

## Mapping Research on Employee Innovative Behavior in Human Resource Management: A Bibliometric Analysis

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**Abstract.** This study aims to analyse the existing literature and identify major research trends in the field of employee innovative behavior within the human resource management domain. Data were retrieved from the Scopus database and include 230 English-language journal articles and review papers published between 2005 and 2025. A bibliometric analysis was conducted using R Studio (Bibliometrix/Biblioshiny) and VOSviewer to examine publication performance, influential journals and authors, geographical distribution, and thematic structures within the research domain.

The findings suggest a steady and expanding body of research linking human resource management practices with employee innovative behavior, reflecting increasing scholarly attention to the role of HR systems, leadership, and organizational contexts in fostering innovation at the employee level. The literature is primarily published in journals related to human resource management, organizational behavior, psychology, and innovation studies. Geographically, research activity is concentrated in Asia and Europe, with China emerging as the most productive contributor, followed by other Asian countries and several European research contexts.

Keyword co-occurrence and thematic mapping identify four major research themes: psychological drivers and innovation outcomes; knowledge management and behavioral processes; strategic HRM systems and leadership mechanisms; and emerging themes related to digital transformation and organizational change. The study also outlines future research directions aimed at strengthening the integration of HRM, organizational behavior, and innovation management perspectives, particularly in contexts shaped by digitalization, sustainability agendas, and evolving workplace environments.

**Keywords:** employee innovative behavior, human resource management, bibliometric analysis, VOSviewer

## 1. Introduction

Innovation has become a critical determinant of organizational competitiveness and long-term sustainability in increasingly dynamic business environments. While earlier research primarily examined innovation at the organizational or technological levels, more recent studies emphasize that innovation is fundamentally driven by employees' proactive behaviors within everyday work contexts. Employee innovative behavior (EIB), often conceptualized as innovative work behavior (IWB), refers to employees' intentional generation, promotion, and implementation of new ideas aimed at improving organizational processes and outcomes (Al-Khaldi & Bachkirov, 2025; Wibowo et al., 2026). In this study, EIB and IWB are treated as conceptually overlapping and operationally equivalent for bibliometric search purposes. In much of the existing literature, both terms are used to describe employees' intentional efforts to generate, promote, and implement new ideas in the workplace. Including both terms in the search strategy allows the dataset to capture a broader range of relevant publications and reduces the risk of omitting studies that use different but closely related terminology. However, this approach also involves a limitation. Although EIB and IWB are often used interchangeably, some studies may assign slightly different conceptual boundaries or disciplinary emphases to these terms. Therefore, the findings of this study should be interpreted as representing the broader research landscape of employee-level innovation behavior in HRM rather than a strictly bounded distinction between EIB and IWB. Empirical evidence indicates that employee innovative behavior significantly contributes to productivity improvement, organizational innovation, and competitive advantage, positioning it as a micro-level foundation of organizational innovation (Dorenbosch et al., 2005).

In this context, human resource management (HRM) has emerged as a key organizational mechanism shaping employee innovative behavior. HRM practices create ability, motivation, and opportunity structures that encourage employees to engage in innovation-related activities (Cera et al., 2025; Hassanah Husin et al., 2025). Research demonstrates that high-performance work systems (HPWS) positively influence innovative work behavior through mediating processes such as employee creativity and knowledge sharing (Amoozegar et al., 2025). Similarly, studies on flexible HRM arrangements suggest that innovative behavior functions as an intermediary linking HRM systems with firm innovativeness and organizational learning capability (Sopiah et al., 2024). These findings position HRM as a strategic driver of innovation rather than merely an administrative function.

The role of HRM in fostering innovation has expanded further as organizations face emerging technological and societal challenges. Digital HR practices have been shown to facilitate digital transformation and stimulate innovative work behavior, particularly in organizations where technology-enabled coordination, information exchange, and adaptive service processes are increasingly central to performance (Zhang et al., 2024; Rosita et al., 2026). In addition, sustainability-oriented HR approaches, such as green HRM practices, positively influence innovation-related behaviors aligned with environmental goals, reflecting the growing intersection between HRM, sustainability agendas, and organizational innovation outcomes (Khan et al., 2025; Jiang et al., 2025). These developments suggest that HRM-based innovation research increasingly extends beyond traditional performance outcomes toward broader contexts of digitalization and sustainable development.

Beyond structural HR practices, recent research has emphasized psychological and contextual mechanisms that explain how HRM influences employee innovation. Processes such as job crafting, work engagement, and creative self-efficacy are identified as important mediators through which HR practices translate into innovative behavior (Mehboob & Haque, 2024; Lu et al., 2025; Jabid et al., 2025). Likewise, creativity and knowledge-sharing mechanisms help explain why certain HR bundles more effectively stimulate innovation outcomes (Amoozegar et al., 2025). These findings suggest that employee innovative behavior emerges from complex interactions between HR systems and individual-level psychological processes.

Despite the growing volume of studies, research on employee innovative behavior within the HRM domain remains fragmented across multiple disciplines, including human resource management, organizational behavior, innovation management, and sustainability studies. Existing research varies considerably in theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches, and contextual settings, resulting in dispersed findings and limited conceptual integration. Some studies emphasize innovation performance at the organizational level, whereas others focus on psychological or leadership-based mechanisms, making it difficult to identify a coherent intellectual structure of the field (Bos-Nehles et al., 2017). Furthermore, emerging themes such as digital HRM and green HRM are often investigated independently rather than within an integrated framework (Aboramadan et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2024).

Recent review-oriented studies acknowledge this fragmentation and highlight the need for systematic mapping approaches capable of clarifying research trends, influential themes, and future directions (Bos-Nehles et al., 2017; Nicolás-Agustín et al., 2022). Bibliometric analysis offers an objective and replicable method for identifying intellectual structures, thematic clusters, and research evolution through quantitative synthesis of large datasets. Such an approach is particularly valuable for research domains experiencing rapid expansion and interdisciplinary diffusion (Wibowo et al., 2026). In contemporary organizations, employee innovative behavior is increasingly embedded in digital work systems, organizational knowledge flows, and service-oriented processes that influence how employees generate, exchange, and implement new ideas. Recent research in digitally intensive workplaces also shows that digital work systems and employee digital experience can significantly shape employee well-being, performance, and adaptation in technology-mediated environments (Hoai et al., 2026). This suggests that research on employee innovative behavior is not only important for understanding HRM-driven innovation, but also for explaining how technology-enabled coordination, information exchange, and continuous improvement support organizational adaptability and performance.

Accordingly, this study aims to systematically map the research landscape of employee innovative behavior within the human resource management domain using bibliometric analysis. Specifically, this study seeks to: (1) identify publication trends and influential contributors; (2) examine the intellectual structure of the field through co-citation analysis; (3) uncover thematic clusters via keyword co-occurrence analysis; and (4) propose future research directions in emerging contexts such as digitalization, sustainability, and evolving HRM systems. By providing a comprehensive overview, this study contributes to a clearer understanding of how HRM research has evolved to explain employee innovative behavior and how this research increasingly intersects with digital work environments, knowledge-based organizational processes, and broader patterns of organizational adaptation.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Concept of employee innovative behavior**

Employee innovative behavior (EIB), also referred to as innovative work behavior (IWB), describes employees' intentional actions aimed at generating, promoting, and implementing new ideas within organizational contexts. In the literature, these behaviors are commonly understood as a multi-stage process involving idea generation, idea promotion, and idea implementation, through which employees contribute directly to organizational improvement and renewal. Unlike innovation examined at the organizational or technological levels, EIB emphasizes individual proactive behavior as a key unit of analysis in understanding how innovation emerges in everyday work settings. Research across different sectors shows that innovative work behavior plays an important role in enhancing productivity, organizational performance, and innovation outcomes (Dorenbosch et al., 2005; Amoozegar et al., 2025).

