarantee to have one's voice heard concerning the design and delivery of services (Johnson and Svara 2011; Svara and Brunet 2005). Social equity is thus profoundly intertwined with the concepts of diversity, inclusion, fairness, and accessibility (see, e.g., Guy and McCandless 2012; McCandless et al. 2022; Yeo and Jeon 2023). Interestingly, however, social equity remains an elusive and multifaceted concept, far from witnessing convergence on its underlying concrete criteria and operationalization and in need of more empirical and conceptual exploration (see also Guy and McCandless 2012; Cepiku and Mastrodascio 2021).

This review focuses specifically on citizens' inclusion in public services, as "[t]he need to understand what diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) mean has never been more poignant" (McCandless et al. 2022, 130). While the concept of inclusion in the workplace has garnered some attention within public administration literature (e.g., Yeo and Jeon 2023), there is a pressing need to shift the focus toward the inclusion of citizens, and to recognize and integrate diversity as an essential part of equitable public services (Sabharwal, Levine, and D'Agostino 2018; Mor Barak 2011; McCandless et al. 2022; Portillo, Humphrey, and Bearfield 2022). Addressing citizens' inclusion in public services requires moving beyond a focus on the workplace dynamics to understand how citizens' diversity is recognized and valued in their encounters with public services, ensuring that they feel part of their community and society, and have their voices heard in decisions that affect them.

In the absence of a specific, commonly used definition of citizens' inclusion in public services in the public administration literature, it is possible to draw on organizational literature, which broadly describes inclusion as the degree to which someone experiences treatment that satisfies simultaneously the needs for belongingness and uniqueness (Shore et al. 2011, 1264), and thus making sure that no one is left behind. Uniqueness refers to "the need to maintain a distinctive and differentiated sense of self." Belongingness concerns "the need to form and maintain strong, stable interpersonal relationships." Focusing on public services, the theme of valuing uniqueness moves beyond a strictly numerical sense of diversity, to reflect the processes, relations, and interactions where difference is acknowledged and

valued, and where all cultural perspectives are respected and represented (e.g., Yeo and Jeon 2023; Svara and Brunet 2005). In other words, uniqueness ensures that different identities are considered and represented in the design and delivery of services. Belongingness, on the other hand, involves more than being valued and recognized. It reflects the essential need for an individual to be accepted, build a sense of connection with others, and feel like an insider; that is to say, be actively involved in shaping the services they receive. When uniqueness and belongingness work together, the risks of stigmatization (Goffman 1963) and exclusion are reduced, leading to a more inclusive and equitable public service environment.

Inclusion, therefore, ensures that people have a voice, have equal access to, and feel involved in decision-making, information sharing, services, and benefits, in line with the dimensions of equity identified earlier, from the public administration literature (e.g., Guy and McCandless 2012; Svara and Brunet 2005). To satisfy these needs, contextual factors, such as an inclusive environment, and policies and practices that create equal opportunities and fair conditions, play an important role. As such, inclusion emphasizes not only what people do and how they feel when their differences are valued, but also what is done differently in public services to stop social inequities.

In public administration scholarship, the dimension of "uniqueness" has attracted some attention, especially in the substantial body of empirical literature focused on how social equity can be attained through bureaucratic representation and organizational diversity policies (Gooden 2015a; Pandey et al. 2023; Riccucci and Van Ryzin 2016). This literature, while not necessarily referring explicitly to the concept of uniqueness, emphasizes the value and necessity of having employees whose unique characteristics reflect the demographic composition of society, as a crucial condition for effective governance. However, while public sector organizations may have employees from diverse backgrounds or representatives of various categories of citizens, they may not necessarily provide services that recognize citizens' distinctive identities, or their sense of belonging (Sabharwal 2014; Shore et al. 2011). It has thus been noted that this literature has concentrated primarily on the bureaucratic aspects, often sidelining citizens' voices and perspectives (Pandey et al. 2023). This highlights the need to shift attention toward citizens' concrete encounters with public services and their consequences in terms of belongingness and more generally inclusion.

Complementarily, literature on participation in the governance and delivery of public services (Arnstein 1969; Fung 2006, 2015), and coproduction has indirectly focused on the "belongingness" dimension of inclusion, by studying either how the individual service user (or a group of users) becomes directly involved in designing and delivering services, or how collective processes are put in place to create a stronger sense of engagement (Nabatchi, Sancino, and Sicilia 2017). In doing so, it has emphasized the democratic, participatory potential of public services, proving that this ethos can imbue not only political processes (which are not the focus of this paper) but also administrative ones (Nabatchi, Sancino, and Sicilia 2017). This literature has highlighted the multiple ways and stages in which citizens can participate in making decisions concerning public services, such as during prioritizing and planning,

designing, directly in their delivery, or subsequently in assessing them (e.g., Nabatchi, Sancino, and Sicilia 2017). However, scholarly work in this area has highlighted that increased involvement may not necessarily translate into citizens' feeling included in these processes (e.g., Fung 2015; Barbera, Sicilia, and Steccolini 2016; Ferdman 2017). Moreover, the focus often remains on the administrative processes and conditions under which participation occurs.

To delve more deeply into how the public administration literature engages with citizens' inclusion, it is necessary to identify how inclusion is discussed in the relevant literature (name) and explore the causes and antecedents (blame) to bring forward solutions and improvements (claim). According to Gooden (2008, 2015b), naming, blaming, and claiming are important steps to identify and overcome injustices. This framework is particularly useful for at least three reasons. First, the focus on "naming" allows for an exploration of how inclusion is currently discussed in the literature, including at the citizens' level, while acknowledging that citizens' inclusion in public services is still in need of a clearer understanding. The naming of an event or phenomenon is critical because how we define its nature affects or "transforms" the evolution of all subsequent beliefs, feelings, and actions (Sheppard, Lewicki, and Minton 1992, 47). Second, the focus on "blaming" connects inclusion with its boundary conditions. "Blaming" distils the responsible sources or causes for "claiming" the implementation of appropriate solutions. Third, through "claiming", this framework provides an integrated perspective on how to bridge a theoretical commitment to social equity efforts with the practical implementation of equity solutions, through inclusion (Gooden 2015b; McCandless et al. 2022).

Public administrators have a responsibility to ensure that citizens and users are treated fairly and to account for, act upon, and remedy situations in which exclusion occurs (Gooden 2015b). As equity disparities that affect citizens' inclusion in public services are documented, and their potential causes identified, the framework allows for successfully plowing this evidence terrain. In turn, its emphasis on solutions as a fundamental component of any social equity effort and change is crucial, enabling us to identify, within the literature reviewed, how citizens' inclusion in public services can be fostered. Building on these ideas, the review provides a launching point for expanding understanding of citizens' inclusion in public services, for identifying further research avenues, and also possible practical actions to strengthen public services' inclusivity.

2 | Methodology

This section provides an overview of the search, screening, and analysis process to develop the systematic literature review (SLR) on citizens' inclusion in public services, following recommended procedures from the extant literature (George et al. 2023).

2.1 | The Search and Screening Process

The search and screening process is illustrated in Figure 1, following four stages of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA) flow diagram
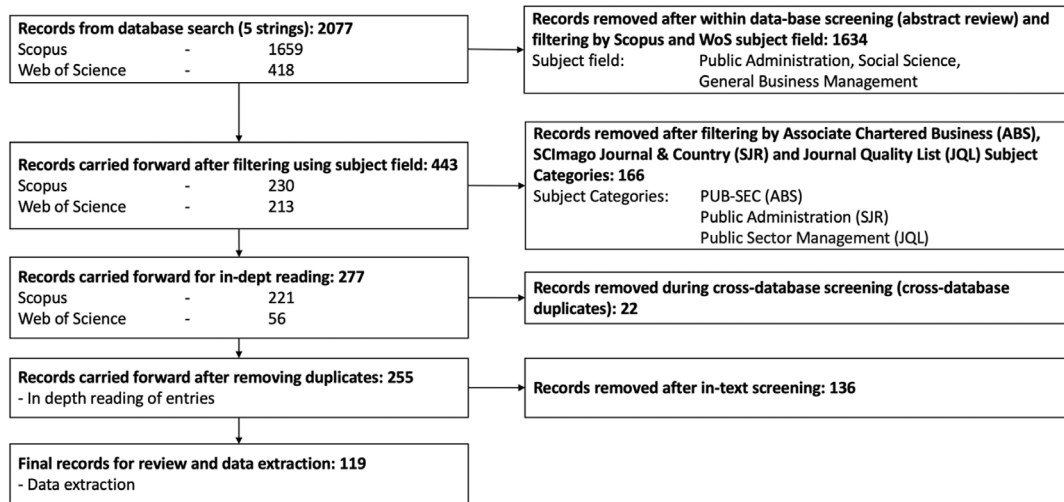
Records from database search (5 strings): 2077
Scopus   -   1659
Web of Science   -   418

