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STRENGTHENING EMPLOYEE RETENTION THROUGH CAREER GROWTH: A SCOPUS-BASED BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

Rising employee mobility and mobility expectations, evolving employee needs and requirements, and increased competition to attract scarce talent have made career growth a priority in this study on employee retention. While previous studies have examined various factors that may affect retention, the literature remains fragmented. This deficit has been addressed by the study, which suggests an integrated review and systematic knowledge mapping in the period 2017-2026. The research was conducted through a literature review; data were retrieved from the Scopus Database, and 452 publications were qualified. In OpenRefine, the dataset was standardized and cleaned for accuracy. Bibliometric performance analysis and science mapping were conducted using Scopus Analyzer and VOSviewer software to provide

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information on publication trends, influential publications, countries, thematic clusters, and collaborations. The findings indicate that the volume of published work has continued to rise during this period, suggesting that the academic community has been growing in its interest in employee retention and the relationships between retention and career advancement. Keyword co-occurrence analysis has revealed dominant themes in the organizational context (commitment, career development), employee performance, and career adaptability/psychological capital. The most prominent research avenues are sustainable careers, protean career orientation and workplace well-being. There is also growing international cooperation reflected in the country co-authorship analysis of developed and developing countries. Moreover, the systematic and empirical mapping of the intellectual structure of employee retention research makes this research a broader contribution to the literature. It further identifies key strands of research and their modes of collaboration, and offers a synthesis that will inform the work of employees and those interested in creating retention plans based on long-term engagement with work and careers.

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Keywords:

Employee Retention, Career Growth.



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Introduction

The true challenge in today's evolving employee expectations, rising talent arbitrage, and increasing workforce mobility is retaining employees. Although there has been a long-standing tradition of extrinsic motivation factors (such as salary, benefits, and employment security) being the primary drivers of retention, newer studies are shifting the focus to a more multifaceted outcome, driven by psychological, relational, and developmental factors in the workplace. Instead, interestingly, career progression drives intention to stay in their organisations. Meaningful work affects employee retention by increasing job satisfaction, workplace happiness, work engagement, organisational commitment, and person-organisation fit. This jointly reduces turnover intention by reducing emotional and psychological attachment to the organisation (Basher et al., 2024; Dhia, 2024; Sinisterra et al., 2025; Wandycz-Mejías et al., 2024). At the same time, career growth normalizes influence by setting expectations for future returns, upward mobility, skills development, and longer-term job satisfaction. This, in turn, enables both affective and continuance commitment through the employee's perception of a dynamic relational contract between employer and employee. The brainstorming for this stage focused on well-established perspectives, including Self-Determination Theory, Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory, Expectancy Theory, and Social Exchange Theory.

Interestingly, these have been identified over the years to delineate a conceptual framework that can guide the empirical evidence of previous studies. They primarily seek to determine whether employees are more likely to remain engaged when their work is perceived as a developmental path that can be observed and achieved, and when organisational systems provide adequate support, autonomy and fairness (Albrecht et al., 2021; Ferdiana et al., 2023; Jannah, 2025). In addition, as noted in a recent systematic review that focuses on systems within environments from public service, higher education, and informational technology (IT) through to hospitality and knowledge-intensive industries, it appears that retention outcomes are most favourable. This is especially evident when career development unfolds hand-in-hand within an enabling organisational climate. Such a climate is characterised by the concurrent presence of empowerment, organisational fit, psychological well-being, and sustainable careers. Despite this, the literature identifies contextual variation. This includes compensation, managerial support, or organisational culture, which are less frequently examined in studies of direct effects of career development. In line with this, Becker (2019) reported relatively weak direct effects controlling for these factors. The author further argued that success alone is insufficient without an environment that is more generally meaningful and supportive of achievement. This nascent literature also draws attention to employee retention as a transaction and an ongoing as well as largely driven process for employees to seek opportunities for purpose, growth, and congruence with the values underpinning their organisation. This, in turn, suggests the need for more academic insights into how work itself that is meaningful, along with career growth, is considered an internalised pathway towards sustainable employee retention strategies.

Table 1: How Career Growth Drives Retention.

Mechanism/Factor	Effect on Retention and Turnover Intention	Citations
Work & organizational engagement	Mediate the impact of meaningful work on lower turnover intention	(Albrecht et al., 2021; Sinisterra et al., 2025)
Job resources (autonomy, variety, development)	Enhance meaningful work and engagement, indirectly supporting retention	(Albrecht et al., 2021; Lehtonen et al., 2021; Wandycz-Mejías et al., 2024)

Research Question

RQ1: How has academic publication output related to employee retention (regarding career growth) evolved from 2017 to 2026?

