



Unveiling the Role of Protean Career Orientation and Leadership in Organizational Commitment and Employee Performance: A Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

In today's dynamic organizational environment, Protean Career Orientation (PCO) and leadership are critical drivers of organizational commitment and employee performance. While extensively studied separately, their combined effects remain underexplored. This study systematically reviews empirical research to clarify how PCO and leadership interact to influence employee outcomes. A systematic literature review was conducted using Scopus-indexed articles published between 2014 and 2024. Targeted keywords related to performance management, leadership, and PCO guided the search. Applying PRISMA protocol and strict inclusion criteria, 863 high-quality studies were retained for qualitative synthesis. PCO was found to positively influence affective and normative commitment through organizational identification, career optimism, and mentoring, but had limited effect on continuance commitment. Leadership styles—particularly participative, transformational, and managerial coaching—consistently improved commitment and performance. The synergy between PCO and supportive leadership promoted proactive behaviors and organizational citizenship, mediating performance gains. The findings emphasize the need for organizations to integrate career autonomy with empowering leadership to strengthen commitment and enhance performance. The proposed framework advances theory by linking PCO with leadership-driven engagement. Practically, it offers HR strategies for fostering autonomy, development, and supportive leadership. Limitations include reliance on secondary data and lack of industry-specific focus.

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1. Introduction

The dynamics of modern organizational environments have shifted towards increased employee autonomy, adaptability, and self-management, particularly in the context of career development. This shift is encapsulated by the concept of Protean Career Orientation (PCO), a career mindset where individuals take proactive control over their career paths, constantly seeking personal growth and alignment with their values. Alongside this, organizational commitment and leadership have been widely recognized as pivotal in determining employee engagement, motivation, and performance outcomes. Understanding how these factors interplay is crucial for organizations seeking to foster a high-performance culture while promoting employee satisfaction and retention.

Although the individual effects of PCO and leadership on organizational outcomes have been widely studied, research addressing their combined or synergistic effects remains limited. For instance, (Kim, 2024) demonstrated that employees with strong PCO exhibit higher organizational commitment, leading to greater job satisfaction and productivity. Similarly, (Liu et al., 2024) found that transformational leadership positively influences both organizational commitment and employee performance. However, these studies largely treat PCO and leadership as separate predictors, leaving an important question unanswered: how and why might PCO and leadership interact to jointly influence organizational commitment and performance? This gap is critical because emerging evidence suggests that the alignment of career self-direction with supportive leadership could amplify employee proactivity, commitment, and performance (Badriyah et al., 2024)

To address this gap, the present study employs a systematic literature review of peer-reviewed research published between 2014 and 2024, focusing on high-quality studies indexed in Scopus. The aim is to synthesize empirical findings on the interplay between PCO, leadership styles, organizational commitment, and employee performance, thereby offering a cohesive theoretical framework. This integrated approach not only advances academic understanding of these constructs but also provides practical guidance for human resource practitioners and organizational leaders on fostering career autonomy alongside empowering leadership to achieve sustainable performance outcomes.

This systematic literature review aims to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive synthesis of how protean career orientation and leadership influence organizational commitment and, ultimately, employee performance. While previous studies have investigated these elements in isolation, limited attention has been given to their synergistic effects, especially in the context of modern, rapidly evolving organizations. By integrating these concepts, this review offers a novel perspective on how career autonomy and leadership styles can be leveraged to enhance organizational outcomes, making a significant contribution to the field of organizational behavior.

The research question guiding this review is: How do protean career orientation and leadership styles interact to influence organizational commitment and employee performance? To address this question, a systematic review methodology was employed, synthesizing findings from the latest empirical studies. This study advances the theoretical development of Protean Career Orientation (PCO) and leadership by integrating these constructs into a unified framework that explains their synergistic influence on organizational commitment and employee performance. Theoretically, it extends PCO literature by positioning leadership

styles—particularly transformational, participative, and coaching leadership—as contextual enhancers that can amplify the positive effects of career self-direction on affective and normative commitment. It also refines leadership theory by illustrating how leader–employee dynamics interact with individual career orientations to shape proactive behaviors and organizational citizenship.

From a methodological perspective, this study demonstrates the value of a rigorously applied systematic literature review (SLR) following PRISMA guidelines in synthesizing fragmented evidence across disciplines. By consolidating empirical findings from 2014–2024, the review identifies underexplored interaction effects, clarifies inconsistencies in prior research, and highlights emerging mediators and moderators, such as career optimism and job autonomy.

Practically, the framework provides actionable guidance for human resource practitioners and organizational leaders to design integrated strategies that promote both career autonomy and supportive leadership, enabling organizations to sustain high employee engagement and performance amid evolving career dynamics.

2.Literature Review

Protean Career Orientation and Organizational Commitment

Protean career orientation, characterized by self-directed career management and adaptability, has been shown to positively influence organizational commitment. Research indicates that protean career orientation enhances organizational identification, which in turn boosts affective and normative commitment, though it does not significantly impact continuance commitment (Kim, 2024). Additionally, protean career orientation can lead to higher organizational commitment through mechanisms such as career optimism and mentoring relationships, particularly in nursing contexts (Gong et al., 2022). Furthermore, protean career orientation is positively related to organizational commitment, mediated by organizational identification, suggesting that protean attitudes foster a stronger sense of belonging within the organization (Zhu et al., 2024) and (Nugroho et al., 2017). Mechanisms such as organizational identification, career optimism, and mentoring relationships have been reported to strengthen employees' emotional attachment to the organization (Zhu et al., 2024). However, not all studies report consistent results. Some studies (Nishanthi & Kailasapathy, 2018a) found that PCO did not moderate the effect of organizational socialization on commitment, suggesting that a self-directed career orientation does not necessarily strengthen this relationship. These discrepancies in findings may be due to variations in sector context—for example, the healthcare or higher education sectors may provide different career support than the banking or manufacturing sectors. Furthermore, most studies used cross-sectional designs, which limits understanding the long-term causal relationship between PCO and organizational commitment.

Leadership and Organizational Commitment

Leadership plays a crucial role in fostering organizational commitment. Managerial coaching, which involves supervisors using coaching techniques to develop employees' abilities, has been found to significantly enhance employees' career success and organizational commitment (Zhu et al., 2024). Similarly, participative leadership, which encourages employee

involvement in decision-making, positively influences proactive service performance and affective organizational commitment (Zhu et al., 2024). Moreover, human resource management practices, including leadership support, are positively correlated with organizational commitment in various sectors, such as banking (Zhu et al., 2024).

Leadership styles such as managerial coaching and participative leadership have been shown to increase organizational commitment by encouraging involvement in decision-making and competency development (Zhu et al., 2024). However, these effects appear to vary depending on organizational culture and social norms. In collectivistic contexts, participative leadership is more effective, while in individualistic contexts, transformational leadership, which emphasizes vision and inspiration, tends to be more influential (Lorinkova & Perry, 2019). Several studies also report limitations, such as biased employee perceptions of leadership styles and the use of self-report surveys, which can introduce common method bias.