Records removed after within data-base screening (abstract review) and filtering by Scopus and WoS subject field: 1634
Subject field: Public Administration, Social Science, General Business Management

Records carried forward after filtering using subject field: 443
Scopus   -   230
Web of Science   -   213

Records removed after filtering by Associate Chartered Business (ABS), SCImago Journal & Country (SJR) and Journal Quality List (JQL) Subject Categories: 166
Subject Categories: PUB-SEC (ABS)
Public Administration (SJR)
Public Sector Management (JQL)

Records carried forward for in-dept reading: 277
Scopus   -   221
Web of Science   -   56

Records removed during cross-database screening (cross-database duplicates): 22

Records carried forward after removing duplicates: 255
- In depth reading of entries

Records removed after in-text screening: 136

Final records for review and data extraction: 119
- Data extraction

FIGURE 1 | PRISMA flow diagram.

(Moher et al. 2009; Page et al. 2021). Following this process, the search covered Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus Databases over the past two decades (2000–2021). The keywords that best reflected the research scope were based on our initial reading of a set of relevant studies and discussed in several iterative meetings. They included terms concerning the *context* of study (i.e., "public services," "public sector," "public administration," and "government"), and the *concepts* studied (i.e., "inclusi*"— to cover all tenets of inclusion, inclusive*, "divers*"—to cover all tenets of diversity, "intersectionality," "social equity," and "representative bureaucracy"—to cover other concepts and literature streams that have been generally connected with social equity and inclusion issues in public administration). Including representative bureaucracy as a separate search term follows recent research suggesting that social equity and, implicitly, inclusion in public administration literature have mainly been discussed within this field (Gooden 2015a; Pandey et al. 2023). To ensure the identification of studies specifically concerned with citizens′ perspectives and experiences, rather than studies focused only on the perspectives of employees, two additional terms were added, that is, "users" and "citizens." Finally, "digital inclusi*" was included to cross-check for any relevant titles that examined the administration of public services in the digital age. Keywords were kept broad to ensure sufficient coverage, reduce any bias that could be generated from a small search sample and enhance the reliability and transparency of the study (Wang et al. 2018). We acknowledge, however, that the choice of keywords may not have captured an exhaustive list of papers and could have overlooked some studies, which is an inherent limitation of a systematic review paper of this kind.

The preliminary search used 20 search combination strings and generated 3926 papers. The authors reviewed the titles of the papers and journals generated by each respective string to determine the suitability of the keywords to generate relevant results to the scope of our SLR. For example, some of the keywords, when taken independently, generated very similar results, leading to multiple duplications. Hence, the keyword strings were adapted to five complex Boolean strings, as shown in Appendix A.

The five keyword strings were used to search titles, keywords, and abstracts in Scopus and WoS databases. For both databases, we considered only peer-reviewed publications written in English. This generated 2077 results. A review of the bibliographic information, titles, and abstracts of the articles, aligned with our inclusion criteria (i.e., reference to public administration and/or public services, and citizens and/or service users) indicated that, as is often the case at this stage, many results were beyond the scope of this review. This included articles published in journals unrelated to the discipline in focus (e.g., construction, engineering, and journalism). To reach a more manageable and discipline-relevant set of papers for review, we applied the filters available on Scopus and WoS, restricting the subject fields to Public Administration, Social Science, and General Business Management. This process resulted in the removal of 1634 papers from our sample, leaving 443 for the next step. A further review of the titles and abstracts indicated that many papers still lacked reference to public administration or public services in their objectives and/or design. At this point, we decided to narrow our focus to public administration journals, which is in line with our research aim to review how citizens′ inclusion in public services is discussed within this literature. The Associate Chartered Business (ABS), SCImago Journal & Country (SJR), and Journal Quality List (JQL) were used for this purpose, given their extensive and comprehensive coverage of public administration journals (over 200 journals across the three lists— see Appendix B) and their widespread use in the field. Our goal was to ensure thorough coverage rather than rely on specific rankings within these lists. Importantly, at this stage, we manually reviewed all the papers listed for removal to avoid a broad-stroke approach. As such, we identified eight relevant papers that we retained, even though the journal titles did not appear in any of the three lists. As a result, we removed 166 papers at this stage, leaving us with 255 results after duplicates were removed.

The 255 papers were divided into two groups of 128 and 127 papers, respectively. Two authors were assigned to each group, independently reviewing the full text of all allocated papers.

At this stage, we sought to identify papers with explicit or implicit implications for citizens' inclusion, either in the research objectives, findings, or discussion. For example, papers that were excluded at this stage looked at issues of diversity, or representative bureaucracy, without making significant reference to their impact on citizens or users' experiences and inclusion. Disagreements were discussed to converge toward an agreed-upon interpretation among the involved authors. To further ensure alignment across groups, authors from each pair also performed random checks on 50 papers (ca. 40%) in the other group and meetings were held to discuss possible doubts and disagreements. This process resulted in 119 papers across both databases being retained for the final review. Please see Appendix C for a final list of public administration journals included in the review sample.

2.2 | Data Analysis and Visualization

The analysis of the papers consisted of three steps (preliminary analysis, quantitative analysis, and qualitative analysis) and is described below.

2.2.1 | Preliminary Analysis

The 119 papers were evenly assigned to all authors. For each paper, relevant information was identified and extracted, including authors' country of affiliation, context of study, methodology, policy area, theoretical framework, definitions of inclusion and related concepts and relationships, main findings and implications, and added to the bibliographic data retrieved from WoS and Scopus (e.g., references, keywords, and abstracts).

2.2.2 | Quantitative Analysis: Keyword Co-Occurrence

To map the conceptual structure of the reviewed literature, visualize the relationships among research areas, and gain insight into how citizens' inclusion is discussed in the sample, a keyword co-occurrence analysis was conducted using the Bibliometrix package in R (Aria and Cuccurullo 2017). These techniques have been acknowledged for their effectiveness in generating scientific maps that uncover knowledge clusters objectively, offering greater efficiency and reducing the risk of subjective bias compared to manual analysis (Mukherjee et al. 2022). The analysis concentrated primarily on the author's keywords. In cases where the journals did not provide the author's keywords, keywords were sourced from the WoS/Scopus. To run the analyses, we used the Leiden clustering algorithm, which is recognized for its accurate partitioning and approximation of connected communities (Traag, Waltman, and Van Eck 2019). Based on the intensity of links between keywords, the co-occurrence analysis illustrates the network pattern between the papers' keywords, facilitating a more nuanced understanding of how sets of terms, or concepts (nodes) across multiple studies are connected within clusters. This analysis identified three core conceptual areas ("participation and coproduction," "representative bureaucracy," and "organizational prerequisites for public services inclusivity," see

Figure 4), which were used as a starting point for the subsequent analyses.

2.2.3 | Qualitative Thematic Analysis

The papers belonging to the three conceptual areas, identified above, were further analyzed to explore how citizens' inclusion is named, blamed, and claimed in public administration. Two coders were involved in this process. Considering the size of the review sample per conceptual area, one coder focused on representative bureaucracy, while the other coder concentrated on the remaining two areas. A thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2021) was conducted in three steps.

In the first step, an interpretive reading of the papers belonging to each conceptual area was performed. During the interpretative reading, first-order codes, that is, descriptive codes grounded in the context of the paper were bracketed following the framework of name, blame, and claim. These included references to concepts reflecting the broad area of citizens' inclusion in each conceptual area, such as different identities (e.g., gender, race, religion, or more generally marginalized individuals) and the implications of the study for inclusion (e.g., empowerment and decision-making). We bracketed these passages in each paper according to each conceptual area following the name, blame, and claim framework.

As the analysis progressed, in the second step, these fairly loosely defined codes were collapsed into more specific key themes (Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton 2013) for each conceptual area, following the name, blame, and claim framework. This resulted in understanding how citizens' inclusion in public services is named, blamed, and claimed in participatory and coproduction, representative bureaucracy, and organizational conditions of public service inclusion conceptual areas, respectively.

