

Celebrating 30 years of Career Development International: nine key topics among 1,186 abstracts (1996–2025)

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Abstract

Purpose – This study maps the conceptual structure of Career Development International (CDI) over its 30-year history. It identifies the principal topics based on published works between January 1996 and June 2025, tracing the shifting prevalence of these topics over time.



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Design/methodology/approach – Structural topic modelling was applied to a dataset of 1,186 CDI abstracts. Model selection and interpretability checks supported a nine-topic solution that maximised thematic distinctiveness and coherence. The analysis tracks longitudinal variation in topic prevalence, profiles 18 influential authors and 12 high-impact articles to distinguish specialist and generalist patterns of contribution and links thematic clusters to citation impact. Interpretive depth was further enriched through reflections from seven scholars with strong connections to CDI.

Findings – The nine topics identified capture the journal’s evolving emphases and reveal both enduring interests and emerging priorities in the field. Temporal patterns highlight phases of growth and decline across topics, while author and article profiling distinguish between concentrated expertise and broad engagement. Citation analysis demonstrates how particular topics have influenced scholarly and practical impact. Insights from seven scholars contextualise these dynamics and suggest promising directions for future inquiry.

Originality/value – Extending earlier bibliometric work undertaken at CDI’s 25th anniversary, this study offers similar findings but with greater granularity and a multi-dimensional perspective that integrates computational text analysis with expert reflection. The findings provide an empirical foundation for current and future editors, broader editorial team members and prospective contributors to understand the journal’s trajectory and to shape its future development.

Keywords Career development, Expatriate careers, Job insecurity, Graduate employability, Leadership, Mentoring, Structural topic modelling, Sustainable development, Talent management, Wellbeing, Work–family dynamics, Work-identity

Paper type General review

Introduction

Career Development International (CDI) was first published in 1996 following the merger of *Executive Development* with the *International Journal of Career Management*. Over the past three decades Emerald Group Publishing has published the journal, guided by nine Editors: Jeff Gold (1996–1999), Alan Fish (1999–2001), Stephen Gibb (2002–2004), Yehuda Baruch (2004–2007), Hetty van Emmerik (2007–2010), Jim Jawahar (2007–2022), Jennifer A. Harrison (2023–2025), William E. Donald (2025–2027) and Laxmikant Manroop (2026–2028). Their reflections on the journal’s evolution appear in the specially commissioned *Editorial: Celebrating 30 Years of Career Development International* (Gold *et al.*, 2026).

At its inception, *CDI* was primarily conceived as a practitioner-oriented outlet focusing on how employers, managers and leaders manage their employees’ careers. Over time, it transitioned toward a more academic focus, paying greater attention to workers’ own agency, while retaining relevance to practitioners in a range of career-related professions. Since 2004, *CDI* has worked closely with the *Careers Division* of the *Academy of Management* to attract high-quality submissions and establish its role as a developmental journal that supports global scholars throughout their career spans. In 2024, the launch of the *Practitioner Insights* section (Harrison and Donald, 2024) reaffirmed *CDI*’s original practitioner-oriented focus while strengthening its commitment to engaging academics and policymakers. Today, *CDI* is among the most interdisciplinary journals of career development, publishing research across vocational and organisational psychology, human resource management, leadership, graduate employability, career counselling, labour studies, and related fields. It also seeks to integrate, bridge or reconcile the diverse literatures within and across these domains (e.g. Akkermans *et al.*, 2024; Healy *et al.*, 2025).

To mark *CDI*’s 25th anniversary, Varma *et al.* (2021) published a bibliometric review of articles published in *CDI* between 1996 and 2020. Five years later, the rationale for a new review is twofold. First, the external environment has shifted dramatically. Global disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Kingdom’s departure from the European Union, the rise of large language models and artificial intelligence, and geopolitical instability have reshaped career experiences as never before. In parallel, *CDI* has hosted special issues on timely and emergent topics, such as career shocks (Akkermans *et al.*, 2021), career theory and research trends (Jawahar, 2022), self-initiated expatriates (Andresen *et al.*, 2023), linguistic profiling (Hughes *et al.*, 2024), positive psychology (Budworth and Masood, 2024), and neurodivergence (Donald *et al.*, 2025). In addition, theoretical and literature review contributions in regular issues have also advanced the field, such as a critical review of contingent work (Retkowsky *et al.*, 2023), the reframing of sustainable careers (Donald *et al.*, 2024a), explorations of career

trajectories in the future workplace (Rabenu and Baruch, 2025), and a mapping of the multidisciplinary perspectives on employability (Healy *et al.*, 2025).

Second, while bibliometric analysis provides valuable insight into publication trends and social structures of scholarship, Structural Topic Modelling (STM) offers finer granularity and richer fidelity in capturing the concepts addressed in published work (Lindstedt, 2019; Roberts *et al.*, 2019). STM allows latent topic clusters to be uncovered from large bodies of text and their trajectories traced over time. Building on Varma *et al.* (2021), the present study applies STM to 1,186 abstracts published in *CDI* between January 1996 and June 2025. The analysis identifies nine coherent and distinct conceptual topics, examines longitudinal variation in topic prevalence, profiles 18 influential authors and 12 highly cited articles to differentiate specialist from generalist contributions, and evaluates the citation impact of each topic. Additional interpretive depth is provided through reflections from seven scholars closely associated with *CDI*.

Consequently, this study extends the 25th anniversary review by offering a multi-dimensional perspective that combines computational text analysis with expert commentary. In doing so, it provides an empirical foundation for current and future editors, the editorial team, and contributors to understand *CDI*'s intellectual trajectory and to inform its future direction.