As organizations increasingly depend on employee-driven innovation, EIB has become a central concept linking individual agency with broader innovation capability. This perspective positions employee innovation as a micro-level foundation that supports organizational development and

sustained competitiveness. At the same time, the concept also provides an important bridge between employee-level behavior and wider organizational systems, as individual innovation is often shaped by managerial support, workplace conditions, and opportunities for knowledge exchange. For this reason, EIB has become a useful analytical lens for examining how HRM practices influence innovation not only through formal systems, but also through employees' day-to-day behavioral contributions to organizational change and adaptation.

## **2.2 HRM practices and systems promoting innovative behavior**

Human resource management (HRM) is widely recognized as a strategic driver of employee innovative behavior because it shapes the conditions under which employees are able, motivated, and given opportunities to innovate. This logic is broadly consistent with the Ability–Motivation–Opportunity (AMO) perspective, which suggests that HRM practices influence innovation by strengthening employees' skills, encouraging their motivation, and creating supportive conditions for participation in idea generation and implementation. From this perspective, innovative behavior is not simply an individual trait, but an outcome that is partly structured by organizational systems and managerial practices.

High-performance work systems (HPWS), in particular, are frequently identified as integrated HRM bundles that enhance innovative behavior through mechanisms such as creativity and knowledge sharing (Amoozegar et al., 2025; Bos-Nehles et al., 2017). Rather than viewing HR practices in isolation, HPWS research emphasizes the combined effect of mutually reinforcing practices that promote employee development, involvement, and performance. In addition to HPWS, flexible HRM arrangements and high-commitment work practices have been shown to encourage employee adaptability and innovation (Sopiah et al., 2024; Thneibat, 2023). Research also suggests that HRM practices indirectly stimulate innovation by fostering engagement and positive work behaviors that support idea generation and implementation (Ogbonnaya & Messersmith, 2019). In this respect, psychological empowerment provides an additional explanatory lens, as employees are more likely to engage in innovative behavior when they experience autonomy, meaning, competence, and support within the workplace.

Knowledge-sharing perspectives further deepen this relationship by explaining how HRM supports innovative behavior through organizational learning, information exchange, and collaboration. Innovation at the employee level often depends not only on individual creativity, but also on access to shared knowledge and supportive communication processes that enable ideas to be refined and applied in practice. Recent studies also indicate that HRM-driven innovation extends beyond traditional organizational contexts. Digital HR practices facilitate digital transformation and strengthen innovative work behavior in technologically dynamic environments (Zhang et al., 2024). Similarly, green HRM practices promote environmentally oriented innovative behavior, reflecting increasing integration between sustainability objectives and HRM strategies (Aboramadan et al., 2022; Jiang et al., 2025). Related evidence also suggests that responsibility-oriented HRM can improve employee outcomes through attitudinal and behavioral mechanisms such as employee commitment and organizational citizenship behavior, reinforcing the broader relevance of sustainability-oriented HRM for employee performance and positive workplace behavior (Chau & Luc, 2026). These developments suggest that HRM has evolved into a strategic system designed to support innovation in increasingly complex, knowledge-intensive, and changing organizational environments.

## **2.3 Linking HRM and employee innovative behavior**

A growing body of research examines how HRM practices and systems contribute to employee innovative behavior and, subsequently, organizational innovation outcomes. Existing evidence suggests that HRM facilitates innovation by creating supportive environments that encourage learning, creativity, and collaboration, ultimately strengthening firm innovativeness and adaptability (Dorenbosch et al.,

2005; Sopiah et al., 2024). From this perspective, the relationship between HRM and employee innovative behavior can be understood through multiple but related theoretical lenses. AMO-oriented explanations emphasize how HRM enhances employees' abilities, motivation, and opportunities to contribute new ideas, while HPWS research highlights the role of integrated HRM systems in shaping innovation-supportive work environments. At the same time, knowledge-sharing perspectives stress the importance of learning, information exchange, and collaboration as mechanisms through which HRM practices are translated into innovation outcomes. Psychological empowerment further explains why employees are more likely to engage in innovative behavior when they experience autonomy, competence, and meaningful involvement in their work.

Emerging contexts such as digitalization and sustainability further expand this relationship, demonstrating how evolving HRM systems influence new forms of employee innovation (Zhang et al., 2024; Aboramadan et al., 2022; Jiang et al., 2025). Digital HRM extends the HRM–innovation link into technology-enabled work environments, while sustainability-oriented HRM highlights how employee innovation can also support broader environmental and long-term organizational goals. However, despite rapid growth, research linking HRM and employee innovative behavior remains fragmented across HRM, organizational behavior, innovation management, and sustainability studies. Variations in theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches, and research contexts have resulted in dispersed findings and limited conceptual integration. Recent review-oriented studies therefore highlight the need for systematic synthesis capable of mapping the evolution, dominant themes, and emerging trends within this field (Bos-Nehles et al., 2017; Nicolás-Agustín et al., 2022). Accordingly, a bibliometric approach is appropriate for providing a structured overview of the HRM–EIB research landscape and identifying its intellectual and thematic foundations to guide future research directions.

### **3. Research Methods**

This study employs a bibliometric approach to systematically map research on employee innovative behavior (EIB) within the human resource management (HRM) domain. Bibliometric analysis enables the quantitative examination of publication trends, intellectual structures, and thematic development through citation and keyword networks. As illustrated in Figure 1, the study followed a sequential process consisting of data collection, screening, bibliometric analysis, and visualization.

Data were retrieved from the Scopus database due to its extensive indexing of peer-reviewed journals relevant to human resource management (HRM) and innovation research, as well as its compatibility with bibliometric tools. Scopus is one of the most widely used and reliable databases for bibliometric analyses, offering a large repository of articles related to a wide range of academic disciplines, including HRM and organizational behavior. The search query applied was: TITLE-ABS-KEY (“employee innovative behavior” OR “innovative work behavior”) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY (“human resource management” OR HRM OR “HR practice\*” OR “human resource practice\*” OR HPWS). The search covered publications from 2005 to 2025, focusing on the title, abstract, and keyword fields to ensure topic relevance. The starting year 2005 was retained because it corresponds to the earliest publication identified in Scopus under the search criteria applied in this study, thereby marking the initial emergence of the HRM–EIB research domain within the dataset. Only English-language journal articles and review papers were included, while conference papers, editorials, and studies not explicitly related to HRM or employee-level innovation were excluded.

However, we acknowledge that relying solely on Scopus may limit the comprehensiveness of the study. While Scopus provides a robust and reliable dataset, other databases such as Web of Science or Google Scholar offer broader interdisciplinary coverage and access to gray literature, which may include conference papers, dissertations, and other non-peer-reviewed sources that Scopus does not fully index. Future research could benefit from incorporating multiple databases to enhance the representativeness of the dataset, thus reducing potential biases in citation patterns, journal

representation, and geographical distribution. By integrating additional databases, the study could offer a more complete and balanced view of the research landscape.

