

Research trends in the field of organisational management: A bibliometric analysis

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Received August, 2022

Accepted February, 2023

Abstract

Purpose: Studies into organisational management are considered key to understanding the characteristics of the organisational fabric in general, and administrative managers' capacity for reflection is particularly relevant to achieving a more intricate and in-depth comprehension of the organisational context. Nonetheless, despite the importance of such studies, there is a lack of alignment in the specialised literature and no review articles that allow us to identify research trends in the field. The purpose of this paper is, thus, to identify the main research trends in the literature on organisational management.

Design/methodology: We conducted a bibliometric analysis with 457 articles following the PRISMA Statement guidelines, which is why we specified the inclusion and exclusion criteria, data sources, search strategy, and the data collection and selection processes we employed.

Findings: The increasingly growing amount of research done on the topic is evidence of its significance. Using quality and quantity indicators, we were able to identify the most productive authors, journals, and countries in the field. Also, by means of a keyword analysis, we identified the most relevant research trends and classified them per year. According to the results of such analysis, organisational performance and organisational culture are currently the most influential topics, and themes related to transformational leadership are likely to be increasingly used in future research.

Originality/value: This study identifies the concepts that have been most prominent and that are outlined as crucial for the research agenda or future work in the field, which would allow organisations to be aligned with the Industry 4.0 trends.

Keywords: Organisational management, Bibliometric analysis, Innovation, Transformational leadership, Social sciences

Jel Codes: D29

To cite this article:

Rodriguez-Lora, V., Valencia-Arias, A., & Brand-Ortiz, J. (2023). Research trends in the field of organisational management: A bibliometric analysis. *Intangible Capital*, 19(3), 459-473.
<https://doi.org/10.3926/ic.2180>

1. Introduction

Recently, firms have started to use new management techniques to attain their goals and to adapt to today's volatile economic environment (Bucăța, 2018). According to Narváez, Gutiérrez and Senior (2011), contemporary organisational management approaches have drawn their attention to notions such as complex learning, self-organisation, adaptation, and strategic management. Also, the knowledge age has made it necessary for organisations to develop information-based management models that are more efficient and bring more value to the market (del Rio Vásquez, 2017).

Firms can reinvent themselves through organisational management and by implementing new administrative theories and technologies. Hence, as noted by Ropa-Carrión and Alama-Flores (2022), it is crucial to recognise, both in the academic and real worlds, the differences between the two categories of the management process in organisations: administration and management. Administration, according to some theorists such as Fayol (1970) and Drucker (1979), comprises five key pillars: planning, organising, commanding, coordinating, and controlling the available resources. Management, for its part, is more closely tied to the organisation's objectives, and, as a result, in addition to the five key pillars of administration, it considers its environment and how it affects organisational success. Thus, management may be said to have a more strategic focus (Galinelli & Migliore, 2015).

At the organisational level, management includes three key aspects: (i) planning, organising, commanding, coordinating, and controlling; (ii) using human resources; and (iii) achieving results or goals. Additionally, it is associated with governance, human resource management, and leadership. Based on the foregoing, Kaehler and Grundei (2019) proposed a more modern definition of management:

Management is a steering influence on market, production and/or resource operations in an organization and its units that may address both people and non-people issues and is exerted by multiple organizational actors through either anticipatory norm-setting (= constitutive or strategic management) or situational intervention (= operational management) with the aim of achieving the unit's objectives. To manage a unit is synonymous with "directing" or "leading" it (p. 20).

Management thus becomes a complex task that is dominated by competing socioeconomic interests and political ideologies, which is why it integrates creative and innovative organisational change initiatives (Ropa-Carrión & Alama-Flores, 2022). It requires firms to, for instance, attract fresh talent to create and keep a management team that is capable of being effective, manage the performance of the team, and be ready for the changing environment and for competition (Bucăța, 2018). Moreover, the history of organisational management has been influenced by the dominant scientific paradigms of each era (Narváez et al., 2011).

In the 1950s, studies in the field mainly sought to apply the principles of industrial engineering to help organisations respond to the rapidly changing social components, giving rise to notions such as the contemporary organisational theory (Hertz & Livingston, 1950). This new conceptual framework piqued the interest of several researchers who, realising the importance of organisations to society and the economy, developed new approaches that could be used in the organisational sciences. However, Podsakoff and Dalton (2016) found that only a very small number of these approaches—materialised in research strategies and analytical procedures—actually represent the methods of choice and of conceptual contribution in the organisational sciences.

Undoubtedly, a number of thinkers in the field of administrative theory have made substantial contributions to organisational theory. Taylor and Fayol, for example, proposed the "scientific method" and control mechanisms in administrative management. Later approaches to business administration tend to be more reductionist, incorporating concepts like the division of labour, the notion of task, the possibility of exchange between the parties, the standardisation of processes, quality controls, cost calculation, the analysis of capital and labour, and organisational charts (Narváez et al., 2011).

Considering this, the main administrative doctrines can be grouped into three approaches: (i) the traditional mechanistic approach, which is backed by the scientific theory of positivism, where management is focused on the rational use of the organisation's resources to achieve efficiency; (ii) the systemic approach, which describes

management as an activity in which the organisation's resources are coordinated to boost productive efficiency and gives rise to the concept of strategic management; and (iii) the postmodern or complex approach, which assumes that firms are complex systems that leverage information as their primary asset (Narváez et al., 2011; Ropa-Carrión & Alama-Flores, 2022).