Social, intellectual, and conceptual structure of CDI

Different approaches to science mapping can capture the characteristics of and structures within a specific body of literature (Cuccurullo and Aria, 2022; Zupic and Čater, 2015). Co-authorship, institutional affiliations, and country collaboration networks reveal the *social structure* of a field, highlighting how scholars connect and collaborate. Citation-based analyses reveal its *intellectual structure*, highlighting foundational works and tracing the influence of ideas through citation networks. Key word co-occurrence, bibliographic coupling, and topic modelling reveal the *conceptual structure* of a field, highlighting dominant themes, emerging topics, and patterns of research content.

Varma *et al.* (2021) conducted a bibliometric review of 25 years of articles published in *CDI*, investigating the social, intellectual, and conceptual structure of the journal. For the social structure of the journal, they illustrated strong international collaboration and noted a marked increase in the number of authors contributing to published articles. They highlighted elements of the intellectual structure, such as the most cited authors and articles, as well as analysing how various factors influence citation impact. To explore the conceptual structure, they illustrated five clusters of related articles (career development, work engagement, entrepreneurship career, career outcomes, and career mentoring) from a bibliographic coupling analysis, which is based on the assumption that articles on a similar topic will cite common references and, in turn, be cited together by subsequent articles. They also used author keywords to trace trending topics over time.

However, the methods used to explore the conceptual structure in Varma *et al.* (2021) are quite limited. Bibliographic coupling does not analyse the actual content of the research but uses citations as a proxy for it. It also operates at a coarse level of granularity, treating entire documents as a single conceptual unit and producing lower fidelity analyses of nuanced conceptual structures. It only captures surface-level relationships based on shared citations, potentially missing related papers that use different theoretical frameworks or that cite different foundational works. Further, citations signal more than just topical relevance—including author relationships, citation trading, strategic positioning, and disciplinary signalling—meaning that shared reference patterns may reflect academic politics or citation conventions rather than genuine conceptual similarity. Author keywords provide even smaller data sets for analysis, seldom more than a half-dozen words per article, and can be undermined by redundancy, with the most common keywords in Varma *et al.* (2021) being “career development”, “careers”, and “job satisfaction”.

Structural topic model (STM) of CDI

In this article, we seek to explore the conceptual structure of *CDI* with greater depth and nuance than afforded by keyword or bibliographic coupling. To do so, we apply the method of Structural Topic Modelling (STM: [Lindstedt, 2019](#); [Roberts et al., 2019](#)) to the abstracts of all articles published in *CDI* over its 30-year history. STM is an unsupervised statistical method that automatically learns and discovers topics from raw text, rather than relying on researcher-defined categories. It identifies clusters of co-occurring words, representing latent topics, within large document collections. Researchers are therefore able to map the conceptual structure of academic fields without bias from prior assumptions about topic boundaries or disciplinary classifications ([Lindstedt, 2019](#); [Roberts et al., 2019](#)). Rather than assigning each text entirely to a given topic, STM allows texts to exhibit mixed membership across multiple topics (each topic is a blend of texts, and each text is a blend of topics), which provides nuanced insights into often closely related conceptual themes. Further, STM enables the use of other metadata variables (e.g. author names, affiliations, or year of publication) to support more complex comparative analysis. A recent STM study mapping employability research, and published in *CDI*, demonstrated the fidelity, validity, and value of the method for particularly complex and diffuse literatures ([Healy et al., 2025](#)).

Method*Data collection and preparation*

This retrospective analysis examined the complete corpus of articles published in *CDI* from its first issue in 1996 through to June 2025. Full bibliographic records, including abstracts, were retrieved from the Scopus database. Editorials and book reviews were excluded, yielding 1,186 articles.

The primary data field for this STM analysis is the abstract, as it provides a focused summary of each article's substantive content. Abstracts were pre-processed to enable precise analysis and reduce noise. Punctuation, numbers, standard English stop words, common research article terminology (e.g. "study," "research," "findings"), and copyright statements were removed. Finally, the abstracts were lemmatised, converting plural and conjugate forms of words to their base form (e.g. managed, managing, and manages were all converted to manage), reducing noise from different grammatical variations.

Data analysis

Topic number selection. STM does not itself identify any empirically definitive number of topics in a corpus. It generates as many as the researcher specifies. The meaningfulness, distinctiveness, and coherence of those topics therefore depend on the researcher's evaluation and interpretation ([Lindstedt, 2019](#); [Roberts et al., 2019](#)).

Accordingly, candidate models ranging from 3 to 30 topics were generated and assessed in increments of three using two quantitative measures: semantic coherence and exclusivity. Semantic coherence measures the probability that high-frequency words within topics co-occur in the same documents, while exclusivity assesses the degree to which words are distinctive to an individual topic rather than shared across multiple themes ([Roberts et al., 2019](#)). The range between 6 and 15 topics showed the best balance between semantic coherence and exclusivity.

A subsequent exploratory modelling of 6–15 topics, in increments of one, suggested that 9, 10, or 11 topics provided the strongest balance of semantic coherence and exclusivity. Manual qualitative inspection of the topic keywords and representative documents across these three models ultimately supported the 9-topic solution as the most meaningful. This solution offered qualitatively distinct topics while capturing a comprehensive yet parsimonious representation of scholarship across the *CDI*'s three-decade publication record.

Naming, describing, and validating the topics. Just as STM does not determine the number of topics in a corpus, it does not specify what those topics mean, or even whether they are meaningful at all. The latter remains the researcher's responsibility, based on their knowledge of the data and the research context (Lindstedt, 2019; Roberts *et al.*, 2019). After selecting the 9-topic model, the keywords for each topic (see Table 1) were studied, and a title and qualitative summary were written for each. The summaries reflect the conceptual themes that are proportionally most aligned with each topic.