Finally, after multiple rounds of team discussion, and re-grouping of codes and themes, in the third step, similarities or third-order themes across the three conceptual areas were identified. For example, the theme of the public officials' attitudes (e.g., lack of trust), behaviors (e.g., treatment of minority citizens), and roles (e.g., interaction with the community and diversity management) toward citizens' inclusion was identified as one of the barriers hindering citizens' inclusion in public services (blaming). The findings present these final themes across the three conceptual areas, providing insights into how citizens' inclusion is named, blamed, and claimed in public administration literature.

3 | Findings

3.1 | Descriptive Findings: Overview of the Research Field

The 119 papers included in the review were published in 27 journals. The number of papers has grown over time (Figure 2), suggesting increasing interest in this area.

Figure 3 shows that 93.1% of the internationally published research to date has predominantly concentrated on Western contexts and the so-called Global North, with less than 7% of studies conducted in Non-Western contexts (i.e., China, South Korea, South Africa, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkey). This trend is also reflected in the distribution of authors by country
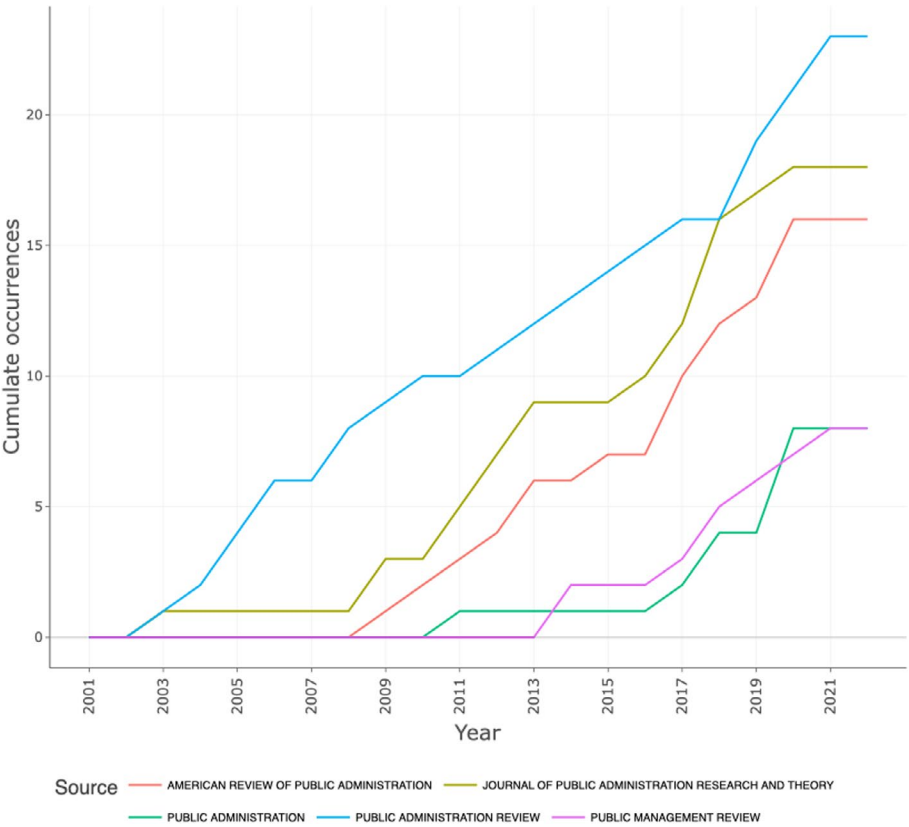

FIGURE 2 | Main publication journals across the search timeline. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]
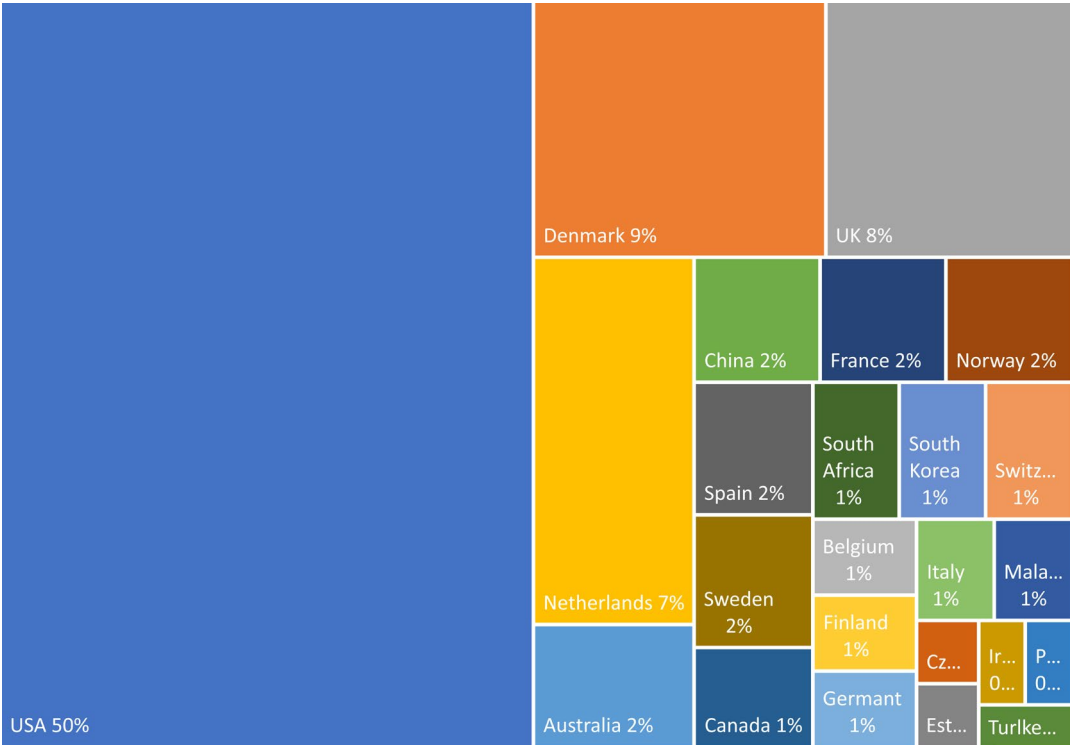
FIGURE 3 | Geographical context of study. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]
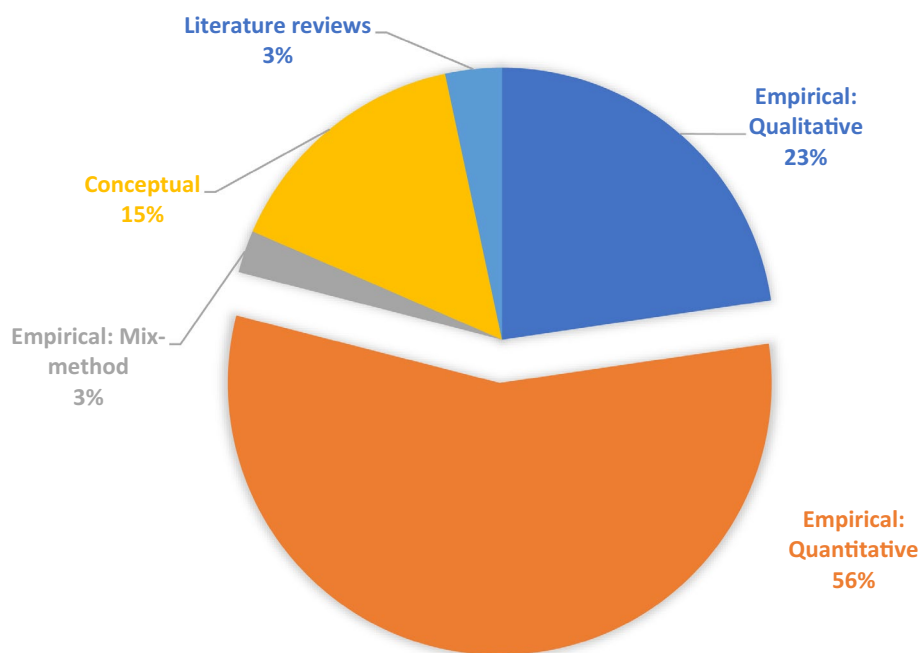
FIGURE 4 | Methodological approaches in the sample. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

of affiliation, with 47% of the reviewed studies authored by US-based researchers, followed by Europe (33%). Less than 10% of the papers were authored by researchers based in the Global South, and in many cases, these papers were co-authored with someone affiliated with a Global North university. While this observation may partly result from our focus on international English-language journals, it also underscores a dearth of representation of voices from the Global South, a recurrent pattern in public administration journals (Liu et al. 2024). This imbalance not only skews the perspectives incorporated into academic discourse but also generates knowledge that inadequately reflects the experiences and realities of a substantial portion of the world's population. We further reflect on the implications of these findings in the Discussion section.