In recent years, various researchers have revisited the traditional concepts of organisational theory to use them in organisations. Such is the case of the concept of *leadership*, which has a profound impact on organisational management, particularly in terms of historical, analytical, and critical analysis for decision-making. Yet, leadership depends on the coexistence of different factors such as motivation, communication, and power, which differ depending on the type of organisation (Palafox Soto, Ochoa Jiménez & Jacobo Hernández, 2020).

Given the historical relevance and development of organisational studies, organisational research is seen as a distinct, complex, and even fragmented area with theories that are complementary but also contradictory and incommensurable due to the adoption of conceptually dissimilar social stances (Aksom & Firsova, 2021). Besides this lack of alignment or uniformity in the literature, there are no review studies that could shed light on the generalities and particulars of organisational research, which contributes to the lack of clarity regarding research trends in the field. In light of this, this paper addresses the following research question: What are the primary research trends in the field of organisational studies?

2. Methodology

In this study, we conducted a bibliometric analysis, which, according to Agarwal et al. (2016), is a method for gathering quantifiable data to statistically analyse scientific production and identify how knowledge is used in a specific research field. In addition, this method employs bibliometric indicators (e.g., number of citations) to objectively measure the impact of publications. Importantly, considering that bibliometric analysis is a literature review methodology, the PRISMA Statement provides a set of guidelines for reporting systematic reviews to make them clear, comprehensive, and repeatable. These guidelines, which were described by Rethlefsen, Kirtley, Waffenschmidt, Ayala, Moher, Page and Koffel (2021), include the following elements:

2.1. Inclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria are the characteristics that an article must have to be eligible for inclusion in a review (Rethlefsen et al., 2021). Hence, to analyse the behaviour of and trends in the scientific production on organisational theories, it is important to first define the key terms to use in a search that is pertinent to said field of study. In this case, such key terms include *organisational, management, leadership, company, business, and enterprise*.

2.2. Exclusion criteria

Exclusion criteria are used in both the screening and eligibility phases. In the screening phase (first filter), records with incomplete metadata, indexing errors in the data source, or missing information are removed because including them would not ensure a proper analysis. In the eligibility phase, the metadata of the records that passed the first filter are carefully reviewed, and records that fail to shed light on the topic under study and thus do not add to the analysis are eliminated (Selçuk, 2019).

2.3. Data sources

For our bibliometric analysis, we used two international databases: Scopus from Elsevier and Web of Science (WoS) from Clarivate Analytics. We selected them because they are among the main bibliographic databases in terms of publications' metadata and provide the academic community with high-quality information on scholarly activity in multiple areas (Visser, van Eck & Waltman, 2021).

2.4. Search strategy

As indicated in the PRISMA Statement guidelines, once the data sources have been chosen, a search strategy must be developed. Thus, we designed a search equation (adapted to each database) using the key terms mentioned above. The following are the search equations we used for each database:

For Scopus: TITLE (("organizational management") OR (organizational AND management) OR (organizational AND leadership)) AND (company OR business OR enterprise)

ForWoS: TI=(((("organizational management") OR (organizational AND management) OR (organizational AND leadership)) AND (company OR business OR enterprise)))

2.5. Data collection

After using the search equation in the selected databases, 850 documents published between 1959 and 2023 were retrieved. Following that, we applied the defined exclusion criteria to the retrieved documents and created a set of bibliometric indicators using the Microsoft Excel® data tool. Bibliometric indicators are widely employed to evaluate scientific production in terms of productivity and impact (e.g., number of publications and citations), as well as collaborative networks and trends (Romanelli, Fujimoto, Ferreira & Milanez, 2018).

2.6. Selection process

According to the PRISMA Statement guidelines, the inclusion and exclusion processes, as well as the search process, must be detailed in a flowchart in this final phase, so that the methodology is as clear as possible. Figure 1 shows the PRISMA flow chart illustrating the selection process. As observed, duplicate records were removed first, followed by those with indexing problems. In the eligibility phase, we only considered full-text publications, or research articles (excluding, for instance, conference proceedings and book chapters), that addressed the issue of organisational management. The final number of articles eligible for inclusion in the review was 427.