After the initial data collection, several steps were taken to clean and prepare the dataset. Duplicate records were identified and removed to ensure accuracy. Non-relevant studies, such as those outside the HRM context or unrelated to employee innovation, were excluded. The following screening criteria were applied: relevance to employee innovative behavior and HRM practices, inclusion of only peer-reviewed journal articles or review papers, and exclusion of conference papers, editorials, and non-English articles. This resulted in a final dataset of 230 publications.

The analysis combined several bibliometric techniques: performance analysis, co-citation analysis, and keyword co-occurrence analysis. Performance analysis was used to identify publication trends, influential contributors, and citation patterns. It examined publication numbers, the most cited papers, and productive authors. Co-citation analysis uncovered the intellectual structure of the field by analyzing citation relationships, identifying seminal works and key authors who have shaped the research landscape. Keyword co-occurrence analysis revealed thematic clusters and emerging research directions by examining how frequently certain keywords co-occurred in the dataset.

Data processing and visualization were conducted using the VOSviewer tool and the Bibliometrix package in R. VOSviewer was used to construct networks based on citation and co-occurrence data, while Bibliometrix facilitated the quantitative analysis and visualization. The use of these tools ensured transparency, reproducibility, and robust insights into the intellectual structure of the field.

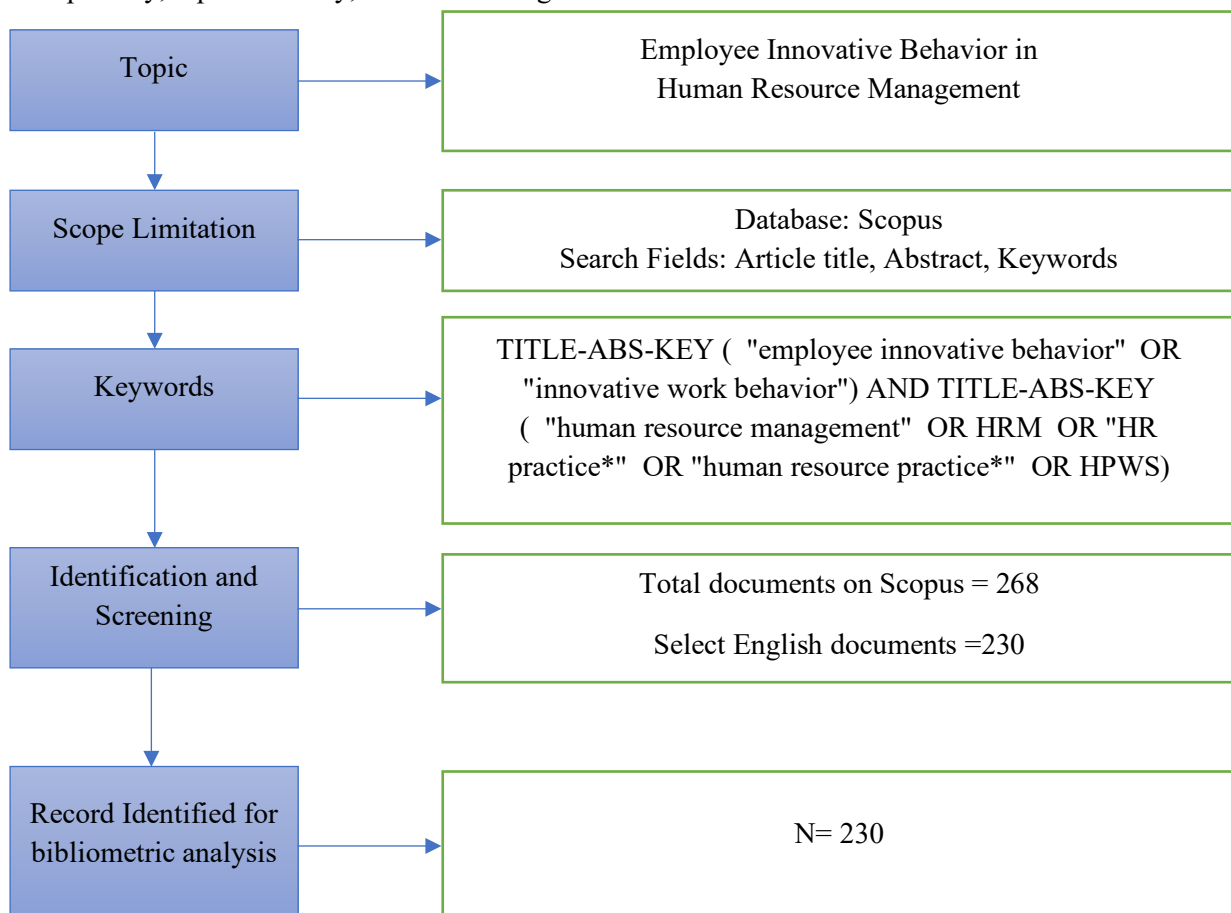


Fig.1 : Research procedure

## 4. Results and Discussion

Table 1: Main Information of Data

| Timespan                       | 2005–2025 |
|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Sources (Journals)             | 155       |
| Documents                      | 230       |
| Annual Growth Rate (%)         | 9.73      |
| Document Average Age           | 4.53      |
| Average citations per document | 28.82     |
| References                     | 1634      |
| Keywords Plus (ID)             | 531       |
| Author's Keywords (DE)         | 688       |

Table 1 summarizes the main descriptive statistics of the dataset analysed in this study. The bibliometric review covers 230 English-language journal articles and review papers published between 2005 and 2025 across 155 indexed journals. The dataset shows an annual growth rate of 9.73%, indicating a steady and continuous increase in scholarly interest in the relationship between human resource management and employee innovative behavior. The average document age of 4.53 years suggests that the field is relatively recent yet sufficiently mature to reveal evolving research patterns. On average, each publication has received 28.82 citations, reflecting the growing academic visibility and influence of the topic. In total, the corpus includes 1,634 references, along with 531 Keywords Plus (ID) and 688 Author's Keywords (DE), demonstrating the conceptual breadth and thematic diversity of research linking HRM practices with employee innovative behavior.

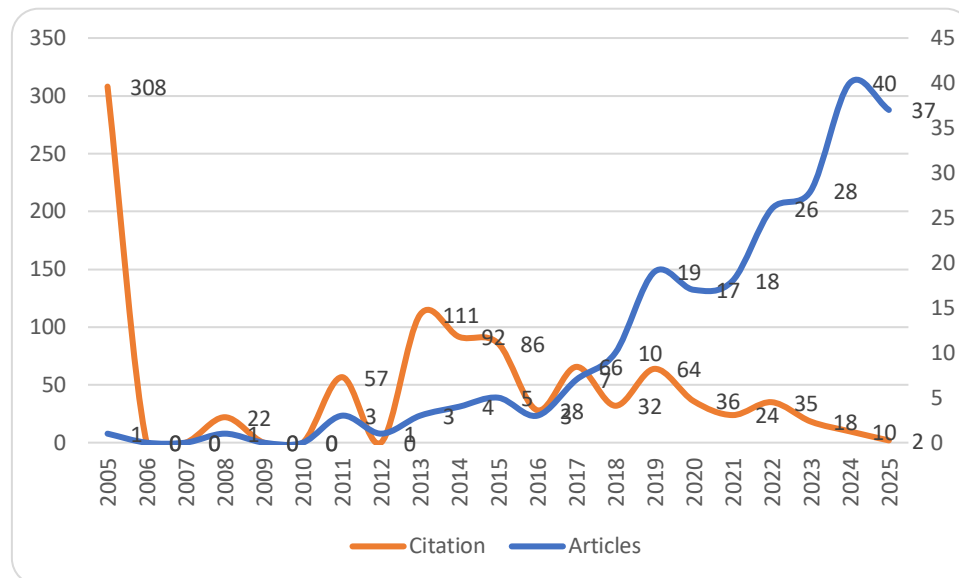


Fig.2: Number of documents and citations

Figure 2 presents the annual evolution of publications and citations on employee innovative behavior within the human resource management domain from 2005 to 2025. The early stage of the literature (2005–2012) was characterized by limited publication output, although several influential studies laid the conceptual foundation for subsequent research development. From 2013 onward, publication activity increased gradually, suggesting a growing recognition of employee innovative behavior as an important mechanism through which HRM contributes to organizational adaptability, performance, and innovation outcomes. This expansion likely reflects broader shifts in management