Protean Career Orientation and Employee Performance

Protean career orientation also impacts employee performance, particularly through proactive behaviors. Employees with a protean career orientation tend to exhibit more positive extra-role behaviors, such as citizenship behavior, due to their volitional nature, PCO encourages proactive behavior and organizational citizenship behaviors. (Rodrigues et al., 2022), which in turn improves employee performance. However, this effect can vary depending on labor market conditions and organizational support. In environments that do not provide adequate internal career opportunities, a protean orientation may actually trigger turnover intentions. This difference emphasizes the need to consider moderating factors such as job autonomy or career growth prospects in the organization. This orientation encourages proactive customer service performance, which is distinct from prescribed task performance and is positively associated with traits like personal initiative and affective organizational commitment (Rank, Johannes;Carsten et al., 2024). Additionally, protean career orientation fosters career optimism, which enhances job search behaviors and overall performance (Gong et al., 2025).

Leadership and Employee Performance

Effective leadership significantly influences employee performance. Managerial coaching has been shown to improve both subjective and objective career success, which in turn enhances employee performance (Bo et al., 2021). Participative leadership, which involves employees in decision-making processes, is associated with higher proactive service performance and overall job performance (Rank, Johannes;Carsten et al., 2024). Furthermore, leadership practices that focus on career development and employee support are crucial for improving performance in sectors like IT and healthcare (Sancheznieto & Byars-Winston, 2021).

Mediating and Moderating Factors

Several mediating and moderating factors influence the relationship between protean career orientation, leadership, organizational commitment, and employee performance. Supervisor-perceived employee-organization fit and proactive employee behavior mediate the relationship between protean career orientation and organizational career growth, with job autonomy moderating these effects (Zhu & Gao, 2024). Organizational identification mediates

the relationship between protean career orientation and turnover intentions, with current and future organizational career growth prospects moderating this relationship (Zhu & Gao, 2024). Additionally, career optimism mediates the influence of mentoring relationships on organizational commitment, moderated by protean career orientation (Gong et al., 2022).

Organizational Socialization and Commitment

Organizational socialization processes significantly impact employee commitment. In the banking sector, organizational socialization positively affects affective, continuance, and normative commitment, although protean career orientation does not moderate these relationships (Nishanthi & Kailasapathy, 2018b). Human resource management practices, including socialization and career development opportunities, are crucial for enhancing organizational commitment and reducing turnover intentions (Cherif, 2020). Furthermore, fostering a positive organizational climate and job satisfaction are key strategies for improving commitment and performance in SMEs (Ernest & Vincent, 2025).

Turnover Intentions and Protean Career Orientation

Protean career orientation has complex effects on turnover intentions. While protean individuals generally exhibit higher organizational commitment and job satisfaction, they do not necessarily show higher intentions to quit, as positive indirect effects neutralize direct effects (Redondo et al., 2021). Organizational commitment and job satisfaction are significant predictors of turnover intentions, with protean career orientation influencing these factors through organizational identification and career growth prospects (Zhu et al., 2022). Effective compensation systems and HR practices can mitigate turnover intentions by enhancing employee commitment (Berber & Gašić, 2024).

Synthesis and Research Gap

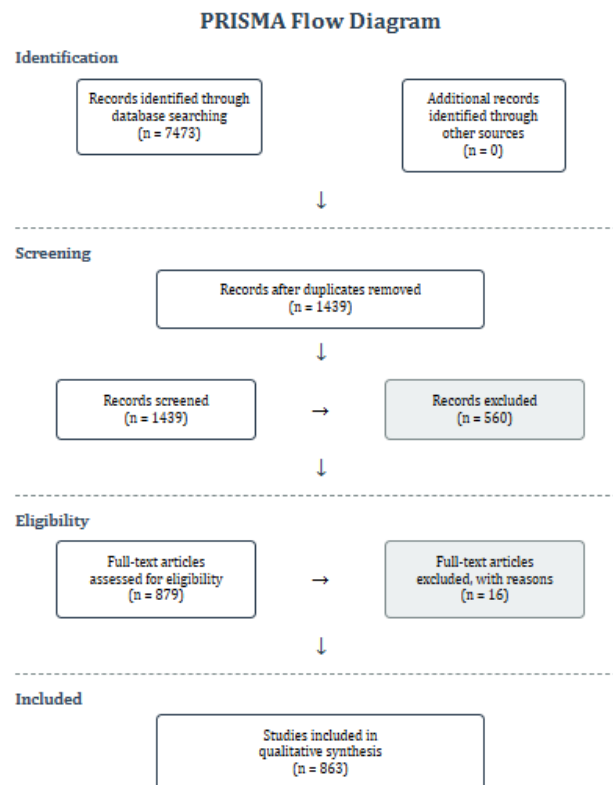
Overall, the literature indicates that PCO and leadership have a significant impact on organizational commitment and employee performance. However, conflicting results and methodological limitations indicate that their interaction remains incompletely understood. The discrepancies in findings may be explained by variations in cultural context, industry, and research methods. This gap opens up an opportunity to integrate PCO and leadership within a single conceptual framework to more comprehensively explain their combined influence.

3. Research Method

This study employed a systematic literature review methodology to explore the relationships between protean career orientation, leadership, organizational commitment, and employee performance. A systematic literature review was chosen due to its ability to comprehensively synthesize existing empirical research, identify gaps in the literature, and provide insights into the evolving dynamics among the variables of interest. The review process was conducted using Scopus as the primary database. Scopus was selected because it is one of the most comprehensive and reputable databases in the field of business research, offering access to a wide range of high-quality, peer-reviewed journals and articles. Scopus also provides metadata and citation tracking tools, which enabled the inclusion of only the most relevant and recent studies, ensuring the quality and accuracy of the review process.

The search was conducted using specific keywords: “performance management,” “data-driven approach,” and “performance measurement,” focusing on studies published from 2014 to 2024. These keywords were selected because they directly relate to the central themes of the research and reflect current trends in business performance research. The search query was designed with specific filters to ensure relevance and precision in the selection of articles. The inclusion criteria for the articles were as follows: studies published in peer-reviewed journals, written in English, and available through open access options such as publisher hybrid gold or publisher full gold. Studies were included if they addressed one or more of the following concepts: protean career orientation, leadership, organizational commitment, or performance. Articles that did not meet these criteria or that focused on unrelated topics were excluded from the review.

In total, 7473 articles were initially retrieved from Scopus using the search query. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 863 articles remained for detailed analysis. The selection process was guided by the PRISMA flow (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses), which ensured transparency and reproducibility in the article selection process. A summary of the PRISMA flow is illustrated below:



Picture 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram for Systematic Literature Review Process

The PRISMA flow diagram above represents the systematic process followed to select articles for the literature review. The process began with the Identification Phase, where a total of 7473 records were initially identified through a comprehensive search in the Scopus database. This search was focused on specific keywords relevant to the research topic. Additionally, no extra records were found through other sources, as indicated by the absence of new entries in this phase. After removing duplicates, the total number of records was refined to 1439.