In terms of the methodological approaches adopted in the sample, most papers are empirical (82%), with empirical-quantitative accounting for 56%, empirical-qualitative 23%, and empirical-mixed method 3%, respectively, and conceptual papers 15% of the total. Figure 4 displays a summary of the methods identified. This emphasis on quantitative methods reflects a strong focus on measurable, data-driven analysis within the field. However, this focus may limit the ability to fully capture the complex, lived experiences of citizens with public services, particularly in diverse and non-Western contexts, for which a more diverse methodological approach could be beneficial.

3.2 | Co-Occurrence Analysis Results

The co-occurrence analysis (Figure 5) demonstrates that the papers reviewed are clustered around three main areas of exploration. Representative bureaucracy is the most popular area (61 papers). This literature discusses citizens' inclusion indirectly by highlighting how it is achieved through active, passive,

or symbolic representation of social categories, such as race or gender. A second area of investigation concerns governance, coproduction, and public participation, and more generally interactions between citizens and governments for planning, designing, or delivering public services (40 papers). A third area (18 papers) studies organizational antecedents of inclusive services, that is, how organizational and employment arrangements translate into inclusive outcomes for citizens. These areas are determined by the primary clusters to which each paper belongs, based on their narrative and keywords. However, as usual in these analyses, some papers might belong to more than one cluster, as highlighted in Figure 5.

3.3 | Qualitative Thematic Findings: Naming, Blaming, and Claiming Citizens' Inclusion in Public Services

This section illustrates the results of the qualitative thematic analysis, which are summarized in Table 1.

3.3.1 | Naming Citizens' Inclusion

The analysis of the literature within the three conceptual areas shows that citizens' inclusion is often addressed indirectly. Citizens' inclusion is generally not explicitly discussed, and issues of belongingness and uniqueness are often discussed separately. Instead, the focus tends to be on the absence of exclusion concerning specific sociodemographic categories, mainly from participatory and representative bureaucracy processes. In this sense, the literature reviewed emphasizes the importance of naming "differences" in service provision but stops short of addressing how these differences can be valued, encouraged, or considered as part of an attempt to foster equitable public services, as demonstrated below.
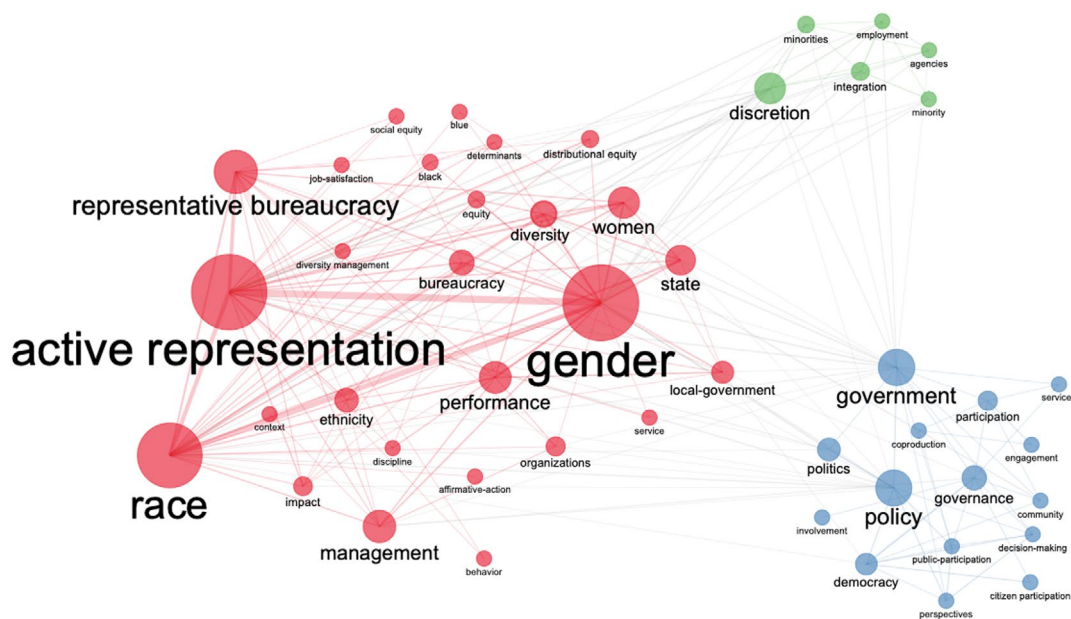
FIGURE 5 | Co-occurrence network clustering of the research topic. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Bureaucratic representation and citizens' participation have attracted significant attention in the last few decades. The representative bureaucracy literature explores how historically excluded and marginalized groups in terms of, for example, gender and racial makeup, are empowered through passive, symbolic, and active representation, where bureaucrats not only share the sociodemographic characteristics of minority users but also work toward promoting their interests (e.g., Rosenthal and Bell 2003; Grissom, Nicholson-Crotty, and Nicholson-Crotty 2009; Riccucci, Van Ryzin, and Li 2016), potentially furthering their inclusion. This literature has thus especially highlighted the role of distinctiveness and uniqueness in service provision but has given less consideration to how these elements are connected to a collective sense of belonging. Conversely, the literature on citizens' participation and coproduction explores the multiple forms of participation that complement and deepen democratic participation, and the actors of coproduction processes (e.g., Fung 2015; Nabatchi, Sancino, and Sicilia 2017), emphasizing especially citizens' engagement and sense of collective efforts, but often downplaying the role of citizens' uniqueness and associated knowledge, experience and perceptions.

These literatures tend to refer to citizens' inclusion in general terms, as a possible input or outcome of representative and participatory processes. Yet, they seem to lack a clear definition and underlying conceptual framework concerning citizens' inclusion in public services, remaining at risk of leading to a trivial engagement with the phenomenon and failing to thoroughly and jointly address citizens' experiences of uniqueness and belongingness.

Specifically, when categories of difference are considered, this is not done in an even-handed way. There is a tendency in the reviewed literature to prioritize gender or race as the focus of the study. With the exception of Baumgartner et al.'s (2021) study on the intersection of various categories of difference, analyses of representative bureaucracy, for instance, tend to concentrate primarily on one category, such as race (e.g.,

Watkins-Hayes 2011; Stazyk, Davis, and Portillo 2017), ethnicity (e.g., Pedersen, Stritch, and Thuesen 2018), or gender (e.g., Adusah-Karikari and Ohemeng 2014), as minority features of citizens or bureaucrats. This results in sidelining intersectional concerns and experiences with public services, which, from an inclusion perspective, would require stronger attention to how "uniqueness" is acknowledged and valued and how it connects to belongingness.

Power differences that affect marginalized people are broadly named and articulated. Fung (2015) highlighted that citizens who engage in participatory experiences and show high interest in the topics addressed are often more socioeconomically advantaged than the broader population. Scholars further differentiate between the elite and the masses (Liu 2017), or the need for representation of varied interests and values in participatory processes (Meijer and van der Krabben 2018; Rossmann and Shanahan 2012). A few studies (Molina 2020; Saidel and Loscocco 2005) make an explicit link between representative bureaucracy and inclusion of minority citizens, highlighting how representation is a necessary condition that underpins inclusion. For example, according to Molina (2020, 193): "representation in service-providing organizations is vital to the inclusion of ethno-racial minorities in a democratic society.". Yet, despite the mostly implicit assumption that representation will result in inclusion and vice versa, the literature reviewed does not "name" or articulate citizens' inclusion. In turn, seeking public satisfaction with service delivery (Alemán, Gutiérrez-Sánchez, and Liébana-Cabanillas 2018; Howard 2010), gaining citizens' trust in the efficiency and effectiveness of public services (Calista 2002), and managing diversity both inside the organization and among the users of services (Amirkhanyan et al. 2019; Ritz and Alfes 2018; Lim 2007) are identified as important preconditions for inclusive public service delivery. However, there appears to be a limited understanding of how citizens become differentially exposed or affected in their encounters with public services, and how this shapes their sense of belonging and uniqueness.

TABLE 1 | Naming, blaming, claiming inclusion across participation, representation, and organizational pre-requisites literatures.