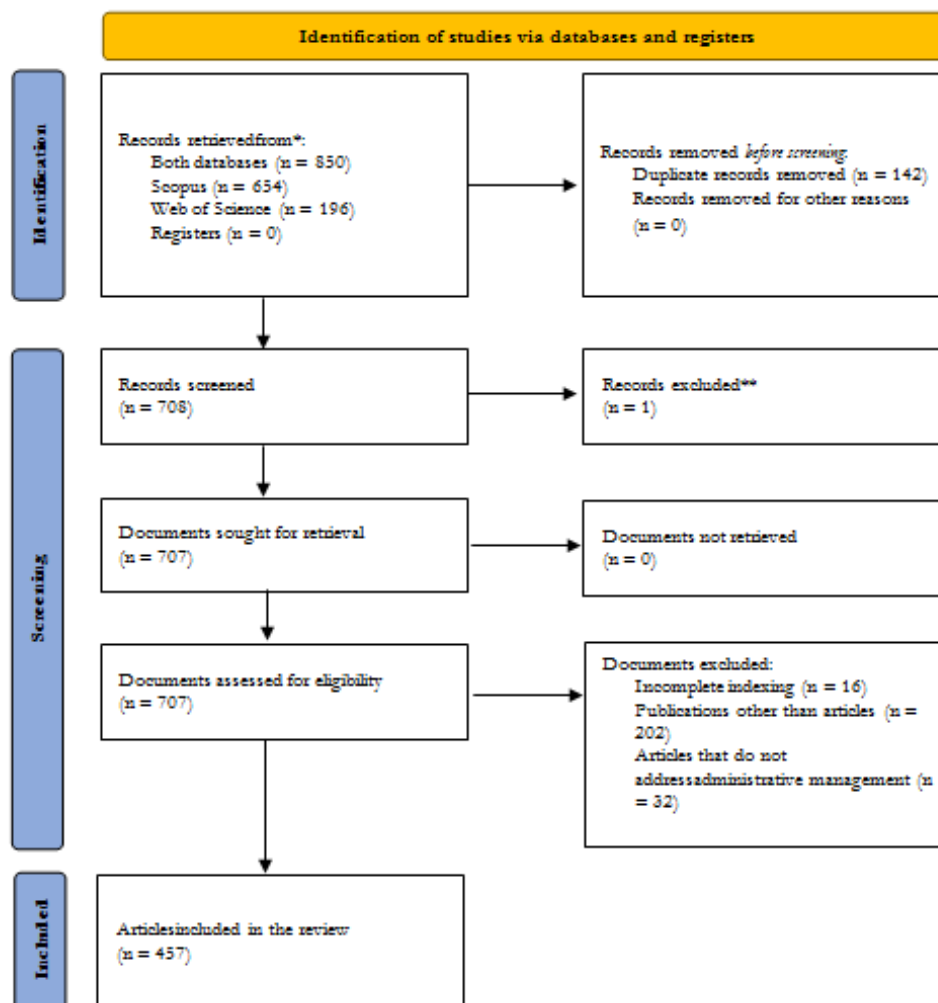


Figure 1. PRISMA flowchart (Scopus and WoS)

3. Results

The selected articles were analysed using three bibliometric indicators: quantity, quality, and impact. Quantity indicators, in particular, measure the number of publications by an author or journal or in a given year or country. Figure 2 shows the number of publications on organisational management per year. As can be seen, the first publication dates back to 1959, and the most recent one was published in 2023, which suggests the relevance of this topic over time. Furthermore, since 2010, there has been a considerable increase in the number of publications on the matter, with the highest peaks in 2016 (when 46 articles were published) and 2019 (when 45 articles were published). Based on its behaviour since 2010, research on organisational management is expected to continue with an average of 30 publications per year.

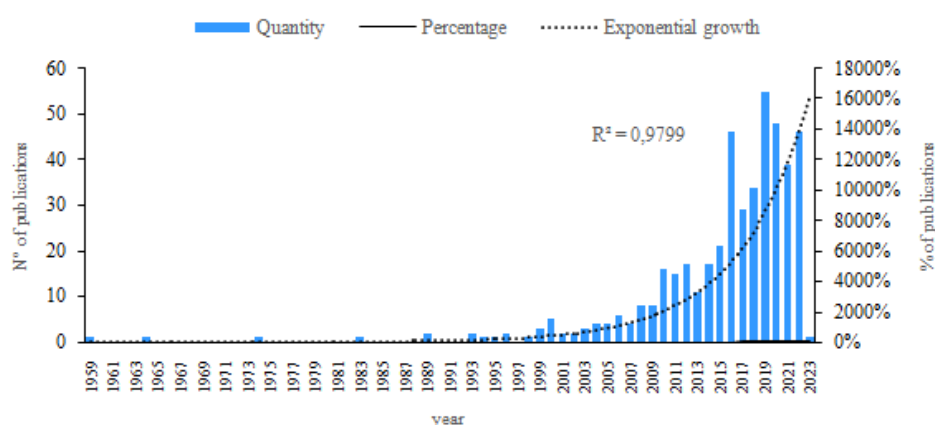


Figure 2. Number of publications per year (Scopus and WoS)

Figure 3 presents the most productive authors in the field. As observed, there are three authors with the highest number of published articles in the field (three articles in total). First, we have C. Lee (Chihlee Institute of Technology in Taiwan), whose research has concentrated on the impact of organisational culture, leadership style, and organisational commitment in the business performance of the Taiwanese insurance industry (Lee & Lee, 2014; Liu et al., 2022). Then, there is Y. Liu, whose studies are primarily focused on human resource management, digital transformation, and the effect of knowledge management on enterprise organisational capability and industrial development (Chen, Liu, Cheng & Chiu, 2010; Di, Liu & Li, 2022; Zhou, Liu, Yu & Ren, 2020). Finally, we have H. Teimouri, who stands out for his studies on human resource management, leadership styles, and knowledge management (Allameh, Teimouri & Nadali, 2016; Isfahani, Teimouri & Abzari, 2019; Teimouri, Hosseini, Imani & Bagheri, 2018).

