

Flexible work culture: prospects and trends through a bibliometric and systematic review

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Abstract

Purpose – Flexible work, defined by its adaptability to changing global conditions, marks a shift from traditional to modern practices. In this environment, employees can choose their preferred working style. This study reviews existing research and highlights new themes in the field.

Design/methodology/approach – The research data has been organized through a bibliometric analysis, including a systematic literature review and thematic analysis. Using Scopus, data from 2000 to 2024 was collected, and 400 articles were finalized for study on FWC. Vos Viewer, R Studio and Excel were used for analysis.

Findings – The research emphasizes embracing a flexible work culture, crucial for workforce adaptability. This can be achieved through telecommuting, compressed workweeks, part-time schedules and flexible hours. The study categorizes four main themes through cluster analysis: T1 (Framework, employee well-being and work experience), T2 (Gender-based study, supervisor support, perceived usability and career development), T3 (Parental experience, child care and virtual offices) and T4 (Present and futuristic agenda, work-intensification, teleworking and traditional vs modern work environment).

Research limitations/implications – This study will offer a blueprint for modern office job requirements. This Work structure will assist in addressing several difficulties for the business and its personnel, enabling managers and staff to effectively manage workloads while embracing flexibility to promote a positive workplace culture.

Practical implications – This study's prime implication is to provide clarity to managers to start working in a new modernize work set up where managers can help employees to build resilience and enjoy pros and work upon the cons within their work setup.

Social implications – This paper emphasizes the need to boost employee resilience and modernize traditional work systems. Key recommendations for improving workplace culture and well-being include recognizing gender differences in telework acceptance and providing related training, fostering ethical work practices and positive interpersonal beliefs and enhancing managers' leadership skills through targeted training.

Originality/value – This paper explores flexible work cultures, focusing on caregivers and elder care, to guide researchers and organizations in enhancing work-life balance.

Keywords Flexible work culture, Flexible work arrangement, Bibliometric/SLR analysis, Thematic and content analysis, Future research agenda

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Flexible working practices (FWP) have become increasingly vital in today's rapidly changing world. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of a flexible work culture

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Note: T_{1,2,3,4} are Themes identified in this research.



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(FWC), highlighting the need for organizations to adapt to evolving work environments. According to Hill *et al.* (2008), FWC allows employees to choose when, where and how they work, offering greater autonomy regarding working hours, career development, benefits and work location. These flexible arrangements can manifest in various forms, including part-time work, reduced workweeks and flexible scheduling, practices that have gained traction (Soga, Bolade-Ogunfodun, Mariani, Nasr, & Laker, 2022; Bal & Izak, 2021) since the 1970s and have become more prevalent in the West by the 1980s (Galinsky, David, & Hughes, 1990). In developed nations, the rigid 8-h and 40-h workweek is increasingly giving way to more adaptable schedules, allowing employees greater control over their time (Lyness, Gornick, Stone, & Grotto, 2012).

Several factors, including the workforce's growing diversity, drive the shift towards greater workforce flexibility. Critical contributors to flexibility include the rise of single-parent and dual-earner households, an aging population, increased elder care responsibilities, working women's workforce, reducing gender inequalities and fostering a more equitable society (Lyness *et al.*, 2012). Research has shown that flexible work arrangements, such as part-time work, job-sharing and telecommuting, boost job satisfaction and decrease employee turnover (Masuda *et al.*, 2012). Hopkins and Bardoel (2023) state that workplace flexibility is gaining popularity as it helps workers adapt quickly and supports sustainability, leading to new models like hot-desking and hybrid work. Chua, Myeda, and Teo (2023) add that these practices foster creativity by blending social connections and adaptable environments (Mattarelli, Cochis, Bertolotti, & Ungureanu, 2024). Yeves, Bargsted, Orlandini, and Ureta (2024) and Sunaryo, Sawitri, Suyono, Wahyudi, and Sarwoto (2022) note that the COVID-19 pandemic prompted these changes, with up to 85% of individuals aged 29–56 favoring flexible work schedules and wishing to continue them post-pandemic (Wilson, Potter-Nelson, Gaffney, Redman, & Rudinger, 2023; Shao, Martensen, Martensen, & Reindl, 2024). However, working from home poses challenges such as technology limitations, balancing work and family, lack of social support and frequent home interruptions, which can reduce effectiveness (Barbieri *et al.*, 2024). Systematic studies lack a deeper and more contextual exploration that effectively captures the past, present and future perspectives of FWC (Bal & Izak, 2021; Soga *et al.*, 2022).

