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What Happens *After* Whistleblowing? A Systematic Literature Review of the Post-whistleblowing Phase

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Abstract

In the wake of a rise in high-profile whistleblowing incidents, there has been a substantial increase in scholarly attention toward understanding the complexities of what happens after people have engaged in the act of whistleblowing. According to the current literature, this phase is often associated with significant harm for both the individuals who 'blow the whistle' as well as the organisations in which the wrongdoing has occurred. Given this real-world significance, together with the rapidly growing body of empirical research, a comprehensive review of the post-whistleblowing literature is warranted. The overall aim of the current review is to provide a state-of-the-art assessment of what is known about the post-whistleblowing phase and to identify how future research can advance current research and scholarship on whistleblowing. Specifically, we summarise information about current research trends and dominant theoretical perspectives evident in the post-whistleblowing literature; provide a categorisation of the different types of organisational wrongdoing; discuss the factors influencing, mediating, and moderating post-whistleblowing outcomes, and outline the methodological strengths and weaknesses of prior research. Finally, the current review highlights areas in critical need of development and paves the way for a more holistic understanding of the complete whistleblowing process, including a temporal perspective of the post-whistleblowing phase.

Keywords Whistleblowing · Post-whistleblowing · Systematic literature review · Organisational wrongdoing

Introduction

Recent media reports are filled with cases of organisational wrongdoing (Latan et al., 2023), encompassing ethical transgressions, safety breaches, and financial malpractices (e.g., Latan et al., 2023; Vandekerckhove & Phillips, 2019). Organisational wrongdoing is defined as conduct that "ranges from serious illegality to unprofessional or improper behaviour in the workplace" (Teo & Caspersz, 2011, p. 239) and "places a firm's stakeholders at risk and violates stakeholders' expectations of societal norms and general standards of conduct" (Zavyalova et al., 2012, p. 1080). In the face of this organisational wrongdoing, individuals often voice concerns via formal and informal

channels, either individually or collectively (Wilkinson et al., 2020). However, when constructive avenues for voicing fail, a final option they may opt for is whistleblowing (Kenny et al., 2020b). Whistleblowing is an intended, voluntary, deliberate, and non-obligatory form of disclosure (Jubb, 1999) defined as the act of organisation members (former or current) disclosing "illegal, immoral, or illegitimate practices under the control of their employers, to persons or organizations that may be able to effect action" (Near & Miceli, 1985, p. 4). From Enron's Sherron Watkins exposing improper accounting methods (Lacayo & Ripley, 2002), to Frances Haugen's recent Facebook whistleblower complaint on misinformation (Horwitz, 2021), whistleblowing is often seen as an important means for uncovering and addressing organisational misconduct.

Whistleblowing has been widely recognised by scholars as a process rather than an event (e.g., Culiberg & Mihelič, 2017; Dozier & Miceli, 1985; Kenny, 2019; Miceli & Near, 1992; Near & Miceli, 1985). This process generally consists of three broad phases: pre-whistleblowing, whistleblowing, and post-whistleblowing. While extensive research has focused on the first two phases, a growing

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body of research has been dedicated to understanding what happens after the wrongdoing has been disclosed, particularly in terms of the consequences experienced by whistleblowers (e.g., Kenny & Fotaki, 2023; Lewis, 2022; Vandekerckhove & Phillips, 2019), their families (e.g., Kenny & Fotaki, 2023; Lewis, 2022) and the individual or group responsible for the wrongdoing (also referred to as the 'wrongdoer') (e.g., Bowen et al., 2010; Smaili & Arroyo, 2022). This research has uncovered a diverse range of outcomes that arise during the post-whistleblowing phase, including retaliation (e.g., Miceli & Near, 1989; Rehg et al., 2008; Somers & Casal, 2011), dismissal (Vandekerckhove & Phillips, 2019), ostracism (Curtis et al., 2021), workplace bullying (Park et al., 2020), family distress (Kenny & Fotaki, 2023) and adverse mental health effects such as anxiety, depression, and suicidal thoughts (Park & Lewis, 2018). These often negative outcomes not only have far reaching consequences for the people involved, especially for whistleblowers and their families, but also represent major barriers to creating environments where organisational members feel safe to call out fraud, corruption, inappropriate behaviour and other forms of organisational wrongdoing (Curtis et al., 2021).

Despite the depth and breadth of knowledge captured in the post-whistleblowing literature, there are three key shortcomings that limit our understanding of what happens after the wrongdoing has been disclosed. Firstly, the existing literature lacks a systematic integration of evidence regarding the post-whistleblowing phase. Previously published reviews on whistleblowing have primarily examined the pre-whistleblowing and whistleblowing phases (e.g., Culiberg & Mihelič, 2017; Gao & Brink, 2017) and/or have explored whistleblowing across specific disciplines, including accounting (e.g., Gao & Brink, 2017; Lee & Xiao, 2018), the public sector (e.g., Kang, 2023), and law (e.g., Carson et al., 2008; Near et al., 1993; Vandekerckhove & Lewis, 2012). A review of the post-whistleblowing literature is therefore necessary to take stock of the full range of effects associated with this post-whistleblowing phase and to identify the wide range of theoretical and methodological paradigms that have been used in this growing body of research.

The second key shortcoming addressed in the current review is the lack of clarity regarding how different stakeholders are impacted during the post-whistleblowing phase. Prior research has explored a plurality of post-whistleblowing outcomes affecting whistleblowers as well as organisations and other stakeholders (e.g., family members, peers, and regulatory bodies) (e.g., Lewis, 2022; Van Portfliet, 2022), but with little categorisation and understanding of how these outcomes compare when considered across groups and stakeholders. An important aim of the current review, therefore, is to capture the diverse post-whistleblowing outcomes experienced by various stakeholders across the

source studies and to better understand the interplay between these different post-whistleblowing outcomes.

The third key shortcoming in existing post-whistleblowing research relates to the dominance of cross-sectional studies in this field (e.g., Near et al., 2004; Parmerlee et al., 1982; Rehg et al., 2008). Consistent with the broader whistleblowing literature, the post-whistleblowing phase is best conceived as a temporal process with different incidents and events unfolding over time (Culiberg & Mihelič, 2017; Dozier & Miceli, 1985). However, there have been limited explorations of this perspective in previous research (cf. Lewis, 2022). This review aims to identify different elements of the post-whistleblowing process that represent a sequence of incidents and actions and thereby shed light on how these unfold over time.

In light of the above shortcomings, the specific research questions guiding the current review are as follows: (1) what theoretical and methodological paradigms have been used to study the post-whistleblowing phase of the whistleblowing process?; (2) how are different stakeholders impacted during the post-whistleblowing phase?; and (3) how does the post-whistleblowing phase unfold over time (i.e., is the process characterised by different stages and a temporal chain of events)? As such, the current review makes three key contributions to our understanding of the post-whistleblowing phase in particular and the overall whistleblowing process more generally. Firstly, by focusing on the post-whistleblowing phase which to date has not been subjected to systematic review and theoretical integration, the current review helps to provide a more holistic view of the entire whistleblowing process. Secondly, by providing a systematic assessment of the responses of whistleblowers and wrongdoers in the post-disclosure phase, the current review generates important insights into the types of legislation and policy making needed to safeguard the rights of whistleblowers after disclosure has occurred. Thirdly, by examining short-term and long-term outcomes within this post-whistleblowing phase, the current review contributes to a better theoretical and practical understanding of the entire post-whistleblowing process, including how the effects of whistleblowing unfold over time and the interplay between proximal and distal outcomes experienced by different stakeholders.

Review Process

To provide a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary synthesis of the literature examining the post-whistleblowing phase, we included all types of empirical studies (e.g., experimental, qualitative, quantitative, and case studies) that were published in peer-reviewed journals, written in English, with no restrictions on publication date or field. Next, we searched the titles, keywords, and abstracts of journal articles in the

following databases: JSTOR, Emerald (including Emerald Insight), APA PsycInfo (including Psyc Info, Psycinfo), and ScienceDirect (including Science Direct; Elsevier). The selection of these databases was intended to capture a wide range of historical and foundational works that have shaped the field of whistleblowing over time. Specifically, these databases provide access to the behavioural and social sciences, offering key psychological and behavioural insights, along with cutting-edge empirical studies in business, management, and organisational studies, disciplines central to the understanding of whistleblowing. Collectively, these databases are believed to cover a substantial proportion of the available scientific literature on whistleblowing. We specifically selected papers that had whistleblowing as their primary focus and utilised an empirical research design in their study approach. To capture a wide range of relevant literature, we included several variants of whistleblowing as search terms, including 'whistleblowing', 'whistle-blowing', 'whistle blowing', 'blow the whistle', 'blowing the whistle', 'whistle', 'whistleblower', 'whistle-blower', and 'whistle blower'.

After removing 73 duplicates, this step resulted in a total of 1077 papers that met the criteria and were included for further analysis. Next, we reviewed papers for relevance and scope. We excluded articles that were not part of the 2022 Australian Business School Deans Council (ABDC) list ($k=656$), were review and/or theoretical papers ($k=64$), did not use whistleblowing as their primary focus and/or did not utilise an empirical research design in their study approach ($k=152$), and did not focus on the outcome (i.e., response or effect or impact) attached to the act of whistleblowing ($k=174$). Figure 2 in Appendix 1 presents a PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) flow diagram detailing these steps.

The ABDC list is informed by globally recognised and externally validated journal ranking lists (e.g., the UK's Chartered Association of Business Schools Academic Journal Guide, the German Academic Association for Business Research's Journal Ranking list, the University of Texas at Dallas Top 100 List), appropriate citation metrics (e.g., SCImago) and expert peer review. The current list comprises 2,680 journals across 17 fields of research (e.g., accounting, finance, marketing, management, and economics) and represents a substantial portion of the scholarly literature from the management sciences. This literature encompasses the vast multi-disciplinary body of research from which the sampled papers in this review were drawn. Scholarly rigour is essential for maintaining the integrity of the research process and ensuring the practical relevance of outcomes. Due to the comprehensive nature of the ABDC list, articles published in journals not included in the ABDC list are unlikely to incorporate both the necessary rigour and relevance for fields relevant to our review (i.e., business, management,

and organisational studies), raising concerns regarding the quality and reliability of their findings. By focusing on high-quality journals included in the ABDC list, this systematic review aligns with the academic standards upheld by other systematic literature reviews (e.g., Mishra et al., 2022; Shu et al., 2022). This latter step of applying exclusion criteria reduced our initial sample to 31 papers. Finally, to ensure no relevant literature was missed, we conducted a manual search (e.g., Mishra et al., 2022) in management, business ethics, psychology, and organisational behaviour journals ranked A* or A by the 2022 ABDC list. This process led to the addition of three more papers to the dataset that were not included in the initial search but should have been based on our inclusion criteria. In other words, they also withstand our exclusion criteria because they were published in journals included in the ABDC list. Following these procedures, the final sample included $k=34$ studies for review.

Results

Main Trends in Post-whistleblowing Research

Over the last decade, there has been a significant increase in the number of whistleblowing studies overall, which helps to contextualise the proportion of research focusing on the post-whistleblowing phase. Among studies addressing either pre-whistleblowing or whistleblowing phases published in ABDC-ranked journals, 96 articles were published between 2015 and 2024, compared to 78 published between 1982 and 2014. In contrast, 16 post-whistleblowing articles were published between 2015 and 2024, in addition to 18 post-whistleblowing articles published between 1982 and 2014. Consistent with trends observed in other whistleblowing studies, the post-whistleblowing phase has garnered attention from a diverse array of disciplines, including business management (e.g., Miceli & Near, 1994), psychology (e.g., Near & Miceli, 1986), accounting (e.g., Bowen et al., 2010), finance (e.g., Smaili & Arroyo, 2022), and law (e.g., Lewis, 2022). Thus, while the overall growth in whistleblowing studies in recent years indicates increased interest in this vital area, the relatively small number of studies on the post-whistleblowing phase suggests that it remains an underexplored aspect of the whistleblowing process.