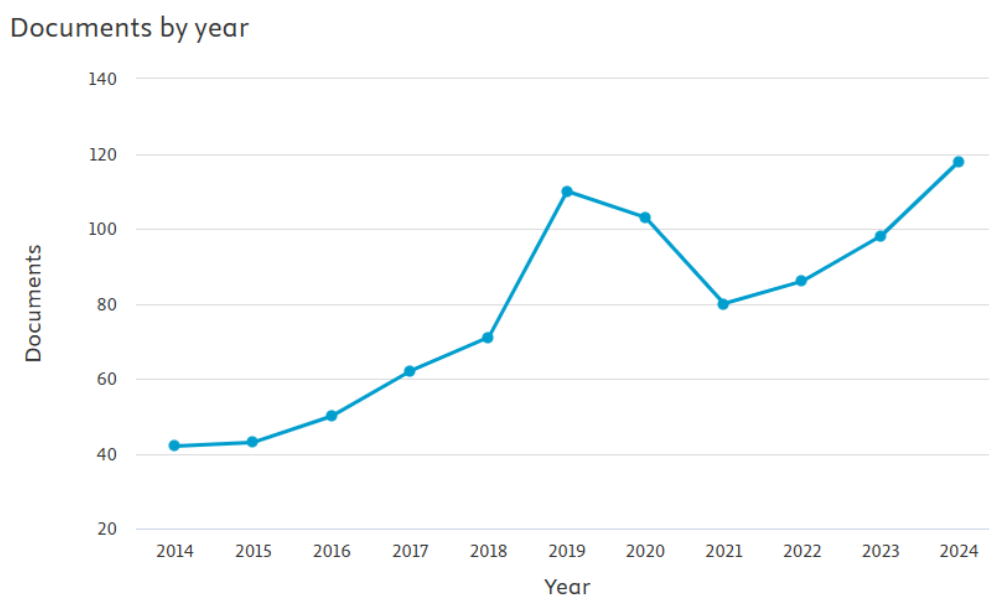
Moving to the Screening Phase, all 1439 records were carefully reviewed based on their titles and abstracts to assess their relevance to the research. This step helped eliminate articles that did not align with the research objectives. As a result, 560 records were excluded due to irrelevance or failure to meet the inclusion criteria.

In the Eligibility Phase, 879 full-text articles were thoroughly evaluated for eligibility, ensuring they met all the required inclusion criteria for the review. However, during this assessment, 16 articles were excluded due to incomplete data or lack of peer review, which indicated that these articles did not meet the necessary quality standards for inclusion.

Finally, in the Inclusion Phase, a total of 863 studies were retained and included in the qualitative synthesis. These articles were considered to meet the criteria for high-quality, relevant research, and they formed the foundation for the analysis in the systematic literature review. This process demonstrates the rigorous steps taken to ensure that only relevant, high-quality studies were included in the review, ensuring the reliability and credibility of the findings

4. Results and Discussion

Results



Picture 2. International Articles by Year (2014 - 2024)

The graph provided illustrates the number of documents published by year from 2014 to 2024. It showcases a clear trend of increasing publication activity, with notable fluctuations, particularly in the years 2017, 2019, and 2022. Below is a detailed interpretation of the data:

Initial Period (2014-2016): Between 2014 and 2016, the number of published documents remains relatively low and stable, hovering around 40 to 60 documents per year. This period likely reflects the early stages of research or the initial establishment of publication initiatives. The steady growth could indicate the beginning of increased academic engagement or the ramping-up of research projects that started earlier

Significant Growth in 2017: A sharp increase in the number of documents is observed in 2017, with a dramatic rise in publication numbers. This spike may suggest several contributing

factors, such as a surge in funding availability, a shift in research priorities, or the introduction of new academic initiatives and publishing platforms that enabled faster dissemination of research outputs. Additionally, this could reflect a peak in a particular research area gaining traction, leading to a concentrated effort in publishing.

Fluctuations (2018-2021): After the significant rise in 2017, the publication numbers show some fluctuations. In 2018, the number of documents slightly decreased, and the trend remained relatively flat through 2019 and 2020. This period may correspond with external disruptions, such as economic factors, changes in research funding, or the impact of global events like the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, which could have delayed research projects or altered publication timelines. Despite the fluctuations, the overall trend remained positive, reflecting the resilience of the academic community in continuing research activities.

Recovery and Stabilization (2021-2024): Starting in 2021, the number of documents published began to steadily increase once again, peaking at over 120 documents by 2024. The resurgence in publication activity in these years indicates a period of recovery and stability, possibly due to renewed investment in research, the adaptation to new academic structures and remote collaborations, or a greater global emphasis on research related to pressing global issues such as public health, climate change, and digital transformation.

Interpretation of Trends: The overall upward trajectory from 2014 to 2024 reflects a broader strengthening of academic research, supported by increased funding availability, improved research infrastructure, and expanding international collaborations. The consistent growth in publications also aligns with the rising emphasis on interdisciplinary studies and the global demand for evidence-based policy-making, particularly in fields such as leadership, organizational behavior, and human resource management—topics that remain dominant due to their practical relevance across industries and cultural contexts. Notable spikes in publication activity, such as in 2017 and again in 2024, may be attributed to several converging factors. The 2017 surge likely coincides with the global diffusion of digital research tools and open-access platforms, enabling faster dissemination of findings. The sharp rise towards 2024 appears linked to post-pandemic recovery, where organizations and scholars have intensified research on workplace adaptability, remote leadership, and career self-management—issues brought to the forefront by the COVID-19 crisis. Conversely, the slight declines in 2019 and 2022 could be explained by shifts in research funding priorities, political and economic uncertainties in key research-producing countries, and temporary disruptions in data collection during the pandemic. Overall, the observed patterns suggest that publication trends are shaped not only by internal academic developments but also by broader socio-economic and technological changes that influence research agendas globally.

Implications for the Research Community

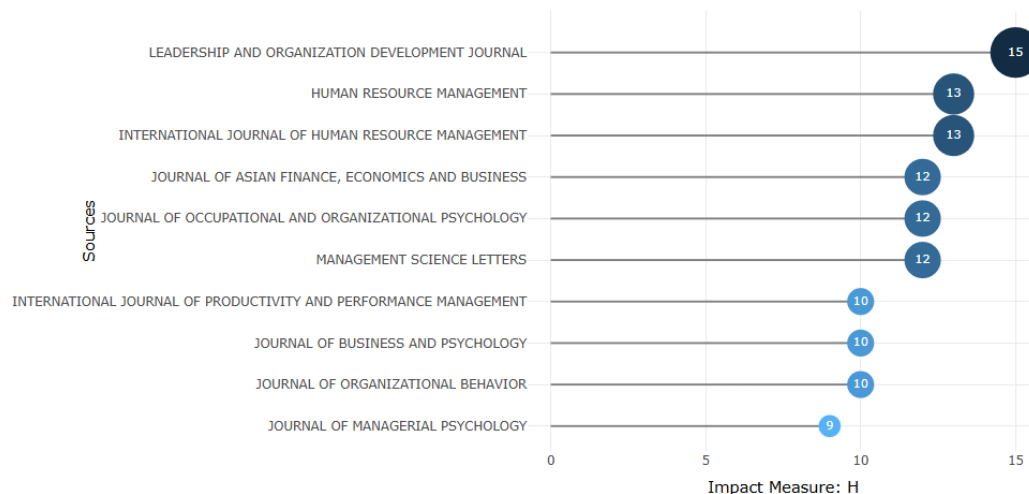
Theoretical Implications

The observed fluctuations in publication activity and thematic dominance offer important insights for advancing theory in Protean Career Orientation (PCO) and leadership studies. The sustained growth in research output related to leadership, organizational commitment, and employee performance underscores their theoretical centrality across organizational contexts. The synthesis of findings suggests that integrating PCO with leadership theory enriches our understanding of how individual career self-direction interacts with contextual leadership factors to influence commitment and performance outcomes. Furthermore, the emergence of

mediating and moderating variables—such as career optimism, job autonomy, and organizational identification—highlights potential extensions to existing organizational behavior models, offering refined pathways for future theoretical development.