RQ2: What are the most cited papers on the retention of employees through career progression?

RQ3: Which countries are the top based on their publication and citation records about employee retention, and what is explored through career advancement?

RQ4: What thematic structures and latest research trends appear in the co-occurrences of authors' keywords, including theme-based employee retention via career growth literature?

RQ5: What are the patterns of international research collaboration in studies on employee retention through career growth using country-level co-authorship network analysis?

Methodology

Bibliometric analysis is a systematic method for collecting, organizing, and evaluating bibliographic data from scholarly literature (Alves et al., 2021; Assyakur & Rosa, 2022; Verbeek et al., 2002). It includes conventional descriptive information such as publication sources, temporal publication trends, and important authors (Wu & Wu, 2017). Moreover, bibliometrics also applies advanced analytical techniques, such as co-citation analyses, to uncover the intellectual structure of a research field. A systematic literature search is a rigorous, iterative process that involves comprehensive keyword development, an informed search across multiple databases, and a detailed analytical review. Such (semi-)systematic processes help ensure sound and comprehensive bibliographies and enhance the credibility and reproducibility of outputs (Fahimnia et al., 2015). Hence, in this work, the emphasis was on high-impact publications known to provide relevant theoretical guidelines for the research area. Furthermore, to minimize the potential for reporting bias, data were sourced predominantly from Scopus databases (Al-Khoury et al., 2022; di Stefano et al., 2010; Khiste & Paithankar, 2017). In order to maintain the comprehensiveness of the manuscript, only peer-reviewed articles were considered, and books and lecture notes were intentionally excluded from the current review (Gu et al., 2019). Concurrently, the current comprehensive, multidisciplinary scope of Elsevier's Scopus database served as a basis for systematically identifying relevant articles published from 2017 to January 2026 for subsequent studies.

Data Search Strategy

To maintain precision and relevance to the research focus on employee retention through meaningful work and career growth, a purposefully structured advanced search of the Scopus database was conducted to meet the article's bibliometric base. Accordingly, the search was constrained to the article title to improve conceptual coherence and reduce background noise, collating key terms for employee retention (employee, staff retention, workforce retention) and practitioner career development (career development, career advancement, career path, career growth). Prior to conducting the formal bibliometric analysis for this study, the author set the inclusion of pre-specified research constructs in a publication's title as the core prerequisite for literature screening. This ensures outcomes highly relevant to the research topic were captured from the source. Consequently, we clarified the retrieval time limits from 2017 until January 2026 and established multi-dimensional corpus purification rules to complete the full screening process. Building on this, the specialized corpus ultimately formed provides a rigorous and reliable core foundation for all subsequent analyses.

The outcome of this process is a rich pool of useful research that has been used to examine employee turnover in the context of an organization's career progression. The use of journal articles indexed in Scopus, in addition to the indexing process (broad coverage) based on strict quality control, can increase the reliability of data and the consistency of the data analysis. This data reflects the trajectory of this literature over a long timeframe and can be used to identify trends, shifts in theoretical focus, and the development of new research themes. This is mainly due to the fact that the literature has evolved in response to shifting labour-market demands, the digital revolution, and the post-pandemic era of contemporary employment. The database is sufficiently large to support more advanced types of bibliometric analysis (e.g., co-citation analysis, incidence mapping, and thematic clustering). Nonetheless, it remains sufficiently focused to align with the conceptual focus of this study. In general, this comprehensive and

well-documented search methodology enhances the quality of the bibliometric review and minimises the risk of selection bias. It further ensures that the results of the search process are a true snapshot of the nature and scope of research on employee retention, generally, and on the use of career development in particular.

Table 2: The Search String

Scopus	TITLE (((employee* OR "staff retention" OR "workforce retention" OR "employee retention") AND (career* OR "career development" OR "career advancement" OR "career path" OR "career growth"))) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2017) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2018) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2019) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2020) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2021) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2022) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2023) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2024) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2025) OR LIMIT-TO (PUBYEAR , 2026)) AND (LIMIT-TO (PUBSTAGE , "final")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE , "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , "English"))
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Table 3: The Selection Criterion Is Searching

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Language	English	Non-English
Document type	Article	Others
Publication stage	Final	Proceeding, Book, Chapter, Review
Source type	Journal	Others
Timeline	2017 – 2026	<2016

Data Analysis

The bibliometric data used in this study were constructed with a specific, more accurate, and relevant advanced search strategy (in combination with our research interest in employee retention through career development criteria) that was queried in the Scopus database. Accordingly, article titles were searched to focus on concepts and minimize themed noise, and combined search terms for employee AND staff AND workforce retention with job-related concepts (e.g., career advancement, career trail, development partly, etc.). Even though many studies included these constructs in their title, this was a deliberately limiting title designation, as it was perceived that these studies would contribute to theory or empirical research. Only papers published between 2017 and January 2026 were searched to keep up to date with the academic debate and the continually changing work context. Other filters applied: Final-stage publications only, English or other language as the source type, and results. Likewise, only papers published in journals were included, while conference papers, books, or other

publications were excluded. This filtering operation yielded 452 articles, creating a strong, focused sample for further bibliometric study.