Post-whistleblowing research tends to be clustered around three main themes: exploring the effects of the whistleblowing on the whistleblower themselves, examining the impact on the wrongdoer (often the organisation), and/or identifying factors that contribute to these post-whistleblowing outcomes. However, of the 34 studies assessed, 31 concentrated solely on the whistleblower's perspective, while the remaining two studies examined wrongdoers' perspectives, and one study explored the views of other stakeholders (e.g.,

peers). This imbalance is problematic for at least two reasons. Firstly, the skewed attention towards studying whistleblowers' experiences reduces opportunities for gaining a complete understanding of the post-whistleblowing phase, including the impact of whistleblowing on the wrongdoer and other stakeholders (e.g., family members, peers, and regulatory bodies). Secondly, and from these studies, protective policies favouring whistleblowers may emerge, which not only disregard wrongdoers' viewpoints and rights but also reduce the likelihood that organisations can learn from these experiences.

Post-whistleblowing Research Across Geographical Regions

In terms of geographical distribution of the studies included in this review, our analysis reveals that post-whistleblowing research largely focuses on North America, with 26 of the 34 source studies featuring participants from the United States (e.g., Gravley et al., 2015; Miceli & Near, 1989; Near et al., 2004) and one from Canada (Smaili & Arroyo, 2022). Notably, 20 studies include only US participants. Europe represents the second-largest group, particularly the UK (n=4) (e.g., Lewis, 2022; Vandekerckhove & Phillips, 2019), Ireland (n=3) (e.g., Kenny & Fotaki, 2023; Lewis, 2022), and Norway (n=3) (e.g., Skivenes & Trygstad, 2010). Other European studies focus on Switzerland (n=1) (Kenny, 2018) and Belgium (n=1) (Kenny & Fotaki, 2023). Research involving Asian samples is limited, with studies from India (n=1) (Kenny & Fotaki, 2023), China (n=1) (Zhou et al., 2022), and South Korea (n=2) (e.g., Park & Lewis, 2018). Additional samples come from Australia (n=2) (Kenny & Fotaki, 2023; Miceli & Near, 2013) and South Africa (n=1) (Kenny & Fotaki, 2023). Table 2 summarises the geographical distribution of these studies.

While the focus on the USA provides useful insights into the post-whistleblowing phase, the heavy reliance on US-based samples limits our understanding of how this process unfolds in other countries. For instance, Norway's culture, characterised by a smaller power distance between management and employees compared to other European countries and the US, is said to foster work environments that reduce negative post-disclosure experiences. This is because smaller power distances support a management style that "resists overt management power and is less prone to 'charismatic dominance' types of communication" (Skivenes & Trygstad, 2010, p. 1089). The over-representation of Western (including US-based) samples in post-whistleblowing research may therefore restrict insights into non-Western contexts. Park and Lewis (2018), for example, noted cultural differences between South Korea, a highly collectivist society, and the more individualistic UK (Park et al., 2008). These variations highlight the need for cross-cultural research to capture the unique aspects of the post-disclosure phase, as current Western-focused studies introduce geographical and cultural biases.

Post-whistleblowing Research Across Occupations and Industries

In contrast to the limited focus on certain geographic regions and cultures, the source studies reflect a wide range of professions and occupations, showing that whistleblowing can occur across various job roles. For instance, whistleblowing has been researched among unskilled workers, such as supermarket cashiers (Parmerlee et al., 1982), and administrative staff, including secretaries (e.g., Jos et al., 1989), civil servants (Lewis, 2022), school administrators (Gravley et al., 2015), and public officials (Skivenes & Trygstad, 2010). This diversity also includes engineers, brokers, chefs (Vandekerckhove & Phillips, 2019), nurses (Lewis, 2022; Parmerlee et al., 1982), teachers (e.g., Gravley et al., 2015), counsellors (Lewis, 2022), management accountants (Somers & Casal, 2011), and faculty members (Richardson & McGlynn, 2011). Other groups such as academic researchers (Lewis, 2022), military members (e.g., Near et al., 2004), law enforcement agents (e.g., Lewis, 2022), and coaches (e.g., McGlynn & Richardson, 2014) further highlight the extensive range of professions where whistleblowing may occur.

Another noteworthy trend in the studies focusing on specific professional roles is that particular professions are linked to certain types of misconduct. For example, high-ranking executives, such as CEOs, general managers, and directors (Zhou et al., 2022), as well as assistant vice presidents (Kenny, 2018), are often responsible for reporting corporate governance breaches or financial misconduct due to their oversight of strategic and financial operations. Similarly, internal auditors (Miceli & Near, 1994) and management accountants (Somers & Casal, 2011), are also likely to identify and report regulatory violations (see Table 2 for represented professions).

Research across sectors also shows that industry differences in terms of industry culture, regulatory frameworks, and social norms shape whistleblowing outcomes. In a post-whistleblowing context, the public sector with a focus on civic duty is often studied, covering the military (Near et al., 2004), municipal governments (Skivenes & Trygstad, 2010), and other government agencies (Park & Lewis, 2018). In Norway, it was found that "three out of four workers report serious misconduct in the municipal sector" (Skivenes & Trygstad, 2010, p. 1077), indicating a strong culture of whistleblowing within this sector. Conversely, military contexts may view reporting as a betrayal of values, even though they offer more protection through bureaucratic structures (Near et al., 2004). The financial

services sector, including financial institutions and insurance companies, is known for its opacity and complex legal regulations, which complicates whistleblowing practices (Kenny, 2018; Vandekerckhove & Phillips, 2019). Here, the level of censorship varies, with whistleblowing on issues like tax evasion praised and encouraged in one country but condemned and discouraged in another (Kenny, 2018).

The education sector, spanning universities (McGlynn & Richardson, 2014; Richardson & McGlynn, 2011), schools (Gravley et al., 2015), and other learning institutions (Parmerlee et al., 1982), further highlights relevant gender dynamics in response to whistleblowing. For instance, US collegiate sports research shows that hypermasculine cultures favour masculine norms, impacting negative post-whistleblowing experiences for coaches, faculty members, university staff personnel, and citizens (Richardson & McGlynn, 2011). Similarly, the Texas school system, characterised by a rigid bureaucratic structure with hierarchical authority and centralised decision-making, creates a unique context for negative post-whistleblowing dynamics (Gravley et al., 2015). For instance, "the whistle-blower disrupts the idea of a bureaucracy as a smooth-running machine in which everyone abides by the rules, which leads to the possibility of the individual being "disciplined" via retaliation" (Gravley et al., 2015, p. 176). These studies show that whistleblowing outcomes are influenced by sector-specific norms, organisational structures, regulations, and social and gender dynamics. Table 2 details relevant industry information for each of the different source studies.

Beyond industry-level analyses, researchers have also examined specific organisations to gain a more nuanced understanding of post-whistleblowing dynamics. Studies have focused on individual firms where whistleblowing incidents have triggered substantial organisational changes, particularly in corporate governance. For instance, Smaili and Arroyo (2022) analysed 11 publicly exposed Canadian corporate financial statement fraud cases from 1995 to 2012, exploring how these firms adjusted their governance structures both before and after whistleblowing events. Their findings indicate that companies that successfully navigated the fallout from whistleblowing had strengthened their internal corporate governance practices by the third year post-whistleblowing. Conversely, some scholars have concentrated on larger, high-profile corporations, including Fortune 100, Fortune 500 (Heese & Pérez-Cavazos, 2021) and Fortune 1000 companies (Greenwood, 2015), to examine potential adverse dynamics following whistleblowing. For example, Greenwood (2015) highlights the presence of retaliatory actions within Fortune 1000 corporations. These findings point to the importance of organisation-specific factors, such as governance practices and organisational culture, in shaping the consequences of whistleblowing,

highlighting that outcomes can range from positive reforms to severe backlash.

Cross-Jurisdictional Variations in Whistleblower Protections

Table 1 summarises the various legal protections available to whistleblowers following their disclosures of misconduct as detailed in the reviewed post-whistleblowing studies.

Some source studies increasingly emphasise the significance of whistleblower protection policies, highlighting national and cross-national disparities that lead to variations in outcomes during the post-disclosure phase. For example, Near et al. (2004) conducted a study involving employees in an USA military base who are protected under the Merit Systems Protection Act of 1978. They observed that military-specific policies may afford greater protection to personnel than those provided to other federal employees. Under this law, federal employees are shielded from dismissal for reporting misconduct, whereas nonprotected employees may be terminated under the employment-at-will doctrine (Near et al., 2004). By contrast, other research suggests that certain areas of whistleblowing law are clearer than others. For instance, Near and Jensen (1983, p.5) argued that "the law on the subject of sex discrimination is less ambiguous than it may be in other cases of whistleblowing (such as product safety or worker health and safety cases)".

In a comparative context, Skivenes and Trygstad (2010) highlighted that dismissal protections in Norway, as outlined by the Working Environment Act (WEA), are stronger than those in the USA and the UK. The WEA applies to most employers and employees across sectors, granting employees constitutional rights to voice concerns about non-confidential matters, participate in decisions related to working conditions, and report misconduct without fear of retaliation. Moreover, in workplaces with 10 or more employees, a health and safety officer must be elected to ensure compliance with the WEA. These national and cross-national variations in whistleblower protection policies are likely to influence the consequences experienced by those who disclose the wrongdoing both in the short and the long term.

Conceptualisation of Whistleblowing in the Post-whistleblowing Literature

In the post-whistleblowing literature, scholars have adopted various perspectives when defining whistleblowing. The whistleblowing concept originated in the early 1970s as a morally driven act (Nader et al. 1972) and evolved into a process-oriented framework, including pre-and during-whistleblowing phases (Dozier & Miceli, 1985). By the early 1990s, Miceli and Near (1992) extended this to encompass post-whistleblowing (e.g., Near & Jensen, 1983; Vandekerckhove

Table 1 Legal protections available to whistleblowers following their disclosures of misconduct

Article	Country/Countries of data collection	Legal protection	Key facts about legal protection(s) available for whistleblowers are mentioned in the source article
Bowen et al. (2010)	USA	The Sarbanes–Oxley (SOX) Act of 2002	Employees who disclose improper financial practices receive greater protection from discrimination. The act also mandates that companies listed on USA stock exchanges establish an anonymous hotline, allowing whistleblowers to directly communicate with the board of directors
Greenwood (2015)	USA	The Sarbanes–Oxley (SOX) Act of 2002	The act is designed to increase financial oversight and transparency, auditor independence, and corporate accountability. The Sarbanes–Oxley Act mandates that publicly traded companies set up an anonymous communication channel to the board's audit committee, enabling employees to report financial misconduct. It also safeguards employees who disclose such wrongdoing
		The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978	This legislation protected federal whistleblowers and prohibited retaliation against them by establishing the United States Merit Systems Protection Board (USMSPB)
Lewis (2022)	USA, UK, and Ireland	European Union directives	Article 23 requires member states to implement "effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties for (a) hindering or attempt to hinder reporting, (b) retaliating against persons". It emphasises that compensation or reparation must not discourage potential whistleblowers and notes that compensation should not be seen as an alternative to reinstatement, as this may lead to systematic avoidance by larger organisations
		The international standard for whistle-blowing management systems (ISO 37002, 2021)	These international standards stress that remediation for whistleblowers must aim to restore them to the position they would have held had they not suffered retaliation
Miceli and Near (1989)	USA	The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (CSRA)	The act created the Merit Systems Protection Board (USMSPB) to protect federal employees against retaliation when they blew the whistle on wrongdoing in their agencies
Near and Jensen (1983)	USA	Not applicable	The law on the subject of sex discrimination is less ambiguous than it may be in other cases of whistleblowing (such as product safety or worker health and safety cases)
Near et al. (2004)	USA	Merit Systems Protection Act of 1978	Federal employees who blow the whistle, under certain conditions, are protected from retaliation under the act
Parmerlee et al. (1982)	USA	The Civil Rights Act of 1964	Whistle-blowers who file complaints of discrimination that is prohibited by the Civil Rights Act may file a second complaint if they believe themselves to be victims of retaliation

Table 1 (continued)

Article	Country/Countries of data collection	Legal protection	Key facts about legal protection(s) available for whistleblowers are mentioned in the source article
Skivenes and Trygstad (2010)	Norway	Working Environment Act (WEA)	"WEA covers the majority of all employers and employees across sectors and branches. Employees are given constitutional rights to voice their opinion about any matter that is not confidential by law and to have a say in matters concerning working hours, health and safety, workplace environment, job fulfilment and temporary employment. WEA states that employees have a right to report misconduct, and workers who report misconduct shall be protected from retaliation and unfair treatment from employers". Furthermore, according to the WEA, "all workplaces that employ 10 or more workers are obliged to have a health and safety officer"
Smaili and Arroyo (2022)	Canada	Regulation 52–110 respecting Audit Committees	Regulation 52–110 emphasises the role of the audit committee in whistleblowing, which assumes that the audit committee has sufficient power and can act with a certain degree of independence
Vandekerckhove and Phillips (2019)	UK	The Public Interest Disclosure Act of 1998	The law that protects whistleblowers from negative treatment or unfair dismissal and regulators are mandated as 'prescribed persons' under the Public Interest Disclosure Act

& Phillips, 2019). Current post-whistleblowing research often relies on Near and Miceli's (1985) widely accepted definition (e.g., Gravley et al., 2015; Vandekerckhove & Phillips, 2019) of whistleblowing as the act of organisation members (former or current) disclosing "illegal, immoral, or illegitimate practices under the control of their employers, to persons or organizations that may be able to effect action" (Near & Miceli, 1985, p. 4).