Table 1 provides an overview of studies on flexible work culture (FWC), highlighting critical knowledge gaps the present research aims to address. Mokrytska and Dolynska (2019) examined part-time employment in Europe, offering theoretical insights but needing more relevance to recent FWC trends. This study bridges that gap by focusing on current developments. Lorenz, Whittaker, Tazzeo, and Williams (2021) analyzed caregiving-related policies, yet their thematic analysis needed methodological rigor; the current study fills this by employing a more robust bibliographic coupling approach. Renard, Cornu, Emery, and Giauque (2021) assessed new working methods' benefits and drawbacks but still need to see broader bibliometric trends; our study includes these trends for a more comprehensive view of FWC. Bibliometric analyses by Kumar, Sarkar, and Chahar (2023) and Rashmi and Kataria (2022) also have gaps: Kumar's work on work–life integration needed more future research directions, while Rashmi's focus on flexible work arrangements omitted broader concepts like family-supportive. The current study addresses these limitations by proposing new research questions and expanding the scope to include diverse FWC terminologies, enhancing theoretical and practical contributions to FWC literature.

To explore FWC amid these complexities, this study addresses the need for focused seminal works and theme elaborations to guide future research. It aims to fill existing gaps and advance the theoretical understanding of FWC by addressing the following research questions:

- RQ1. What are the publication trends in this field?
- RQ2. What is the theoretical and methodological structure of FWC research?
- RQ3. What is the most significant collaboration between authors in this research?

Table 1. Reviews relating to flexible work culture

Author	Studies covered	Search terms/search string	Method	Gap
Mokrytska and Dolynska (2019)	–	Part-time Working	SR	The study needs to include bibliographic information
Lorenz <i>et al.</i> (2021)	82	Caregiver, care, caregiving, adult care, elder care, senior care, spouse care, organization, employee, policies, policy and program	T, P, C*	The study requires including bibliographic and cluster information; future research avenues are also not given
Renard <i>et al.</i> (2021)	21	New ways of working	SLR	The study lacks bibliographic information, thematic analysis and future research avenues
Kataria, Kumar, and Pandey (2021)	101	Flexible work arrangements, WLB/I	SLRB.A.	The study reports the absence of thematic and cluster analysis
Rashmi and Kataria (2022)	945	WLB	BA, SLR, T & C.	Future recommendations and areas in the study need to be considered

Note(s): WLB/I – work–life balance/integration. S.R. – systematic reviews, (SLR) – systematic literature reviews, B.A. – bibliometric analysis, T – thematic analysis, C – cluster analysis, C* – comparison between different organizations and sectors, P – percentage

Source(s): Authors' own development

RQ4. What is the bibliographic evolution of flexible work culture research from 2000 to 2024?

RQ5. What are the recent trends and futuristic approaches in FWC research?