VOSviewer is a popular, intuitive bibliometric analysis and visualization software developed by Nees Jan van Eck and Ludo Waltman at Leiden University (van Eck & Waltman 2010, 2017). The tool is designed to analyse and visualise scientific literature and provides a range of possibilities, including network visualisation, clustering of entities by co-occurrence and density maps. Additionally, its analytical flexibility allows the analysis of a set of bibliometric relations (such as co-authorship, co-citation, and keyword co-occurrence networks), providing insights into research structures and knowledge domains. Attributed to the above properties, the user-friendly interface, and frequent software updates, users can produce efficient and dynamic analyses of large bibliometric databases in VOSviewer. Furthermore, it is a robust analysis platform designed for research, supported by the calculation of bibliometric performance indicators, visualisation options, and multiple data sources.

Features that make the VOSviewer software able to convert complex data or bibliometric information into simple, readable map images. The software has proven particularly adept at network-oriented tasks such as clustering conceptually similar items, identifying co-occurrence patterns among keywords, and generating density maps that illustrate the focus of research and the salience of the topic. It is based on Australian vocabulary, and thus its user-friendly characteristics can facilitate the development of new focus, dominant themes, and intellectual linkages across research fields by junior and senior researchers. In addition, the constant advances in methodology and techniques ensure that VOSviewer is at the cutting edge of bibliometric visualization. This ultimately enables flexible analysis of the different data structures that comprise author, citation, and theme networks.

The bibliometric analysis retrieved the following details, published between 2017 and January 2026 (time span), from the Scopus database (Output in Excel [CSV] format): year of publication, article title, authors' details, source journal name, citation count, and author keywords. These data were subsequently analysed using VOSviewer version 1.6.20. Through VOS mapping and clustering methods, the tool supports systematic construction and exploration of bibliometric networks. In addition to common Multidimensional Scaling approach (MDS), VOSviewer supports the visualization of items in a low-dimensional space where the distance between any pair of items closely reflects their relationship (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). It corresponds conceptually to MDS (Appio et al., 2014), yet relies on solutions not readily compatible with MDS, instead using normalization procedures tailored for co-occurrence data settings such as this association strength $AS_{ij_ \{ij\}}$, calculated as follows by van Eck and Waltman (2007), presented as:

$$AS_{ij} = \frac{C_{ij}}{w_i w_j},$$

which is the ratio of (on the one hand) "the observed number of co-occurrences between i and j on the other hand, the expected number of co-occurrences of i and j under the assumption that co-occurrences of i and j are statistically independent (Van Eck & Waltman, 2007).

Result and Discussion

RQ1: How Has Academic Publication Output Related To Employee Retention (Regarding Career Growth) Evolved From 2017 To 2026?

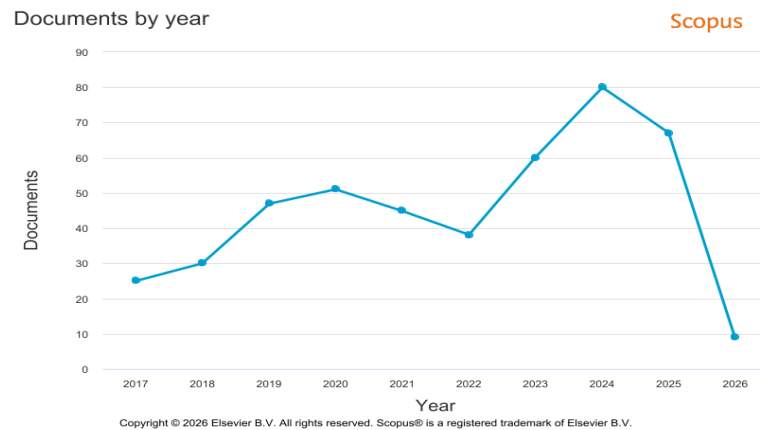


Figure 1: Trend Of Research In Scopus Documented By Years



Figure 2: Trend Of Research In Augmented Reality By Years

Table 4: Publication Trend By Percentage

Year	No of publication	Percentage %
2026	9	2%
2025	67	15%
2024	80	18%
2023	60	13%
2022	38	8%
2021	45	10%
2020	51	11%
2019	47	10%
2018	30	7%
2017	25	6%