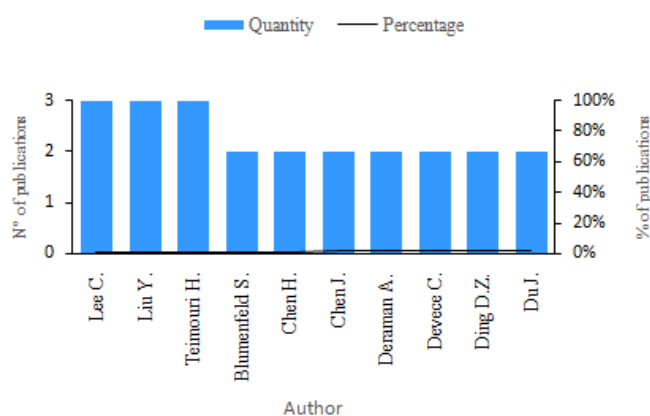


Figure 3. Top ten most productive authors in the field (Scopus and WoS)

Figure 4 shows the top ten most productive journals in the field. With a total of 13 publications on organisational management, *Sustainability* (Switzerland) is the most prominent journal in the field. This journal publishes articles on human environmental, cultural, economic, and social sustainability. Concerning the topic under analysis, this journal has published studies on sustainable innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises and the impact of knowledge management (Abbas, Zhang, Hussain, Akram, Afaq & Shad, 2020), as well as studies on organisational change for corporate sustainability (Kiesner & Baumgartner, 2019).

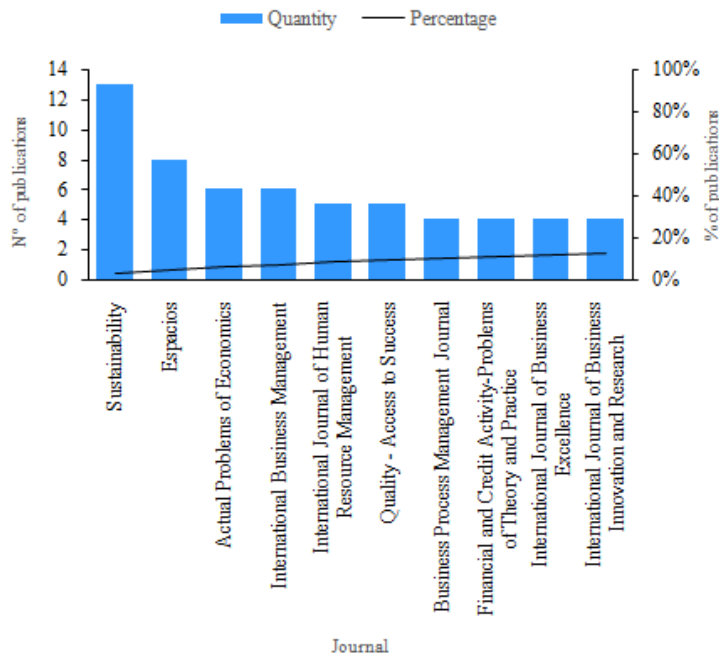


Figure 4. Top ten most productive journals in the field (Scopus and WoS)

Finally, Figure 5 presents the countries with the highest number of publications on organisational management, with the United States on the top of the list. As can be seen, emerging economies such as Iran, Indonesia, and Malaysia are among the most productive countries in the field, as are developed economies such as the United States, China, the United Kingdom, and Russia.

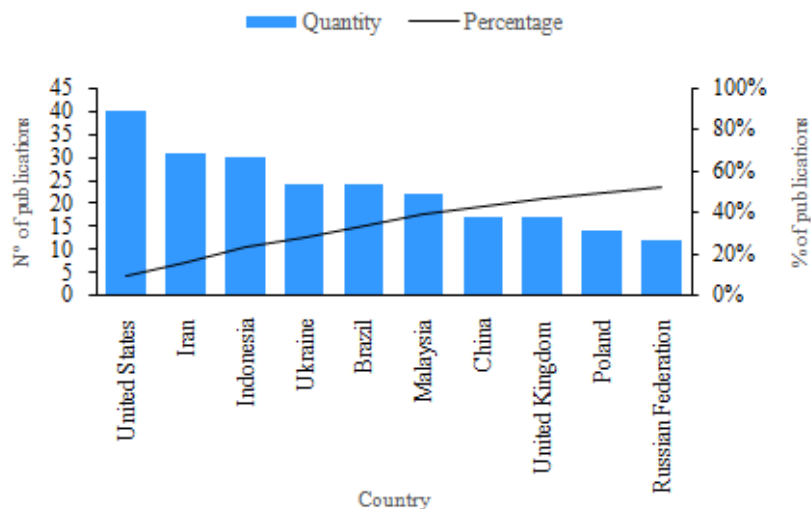


Figure 5. Top ten most productive countries in the field (Scopus and WoS)

