

A Bibliometric Analysis of Performance Management and Employee Well-Being

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Abstract: *In light of the unprecedented challenges brought about by the pandemic and recent societal shifts, there has been a notable transformation in people's lives and needs. These changes have significantly impacted professional activities, posing new challenges in maintaining organizational commitment among employees. Consequently, there is a pressing need to transition from viewing performance management as a mere task to be completed, towards a process centered on employee motivation and professional development solutions, which are imperative for organizational success in the current climate.*

This study aims to critically examine performance management and employee well-being practices that are relevant in the contemporary context. The overarching goal is to develop a novel approach centered on addressing employees' needs to optimize organizational performance. To achieve this objective, the research methodology employs a bibliometric analysis leveraging insights from VOSviewer software. This approach entails a comprehensive review of specialized literature on performance management, alongside articles addressing the evolving needs and demands of employees. This analysis, by highlighting significant themes, relationships, and developing patterns, serves as a key tool for guiding future research efforts and informing organizational policies targeted at improving both performance outcomes and employee well-being.

Keywords: performance management, employee well-being, human resource management, work-life balance, bibliometric analysis.

Introduction

The new millennium brought attention to the concept of employee wellbeing. Some of the causes that generated this multidisciplinary concept are employee burnout, obesity caused by stress, absenteeism for medical reasons, all of this made organizations to lose money, and lowered the productivity.

Even though the concept is not new, the recent pandemic changed the way people see work. For a majority of employees, the work life balance changed a lot, after spending two years in totally different work conditions. Working remotely and spending more time with family, having the comfort of your own home. All of these made people to have more expectations from their employer.

Employers and Human Resources (HR) specialists must now provide new policies and strategies if they want to have satisfied, motivated, healthy and productive employees, focusing on wellbeing. In the past years we have observed an increasing interest in the relationships between high-performance work practices (Appelbaum et al., 2000) and employee related outcomes including different aspects of employee wellbeing like job satisfaction, commitment, and health (Peccei and Van De Voorde, 2019).

The main objective of this academic research is to investigate the changing landscape of performance management and its complex interaction with employee well-being through a bibliometric analysis. This study aims to uncover detailed insights into the interplay of the

constructs by investigating emerging trends, thereby creating a platform for future research. By understanding how these constructs intersect and potentially influence one another, this study hopes to provide scholars with valuable implications for possible in-depth research of HRM strategies and the development of policies that promote both employee well-being and organizational success.

Literature review

Over the past two decades, Human Resource Management (HRM) has seen remarkable progress in both research and practical applications (Schuler & Tarique, 2007; Brewster et.al, 2005). During this period, HRM faced numerous challenges stemming from escalating global economic development, expanded intercontinental communication, rapid dissemination of new technologies, growing trade, and significant population migration (De Cieri, Wolfram Cox, & Fenwick, 2007; Schuler & Tarique, 2007).

Human resource management, defined by Armstrong (2001), is a strategic approach to the company's decision-making and planning process in relation to employees and strategies that integrate policies and actions related to recruitment, training, development, performance management, reward and relations between employees, both horizontally and vertically. Therefore, HRM has a clear strategic dimension (Bratianu, 2002; Bratianu & Lefter, 2001).

Guest (1999) notes that, traditionally, human resource management is perceived as a factor that improves business performance in response to the external threat of increasing competition. Furthermore, there has been a growing interest in the notion of "best practices" of human resource management, sometimes referred to as "high performance work systems" (Appelbaum et al., 2000), "high commitment" (Guest, 2001) or "high involvement" (Wood, 1999). With this in mind, managers now strive to develop an engaged and skilled workforce in a climate of trust and camaraderie (Gould-Williams, 2004). Currently, employee responses to HRM practices are at the heart of all HRM performance models (Purcell and Kinnie, 2006), as the link between employee reactions and their subsequent behaviour is critical.