research toward employee-centered perspectives on innovation, alongside rising interest in high-performance work systems, engagement, and knowledge-sharing mechanisms.

A more pronounced growth phase emerged after 2019, when publication output increased sharply and reached its highest levels in recent years. This acceleration may be associated with several concurrent developments. First, rapid digital transformation across organizations increased scholarly attention to how HRM practices support employee adaptability, creativity, and innovation in technology-enabled workplaces. Second, growing sustainability concerns encouraged research linking HRM with green innovation and broader organizational change. Third, post-pandemic organizational restructuring, remote and hybrid work arrangements, and the increasing adoption of AI and digital tools may have further intensified interest in innovative employee behavior as a strategic capability for resilience and transformation. In contrast, citation counts show a declining trend in the most recent years, which is likely attributable to the citation time-lag effect, as newly published studies have had less time to accumulate citations. Overall, the pattern suggests a transition from an early stage shaped by foundational contributions to a more rapidly expanding and contextually diversified research stream driven by digitalization, sustainability, and changing work environments.

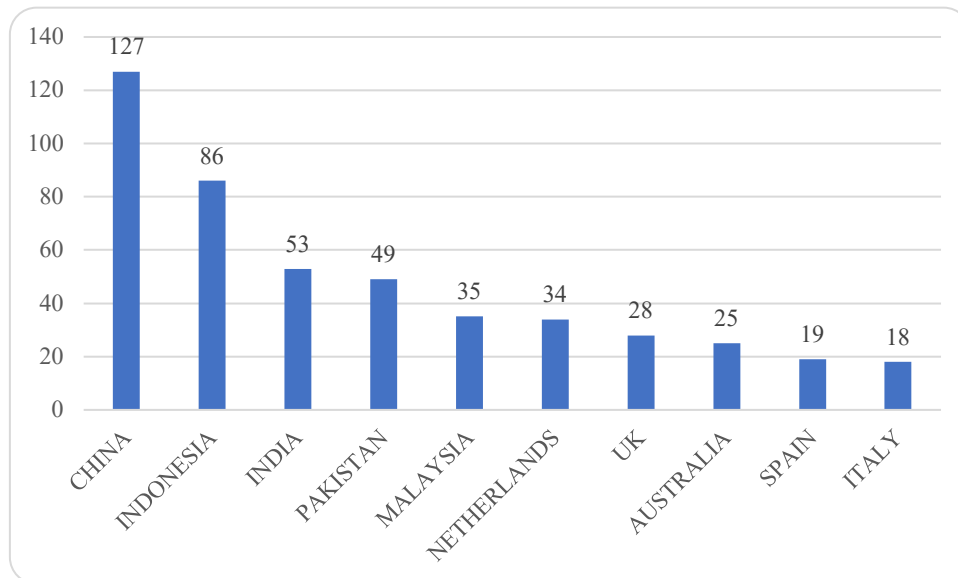


Fig.3: Countries' Scientific Production

Figure 3 illustrates the geographical distribution of scientific production related to employee innovative behavior within the human resource management domain. Based on raw publication counts, China is the most productive contributor with 127 publications, followed by Indonesia (86), India (53), and Pakistan (49). Malaysia (35) and the Netherlands (34) also show notable research output, while the United Kingdom (28), Australia (25), Spain (19), and Italy (18) maintain moderate but consistent contributions to this research area. These figures indicate that research on employee innovative behavior has attracted substantial attention across both Asian and European contexts.

At the same time, this country-level analysis should be interpreted with caution because it is based only on publication output and does not account for differences in country size, number of researchers, research funding, or citation impact. Therefore, the results reflect relative publication activity rather than normalized scientific performance. Even so, the observed distribution suggests that the literature is increasingly shaped by diverse institutional and managerial settings, particularly in emerging Asian economies where innovation, organizational transformation, and HRM development have become important research priorities. Future studies may strengthen this analysis by incorporating additional

indicators such as average citations per country, international collaboration patterns, or output normalized by research capacity.

Table 2: Top 5 journals in the field

| Sources                                            | Articles |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------|
| COGENT BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT                     | 6        |
| EMPLOYEE RELATIONS                                 | 6        |
| INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT | 6        |
| INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INNOVATION SCIENCE        | 5        |
| HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT                          | 4        |

Table 2 shows the distribution of publications across the top five journal outlets contributing to research on employee innovative behavior within the human resource management field. The journal profile indicates that this research area is primarily shaped by HRM-, employment-, and management-oriented outlets. Journals such as *Employee Relations*, *Human Resource Management*, and *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* emphasize the role of HR systems, people management practices, organizational climate, and leadership conditions in fostering innovation-supportive work environments. These outlets reflect the strong positioning of employee innovative behavior within the broader HRM and employment relations literature.

At the same time, journals such as *International Journal of Innovation Science* and *Cogent Business and Management* extend the discussion toward broader innovation and management perspectives, where employee innovative behavior is linked to organizational adaptability, innovation capability, and firm-level outcomes. Taken together, this distribution suggests that the field is not only multidisciplinary in a broad sense, but also strongly anchored in HRM and management scholarship, with complementary contributions from innovation-oriented research.