Quality indicators, for their part, measure the performance of a researcher or journal in terms of the number of citations they have received. In this case, they allowed us to identify the most influential actors in organisational management research. Figure 6 shows the top ten cited authors in the field. As observed, L. Harris and E. Ogbonna (University of Wales in Wales) are in the first place, with their paper on leadership style, organisational culture, and performance, which has received around 469 citations. In this article, the authors examine the nature of the relationship between leadership style and performance and contend that it is mediated by the type of organisational culture that is prevalent in each firm (Ogbonna & Harris, 2000). With their article on organisational skills, which has received 334 citations, M.R. Haas (Cornell University in the United States) and M.T. Hansen (INSEAD in France) are in the second place. In their study, the authors explore the possibility that using the firm's knowledge resources to perform important tasks may be counterproductive and impair competitive performance (Haas & Hansen, 2005). Finally, with 286 citations, H.-F. Lin and G.-G. Lee (National Taiwan University of Science and Technology and St. John's and St. Mary's Institute of Technology, respectively) come in the third place. In their study, these authors investigated the impact of organisational learning and knowledge management factors on the adoption of e-business systems (Lin & Lee, 2005).

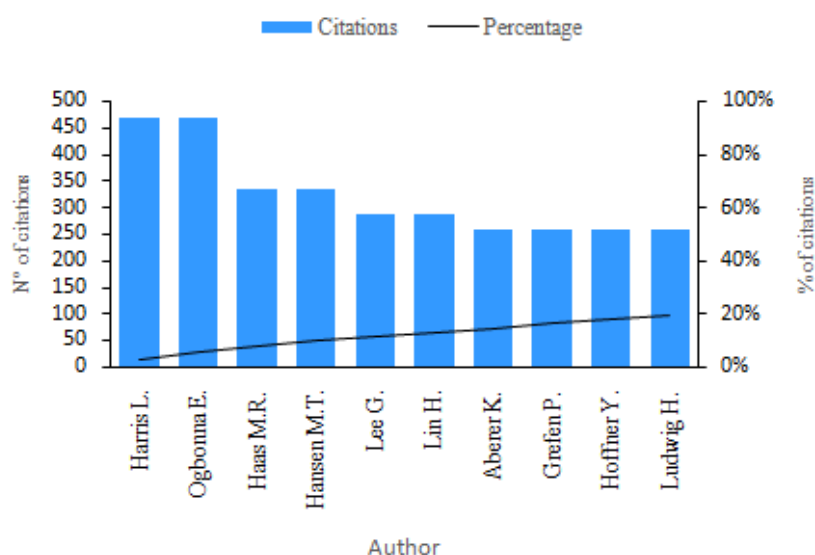


Figure 6. Top ten cited authors in the field (Scopus and WoS)

Figure 7 presents the top ten cited journals in the field. As observed, the *International Journal of Human Resource Management* is at the top, with 642 citations to six articles centred on the topic under analysis. Its most cited article is that by Ogbonna and Harris (2000) with 469 citations. Then, the *Journal of Knowledge Management* comes second with 364 citations, and its most cited paper is that by Malhotra (2005) with 230 citations. In such paper, the author discusses how to integrate knowledge management technologies in an organisation's business processes. In the third place, there is the *Strategic Management Journal*, with a total of 334 citations to four relevant publications.

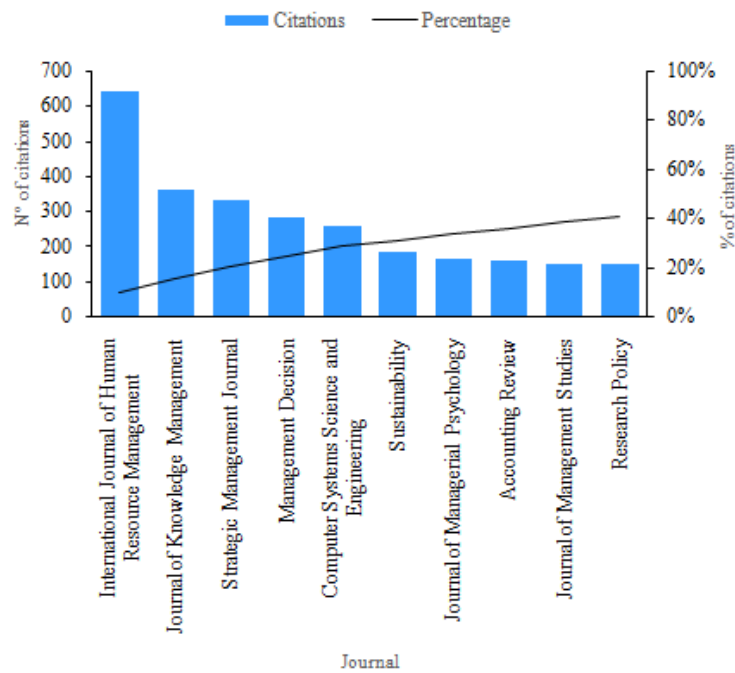


Figure 7. Top ten cited journals in the field(Scopus and WoS)

Importantly, we would like to highlight the Sustainability journal (in the sixth place) because it is one of the journals with the most articles and citations and so, together with the *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, is one of the most influential on the subject. The most renowned publication in this journal is that by M.R. Haas and M.T. Hansen (who were mentioned earlier).

Finally, we analysed the countries with the most citations in the field and found that the United States and the United Kingdom are at the top of the list.