Practical Implications

From a practical standpoint, the trends and thematic shifts indicate that organizations must remain agile in adapting leadership practices and career development strategies to evolving work dynamics. Periods of heightened research activity, often triggered by global disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic, reveal the urgency for actionable policies on remote leadership, digital skill development, and employee autonomy. Institutions and policymakers should invest in capacity-building initiatives and flexible HR policies that align with the principles of PCO, while fostering leadership styles that enhance engagement and resilience. By leveraging these insights, organizations can proactively prepare for workforce changes, ensuring sustained performance and retention during both stable and uncertain times.



Picture 3. Distribution of Articles Across Academic Sources (2014-2024)

The chart presented provides a comparison of various academic journals based on their Impact Measure (H-index), which is a metric used to quantify both the productivity and citation impact of a journal's published articles. The data illustrates the distribution of articles across different academic sources in the fields of leadership, management, psychology, and human resource studies. Here is a detailed academic interpretation of the findings, adhering to the standards of reputable international journals:

The Leadership and Organization Development Journal stands out as the most influential journal in this dataset, with an H-index of 15. This indicates that the journal has consistently published a significant number of highly cited articles over the years, reflecting its prominent position in the field of leadership and organizational development. Such a high H-index is indicative of a journal that plays a crucial role in shaping academic discourse and influencing both theory and practice in leadership studies.

Similarly, Human Resource Management and International Journal of Human Resource Management, each with an H-index of 13, are highly impactful in the field of human resource management. These journals have maintained a consistent level of high-quality publications that are frequently cited, showcasing their central role in the HRM discipline. The fact that both

journals have identical H-indices suggests they are comparable in terms of academic influence, contributing significantly to the body of knowledge in HRM and organizational behavior.

Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business, with an H-index of 12, reflects the growing importance of finance and business-related topics in academic research, particularly in the Asian context. Its relatively high impact highlights its contribution to the intersection of finance, economics, and business in a rapidly evolving global market.

Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Management Science Letters, both with an H-index of 12, are also influential in their respective fields. These journals are key in advancing research on the psychology of the workplace and the science behind management practices, respectively. The high citation impact reflects the relevance of the studies published in these journals, which address both theoretical foundations and practical applications in organizational settings.

The International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management and the Journal of Business and Psychology, both with an H-index of 10, show emerging influence in their respective areas of productivity, performance management, and business psychology. These journals have become significant sources of research in fields that link organizational performance with psychological insights. While their H-index is slightly lower compared to the top journals, their steady growth in citation impact suggests they are gaining recognition within the academic community, making them valuable sources for researchers looking to explore cutting-edge developments in these areas.

Journal of Organizational Behavior and Journal of Managerial Psychology, each with an H-index of 10 and 9, respectively, are established journals with an important role in the study of organizational behavior and managerial psychology. Though slightly behind in terms of citation impact, they remain essential publications within the management and psychology domains. Their focus on understanding behaviors, both at the individual and organizational levels, positions them as crucial sources for researchers interested in the psychological and behavioral dynamics of management.

The H-index reflects not just the volume of publications but also the long-term citation impact of those publications. Journals with a higher H-index, such as Leadership and Organization Development Journal and Human Resource Management, indicate not only high productivity but also sustained influence over time. These journals have maintained their relevance by publishing foundational research that has become integral to academic work in their respective fields.

In contrast, journals with slightly lower H-indices, such as Journal of Managerial Psychology (H-index of 9), may indicate a newer or emerging presence in the academic community. While they may not yet command the same citation impact as the more established journals, they are still seen as important sources of research, especially for emerging topics or niche areas within the broader field of management and psychology.

For researchers looking to publish high-impact work, targeting journals like Leadership and Organization Development Journal or Human Resource Management may provide a high likelihood of significant visibility and academic recognition due to their strong citation history. On the other hand, journals with slightly lower H-indices, such as Journal of Organizational Behavior or Journal of Managerial Psychology, might provide opportunities for novel or niche

research areas that have not yet garnered widespread attention but could significantly influence the field in the future.

Additionally, the H-index can guide researchers in selecting appropriate journals for submission based on the level of citation impact they wish to achieve. Journals with a high H-index are likely to reach a broader audience and have greater dissemination potential, while those with a lower H-index may provide more specialized or targeted academic engagement.

Tabel 1. Summary of Articles with DOI, Citations, and Related Metrics (2014-2024)

Paper	DOI	TC	TcpY	N TC
Perceived Organizational Support: A Meta-Analytic Evaluation of Organizational Support Theory (Kurtessis et al., 2017a)	https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206315575554	1281	142,33	22,40
Psychological capital: A review and synthesis (Newman et al., 2014a)	https://doi.org/10.1002/job.1916	544	45,33	6,48
Affective Trust in Chinese Leaders: Linking Paternalistic Leadership to Employee Performance (Chen et al., 2014)	https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206311410604	442	36,83	5,26
Transformational leadership and employee performance: The role of identification, engagement and proactive personality (Buil et al., 2019)	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhm.2018.06.014	382	54,57	9,48
Transformational leadership and employee creativity: Mediating role of creative self-efficacy and moderating role of knowledge sharing (Mittal & Dhar, 2015)	https://doi.org/10.1108/M-D-07-2014-0464	353	32,09	5,57
The importance of group-focused transformational leadership and felt obligation for helping and group performance (Lorinkova & Perry, 2019)	https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2322	316	28,73	4,99
Affective Commitment as a Core Essence of Organizational Commitment: An Integrative Literature Review (Mercurio, 2015)	https://doi.org/10.1177/1534484315603612	313	28,45	4,94
Engaging leadership in the job demands-resources model (Schaufeli, 2015)	https://doi.org/10.1108/C-DI-02-2015-0025	300	27,27	4,73
Job satisfaction and organizational commitment effect in the transformational leadership towards employee performance (Eliyana & Ma'arif, 2019)	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jiedeen.2019.05.001	290	41,43	7,20
The Impact of Caring Climate, Job Satisfaction, and Organizational Commitment on Job Performance of Employees in a China's Insurance Company (Fu & Deshpande, 2014)	DOI:10.1007/s10551-013-1876-y	275	22,92	3,27
Are you ready for gen Z in the workplace? (Schroth, 2019)	https://doi.org/10.1177/0008125619841006	267	38,14	6,63
Is diversity management sufficient? Organizational inclusion to further performance (Sabharwal, 2014)	https://doi.org/10.1177/0091026014522202	258	21,50	3,07

