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TRENDS AND PATTERNS IN ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION STUDIES: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

This bibliometric analysis explores the evolving trends and research patterns in organizational communication studies over the past two decades. Organizational communication, as a dynamic and interdisciplinary field, has experienced significant growth and diversification in terms of topics, methodologies, and global scholarly participation. Despite this development, a lack of comprehensive mapping remains, which prevents the synthesis of the intellectual landscape and identification of influential themes, authors, and geographical contributions. Addressing this gap, the study aims to systematically analyze the structure and trajectory of organizational communication literature using advanced bibliometric tools. A total of 848 relevant documents were extracted from the Scopus database using the search string TITLE (organisational AND communication) and filtered by subject area (SOC1) for the publication years 2000 to 2025. The data were refined using OpenRefine for cleaning and standardization, then analyzed through the Scopus Analyzer for publication trends, and visualized using VOSviewer for keyword co-occurrence, author citations, and country collaboration networks. The results demonstrate a steady increase in publication volume, with the United States leading in research output and influence. The most frequently cited works focus on participatory communication, crisis communication, and organizational identity. Keyword analysis revealed “organizational communication,” “corporate communication,” and “crisis communication” as central themes, alongside emerging areas such as digital platforms and employee engagement. The study also highlights the growing involvement of countries such as China, Brazil, and South Africa, indicating a more globalized research landscape. In conclusion, this bibliometric mapping provides valuable insights into the knowledge structure and global discourse of organizational communication, offering direction for future research and identifying underexplored areas that merit scholarly attention.

Keywords:

Organizational Communication, Communication Networks, Corporate Communication, Crisis Communication, Internal Communication, Strategic Communication

Introduction

Organizational communication as an area of study has evolved significantly, reflecting diverse and dynamic trends. One prominent trend is the increasing focus on the flexibility and problem-centered nature of organizational communication. This trend highlights the importance of research that supports both the vitality of the discipline and the personal well-being of researchers (Krone, 2005). Additionally, there is a growing interest in intergenerational dialogue within the field, which fosters collaboration between established and emerging scholars, enriching the scholarly community (McDonald & Mitra, 2019). The evolution of communication patterns, such as vertical, horizontal, and diagonal flows, and their impact on team effectiveness is another critical area of study, highlighting the importance of communication structures in organizational success (Wattanapanit, 2019).

Another significant trend in organizational communication research is the methodological diversity and the emphasis on quantitative approaches. Researchers are increasingly using systematic development and validation of measures, mixed methods, and multiple levels of analysis to explore complex organizational phenomena (Miller et al., 2011). This methodological pluralism is evident in the field's acceptance of various research paradigms, including positivist, interpretive, critical, and constitutive approaches, which coexist to explain the evolving organizational environment (Silva et al., 2020). The focus on methodological curiosity and depth in research approaches is crucial for advancing the field and addressing contemporary challenges (Stephens, 2017).

The impact of technological advancements and the changing nature of communication in organizations are also central themes in current research. The ubiquity of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) and the renewed interest in social networks and relational processes at the workplace are reshaping organizational communication strategies (Meissner & Tuckmanrr, 2007). Moreover, the emergence of new communication trends, such as customized content, rapid communication, and digital detox, reflects the dynamic nature of the field (Schneckenleitner & Windhager, 2023). Incorporating elements of strategic communication, including structured communication planning and support from top-level management, highlights the critical role of effective communication in achieving organizational objectives and enhancing employee morale (Kuczman et al., 2024; Mahbob et al., 2019).