Despite the existence of a vast specialized literature, there is no consensus on a model "to follow" in human resource management practices. In general, there are mixed opinions regarding the number and nature of HRM practices (Guest, 1998), but it is generally accepted that six practices are the most used (Pfeffer, 2005; Guest, 2001) and have provided very good results and a competitive advantage through the workforce (Marchington and Wilkinson, 2005). Guest (1998) suggests that it is unlikely that any organization will use all of these practices or even execute them equally well.

Table 1. The most used six practices in Human Resource Management

Selection practices and internal promotion	Employee voice	Employee involvement, information sharing	High compensation contingent on performance	Extensive training, learning and development	Greater involvement in decision making and work teams
Recruiting the right people, developing, training them in order to keep them (Pfeffer, 2005)	Expressing freely their grievance and contribute in the decision-making issue. (Gould-Williams, 2004)	Open communication results in informed workers and send a message about the trust organization have in them. Marchington and Wilkinson, 2005)	Workers should be rewarded for their effort according to the performance of themselves and the organization's	Talent management practices which ensure that people can become more effective in carrying out aspects of their work. (Bramley, 2003)	Open communication in all strategy matters between organization and workers.

Source: Authors' own research.

Performance management

Armstrong (2001) defines performance management as a systematic process of improving organizational performance by developing the performance of individuals and teams. It is a means of obtaining better results from the organization, teams and individuals by understanding and managing performance within an agreed framework of planned objectives, standards and competency requirements. The overall goal of performance management is to establish a high-performance culture where individuals and teams take responsibility. It aims at the continuous improvement of business processes, capitalizing on the skills available to employees, all in the context of effective management.

In fact, Performance Management encompasses all HR processes that can contribute to improving employee performance and is therefore not a single process but a cluster of different but converging processes. Thus, performance management includes: planning, continuous performance monitoring, performance development, periodic performance evaluation and reward for outstanding performance (Triculescu, 2019).

The studies that address the link between human resource management practices and performance are limited, but growing. The difference between the approach focused on attitudes or behaviours based on commitment associated with discretionary effort can be observed, compared to research on employee satisfaction and well-being. On the other hand, as previously presented, there is still no universally accepted set of practices that are associated with high performance as well as employee satisfaction/well-being (Guest, 2002).

The prevailing belief in HRM has long been that an employee's performance is primarily determined by their knowledge, skills, and abilities, which can be developed through training and professional development initiatives. However, organizational managers have observed instances where highly talented individuals, both intellectually and physically, have exhibited lower performance compared to their less gifted counterparts. Through investigation and collaboration with researchers in the field, it has been recognized that success in the workplace is contingent not only on an individual's inherent abilities and training but also on their internal motivation. This acknowledgment underscores the critical importance of motivation in conjunction with an individual's capabilities and training to achieve optimal performance in the workplace.

Employee well-being

The concept of employee well-being at work promotes the advantages for organizations of having a healthy workforce (Cooper and Robertson, 2001). The dynamics of employee well-being at work are central to understanding the various domains that affect quality of life at work. The number of researches and the vast fields (economics, sociology, psychology) undertaken to understand people's sense of well-being or stress is constantly increasing, especially after the recent events to which human society has been exposed globally. (Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD), 2007;).

Thus, different perceptions have been developed on the understanding of the concept of well-being at the workplace:

- Warr (2002): cognitive factors affecting quality of life are likely related to people's perception of their own level of well-being. Effective (psychological) well-being therefore emphasizes the centrality of feelings about life.
- Currie (2001) considers employee well-being at work as the physical and mental health of the workforce. That is, employees should work in a stress-free and physically safe environment.

- Bakke (2005) notes that well-being can be linked to fostering an environment that makes work interesting, rewarding, stimulating, enjoyable and proposes that joyful workplaces improve financial performance.
- Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) (2007): states that personal well-being does not exist alone or at work, but in a social context.

Hence, the individual's well-being is influenced by interpersonal interactions within the organization, as well as lifestyle adjustments and career transitions (Guest, 1998). Nonetheless, despite these transformations, Tehrani et al. (2007) contend that fundamental physical and psychological needs for social reinforcement, physical security, health, and a sense of resilience remain unchanged. Consequently, employees seek assistance from employers in fulfilling these needs, recognizing that a significant portion of their lives is dedicated to work. To effectively support employees' well-being in the workplace, employers must cultivate an environment conducive to contentment, enabling employees to thrive and maximize their potential, thereby benefiting both the individual and the organization (Tehrani et al., 2007).