Many studies in this field draw on whistleblower accounts (e.g., Lewis, 2022; Park et al., 2020) and include internal, external, and anonymous whistleblowing (e.g., Bjørkelo et al., 2011; Park et al., 2020). However, anonymous whistleblowing has received less attention in the post-whistleblowing literature since anonymity shields whistleblowers from organisational responses (Bjørkelo et al., 2011). Consequently, the post-whistleblowing literature increasingly frames whistleblowing as "speaking truth to power" (Kenny & Fotaki, 2023, p. 344) or speaking up at great personal risk, highlighting the negative consequences, such as retaliation, that whistleblowers frequently experience (e.g., Kenny, 2018; Kenny & Fotaki, 2023).

The post-whistleblowing literature also considers organisational traits as part of the description of whistleblowing, for instance, in viewing whistleblowing as bureaucratic opposition or an effort to incite change without formal authority (Parmerlee et al., 1982). However, whistleblowing has been found to occur across both bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic contexts, reinforcing its role in promoting ethics and transparency (Parmerlee et al., 1982). Furthermore, national regulations also shape conceptualisations of whistleblowing. In Norway, for instance, the threshold for whistleblowing is considered relatively low, as any report of perceived wrongdoing (not necessarily involving wrongdoing by the organisation) to a manager or responsible person is considered whistleblowing. In this context, Norwegian scholars distinguish between weak whistleblowing (i.e., reporting to a supervisor) and strong whistleblowing (i.e., further escalating reports within the organisation) (Skivenes & Trygstad, 2010).

Theoretical Developments in Post-whistleblowing Research

Previous whistleblowing research draws on diverse theoretical frameworks that emanate from a range of disciplines, including organisational behaviour, psychology, accounting, law, and ethics. These theoretical frameworks include both macro-level theories like resource

dependency (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) and micro-level theories like the prosocial organizational behavior (POB) model (Dozier & Miceli, 1985; Miceli & Near, 1992). Furthermore, some studies adopt topic-specific theoretical models, such as the whistleblowing decision process model (Henik, 2008), and the model of whistleblowing effectiveness (Miceli & Near, 2002) which focus on specific aspects of whistleblowing. However, the theories that are most commonly used to guide post-whistleblowing research are the POB model (Dozier & Miceli, 1985; Miceli & Near, 1992), the theory of resource dependency (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), and the theory of minority influence (Moscovici, 1976). The key insights gained from these three theories are outlined below.

The POB (Dozier & Miceli, 1985; Miceli & Near, 1992) is the most frequently cited theoretical lens underpinning post-whistleblowing research (e.g., Dworkin & Baucus, 1998; Lee et al., 2004; Near et al., 2004). This model was initially introduced by Dozier and Miceli (1985) and was expanded by Miceli and Near (1992) to include two additional steps. The POB model outlines whistleblowers' typical journey when encountering organisational wrongdoing. The steps, commencing with the pre-whistleblowing phase, involve being aware of the wrongdoing and the subsequent decision-making on whether and how to report it (Dozier & Miceli, 1985; Miceli & Near, 1992). This precedes the act of whistleblowing itself (Dozier & Miceli, 1985; Miceli & Near, 1992), as outlined in the three-phased model presented earlier in this review. Following whistleblowing, the post-whistleblowing phase unfolds with the organisation's response (often against the whistleblower), and the whistleblower's outcome assessment, which then goes on to influence future actions (Miceli & Near, 1992).

Two other theories that are frequently used in post-whistleblowing literature are the theory of resource dependency (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) (e.g., Miceli & Near, 1989, 1994; Near & Jensen, 1983; Rehg et al., 2008) and the theory of minority influence (Moscovici, 1976) (e.g., Bjørkelo et al., 2011; Miceli & Near, 1994, 2013). Theories of resource dependency and minority influence share commonalities as they both address power dynamics within organisations and acknowledge that individuals or groups with specific attributes or resources can influence decision-making processes within an organisation. In the context of post-whistleblowing, scholars employing the theory of resource dependency argue that organisational members possess more influence when the organisation relies on their resources, thus whistleblowers hold a relatively stronger position if the organisation depends on them. Similarly, scholars using the theory of minority influence argue that whistleblowers, representing a minority group within the organisation, can be more influential if they appear credible, confident, competent, and objective in their disclosures (Moscovici, 1976).

Factors Influencing Post-whistleblowing Outcomes

In previous work, the determinants of post-whistleblowing outcomes have often been grouped into one of three categories: stimulus (e.g., type of wrongdoing and length of wrongdoing), organisational (e.g., factors related to co-workers and supervisor), and individual (e.g., age and income of focal respondent) variables (Lee et al., 2004). However, more recently other scholarly perspectives have introduced additional categories relating to the attributes of the whistleblower, such as their power and job satisfaction (e.g., Bjørkelo et al., 2011), and demographic variables such as gender (e.g., Greenwood, 2015). Broadly speaking, all these factors can be grouped into two overarching categories: personal and environmental factors. Personal factors pertain to individual-specific attributes like gender, age, education, personality traits, and pay (Culiberg & Mihelič, 2017). These personal factors can be further broken down into different subcategories, including demographic, personality, and individual job situation characteristics. "Personality characteristics (i.e., dispositional characteristics) are internal factors that cause an event or behavior" (Gao & Brink, 2017, p. 2), while demographic characteristics involve age, race, sex, and marital status (Gao & Brink, 2017; Miceli et al., 2008). Characteristics of the individual's job situation include pay, professional status, job tenure, and performance (Miceli et al., 2008).

Environmental factors are defined as factors that are external to the individual but which may interact with the individual in the context of whistleblowing (Culiberg & Mihelič, 2017; Gao & Brink, 2017). Environmental factors include hostility of the co-worker (e.g., Miceli & Near, 1989), supervisor (e.g., Miceli & Near, 1989; Near & Miceli, 1986; Skivenes & Trygstad, 2010), type of wrongdoing (e.g., Near et al., 2004), and wrongdoer power (e.g., Rehg et al., 2008). Again, different subcategories can be identified, such as organisational characteristics, wrongdoing characteristics, and country/culture characteristics. Organisational characteristics encompass factors tied to the employing organisation and include co-worker support, supervisor support, and culture (Culiberg & Mihelič, 2017). Wrongdoing characteristics include factors related to the nature and context of the wrongdoing (Culiberg & Mihelič, 2017), and country/culture characteristics refer to unique attributes, qualities, and traits associated with a particular nation or geographical entity (Culiberg & Mihelič, 2017).

Overall, post-whistleblowing studies examined in the current review have predominantly focused on environmental factors over personal factors. Within the realm of environmental factors, the characteristics of the organisation have received most attention. Specifically, the level of support received from co-workers, supervisors, and top management, emerges as a significant factor within this category. For

instance, previous post-whistleblowing studies have identified a significant correlation between whistleblowers experiencing organisational retaliation (e.g., Near et al., 2004; Parmerlee et al., 1982) on the one hand and the hostility of the co-worker (e.g., Miceli & Near, 1989), supervisor (e.g., Miceli & Near, 1989; Near & Miceli, 1986; Skivenes & Trygstad, 2010) and top management (e.g., Miceli & Near, 1989; Near & Jensen, 1983; Near & Miceli, 1986; Parmerlee et al., 1982) on the other.

Furthermore, wrongdoing-related factors such as type of wrongdoing (e.g., Near et al., 2004), wrongdoer's power (e.g., Rehg et al., 2008), and the seriousness of the wrongdoing (e.g., Miceli & Near, 1989; Near & Miceli, 1986; Rehg et al., 2008), have shown a positive correlation with the comprehensiveness of the retaliation experienced by whistleblowers within organisational contexts. However, there has been relatively limited attention given to the characteristics of the country/culture, including aspects like cross-cultural differences (e.g., power distance, collectivism versus individualism, and masculinity versus femininity) and whistleblower protection mechanisms (e.g., whistleblower protection laws, support from non-governmental organisations (NGOs)). For instance, in one study, it was found that support for whistleblowers from external sources, including government agencies and NGOs, does not appear to have a significant impact on reducing workplace bullying by colleagues (e.g., Park et al., 2020). Further, the results of Park and colleagues' (2020) study suggest that government and NGO support might not be particularly effective in safeguarding whistleblowers from retaliation, which often takes the form of workplace bullying by colleagues.

With respect to personal factors, researchers have predominantly focused on demographic characteristics. For example, one study revealed that older whistleblowers tend to face more organisational retaliation compared to their younger counterparts (e.g., Parmerlee et al., 1982). This tendency could be attributed to older whistleblowers having greater access to information about organisational wrongdoing and their ability to expose more serious types of organisational misconduct. Similarly, another study strongly supported the notion that whistleblowers with higher levels of education are more likely to hold strategic positions within the organisation (e.g., Skivenes & Trygstad, 2010). Consequently, they have increased opportunities to uncover serious organisational wrongdoing, potentially leading to greater experiences of retaliation. On the contrary, some scholars contend that there is no significant correlation between the demographic characteristics of whistleblowers, such as age and education, and the negative health effects of whistleblowing (e.g., Park & Lewis, 2018). Additionally, the individual's job situation characteristics, such as tenure (Miceli & Near, 1989; Skivenes & Trygstad, 2010), hours of work (Skivenes & Trygstad, 2010), and pay (Miceli & Near, 1989) have been examined in the context of post-whistleblowing which often revealed non-significant results.

Types of Wrongdoing Explored in Post-whistleblowing Research

The overarching assessment of studies focusing on the type of wrongdoing is that the whistleblowing process is significantly impacted by the form of wrongdoing (Culiberg & Mihelič, 2017). This impact extends to subsequent steps, including the way in which the wrongdoing is reported during the pre-whistleblowing phase as well as the comprehensiveness of retaliation within the post-whistleblowing phase (Culiberg & Mihelič, 2017; Near et al., 2004). Accordingly, studies examining the post-whistleblowing phase have consistently incorporated details about the specific type of wrongdoing that precedes these post-whistleblowing outcomes (e.g., Near et al., 2004; Rehg et al., 2008). These can be broadly considered as three general categories (Dworkin & Baucus, 1998; Skivenes & Trygstad, 2010; Vandekerckhove & Phillips, 2019); ethical, financial, and safety malpractices.

Previous post-whistleblowing studies have predominantly focused on ethical malpractices over the financial and safety-related forms of malpractices. Ethical malpractices involve actions violating ethical principles, standards, or codes of conduct within a professional, organisational, or societal context (e.g., Vandekerckhove & Phillips, 2019). Examples include legal violation (e.g., Near et al., 2004; Rehg et al., 2008), mismanagement (e.g., Bjørkelo et al., 2011; Kenny & Fotaki, 2023; Near et al., 2004; Rehg et al., 2008), and academic misconduct (e.g., McGlynn & Richardson, 2014; Richardson & McGlynn, 2011). Financial malpractices concern unethical conduct related to financial matters (e.g., Vandekerckhove & Phillips, 2019), and typically involve bribery (e.g., Lewis, 2022; Vandekerckhove & Phillips, 2019), corruption (e.g., Gravley et al., 2015; Vandekerckhove & Phillips, 2019), money laundering (e.g., Kenny, 2018; Kenny et al., 2019), and tax evasion (e.g., Kenny, 2018; Kenny et al., 2019; Ouriemmi, 2023). Finally, safety malpractices encompass actions or negligence that fail to comply with safety regulations, standards, or practices, leading to risks, hazards, or harm to individuals, property, or the environment (e.g., Dworkin & Baucus, 1998; Vandekerckhove & Phillips, 2019). The most common examples of safety malpractice include disregarding safety protocols (e.g., Heese & Pérez-Cavazos, 2021; Near et al., 2004; Rothschild & Miethe, 1999) and sexual harassment (e.g., Kenny & Fotaki, 2023; Lee et al., 2004; Rehg et al., 2008; Van Portfliet, 2022). Refer to Table 2 for types of wrongdoing investigated in post-whistleblowing research.