1.1 Aim of the study

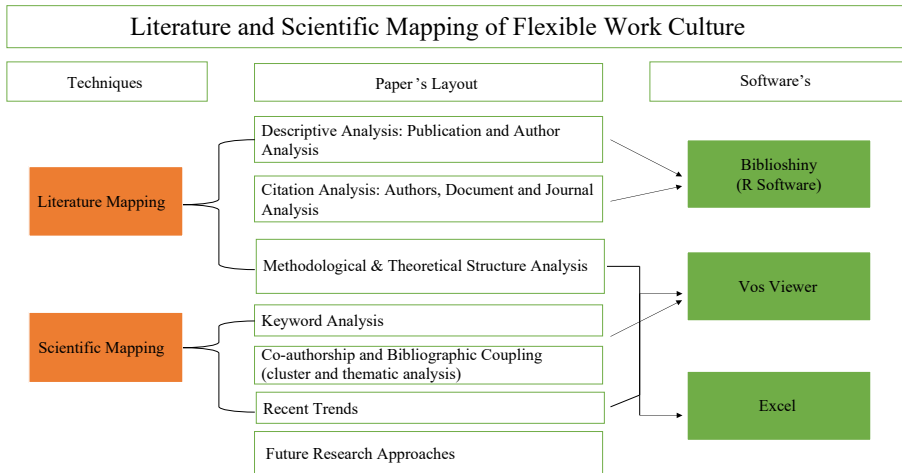
This study offers a comprehensive review of flexible work culture (FWC) research, addressing underexplored areas using advanced analytical techniques like citation analysis, co-authorship networks and thematic analysis see [Figure 1](#). It evaluates past methodologies and, through cluster analysis, examines flexible work practices in various contexts. Findings highlight that female employees significantly adopt FWC practices, underscoring the need for strong organizational and managerial support. The study contrasts traditional and modern FWC strategies, tracing the evolution of workplace practices. It identifies emerging trends, explores relationships with other variables and suggests future research directions to fill gaps and improve FWC implementation.

2. Research methodology

This study employs a bibliometric approach to analyze flexible work culture (FWC), incorporating bibliometric analysis, SLR, thematic and content analysis, with SLR organizing the articles' methodological and theoretical frameworks ([Donthu, Kumar, Mukherjee, Pandey, & Lim, 2021](#)).

2.1 Search string

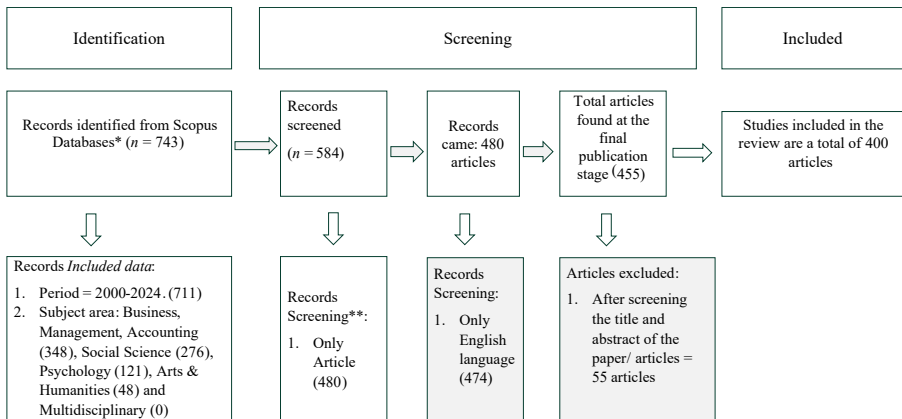
The analysis is based on bibliographic information extracted from the SCOPUS database, considering articles published between 2000 and 2024. Specific keywords were used for data extraction following expert discussions, with the search string: title-abs-key ("flexible work



Source(s): Authors' own development

Figure 1. Research paper framework

culture” OR “flexible work arrangement” OR “family supportive culture” OR “alternate work culture” OR “flexible work practice”) AND (limit-to (sub-area, “busi”) OR limit-to (sub-area, “soci”) OR limit-to (sub-area, “psyc”) OR limit-to (sub-area, “arts”) OR limit-to (sub-area, “mult”)) AND (limit-to (doctype, “ar”) AND limit-to (language, “English”)). The latest published data included is from 1st February 2024. The inclusion and exclusion criteria along with the Prisma framework in Figure 2 illustrate the data extraction process. Initially, 743 articles were identified, but only 400 were included after applying the criteria (see Figure 2). Articles before 2000 were excluded due to the few publications and significant citable work published post-2000. Descriptive, thematic and content analyses are detailed in the article. Data analysis was further conducted using R Studio (Biblioshiny) and Vos Viewer software.