	Name	Blame	Claim
Coproduction and participation	Inclusion as a feature of participatory processes emphasizing: 1. The need to empower historically excluded and marginalized groups; 2. The need for representation of varied interests and values. Inclusion mostly defined as an input to the process ("inclusivity" of participatory processes) rather than an outcome of such processes (inclusion as sense of belonging to the community-possible consequence of participatory processes).	1. Barriers related to citizens' lack of social and cultural resources; 2. The attitudes of public officials toward citizens' inclusion in participatory processes, and; 3. The broader socio-economic context in which participatory processes take place.	1. Explicit, transparent, and balanced decisions on inclusion of citizens in participatory processes; 2. Ethical leadership; 3. Technology; 4. Comparative research.
Representative bureaucracy	Inclusion as a taken-for-granted outcome of 1. Active; 2. Passive, and 3. Symbolic representative processes Often with a separate focus on gender and race. Active representation more likely to be seen as positively related with inclusion, (although not substantiated by empirical evidence).	1. Equitable hiring practices; 2. Enabling representative processes within public sector organizations; 3. Enabling positive citizens' treatment by bureaucrats (mainly police force) based on shared sociodemographic background.	1. Design of administrative processes; 2. Strengthening reliance on affirmative action; 3. Shaping social norms and organizational culture.
Organizational pre-conditions of inclusion	1. Satisfaction; 2. Trust; and 3. Diversity as important preconditions for public service inclusion.	1. The impact of public officials' role and practices on inclusive public service delivery; and 2. The role of organizational/administrative environment toward inclusive public services, including (i)the impact of administrative context, and (ii). the experiences of administrative burden.	1. Strengthening theoretical and methodological paradigms; 2. Improving organizing of service delivery

(Continues)

TABLE 1 | (Continued)

	Name	Blame	Claim
Future research opportunities	1. Focusing on inclusion as the focal phenomenon. 2. Understanding inclusion in its dialectic relationship with participation, and both as a feature and outcome of participatory processes. 3. Considering specific categories of vulnerabilities and marginalized groups, and intersectional features and perspectives. 4. Refocusing attention "outside" the bureaucratic organization, with attention to citizens' experience. 5. Adopting a citizens' life-course perspective 6. Exploring if passive, active and symbolic representation yield different inclusion outcomes 7. Embracing pluralism in methods	1. Exploring the role of "intermediary" bodies in ensuring or hampering citizens' inclusion. 2. Exploring citizens' and public officials' experiences more closely through in-depth, qualitative approaches 3. Considering a plurality of policy areas, and contexts, including with specific attention to the Global South. 4. Adopting a relational perspective that enables the understanding of citizens' inclusion within the organizational and structural hierarchies in which it is embedded.	1. Need for an in-depth understanding of how transparency on inclusion decisions, ethical leadership, and technology actually shape inclusion (both as a process and as an outcome). 2. Paying stronger attention to the Global South. 3. Strengthening understanding of the role of nonprofits as agents of the public. 4. Qualitative research may allow to look more closely at participation processes, and gain insights into citizens' motivations (e.g., intrinsic rewards, social affiliations or moral purposes), or to examine in-depth the relationship between coproduction, inclusion, and trust in government. 5. Need for new theoretical and methodological paradigms to study and promote citizens' inclusion. 6. Research attention on theory-grounded practice, as a precursor to building citizen trust in public service.

3.3.2 | Blaming Citizens' Inclusion

The analysis of the literature reveals three main contextual barriers to citizens' inclusion in public services. These are related to (1) citizens' access to opportunities and resources, (2) public officials' attitudes (e.g., lack of trust), behaviors (e.g., treatment of minority citizens), and roles (e.g., interaction with the community and diversity management) toward citizens' inclusion, and (3) organizational and administrative practices (e.g., hiring and work routines).

Citizens' access to opportunities and resources, such as education, knowledge, expertise and skills required for decision-making, as well as public roles (e.g., Greenan et al. 2019; Guul, Villadsen, and Wulff 2019) are identified as important conditions of inclusive participatory governance (Van den Berg et al. 2020; Fryar and Hawes 2012; Bützer 2007) and representative bureaucracy (Molina 2020; Andersen and Guul 2019). Swyngedouw (2005) highlights that while "the concept of (stake)'holder' is inclusive and presumably exhaustive, the actual concrete forms of governance are necessarily constrained and limited in terms of who can, is, or will be allowed to participate." For example, in Michels and De Graaf's (2010) study of two municipalities in the Netherlands, the citizens taking an active role were mostly highly educated men above the age of 50. The authors highlight that "this is far from unique" (486) as women, ethnic minorities, young people, and people with limited resources are often under-represented. In general, this further supports the view that the participation of citizens in processes does not necessarily translate into stronger recognition of their uniqueness and to them being accepted and valued in these processes, which is key to fostering feelings of belongingness. On the contrary, the exclusion of certain socio-demographic categories of citizens may lead to the erosion of the democratic potential of these participatory processes.

Public officials' attitudes, behaviors, and roles are also recognized as significant contextual barriers that impede the inclusion of citizens in participatory and representative bureaucracy processes, hindering inclusive public service governance and delivery. Studies indicate that public officials often distrust the skills and experience of ordinary people (Ianniello et al. 2018), rely on stereotypes when making decisions (e.g., gender stereotypes, Wenger and Wilkins 2008), and show limited capacity

and willingness to interact directly with citizens in collaborative processes for developing shared recommendations on public problems (Sønderskov 2019).

Such attitudes may lead to discriminatory behaviors, as evident, for instance, in studies on police services, where treatment and racial profiling vary based on the alignment of police forces with citizens' race and/or gender. For example, Hong (2017) found that higher representation of ethnic minorities in the police force reduces minorities' stop-and-search rates. Headley and Wright (2020) highlighted that racial and gender mismatches between police officers and civilians, particularly involving white officers and black civilians, increase the use of force. However, Wilkins and Williams (2008) found that the presence of black officers in the police force increased racial profiling within the division, as minority black officers felt pressure to conform to the organization's goals and values. This is important because the challenges that public officials face in their role, also constitute significant barriers to citizens' inclusion in public services. Navigating the tensions arising from versatile roles, for instance, when providing care alongside traditional service provision (Nederhand and Van Meerkerk 2018), and managing the challenges involved in workforce diversity (Amirkhanyan et al. 2019), including linguistic diversity in multicultural public services (Ritz and Alfes 2018) is arguably important for inclusive public service delivery. Yet, most analyses inspired by representative bureaucracy theories will often focus on the actions and reactions of bureaucrats, or on service outcomes, without directly elaborating how these factors connect to citizens' feeling valued and accepted and thus a sense of belongingness.

Finally, the analysis uncovered contextual barriers stemming from organizational and administrative processes and practices that impede citizens' inclusion in public services. Factors related to the design of participatory processes, such as the length of citizens' interactions with public administration (i.e., sporadic or long term) (Pestoff 2013), the formal or informal methods of citizens' involvement (Mazzei et al. 2020), the time of citizens' participation in the process (Guo and Neshkova 2012; Torvinen and Haukipuro 2018), as well as centralized decision-making and the lack of explicit lines of accountability in democratic engagement (Gasparre 2011) hinder citizens' inclusion. Relatedly, scholars highlight how discriminatory hiring practices with public service organizations limit access to decision-making processes (e.g., Baekgaard and George 2018; Greenan et al. 2019), and prevent citizens belonging to specific sociodemographic groups from assuming public roles (e.g., Guul, Villadsen, and Wulff 2019). Furthermore, administrative burden, or the experience of policy implementation as onerous, hinders citizens' interactions with public services, particularly affecting marginalized groups who often bear a disproportionally higher administrative burden, as observed in the case of the Khawaja Sira of Pakistan due to their gender nonconformity (Nisar 2018).

3.3.3 | Claiming Citizens' Inclusion

When looking at suggestions and future steps for citizens' inclusion in public services, this review has identified the need for (1) transparent and bias-free decision-making practices and administrative processes, (2) changing organizational cultures and

service delivery, and (3) novel theoretical paradigms and methodological approaches (see also Table 1).