Mediators and Moderators Examined in Post-whistleblowing Research

Few studies have examined the role of moderators and mediators during the post-whistleblowing phase. In an experimental study, researchers found that moral judgments regarding the action and likability of the actor play a mediating role in the connection between organisational norms (both injunctive and descriptive) and an observer's intention to ostracize the actor (Curtis et al., 2021). Another study found that the relationship between manufacturer monitoring (how manufacturers oversee distributor activities), manufacturer incentives (monetary-based payments for expected behaviours), and relationship quality (the satisfaction of distributors with their relationship with the manufacturer) is mediated by distributor whistleblowing (the act of a distributor reporting another distributor's wrongdoing to the manufacturer) (Zhou et al., 2022). In the same study, Zhou, and colleagues (2022) delved further into exploring the moderating role of distributor transaction-specific investments (TSI) (capital allocated for a specific investment opportunity) and market uncertainty (unpredictability and instability of the market environment). Their findings revealed that the impact of distributor whistleblowing on relationship quality is weaker when distributor TSI is high. Conversely, when market uncertainty is high, distributor whistleblowing has a stronger effect on relationship quality. Finally, another study found that gender moderates the relationship between influencing factors such as the power of the whistleblower, the seriousness of the wrongdoing, the power of the wrongdoer, lack of support for whistleblowers, and organisational retaliation. Specifically, these associations tend to be stronger for men than for women (Rehg et al., 2008).

Type of Outcomes Analysed in Post-whistleblowing Research

The outcomes identified in the current review suggest that the effects of post-whistleblowing reach far beyond the individual whistleblower. These outcomes influence both internal entities within the organisation, such as co-workers, managers, supervisors, and organisational processes (e.g., Bowen et al., 2010; Lewis, 2022), as well as entities outside the organisation that have been indirectly influenced by whistleblowing, including customers, family members, shareholders, suppliers, media, and the public (e.g., Curtis et al., 2021; Kenny & Fotaki, 2023). Of the 34 studies, most (65%) exclusively offered insights into the outcomes and responses encountered by whistleblowers (e.g., Kenny, 2018; Near et al., 2004; Parmerlee et al., 1982), 6% reported solely on outcomes and responses

experienced by the organisation (Bowen et al., 2010; Smaili & Arroyo, 2022), and 29% reported outcomes and responses affecting both internal and external entities (e.g., Lewis, 2022; Van Portfliet, 2022).

Out of the 34 studies, 62% reported the negative outcomes and responses (e.g., Kenny et al., 2019; Near et al., 2004; Parmerlee et al., 1982), whereas 38% of the studies reported both positive and negative outcomes and responses in the post-whistleblowing phase (e.g., Bowen et al., 2010; Kenny & Fotaki, 2023; Lewis, 2022). Further, qualitative studies more often identified themes that highlight a more diverse set of outcomes and responses experienced by whistleblowers during the post-whistleblowing phase (e.g., Kenny, 2018; Kenny et al., 2019).

Using Vallerand's (1997) motivational consequences framework, we provide a framework for explaining how whistleblowers, wrongdoers, and other important stakeholders (e.g., colleagues, managers, customers, family members) are impacted during the post-whistleblowing phase. This framework consists of three categories of outcomes; cognitive outcomes, affective outcomes, and behavioural outcomes (Vallerand, 1997). Cognitive outcomes include "memory and conceptual learning, as well as concentration (or attention)" (Vallerand & Losier, 1999, p. 157). Affective outcomes "include interest, satisfaction, positive emotions, mood, and anxiety" while behavioural outcomes refer to "persistence at the task, choice of behaviour, complexity, intensity, behavioural intentions, and performance" (Vallerand & Losier, 1999, p. 157). In terms of the specific outcomes experienced by different stakeholders, the majority of studies included in this review focused on the experiences of whistleblowers, their families, and to a lesser extent, the wrongdoers. Below, we outline the types of outcomes experienced by each stakeholder.

In the subset of studies that examined the outcomes and responses encountered by whistleblowers during the post-whistleblowing phase, 77% offered insights specifically into negative outcomes (e.g., Dworkin & Baucus, 1998; Near et al., 2004; Parmerlee et al., 1982), while 23% provided insights into both negative and positive outcomes (e.g., McGlynn & Richardson, 2014; Park et al., 2020). In general, the most commonly reported negative outcomes were behavioural, followed less frequently by affective and cognitive outcomes. Examples of the frequently identified negative behavioural outcomes include harassment (e.g., Dworkin & Baucus, 1998; Jos et al., 1989), dismissal (e.g., Kenny, 2018; Kenny & Fotaki, 2023), and demotion (e.g., Bjørkelo et al., 2011; Miceli & Near, 1989). Affective emotional responses such as unhappiness and disappointment (Kenny, 2018) were also commonly cited by whistleblowers. Finally, some of the less experienced negative cognitive outcomes included uncertainty about whom to trust and scepticism regarding

the organisation's ethical standards (McGlynn & Richardson, 2014).

While the above percentages capture the proportion of source studies that identified the various negative behavioural, affective and cognitive outcomes, some of these studies undertook surveys to identify how prevalent these outcomes were among whistleblowers. In the case of Rothschild and Miethe (1999), for instance, they found that a majority of whistleblowers in their sample experienced intense negative outcomes, including severe depression or anxiety (84%). Moreover, Rothschild and Miethe (1991) reported that two-thirds of participants faced retaliation, including losing their job or being forced to retire (69%). Additionally, Near et al. (2004) found that 37% of identified whistleblowers experienced some form of retaliation (e.g., poor performance appraisal and verbal harassment), while another study reported that among their cohort of 92 whistleblowers, 63% were dismissed, 28% resigned, and 62% were demoted or assigned a more menial role (Kenny & Fotaki, 2023). In all, these studies highlight that punishing whistleblowers for exposing wrongdoing was prevalent among the organisations represented in the source studies and that despite efforts to reduce anti-whistleblowing behaviour, the likelihood that whistleblowers will experience some form of retaliation remains high.

In terms of more favourable outcomes, behavioural outcomes tend to outnumber cognitive and affective outcomes. Positive behavioural outcomes include support from peers, government bodies, NGOs, and media (e.g., Lewis, 2022; Park et al., 2020), along with promotions (e.g., Bjørkelo et al., 2011; Lewis, 2022) and appreciation (e.g., Bjørkelo et al., 2011; Miceli & Near, 2013). An intriguing positive cognitive outcome is peace of mind, (e.g., Kenny & Fotaki, 2023) reflecting inner tranquillity resulting from whistleblowers' courageous actions. In the same study, Kenny and Fotaki (2023) stated that whistleblowers encounter a feeling of satisfaction since they had contributed to raised awareness of the wrongdoing, representing a positive affective outcome.

According to a number of the source studies that offered insights into the post-disclosure outcomes experienced by external entities, 67% of the studies indicated that the families of whistleblowers are adversely impacted during the post-disclosure phase (e.g., Jos et al., 1989; Kenny et al., 2019; Lewis, 2022). These impacts include experiencing negative behavioural outcomes followed less frequently by affective and cognitive outcomes. Such negative behavioural outcomes include family members being subjected to threats, intimidation (e.g., Kenny et al., 2019), loss of employment (e.g., Kenny et al., 2019; Near et al., 2004), negative health outcomes (e.g., Lewis, 2022; Park & Lewis, 2018), and strained relationships (e.g., Jos et al., 1989; Lewis, 2022; Richardson & McGlynn, 2011; Van Portfliet, 2022), whilst

the most prevalent affective outcome experienced by families of the whistleblower is fear (e.g., Lewis, 2022; McGlynn & Richardson, 2014). In terms of positive cognitive outcomes reported by participants in the source studies, a number of studies found that whistleblowing resulted in the general public acquiring knowledge about organisational wrongdoing and the potential risks (e.g., Kenny & Fotaki, 2023; Zhou et al., 2022).

Individuals and organisations engaged in wrongdoing, have also been found to experience positive and negative outcomes. Studies have predominantly highlighted behavioural outcomes experienced by wrongdoers' during the post-whistleblowing phase. These behavioural outcomes were often viewed through a financial perspective such as negative stock market reaction, and poor operating performance (e.g., Bowen et al., 2010). Lawsuits against the organisations responsible for the wrongdoing are noted by many researchers (e.g., Van Portfliet, 2022; Vandekerckhove & Phillips, 2019). In contrast, positive behavioural changes displayed by wrongdoers are more prevalent following whistleblowing. In most cases, these behavioural changes aimed at the development of an organisation's corporate governance systems that could prevent future wrongdoing (e.g., Bowen et al., 2010; Smaili & Arroyo, 2022) and/or the introduction of policies that protected the rights of the whistleblower and helped ensure the organisation responded appropriately to the whistleblowing (e.g., Smaili & Arroyo, 2022; Van Portfliet, 2022).

Temporal Dynamics in the Post-whistleblowing Phase

Within the articles we reviewed, most stakeholders experienced negative outcomes in the short-term and a mix of both positive and negative outcomes in the long-term. However, across all studies reviewed we also observed considerable variation in the timeframes used to capture the various outcomes, as well as different periods used to describe short-term and long-term. For example, whilst some authors have defined short-term effects as occurring within just days of the whistleblowing event and long-term as between 1–3 years after the event (Bowen et al., 2010), others have classified outcomes within a three-year timeframe as short-term and beyond three years as long-term (Smaili & Arroyo, 2022). Overall, the existence of differing temporal viewpoints regarding the onset and impact of certain events within the post-whistleblowing literature emphasises the necessity for enhanced clarity and consistency in the temporal terminology in future research. As such, and with the intention of providing a starting point for the development of a theoretical model conceptualising the role of time in the post-whistleblowing phase, we provide an overview of the temporal dynamics of the post-whistleblowing phase

(see Fig. 1). In the following paragraphs, to ensure consistency, we classify short-term as the timeframe during which outcomes emerge in the immediate aftermath of a whistleblowing event, typically encompassing the initial responses, reactions, and impacts observed following the disclosure. In contrast, long-term refers to the effects of whistleblowing that persist gradually over an extended period beyond the immediate aftermath of the disclosure.

In the short-term, whistleblowers often face adverse performance reviews (Lewis, 2022), criticisms (Gravley et al., 2015), and job reassignment (Vandekerckhove & Phillips, 2019), while organisations may experience negative stock market reactions and poor operating performance (Bowen et al., 2010). However, more severe and enduring consequences tend to emerge in the long term, including voluntary retirement (Lewis, 2022), loss of job (Gravley et al., 2015; Vandekerckhove & Phillips, 2019), depression (Lewis, 2022), self-doubt (Kenny, 2018), loss of purpose (Lewis, 2022), identity changes for whistleblowers (Gravley et al., 2015), lawsuits, management turnover (Bowen et al., 2010) and company bankruptcy (Smaili & Arroyo, 2022). Families of whistleblowers may also suffer long-term effects such as fear (Lewis, 2022), disruptions in children's education (Gravley et al., 2015), partner job loss, and family health issues (Kenny et al., 2019). Although the source studies were far less likely to report positive outcomes, when they did, these primarily manifested in the long-term. These include whistleblower receiving apologies, being asked to review the organisation's whistleblowing policy (Lewis, 2022), receiving media support (Richardson & McGlynn, 2011), and contributing to the public education (Van Portfliet, 2022). Furthermore, organisations may enact changes in policies and governance (Lewis, 2022; Smaili & Arroyo, 2022), while managers may engage in defensive actions to mitigate negative publicity (e.g., directing funds away from strategic investment) (Bowen et al., 2010).