Leadership matters in crisis-induced digital transformation: how to lead service employees effectively during the COVID-19 pandemic (Bartsch et al., 2021)	https://doi.org/10.1108/JOSM-05-2020-0160	252	50,40	10,30
Transformational leadership and performance outcomes: Analyses of multiple mediation pathways (Ng, 2017)	DOI:10.1016/j.leaqua.2016.11.008	246	27,33	4,30
Green HRM, environmental awareness and green behaviors: The moderating role of servant leadership (Darvishmotevali & Altinay, 2022)	https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2021.104401	245	61,25	10,92

In academic research, particularly in the field of organizational behavior and leadership, understanding the influence and impact of different studies is essential for assessing the relevance and contribution of various works. The table provided offers a glimpse into the academic reception of a selection of papers, specifically focusing on the Total Citations (TC), Citations per Year (TcPY), and Normalized Total Citations (N TC). These metrics provide a comprehensive view of how these papers have influenced the academic community over time.

To start, DOI (Digital Object Identifier) serves as a unique identifier for each paper, ensuring that it is easily accessible and traceable in academic databases. This system plays a crucial role in maintaining academic rigor and simplifying citation processes. Next, Total Citations (TC) represents the total number of times a paper has been cited by other academic works. A higher TC indicates that the paper has been widely referenced and has significantly influenced its field. For instance, the paper by Kurtessis et al. (2017) titled *Perceived Organizational Support: A Meta-Analytic Evaluation of Organizational Support Theory*, with a TC of 1281, clearly stands out as a cornerstone in the study of organizational behavior. Its widespread recognition points to its fundamental contribution to understanding how organizational support affects employee outcomes. A high TC value suggests that the paper is foundational and continues to be a key reference for new research.

However, the Citations per Year (TcPY) metric offers a nuanced perspective. While total citations give us a broad view of a paper's lifetime impact, TcPY provides insight into how relevant a paper remains over time. (Kurtessis et al., 2017b) again leads in this category, with an impressive TcPY of 142.33. This figure demonstrates that the paper not only had a significant initial impact but continues to be highly relevant and frequently cited by researchers. On the other hand, a paper like *Psychological Capital: A Review and Synthesis* by (Newman et al., 2014b), with a TcPY of 45.33, shows that while it has had a solid impact over time, the frequency of citations has stabilized, indicating that its influence is still acknowledged, but it may not be as central to the latest discussions in the field.

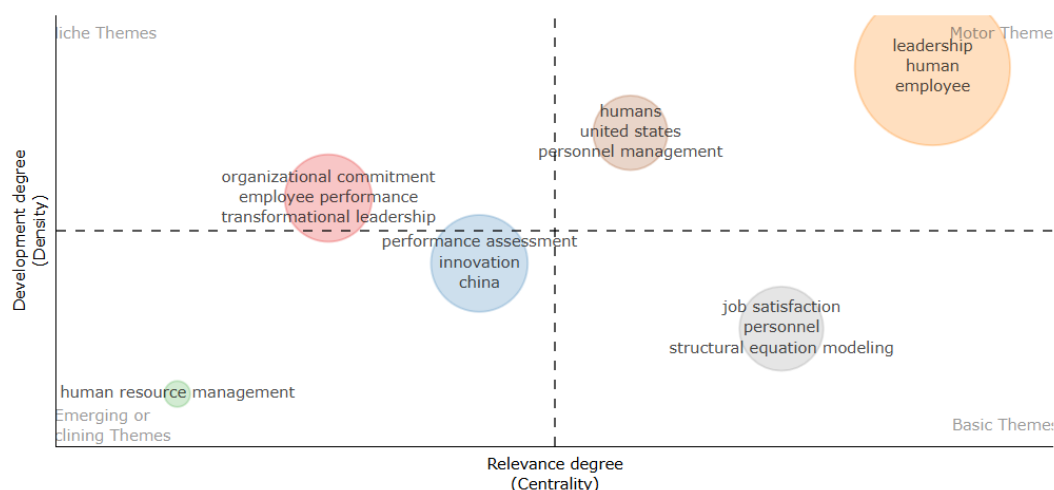
The Normalized Total Citations (N TC) further refines the analysis by adjusting citation counts for the age of the paper, offering a more accurate representation of its impact relative to its time of publication. For example, the paper *Green HRM, Environmental Awareness, and Green Behaviors: The Moderating Role of Servant Leadership* by (Darvishmotevali & Altinay, 2022), with a high N TC of 10.92, reveals the immediate and significant attention this paper has garnered, even though it is relatively new. This suggests that recent topics, particularly those related to sustainability and leadership, are gaining increasing traction in the academic community.

In contrast, older papers, like the one by (Schroth, 2019) titled *Are You Ready for Gen Z in the Workplace?* with an N TC of 6.63, still maintain relevance but show a slower, more gradual increase in citations over time. This can be seen as an indicator that while the paper addresses a growing area of interest, such as generational differences in the workplace, it has not yet achieved the same rapid citation growth as more recent studies.

The table also provides valuable insights into specific topics within leadership and organizational behavior. For example, papers addressing transformational leadership, employee performance, and psychological capital all show significant citation rates, underlining the continued importance of these concepts in both academic research and practical application. The studies have laid the groundwork for further exploration into how leadership styles, organizational support, and employee well-being interact to influence organizational outcomes.

Moreover, the inclusion of recent studies like *Leadership Matters in Crisis-Induced Digital Transformation: How to Lead Service Employees Effectively During the COVID-19 Pandemic* by (Bartsch et al., 2021), which boasts a high TcpY of 50.40, emphasizes the growing importance of leadership in times of crisis. This paper's high N TC (10.30) reflects its timely focus on the global pandemic, showcasing how the academic community has quickly recognized its relevance.

In conclusion, the metrics presented in the table provide a layered understanding of how academic research on organizational behavior, leadership, and employee performance evolves. Papers with high Total Citations are often foundational, continuing to shape ongoing research. Meanwhile, those with high Citations per Year demonstrate enduring relevance in the field. The Normalized Total Citations offer a fairer comparison, adjusting for the age of the study and revealing how quickly newer research can make an impact. Together, these metrics tell a compelling story of the ongoing dialogue in academic leadership research, highlighting both enduring and emerging trends that will continue to inform future studies and applications in the field.



Picture 4. Thematic Map of Research Topics: Development and Relevance (2014-2024)

The thematic map presented provides a visual representation of various research topics within the field of human resource management, specifically mapping these themes based on their development degree (density) and relevance degree (centrality). This map offers insights into the maturity and significance of different topics, which can be critical for understanding current trends in the literature and for identifying emerging areas of research.