The current global context is extremely changing and competitive at the same time, this makes a healthy organization essential for survival in this environment in which we all live, work and perform. Performance expectations from organization, especially in unpredictable circumstances, as the pandemic of Covid-19, shows the importance of leaders in managing the workload, and paying attention at the needs of employees (Smollan and Mooney, 2024) Some of the factors that lead to organizational and personal well-being, involve open communication, teamwork and cooperation, flexibility, support and a work-life balance.

The importance of flexible work practices in facilitating greater work-life balance, can lead to positive employee outcomes and reduced turnover intentions, with implications for promoting workforce diversity, improving employee retention and finally, achieving a work culture that supports employee well-being and organizational performance. It is necessary to consider work-life balance as a broader construct beyond work-family balance, incorporating all employees and life roles (Ferdous et al., 2023).

The sustainability of organizations is given by the promotion of the well-being of its employees as a necessary need to improve the performance and therefore the survival and further development of the organization (Currie, 2001). Schuster (1998), reinforces this view and argues that there is a significant relationship between attention paid to employees and superior organizational performance. The introduction of workplace wellness in business and public sector organizations is likely to introduce a change in the organizational climate that makes way for innovative practices that can produce positive organizational outcomes.

The discussion over High Performance Work Practices (HPWP) in HRM revolves upon their impact on employee well-being. The optimistic viewpoint contends that HPWPs not only improve corporate performance but also favourably impact employee well-being. This viewpoint uses theories like social exchange theory and the reciprocity norm to explain how HPWPs show company commitment and encourage good attitudes and behaviours among employees. However, the pessimistic viewpoint implies that HPWPs may have a negative impact on employee well-being by increasing job demands, stress, and strain. While recent data largely supports an optimistic outlook, other studies paint a mixed picture, particularly in terms of employee well-being. For example, while HPWPs may improve affective commitment, they could also increase job expectations and stress, emphasizing potential trade-offs in their impact on employee well-being. (Peccei and Van De Voorde, 2019; Ogbonnaya and Messersmith, 2019; Guerci et al., 2022).

Recent studies have shown the positive link between employee's well-being and organizational performance, having perceived organizational support as a catalyst. The policies used by managers regarding the welfare of the human resources can help an enterprise growth and succeed. As a recommendation, managers could also include Key Performance Indicators for well-being in order to attract talent and human capital, by demonstrating corporate social responsibility (Pena et al., 2024).

According to Van den Broek A. (2024), employees play a crucial role as intermediaries between HRM activities and organizational performance, suggesting in his studies the incorporation into HRM practices of theoretical models that link HRM activities with employee performance and well-being. Van den Broek A. (2024) also found a discrepancy between the theoretical understanding of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) and its practical implementation in addressing employee well-being within organizations, highlighting the need to bridge this gap by integrating employee welfare into SHRM policies more effectively.

In conclusion, this chapter has offered a comprehensive overview of the existing research on performance management and employee well-being in the field of Human Resource Management. The following chapter will discuss the methodology used in this study to conduct a bibliometric analysis, a systematic and quantitative method for thoroughly reviewing the research landscape, allowing us to identify emerging trends and areas of attention in the fields of performance management and employee well-being.

Methodology

The bibliometric analysis was proposed by Pritchard (1969), this research method has meanwhile gained ground as a scientific technique for studying the chronological development of a subject from a multidisciplinary perspective. Bibliometric analysis allows for an extensive understanding of a research topic, including defining its limits, identifying key authors, and developing new research directions. (Donthu et al., 2020). As Merediz-Solá and Bariviera (2019) said, a bibliometric analysis is based on a database and analyzes the bibliographic elements quantitatively, therefore, in this study, we decided to use the Web of Science Core Collection.