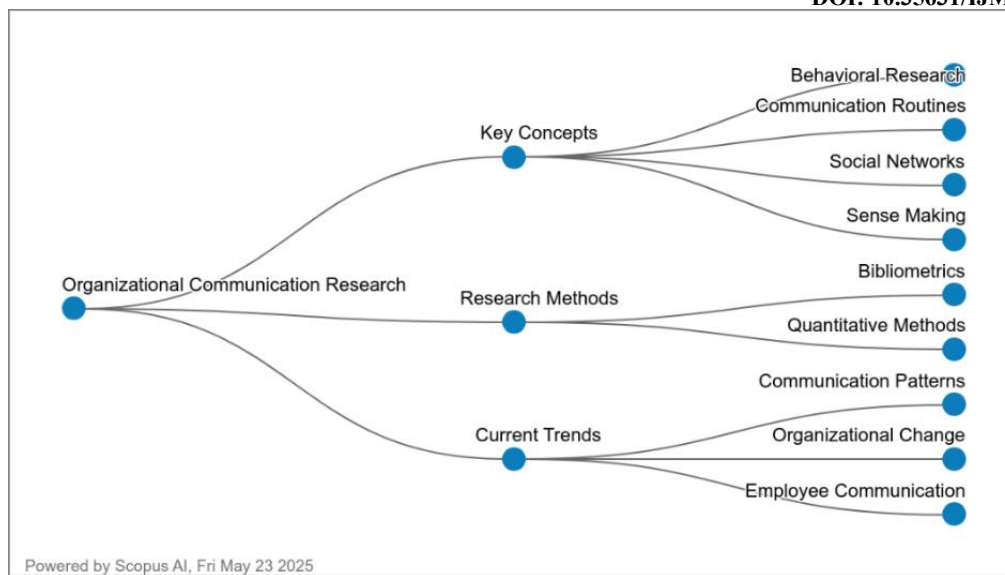


Figure 1: Overview of Trends and Patterns in Organizational Communication Study

Research Question

1. How have trends in organizational communication research evolved over time based on publication year?
2. Which articles are cited most frequently within the field?
3. Which ten countries have contributed the highest number of publications in this area?
4. What are the most commonly used keywords associated with organizational communication studies?
5. How do countries collaborate in terms of co-authorship within this research domain?

Methodology

Bibliometric analysis refers to the process of collecting, structuring, and interpreting bibliographic information from scholarly literature (Alves et al., 2021; Assyakur & Rosa, 2022; Verbeek et al., 2002). In addition to basic metrics such as publication year, source journals, and prominent contributors (Wu & Wu, 2017), bibliometric methods also encompass advanced tools like document co-citation analysis. A thorough literature review involves an iterative and methodical approach—selecting appropriate keywords, searching relevant databases, and conducting a detailed examination of the findings. This systematic process supports the creation of an inclusive bibliography and contributes to dependable outcomes (Fahimnia et al., 2015). With this framework, the present study prioritized influential publications, as they are instrumental in revealing key theoretical models that shape academic discourse. To guarantee the reliability of the data, Scopus was used as the main database (Al-Khoury et al., 2022; di Stefano et al., 2010; Khiste & Paithankar, 2017). Furthermore, to maintain the integrity of the research, only peer-reviewed journal articles were included, while other sources, such as books and lecture notes, were intentionally excluded (Gu et al., 2019). The data collection was carried out through Elsevier's Scopus database, which offers extensive coverage and focuses on materials published between 2020 and December 2023.

Data Search Strategy

The study followed a structured screening process to identify appropriate search terms for retrieving relevant articles. Initially, the Scopus database was accessed online to perform a preliminary search. The query was then refined to include the terms 'organisational' and

'communication specifically.' This initial search returned 1,984 results. These were further filtered to retain only English-language research articles, while review articles were excluded—details are provided in Table 2. After this refinement, the final dataset comprised 848 articles, which were subsequently used for bibliometric analysis.

Table 1: The Search String

Scopus	TITLE (organisational AND communication) AND PUBYEAR > 1999 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "SOCI"))
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Table 2: The Selection Criterion is Searching

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion
Timeline	2000 – 2025	< 2000
Subject	Social Science	Besides Social Science

Data Analysis

VOSviewer is a widely adopted bibliometric analysis tool designed by Nees Jan van Eck and Ludo Waltman at Leiden University in the Netherlands (van Eck & Waltman, 2010, 2017). This software is particularly effective in visualizing and interpreting patterns within scientific literature. It offers features such as network diagram generation, item clustering, and density visualizations. Researchers commonly use VOSviewer to explore co-authorship patterns, co-citation relationships, and keyword co-occurrence networks, allowing for a thorough examination of research trends and collaborations. Its interactive interface and ongoing development contribute to its reliability and usability in analyzing large datasets. The platform also supports metric calculations and allows for the customization of visual outputs, making it a versatile and essential tool for academics aiming to gain insights into complex scholarly landscapes.