Source(s): Authors' own development

Figure 2. Study identification via Scopus using inclusion/exclusion criteria and the PRISMA framework

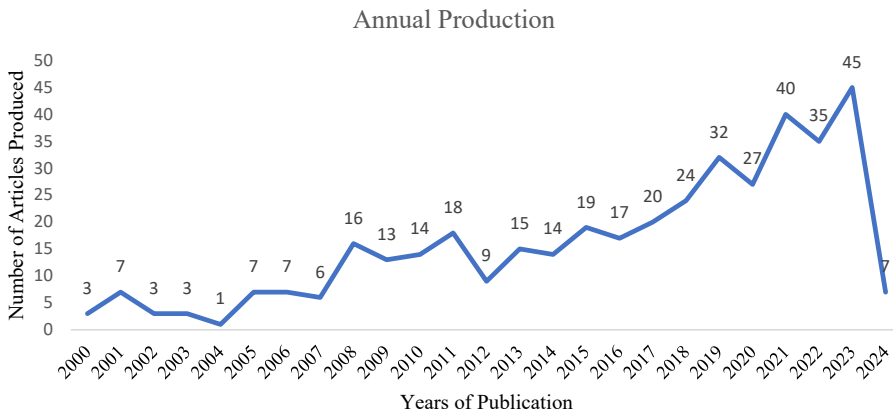
3. Results and analysis

3.1 Publication trends

Figure 3 shows the historical evolution of Flexible Work Culture (FWC) research over the past 23 years. Before 2000, publications were sparse, but technological advancements and the growth of the Internet increased awareness and feasibility. Key studies in 2008 (Origo & Pagani, 2008; Grzywacz, Carlson, & Shulkin, 2008; Hill et al., 2008) highlighted FWC's benefits, fueling consistent growth in research. Between 2021 and 2023, 109 articles were published, underscoring its status as a trending topic, though many variable combinations remain underexplored.

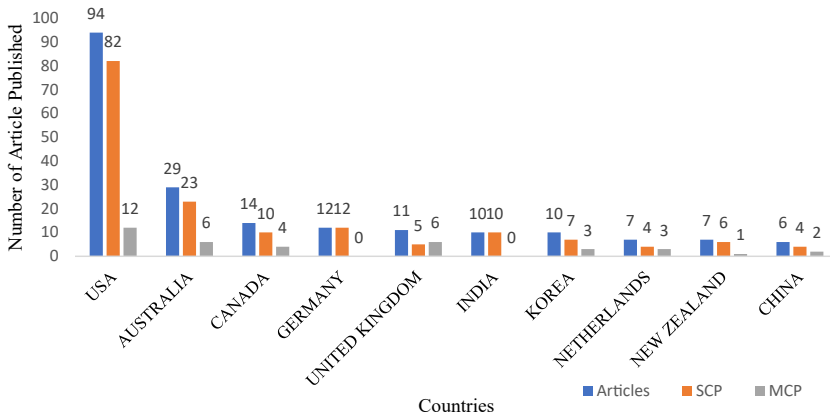
3.2 Country-wise analysis

Figure 4 shows that the USA leads in FWC publications, followed by Australia, Canada, Germany, the UK and India. The USA also has the highest single-author publications (82%), followed by Australia (23%) out of 114 articles. Notably, India and China are the only developing countries contributing significantly to this research.



Source(s): Authors' own development

Figure 3. Number of articles published



Source(s): Authors' own development

Figure 4. Top ten contributing countries and their article publication

3.3 Citation analysis

Citation analysis highlights key authors, documents and journals, revealing influential research frequently cited by others. Citations illustrate scientific collaboration, the impact of research outcomes and the topic’s growth over time (Baker, Pandey, Kumar, & Haldar, 2020). They serve as indicators of research significance and connections.

3.3.1 Author analysis. Table 2 shows that 924 contributors produced 1,060 FWC articles, with key contributions from frequently cited authors like Allen T. D., Kossek E. E. and Lee M. D., who focus on career patterns, reduced workload, turnover intentions and work–family conflict. Table 3 highlights top-cited documents.