Table 4 indicates that between 2017 and 2026, academic interest in employee retention through career development increased, suggesting that this research area is becoming increasingly strategically important. In the other two years, 2017-2019, the proportion of total publications was up to 6% of output (in tough times, half that for all papers by these measures; data not presented), and each year reached a peak greater than double this estimated proportion by my methodology. This implies that the earlier stage of retention, career development, and encouragement is still evolving in the most basic terms. The relevance of 2020 (11%) to 2021 (10%) is a positive infographic view and concerns the narrative of a changed global employment context.

Notably, COVID-19 has been a strong catalyst for refocusing and heightened organizational concerns with regard to employee stability, engagement, and long-term professional sustainability. Eventually, an explanation of retention emerged: less focused on pay or job security, and more on the efforts needed to bind and connect workers to their work, with jobs that provided for personal growth or career continuity amid uncertainty.

This increase is more evident since 2022 and reaches its maximum point in 2024 (18%), followed closely by 2025 (15%). This is indicative of the evolution of work and worker preferences, as well as the research discipline itself, with a greater focus on employee well-being, career progression, and hybrid working arrangements. The high outpourings in 2023-2025 suggest that work and career development are increasingly emerging as key explanatory frameworks in attitudinal retention studies, rather than peripheral issues. Nonetheless, the lower figure in 2026 (2%) should be interpreted with caution, as it reflects data from only an incomplete year and may not reflect a relative decrease in scholarly interest. Overall, the trajectory suggests a shift from exploratory and theory-building studies to more mature theory-driven and empirically sophisticated research. It remained, however, unsustainable. Moreover, the existing literature on employee retention was developed in a context when these changes were still in their infancy. This trend also underscores the relevance of the current bibliometric study, as organizational and workforce values are transforming in the same direction at this moment.

RQ2: What Are The Most Cited Papers On The Retention Of Employees Through Career Progression?

All 10 of them are best regarded as high-impact scholarship, writing borne out of major contextual disruptions and problems with psychologically salient 'career mechanisms' (relevant to most academic researchers) that are likely to constitute these kinds of high-impact papers. Such a trend is well captured in the most cited article by Bufquin et al. (2021), with 164 citations, which examines employees' working status, mental state, substance use, and career turnover intentions during the COVID-19 outbreak. It is considered salient due to its timeliness and relevance. For instance, the hospitality sector experienced once-in-a-lifetime employee turnover, which requires urgent attention from researchers and managers. Similarly, the major contributions cited by Nisar and Rasheed (2020) and Yarberry and Sims (2021) address both career adaptability and constructs related to perceived career opportunities and virtual or remote settings. These are deemed important markers for employees seeking an exit during times of uncertainty and reconfiguring their career trajectories during a crisis. Thus, by revealing psychological resilience, adaptability and meaning-making in disrupted career contexts, these studies have relative appeal as they transcend conventional retention predictors.

The analysis of the most cited articles (Table 5) reveals a significant shift in employee retention research from traditional turnover determinants toward broader themes of career sustainability, technological transformation, and employee well-being. Earlier influential studies primarily emphasized mental health, career satisfaction, and human resource management practices as key factors influencing employee retention (Bufquin et al., 2021; Aburumman et al., 2020). In addition, more recent research expands this perspective by highlighting career adaptability, trust in Artificial Intelligence (AI), AI collaboration, and career self-management as essential drivers of long-term employability and organizational commitment (Kong et al., 2023; Presbitero & Teng-Calleja, 2023). Concurrently, this evolution reflects the changing nature of work, in which organizations increasingly retain employees by supporting continuous career development and adaptability rather than relying solely on conventional retention strategies. Nevertheless, this citation pattern should be interpreted cautiously, as several highly cited studies were published during or immediately after the COVID-19 pandemic, when remote work, employee well-being, and career resilience received exceptional scholarly attention (Bufquin et al., 2021; Yarberry & Sims, 2021).

Theoretically, the findings of this study are consistent with the Career Construction Theory (Savickas, 2005), Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent et al., 1994), and Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989). These theories together explained how career adaptability, organizational support, self-efficacy, and psychological resources promote employee retention. Table 5 overall presents that employee retention studies have become multi-dimensional, incorporating career sustainability, technological readiness, and employee well-being. Critically, the number of citations should not be considered the only measure of the research's importance, as it depends on external events and changing academic fashions. Consequently, the findings should be analyzed and understood in the context of the temporal evolution of employee retention studies.