For this study, we chose to use the bibliometric analysis method due to its ability to objectively establish the intellectual structure of a subject (Xue et al., 2018). This analysis, together with the scientific mapping technique, is effective for objectively analyzing the evolutionary tendency of research papers and has been successfully utilized in previously published reviews (Dabic et al., 2014; Garengo and Sardi, 2020;). This study aims to highlight the most popular concepts addressed by scholars in relation to performance management at the intersection of employee well-being over the years, as well as to examine the worldwide interest in this topic.

To achieve the study's objectives, we used a two-step method to determine which papers will be studied and reviewed. The initial step was to select appropriate search terms for mining the Web of Science databases for papers of significance. This database was chosen for its extensive coverage of peer-reviewed research in respectable publications, as well as its widespread use in the academic community (Cavaggioli&Ughetto, 2019; Donthu et al., 2020). In the second stage, we used predetermined criteria to select which papers to include in our database for bibliometric and content analysis. To conduct this bibliometric analysis, the keywords "performance management" and "employee well-being" were utilized to define the base of works under consideration.

During the initial phase of our research, we did a thorough review of the selected papers using the Web of Science database. We gained useful insights into the changing context for performance management and well-being research by meticulously categorizing and examining the distribution of publications by year. This careful investigation not only gave us an overview of academics' interests and viewpoints, but it also showed the evolution of scholarly inquiry across time. By identifying patterns and trends in the literature, we were able to position our analysis within the larger scholarly debate, broadening our understanding of the subject.

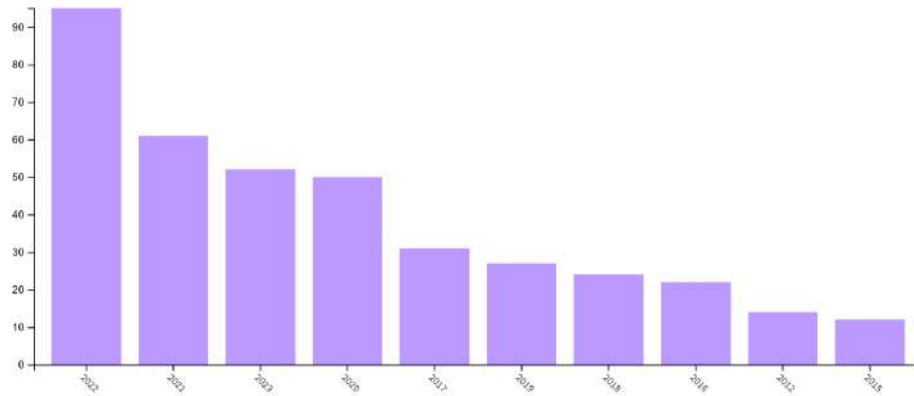


Figure 1. Chart of the article’s distribution by years

Source: Web of Science.



Figure 2. Distribution of articles by Web of Science category

Source: Web of Science.

According to fig. 1, the year in which researchers showed the most interest in the investigated issue is 2022, followed by the years 2021, 2023, and 2020, with the fewest publications in the years 2012 and 2015, and in 2013-2014 we didn’t retrieve any data from Web of Science regarding the conjunction of the construct searched. We agree that a possible factor for this extensive publication in recent years is due the changings inducted by the pandemic and how workers have new perspectives and expectations from the workplace.

The second figure depicts the distribution of articles in the Web of Science categories, revealing that more than half of the publications are in the fields of Management (195), Business (70) and Psychology applied/Psychology multidisciplinary (52/49). Additional areas of note include: Public environmental occupation health, environmental sciences, environmental studies and others.