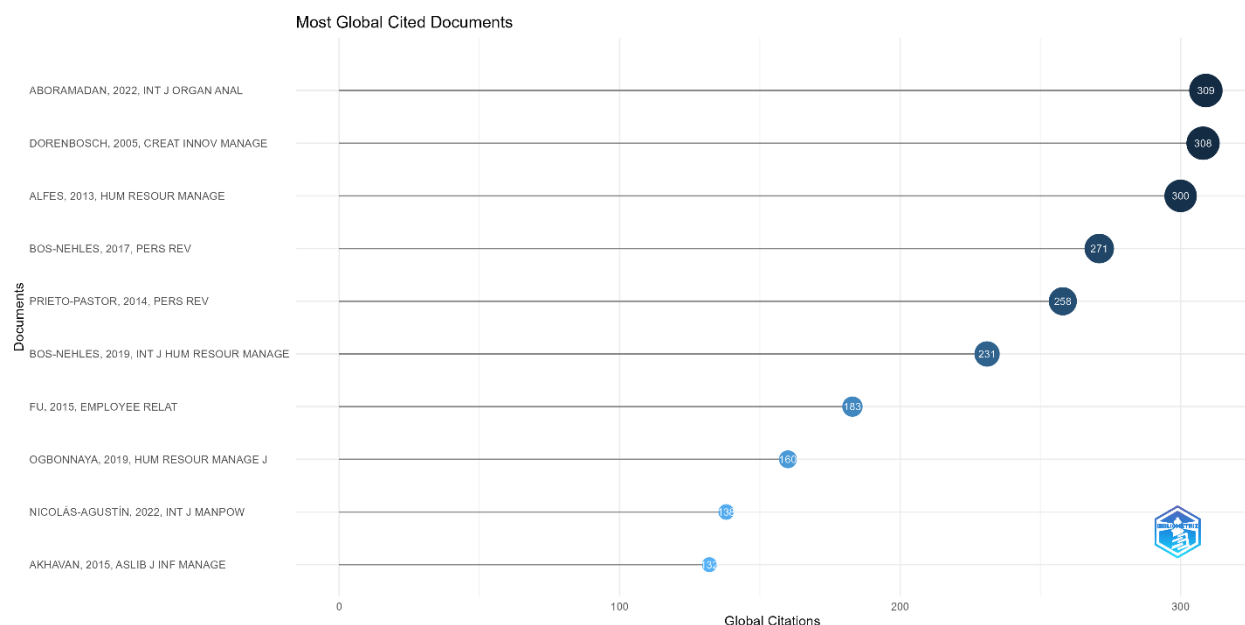


Fig.4: Most Cited Documents

Table 3. Top ten studies with the highest citation

| Title                                                                                                                                           | Author                                                                 | Total Citations |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| The effect of green HRM on employee green behaviors in higher education: The mediating mechanism of green work engagement                       | Aboramadan, M., Kundi, Y. M., & Elhamalawi, E. M. I. (2022)            | 309             |
| On-the-job innovation: The impact of job design and human resource management through production ownership                                      | Dorenbosch, L., van Engen, M. L., & Verhagen, M. (2005)                | 308             |
| The relationship between line manager behavior, perceived HRM practices, and individual performance: Examining the mediating role of engagement | Alfes, K., Shantz, A. D., Truss, C., & Soane, E. C. (2013)             | 300             |
| HRM and innovative work behaviour: A systematic literature review                                                                               | Bos-Nehles, A. C., Renkema, M., & Janssen, M. (2017)                   | 271             |
| Managing innovative work behavior: The role of human resource practices                                                                         | Prieto-Pastor, I., & Pérez-Santana, M. P. (2014)                       | 258             |
| Perceptions of HR practices and innovative work behavior: The moderating effect of an innovative climate                                        | Bos-Nehles, A. C., & Veenendaal, A. A. (2019)                          | 231             |
| How do high performance work systems influence organizational innovation in professional service firms?                                         | Fu, N., Flood, P. C., Bosak, J., Morris, T., & O'Regan, P. (2015)      | 183             |
| Employee performance, well-being, and differential effects of human resource management subdimensions: Mutual gains or conflicting outcomes?    | Ogbonnaya, C., & Messersmith, J. (2019)                                | 160             |
| The role of human resource practices in the implementation of digital transformation                                                            | Nicolás-Agustín, Á., Jiménez-Jiménez, D., & Mañas-Rodríguez, M. (2022) | 138             |
| Knowledge-sharing determinants, behaviors, and innovative work behaviors: An integrated theoretical view and empirical examination              | Akhavan, P., Hosseini, S. M., Abbasi, M., & Manteghi, M. (2015)        | 132             |

Figure 4 and Table 3 present the most globally cited publications associated with the literature on employee innovative behavior (EIB) within the human resource management domain, thereby identifying the studies that have had the strongest scholarly influence on the development of this research field. However, these highly cited works do not all contribute in the same way. Some are directly central to the HRM–EIB relationship, while others exert a more indirect influence by extending the field toward related constructs such as employee engagement, green behavior, knowledge sharing, and digital transformation.

Among the most directly relevant contributions, Dorenbosch, van Engen, and Verhagen (2005) (308 citations), Bos-Nehles, Renkema, and Janssen (2017) (271 citations), Prieto-Pastor and Pérez-Santana (2014) (258 citations), and Bos-Nehles and Veenendaal (2019) (231 citations) can be regarded as core works because they focus explicitly on innovative work behavior and its relationship with HRM practices, supportive climates, and organizational conditions. These studies provide the most direct intellectual foundation for understanding how HRM influences employee innovative behavior.

By contrast, several other highly cited publications are influential because they broaden the explanatory context of the field rather than address employee innovative behavior as their sole or central construct. For example, Alfes et al. (2013) highlight the role of line manager behavior and perceived

HRM practices through employee engagement, Aboramadan et al. (2022) connect green HRM with green employee outcomes, Nicolás-Agustín et al. (2022) focus on HR practices in digital transformation, and Ogbonnaya and Messersmith (2019) examine broader HRM subdimensions in relation to employee performance and well-being. These studies are important because they show how adjacent constructs and emerging organizational contexts have influenced the development of EIB-related research.

Akhavan et al. (2015) and Fu et al. (2015) occupy an intermediate position, as they do not focus exclusively on EIB but contribute important explanatory mechanisms by linking knowledge sharing and high-performance work systems to innovation-related outcomes. Taken together, the citation profile suggests that the field is shaped both by a core stream of HRM–EIB research and by adjacent lines of inquiry that extend the field toward engagement, sustainability, knowledge processes, and digital transformation. This distinction helps clarify how the intellectual structure of the literature has evolved beyond narrowly defined employee innovative behavior toward a broader and more interconnected research landscape.