3.1. Analysis of research trends in the field

Keyword analysis is used to identify research trends in a particular field. Figure 8 shows the behaviour of the most important terms in organisational theories over time, i.e., the keywords with the highest frequency and persistence in the research context, and whether they are hot, declining, or emerging topics. For such an analysis, we employed a Cartesian plane, where the x-axis represents the frequency of the keywords, or the total number of times they have been used, and the y-axis indicates the average year in which they were used.

In Quadrant IV on the Cartesian plane, we find the terms with a high frequency in the literature but low persistence, which is why they are known as declining concepts or keywords. Based on our analysis, *knowledge management* is the only keyword in this quadrant. We found that it was used in around 56 of the articles we reviewed, and it first appeared in 2005 in the papers by Lin and Lee (2005) and Malhotra (2005).

Initially, studies into knowledge management were mainly concentrated on the need to link knowledge management to organisational goals, business strategy, and performance metrics (Chen & Mohamed, 2008). Later, researchers focused on demonstrating the importance of creating knowledge in organisations to foster organisational creativity and thus organisational success (Soon & Zainol, 2011). Based on these concepts and given that prior studies had reported little to no change in organisational performance despite significant investments in knowledge management, a model was then developed to properly evaluate the effectiveness of knowledge management (Soon & Zainol, 2011). Most recently, various authors have investigated the impact of knowledge management and business intelligence on organisational performance. As a result of this, the processes of knowledge creation, sharing, and utilisation have been associated with business intelligence based on data analysis and strategic management (Abusweilem & Abualoush, 2019).

For its part, Quadrant III on the Cartesian plane includes those less frequent but still persistent terms, whose behaviour must be examined in order to evaluate their place in future research agendas. Here, we find terms like *organisational change*, *organisational learning*, *strategic management*, *human resource management*, *job satisfaction*, *business performance*, and *organisational effectiveness*.

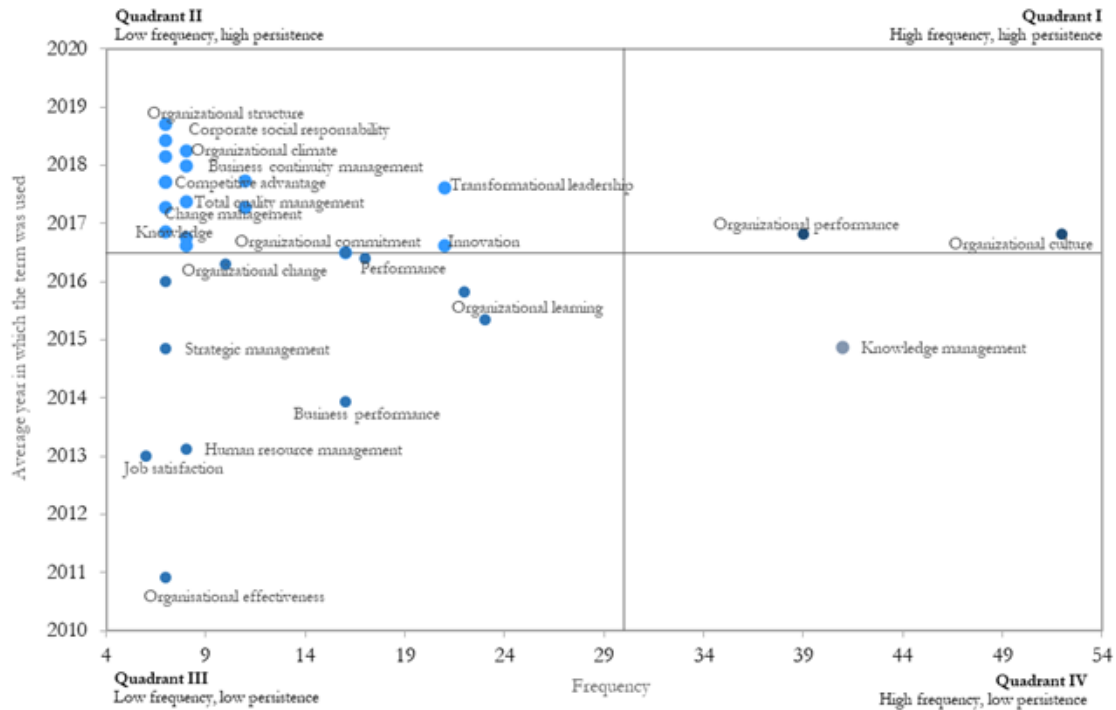


Figure 8. Main topics in organisational theory (Scopus and WoS)

Organisational effectiveness has previously been associated with knowledge management, as the effective management of knowledge resources can help firms achieve a competitive advantage and improve organisational performance (Smith, Mills & Dion, 2010). The concept of business performance has also been incorporated into the field of organisational management and linked to organisational learning (Lee & Lee, 2014). Another prevalent topic in the field is strategic management, which has enabled the creation of both conventional and situational strategic planning models (Santos, Santos, Santos & Rodrigues, 2015). Additionally, the notion of organisational change has led to the development of management and business models that consider the role of managerial dynamic capabilities (Basile & Faraci, 2015), and it has even been linked to corporate sustainability (Kiesnere & Baumgartner, 2019).