As previously emphasised, stakeholders typically encounter a broader range of long-term outcomes compared to short-term ones, reflecting the intricate nature of whistleblowing. This complexity stems from ongoing legal disputes (e.g., Kenny & Fotaki, 2023; Lewis, 2022; Van Portfliet, 2022), shifts in organisational dimensions (e.g., Bowen et al., 2010; Lewis, 2022), changes in public perception (e.g., Richardson & McGlynn, 2011; Van Portfliet, 2022), long-term behavioural adaptation (e.g., Gravley et al., 2015; Richardson & McGlynn, 2011), and the influence of various internal and external entities in the long-term (e.g., public, family, legal bodies) (e.g., Kenny et al., 2019; Richardson & McGlynn, 2011) which require time to fully materialise and resolve. In contrast to short-term outcomes, stakeholders often experience more positive outcomes in the long-term, but the emergence of positive changes is typically less likely compared

to negative outcomes. This discrepancy can be attributed to several key factors including the lack of leadership support (e.g., Gravley et al., 2015; Kenny et al., 2019; Lewis, 2022), absence of a supportive organisational culture (Kenny, 2018; Richardson & McGlynn, 2011), centralisation of authority (Gravley et al., 2015), strict adherence to policy (Gravley et al., 2015), and lack of external support (e.g., media, and fans) (Richardson & McGlynn, 2011; Van Portfliet, 2022).

Another important finding identified in the current review involves the interactions between the outcomes experienced by the different stakeholders involved in the post-whistleblowing process. In the short-term, discernible outcomes are primarily observed within the realm of the whistleblower (e.g., criticisms) and the wrongdoer (e.g., poor operating performance), with both parties encountering a mixture of negative and positive consequences, albeit with a heavy leaning towards negativity. However, it remains unclear how these outcomes, as experienced by whistleblowers and wrongdoers, interact with each other and whether any mitigating factors or external circumstances influence or mediate these interactions. Additionally, the impact of these interactions on other stakeholders (e.g., families of whistleblowers, regulators), has not yet been fully revealed. This trend is in contrast to the long-term outcomes, where there are tentative signs that these inter-stakeholder effects begin to emerge beyond the immediate aftermath of the disclosure (e.g., Lewis, 2022; McGlynn & Richardson, 2014; Van Portfliet, 2022). For example, one study documented a whistleblower facing physical intimidation on campus and significant familial pressure, including attempts by their spouse to take the children away (McGlynn & Richardson, 2014), while another study highlighted a situation where a whistleblower was placed on administrative leave, subsequently receiving external support, leading to re-employment following decisions by regulatory bodies (Lewis, 2022).

Another trend that was evident in the transition from the short to the long-term is that many of the more proximal outcomes endured by each party lay the foundation for, and contribute to, more severe outcomes in the long-term (e.g., Kenny, 2018; Kenny et al., 2020a). For instance, one whistleblower shared that even seven years after their employment termination, they still experienced anxiety when reflecting on the event (Kenny et al., 2020a). At the same time, the trajectory of these more distal outcomes is disrupted to some extent by the influence wielded by other parties in the long-term (e.g., regulatory bodies, media), as they become involved in and are influenced by the whistleblowing process (e.g., Gravley et al., 2015; Lewis, 2022; Richardson & McGlynn, 2011). Table 4 in Appendix 2 provides a comprehensive overview of the range of outcomes experienced by stakeholders, while Fig. 1 presents a summary of the post-whistleblowing findings within the context of the entire whistleblowing process.
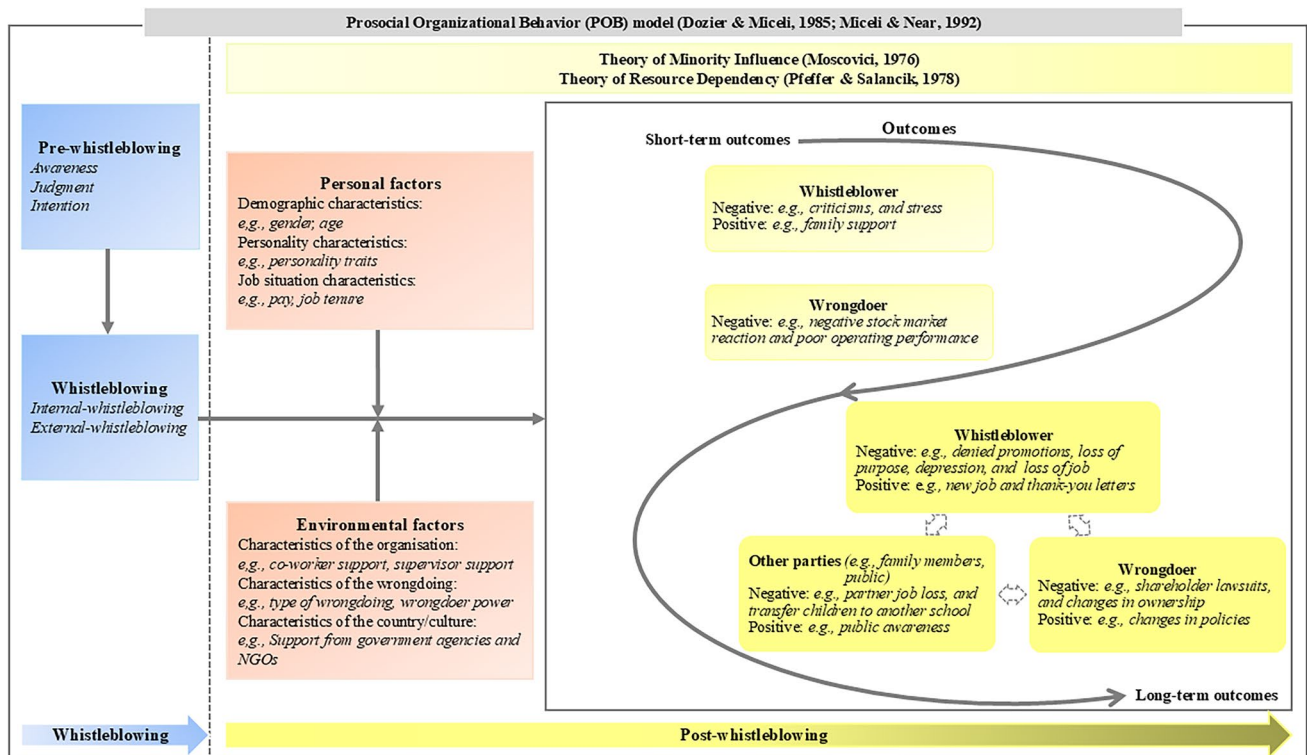
Fig. 1 An overview of the post-whistleblowing phase

Methodological Strengths and Weaknesses of Post-whistleblowing Research

Table 2 summarises the different methodologies included in the reviewed post-whistleblowing studies.

Of the 34 studies, most (62%) used a quantitative approach, 29% employed a qualitative method, and 9% utilised a mixed-method design. This distribution underscores the prevalence of quantitative methods and given the growing interest in mixed-methods for enhanced validity, generalisability, cross-validation, and theoretical contribution (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018) future post-whistleblowing research should consider a greater balance between both.

The studies in our review utilised both cross-sectional and longitudinal research designs. However, there was a significant skew toward cross-sectional designs, with 30 studies adopting this approach compared to only four that used longitudinal designs, all employing a consistent 3-year time lag. Longitudinal designs need to be used more frequently within post-whistleblowing research given their capacity to uncover temporal relationships, although recruiting participants for whistleblowing studies may be particularly difficult, due to the sensitive nature of the topic (Lewis, 2022). The need for more longitudinal research and greater temporal precision is especially critical, as only a few of the 34 studies included in this review explicitly defined a reference period to capture participants' observations or experiences. Furthermore,

these reference periods varied widely across studies, from 6 months to 5 years (e.g., Lee et al., 2004; Park & Lewis, 2018; Somers & Casal, 2011). Future research should systematically integrate temporal research designs with a consistent reference period aligned with the unit of time being measured (i.e., daily, weekly or monthly diary studies).

Regarding data collection, 68% of the studies used primary data specific to their research (typically through surveys in quantitative research, and interviews in qualitative studies), while the remaining 32% utilised secondary data from sources like the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB), Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Public Concern at Work (PCAW), and IRRC databases. For example, Miceli and Near (1989) reanalysed archival data collected by the USA Merit Systems Protection Board in 1980 and 1983, surveying employees from 15 and 22 federal departments, respectively. Most studies (both quantitative and qualitative) tended to focus exclusively on whistleblowers (e.g., Kenny & Fotaki, 2023; Kenny et al., 2020a; Lewis, 2022), and often overlooked an organisational viewpoint (e.g., Heese & Pérez-Cavazos, 2021; Smaili & Arroyo, 2022; Zhou et al., 2022). Finally, with respect to analytical approach, quantitative post-whistleblowing studies primarily used correlation and regression analyses, employing instruments measuring outcomes ranging from twenty-four potential forms of retaliation (e.g., Miceli & Near, 1989; Near et al., 2004; Parmerlee et al., 1982), to those using a single binary item (e.g., Somers &

Table 2 Summary of methodologies

Study	Design	Types of wrongdoing	Level of analysis	Time lag Reference/data collection period	Analysis	Data source	Data collection method	Sample Size	Occupation/ profession	Industry/ organisation type	Origin of the sample
Bjørkelo et al. (2011)	Cross-sectional	Different types[a]	Between	N/A (N/A) (in 2005)	Independent samples t-test	Primary	Survey	>1000	N/A	N/A	Norway
Bowen et al. (2010)	Longitudinal	Financial misconduct	Between	1 year to 3 years (N/A) (1989 to 2004 and 2002 to 2004)	Logistic regression	Secondary	IRRC database	100–500	N/A	N/A	USA
Curtis et al. (2021)	Cross-sectional	N/A	Between	N/A (N/A) (N/A)	MANOVA and ANOVA	Primary	Scenario approach	100–500	N/A	N/A	USA
Greenwood (2015)	Cross-sectional	Financial fraud mandated by the Sarbanes–Oxley Act of 2002	Between	N/A (N/A) (N/A)	Univariate analysis and post-hoc Chi-square	Primary	Survey	>1000	Executives and practitioners	Fortune 1000 companies	USA
Heese and Pérez-Cavazos (2021)	Cross-sectional	Workplace safety and health issues	Between	N/A (N/A) (2002 to 2017)	Linear regression	Secondary	OSHA	>1000	N/A	Fortune 100 and Fortune 500 firms	USA
Jos et al. (1989)	Cross-sectional	N/A	Between	N/A (N/A) (November of 1987 to September of 1988)	Univariate analysis	Primary	Survey	100–500	Different occupations[b]	Different organisations[c]	USA
Kenny and Fotaki (2023)	Cross-sectional	Different types[d]	Between	N/A (N/A) (March to June 2018)	Univariate analysis	Primary	Survey	<100	Different occupations[e]	Different industries[f]	USA, UK, Ireland, Switzerland, Belgium, Australia, Sweden, South Africa, Romania, and India
Lee et al. (2004)	Cross-sectional	Sexual harassment	Between	N/A (24 months) (1994)	Structural equation modeling (SEM) and regression analysis	Secondary	Survey	>1000	Federal employees	Agencies in the executive branch of the federal government	USA
Miceli and Near (1989)	Longitudinal	Different types[g]	Between	3 years (12 months) (1980 to 1983)	Hierarchical linear regression	Secondary	MSPB	>1000	N/A	Agencies and departments of the Federal Government	USA
Miceli and Near (1994)	Cross-sectional	Different types[h]	Between	N/A (12 months) (N/A)	Case–control analysis/conditional logistic regression	Primary	Survey	>1000	Members of the Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA)	Different organisations[i]	USA
Miceli and Near (2013)	Cross-sectional	Different types[j]	Between	N/A (12 and 24 months) (N/A)	Comparative analysis	Primary and secondary	Database	>1000	N/A	Large and small companies	Australia, Norway, and the USA
Near and Miceli (1986)	Cross-sectional	Different types[k]	Between	N/A (12 months) (1980)	Hierarchical linear regression	Secondary	MSPB	>1000	N/A	Agencies and departments of the Federal Government	USA