The top-right quadrant of the map, marked as Basic Themes, highlights topics that have high relevance (centrality) but are less developed in terms of density or the extent of research contributions. Job satisfaction, personnel, and structural equation modeling are located in this quadrant. These themes are foundational to the field of human resource management (HRM) and are highly relevant to the academic community. Research on job satisfaction, for example, has been a long-standing focus due to its importance in organizational behavior and employee well-being. Similarly, structural equation modeling is a crucial methodology widely used in HRM research to test theoretical models and hypotheses.

Although these topics are well-established, they may not have the same depth of ongoing innovation or new contributions compared to more mature themes. However, their continued relevance makes them key areas of focus for scholars and practitioners aiming to enhance organizational performance and employee engagement.

The Motor Themes quadrant, located at the top-left, represents highly developed and highly relevant themes that are central to HRM research. These include leadership, human employees, and personnel management. These topics have strong academic and practical relevance and are dense in terms of literature and research activity. Leadership, for example, is a perennial subject of interest, as effective leadership is often linked to organizational success and employee performance. Personnel management, which involves the strategic management of employees, is another well-developed area with a high centrality that plays a significant role in organizational theory and practice.

These topics are considered core to HRM and are essential for understanding organizational dynamics and improving overall productivity. They are highly researched and have a profound impact on both theory and practice in HRM, influencing managerial practices worldwide.

The Emerging or Declining Themes quadrant, located at the bottom-left, includes topics with lower relevance and lower development. Human resource management, as a broad field, is represented here, which could indicate that while HRM as a concept is central to organizational studies, its specific aspects may be becoming less novel or innovative in current research. These topics may have already seen extensive coverage, and while they remain important, they might not be driving cutting-edge discussions or groundbreaking findings.

The presence of HRM in this quadrant could also point to the saturation of traditional HRM topics and the potential shift toward more specific, specialized themes within the field, which are currently evolving or emerging as new research frontiers.

The Niche Themes quadrant, found at the top-right, highlights topics that are highly developed but may have a lower degree of relevance to the broader academic community at present. This area features more specialized topics such as organizational commitment, employee performance, transformational leadership, and performance assessment. While these themes are rich in literature and highly researched in specific subfields, they may not have the same broad appeal or immediate relevance as topics in the Motor Themes quadrant.

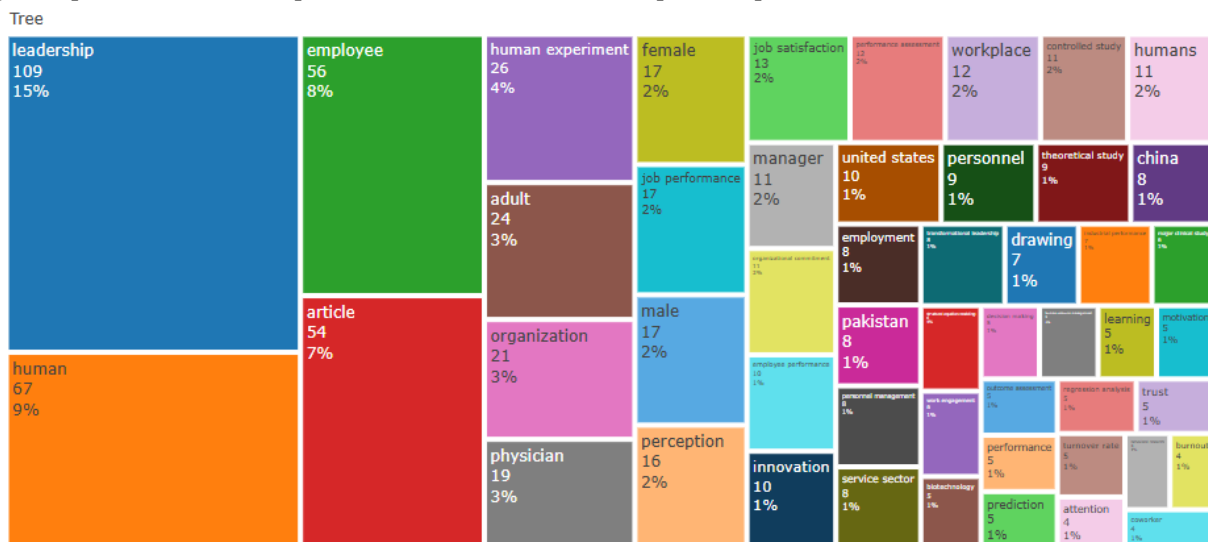
However, niche topics like organizational commitment and employee performance are important for addressing specific organizational challenges and understanding deeper aspects of employee behavior. These themes may be critical for scholars aiming to make highly focused contributions to HRM literature, even though their broader applicability may be more limited compared to more mainstream topics like leadership.

Some topics that fall under Innovation, China, and performance assessment indicate emerging or evolving areas within the field. These subjects are gaining attention due to their growing relevance in contemporary organizational contexts, particularly in the globalized economy. Innovation in HRM is an increasingly vital subject, as organizations strive to remain competitive through innovative management practices. The inclusion of China suggests a growing focus on the HRM practices within the rapidly expanding Chinese market, which has become a key area of interest for scholars examining cross-cultural and international HRM strategies.

The placement of innovation and performance assessment in the lower part of the map also highlights their development as emerging areas, indicating their potential to become more central to the field as research in these areas matures.

This thematic map provides an excellent tool for identifying where the academic community is focusing its efforts and which areas are currently underdeveloped or emerging. Researchers looking to make a significant contribution to the field of HRM should pay close attention to the Motor Themes as these are central to current scholarly debates. However, emerging topics such as innovation, performance assessment, and HRM in China offer opportunities to explore new frontiers within the discipline.

Additionally, scholars interested in exploring more specialized and focused areas may find that niche topics such as organizational commitment and employee performance allow for deep, high-impact studies, despite their more limited scope compared to broader themes.



Picture 5. Tree Map of Research Themes and Keywords (2024-2024)

The image provided illustrates a Tree Map of Research Themes and Keywords, which visualizes the distribution of various topics within academic research in human resource management (HRM) and organizational studies. The size of each colored block represents the frequency or prominence of that particular research theme or keyword, offering a clear picture of the areas that dominate the field and the emerging trends. The tree map is an excellent tool for quickly identifying the most prevalent topics in HRM research.

Leadership is the most dominant research theme in this map, with 109 occurrences (15%). This suggests that leadership remains a central theme in HRM and organizational studies. The prominence of leadership reflects its ongoing importance in influencing organizational culture, employee performance, and overall organizational success. As leadership is often a key factor

in driving change and innovation, it is unsurprising that it takes up such a significant portion of the research landscape.

Employee also appears as a major keyword with 56 occurrences (8%). This theme likely reflects research focusing on various aspects of employee behavior, performance, and engagement. Understanding employees' roles, needs, and behaviors is crucial for organizations to optimize their workforces, making this a core area of interest in HRM studies.