A key advantage of VOSviewer lies in its ability to transform complex bibliometric data into clear, visual formats. The software's network mapping capabilities help users identify thematic clusters, co-occurring keywords, and density hotspots within academic publications. Designed to be accessible for both beginners and experienced researchers, its user-friendly interface enhances the exploration of scholarly landscapes. Ongoing software improvements ensure that VOSviewer remains a state-of-the-art tool for bibliometric mapping and analysis. Its compatibility with various data types, including citation and co-authorship records, further emphasizes its adaptability and value in academic research. Datasets comprising information on the publication year, title, author name, journal, citation, and keywords in PlainText format were procured from the Scopus database, spanning the period from 2004 to December 2024. For this study, bibliometric data in PlainText format were sourced from the Scopus database, covering the period from 2004 to December 2024. The data included information such as publication year, article titles, author names, journal names, citations, and keywords. This dataset was processed using version 1.6.19 of VOSviewer. The software enabled the creation of visual maps and clusters through VOS-based analytical methods. Unlike the Multidimensional Scaling (MDS) approach, VOSviewer focuses on mapping items into a low-dimensional space where the spatial proximity of items mirrors their level of similarity (van Eck & Waltman, 2010). While VOS and MDS share similarities (Appio et al., 2014), VOSviewer utilizes a different normalization method for co-occurrence data. Instead of

traditional similarity indices like cosine or Jaccard, it employs the Association Strength metric (AS_{aij}), calculated as:

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

where C_{ij} represents the observed co-occurrence of items i and j , while w_i and w_j denote the total occurrences of items i and j , respectively. This measure estimates the ratio of observed to expected co-occurrences, assuming statistical independence between the items (van Eck & Waltman, 2007).

Findings

How Have Trends In Organizational Communication Research Evolved Over Time Based On Publication Year?

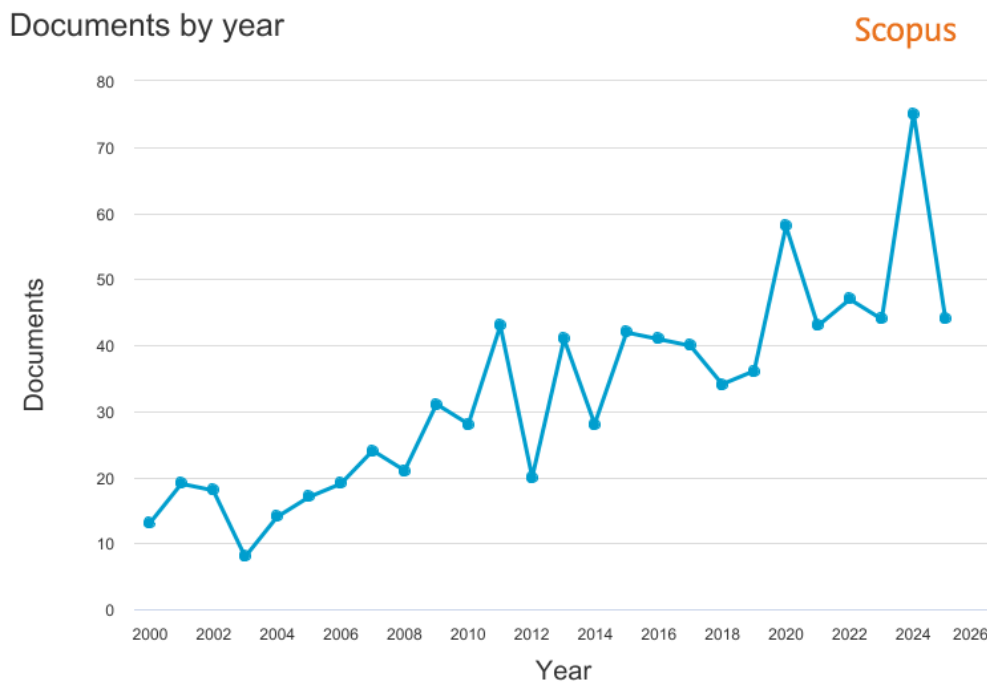


Figure 2: Trend of Research in Organizational Communication Studies by Years

Table 3: Number of Publications and Percentages of Organizational Communication Studies