3.3.2 Journal citation analysis. Table 4 displays major FWC publications and the top-referenced journals with their index scores. The *International Journal of Human Resource Management* (18), *Community, Work and Family* (15), *Human Relations* (10) and *Journal of Vocational Behavior* (10) are the most cited. Sage is the leading publisher.

4. Methodological and theoretical structures

We reviewed 400 FWC studies, categorizing the literature to address research gaps and guide future scholarly work.

Table 2. Top cited authors and publications

Authors	H	G	M	TC	NP	PY_start	Research area	Articles published
Allen, T. D.	7	7	0.3	1,012	7	2001	Work–Family Conflict/Balance, Turnover Intentions, Job Satisfaction	7
Kossek, E. E.	6	6	0.33	831	6	2006	Sustainable Careers, Reduced workload, Telecommuting	6
Lee, M. D.	5	5	0.23	195	5	2002	Career Pattern, Reduced Load Work, Balancing Alternate Work Arrangement	5
Mcdonald, P.	5	5	0.26	117	5	2005	Flexible work (supporting, managing and using)	5
Pitt-Catsouphes, M.	5	5	0.31	323	5	2008	Flexible Work Arrangement (uses and options)	5
Kröll, C.	4	4	0.57	124	4	2017	Flexible Work Practices, Employee Attitude, Meta-analysis study	4
Nüesch, S.	4	4	0.57	124	4	2017	Flexible Work Practices, Organization Attractiveness, Panel and Meta-analysis Study	4
Ollier-Malaterre, A.	4	4	0.36	192	4	2013	Employee Career, Reduced Load Work, Work-life Policies and Arrangement	4
Shockley, K. M.	4	4	0.24	773	4	2007	Motives of Flexible Work Arrangement, Work–Family Conflict	4
Sweet, S.	4	4	0.4	85	4	2014	Flexible Work Arrangements and uses	4

Note(s): H – h_index, g – g_index, m – m_index, T.C. – total citation, N.P. – net papers, area – subject area in where the articles got published by the authors

Source(s): Authors’ own development

Table 3. Top cited documents

Sr. No.	Document	TC	TCpy	NTC	Sampling and research techniques	Main argument	Future recommendations
1	Kossek et al. (2006)	601	31.63	4.55	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey and interview Sample – 245 professionals Data collected from two large firms Robustness regression 	Job control reduces conflict, turnover and sadness, but boundary control may heighten work–family conflicts. Telecommuting aids mothers and aligns with manager evaluations	Future studies should examine the difference between actual flexibility and its mental effects
2	Allen et al. (2013)	466	38.83	7.31	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Data was analyzed from the PsycINFO database Meta-Analysis – 53 articles This includes two flexibilities – flexitime and flexplace 	Flexibility impacts work–family conflict, benefiting workers with higher family responsibilities	Future research should identify types of work–family conflict and explore strategies to reduce stressors like lack of support or negative feedback
3	Hill, Ferris, and Mårtinson (2003)	354	16.09	2.46	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IBM Global Work and Life Issues Survey Sample size – 5,523 respondents Data was collected from 48 countries in the U.S. T-test, One-way ANOVA, Post Hoc test, Multivariate Analysis 	Home offices are preferred, while traditional offices harm work–life balance. Virtual offices benefit work but can strain personal life	Further research should assess job location impact, incorporating qualitative studies to mitigate monomethod bias
4	Hornung, Rousseau, and Glaser (2008)	306	18	3.47	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey Method Sample – 887 employees Structure equation modeling, correlation 	Developmental ideals positively correlate with work–family conflicts and overtime more than flexibility ideals	Future studies should explore group and colleague perceptions of ideal working arrangements
5	Rau and Hyland (2002)	266	11.57	2.25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 142 management students Well-defined questionnaire Correlation and regression 	Boundary theory shows that those with higher role conflict are more attracted to flexible work	Future studies should focus on understanding job seekers' needs to attract talent

(continued)