STM generates a matrix which includes, for each article, the proportion of words in the abstract assigned to each topic. So, an article that focuses exclusively on one topic would score 1 for that topic and 0 for all others, while an article evenly distributed across topics would show a value of approximately 0.111 for each. Similarly, the overall topic proportions for individual authors can be calculated from the averages of their articles' topic blends, producing a distinctive "conceptual fingerprint" (Healy *et al.*, 2025, p. 228), as visualised in the results section of this study.

These visualisations provide the best method of validating the integrity and value of the topic model. Based on prior knowledge of an article's content or an author's oeuvre, the researcher may predict the topic proportions they expect to be illustrated in the visualisation. Aberrant results can then be investigated to refine how the topics are understood and described, identify errors in data collection or processing, or, in extreme cases, question the validity of the model.

Table 1. Topic keywords

Topic	Highest probability words	Frequent and exclusive words
1. Sustainable, protean, boundaryless, and women's careers	career, women, success, development, individual, work, protean, transition, interviews, practical	saudi, boundaryless, protean, career, migrant, transition, women, careers, advancement, arabia
2. Job insecurity, engagement, and proactive behaviours	job, employees, relationship, performance, engagement, effect, work, employee, proactive, insecurity	insecurity, lmx, proactive, engagement, craft, crafting, mediating, psycap, mediate, mediation
3. Work-family dynamics and well-being	work, employees, family, worker, satisfaction, job, relate, relationship, turnover, support	wfc, older, prevention, turnover, presenteeism, retirement, exhaustion, mindfulness, family, wfe
4. Recruitment and talent management	management, manager, development, organisation, process, decision, recruitment, experience, resource, employer	military, crisis, veteran, civilian, ocm, smes, recruitment, recruiter, scheme, candidate
5. Leadership and career change	change, development, organization, leadership, organizational, manager, career, management, business, leader	csr, shock, change, shocks, client, executive, coaching, assessment, programme, corporate
6. Graduate employability, job search, and career choice	student, job, search, career, difference, graduate, university, mba, perceived, business	profiling, seeker, search, student, mba, generational, school, communication, choice, seekers
7. Mentoring, relationships, and career development	mentoring, relationship, mentor, theory, development, developmental, career, support, network, mentors	mentoring, mentor, protégé, protégés, supervision, mentors, developmental, network, scs, functions
8. Expatriate careers and international adjustment	expatriate, international, cultural, career, manager, country, adjustment, development, sie, literature	expatriate, sie, expatriation, repatriation, abroad, sies, overseas, international, assignment, repatriate
9. Work identity and temporary or precarious employment	work, identity, employment, worker, temporary, professional, role, context, socialization, status	tactics, newcomer, temporary, socialization, wlb, unemployment, identity, historical, labour, contingent

Source(s): Authors' own creation

Results

Nine topics in 30 Years of Career Development International

Our STM of 1,186 articles published in *CDI* from January 1996 to June 2025 identified nine distinct topics in the research, as named and described below. Significantly, the STM process itself did not generate these labels and descriptions; rather, they reflect the authors' qualitative interpretations of the topics. The keywords for each topic, which informed the naming and summaries below, are presented in [Table 1](#).

Topic 1: sustainable, protean, boundaryless, and women's careers. This topic explores the notion of career sustainability as well as the concepts of protean and boundaryless careers. The topic has a particularly strong focus on women's career experiences across cultural and professional settings, investigating barriers such as gender norms, motherhood, and migration, alongside strategies women use to build authentic and adaptable careers. Consequently, while research on women's careers appears across all nine topics, our model shows it is particularly prevalent in Topic 1, which is why we specifically include it in the topic name. Research includes studies of entrepreneurs, academics, and professionals in diverse regions. The role of identity, social capital, and language is examined. This body of work contributes to advancing gender equality and developing policies that enable women's long-term career success and fulfilment.

Topic 2: job insecurity, engagement, and proactive behaviours. This topic examines how individuals experience job insecurity and actively respond to protect and advance their careers. It highlights how employees take initiative by helping colleagues, voicing ideas, and managing how they are perceived to maintain or improve performance during uncertain times. Personal traits such as resilience and adaptability combine with organisational support to shape these behaviours. The quality of leader relationships influences trust and engagement, which affects subordinates' career stability. Understanding these dynamics offers insight into how individuals navigate uncertainty and proactively manage their career development despite challenging work environments.

Topic 3: work-family dynamics and well-being. This topic examines how individuals balance work and family roles and the impact on their well-being and career outcomes. It explores how conflicts between work and family can lead to burnout, emotional exhaustion, and decreased motivation, while positive interactions can enhance satisfaction and engagement. Personal factors like age, support from supervisors, and mindfulness influence these experiences, with effects often extending into family life. Understanding these dynamics helps individuals and organisations create strategies to manage work-life balance, reduce stress, and support long-term career success and personal well-being.

Topic 4: recruitment and talent management. This topic explores how individuals experience recruitment and talent development in diverse and evolving labour markets. It examines engagement with organisational processes, decision-making, and training programmes designed to support their integration and development. Additionally, it focuses on the challenges faced by diverse groups such as veterans, displaced workers, and employees in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as they navigate searching for jobs and exploring career growth opportunities. The research also considers how individuals balance immediate job demands with long-term career goals. Insights highlight how recruitment practices can foster inclusion, support skill-building, and promote career advancement.