A key recommendation echoed in the literature across all conceptual areas is the development of transparent and unbiased decision-making practices and administrative processes to foster citizens' needs for belongingness and uniqueness. Studies focusing on participatory governance, for example, underscore the significance of making balanced and transparent decisions when incorporating citizens' contributions into policies, ensuring that participants are well-informed (e.g., Mazzei et al. 2020; Liu 2017). Such an inclusive approach to participation requires the provision of continuous support to citizens to develop the skills required throughout the process (Rathgeb Smith 2010). Additionally, it is important to carefully monitor the involvement of diverse sociodemographic groups that are traditionally under-represented, through targeted communication messages (Van den Berg et al. 2020). Designing bias-free administrative processes in bureaucracies (e.g., Molina 2020; Baekgaard and George 2018) is crucial for acknowledging and addressing hidden forms of racism that shape decisions impacting citizens (Alexander and Stivers 2020). In turn, engaging in proactive efforts, such as gender impact assessment, gender-responsive budgeting, and affirmative action initiatives, enhances the representation of historically excluded groups in specific areas, including high-level positions in public organizations and the legislature (Fernandez, Koma, and Lee 2018; Park 2013), potentially fostering inclusion.

The literature reviewed further emphasizes the need to change organizational cultures and service delivery to address gender and racial disparities. This involves aligning policies and programs with the goal of active representation, ensuring they are responsive to the unique experiences and circumstances of marginalized groups (e.g., through increased discretion; Marvel and Resh 2015). Actions may include, for instance, revisiting public servants' training and socialization (Headley and Wright 2020; Adusah-Karikari and Ohemeng 2014), exercising ethical leadership (Rossmann and Shanahan 2012), and using technology, such as in the case of automation of unemployment insurance services (Wenger and Wilkins 2008) to minimize biases and enhance citizens' inclusion. Organizational strategies for diversity management need to go beyond simply enhancing workforce diversity (Hur 2013); it is also important to identify the substantive implications of these strategies, particularly in areas of service delivery that involve rich interpersonal communications with clientele (Amirkhanyan et al. 2019). In turn, the investigation and comparison of various forms of supervisor support for diversity, and their effects on experiences of justice and inclusion, are important future steps for research and practice (Ritz and Alfes 2018).

Finally, scholars emphasize the importance of embracing new theoretical and methodological paradigms to serve the public interest and inclusive public services. Calls are advanced for attention on theory-grounded practice to build citizen trust in public services (Calista 2002; Pitts 2011) and methodological improvements in citizens' satisfaction surveys (Howard 2010). Comparative research is considered essential to understanding citizens' participation across various types of service provision in different countries (Verschuere, Brandsen, and Pestoff 2012).

It is also necessary to capture citizen–citizen interactions in different contexts, as they may result in differential experiences with public services (Nisar 2018). In this regard, Alford and Yates (2016) argue that while large-scale quantitative data provide a broad overview, future studies could incorporate a qualitative component to allow for more nuanced explanations and interpretations of the data.

4 | Discussion and Future Research Areas

This systematic review responds to the need for increased attention to social equity and social justice (e.g., McCandless et al. 2022; Stivers et al. 2023) by exploring the meanings, challenges, and possibilities of citizens' inclusion in public services manifested across three conceptual areas in public administration literature: participation and coproduction, representative bureaucracy, and organizational prerequisites for inclusive public service delivery. Table 1 illustrates and summarizes the main findings in the three conceptual areas, drawing on the "name, blame, and claim" framework, and highlights possible future research avenues stemming from the analysis.

The review moves beyond the predominant focus on the bureaucratic context, and thus the concept of representation, or on the generic engagement of citizens with public services in participatory processes, instead focusing on how citizens' encounters with public services shape (and are shaped by) inclusion. It thus emphasizes the ways in which citizens' inclusion is addressed in the public administration literature and highlights the extent to which the underlying needs for uniqueness and belongingness are already (implicitly) present in the discourse or require further exploration in future research. Overall, this review suggests that citizens' inclusion in public services remains an underexplored area and calls for greater recognition and explicit engagement with this concept in public administration scholarship, suggesting possible concrete ways forward. Below, the review's main findings are discussed, and recommendations for research, policy, and practice regarding citizens' inclusion in public services are provided.

4.1 | Main Findings: Exploring Naming, Blaming, and Claiming Citizens' Inclusion in Public Services

Drawing on the name, blame, and claim framework, the review demonstrates the main facets of citizens' inclusion in the public administration literature and identifies limitations in existing theorizing and empirical research.

The review of the literature highlights a need for a clearer and more comprehensive definition, as well as deeper theoretical and empirical engagement with the concept of inclusion in public administration literature (*name*). Citizens' inclusion in public services is primarily understood indirectly, as a feature of administrative processes, and often in relationship with concepts of representation and participation. These perspectives focus on the absence of exclusion from participatory and representative bureaucracy processes and service delivery. However, a lack of focus on inclusion as a focal phenomenon fails to capture the complex structures and feelings of belonging, access

and recognition for all that are variously shaped by the unique characteristics and experiences of citizens. Citizens' inclusion is often understood in generic terms, with superficial references to different groups of citizens or taking for granted assumptions that citizens are represented by public servants of the same race/gender as themselves (Nørgaard 2018; Riccucci, Van Ryzin, and Li 2016). The risk of this approach is to fall into a preoccupation solely with diversity (and only specific features therein), or with generic engagement of citizens, whereas inclusion requires connecting belongingness and uniqueness, and building on diversity to make citizens feel part of the community (e.g., Yeo and Jeon 2023; McCandless et al. 2022).

This approach also overlooks how the unique characteristics, perceptions, and knowledge of citizens within groups are valued and contribute to a sense of belonging leading to some citizens remaining "invisible" and without voice. As such, the literature reviewed often fails to address the intersectionality of multiple sociodemographic categories that shape citizens' sense of being accepted and belonging in public services. Failing to offer an in-depth, comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences and encounters of citizens who are differentially affected by constraining power relations, social hierarchies, or administrative burden, may result in the perpetuation and neglect of pervasive sources of inequity. As a result, these issues become increasingly difficult to name and, thus, *claim*.

The review further shows the boundary conditions (*blame*) that arguably hinder citizens' inclusion in public services. At the individual level, barriers to citizens' inclusion are identified in terms of limited access to resources and attitudes, behaviors, and roles of public officials. At the organizational level, barriers to citizens' inclusion arise from the design of participatory processes and administrative practices, such as hiring practices that limit access to decision-making processes, and prevent citizens belonging to specific sociodemographic groups from assuming public roles. While these insights offer an initial understanding of the contextual barriers hindering citizens' inclusion in public services, an empirical exploration that specifically focuses on inclusion, bridging issues of uniqueness and belongingness, is missing. This underscores the importance of conducting future empirical research in the area. In the absence of a significant base of empirical studies, and specific frameworks to explore citizens' inclusion in the reviewed literature, there is a need to identify novel theoretical and methodological approaches to look into this phenomenon, both in terms of its "naming" (e.g., how do citizens experience inclusion in and through public services?) and "claiming" (e.g., what enables or hinders citizens' sense of uniqueness and belongingness?).

Finally, extant studies suggest several opportunities for tackling (*claiming*) issues of inclusion, including developing transparent and unbiased decision-making practices and administrative processes through active representation, promoting ethical leadership behaviors, the use of technology to minimize biases, and effective management of diversity. However, more research to understand citizens' inclusion as part and parcel of broader societal, organizational and administrative cultures and processes that entrench and perpetuate discriminatory and exclusionary practices in specific contexts is needed. Specific attention may be devoted to technologies, including bots, algorithms, platforms,

and AI, as they have the potential to enhance inclusion but also to create new forms of exclusion.

Drawing upon these findings, in what follows, actions and recommendations for research, policy, and practice are made.

4.2 | Recommendations for Researching Citizens' Inclusion in Public Services

These findings have clear implications for future research in two main directions, discussed in the subsections below. First, exploring citizens' inclusion in public services as an ethico-political commitment and responsibility to society is important to develop novel theoretical understanding and opportunities for public administration research. Second, to achieve this, it is important to adopt a relational, multilevel perspective and understanding in public administration research that focuses on transforming organizational and administrative cultures, and institutions into spaces where citizens' unique features are recognized and valued in a way that makes them feel part of society and communities.

4.2.1 | Exploring Citizens' Inclusion in Public Services as an Ethico-Political Commitment

A striking finding from the review pertains to the fragmented meanings and engagement with the concept of citizens' inclusion in public administration theory and research. Exploring citizens' inclusion as an ethico-political commitment (Foucault 1997) that fosters the principles of belonging, access, and recognition for all and the implications involved in the distribution of power, privilege, and resources in diverse societies is important to achieve social equity and social justice in public services (Frederickson 2005; Svara and Brunet 2005; Blessett et al. 2019; Guy and McCandless 2012; Nisar 2018; McCandless et al. 2022).