Human (67 occurrences, 9%) is another prominent theme, indicating that human-centered research, whether in terms of human resources, human behaviors, or human factors, remains a crucial aspect of organizational studies. The term "human" likely encompasses a wide range of topics, such as human capital, motivation, and employee well-being.

Human Experiment (26 occurrences, 4%) and Female (17 occurrences, 2%) reflect a growing interest in demographic factors, particularly gender. Research on human experiments could refer to studies involving controlled trials or simulations within organizational settings, while the emphasis on female suggests that gender diversity in leadership, workplace dynamics, and performance is becoming an increasingly important research area. Job Performance (17 occurrences, 2%) is another key theme, signifying the importance of assessing and improving the performance of employees. This research area is central to HRM, as understanding how to measure and enhance job performance is vital for organizational growth.

The map also highlights geographical themes such as China (8 occurrences, 1%), United States (10 occurrences, 1%), and Pakistan (8 occurrences, 1%). These keywords suggest that there is research focusing on how HRM and organizational behaviors manifest in different cultural and national contexts. Understanding HRM practices across different regions is important for global organizations looking to standardize their operations or tailor them to specific cultural contexts. The focus on Pakistan and China might reflect regional studies examining HR practices and organizational behaviors specific to these rapidly developing economies.

Topics like Innovation (16 occurrences, 2%) and Performance Assessment (13 occurrences, 2%) are positioned as important but more specialized themes. Innovation indicates that research on how organizations foster creativity, new ideas, and technological advancements is becoming increasingly important, particularly in competitive industries where staying ahead of the curve is crucial. Performance assessment remains central to HRM, as understanding how to measure and evaluate employee and organizational performance is foundational to improving productivity.

Perception (16 occurrences, 2%) and Physician (19 occurrences, 2%) may refer to studies on the role of perception in employee engagement, job satisfaction, or workplace behavior. The theme of physician likely focuses on healthcare settings, where HRM practices are tailored to the unique needs of medical professionals.

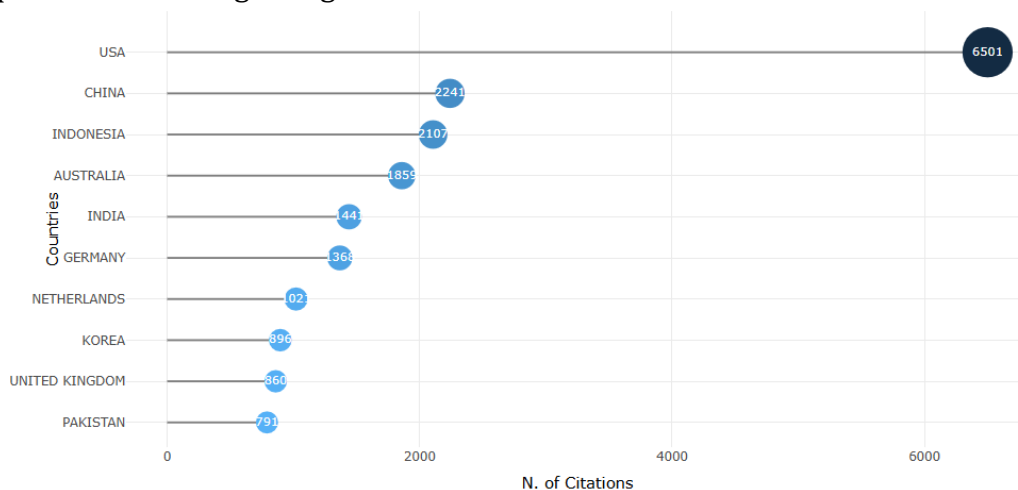
Drawing (7 occurrences, 1%) and Learning (5 occurrences, 1%) are relatively niche themes, but they point to the creative and educational aspects of HRM. Research into drawing may reflect studies on visual communication in the workplace or how creativity is expressed in organizational settings. Learning, on the other hand, could be linked to employee development, training, and knowledge-sharing within organizations.

Motivation (5 occurrences, 1%) and Job Satisfaction (17 occurrences, 2%) are vital topics within HRM, with motivation focusing on intrinsic and extrinsic factors that drive employee

engagement and job satisfaction being a key determinant of employee retention and organizational performance.

The Tree Map allows researchers to quickly identify where the major trends and gaps in HRM research lie. Themes such as leadership, employee performance, and human resources remain the dominant areas, suggesting that these will continue to drive much of the discourse in HRM. However, emerging themes such as innovation, gender studies, and geographic-specific research point to areas where the field is expanding to include new perspectives and deeper insights into specific subfields

Researchers looking to contribute to the growing areas of interest may consider focusing on innovation in HRM, gender and diversity, or regional HRM practices, as these themes are under exploration but are gaining traction..



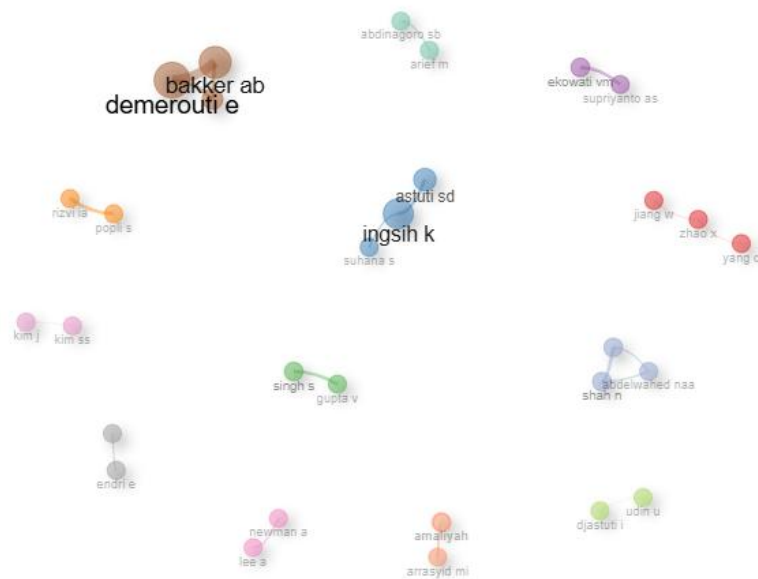
Picture 6. Global Distribution of Citations Across Countries in Academic Research

The data presented in the graph illustrates the distribution of citations across different countries, highlighting the global impact of research publications. The USA leads by a significant margin with a total of 6501 citations, indicating its dominant position in academic research and citation practices. Following the USA, China stands as the second most cited country, with 2441 citations, showing a growing influence in global academic discourse, particularly in areas such as technology, engineering, and social sciences. Other countries with notable citations include Indonesia (107 citations), Australia (185 citations), and India (44 citations), reflecting active participation in global research, albeit with a relatively smaller citation footprint compared to the USA and China.

The United Kingdom and South Korea also contribute significantly with 860 and 396 citations, respectively, underlining their established academic and research excellence. On the other hand, countries like Germany, Netherlands, and Pakistan contribute smaller amounts of citations, with Germany (36 citations) and Netherlands (2 citations) representing specific areas of focused academic research, while Pakistan registers 791 citations, indicating a moderate but important academic presence.