Topic 5: leadership and career change. This topic explores how individuals, especially leaders and professionals, navigate career transitions and adapt to organisational change. It focuses on personal development through executive coaching, targeted assessments, and leadership programmes that prepare them for new roles and challenges. The literature also highlights the impact of unexpected career shocks and the need for proactive change management. Ethical leadership and cultural awareness play important roles in these processes. By understanding these dynamics, individuals can strengthen resilience and effectively manage their career progress while contributing to organisational success in dynamic environments.

Topic 6: graduate employability, job search and career choice. This topic explores how graduates navigate the critical transition from education to the workforce. It considers how personal factors like academic achievement, extracurricular involvement, personality traits, and generational influences shape their employability and job search strategies. Communication skills and entrepreneurial intentions are important for career success across diverse fields. The role of socio-cultural and educational experiences in shaping career aspirations is also examined. This research provides valuable insights to help graduates build confidence, make informed career choices, and develop skills needed for sustainable, fulfilling careers.

Topic 7: mentoring, relationships, and career development. This topic examines how individuals use mentoring relationships to foster their career growth, learning, and professional identity development. It explores both formal and informal mentoring, focusing on the roles of mentors and protégés in providing guidance, emotional support, and skill development opportunities. The quality of these relationships influences career progression and personal growth. Challenges like maintaining commitment and managing potential conflicts are also addressed. Additionally, mentoring benefits protégés through expanded networks and self-improvement. Understanding these dynamics helps individuals maximise the benefits of mentoring opportunities to advance their careers and strengthen their professional skills.

Topic 8: expatriate careers and international adjustment. This topic explores the personal and professional experiences of expatriates and self-initiated expatriates on international assignments. It examines how individuals culturally adjust, find job satisfaction, and develop their careers while working abroad. The role of organisational support, training, and networking in aiding successful transitions is highlighted. Particular attention is given to challenges faced by female expatriates and the importance of diversity and inclusion. Understanding these dynamics helps individuals navigate global mobility, build cultural competence, and shape their career paths. Insights also inform policies to enhance expatriate success and career growth through international opportunities.

Topic 9: work identity and temporary or precarious employment. This topic explores how individuals develop and maintain their professional identity while navigating temporary or insecure employment. It focuses on the personal challenges faced by those with short-term contracts or unstable jobs and how these affect their self-concept and career growth. It considers how work-life balance, organisational connection, and social status influence identity during employment uncertainty. The topic also highlights the experiences of refugees and migrants whose careers are further affected by wider social and political contexts. Understanding these dynamics helps individuals manage identity and career development despite precarious work conditions.

Topic trends: 1996–2025

Figure 1 illustrates trends in the proportion of each topic by year of publication. As is clearly visible, CDI's initial focus was on the management of other people's careers by managers and leaders, with leadership and career change (Topic 5) and recruitment and talent management (Topic 4) dominating the first seven years. However, this focus gradually receded to be overtaken in the early-to-mid 2000s by scholarship that focused more on workers' or students' characteristics, needs, dynamics, and agency, such as sustainable, protean, boundaryless and women's careers (Topic 1), work-family dynamics and wellbeing (Topic 3), graduate employability, job search and career choice (Topic 6), and job insecurity (Topic 2). In 2025, the most studied topics, sustainable career development (Topic 1) and job insecurity (Topic 2), share a central concern for equity, agency, and empowerment in career development.

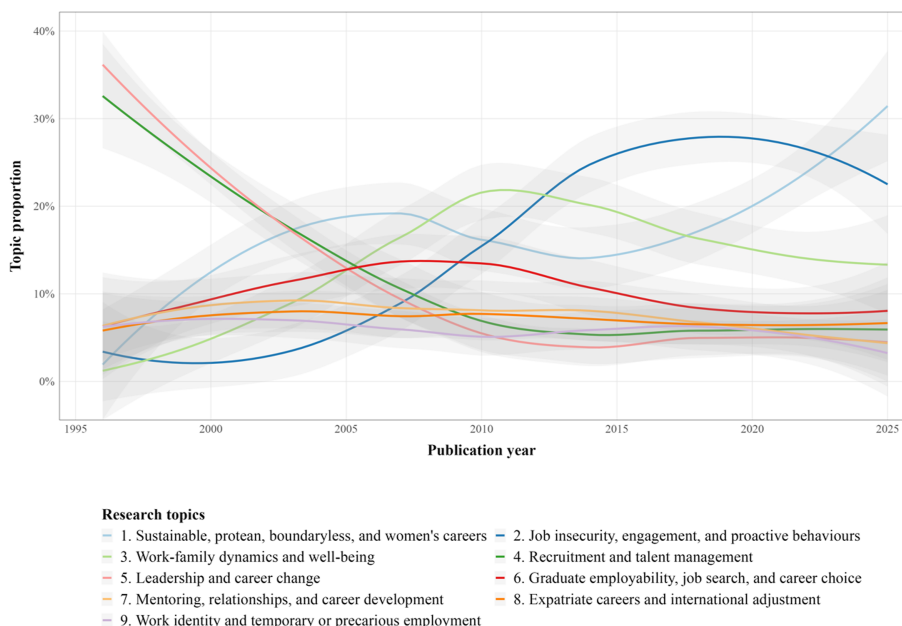


Figure 1. Topic proportions by year of publication. Source: Authors' own creation

Topics by author

[Figure 2](#) illustrates the topic proportions of a selection of 18 authors who have contributed the most articles to *CDI*, whose work in *CDI* has been the most highly cited, and/or who appear as authors on this paper and have published in the journal. This figure is based solely on articles where these scholars are listed as the first author, reflecting their primary research interests compared to co-authored contributions. The conceptual fingerprint offered by the STM clearly shows both the distinctive scholarly interests of each author and the contrast between those with broad research interests (e.g. Akkermans, Baruch, Donald) and those with more specialised profiles (e.g. Arthur, Jawahar, Schaufeli).