Year	Number of Publications	Percentages (%)
2025	44	5.19
2024	75	8.84
2023	44	5.19
2022	47	5.54
2021	43	5.07
2020	58	6.84
2019	36	4.25
2018	34	4.01
2017	40	4.72

2016	41	4.83
2015	42	4.95
2014	28	3.30
2013	41	4.83
2012	20	2.36
2011	43	5.07
2010	28	3.30
2009	31	3.66
2008	21	2.48
2007	24	2.83
2006	19	2.24
2005	17	2.00
2004	14	1.65
2003	8	0.94
2002	18	2.12
2001	19	2.24
2000	13	1.53

According to Scopus data, research on organizational communication has exhibited a steady growth trajectory from 2000 to 2025, with a notable increase in output over the last five years. The peak was recorded in 2024, with 75 publications (8.84%), indicating a strong recent interest in the field, possibly driven by global shifts in organizational structures, hybrid work environments, and communication technologies following the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, the year 2025 also maintains high activity with 44 publications (5.19%), demonstrating sustained interest and ongoing research momentum.

From 2010 to 2020, the publication trend reflects a gradual rise, punctuated by consistent output each year. Key years such as 2020 (58 publications, 6.84%) and 2016–2017 mark periods of heightened activity, potentially due to the increasing relevance of digital transformation, internal communication tools, and organizational change management practices during this time. These years might also reflect a broader academic and industry interest in aligning communication practices with evolving corporate and technological contexts.

In the earlier period between 2000 and 2010, the publication volume was relatively modest, with annual outputs ranging from 8 to 28 publications. This suggests that while organizational communication was a recognized field, it had not yet reached the broader academic attention it enjoys today. The steady increase in publications over time highlights the field's growing maturity and interdisciplinary appeal as it increasingly intersects with areas such as leadership, organizational behavior, information systems, and workplace culture. This pattern sets a solid foundation for identifying influential themes and future research directions in organizational communication.

Which Articles Are Cited Most Frequently Within The Field?

The analysis of the top 10 most-cited authors in organizational communication research, based on Scopus data, reveals that highly influential works span diverse thematic areas, from organizational democracy and identification to crisis communication and corporate reputation. Stohl C. leads with the most cited work—“Participatory processes/paradoxical practices” (2001)—with 363 citations, highlighting enduring scholarly interest in the complexities and

contradictions within democratic communication practices in organizations. This suggests that foundational issues of participation and structure continue to resonate strongly in the field.

Thematically, the top-cited works reflect two dominant clusters: crisis and strategic communication (e.g., Lee B.K., Yang S.-U., Ma L.) and identity and organizational climate (e.g., Bartels J., Cheney G.). Notably, Chiu M.-L.'s (2002) article on design collaboration reveals cross-disciplinary impact by linking organizational communication with design studies, earning 240 citations, which demonstrates how communication research contributes to innovation and teamwork dynamics. Similarly, works by Christensen and Cornelissen (2011), as well as Lammers and Barbour (2006), focus on theoretical integration and institutional frameworks, suggesting that conceptual development remains a high-impact area.

Another important trend is the growing attention to credibility, dialogic communication, and digital platforms, as seen in studies by Yang et al. (2010) and Ma and Zhan (2016), which reflect the emergence of newer challenges in organizational-public interaction and crisis response. The consistent citation of works from the early 2000s to the mid-2010s also indicates a maturing field with long-lasting theoretical contributions. Collectively, these findings highlight a balance between conceptual rigor and applied relevance, positioning organizational communication as a critical discipline that bridges theory, practice, and interdisciplinary relevance.