### Co-occurrence of author keywords

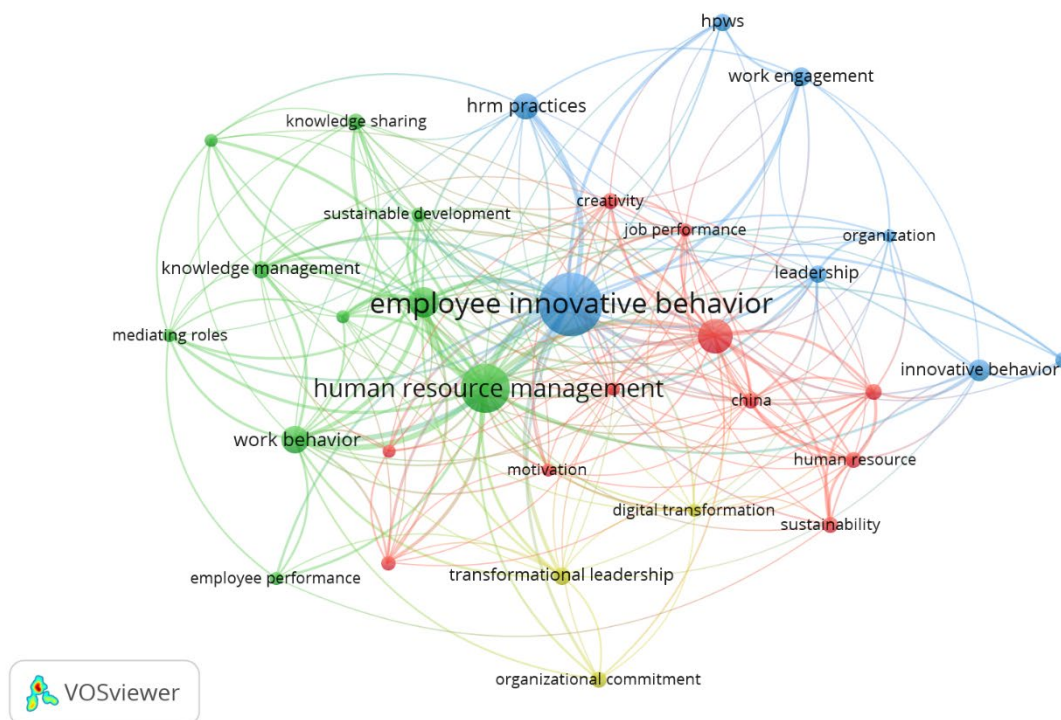


Fig.5: The network of co-occurring keywords

Based on the keyword co-occurrence analysis conducted using VOSviewer, four distinct research clusters were identified within the literature on employee innovative behavior (EIB) in the human resource management (HRM) domain. Figure 5 visualizes the network of co-occurring keywords and illustrates structural relationships among major research themes, with each cluster representing a set of concepts that frequently appear together in the dataset. The clusters were generated by VOSviewer on the basis of co-occurrence link strength among keywords, meaning that terms that appeared more frequently together across documents were grouped into the same cluster. The interpretation and labeling of each cluster in this study were then based on a qualitative reading of the most prominent keywords within each group, their relative centrality in the network, and their conceptual consistency

with the surrounding terms. In addition, sub-themes were identified by examining smaller conceptual concentrations within each cluster, especially where several keywords formed a recognizable thematic pattern. Accordingly, the cluster labels should be understood as analytical interpretations derived from the keyword structure rather than as completely fixed or mutually exclusive categories.

Cluster 1 reflects psychological drivers and innovation outcomes, emphasizing themes such as creativity, creative self-efficacy, motivation, job performance, innovation, and sustainability. This interpretation is based on the concentration of keywords associated with individual cognition, motivation, and performance-related consequences of innovative behavior. The cluster highlights how individual psychological resources and motivational factors influence innovative behavior and related performance outcomes within HR contexts. Research in this stream frequently employs quantitative approaches, including structural equation modelling, to examine relationships among HR factors, employee cognition, and innovation outcomes (Alfes et al., 2013; Dorenbosch et al., 2005; Prieto-Pastor & Pérez-Santana, 2014). The presence of sustainability-related terms also suggests an expanding research interest in connecting employee innovation with broader organizational responsibility and long-term performance perspectives (Aboramadan et al., 2022). Within this cluster, two sub-themes can be identified. The first focuses on psychological mechanisms such as creativity and self-efficacy as antecedents of innovative behavior and performance outcomes (Dorenbosch et al., 2005; Bos-Nehles et al., 2017). The second links innovation outcomes with broader organizational contexts, including sustainability and resource management considerations (Aboramadan et al., 2022).

Cluster 2 centres on knowledge-based and behavioral management perspectives, with strong emphasis on human resource management, knowledge management, knowledge sharing, and mediating mechanisms. This cluster was grouped under a knowledge and behavioral process orientation because the dominant keywords point to organizational learning, information exchange, and intervening mechanisms that connect HRM practices with employee outcomes. Research in this cluster adopts an organizational-process perspective, examining how HRM practices influence employee performance and innovation through knowledge exchange and behavioral pathways. Studies consistently identify knowledge sharing and organizational learning as critical mechanisms linking HR systems to innovation outcomes (Akhavan et al., 2015; Ogbonnaya & Messersmith, 2019). Two interrelated sub-themes emerge within this cluster. The first concerns knowledge management and information processes as organizational enablers of innovation. The second highlights mediating behavioral mechanisms that explain how HRM practices influence innovative outcomes (Bos-Nehles et al., 2017; Nicolás-Agustín et al., 2022). The inclusion of sustainable development terms indicates that knowledge capabilities are increasingly associated with long-term organizational adaptability.

Cluster 3 represents the core HRM–innovation nexus, focusing on strategic HR systems and leadership influences on employee innovative behavior. This label was assigned because the most central terms in the cluster, including HRM practices, high-performance work systems (HPWS), leadership, psychological empowerment, and work engagement, consistently point to formal HR architectures and managerial conditions that support employee innovation. Prior studies suggest that HRM systems and high-involvement work practices enhance engagement and empowerment, thereby stimulating employee innovation (Prieto-Pastor & Pérez-Santana, 2014; Bos-Nehles et al., 2017; Fu et al., 2015). This cluster can be further divided into two sub-themes. The first examines HRM systems and strategic practices as direct drivers of innovative behavior (Prieto-Pastor & Pérez-Santana, 2014; Fu et al., 2015). The second emphasizes psychological empowerment and work engagement as mechanisms translating HR interventions into innovation outcomes (Bos-Nehles et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2024).

Cluster 4 reflects emerging themes related to organizational transformation and digital contexts, including digital transformation, organizational commitment, and transformational leadership. Although smaller in size, this cluster was interpreted as an emerging transformation-oriented theme

because its keywords are associated with technologically dynamic environments and change-related organizational conditions. Recent studies suggest that digital HR practices and transformational leadership increasingly influence employee adaptability, commitment, and willingness to innovate during organizational change (Aboramadan et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2024). Two complementary sub-themes are evident within this cluster. The first concerns digital transformation and its implications for HRM and innovation processes. The second highlights transformational leadership and organizational commitment as key factors supporting innovation during periods of organizational change.

Taken together, the four clusters illustrate that research on employee innovative behavior within the HRM domain is thematically interconnected and multi-level, spanning individual psychological foundations, knowledge and learning processes, strategic HRM systems, and broader transformational organizational contexts. At the same time, the boundaries among clusters should not be interpreted as completely rigid, because several keywords are linked across multiple themes in the network. In summary, psychological and motivational antecedents (Cluster 1) provide the individual-level conditions that stimulate employee innovative behavior, which is further facilitated through knowledge sharing and organizational learning mechanisms (Cluster 2). These micro-level behavioral processes are strengthened and institutionalized through strategic HRM practices and leadership-driven systems (Cluster 3), while recent studies increasingly situate these dynamics within digitalization, sustainability, and organizational transformation environments that shape the future trajectory of innovation-oriented HRM research (Cluster 4), as summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of Keyword Clusters, Themes, and Sub-themes

| Cluster                   | Keywords                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Theme                                                    | Sub-themes                                                                                                                                                  |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Cluster 1 (Red)</b>    | china; creative self-efficacy; creativity; design/methodology/approach; human resource; innovation; job performance; motivation; resource management; structural equation modeling; sustainability          | Psychological Drivers and Innovation Outcomes            | (1) Psychological mechanisms of employee innovation (creativity, motivation, self-efficacy) (2) Innovation outcomes and sustainability-oriented performance |
| <b>Cluster 2 (Green)</b>  | behavioral research; competition; employee performance; human resource management; information management; knowledge management; knowledge sharing; mediating roles; sustainable development; work behavior | Knowledge Management and Behavioral Processes in HRM     | (1) Knowledge sharing and organizational learning mechanisms (2) Mediating behavioral processes linking HRM and performance                                 |
| <b>Cluster 3 (Blue)</b>   | employee innovative behavior; hpws; hrm practices; innovative behavior; leadership; organization; psychological empowerment; work engagement                                                                | Strategic HRM Systems and Leadership for Innovation      | (1) HRM practices and HPWS as innovation enablers (2) Empowerment, engagement and leadership-driven innovation                                              |
| <b>Cluster 4 (Yellow)</b> | digital transformation; organizational commitment; transformational leadership                                                                                                                              | Digital Transformation and Organizational Change Context | (1) Digital HRM and innovation in transforming workplaces (2) Transformational leadership and organizational commitment during change                       |