Quadrant II on the Cartesian plane contains the terms that are currently among the least frequent but have persisted in the literature and help us understand the structure of the current and upcoming publications. They are referred to as emerging keywords. In this quadrant, we find concepts such as *transformational leadership*, *organisational structure*, *business continuity management*, *competitive advantage*, *change management*, and *organisational commitment*.

In recent years, transformational leadership and innovation have been widely studied topics in organisational management as key strategies for enhancing environmental performance (Pirayesh & Pourrezay, 2020). Moreover, transformational leadership has not only been linked to innovation but also to organisational commitment and competitive advantage, and this has yielded positive results (Kustiyadji, 2020). Thus, it is anticipated that these topics will be important in future studies into organisational management, particularly in the areas of corporate social responsibility and environmental protection. Another topic associated with transformational leadership is organisational commitment, which refers to employees' performance based on

their level of attachment toward the organisation (Donkor, Appienti & Achiaah, 2022). In fact, research has shown that organisational commitment has a positive impact on an organisation's competitive advantage (Kustiyadji, 2020). Hence, it may also become an interesting research topic that can guide upcoming studies in the broad field of organisational management.

Finally, Quadrant I on the Cartesian plane presents the most frequent and persistent concepts in the literature on organisational studies, which is why they are regarded as hot topics. Some of these terms are *organisational culture and organisational performance*. For a very long time, organisational performance has been a topic with tremendous significance, and it has also been linked to transformational leadership (Elenkov, 2002). With the advent of Industry 4.0, new research has focused on the integration of business intelligence and analytics to boost firms' strategic and operational business activities (Yahaya, Abai, Deraman & Yusmadi, 2019).

All of the above is further supported by Figure 9, which shows the most relevant topics in the field from 1994 to 2023, years with a significant number of publications and a clear trend for each year. As can be seen, the research trends in the first years focused on strategy. For instance, strategic diversity was a popular theme in 1995; and strategic human resource management, in 2001. Later, the trends changed to include topics such as teleworking, knowledge management, business performance, strategic management, and organisational performance (still persistent). The most frequent themes after 2010 and in the last decade have been transformational leadership, organisational learning, organisational culture, and organisational context.

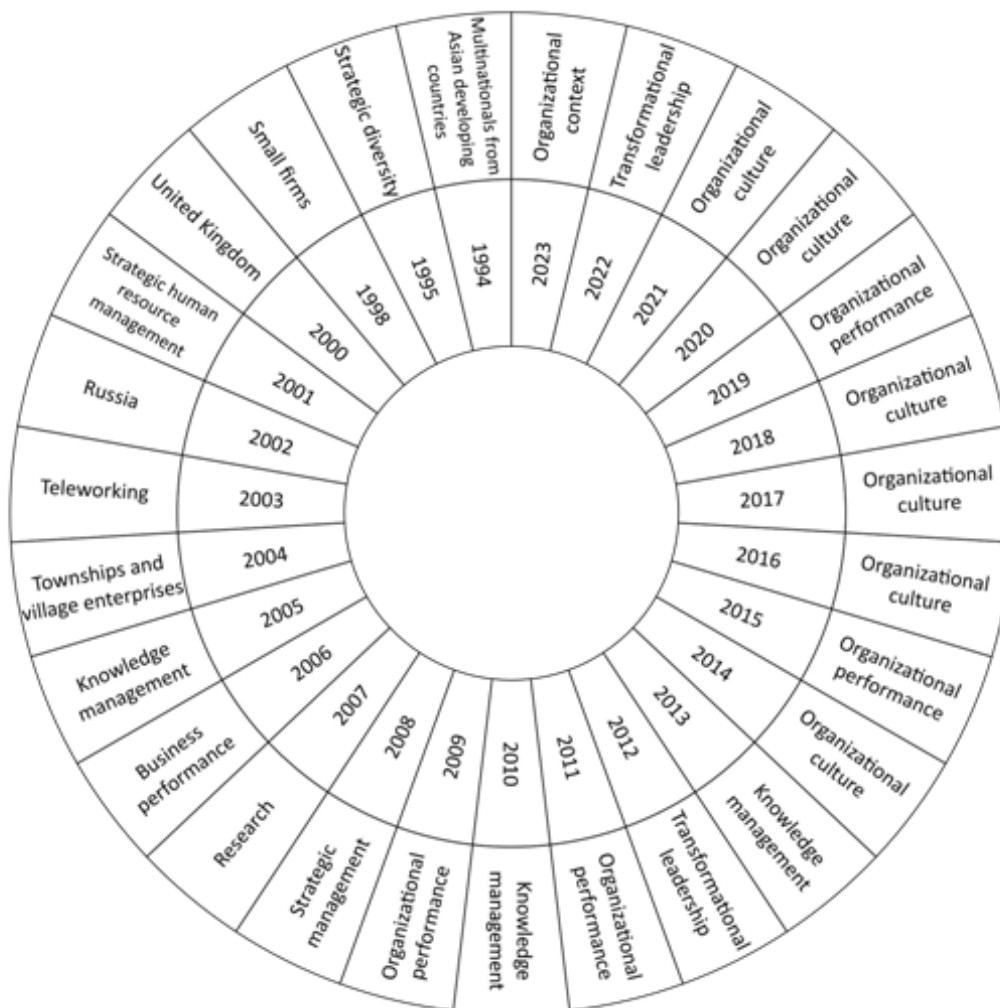


Figure 9. Research trends over time (Scopus and WoS)

Also, as observed in Figure 9, the following themes were popular for more than two years: (i) knowledge management, which was the most prominent topic in the field in 2005, 2010, and 2013 but is now losing relevance; (ii) organisational performance, which was relevant in 2009, 2011, 2015, 2020, and 2021; (iii) transformational leadership, which was the most frequent theme in 2012 and 2022; (iv) and organisational culture, which maintained its relevance from 2016 to 2019, making it a relevant subject for future studies.