Table 3. Continued

Sr. No.	Document	TC	TCpy	NTC	Sampling and research techniques	Main argument	Future recommendations
6	Leslie, Manchester, Park, and Mehng (2012)	266	20.46	3.11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The top 500 organizations in the world were approached Correlation and regression 	Flexibility leads to career success, with positive outcomes linked to leader approval	More research is needed on factors mitigating the negative effects of flexible work policies (FWP)
7	Hill et al. (2008)	261	15.35	2.96	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theoretical-based analysis 	A conceptual study on defining flexibility and its cause-effect relationship	Future studies should explore the relationship between workplace flexibility and holistic approaches
8	Shockley and Allen (2007)	248	13.78	2.16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey of female employees 230 Moderated regression and correlation 	Family responsibilities and time flexibility influence each other more than work-family dynamics	Future research should assess both the usage and implementation of flexibility to understand variations in results
9	Mcnull et al. (2009)	222	13.88	4.79	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey process adopted Sample – 220 employees Hierarchical Regression and Correlation 	Access to flexible work arrangements improves work-life balance, and job satisfaction, and reduces turnover intentions	Future research should apply these assumptions in diverse settings
10	Putnam et al. (2014)	182	16.55	3.85	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theoretical Analysis 	Flexible work environments can cause stress and guilt due to task juggling	Further study is needed on how recreational spaces help employees manage flexibility stress

Note(s): T.C. is the total citation, TCpy is the total citation per year and NTC is the normalized total citation
Source(s): Authors' own development

4.1 Research methods and studies

Our review found that 262 studies used quantitative methods, 134 qualitative and only 4 mixed methods. Most were cross-sectional; further exploration of case study methodology is needed.

4.2 Sampling method, techniques and sizes

In our review of 239 studies, 136 used random sampling and 103 non-random sampling. Common techniques included convenience (26), stratified (19) and purposive (12). Many studies utilized surveys like the Cranet, Current Population and NSCW surveys. Most samples were under 1,000 (171), while some panel studies exceeded 4,000. Future research should prioritize random sampling techniques.

Table 4. Top cited research journal and articles publication

Journals	H	G	M	IF	SJR	SNIP	S	A	TC	NP	PY_start	Articles
<i>International Journal of Human Resource Management</i>	14	18	0.538	5.6	1.571	2.35	Y	A	433	18	1998	18
<i>Community, Work and Family Journal of Vocational Behavior</i>	11	15	0.688	2.3	0.651	1.226	Y	C	824	15	2008	15
<i>Human Relations</i>	10	10	0.435	11.1	2.926	3.666	Y	A*	1,522	10	2001	10
<i>British Journal of Management</i>	9	10	0.474	5.7	3.508	3.468	Y	A*	767	10	2005	10
<i>Employee Relations</i>	7	7	0.304	5.6	2.153	2.523	Y	A	323	7	2001	7
<i>Human Resource Management</i>	7	8	0.318	3.4	0.897	1.49	Y	B	180	8	2002	8
<i>Personnel Review</i>	7	7	0.219	6.6	2.338	2.782	Y	A*	303	7	1992	7
<i>Advances in Developing Human Resources</i>	6	8	0.4	3.9	1.078	1.729	Y	A	138	8	2009	8
<i>European Management Journal</i>	4	5	0.235	3.1	0.758	1.296	Y	C	185	5	2007	5
	4	4	0.364	7.5	1.625	2.275	Y	B	166	4	2013	4

Note(s): H– h_index, g – g_index, M – m_index, IF- Impact Factor, SJR – scimago journal research, SNIP – source normalized impact per paper, S – Scopus indexed, A – ABDC category journal, T.C. – total citation, N.P. – net paper, PY_start – starting of the research

Source(s): Authors' own development

4.3 Theoretical basis

This section outlines the theoretical frameworks in FWC studies see [Figure 5](#), with *Social Exchange Theory* as the most significant, emphasizing the exchange of social costs and benefits. Other key theories include *Signaling, Institutional, Border, Attribution, Organizational Support, Self-Regulation, Control, Equity* and *Human Capital Theories*. Future research can integrate these theories into their frameworks.