Table 5: Most Cited Author

No	Authors	Title	Year	Source title	Cited by
1	Bufquin et al. (Bufquin et al., 2021)	Employee work status, mental health, substance use, and career turnover intentions: An examination of restaurant employees during COVID-19	2021	International Journal of Hospitality Management	164
2	Rasheed et al. (Rasheed et al., 2020)	Career adaptability and employee turnover intentions: The role of perceived career opportunities and orientation to happiness in the hospitality industry	2020	Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management	115
3	Yarberry, S. (Yarberry & Sims, 2021)	The Impact of COVID-19-Prompted Virtual/Remote Work Environments on Employees' Career Development: Social Learning Theory, Belongingness, and Self-Empowerment	2021	Advances in Developing Human Resources	114
4	Kong, H. et al. (Kong et al., 2023)	The impact of trust in AI on career sustainability: The role of employee–AI collaboration and protean career orientation	2023	Journal of Vocational Behavior	112
5	Aburumman, et al. (Aburumman et al., 2020)	The impact of human resource management practices and career satisfaction on employee's turnover intention	2020	Management Science Letters	95
6	Safavi, H.P.; Karatepe, O.M. (Safavi & Karatepe, 2018)	High-performance work practices and hotel employee outcomes: The mediating role of career adaptability	2018	International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management	94
7	Presbitero, A.; Teng-Calleja, M. (Presbitero & Teng-Calleja, 2023)	Job attitudes and career behaviors relating to employees' perceived incorporation of artificial intelligence in the workplace: a career self-management perspective	2023	Personnel Review	91
8	Aboobaker, N.; Edward, M.; Zakkariya, Z. (Aboobaker et al., 2019)	Workplace spirituality, employee wellbeing and intention to stay: A multi-group analysis of teachers' career choice	2019	International Journal of Educational Management	85
9	Nisar, S.K.; Rasheed, M.I (Naz et al., 2024)	Stress and performance: Investigating relationship between occupational stress, career satisfaction, and job performance of police employees	2020	Journal of Public Affairs	82

10	Bozionelos, N.; Lin, C.-H.; Lee, K.Y. (Bozionelos et al., 2020)	Enhancing the sustainability of employees' careers through training: The roles of career actors' openness and of supervisor support	2020	Journal of Vocational Behavior	80
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RQ3: Which Countries Are The Top Based On Their Publication And Citation Records About Employee Retention, And What Is Explored Through Career Advancement?

The distribution of publications at the country level suggests that the production of academic literature is highly concentrated in economies undergoing rapid workforce changes and enormous shifts in organizational forms. With a huge labour force and recent attention to talent retention amid challenges of population aging and international competition, China leads the way with 96 papers (21%). The relevance of the United States (US) (13%) and India (11%) also underscores the importance of retention in a wider strategic context, given the size and diversity of the labour markets. Research on meaningful work and career advancement has emerged as a major focus of efforts to retain employees in their current jobs, as widespread workforce mobility in the US has disrupted career paths and shifted attention toward purpose-driven work. In India, interest in academic career development has been furthered by economic growth, skills shortages, and a high youth population seeking jobs. Together, the first three nations demonstrate similar proportions of publications and approximate the size of the labour force, or economic health/relevance to retention management issues in diverse and competing environments.

The presence of the United Kingdom (UK), Australia, and Germany is an indication of the maturity of research ecosystems in these countries. They have long considered employee retention from theoretical and policy perspectives and have developed robust concepts of career sustainability, employee well-being, and human capital development. Simultaneously, the high participation rate from developing and middle-income countries highlighted a growing awareness in academia that attrition is not exclusively a developed-country issue. Hence, it is critical to understand how career advancement affects employees' retention intentions amid accelerating industrialization, as populations across generations are in motion and more workers are exposed to global labour standards. Employee retention has been widely recognised and explored as a salient global issue, as evidenced by the relatively even distribution of research contributions across regions, harmonized by globally ubiquitous labour market expectations and localised institutional dynamics. Such geographic diversity provides a basis for bibliometric evidence. It can, in this sense, be viewed as confirmation that both retention and career development constitute a cross-national research field, theoretically anchored.