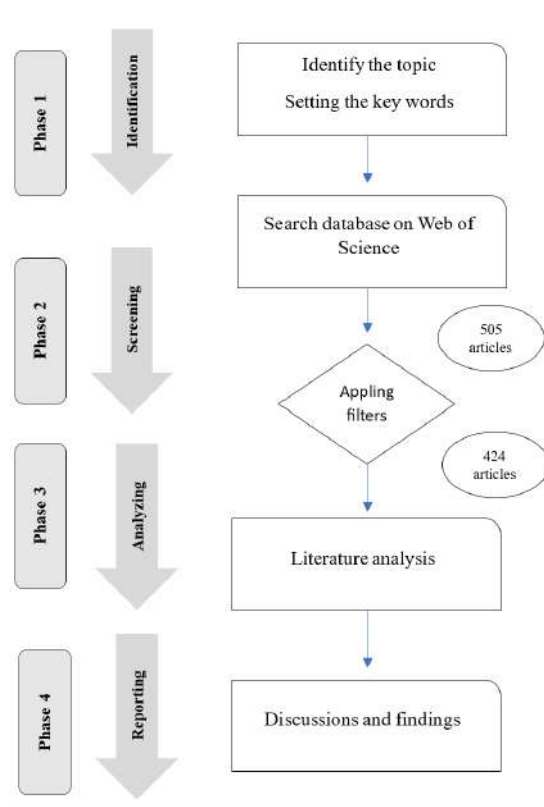


Figure 3 - Overview of the methodology

An intricate search approach was methodically created to thoroughly analyze the scholarly discourse at the intersection of "performance management" and "employee well-being", as depicted in Figure 3. This strategy involves combining the capabilities of numerous bibliographic databases to ensure complete and deep coverage of the literature. Initially, the Web of Science database was searched using the keywords "performance management" and "employee well-being", yielding an initial pool of 505 articles. After refining the articles by category and relevancy, the final results were enhanced, obtaining 424 articles from Web of Science, which served as a starting point for the subsequent analysis and synthesis of the available literature in this study.

To comprehensively explore the intricate dynamics of scholarly discourse in performance management and employee well-being, we adopted a unique analytical approach. This involved subjecting the dataset to thorough analysis using VOSviewer software (van Eck and Waltman, 2014), enabling us to investigate both co-authorship ties and keyword co-occurrence patterns. Through this innovative technology, we identified prolific contributors to the conversation and the global distribution of collaborative activities, shedding light on the interconnectedness of researchers worldwide. Our multidimensional analysis not only illuminated collaborative networks and international dimensions but also unveiled key subjects and concepts shaping the intellectual landscape. By integrating these various analytical methods, our research aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between employee well-being and performance management within the global perspective of Human Resource Management, drawing on the collective expertise of researchers and practitioners worldwide.

From the comprehensive analysis conducted through VOSviewer, a set of keywords emerges, indicating important directions for future research at the juncture of performance management and employee well-being. Noteworthy terms include "behavior," "emotional intelligence," "motivation," "life satisfaction," "organizational commitment," "work-life balance," "knowledge," "leadership," and "sustainability." These keywords delineate critical research pathways, suggesting that delving into the intricate interplay of these factors holds significant promise for enhancing our understanding of how to effectively integrate performance management and well-being initiatives for sustainable organizational success. In essence, these findings highlight the importance of exploring the connections between these key concepts to inform holistic approaches to optimizing both performance and employee well-being in organizational settings.

Clusters formed from the analysis revealed several thematic areas where performance management and employee well-being intersect, shedding light on their multifaceted relationship. Within these clusters, various dimensions emerged, showcasing intricate connections between the two constructs. For example, Cluster 1 highlighted the significance of determinants, motivation, emotional intelligence, and support, pivotal in shaping organizational performance and employee well-being. Similarly, Cluster 2 emphasized employee engagement, happiness, and well-being's importance in effective performance management strategies. Moreover, Cluster 3 underscored organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and positive climates' critical role, impacting both performance outcomes and employee well-being. Additionally, Cluster 4 emphasized the detrimental effects of burnout and the necessity of work-life balance strategies, crucial for fostering organizational performance and employee well-being.

The co-author's bibliometric review revealed important insights into the landscape of performance management and employee well-being, particularly about authors and countries. According to the research, Australia, along with England and the United States of America have the most publications on this subject, proving their significant contributions in the field. They are followed by China, Canada and then by several European countries, such as the Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Finland or Germany. Surprisingly, the analysis identified a significant proportion of researchers from Pakistan, South Africa, New Zealand, the United Arab Emirates and India, underscoring the global nature of the researched topic. These findings illustrate the different perspectives and collaborations that exist across continents, providing insights into the cross-cultural flow of information and insights in the researched field.