Topics by article

[Figure 3](#) illustrates topic proportions of the 12 most highly cited articles as of 30th June 2025. The visualisations illustrate the latent topics of each article, which sometimes diverge from what might be expected based on the article's title or keywords, as it is based solely on the language used in the abstracts. For example, [Schaufeli et al.'s \(2009\)](#) review of burnout research is labelled as work identity and temporary or precarious work, rather than work-life balance and wellbeing, because it offers a conceptual, phenomenological, and socio-cultural review rather than a direct account of the causes and outcomes of burnout.

Topic prevalence and citation impact

[Figure 4](#) illustrates the relationship between topic prevalence and average citation impact, with the bubble size indicating the number of articles where each topic is prominent (>10% topic proportion). The figure shows that the most frequently studied topics are not necessarily the most highly cited. The most impactful topics, measured by average citations, are job insecurity, engagement, and proactive behaviours (Topic 3), and work identity and temporary and precarious work (Topic 2), the latter being the smallest topic in the dataset. Both citations and

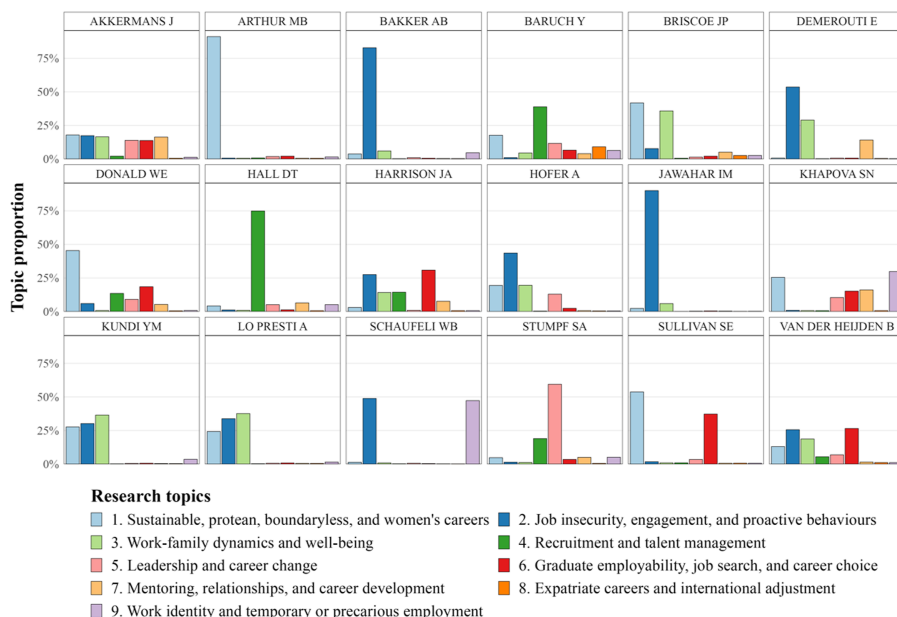


Figure 2. Topic proportions by author. Source: Authors' own creation. Note: Topic proportions derived solely from articles where the individual is the first author

volume of publications per topic in Figure 4 are lag indicators and, therefore, should be interpreted in connection with Figure 1, which illustrates shifts in topic proportions over time.

Discussion

Our findings regarding the conceptual structure of *CDI* align broadly with those of Varma *et al.* (2021), but with greater granularity and fidelity enabled by the STM analysis. For the most part, the nine topics identified in this STM map onto the five major themes identified in Varma *et al.* (2021). However, the STM approach offers a more precise and nuanced understanding of the journal's conceptual structure beyond what Varma *et al.* (2021) bibliographic coupling can reveal. For instance, it separates work-family dynamics and well-being (Topic 3) as a distinct topic from general work engagement and identifies expatriate careers (Topic 8) as a separate topic from general career development. This STM does not identify entrepreneurship as a topic in its own right, but rather as an element of both sustainable, protean, boundaryless, and women's careers (Topic 1) and graduate employability, job search, and career choice (Topic 6).

Both studies also identify similar trends over the journal's history, showing an initial emphasis on managerial career development giving way to themes centred on employee empowerment, well-being, and self-directed career management. But again, the STM provides superior temporal granularity, tracking how specific themes have waxed and waned across the journal's 30-year history with precision that Varma *et al.* (2021) analysis of author-selected keywords cannot achieve. Additionally, the method's ability to generate "conceptual fingerprints" for individual authors offers insights into specialist versus generalist contribution patterns that the bibliometric method alone could not capture.

Most importantly, the STM demonstrates greater fidelity in capturing conceptual structures by identifying latent topics within publications' actual textual content rather than relying on their citation patterns as a proxy. Therefore, this analysis provides a more accurate