Future research should explore citizens' inclusion as a focal phenomenon in diverse social services and geographical contexts, expanding beyond the Global North and the US-centric empirical focus (see Figure 2), to understand how historically constituted power relations are reproduced and/ or contested. In doing so, attention to the intersection (Crenshaw 1991) of different categories of difference, and casting a wider net for such differences, is necessary to engage with the multidimensionality of experience, acknowledging the simultaneity of privilege and oppression beyond additive considerations. This allows for attention to the uniqueness of citizens' experiences with public services in relation to structural and cultural contexts in which they find themselves, while also solidifying the structural and cultural barriers (Anthias 2013; Pandey et al. 2023). It thus offers more nuanced attention to what different positionalities might involve in terms of access to resources and opportunities, and experiences of inclusion in, and exclusion from and invisibility in, public services.

The geographical spread of existing studies requires further consideration as it is startling that the extant literature has engaged so little with non-US perspectives and contexts. The review highlights the need to expose and address the Western- and

US-centricity of current scholarship, particularly its assumed universality, which often sidelines experiences from the Global South or other under-represented contexts. Such omission has important implications, especially in this area of study, because critical examination of non-Western and non-US world would not only allow to challenge, and de-colonize mainstream, Western-centered theoretical views of the themes under consideration, but also bring about change in plural contexts. The current emphasis on specific realities and US/Western-centric theories profoundly affects the type of phenomena observed, the lenses through which they are seen, and the voices that are heard at the risk of excluding those of citizens and professionals outside the Global North and Western hemisphere, including those of Indigenous people or other marginalized and minoritized populations, such as refugees who rely on public services for their integration in the community. As these voices are silenced, this provides little or no opportunity to elaborate on the inclusion aspects that underpin social equity efforts and the public sphere in these contexts. Given that the context and theories embraced shape how findings are interpreted and made sense of, the latter will also contribute in turn to shape, and keep the status quo, or change the context of the research.

One step to address this is to engage in locally grounded research in non-Western and non-US contexts and to create opportunities and space for dialogue between scholars from various contexts in academic journals and conferences. Academic journal editors and funding bodies should support colleagues and encourage the development and publication of non-US/Western research. The current level of engagement in this area has been insufficient. More broadly, there is a need to rethink the public responsibility of education and research, as well as our social obligations as educators and researchers to act for and instil equitable practices within the academic community. This requires openness and willingness to engage with new possibilities, "so that we might discover those places of radical transparency where knowledge can empower" (Hooks 2010, p. 187).

To understand the links between citizens' experiences and plurality of service delivery, future research needs to consider the experiences of citizens' inclusion in the context of the *lifecourse*. A life-course perspective focuses on the "social pathways of human lives, particularly in their historical time and place" (Elder, Johnson, and Crosnoe 2003). Key to life-course approaches are trajectories (e.g., migration and child raising) and transitions (e.g., divorce, death, and unemployment) and how they differ between different generations but also cohorts differentiated by exposure to historical changes. Exploring how citizens' experiences are influenced by their intersecting positionalities over their personal, and family life courses and reflected in their personal biographies is paramount for inclusive public service delivery and societies.

Finally, investigating the relationships and potential tradeoffs between citizens' inclusion, representation, and participation is essential. These three concepts embody in different ways the democratic ethos of public administration scholarship. Yet, they are often studied separately, drawing on different literatures and approaches. Focusing on inclusion may allow to bridge this gap, allowing a stronger appreciation of their reciprocal interrelations, as well as possible synergies, conflicts, or compromises.

Research is needed to ascertain the conditions of possibility and the mechanisms through which this can happen. Future research might also empirically examine the differential effects, or lack thereof, of active, passive, and symbolic representation on citizens' inclusion.

4.2.2 | Adopting a Relational, Multilevel Perspective to Theorize and Research Citizens' Inclusion in Public Services

Future research would benefit from adopting a relational, multilevel perspective to delve into the factors influencing citizens' inclusion. This would encompass considering the microlevel of individual attributes and behaviors, focusing not only on public officials, but also on citizens, especially vulnerable or marginalized ones, and observed both as individuals, groups, and collective (Nabatchi, Sancino, and Sicilia 2017; Haug 2024). It would also require exploring how these are embedded within larger institutions, organizational and structural cultures, and hierarchies. Citizens' needs for belongingness and uniqueness in public services are shaped by the economic, social, and cultural systems that surround public services. By incorporating critical theorizing, such as feminist and critical race theory (Martínez Guzmán, Jordan, and Joyce 2024), along with sociological and institutional frameworks, future research can achieve a deeper understanding of the possibilities and challenges of creating structures of citizens' inclusion.

This will also require embracing pluralism in methods. Qualitative approaches (Ospina, Esteve, and Lee 2018), such as (self-)ethnographies (Cappellaro 2017), biographical interviews, and case studies can be particularly valuable in uncovering insights into a less investigated phenomenon, such as citizens' inclusion in public services. Interpretive studies, in particular, can shed light on the experiences of access, recognition, and belonging of citizens, public managers, and other stakeholders involved in public services, and elucidate the structural processes that variously shape them. This could complement the predominantly quantitative (and behavioral) approaches found in much public administration literature. When designing research around inclusion, a careful sampling process becomes critical to capture the perspectives of minority groups and uncover novel experiences. This requires leaving the process of sampling "open" to diverse, emerging categories of vulnerability.

Such an approach necessitates reflection and organizing for practical implementation. Acting on the barriers, as identified in the "Blaming" sections, is essential for effective implementation. Solutions, including methods of communication and decision-making, ethical leadership, training, technology, and affirmative actions, have been suggested as necessary for promoting citizens' inclusion.

With this in mind, developing mechanisms to monitor sociodemographic diversity in participatory democratic processes is essential to account for privileged backgrounds and enhance citizens' inclusion (Fung 2015). However, these mechanisms and solutions need to go beyond one-dimensional perspectives of race and gender to embrace intersectionality, as explained earlier, acknowledging the multidimensionality of citizens'

experiences in their interaction with public services, and paying particular attention to groups that have remained invisible in the literature so far, or who are stigmatized. Along these lines, monitoring mechanisms should encompass emerging categories of difference. This way, they can lead to design, plan, deliver, or assess services in a way that actively promotes the involvement of citizens from various backgrounds. The same would hold for organizational practices, which should challenge masculine, racist, and ableist cultures to capture wider experiences of uniqueness, belongingness, stigma, and invisibility. While these monitoring mechanisms would contribute to strengthening attention to diversity and representation in participatory efforts, an emphasis on inclusivity will also require building on this to create a sense of acceptance as an insider and collective effort (especially in the case of collective participatory exercises) and of belonging and feeling a valued member of society and the community (e.g., in the case of individual coproduction; Nabatchi, Sancino, and Sicilia 2017). Inclusive participatory mechanisms will thus have to overcome the generic engagement mostly described in current literature, to move toward engagement that specifically targets vulnerable, minoritized, marginalized, less represented categories of citizens not only for them to "sit" at the table, but also to "speak" and to translate into concrete changes in services and users' experiences.

5 | Conclusions

Inclusion is central both to the internal functioning of organizations as well as to our societies and communities. Public services, being at the interface between citizens and public administration, can be an important means for the inclusion (or exclusion) of citizens. Yet, this review of citizens' inclusion in public services reveals that inclusion has generally been discussed indirectly, in its relationships and tradeoffs with other concepts, such as bureaucratic representation and participation. This review suggests that representation and participation are conceptually and empirically different from inclusion and that inclusion in public services may deserve more direct and explicit attention by public administration scholars. In doing so, it advances important suggestions for developing scholarship on inclusion which can provide theoretical as well as practical advancements to our discipline. These will entail exploring citizens' inclusion in public services as an ethico-political commitment and adopting a relational, multilevel perspective to theorize and research citizens' inclusion in public services.

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Papers included in the review sample and cited within the text are designated with an asterisk (*). Those from the review sample that are not referenced in the main text can be found in Appendix D.