Table 2. Data of co-authorship by country
Web of Science

	Country	Documents	Citations	Total link strength
1	Australia	102	2450	70
	UK	63	1572	57
2	USA	59	1443	48
3	China	43	624	36
4	Canada	21	334	27
5	Netherlands	21	499	24
6	Italy	19	354	22
7	Spain	25	377	22
8	Finland	13	280	20
10	Germany	13	175	15
11	Pakistan	26	443	15
12	France	10	97	14

	Country	Documents	Citations	Total link strength
13	South Africa	12	380	14
14	New Zealand	21	302	11
15	UAE	11	119	11
16	Malaysia	23	249	7
17	India	20	370	5

Source: VOSviewer retrieved data.

Our bibliometric review reveals two key themes at the intersection of performance management and employee well-being. First, there is a growing interest in examining the collective impact of performance management and HRM practices on organizational performance. This area of study aims to unravel the complex mechanisms underlying the relationship between these factors, providing valuable insights to inform strategic decision-making processes. Second, our research sheds light on the emerging trend of integrating performance management and employee well-being initiatives to maintain employee motivation and adapt to new demands. Thus, organizations tend to improve their strategies to face changes, stay competitive on the market and have motivated, healthy employees, thus increasing retention and efficiency in the organization.

Furthermore, our study highlights two additional dimensions worth noting in this scholarly landscape. When combined with performance management and employee well-being, sustainability strategies emerge as a compelling area for investigation. Researchers can explore how organizations navigate the integration of these elements to meet their environmental and social responsibilities while maintaining competitiveness. In addition, the bibliometric analysis highlights the importance of knowledge management and the promotion of a culture of innovation. Understanding how organizations effectively capture, disseminate and use knowledge resources in the context of performance management and employee well-being is crucial to fostering continuous innovation and long-term organizational development.

Conclusion

In this study, we investigated the complex relationship between performance management and employee well-being in the context of Human Resource Management. Our investigation, which used bibliometric methodologies, provides useful insights into the current research landscape, giving light on developing trends and areas of concentration in this important sector.

One of our study's primary results is the analysis of clusters encompassing factors such as determinants, motivation, emotional intelligence, and support, which play significant roles in influencing both organizational performance and employee well-being. Moreover, the importance of employee engagement, happiness, and well-being emerged as central themes, indicating a strong link between effective performance management strategies and employee welfare.

Furthermore, the study shows the critical role of organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and positive organizational climates in shaping performance outcomes and employee well-being. Conversely, factors such as burnout and work-life balance issues were identified as potential barriers to both performance and well-being within organizations.

However, we must admit our study's shortcomings. While bibliometric analysis provides a systematic and quantitative way to understanding the research environment, it is not without limitations. For example, database selection, search keywords, and inclusion criteria may all have an impact on the comprehensiveness and validity of our findings.

In terms of emerging trends, the analysis suggests several directions for future research and practice. One such trend is the integration of well-being metrics into performance management systems, reflecting a growing recognition of the need to adopt a holistic approach to evaluating employee performance. Furthermore, there appears to be an increasing emphasis on supportive leadership styles and organizational cultures that prioritize employee well-being and engagement.

Additionally, the rise of remote work and flexible work arrangements has prompted organizations to reconsider traditional performance management practices and explore innovative solutions that accommodate employees' changing needs while maintaining performance standards. Moreover, the utilization of technology-driven interventions, such as well-being apps and digital platforms, is emerging as a promising avenue for promoting employee well-being and enhancing organizational performance.

In conclusion, the bibliometric analysis offers valuable insights into the current landscape of research surrounding performance management and employee well-being. By identifying key themes, connections, and emerging trends, this analysis serves as a foundational resource for guiding future research endeavors and informing organizational practices aimed at optimizing both performance outcomes and employee well-being.

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