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Design	Types of wrongdoing	Level of analysis	Time lag Reference/data collection period	Analysis	Data source	Data collection method	Sample Size	Occupation/profession	Industry/organisation type	Origin of the sample
Near and Jensen (1983)	Cross-sectional	Sex discrimination	Between	N/A (N/A) (Early 1979)	Stepwise regression	Primary	Survey	100–500	N/A	Different organisations[l]	USA
Near et al. (2004)	Cross-sectional	Different types[m]	Between	N/A (12 months) (1997)	Chi-square analysis and one-way ANOVA	Primary	Survey	>1000	Civilian employees and active-duty military members	Military base	USA
Parmerlee et al. (1982)	Cross-sectional	Unfair employment discrimination (based on sex)	Between	N/A (N/A) (1971 to 1977)	Hierarchical linear regression	Primary	Survey	500–1000	Different occupations[n]	Different organisations[o]	USA
Park and Lewis (2018)	Cross-sectional	N/A	Between	N/A (6 months) (December 2013 to January 2017)	Independent-samples t-test	Primary	Survey	100–500	N/A	Different organisations[p]	South Korea
Park et al. (2020)	Cross-sectional	Workplace bullying	Between	N/A (6 months) (December 2013 to January 2017)	Multiple regression	Primary	Survey	<100	N/A	N/A	Korea
Rehg et al. (2008)	Cross-sectional	Different types[q]	Between	N/A (12 months) (N/A)	SEM	Primary	Survey	>1000	Civilian employees and active-duty military members	Air Force unit	USA
Skivenes and Trygstad (2010)	Cross-sectional	Resource-related incidents, service user-related incidents, and work environment incidents	Between	N/A (12 months) (April 2005)	Logistic regression	Primary	Survey	500–1000	Public officials	Norwegian municipalities: child welfare/protection, elementary school and health care	Norway
Somers and Casal (2011)	Cross-sectional	Financial fraud	Between	N/A (5 years) (N/A)	Chi-square analysis	Primary	Survey	500–1000	Management accountants	N/A	USA
Vandekerckhove and Phillips (2019)	Cross-sectional	Different types[r]	Between	N/A (N/A) (August 2009 to December 2010)	Chi-square analysis	Secondary	PCAW	500–1000	Different occupations[s]	Different industries[t]	UK
Qualitative studies											
Gravley et al. (2015)	Cross-sectional	Corruption	Between	N/A (N/A) (N/A)	Narrative analysis	Primary	Interview	<100	Employees (e.g., teachers), school board members, volunteers, and parents	Schools	USA
Kenny (2018)	Cross-sectional	Different types[u]	Between	N/A (N/A) (April 2011 and December 2013)	Thematic analysis	Primary	Interview	<100	Different occupations[v]	Financial sector	UK, Ireland, Switzerland, and the USA

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Design	Types of wrongdoing	Level of analysis	Time lag Reference/data collection period	Analysis	Data source	Data collection method	Sample Size	Occupation/profession	Industry/organisation type	Origin of the sample
Kenny et al. (2019)	Cross-sectional	Illegal lending and other kinds of malpractice, money laundering, and facilitating tax evasion for wealthy clients	Between	N/A (N/A) (N/A)	Inductive, iterative approach	Primary	Interview	<100	N/A	N/A	USA and Europe
Kenny et al., (2020a)[w]	Longitudinal	N/A	Between	3 years (N/A) (April 2011 to December 2012 and December 2013 to February 2015)	Constructivist interpretation of grounded theory	Secondary	Interview	<100	N/A	Different industries[x]	Europe and the USA and across countries
Lewis (2022)	Cross-sectional	Different types[y]	Between	N/A (N/A) (March to April 2021)	Case study approach	Primary	Interview	<100	Different occupations[z]	Public and private sector organisations	USA, UK, and Ireland
McGlynn and Richardson (2014)	Cross-sectional	Different types[aa]	Between	N/A (N/A) (N/A)	Grounded-theory approach	Primary	Interview	<100	Coaches, faculty members, university staff personnel, and citizens	Universities	USA
Ouriemmi (2023)	Cross-sectional	Tax avoidance practices	Between	N/A (N/A) (N/A)	Grounded-theory approach	Secondary	Case study	100–500	N/A	Different organisations[ab]	N/A
Richardson and McGlynn (2011)	Cross-sectional	Different types[ac]	Between	N/A (N/A) (N/A)	Grounded-theory approach	Primary	Interview	<100	Coaches, faculty members, university staff personnel, and citizens	Universities	USA
Smaili and Arroyo (2022)	Longitudinal	Financial statement fraud cases	Between	3 years (N/A) (N/A)	Comparative analysis	Secondary	Public sources[ad]	<100	N/A	Different organisations[ae]	Canada
Van Portfliet (2022)	Cross-sectional	Different types[af]	Between	N/A (N/A) (N/A)	Constructivist grounded-theory approach	Primary	Interview	<100	Senior officer and Senior manager	Armed forces and a national branch of a global humanitarian organisation	USA
Mixed-method studies											
Dworkin and Baucus (1998)	Cross-sectional	Violation of a public policy	Between	N/A (N/A) (1985 to 1990)	Chi-square and pattern-matching mode of analysis	Secondary	Legal cases	<100	N/A	Different industries[ag]	USA
Rothschild and Miethe (1999)	Cross-sectional	Fraud, Health and safety violations, and poor production and or service	Between	N/A (N/A) (N/A)	Correlation analysis	Primary and secondary	Survey and interview	>1000	N/A	Different organisations[ah]	USA

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Design	Types of wrongdoing	Level of analysis	Time lag Reference/data collection period	Analysis	Data source	Data collection method	Sample Size	Occupation/profession	Industry/organisation type	Origin of the sample
Zhou et al. (2022)	Cross-sectional	Counterfeiting, quality shirking, dysfunctional price competition, cross-region sales, and false advertising	Between	N/A (N/A) (2018)	Hierarchical linear regression	Primary	Survey and interview	100–500	Senior distributor managers	Consumer product industries	China

N/A not applicable, *MSPB* Merit Systems Protection Board, *OSHA* Occupational Safety and Health Administration, *PCAW* public concern at work, *SEM* structural equation modeling ANOVA— analysis of variance, *MANOVA* multivariate analysis of variance, *USA* The United States of America, *UK* The United Kingdom, *Time lag* interval between two events, Reference period for wrongdoing- specific period to which data, observations, or measurements are related or anchored (e.g., REF During the last 24 months, 'received any' of eight types of 'uninvited and unwanted sexual attention')

[a]Safety violations, serious financial irregularities/theft, pestering, harassing, or bullying others, serious disloyalty towards the organisation/operation, serious failure to provide care, or mismanagement/wrong medical treatment, and other actions

[b]Managerial, managerial support, other professional services, technical services, political liaison, and support services

[c]Federal government, state government, counties and cities, quasi-public agencies, and private firms

[d]Endangerment of employees, endangerment of the public, cronyism or nepotism, theft orembezzlement, sexual violence, misconduct or harassment, excessive waste or mismanagement, patient safety, discrimination, manipulation, censorship or disregard of research findings, breach of confidentiality, breach of organisation policy, national security and intelligence mismanagement, corporate information security, abuse or mistreatment of children, and fraudulent or predatory financial practices

[e]Professional or skilled, unskilled director, executive or manager, scientist or researcher, and administrative or clerical

[f]Federal and central government, health, and education, military and armed services, manufacturing, housing, leisure and local/state

[g]Stealing, waste, mismanagement, safety problems, sexual harassment, unfair discrimination, and other legal violations

[h]Stealing, waste, mismanagement, safety problems, sexual harassment, unfair discrimination, and other legal violations

[i]Private sector, federal, state, local government, and not-for-profit sector organisations

[j]Stealing, waste, mismanagement, safety problems, sexual harassment, unfair discrimination, and other legal violations

[k]Stealing, waste, mismanagement, safety problems, sexual harassment, unfair discrimination, and other legal violations

[l]Private organisations, educational institutions, and state or local governments

[m]Stealing, waste, mismanagement, safety problems, sexual harassment, unfair discrimination, and other legal violations

[m]Teacher/coach, factory line employee, bank teller, nurse, secretary, general office (government), school administrator (Ph.D.), supermarket cashier, university professor, bridge painter, clerk, dental assistant, doughnut baker, middle manager, mortgage loan collector, social worker, store manager, teacher at technical institution, and unemployed

[o]Private sector organisations; large corporation (greater than 100 employees), small corporation (fewer than 100 employees), large non-corporation (greater than 50 employees), and small non-corporation (fewer than 50 employees), learning institutions; primary school, secondary school, and college or university, public sector organisations; state government and local government, and other; labour organisation, employment agency, and other (filed against more than one employer)

[p]Government agencies, state-owned or -affiliated organisations, education institutions, private companies, and military or the police

[q]Stealing, waste, mismanagement, safety problems, sexual harassment, unfair discrimination, and other legal violations

[r]Ethical, financial malpractice, work safety, public safety, patient safety issues, and other concerns are about environment, discrimination/harassment, or consumer and competition regulation

[s]Unskilled workers at the bottom (e.g., carers, support workers, bartenders), administrative/clerical positions (e.g., office administrators, secretaries, advisers), skilled workers (e.g., brokers, chefs, engineers), professionals (e.g., nurses, doctors, teachers, accountants), managers (e.g., line managers, general managers), executives at the top of the organisational structure, and others (e.g., scientists and researchers)

Table 2 (continued)

[t] Health, care, education, charities, local government, financial services, retail, manufacturing, food/beverage, transport, construction, leisure/hospitality, utilities, science/technology, insurance, central government, police, housing, legal services, pharmaceutical, quango, agriculture, forestry, armed services, mining, oil, and media

[u] Overheated sales, tax evasion, falsification of documents, unfair treatment of customers, documents were not adequately checked, money laundry, overcharging fees, inappropriate mortgage lending practices, providing misleading information, and liquidity breaches

[v] Head of risks, branch manager, head of fraud investigation officer, adviser to clients, assistant vice president, credit card debt division, money-laundering reporting officer, internal auditor, senior manager, banking building society, manager, chief operating officer, mortgage executive, and compliance manager

[w] Seven participants who had taken part in project 1 (2011–2012) were re-interviewed for project 2 (2013–2015)

[x] Study 1 Financial services, and Study 2 Military, leisure services, banking, social work, international development, and health

[y] Nepotism in confidence (Nepotism is the unfair use of power in order to get jobs or other benefits for your family or friends), staff shortages, bullying, harassment and sex discrimination, racial profiling and quotas to management, understaffing, serious unethical behaviour, human rights abuses caused by staff shortages, discrimination, bribery and fraud

[z] Counsellor, senior law enforcement officer, private sector manager, nurse, academic researcher, patient advocate, senior academic, and law enforcement agent

[aa] Academic misconduct, financial misconduct, rape cover-up, and violating National Collegiate Athletic Association's rules

[ab] International companies by PwC Lux and approved by the Luxembourg tax authorities

[ac] Academic misconduct, financial misconduct, rape cover-up, and violating National Collegiate Athletic Association's rules

[ad] Public sources include proxy statements, regulators' briefs or reports, class action complaints, media articles and briefs for court proceedings

[ae] CINAR, Bre-X, Livent, Nortel, Knowledge House Inc., Hollinger Inc., Mount Real Corporation, Retrocom Investment Management Inc., Sino-Forest, Silvercorp Metals Inc., and Agnico Eagle Mines Limited

[af] Discrimination, bullying, harassment, sexual harassment, and sexual violence up to and including sexual assault and rape, and financial fraud

[ag] Liquor industry, hospital/health care, railcar repair services, film development, speciality chemicals, casualty insurance, mining, pension plans, department stores, nurse homes, dental practice, hospitals, insurance, bank and holding, swimmingpool chemicals, aircraft manufacturing, contracts for NASA, trucking companies, commercial painting contractors, construction, pharmaceutical, sports goods, produce equipment for NASA, tool manufacturing, city utilities, city electric department, and police department

[ah] Petrochemical plant, a high-security defence-related manufacturing company, a large bookstore, a university, and a nonprofit organisation

Casal, 2011). In sum, and in consideration of the trends in the methodological and analytical approach in existing post-whistleblowing research, there is a notable degree of homogeneity lacking in (1) the use of research designs to accurately capture the temporal dynamics of the post-whistleblowing phase, as well as (2) the use of diverse perspectives to ensure the validity of findings.

Discussion and Opportunities for Future Research

In Table 3 and the remainder of the discussion, we offer theoretical, methodological, and practice-oriented recommendations for future research on the post-whistleblowing process.