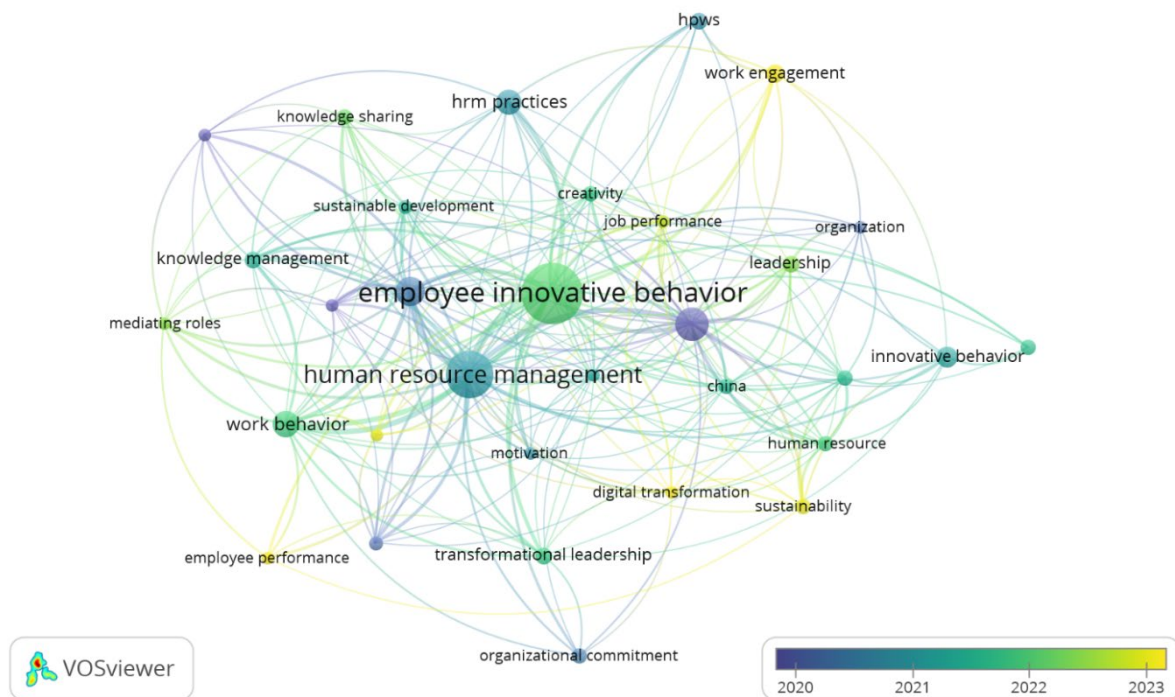


Fig.6: Keyword co-occurrence evolution

Figure 6 illustrates the temporal evolution of keyword co-occurrence in the literature on employee innovative behavior within the human resource management domain, using an overlay visualization generated by VOSviewer. In this visualization, the colour gradient from darker blue to lighter green and yellow represents the average publication year of keywords, allowing the identification of shifts in research emphasis over time. Rather than showing only the presence of keywords, the overlay map provides an approximate temporal indication of when particular terms became more prominent in the literature. In the present dataset, the observed keyword evolution is concentrated mainly between 2020 and 2023, suggesting that the recent development of the field has been marked by increasingly differentiated thematic priorities.

During the earlier stage of the observed period, represented by darker blue-coloured keywords with earlier average publication years, research mainly focused on foundational organizational and managerial concepts such as organization, HRM practices, high-performance work systems (HPWS), and organizational commitment. These keywords indicate that the literature initially concentrated on the structural and strategic HRM conditions that support employee innovative behavior. In the subsequent phase, represented by green-coloured keywords with intermediate average publication years, the literature increasingly incorporated behavioral and knowledge-based perspectives. Keywords such as knowledge management, knowledge sharing, work behavior, mediating roles, and leadership became more prominent, indicating a shift toward explaining the mechanisms through which HRM practices influence innovative behavior. In the most recent stage, shown by lighter green and yellow-coloured keywords with later average publication years, terms related to digital transformation, sustainability, work engagement, employee performance, and creativity became more visible. This pattern suggests that the field has recently expanded toward contemporary organizational challenges shaped by technological change, employee engagement, and sustainability agendas.

Overall, the overlay visualization indicates a temporal progression from foundational HRM structures toward behavioral mechanisms and, more recently, toward digital, transformational, and sustainability-oriented perspectives. To strengthen this interpretation, the average publication years of

the most visible emerging terms can be reported separately in a supplementary table. In particular, keywords such as digital transformation, sustainability, work engagement, and employee performance appear closer to the most recent end of the overlay spectrum, suggesting that they represent newer directions in the literature compared with more established terms such as HRM practices, HPWS, and organizational commitment. This temporal shift reflects a gradual broadening of research on employee innovative behavior, moving from traditional HRM frameworks toward more integrative approaches that incorporate digitalization, engagement, and strategic organizational change.

## **Discussion and Future Research**

The findings of this bibliometric analysis provide a comprehensive overview of how research on employee innovative behavior within the human resource management domain has evolved conceptually and thematically over time. The results indicate a gradual shift from early studies emphasizing HRM systems and structural conditions toward more integrative perspectives that incorporate psychological, behavioral, and knowledge-based mechanisms. This evolution reflects growing recognition that employee innovation is not solely shaped by formal HR practices but also by engagement, empowerment, and organizational contexts that influence how innovation-oriented behaviors emerge in practice (Dorenbosch et al., 2005; Prieto-Pastor & Pérez-Santana, 2014; Alfes et al., 2013). At the same time, the bibliometric structure suggests that this integration remains partial rather than fully consolidated. Although strategic HRM, psychological processes, and knowledge-sharing mechanisms are increasingly linked, these lines of inquiry still appear to develop unevenly across the literature, indicating that the field remains intellectually connected but not yet fully integrated.

A key insight emerging from the analysis is the central role of HRM systems in enabling employee innovative behavior. Highly cited studies consistently demonstrate that HR practices, including high-performance work systems and supportive organizational climates, create conditions that foster creativity, work engagement, and innovation-related outcomes (Dorenbosch et al., 2005; Bos-Nehles et al., 2017). Rather than treating innovation as an isolated outcome, the literature increasingly positions employee innovative behavior as a strategic mechanism linking HRM practices to broader organizational performance and adaptability (Prieto-Pastor & Pérez-Santana, 2014; Alfes et al., 2013). However, the bibliometric evidence also suggests a continuing imbalance in the field: structural HRM frameworks remain more firmly established than newer lines of inquiry related to digital HRM, sustainability-oriented HRM, and transformation-driven innovation. In other words, the field appears to be expanding faster in thematic breadth than in conceptual integration.

Another important theme concerns the growing integration of knowledge management and behavioral mechanisms into HRM research. Existing studies emphasize the role of knowledge sharing, information management, and organizational learning processes as mediating pathways through which HRM systems influence innovation outcomes (Akhavan et al., 2015; Nicolás-Agustín et al., 2022). This suggests a conceptual shift from structural HRM models toward process-oriented explanations that highlight knowledge flows and collaborative interactions as drivers of innovative behavior. Nevertheless, the bibliometric patterns also point to a gap between these knowledge-based perspectives and the more recent digital transformation stream. While digital transformation appears as an emerging theme, it is not yet strongly embedded in the broader HRM–innovation literature. This suggests that research has begun to recognize digital organizational contexts, but has not yet sufficiently explained how digital HR infrastructures, platform-based work systems, AI-enabled management, and data-driven HR practices reshape employee innovative behavior in a theoretically integrated way.