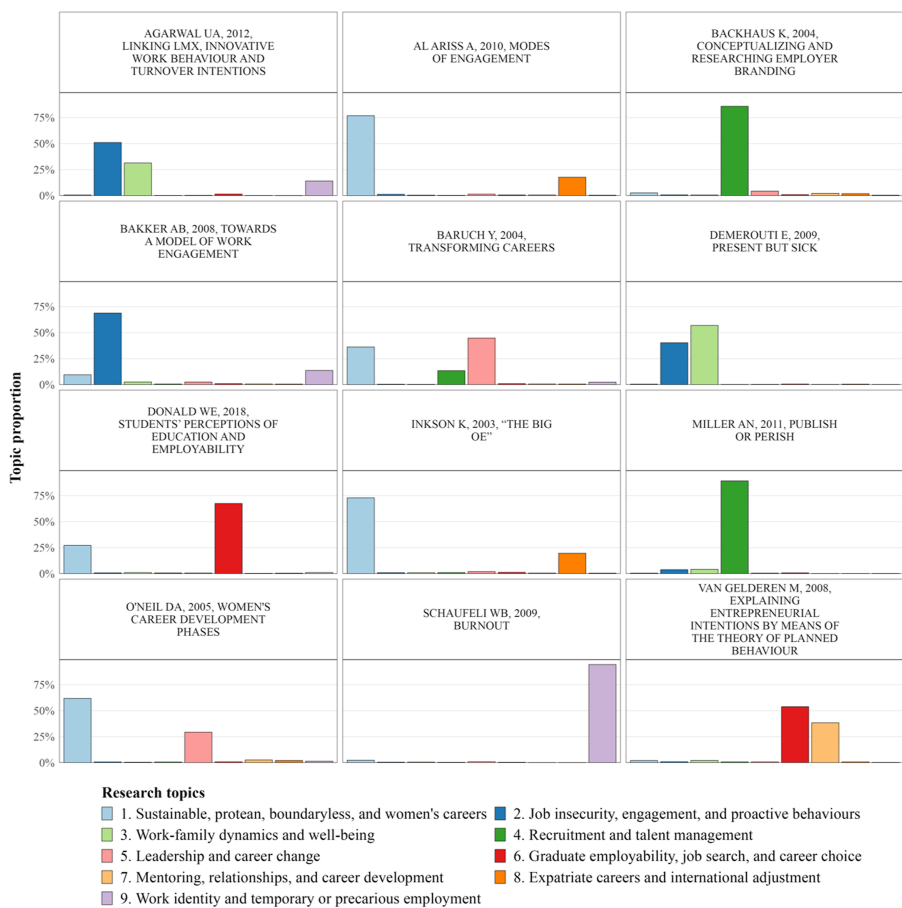


Figure 3. Topic proportions by article. Source: Authors' own creation. Note: The figure only shows the lead author of each manuscript (Agarwal *et al.*, 2012; Al Ariss, 2010; Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Bakker and Demerouti, 2008; Baruch, 2004; Demerouti *et al.*, 2009; Inkson and Myers, 2003; Miller *et al.*, 2011; O'Neil and Bilimoria, 2005; Van Gelderen *et al.*, 2008)

representation of the journal's evolution and offers Editors and contributors clearer guidance for understanding and shaping future research directions.

Authors' reflections

The seven authors of this manuscript have had significant involvement with *CDI* in various ways, often over many years. To draw on such experience, each author now offers a brief reflection covering: (1) their involvement with *CDI* over the years, (2) their reflections on the findings presented in this manuscript, and (3) research avenues they would like to see further explored at *CDI* in the years ahead.

Michael Healy

My research is motivated by a concern that most graduate employability scholarship does not adequately integrate theories, evidence, or principles of practice from the field of career development (Healy, 2023; Healy *et al.*, 2022). The journals I tended to read were either career development or higher education focused, with very little literature drawing on both fields

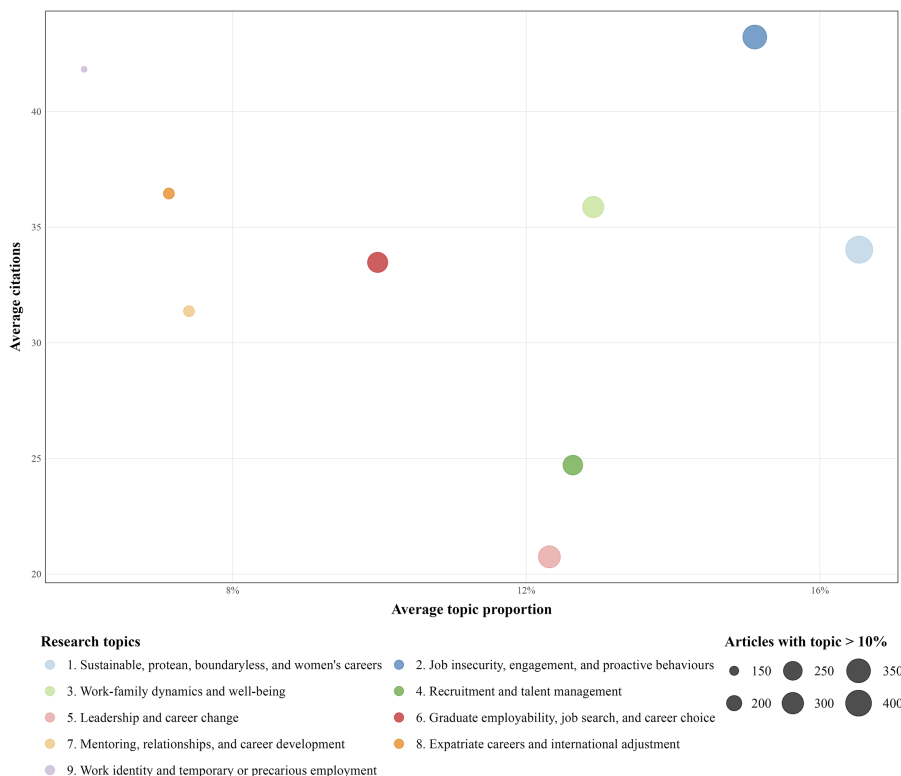


Figure 4. Citation impact of topics. Source: Authors' own creation

(Healy *et al.*, 2022). Even within the career development field, most journals tend to be narrowly scoped, focusing primarily on either vocational or organisational psychology, or education, or counselling, or human resources, but seldom actively accommodating multiple disciplinary perspectives. I quickly recognised *CDI* as the exception to this rule, due to its nature as the most interdisciplinary journal in the field, as so clearly illustrated by this STM analysis. In a citation network analysis of career development and employability scholarship in higher education (Healy *et al.*, 2022), I highlighted scholarship published in *CDI* that includes the rare injection of meaningful career development concepts into graduate employability research (Donald *et al.*, 2018, 2020).