The purpose of this review was to take stock of the research examining the post-whistleblowing phase of the whistleblowing process. On the whole, the current review reveals that the POB model (Dozier & Miceli, 1985; Miceli & Near, 1992), the theory of resource dependency (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978), and the theory of minority influence (Moscovici, 1976) are the predominant theoretical frameworks used to explore the post-whistleblowing phase. Furthermore, quantitative (Kenny & Fotaki, 2023; Rehg et al., 2008), qualitative (e.g., Gravley et al., 2015; Lewis, 2022), and mixed-method (e.g., Dworkin & Baucus, 1998; Zhou et al., 2022) studies have collectively indicated that the effects of whistleblowing extend beyond the whistleblower, affecting both internal (e.g., co-workers, managers) and external entities (e.g., family members, the public). These effects manifest in a variety of outcomes, ranging from negative (e.g., organisational retaliation) to positive (e.g., policy reform) outcomes and encompass cognitive (e.g., peace of mind), affective (e.g., anxiety), and behavioural (e.g., transfers) dimensions.

Notwithstanding these insights, our understanding of this important phase of the whistleblowing process is still fragmented and incomplete. This lack of understanding is directly linked to various theoretical omissions (e.g. studies focusing on third-party effect) and methodological shortcomings (e.g., longitudinal studies) observed in the post-whistleblowing literature. For example, as shown in Table 3, there is potential for future research to adopt critical organisation theory, particularly leveraging the concept of affective recognition which was utilised by other scholars in their studies (Kenny, 2019). Also, future research should consider methodologies that integrate organisational behaviour or human resources with micro or macro theories, alongside social constructionist approaches. This integrated approach would facilitate a holistic understanding of post-whistleblowing phenomena, recognising the intricate interplay between individual behaviours, organisational structures, and the socially constructed nature of whistleblowing

narratives. In addition, further research evaluating the effectiveness of laws and regulations aimed at protecting whistleblowers is needed.

Consideration of Different Theoretical Frameworks and Perspectives

Both resource dependency theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) and minority influence theory (Moscovici, 1976), as identified in this review, offer valuable frameworks for incorporating variables that capture the power dynamics between whistleblowers and wrongdoers. Such variables assessing power are often measured in terms of the individual's status in the organisation, or conversely the dependence of the organisation on the individual, both of which ultimately position the individual as a resource to the organisation. The integration of these theories can help expand the relatively static perspective of power differentials included in the other theory that dominates the whistleblower literature, namely the POB model (Dozier & Miceli, 1985; Miceli & Near, 1992). It is clear from our review that a range of additional explanatory variables such as supervisory status, whether the whistleblowing was role prescribed, informal power of the whistleblower, and wrongdoer formal power level (Rehg et al., 2008) are likely to play a role in explaining the extent to which a whistleblower and wrongdoer wields power (in so far as an organisation depends on them). These variables provide a vital assessment of the power dynamics within an organisation. As such, we propose the following theoretical perspectives that may be considered in the future to better integrate individual and organisational level post-whistleblowing experiences.

From an individual level perspective and utilising the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker et al., 2023), our review indicates that whistleblowing triggers changes in employees' job demands but may also garner additional support through alterations in job resources during the post-whistleblowing phase. For instance, whistleblowers encounter heightened work pressure (Near & Jensen, 1983; Park et al., 2020), and work criticism (e.g., Park et al., 2020; Parmerlee et al., 1982), which can be offset by support from peers, managers (e.g., Near & Miceli, 1986; Park et al., 2020; Parmerlee et al., 1982), protective organisational policies (e.g., Kenny & Fotaki, 2023) and both personal resources (e.g., self-efficacy) and proactive behaviours (e.g., job crafting) (Bakker et al., 2023). Given that organisational reactions to whistleblowing can generate strain, leading to negative outcomes like adverse health effects (e.g., Park & Lewis, 2018), supportive measures may enhance motivation, resulting in positive outcomes such as internal growth and involvement in more meaningful pursuits (Kenny & Fotaki, 2023).

Our review also indicates that some whistleblowers are subjected to severe exclusion within (e.g., Curtis et al., 2021) and outside (McGlynn & Richardson, 2014) the organisation. According to the affective recognition theory, our "selves are

Table 3 Future directions and recommendations: Factors influencing the post-whistleblowing phase

Research question(s)	Useful theoretical framework(s)	Useful methodological design(s)	Exemplary papers
Consideration of different theoretical perspectives			
How do the power dynamics between whistleblowers and wrongdoers influence organisational responses to the post-whistleblowing phase?	The theory of resource dependency (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) and the theory of minority influence (Moscovici, 1976)	Trend survey	Rehg et al. (2008)
How are changes in job demands, job resources, and wellbeing experienced by whistleblowers during the post-whistleblowing phase related to and influenced by personal resources, dysfunctional behaviours, and proactive behaviours?	The job demands-resources model (Bakker et al., 2023)	Longitudinal panel survey	N/A
What is the impact of organisational ethical culture on the experience and outcomes of the post-whistleblowing phase?	The corporate ethical virtues model (Kaptein, 2008)	Between-subjects experimental design	N/A
How do whistleblowers characterise their experiences of social support during the post-whistleblowing phase?	Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977)	Narrative research	McGlynn and Richardson (2014)
Why are certain whistleblowers subjected to severe exclusion, both within and outside the organisation, and how do those who endure manage to survive?	Affective recognition theory (Kenny, 2019)	Grounded theory	N/A
Need for methodological advancement			
How do short-term responses to whistleblowing, experienced by different stakeholders across various temporal horizons, influence and trigger long-term outcomes over time?	Social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986)	Longitudinal panel survey/Diary study	N/A
How do post-whistleblowing outcomes differ when incorporating perspectives from various stakeholders, including internal (e.g., co-workers, managers, supervisors, organisational processes) and external entities (e.g., family members, peers, general public), compared to relying solely on data from the whistleblower?	Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 2010)	Experimental design/Case study approach	N/A
Practice-oriented research			
How do variations in legal frameworks across different jurisdictions influence the effectiveness of whistleblower protection laws and regulations in providing legal safeguards for whistleblowers during the post-whistleblowing phase, and what factors contribute to their efficacy or inefficacy?	Institutional theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977)	The case study approach	Ouriemmi (2023)
What factors contribute to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of whistleblower protection policies over time?		Mixed-method design (survey research and case study)	N/A

Table 3 (continued)

Research question(s)	Useful theoretical framework(s)	Useful methodological design(s)	Exemplary papers
How do the consequences of whistleblowing vary across diverse cultural contexts on a global scale? What role do cultural dimensions such as collectivism and individualism play in shaping post-whistleblowing outcomes?	Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)	Ethnographic research	Miceli and Near (2013)
How do sector-specific regulatory frameworks and cultural norms influence post-whistleblowing outcomes in response to various types of organisational wrongdoing, and what strategies can organisations adopt to navigate these complexities effectively?	Institutional theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977)	Case study approach	N/A

N/A not applicable

founded on desires to be recognized as valid and legitimate" (Kenny, 2019, p. 32), "so that we attempt to develop a stable sense of self through our affective attachments to individuals, groups and organizations" (Near, 2020, p. 753). However, whistleblowers disrupt organisational norms by speaking out against wrongdoing, challenging the status quo, and often facing backlash as a result (Kenny, 2019). This disruption can lead to severe exclusion as whistleblowers are perceived as threats to the legitimacy and stability of the organisation. Despite this, those who endure may find resilience through the support of empathetic individuals and communities who validate their experiences and provide emotional support. By forming new affective attachments and redefining their sense of self, whistleblowers navigate the challenges of exclusion and find ways to survive amidst adversity.

Moreover, social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) emphasises that individuals' learning occurs not only through direct experiences but also through observing others, particularly role models, and the consequences of their actions. Applying this theory, and also drawing from social learning theory (Bandura, 1977), short-term responses to whistleblowing, such as positive reinforcement or retaliation, can significantly influence stakeholders' future behaviours and attitudes. For example, third-party (e.g., colleagues' and supervisors') responses may be influenced by their observations of whistleblowing outcomes, with positive results fostering support and encouragement, and negative outcomes potentially hindering future reporting of ethical behaviour (Curtis 2021). Additional short-term consequences (e.g., adverse performance reviews, directions to take leave) may further serve as social cues that inform individuals about the acceptability of whistleblowing behaviour in their environment, thus shaping their long-term outcomes (e.g., demotion, voluntary retirement).

Lastly, social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1976) explores how individuals' identification with social groups influences their perceptions, behaviours, and interactions, which is useful for exploring cross-cultural differences in the post-whistleblowing context. It may be the case that individuals' cultural backgrounds shape their group identities and perceptions of whistleblowing, affecting the consequences they may face. For example, in collectivist cultures where group harmony is prioritised, whistleblowers may face social ostracism for challenging the status quo, whereas in individualistic cultures, they may be celebrated for upholding ethical standards.

From an organisational level perspective, future research may leverage the corporate ethical virtues model (Kaptein, 2008), which offers a structured approach for organisations to assess their ethical readiness, emphasising virtues such as transparency, discussability, and supportability (Kaptein, 2008), which are crucial for fostering an environment conducive to ethical disclosures. Indeed, the ethical culture within an organisation significantly influences the aftermath of whistleblowing incidents, impacting the safety and support

experienced by whistleblowers. This can lead to positive outcomes such as policy reform (Lewis, 2022) and changes to corporate governance (e.g., Smaili & Arroyo, 2022; Van Portfliet, 2022).

Moreover, institutional theory (Meyer & Rowan, 1977) also provides a valuable framework for understanding how organisations respond to changes in their social environment, including the emergence of new laws, standards, norms, patterns of behaviour, and new participants. This theory argues that organisations are deeply influenced by their institutional environment, which has a profound impact on the development of their structures, processes, and professions. By examining how organisations adapt in response to external pressures, researchers can gain insights into the effectiveness of legal frameworks across jurisdictions in providing legal safeguards for whistleblowers during post-whistleblowing. In this respect, research already highlights the critical role of legal frameworks in fostering positive organisational responses to whistleblowing (e.g., Near et al., 1993), and many papers have begun exploring ways to effectively integrate laws and regulations into institutional practices. This includes synthesising recent guidelines for developing and implementing whistleblowing policies and procedures (Vandekerckhove & Lewis, 2012) and analysing whistleblower protections under various legislative acts, such as the False Claims Act of 1863 (e.g., Carson et al., 2008). We encourage future research to continue incorporating legal scholarly perspectives to examine how organisations adapt to and integrate new whistleblowing laws into their day-to-day operations.

Methodological Opportunities

Although the post-whistleblowing literature boasts several strengths, it is important to note that there are also methodological weaknesses across quantitative and qualitative approaches. With respect to quantitative methodological opportunities, it is imperative to consider temporal design features, which encompass the examination of both short-term and long-term outcomes of post-whistleblowing and the adoption of longitudinal research design (e.g., panel survey, diary study). By examining these dynamics longitudinally, researchers can track the evolution of stakeholders' attitudes and behaviours across different temporal horizons and uncover patterns, trends, and causal relationships that may not be apparent in cross-sectional studies. Additionally, the incorporation of multi-source data collections emerges as a pivotal methodological opportunity, allowing researchers to gather insights from various perspectives, including those of wrongdoers and third parties (e.g., family members of whistleblower). Furthermore, future research should investigate the dual-directional relationships between the parties involved in the whistleblowing process that were largely overlooked in the source studies examined in the current review.

To understand the complexities of the post-whistleblowing phase, researchers also need to gain deeper insights into the lived experiences, motivations, and perceptions of whistleblowers and other stakeholders through qualitative studies. To achieve this depth of understanding future researchers could use an ethnographic approach to contrast how consequences of whistleblowing vary across diverse cultural contexts on a global scale. Case studies can also be used to address research opportunities related to legal frameworks, examining real-life cases of whistleblowing where legal protection was effective and cases where it proved inadequate. This approach could be particularly useful in relation to corporate fraud where the fear of retaliatory action remains a significant barrier to people blowing the whistle despite the increased recognition of the importance of whistleblowing and the proliferation of policies against retaliation (Curtis et al., 2021). Given the range of different qualitative and quantitative designs that should be considered in future research, mixed-method designs (e.g., Miceli & Near, 2013; Rothschild & Miethe, 1999) combining elements from both would provide a more holistic approach to understanding the multifaceted impacts and dynamics following whistleblowing incidents. However, mixed-method designs incorporate a post-positivistic epistemology, which may not apply to all post-whistleblowing studies. This is because some studies aim to explore a problem, "honor the voices of participants, map the complexity of the situation and convey multiple perspectives of participants" (Creswell & Clark, 2017, p. 7). In contrast, other studies may seek to understand the relationship among variables associated with whistleblowing or determine if one group performs better on a whistleblowing outcome than another group (Creswell & Clark, 2017).