Table 6: Country by Publication

No	country	No by Publication	Percentage
1	China	96	21%
2	United States	57	13%
3	India	50	11%
4	United Kingdom	28	6%

5	Indonesia	23	5%
6	Malaysia	21	5%
7	Australia	18	4%
8	Pakistan	18	4%
9	Germany	17	4%
10	South Korea	17	4%

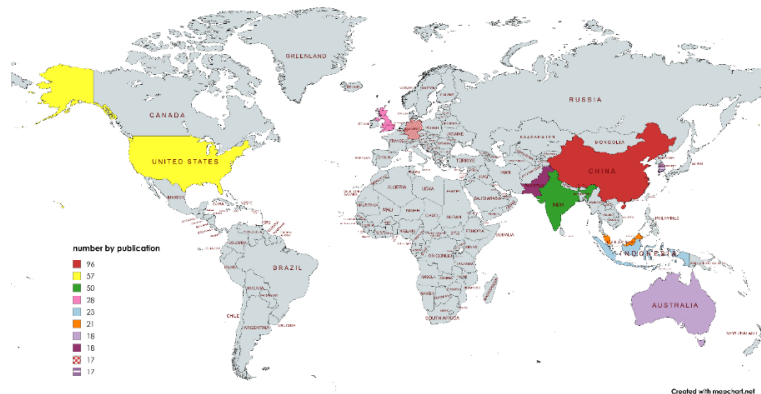


Figure 3: Research Country By Number Of Publications.

RQ4: What Thematic Structures And Latest Research Trends Appear In The Co-Occurrences Of Authors' Keywords, Including Theme-Based Employee Retention Via Career Growth Literature?

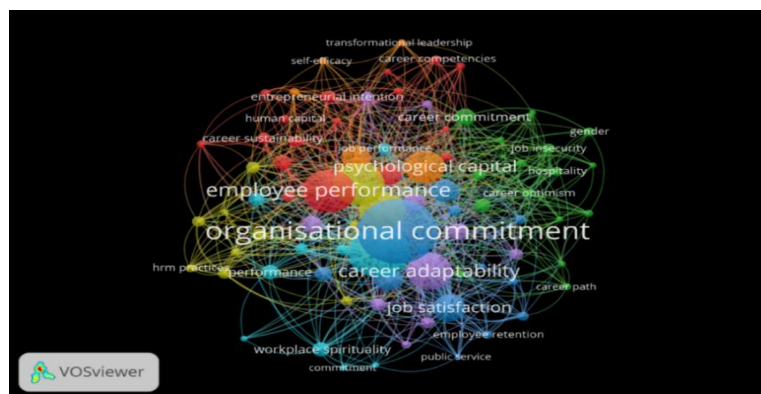


Figure 4: Network Visualization Map Of Keywords' Co-Occurrence

The bibliometric technique of co-occurrence analysis of author keywords with VOSviewer focuses on uncovering the conceptual backbone of scientific activities by examining how often terms co-occur in the same publication. Accordingly, the author-provided "keywords" act as proxies for the main concepts, theories, and constructs of interest to scholars. If two keywords appear together frequently across many documents, it is considered a reasonable intellectual connection between them. VOSviewer demonstrates this by visualizing a network in which nodes are keywords and lines represent their co-occurrence. The nodes are scaled by keyword frequency (i.e., occurrences), whilst edge thickness and total link strength can also be construed in terms of actual connections to other keywords. Consequently, they consider the network's

central nodes (the words) to offer a conceptual backbone for the literature on their given topic and, using this dataset, identify words that are frequently used within it. This includes organisational commitment, career development, employee performance, and employee commitment. Meanwhile, psychological capital, career adaptability, and job satisfaction appear with moderate frequency. However, they report high total link strength, indicating integrative constructs that span multiple themes. Such analysis extends beyond simply counting frequencies and instead demonstrates how ideas cohere and which core themes are connected. They are also central to the system (or peripheral, like 'workplace spirituality' or 'career shocks') compared to other, more accepted concepts. Co-occurrence analysis thus provides a systematic and data-driven cross-sectional snapshot of intellectual landscapes. It further enables researchers to identify dominant lines of inquiry, theoretical lineages, and potential gaps in the literature.