This interdisciplinarity made *CDI* a natural first choice of outlet for my recent STM study on employability scholarship (Healy *et al.*, 2025), which demonstrated 11 distinct and diverse streams of research sharing a common concern. That article joins other recent arguments for greater integration of graduate and worker employability literature published in *CDI* (Akkermans *et al.*, 2024). With my doctoral research published entirely in higher education journals (Healy, 2023; Healy *et al.*, 2022), it was gratifying to contribute to a career development journal which plays such an important role in bringing diverse scholarly and practitioner voices together.

Yehuda Baruch

I had the privilege of serving as Editor of *CDI* from 2004 to 2007, a period marked by both challenges and achievements. My aim during that time was to establish *CDI* as a recognised

and prestigious outlet for career scholars, and it is rewarding to see how this vision has been realised and further advanced by my successors.

The STM findings presented in this manuscript affirm *CDI*'s growth into a leading journal in the field of career studies, evidencing how the journal captures the breadth and depth of career research. *CDI*'s strong positioning in journal rankings and its increasing recognition among scholars demonstrate its success in shaping global career research. It is gratifying to see *CDI* attracting high-quality submissions and offering a platform where diverse voices, perspectives, and methodologies can thrive.

Looking ahead, I see several promising avenues for *CDI*'s continued development. I hope the journal will further explore the roles and outcomes of different career actors within an increasingly complex global career ecosystem (Baruch, 2015; Baruch and Rousseau, 2019). *CDI* is well placed to encourage integrative work that bridges theory and practice, offering scholarly rigour and managerial relevance. I also envision *CDI* continuing to reflect the richness of scholarship in the field by maintaining its global orientation, supporting varied methodological approaches, making significant theoretical contributions alongside managerial implications, and remaining inclusive in its operation. In doing so, the journal can sustain its trajectory as a vital, innovative, and influential outlet for career research.

Sébastien Point

This study employs a comprehensive search strategy, covering all *CDI* articles from 1996 to June 2025, and integrates both conceptual and empirical contributions. It synthesises findings through topic modelling combined with qualitative interpretation.

The STM analysis highlights three intellectual anchors that have shaped *CDI*'s trajectory. First, scholarship on boundaryless and protean careers has provided enduring theoretical lenses for understanding contemporary career paths. Second, contributions from organisational psychology (particularly theories of stress, resources, and job crafting) have enriched debates on career well-being and adaptation. Third, widely cited methodological references have offered the statistical rigour and analytical tools that underpin the journal's empirical strength.

As a recent member of the editorial board and a long-standing supporter of *CDI*, I note its increasing influence as these foundations are adapted to address contemporary career challenges. Four recent streams illustrate this evolution. Inspired by Tims *et al.* (2022), job crafting research now explores links with engagement, turnover, and family enrichment. Building on Breevaart *et al.* (2020), studies on job insecurity investigate its consequences for voice, performance, and engagement. Mansur and Felix (2021) have sparked growing interest in how career shocks and HR practices shape thriving. Finally, drawing on Mello *et al.* (2023), recent work highlights the role of career capital, identity, and context in shaping career success. Together, these advances mark critical foundations for future career scholarship and underscore *CDI*'s pivotal role in advancing the field.

Jennifer A. Harrison

Over time, *CDI* has grown into a truly interdisciplinary outlet, advancing both conceptual and applied insights into careers across diverse contexts. As an outgoing Editor (2023–2025), I find it especially rewarding to connect the STM results presented here with my editorial experience. The patterns revealed closely reflect the submissions I have seen, showing the strength of established themes while also underscoring opportunities to develop underrepresented areas.

One such area is the study of careers as networks. Closer attention to networking behaviours can enrich our understanding of individual sustainable career development within broader ecosystems. Much of this networking now occurs in digital spaces, where the dynamics are increasingly complex. Early research highlighted the risks of (not) cultivating a digital presence (Harrison and Budworth, 2015), while more recent work demonstrates how

affectivity and motivation shape network building and recruiter employability predictions online (Harrison *et al.*, 2024).

In considering the role of networks, I also echo the call for greater inclusion of diverse and multiple actors in career research (Donald *et al.*, 2024b). Advancing this agenda will require more field-based and multi-source data that capture perspectives across networks, organisations, and digital platforms. Looking ahead, I am excited to see *CDI* championing such work, particularly through encouragement via special issues and themes, as it bridges traditional career constructs with emerging domains such as online networks, AI, and digital identity management.

Beatrice I. J. M. van der heijden

Being a member of the Editorial Board of *CDI* for quite a while, I have been closely following its evolution. In my view, one of its current main strengths is the explicit expectation that scholars submit high-quality work, which builds on the knowledge in our field, and at the same time helps increase insights for practitioners on how to manage career-related challenges in the workplace. I also appreciate the multidisciplinary approach of *CDI*, which makes it an attractive possible outlet for scholars from, among others, work and organisational psychology, vocational psychology, and human resource management. At the same time, the Editorial Board has always kept a close eye on the need to add to the theorising as well as to strategy, policy and practice in the field of careers and its development. I have truly enjoyed our *CDI* Editorial Board yearly breakfast meetings at the *Academy of Management* conference, deliberating on how to continue increasing the journal's quality and added value. The care with which the Editors have stressed the need to find ways to increase the volume of sound contributions from underrepresented regions and the role of mentorship in this regard is exemplary, and has also shaped my collaboration practices.