4. Discussion and conclusions

Although organisational studies play a key and influential role in the social, economic, and administrative sciences, we found no review articles (bibliometric analysis or systematic literature reviews) on the topic in its most explicit form. There are review papers that focus on the particulars of the topic, as in the study by Kitsios, Kamariotou, and Michael (2020). In such study, the authors carried out a bibliometric analysis to evaluate the importance that the scientific community has accorded to one of the most currently debate issues in the field: the convergence between strategic management and sustainability, as well as their integration into the business strategy.

Moreover, since Lateef and Omotayo (2019) recognise information as a strategic asset in organisations, they conducted a literature review to investigate the use of information auditing as an effective tool in organisational management. Given the automation of business processes, organisational management is necessary in workflow applications, and zur Muehlen (2004) performed a literature review on this matter. However, despite his contributions to the field of organisational management, his study does not provide a comprehensive picture of the topics on the matter that are often the focus of research.

Beyond planning, organisation, direction, and control, organisational management involves other processes, such as resource allocation in line with the organisation's goals. This is why there are numerous and varied studies on this topic. In this paper, we offered a very broad overview of studies into organisational management and leadership, highlighting both the most relevant topics over the period of analysis considered here and those that can serve as the basis for future research.

According to the research agenda in the field, human resource management has been the subject of the most studies, and it gained the highest relevance in 2014 with the paper by Tortorella and Fogliatto (2014). In such study, the authors proposed a method to evaluate human resource management practises and organisational learning factors. Organisational learning and job satisfaction are also relevant topics in the field, and they have been linked to organisational culture, a topic that has repeatedly appeared in recent research. Additionally, leadership style has been associated with transformational leadership, and both concepts are likely to be increasingly used in publications over the next few years.

In the coming years, topics related to organisational performance and culture are expected to be the most prominent ones. They include organisational structure and culture, strategic management (which continues to be relevant in all organisational contexts), innovation, knowledge, and environmental protection. For their part, knowledge management, organisational change, and organisational success are some of the themes that are no longer significant as they used to be. However, it is undeniable that they have been discussed much in the past, albeit not recently.

Given the importance of considering the practical implications of this study, its theoretical scope should be kept in mind. As a bibliometric analysis, it makes it possible to identify the macro characteristics of the field of organisational studies, as well as its evolution and trends. Thus, it can serve as a starting point for the design and development of future studies that address existing conceptual gaps and upcoming trends.

In this regard, keyword analysis offers useful elements for future research, as it highlights the importance that the scientific community has given to the various trends. In organisational studies, for instance, such relevance has been directly linked to the adoption of new management technologies in the context of Industry 4.0 given the need for technological restructuring in organisations and data analysis for decision-making. Furthermore, future studies in the field should give prominence to emerging concepts, i.e., those that have been addressed in recent years.

We are aware that our research may have some limitations. First, it does not focus on a particular type of organisation or on a specific economic area, sector, country, or region. Second, our analysis does not concentrate on a single organisational management procedure, as it seeks to provide a general perspective on the matter. Third, we only employed two of the main bibliographic databases. Therefore, in order to confirm or complement our recommendations regarding research trends, future studies could consider using other databases, which would allow them to identify other nuances in the field.

According to our findings, the research agenda in the field of organisational management showed a positive behaviour with an exponential growth rate. Although the range of topics is still broad for the near future, we observed a prevalence of the topic in social, geographic, economic, and organisational contexts in developed nations, with Brazil being the only Latin American country to appear among the most productive countries in the field. Hence, we emphasise the importance for other Latin American countries to contribute to the body of literature on organisational management.

Additionally, we may conclude that the academic community has approached organisational management with a multidisciplinary lens. For instance, it has been addressed from (i) a sociological perspective, which enables focusing on issues like organisational culture; (ii) an environmental perspective, which raises concerns about corporate sustainability; and (iii) new perspectives associated with transformational leadership in technological issues, which highlight the relevance of digital transformation in organisational studies.

Finally, the purpose of this study was to identify the main research trends in the literature on organisational studies. In this regard, we found topics that were quite relevant to the literature in earlier decades, as evidenced in the analysis of declining keywords. We also identified the current research trends and the topics that have emerged in recent years, which could shape future research and spark new debates that will add to the increasing literature on organisational studies.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received financial support from the Instituto TecnológicoMetropolitano in Medellín (Colombia) to conduct this research. We would like to thank ITM Translation Agency (traducciones@itm.edu.co) for translating the manuscript into English.

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