To arrive at this network visualisation, VOSviewer methodological settings were inspired to achieve the trade-off between inclusiveness and analytical transparency. This means that each occurrence of a term in a document is equally weighted, and all keywords/terms are treated as a single term. This strategy is especially well-suited when the subject of interest lies in the visibility and conceptual resonance of themes, rather than normalizing by publication size or keyword list. Furthermore, to improve robustness and generalisability across other studies, a minimum cut-off based on frequency (i.e., number of occurrences) was set at 5, excluding infrequent or unique terms that add noise to the data. Note that 82 keywords met this threshold from an original set of 946. Only concepts that have garnered at least some scholarly interest and significance are filtered in this second step of the analysis, since a limit to the set of analysed concepts is desired. This study also set the minimum cluster size to 1, so that even if a theme is small or stays isolated, it still has a chance to form clusters rather than being tied to another of the themes or outright excluded. According to the settings mentioned above, VOSviewer produced 7 clusters, each representing a coherent grouping of content across publications. Collectively, our findings provide strong support for the idea that career-oriented investments and outcomes are largely built on commitment-based constructs (organisational, employee, affective) and performance-related outcomes. At the same time, developing new career-focused perspectives, such as situational forces and adaptive forcing, based on moderation to enable employees to have successful careers, including job satisfaction. The co-occurrence of theory-based keywords (e.g., Conservation of Resources Theory, Career Construction Theory, or Social Cognitive Career Theory) and practical fields (turnover intention, employee engagement, innovative work behaviour) indicates an established field that links theories to practice. Additionally, the emergence of context-specific and demographic keywords such as COVID-19, millennials, Generation Y, and hospitality or public service reflects a growing attention to environmental shocks, generational dynamism and sector-specific challenges. Following this, the co-occurrence network in this article offers a picture of what has been studied and how formerly separate careers are related. Correspondingly, the Human Resource Management (HRM) and organizational behaviour literatures are converging toward a coherent multi-dimensional perspective on employee careers, performance, and sustainability, ready to serve as a robust basis for new theory development and empirical investigation in the years ahead.

RQ5: What Are The Patterns Of International Research Collaboration In Studies On Employee Retention Through Career Growth Using Country-Level Co-Authorship Network Analysis?

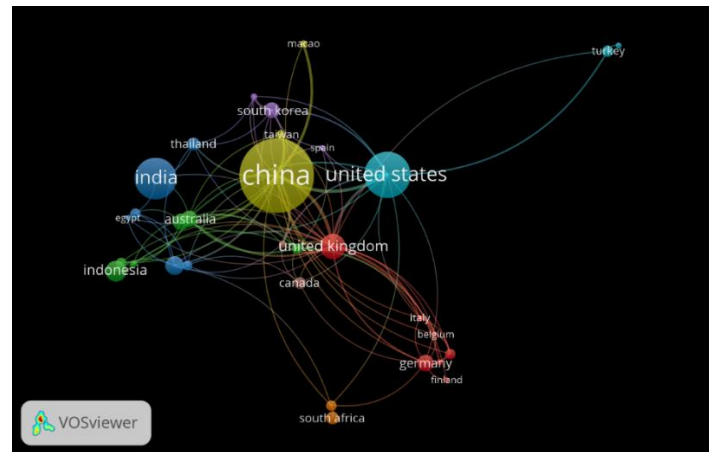


Figure 5: Co-Authorship By Countries' Collaborations.

An analysis of countries' co-authorship using VOSviewer is a bibliometric tool that creates maps of international collaboration rather than conceptual associations. In this work, nodes represent nations, and edges connect them to indicate collaborative papers co-authored by researchers from those countries. The cumulative power of these relations reflects the intensity and frequency of a country's collaboration, as it is usually measured by total link strength (the sum of all links) that joins each country with its co-authors within this research network. While research on ongoing interest is increasingly recognized as tied to a local connection while interlinked globally, the spatial aspect remains puzzling in an abstract form, and most of it is neglected (Gibson et al., 2000). By visualising connections as a system (in our case, knowledge production), VOSviewer demonstrates to scholars how knowledge production circulated geographically, which states could emerge as key centres, and how collaborative links are deeper within regions or components of the worldwide scientific community. Unlike keyword co-occurrence analysis, which uncovers thematic structures, countries' co-citation analysis reveals cultural exchanges, representing institutional network(s) within countries and across the globe. It also exhibits paradigms of internationalization, dependence, and leadership in the production of knowledge, depending on whether a field is focused on a core of highly connected nations or on more decentralized, varied research activities. In this manner, this perspective is particularly advantageous for comprehending how scientific knowledge is co-produced in space. This includes how the visibility of research matters, and how its capacity differs between nations and changes over time through the global collaboration network that makes up an academic field.