Table 4: Most Cited Author

Authors	Title	Year	Source Title	Cited by
Stohl C.	Participatory processes/paradoxical practices: Communication and the Dilemmas of Organizational Democracy (Stohl, 2001)	2001	Management Communication Quarterly	363
Chiu M.-L.	An organizational view of design communication in design collaboration (Chiu, 2002)	2002	Design Studies	240
Lee B.K.	Audience-oriented approach to crisis communication: A study of Hong Kong consumers' evaluation of an organizational crisis (Lee, 2004)	2004	Communication Research	197
Bartels J.; Pruyn A.; De Jong M.; Joustra I.	Multiple organizational identification levels and the impact of perceived external prestige and communication climate (Bartels et al., 2007)	2007	Journal of Organizational Behavior	196
Christensen L.T.; Cornelissen J.	Bridging corporate and organizational communication: Review, development and a look to the future (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011)	2011	Management Communication Quarterly	176

Lammers J.C.; Barbour J.B.	An institutional theory of organizational communication (Lammers & Barbour, 2006)	2006	Communication Theory	167
Lewis L.K.	Organizational Change: Creating Change through Strategic Communication (Lewis, 2011)	2011	Organizational Change: Creating Change through Strategic Communication	166
Cheney G.; Lee Ashcraft K.	Considering "the professional" in communication studies: Implications for theory and research within and beyond the boundaries of organizational communication; ["Der Experte" in der Kommunikationswissenschaft: Implikationen für Theorie und Forschung innerhalb und über die Grenzen der Organisationskommunikation hinaus] (Cheney & Lee Ashcraft, 2007)	2007	Communication Theory	166
Yang S.-U.; Kang M.; Johnson P.	Effects of narratives, openness to dialogic communication, and credibility on engagement in crisis communication through organizational blogs (Yang et al., 2010)	2010	Communication Research	163
Ma L.; Zhan M.	Effects of attributed responsibility and response strategies on organizational reputation: A meta-analysis of situational crisis communication theory research (Ma & Zhan, 2016)	2016	Journal of Public Relations Research	161

Which Ten Countries Have Contributed The Highest Number Of Publications In This Area?

The publication output by country reveals that the United States (U.S.) overwhelmingly leads in organizational communication research, contributing 378 publications, which significantly surpasses all other countries. This dominance reflects the strong presence of U.S.-based universities, academic journals, and funding institutions that prioritize organizational and communication studies. The U.S. also hosts many of the field's foundational scholars and top-tier journals, such as *Management Communication Quarterly* and *Communication Research*, reinforcing its central role in shaping the global discourse.

Beyond the U.S., countries like Australia (37), Canada (31), and the United Kingdom (31) also demonstrate substantial contributions, indicating a vibrant research culture in English-speaking nations. These countries often collaborate in international research networks and share similar

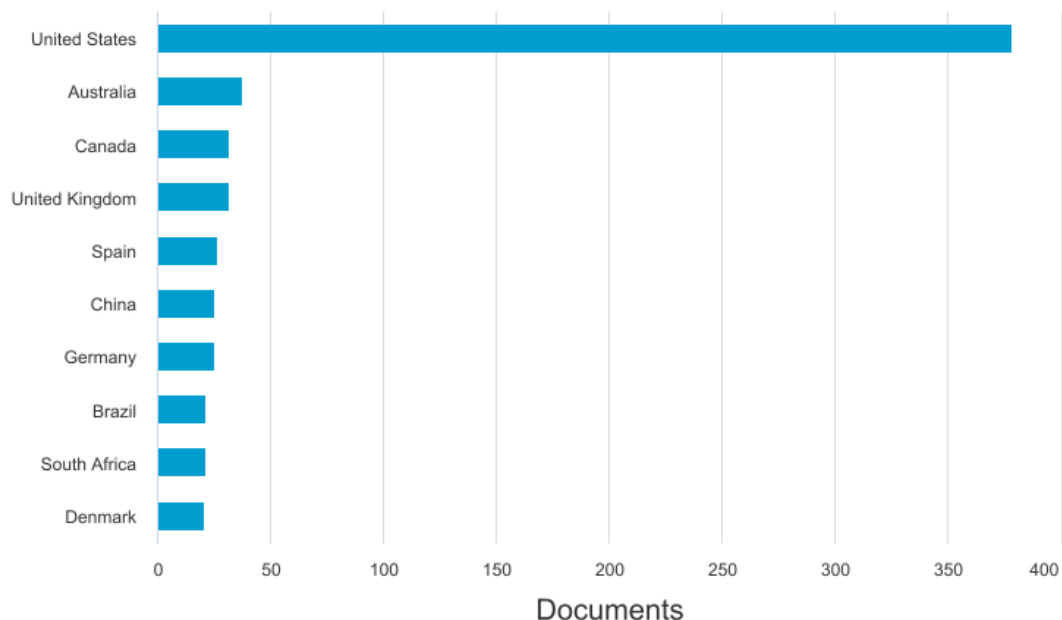
organizational contexts, such as corporate structures, governance models, and communication practices. Their outputs reflect both theoretical developments and applied insights relevant to global corporate communication, public sector management, and workplace culture.