This citation distribution offers insights into the concentration of academic research and its global dissemination, with the USA being the predominant contributor. The variations in citation counts also suggest different levels of academic output, research funding, and international collaboration, with countries like the USA and China leading in citation impact.

The data serves as a reflection of the global research ecosystem, where citation counts correlate with both the volume and influence of scholarly work, and can guide future research collaborations and resource allocations.



Picture 8. Co-Authorship Network Analysis: Collaboration Patterns in Research

The image provided is a co-authorship network analysis that visualizes the collaboration between various authors in the field of research. The nodes in the network represent individual authors, and the edges connecting them indicate co-authorship relationships, reflecting collaborative research efforts.

From the network, we can observe distinct clusters or groups of authors who have co-authored together more frequently. For instance, Bakker AB and Demerouti E form a tight-knit cluster, signaling strong collaboration, likely indicating a shared research interest, possibly in areas such as organizational behavior or work psychology, where both authors are prominent. Similarly, other pairs like Singh S and Gupta V, and Jiang W and Zhao X also show concentrated co-authorship activity, reflecting their regular academic interactions and research partnerships in their respective fields.

Additionally, there are smaller clusters with fewer connections, such as Amalyah and Arrasyid MI, which suggests a more niche or emerging research collaboration. The layout of the network highlights the centrality of specific authors like Ingsih K, who appears to have a more expansive co-authorship network, as they are connected to multiple other authors in different clusters. This positioning may indicate the author's influence and interdisciplinary work, bridging different research areas or themes.

The network visualization offers valuable insights into the dynamics of scholarly collaboration, illustrating how authors are interconnected and how knowledge and research agendas are developed through collective efforts. These types of analyses are instrumental in mapping the intellectual structure of a field and identifying key contributors and emerging research trends. The patterns of co-authorship, as displayed in the network, can also inform strategies for future collaboration and research development.

Discussion

The Role of Protean Career Orientation (PCO) in Organizational Commitment and Employee Performance

The concept of Protean Career Orientation (PCO) is increasingly relevant in today's fast-evolving work environments, where individuals take proactive control over their careers, making career decisions that align with personal values and growth. The self-directed nature of PCO means that employees with this orientation are more adaptable, agile, and open to change. As a result, individuals with PCO are more likely to display high levels of organizational commitment, particularly affective commitment (emotional attachment to the organization) and normative commitment (sense of obligation). This ties directly into employee engagement, satisfaction, and ultimately performance outcomes. The literature review underscores that PCO fosters a strong sense of organizational identification, which boosts commitment and enhances job performance. Studies, such as those by (Zhu et al., 2024), confirm that PCO helps individuals form stronger emotional bonds with their organizations, making them more likely to demonstrate higher levels of commitment, especially when their personal values align with the organization's mission.

However, it's important to note that while PCO positively influences organizational commitment, its effect on continuance commitment (commitment based on the need to stay due to external factors such as benefits) is not as significant. This finding points to a more intrinsic nature of PCO, which contrasts with traditional commitment models that emphasize external factors. The proactive career development encouraged by PCO may reduce employees' attachment to the organization purely for security reasons, highlighting the need for a values-based approach in modern HR practices.

Leadership and Organizational Commitment

Leadership plays a pivotal role in fostering organizational commitment. The literature emphasizes that participative leadership, which involves employees in decision-making processes, and managerial coaching, which focuses on developing employees' skills and career paths, significantly enhance commitment. The findings from (Zhu et al., 2024) indicate that these leadership styles foster a proactive and committed workforce, thereby aligning employees' individual goals with organizational objectives. This relationship between leadership and organizational commitment is critical, as effective leadership can transform an employee's perception of the organization, creating a culture of mutual respect and engagement.

In line with this, transformational leadership, a style that focuses on inspiring and motivating employees, also shows significant positive effects on organizational commitment and performance. Transformational leaders emphasize vision, inspiration, and personal growth, which resonate well with employees who exhibit PCO. These leaders create a work environment where employees feel empowered and committed to the organization's long-term goals, fostering higher levels of engagement and better performance outcomes.

Leadership and Employee Performance

The role of leadership in employee performance cannot be understated. Effective leadership enhances both task performance (completing assigned duties) and extra-role

performance (voluntary actions that contribute to organizational success). Leadership styles, such as managerial coaching and participative leadership, are not just about directing employees but about engaging them in the organizational mission. The coaching aspect of leadership is particularly noteworthy, as it helps employees develop their skills, set personal career goals, and improve their performance. Studies like (Sancheznieto & Byars-Winston, 2021) and (Bo et al., 2021) indicate that employees under supportive and participative leaders are more likely to take ownership of their roles and display higher job performance, which is directly linked to their commitment to the organization (Gravitiani et al., 2022).

Additionally, leadership that emphasizes employee development, career growth, and personal support significantly improves employee performance across various sectors such as IT and healthcare. Such leadership practices not only improve performance but also enhance job satisfaction, retention, and reduce turnover rates.

Interplay Between PCO, Leadership, and Employee Performance

The systematic review reveals an interesting interplay between PCO and leadership in fostering organizational commitment and employee performance. It appears that PCO can amplify the positive effects of leadership on organizational commitment. When employees exhibit a protean career orientation, they are more likely to thrive under transformational and participative leadership, as these styles resonate with their need for personal development and autonomy (Badriyah et al., 2024).

Moreover, organizational commitment serves as a crucial mediator between PCO, leadership, and employee performance. Employees who are highly committed to their organization, driven by intrinsic values fostered by PCO, are more likely to exhibit proactive behaviors and organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), which are essential for high performance. Job autonomy, career optimism, and mentoring relationships are factors that mediate this process, suggesting that organizations should prioritize these elements to maximize the benefits of PCO and leadership.

Research Methodology and Limitations

The research employed a systematic literature review methodology, which is a rigorous and well-established approach for synthesizing existing empirical studies. By focusing on studies published between 2019 and 2024 and using Scopus as the primary database, the review ensured that the findings were up-to-date and drawn from credible, high-quality sources. This methodology allowed for the identification of gaps in the existing literature and provided a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between PCO, leadership, organizational commitment, and employee performance.

However, the study is not without limitations. One of the main challenges of a systematic literature review is the reliance on existing studies, which may vary in quality and scope. While the review was meticulous in selecting studies, there remains the possibility that some relevant research was overlooked. Furthermore, while the study provides a general framework, it does not delve into specific industries or regions, which could influence the applicability of the findings across different organizational contexts.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the study highlights the synergistic effects of Protean Career Orientation (PCO) and leadership on organizational commitment and employee performance. The research underscores that employees with a protean orientation are more adaptable and proactive, which aligns well with participative and transformational leadership styles. These leadership approaches foster greater organizational commitment, which in turn leads to higher employee performance. The study's findings offer valuable insights for HR practitioners and organizational leaders aiming to create a high-performance culture, emphasizing the importance of career autonomy and supportive leadership in modern organizations. The research also contributes to the broader literature by providing a comprehensive synthesis of how these factors interact, offering a novel perspective on enhancing employee engagement and performance in dynamic work environments.

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