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Appendix A	Final Boolean Search Strings
String 1	"inclusi" OR "digital inclusi" AND ("public administration" OR "public sector" OR "public services" OR "government") AND "citizens"
String 2	social equity AND (public administration OR public sector OR public services OR government) AND (citizens OR users)
String 3	divers AND (public administration OR public sector OR public services OR government) AND (citizens OR users)
String 4	intersectionality AND (public administration OR public sector OR public services OR government) AND (citizens OR users)
String 5	representative bureaucracy

Appendix B

List of Public Administration Journals Used in the Screening

1. Academia Revista Latinoamericana de Administracion
2. Administratie si Management Public
3. Administration
4. Administration and Society
5. Administrative Law Review
6. Administrative Science Quarterly
7. Administrative Theory and Praxis
8. Advances in Educational Administration
9. Advances in Library Administration and Organization
10. African Renaissance
11. AHURI Final Report
12. American Journal of Evaluation
13. American Political Science Review
14. American Review of Public Administration
15. Amme Idaresi Dergisi
16. Area Development and Policy
17. Asia and the Pacific Policy Studies
18. Asia-Pacific Journal of Business Administration
19. Asian Journal of Political Science
20. Australian Journal of Public Administration
21. Balkan Social Science Review
22. British Journal of Political Science
23. British Journal of Social Work
24. Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences
25. Canadian Public Administration
26. Canadian Public Policy/ Analyze de Politiques
27. Cato Journal
28. Central European Journal of Public Policy
29. Contemporary Economic Policy
30. Criminology and Public Policy
31. Critical Perspectives on International Public Sector Management
32. Critical Policy Studies
33. Croatian and Comparative Public Administration
34. Decyzje
35. Economic Development Quarterly
36. Education Inquiry
37. Education Sciences
38. Educational Administration Quarterly
39. Electronic Government
40. Environment and Planning
41. Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy
42. Environment and Planning C: Politics and Space
43. European Journal of Comparative Law and Governance
44. European Journal of Government and Economics
45. European Journal of Social Security
46. European Planning Studies
47. European Policy Analysis
48. Evaluation
49. Evidence and Policy
50. Federal Register
51. Frontiers of Business Research in China
52. Gender and Society
53. Geneses
54. Gestion y Politica Publica
55. Globalizations
56. Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration and Institutions
57. Government and Opposition
58. Halduskultuur
59. Health and Social Care in the Community
60. Health Care Management Review
61. Health Policy
62. Health Services Management Research
63. Health Services Research

64. Higher Education Quarterly

65. History of Economic Thought and Policy

66. Homeland Security Affairs

67. Human Resources for Health

68. Human Service Organizations Management, Leadership and Governance

69. IAFOR Journal of Education

70. Information Polity

71. Information Technology for Development

72. Innovar

73. Innovation Journal

74. International Journal of Educational Management

75. International Journal of Electronic Governance

76. International Journal of Health Care Quality Assurance

77. International Journal of Healthcare Technology and Management

78. International Journal of Human Rights in Healthcare

79. International Journal of Organization Theory and Behavior

80. International Journal of Public Administration

81. International Journal of Public Administration in the Digital Age

82. International Journal of Public Policy

83. International Journal of Public Sector Management

84. International Journal of Public Sector Performance Management

85. International Public Management Journal

86. International Review of Administrative Sciences

87. International Review of Public Administration

88. International Social Security Review

89. International Tax and Public Finance

90. Journal of Accounting, Ethics and Public Policy

91. Journal of Asian Public Policy

92. Journal of Benefit–Cost Analysis

93. Journal of Community Practice

94. Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice

95. Journal of Criminological Research, Policy and Practice

96. Journal of Data and Information Science

97. Journal of Drug Policy Analysis

98. Journal of Education and Work

99. Journal of Education Finance

100. Journal of Educational Administration

101. Journal of European Public Policy

102. Journal of European Social Policy

103. Journal of Health Services Research and Policy

104. Journal of Health, Organization and Management

105. Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management

106. Journal of Housing for the Elderly

107. Journal of Information Policy

108. Journal of Information Technology and Politics

109. Journal of Integrated Care

110. Journal of Library Administration

111. Journal of Money Laundering Control

112. Journal of Policy Analysis and Management

113. Journal of Policy History

114. Journal of Policy Modeling

115. Journal of Policy Practice

116. Journal of Public Administration: Research and Theory

117. Journal of Public Affairs

118. Journal of Public Affairs Education

119. Journal of Public and Nonprofit Affairs

120. Journal of Public Budgeting, Accounting and Financial Management

121. Journal of Public Policy

122. Journal of Public Procurement

123. Journal of Public Relations Research

124. Journal of Rural Studies

125. Journal of Social Policy

126. Journal of Special Education Leadership

127. Journal of Urban Management

128. Lex Localis

129. Local Economy

130. Local Government Studies

131. Milbank Quarterly

132. NISPAcee Journal of Public Administration and Policy

133. Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly

134. Nonprofit Management and Leadership

135. Nonprofit Policy Forum

136. Policing

137. Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies and Management

138. Policy and Internet

139. Policy and Politics

140. Policy and Society

141. Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences

142. Policy Sciences

143. Policy Studies

144. Policy Studies Journal

145. Political Science Quarterly

146. Politics and Governance
147. Politics and Society
148. Politics and the Life Sciences
149. Presidential Studies Quarterly
150. Problems and Perspectives in Management
151. Public Administration
152. Public Administration and Development
153. Public Administration Issues
154. Public Administration Quarterly
155. Public Administration Review
156. Public Administration: An International Quarterly
157. Public Budgeting and Finance
158. Public Choice
159. Public Finance Review
160. Public Integrity
161. Public Management Review
162. Public Manager (The)
163. Public Money and Management
164. Public Performance AND Management Review
165. Public Personnel Management
166. Public Policy and Administration
167. Public Services Quarterly
168. Public Works Management and Policy
169. Publius
170. RAE Revista de Administração de Empresas
171. Reforma y Democracia
172. Regional Research of Russia
173. Regional Studies
174. Regulation and Governance
175. Research and Politics
176. Review of Policy Research
177. Review of Public Personnel Administration
178. Revista Brasileira de Politicas Publicas
179. Revista Catalana de Dret Public
180. Revista de Administração Pública
181. Revista de Derecho Administrativo Economico
182. Revista Digital de Biblioteconomia e Ciência da Informação
183. Revue Francaise d'Administration Publique
184. Risk, Hazards and Crisis in Public Policy
185. Rivista Italiana di Politiche Pubbliche
186. Science and Public Policy
187. Scienze Regionali

188. Social Policy and Administration
189. Social Security Bulletin
190. Social Service Review
191. Society and Economy
192. State and Local Government Review
193. Statistics and Public Policy
194. Studies in Public and Non-Profit Governance
195. Teaching Public Administration
196. The Journal of Poverty and Social Justice
197. The Journal of Social Policy Studies/Zhurnal Issledovaniy Sotsial'noy Politiki
198. Town Planning Review
199. Transforming Government: People, Process and Policy
200. Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences
201. Urban Studies
202. Verwaltung
203. Voluntas
204. Yale Journal on Regulation

Note: Compiled from The Associate Chartered Business (ABS), SCImago Journal & Country (SJR), and Journal Quality List (JQL).

Appendix C

Final List of Public Administration Journals in the Reviewed Sample

Journal Title	Count	Percentage
Administration & Society	4	3.36%
Administrative Sciences	1	0.84%
American Political Science Review	1	0.84%
American Review of Public Administration	16	13.45%
Asian Journal of Political Science	1	0.84%
Australian Journal of Public Administration	3	2.52%
European Planning Studies	2	1.68%
Governance: An International Journal of Policy Administration and Institutions	1	0.84%
Health & Social Care in The Community	1	0.84%
International Journal of Public Administration	7	5.88%
International Journal of Public Sector Management	2	1.68%
International Review of Administrative Sciences	5	4.20%
International Review of Public Administration	1	0.84%

Journal Title	Count	Percentage
Journal Of Public Administration Research and Theory	18	15.13%
Journal Of Rural Studies	2	1.68%
Local Government Studies	4	3.36%
Nonprofit And Voluntary Sector Quarterly	1	0.84%
Policy And Politics	1	0.84%
Policy Sciences	1	0.84%
Policy Studies	1	0.84%
Policy Studies Journal	2	1.68%
Public Administration	8	6.72%
Public Administration Review	23	19.33%
Public Management Review	8	6.72%
Social Policy & Administration	2	1.68%
Urban Studies	1	0.84%
Voluntas	2	1.68%
Grand total	119	

Appendix D

Papers From the Review That Were Not Directly Cited in Text

Alozie, Nicholas O., and Cherise G. Moore. 2007. "Blacks and Latinos in City Management: Prospects and Challenges in Council-Manager Governments." *International Journal of Public Administration* 30 (1): 47–63. https://doi.org/10.1080/01900690601050104.

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