Interestingly, there is growing representation from non-Western and emerging economies, such as China (25), Brazil (21), and South Africa (21). This suggests a broadening of scholarly interest in organizational communication beyond traditional Western contexts, with researchers examining local communication challenges within culturally diverse and rapidly developing environments. The presence of Spain, Germany, and Denmark further underscores Europe's engagement in this field. This geographical diversification enriches the field by introducing varied perspectives, expanding theoretical frameworks, and encouraging more comparative and cross-cultural studies in organizational communication.

Documents by country or territory

Scopus

Compare the document counts for up to 15 countries/territories.



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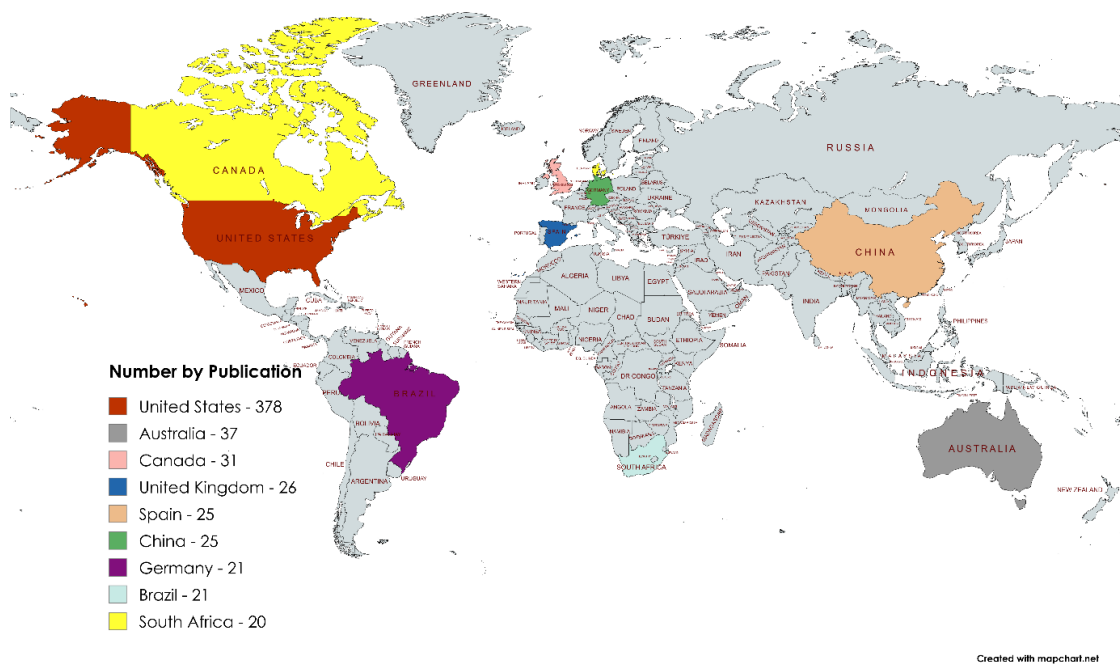


Figure 3: Top 10 Countries based on Number of Publications of Organizational Communication Studies

What Are The Most Commonly Used Keywords Associated With Organizational Communication Studies?