Practice-Oriented Research

In view of the high level of retaliatory, anti-whistleblower behaviour that exists across many countries/jurisdictions, it is also imperative that future studies focus on strengthening practice-oriented research. The source studies used in this review highlight the need to enhance the legitimacy of whistleblowers through improved legal protections (Ouriemmi, 2023), in addition to greater efforts to counteract strategies that perpetuate unethical practices by diverting public attention (Ouriemmi, 2023). More broadly though they also emphasise corporate governance's role in combating financial crime. We note, however, the varied post-whistleblowing outcomes across different countries (Miceli & Near, 2013), and, accordingly, present several practice-oriented research questions for future studies in Table 3. These include inquiries into the influence of legal frameworks across jurisdictions on the effectiveness of whistleblower protection laws, factors contributing to the efficacy of such policies over time, and variations in post-whistleblowing outcomes across diverse cultural contexts globally.
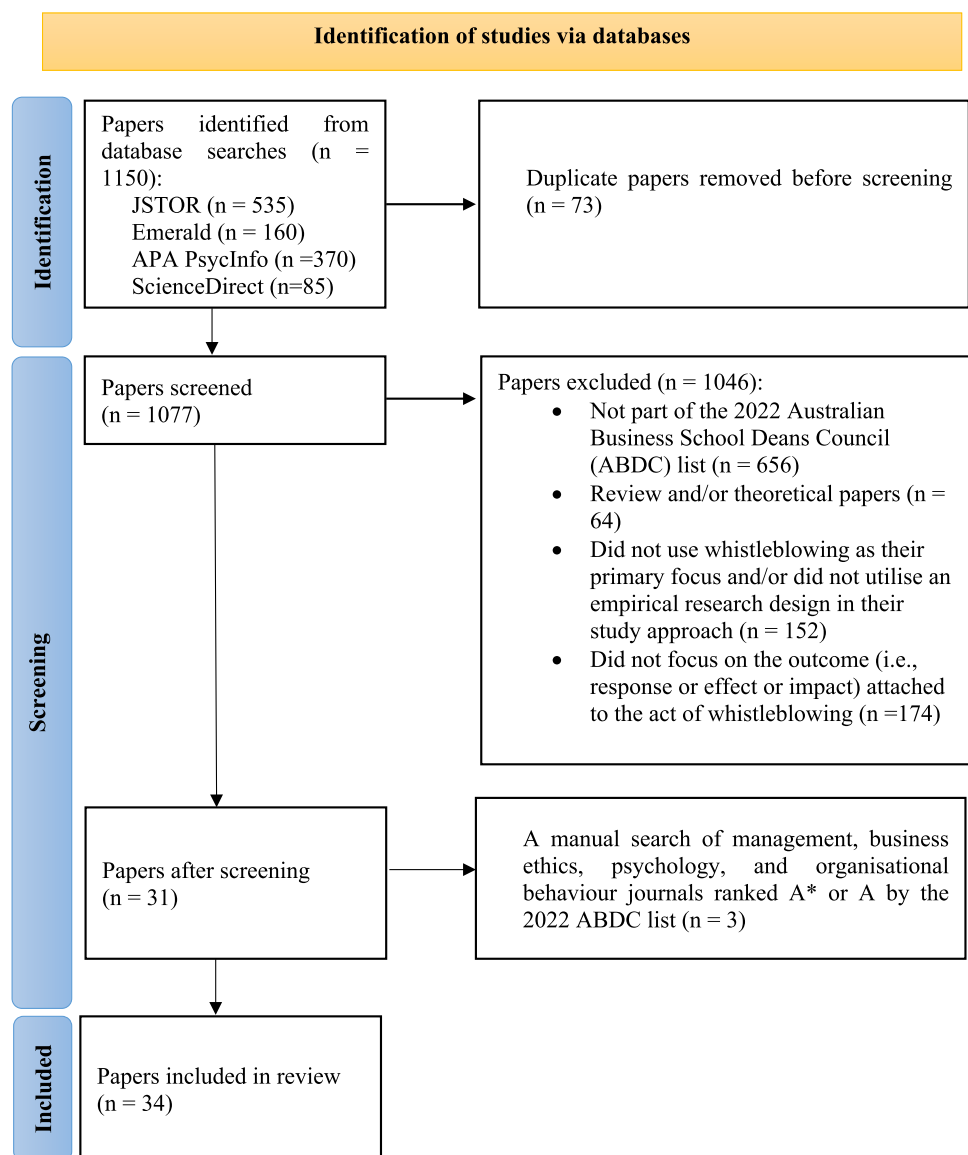
Conclusion

The current review offers a systematic and comprehensive overview of the academic literature concerning the post-whistleblowing phase, yielding valuable theoretical, empirical, and practical insights. Through our review, we identified and discussed the various stakeholders involved in or impacted by whistleblowing, revealing that the disclosure of wrongdoing effects not only the individuals directly involved but also their families, peers, customers, and society at large. We also introduce a temporal progression of post-whistleblowing outcomes and outline methodological strengths and weaknesses of post-whistleblowing research which takes into account, quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method designs. Finally, we provide an agenda for future research by encouraging scholars to investigate specific opportunities that build on the current body of knowledge, are informed by appropriate theoretical perspectives and leverage off the methodological considerations outlined in the current review. In this way, the current review not only enriches our understanding of the post-whistleblowing phase but also provides a roadmap for continued exploration, fostering deeper insights that can contribute to the enhancement of our knowledge about this critical facet of organisational and societal dynamics.

Appendix 1

See Fig. 2.

Fig. 2 PRISMA flow diagram

Identification of studies via databases

Papers identified from database searches (n = 1150):
  JSTOR (n = 535)
  Emerald (n = 160)
  APA PsycInfo (n = 370)
  ScienceDirect (n = 85)

Duplicate papers removed before screening (n = 73)

Papers screened (n = 1077)

Papers excluded (n = 1046):
- Not part of the 2022 Australian Business School Deans Council (ABDC) list (n = 656)
- Review and/or theoretical papers (n = 64)
- Did not use whistleblowing as their primary focus and/or did not utilise an empirical research design in their study approach (n = 152)
- Did not focus on the outcome (i.e., response or effect or impact) attached to the act of whistleblowing (n = 174)

Papers after screening (n = 31)

A manual search of management, business ethics, psychology, and organisational behaviour journals ranked A* or A by the 2022 ABDC list (n = 3)

Papers included in review (n = 34)

Identification

Screening

Included

Appendix 2

See Table 4.

Table 4 A comprehensive overview of the highly referenced post-whistleblowing outcomes

Outcome	Negative and/or positive outcome		Internal/external entities		Short-term and/or long-term outcome		Cognitive/affective/behavioural outcome			References
	Negative	Positive	Internal entities	External entities	Short-term	Long-term	Cognitive	Affective	Behavioural	
Experiencing a change in locus of identity	X		X			X		X		Gravley et al. (2015)
Being allocated less desirable work	X		X		X				X	Parmerlee et al. (1982)
Experiencing verbal harassment or intimidation/being shouted at, or being the victim of spontaneous anger (or rage)/having work being criticised	X		X		X				X	Dworkin and Baucus (1998), Jos et al. (1989), McGlynn and Richardson (2014), Miceli and Near (2013), Near and Jensen (1983), Near et al. (2004), Park et al. (2020), Parmerlee et al. (1982), Richardson and McGlynn (2011), Van Portfliet (2022), Vandekerckhove and Phillips (2019)
Receiving adverse performance reviews	X		X		X				X	Lewis (2022)
Experiencing sexual characterisation/rumours/false accusations	X		X		X				X	Gravley et al. (2015) and Richardson and McGlynn (2011)
Receiving death threats	X		X		X				X	Richardson and McGlynn (2011)
Being isolated from potential support networks/being ignored, or avoided by support networks	X		X	X		X			X	Kenny (2018), McGlynn and Richardson (2014), Richardson and McGlynn (2011)
Losing opportunities for career advancement	X		X			X			X	Richardson and McGlynn (2011)
Being denied promotion	X		X			X			X	Lewis (2022)
Experiencing stigma	X		X		X	X			X	Van Portfliet (2022)
Being suspended from the job/being fired from the job/being dismissed	X		X		X	X			X	Dworkin and Baucus (1998), Jos et al. (1989), Kenny (2018), Kenny and Fotaki (2023), Kenny et al. (2019, 2020a), Miceli and Near (1989, 1994), Near et al. (2004), Park and Lewis (2018), Van Portfliet (2022), Vandekerckhove and Phillips (2019)
Being demoted	X		X		X				X	Vandekerckhove and Phillips (2019)

Table 4 (continued)

Outcome	Negative and/or positive outcome		Internal/ external entities		Short-term and/or long-term outcome		Cognitive/affective/behavioural outcome			References
	Negative	Positive	Internal entities	External entities	Short-term	Long-term	Cognitive	Affective	Behavioural	
Being transferred	X		X			X			X	Lewis (2022)
Taking voluntary retirement	X		X			X			X	Lewis (2022)
Experiencing a poor financial position	X		X			X			X	Lewis (2022)
Experiencing extreme effects on well-being (e.g., drinking)	X		X			X			X	Kenny et al. (2019)
Experiencing a decline in mental health	X		X			X		X		Lewis (2022)
Experiencing negative emotions such as anger, frustration, confusion, and tension	X		X	X	X	X		X		Kenny (2018), Kenny et al., (2019, 2020a), Lewis (2022), Park and Lewis (2018), and Richardson and McGlynn (2011)
Being labelled as an unreasonable and overly emotional person	X		X		X				X	Kenny et al. (2019)
Experiencing anxiety, stress, and depression	X		X		X	X		X		Lewis (2022) and Park and Lewis (2018)
Being directed to take leave	X		X		X				X	Lewis (2022)
Experiencing a loss of sense of purpose	X		X			X	X			Lewis (2022),
Facing negative stock market reactions	X		X	X	X	X			X	Bowen et al. (2010)
Experiencing company bankruptcy/being sold	X		X	X		X			X	Smaili and Arroyo (2022)
Having family members feel scared	X			X		X			X	Lewis (2022)
Having transferred children to another school	X			X		X			X	Gravley et al. (2015)
Experiencing strained family relationships	X		X	X	X	X			X	Jos et al. (1989), Lewis (2022), and McGlynn and Richardson (2014)
Having children resent the fear of poverty they endured	X			X		X	X	X		Lewis (2022)
Experiencing declining family members' health (e.g., depression)	X			X		X			X	Kenny et al. (2019) and Lewis (2022)
Experiencing harassment (e.g., continuous surveillance)	X			X		X			X	Kenny et al. (2019)
Having a partner dismissed from their job	X			X		X			X	Kenny et al. (2019)
Being appointed as the CEO of another company		X	X			X			X	(Van Portfliet, 2022)
Receiving an apology		X	X			X			X	Lewis (2022)

Declarations

Conflict of interest None of the authors has any conflict of interest to declare.

Ethical Approval As this study is a systematic review of published literature, no ethical approval was required.

Research Involving Human Participant or Animals As this research did not involve the collection of data from human or animal subjects, informed consent is not required.

Informed Consent As this research did not involve the collection of data from human or animal subjects, informed consent is not required.

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Table 4 (continued)

Outcome	Negative and/or positive outcome		Internal/external entities		Short-term and/or long-term outcome		Cognitive/affective/behavioural outcome			References
	Negative	Positive	Internal entities	External entities	Short-term	Long-term	Cognitive	Affective	Behavioural	
Being asked to review the organisation's whistleblowing policy	X		X			X			X	Lewis (2022)
Changing the dimensions of corporate governance	X		X			X			X	Bowen et al. (2010), Smaili and Arroyo (2022)
Changing an employer's policies	X		X			X			X	Lewis (2022)
Engaging public education/writing books	X			X		X			X	Van Portfliet (2022)
Receiving support from family and peers	X		X		X				X	Lewis (2022)

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