The emergence of sustainability-related and digital transformation themes further illustrates the expansion of the field. Recent studies increasingly connect employee innovation with sustainability agendas and digital workplace transformation, suggesting that innovative behavior has become central to organizational adaptability in rapidly changing environments (Aboramadan et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2024). This shift broadens the scope of HRM research beyond traditional performance-oriented

outcomes and positions employee innovation as a strategic capability supporting long-term organizational resilience. However, the bibliometric evidence indicates that these emerging themes remain relatively peripheral compared with the more established clusters centered on HR systems, leadership, and psychological mechanisms. This pattern suggests that sustainability and digitalization are promising but still developing frontiers, rather than fully integrated pillars of the field.

The bibliometric findings also reveal strong contextual influences, particularly the growing contribution of emerging economies to the development of this literature. Empirical studies conducted in Asian contexts indicate increasing interest in innovation-driven HRM strategies within rapidly changing institutional environments. This trend contributes to a more context-sensitive understanding of employee innovation and highlights potential differences in how HRM practices operate across diverse cultural and organizational settings (Dorenbosch et al., 2005; Alfes et al., 2013). At the same time, the country-level distribution and thematic structure suggest that cross-cultural comparison remains insufficiently developed. Although the literature is increasingly international in publication output, there is still limited integration of comparative evidence across institutional, cultural, and economic settings. As a result, the field has not yet fully clarified whether the mechanisms linking HRM and employee innovative behavior are universal or context-dependent.

Taken together, the findings suggest that research on employee innovative behavior in HRM has evolved into a multi-level and interdisciplinary field integrating strategic HRM, organizational behavior, and innovation management perspectives. Employee innovative behavior emerges as a key behavioral mechanism connecting HR systems with organizational learning, adaptation, and long-term competitiveness. Yet the bibliometric results also indicate several unresolved issues in the field, including limited integration between digital HRM and innovation research, insufficient comparative evidence across countries and institutional contexts, and a continued reliance on cross-sectional explanations rather than temporally grounded models of change. These gaps suggest that the field is not lacking in thematic diversity, but rather in stronger theoretical and empirical connections across its expanding domains.

Building on the thematic patterns and research gaps identified through the bibliometric analysis, several directions for future research can be proposed. First, future studies should further examine how digital transformation and digital HR practices influence employee innovative behavior, particularly in technology-driven work environments (Zhang et al., 2024). More specifically, research should clarify how digital HR systems, AI-supported management processes, and digitally mediated work arrangements alter employees' opportunities, motivations, and capacities to innovate. Second, more research is needed to understand how knowledge-sharing processes and learning-oriented climates shape innovation outcomes across different organizational contexts (Akhavan et al., 2015; Nicolás-Agustín et al., 2022). Third, scholars could further explore the role of leadership and psychological empowerment in strengthening the HRM–innovation relationship, particularly under conditions of organizational change (Prieto-Pastor & Pérez-Santana, 2014; Fu et al., 2015). Fourth, sustainability-oriented innovation and green HRM perspectives should be more strongly integrated into employee innovation research to clarify how innovation contributes to long-term organizational and societal goals (Aboramadan et al., 2022). Fifth, cross-country comparative studies would help clarify how institutional and cultural differences influence HRM-driven innovation dynamics, especially across developed and emerging economies. Finally, longitudinal research designs are needed to better capture how HR practices and employee innovative behavior evolve over time and contribute to sustained organizational performance, as current bibliometric patterns suggest a field still dominated by static or short-term explanatory models.

By applying bibliometric techniques, this study maps the intellectual structure and thematic evolution of research on employee innovative behavior in HRM. Although the analysis is limited to

Scopus-indexed publications, the results provide a structured foundation for advancing more integrated, comparative, and context-sensitive research on HRM-driven employee innovation.

### **Practical Implications**

The bibliometric findings also provide several practical implications for HR leaders, managers, and organizations seeking to foster employee innovative behavior. First, the strong presence of themes related to HRM systems, high-performance work practices, work engagement, and psychological empowerment suggests that innovation should be supported through integrated HR architectures rather than isolated initiatives. Recruitment, training, performance management, and reward systems should be aligned to encourage creativity, experimentation, and proactive problem solving. Second, the prominence of knowledge-sharing and knowledge-management themes indicates that organizations should strengthen internal learning mechanisms, collaborative routines, and cross-unit communication in order to facilitate the exchange of ideas and innovative practices. Third, the visibility of leadership-related themes suggests that leadership development should focus on empowerment, supportive supervision, and the creation of psychologically safe environments in which employees feel encouraged to propose and implement new ideas. Fourth, the emergence of digital transformation and sustainability as recent themes implies that organizations should increasingly connect innovation-oriented HR strategies with digital HR systems, technology-enabled work processes, and sustainability-related organizational goals. In practical terms, this means that employee innovative behavior should be treated as a strategic capability developed through the combined influence of HR policy, leadership, knowledge infrastructure, and digital readiness.

### **Research Limitations**

Several limitations of this study should be noted. First, the bibliometric dataset was collected exclusively from the Scopus database. Although Scopus is one of the most widely used and reliable sources for bibliometric analysis, its use as the sole database may limit the comprehensiveness of the study, as relevant publications indexed in Web of Science, Google Scholar, or other databases were not included. This may influence the overall representation of journals, citation relationships, and country-level publication patterns. Second, the study was limited to English-language journal articles and review papers. This decision improved consistency in screening and analysis, but it may also have excluded potentially relevant studies published in other languages, thereby introducing a degree of language bias. Third, the interpretation of keyword clusters involves an unavoidable analytical judgment. While VOSviewer generated the clusters according to the strength of keyword co-occurrence links, the labeling and thematic interpretation of these clusters were based on the authors' reading of the most prominent and conceptually related keywords. Therefore, the cluster structure should be interpreted as a meaningful but not absolute representation of the field. Future research may strengthen the robustness of bibliometric findings by integrating multiple databases, broadening language coverage, and combining bibliometric techniques with systematic or qualitative review approaches.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study was conducted to assess the state of research and identify the main research directions within the field of employee innovative behavior in human resource management, based on publications indexed in the Scopus database from 2005 to 2025. The findings suggest that the intellectual structure of the field is shaped by four interconnected themes: psychological mechanisms of innovation, knowledge-based organizational processes, strategic HRM systems, and emerging transformation-oriented contexts associated with digitalization and sustainability. Taken together, these patterns indicate that employee innovative behavior is increasingly understood as a multi-level phenomenon influenced by individual, organizational, and contextual factors.

Among the emerging themes, digital transformation appears to be one of the most significant recent directions, reflecting the growing importance of technology-enabled coordination, knowledge flows, and adaptive organizational processes in shaping employee innovation. This suggests that research on employee innovative behavior is becoming increasingly relevant not only to HRM and innovation management, but also to organizational informatics and service-oriented organizational systems.

Overall, this bibliometric mapping provides a structured foundation for future research and highlights the need for more integrated perspectives linking HRM, digital work environments, organizational knowledge processes, and sustainable organizational adaptation.

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