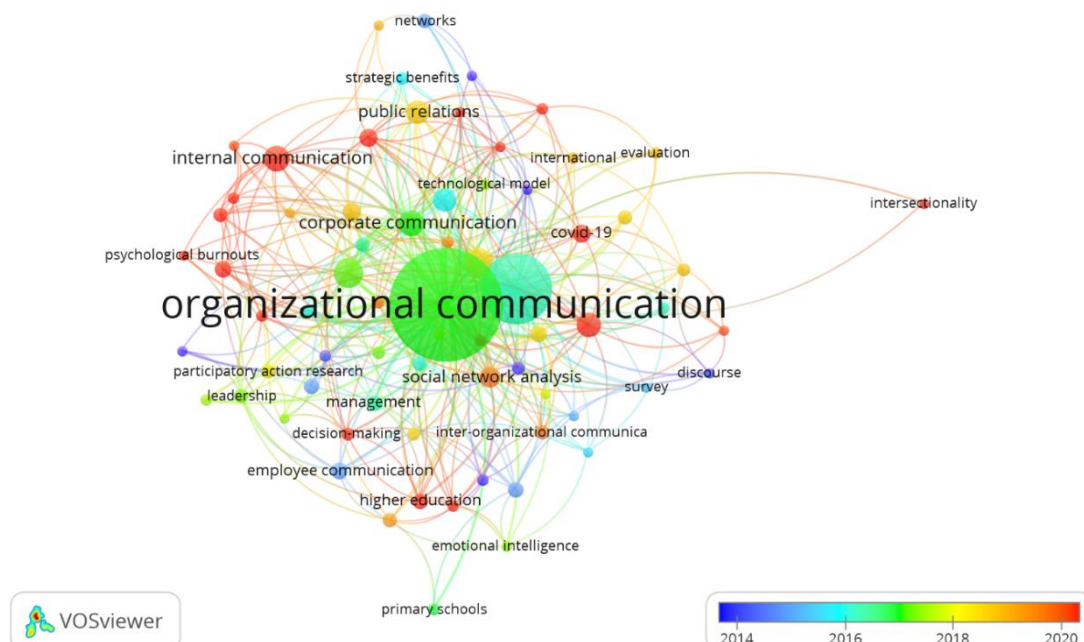


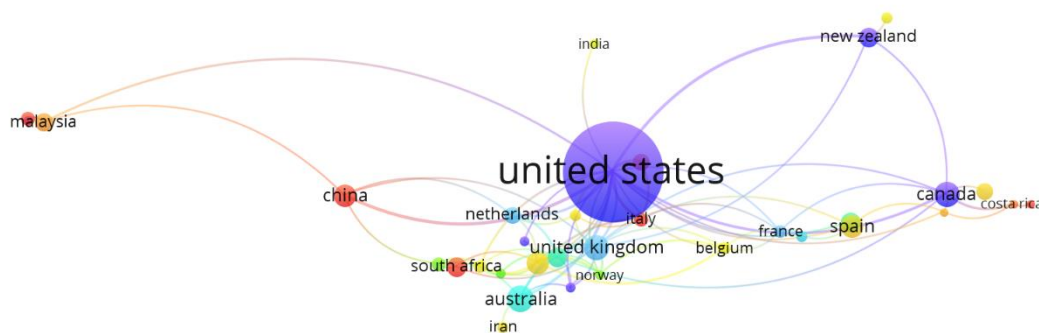
Figure 4: Network Visualization Map of Keywords' Co-Occurrence

Keyword	Occurrences	Total Link Strength (TLS)
Organizational Communication	321	416
Communication	141	219
Corporate Communication	23	45
Information And Communication Technology	30	42
Social media	21	40
Social Network Analysis	16	39
Internal Communication	23	38
Public Relations	19	38
Crisis Communication	29	36
Knowledge Management	20	33

The VOSviewer keyword analysis reveals that “organizational communication” is the most dominant term, with 321 occurrences and a Total Link Strength (TLS) of 416, establishing it as the central focus and anchor of the research domain. Following this, terms like “communication” (141 occurrences, 219 TLS) and “information and communication technology” (30 occurrences, 42 TLS) highlight the integration of foundational and technological themes within the field. The high presence of “corporate communication” (23 occurrences, 45 TLS) and “internal communication” (23 occurrences, 38 TLS) indicates that researchers are deeply exploring both external branding strategies and intra-organizational dynamics, affirming the breadth and complexity of communication in organizational settings.

Emerging and contemporary themes are also strongly represented. For example, “crisis communication” (29 occurrences, 36 TLS) and “COVID-19” (12 occurrences, 21 TLS) reflect an increased scholarly focus on organizational responsiveness during global disruptions. Keywords such as “employee communication,” “employee performance,” and “transformational leadership” suggest a parallel interest in how communication practices affect individual outcomes and leadership efficacy. The presence of “knowledge management” (20 occurrences, 33 TLS) and “social media” (21 occurrences, 40 TLS) further indicates a shift toward digital and knowledge-intensive work environments where communication technologies and platforms play a vital role in shaping organizational behavior and identity.