The network that produced that output was created using our parameters, and the predetermined analysis held everything together and made it interpretable. The count was done in full for each country credited for publication, regardless of the number of contributing countries. This configuration primarily focuses on overall participation and visibility of participants and can be used to compare countries' recognition activities across the entire collaboration. Based on the first 85 documents, a minimum of five documents was established, and a total of 32 countries met this threshold. This threshold eliminates countries with minimal publication

activity and reduces noise, focusing the analysis on countries that have been historically active in research. Additionally, a minimum cluster size of 1 was used to ensure all eligible countries were represented in the network rather than only slightly or weakly connected clusters. From these settings, seven clusters were identified, each consisting of countries that collaborate more often with in-group members than with members of other clusters. The results also make an original and substantive contribution to the literature by highlighting that research is arranged around networks of collaboration. This might be shaped by geographical proximity, common institutional setups, historical academic links, or other socio-economic and research-policy imperatives. The presence of diverse clusters suggests that the field is not unified under a single global collaboration network but instead comprises multiple, globally inter-dispersed communities of researchers. On the other hand, countries with strong links and a bridging role in their networks serve as collaborator hubs, facilitating cross-sector knowledge dissemination between clusters and the globalisation of research results. This pattern indicates increasing internationalisation in the knowledge production cycle, where knowledge cannot rely solely on national developments but is increasingly an outcome of cross-border cooperation. Importantly, emerging systems demonstrate the field's growing inclusivity and offer recommendations for capacity-building and knowledge exchange. The country's patterns of co-authorship offer empirical evidence that can enrich our understanding of the role of international collaboration in research production, visibility, and impact for researchers, institutions, and policymakers seeking to build on international knowledge development to create a more equitable global information environment.

Conclusion

This bibliometric review aimed to systematically chart and quantify the academic field of employee retention through career development, clarifying and addressing basic questions about publication trends, high-impact papers, the thematic structure, and transnational synergy for the years 2017-2026. Finally, this study was conducted with the neatness and cogency of argument. A researcher in an unknown domain: the existing literature on delusions of reference represents at once a rapidly proliferating indigenous industry outward. This study aimed to use performance analysis and science-mapping approaches to reveal where scholarly attention has focused, trace conceptual traps and changes in focus over time, and identify new geo-collaborative configurations that emerged in knowledge production. This discovery calls for particular support for the continuously increasing output of publications throughout the period covered, highlighting (particularly post-2020) an emerging academic curiosity in retention issues related to changes within work (for example, workforce movement) and innovations in staff members' anticipation. This moment reveals that retention is increasingly viewed as a multifaceted phenomenon with a subjective degree of meaning and level in the context of long-term performance, rather than only as an exchange/commercial/price phenomenon, an anti-dynamic.

In addition, some strong patterns, defining the cognitive base of the discipline, are identified in the analysis. The mapping of keyword co-occurrence reveals that the themes of 'organisation commitment,' 'career development,' 'employee performance,' 'career adaptability,' and 'psychological capital' are all common interlinked themes in research on retention. They are attitudinal in nature, based on constructs that are job-specific and career-based. On the other hand, with regard to sustainable careers, protean and boundaryless career orientations, workplace well-being, and career shocks, some broadening of the research agenda is warranted

toward dynamic, employee-centred, and sustainability-oriented paradigms. Furthermore, country-level publication and co-authorship analysis support the argument that global knowledge is not being concentrated at a single point, with the inactive (dormant) and active (functional) node size grouped according to the category of developed and developing countries that are more active in the production of knowledge compared to a directional and single-centric network. This network configuration is indicative of the growing internationalisation and cross-border knowledge transfer, as well as of research centres forming in response to workforce position, population size, economic restructuring processes, and institutional capacity for conducting research in a given region. Together, these findings help shed light on the employee absenteeism literature, a substantial and growing body of research that is of increasing interest yet remains unevenly developed and somewhat confused conceptually, thematically, and geographically.

The results of this bibliometric analysis are especially applicable in practice to the field of organisations, for practising organisations and decision-makers. With this strong theme and a message of "sense of purpose" and "career development," it is unlikely that "one and done" retention strategies will be sufficient in today's workforce. Instead, the evidence suggests that features of work structure develop the individual's purpose and psychological resources and provide clear paths of progression towards future goals. Accordingly, personal future goals are reframed from an organization-centric perspective, shaped by long-term aspirations. The results also bear on policymakers and organizational leaders, suggesting that establishing sustainable career pathways, providing opportunities for lifelong learning, and fostering supportive work environments can contribute to workforce retention and stability. However, with some caution, there are numerous limitations. Due to the limited number of publication types reviewed (only English-language journals in Scopus), this literature review may not cover all relevant literature. Additionally, in contextual or causal writing, there are structural trends that can be prioritized, as emphasized in bibliometric approaches. These limitations could be reduced, for example, by utilising multiple databases, over a longer period, or by combining bibliometric mapping methods with qualitative and theory-driven reviews in future studies. The value of this study lies in its ability to illustrate the potential of bibliometric analysis as a methodological tool for illuminating the evolution and structure of research interests in career development to improve employee retention. Therefore, the study lays the groundwork for further research and knowledge-building in the face of multiple retention phenomena in the industry.

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