Looking into the outcomes of the STM findings, it is promising to see that, all in all, the nine topics show the increasing attention for workers' career sustainability-related challenges (De Vos *et al.*, 2020), and with attention for both the person at home and in their private life (cf. Van der Heijden *et al.*, 2020) across occupational fields and countries. I have high expectations that the content of future articles will do justice to the need to account for turbulent times and major global developments that obviously have a considerable impact on work and careers.

Jon P. Briscoe

I was on the Editorial Board for *CDI* for several years, have published various articles in the journal, and have frequently reviewed submitted articles. I am impressed by the dedication of the various Editors I have worked with, as well as their constant effort to improve the journal.

In addition to demonstrating the depth and breadth of *CDI* contributions, the STM also shows maturation and evolution in the field of careers. I believe *CDI* is in an ideal position to entertain new ideas and methods that help shape and drive our field.

As sustainable careers are currently being defined and explored, I am highly interested in combining research topics 1 and 7—namely, agentic (protean and boundaryless) careers with relational aspects of career development. My first introduction to the careers scholarship was a book chapter I wrote with Doctoral advisors and mentors Douglas T. Hall and Kathy Kram (Hall *et al.*, 1997). I have come full circle back to the topics of that chapter, and I am puzzled by how relational research and self-directed careers are largely separate in both theoretical and empirical attention. I think uniting these seemingly disparate but interdependent topics may be a path to actualising sustainable careers.

Beyond more international careers research across and within cultures, I believe and hope that prospective sensemaking, involving interventions to help employees and academics envision desirable futures (Gümüşay and Reinecke, 2024), will proliferate. This will help us get to a future that we need faster than we can by looking at the present and past (Bergs *et al.*, 2025).

William E. Donald

As a current Editor of *CDI* (2025–2027) and a contributor since my doctoral studies, I view the STM findings with both scholarly interest and editorial purpose. The nine-topic model affirms *CDI*'s broad-church identity, balancing specialist and generalist contributions. Interdisciplinarity is a strength, though cohesion can be challenging. Topic prevalence (Figure 1) has shifted: recruitment and talent management have declined, while sustainable careers, job insecurity, work–family dynamics, and wellbeing have risen, reflecting evolving labour markets and scholarly priorities. Figure 2 highlights *CDI*'s role as a trusted outlet for leading career scholars, reinforcing its intellectual reach and partnership with the *Academy of Management's Careers Division*. Citation trends (Figure 3) require careful interpretation due to citation lag, while Figure 4 shows growing attention to themes shaped by social and technological disruptions.

Looking forward, these insights should guide editorial strategy. As Editor, I prioritise manuscripts positioning Career Development as the core literature, complemented—not overshadowed—by streams such as Human Resource Management or Human Resource Development. *CDI* is well placed to advance scholarship on marginalised groups across life spans and to attract submissions from underrepresented regions, including Africa, Asia, and South America. Further empirical engagement with sustainable career ecosystem theory (Donald, 2023) is also needed, particularly regarding artificial intelligence as a structural and disruptive force in careers (Donald et al., 2024b). At the same time, strengthening the bridge to practice remains essential. *Practitioner Insights*, introduced in 2024, ensures the journal continues to serve academics, practitioners, and policymakers (Harrison and Donald, 2024). Together, these directions will deepen *CDI*'s interdisciplinarity while sustaining its cohesion and impact.

Implications for prospective authors, reviewers, and editors

Beyond mapping *CDI*'s intellectual trajectory, the findings offer important lessons for the journal's stakeholders. For prospective authors, the topic trends identified in this study act as a compass, highlighting consistently strong areas such as sustainable careers, job insecurity, and work–family dynamics, while also pointing to underexplored domains that invite creative and innovative contributions. For reviewers, these patterns help frame evaluations by situating submissions within *CDI*'s broader development, underscoring that the journal's standards of rigour and relevance evolve with the field, and highlighting the value of both specialist and generalist work. For Editors, the longitudinal mapping and author fingerprints provide an evidence base to guide strategic decisions, including commissioning special issues, encouraging contributions from underrepresented regions, and fostering stronger connections between research streams often treated separately. Collectively, these insights reaffirm *CDI*'s role as a developmental, interdisciplinary, and practice-relevant outlet that not only reflects but also actively shapes the future of career scholarship.

Conclusion

This review of *CDI*, marking its 30-year milestone, demonstrates how the journal has evolved into a leading interdisciplinary outlet for career scholarship. By applying STM to nearly three decades of abstracts, the study highlights both the continuity of core concerns and the emergence of new priorities that reflect changing societal and organisational contexts. Patterns of topic prevalence reveal the shifting contours of the field, while author profiling underscores the journal's ability to accommodate both specialist and generalist expertise. The integration of citation analysis and reflections from experienced scholars further deepens understanding of the journal's intellectual trajectory and future opportunities. Taken together, the findings show *CDI*'s responsiveness to global disruptions and evolving debates in careers research. They also provide a foundation for guiding editorial strategy, encouraging contributions from diverse

voices, and shaping future research agendas in career development. As *CDI* enters its fourth decade, it stands as a catalyst—empowering authors, guiding reviewers, and inspiring Editors to shape the future of work and careers in a rapidly changing world.

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