Additionally, the network encompasses methodological and conceptual diversity, with terms such as “participatory action research,” “structural equation modeling,” and “interpretive case study” highlighting the varied research approaches employed. The emergence of “intersectionality,” “institutional theory,” and “identification” reflects the growing theoretical depth, while keywords such as “trust,” “stakeholder management,” and “strategic communication” demonstrate practical and applied relevance. This diversity in keyword patterns demonstrates that organizational communication is a multifaceted field, balancing theoretical inquiry with real-world applications and evolving in response to technological, social, and global developments.

How Do Countries Collaborate In Terms Of Co-Authorship Within This Research Domain?**Figure 5: Network Visualization Map of Keywords' Co-Authorship by Countries' Collaboration**

Country	Documents	Citations	Total Link Strength
United States	375	8932	54
United Kingdom	31	498	22
Germany	25	274	16
Australia	36	478	13
Canada	31	608	13
Denmark	21	379	13
China	25	165	11
Italy	11	42	9
New Zealand	20	777	9
Norway	7	59	9

The VOSviewer analysis of country contributions to organizational communication research underscores the U.S. as the dominant leader, with 375 documents, 8,932 citations, and the highest total link strength (54). This suggests a large volume of research output and a strong influence and integration within the global research network. The United Kingdom follows with 31 documents, 498 citations, and a link strength of 22, highlighting its significant but comparatively more modest impact. Countries like Canada (608 citations) and New Zealand (777 citations) reveal high citation counts, indicating the high quality and influence of their contributions.

Several European countries, including Germany (16 TLS, 274 citations) and Denmark (13 TLS, 379 citations), also exhibit strong citation and link strength figures, indicating active engagement and collaboration within the academic community. Notably, the Netherlands stands out with 628 citations from just 17 documents, highlighting the high impact of Dutch research. Similarly, Belgium and Hong Kong, though smaller in document count, boast relatively high citation numbers (327 and 298, respectively), suggesting specialized, high-value contributions to the field.

In contrast, while countries such as Brazil, India, Indonesia, and Turkey are contributing increasingly to the organizational communication literature, their citation and link strengths remain relatively low, reflecting either emerging research profiles or limited international integration. However, this also signals growth potential and opportunities for increased global collaboration. Collectively, the data reveal a geographical expansion in research activity, with traditional Western countries still dominating but with notable contributions emerging from Asia, Latin America, and Africa, pointing toward a more diversified and interconnected future in organizational communication research.

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the trends and patterns in organizational communication studies through a comprehensive bibliometric analysis. The primary aim was to identify the key developments, influential works, collaborative networks, and thematic directions that have shaped the field between the years 2000 and 2025. By employing Scopus Analyzer for initial data exploration, OpenRefine for data cleaning, and VOSviewer for visualization and network analysis, a final dataset of 848 documents was analyzed to provide a structured overview of the research landscape.

The findings reveal steady growth in publication output, with notable surges in recent years, reflecting increased scholarly interest in how organizational shifts and digital communication innovations may drive change. The U.S. emerged as the most productive and influential contributor, followed by countries like the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. Keyword mapping highlighted dominant themes, including “organizational communication,” “corporate communication,” “crisis communication,” and “information and communication technology.” High citation counts were associated with studies addressing participatory processes, identity, crisis responses, and strategic communication practices. These trends suggest that the field is evolving to address both theoretical constructs and practical challenges in modern organizational settings.

This analysis contributes to the field by offering an updated, data-driven overview of the intellectual structure and global distribution of research in organizational communication. The findings can inform academic researchers, educators, and practitioners by highlighting central issues and identifying gaps for future exploration. Despite its contributions, the study is limited by its reliance on a single database and a fixed timeframe, which may exclude relevant but unindexed work. Future studies may incorporate longitudinal citation analysis or cross-database comparisons to enhance comprehensiveness. Overall, this research highlights the importance of bibliometric methods in mapping academic fields and lays a foundation for further inquiry into the dynamic domain of organizational communication.

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