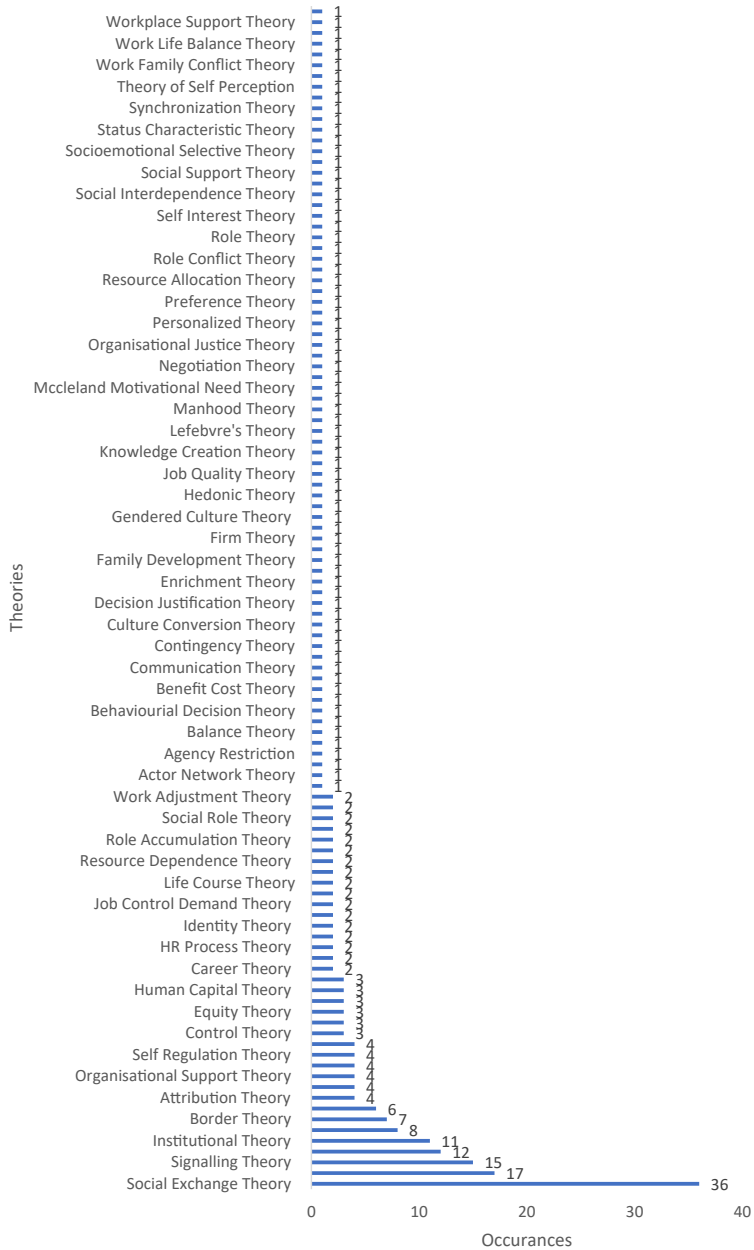
4.4 Statistical researching techniques

The final section reviews quantitative tools in FWC research, analyzing 125 studies. Common methods included various regression tests, correlation analysis (83), descriptive statistics (72), Structural Equation Modeling (60), ANOVA (31) and Chi-Square tests (12). Future research should focus on advanced tools like SEM and Chi-Square for deeper insights.

5. Keyword analysis

5.1 Author keywords analysis

[Figure 6](#) highlights the significance of author keyword analysis using Vos Viewer to identify research themes ([Baker et al., 2020](#)). Out of 1,058 keyword documents, 200 had at least two occurrences. The most frequent keyword was “Flexible Work Arrangement” (83), followed by “Work–Life Balance” (25), “Telecommuting” (18), “Flex Time” (17) and “Flexibility” (15). Other keywords included “Gender,” “Workplace Flexibility,” and “Job Satisfaction.” Future research should investigate variables like “Flexible Labor,” “Pay,” “Relationships at Work,” and “Job Resources.”

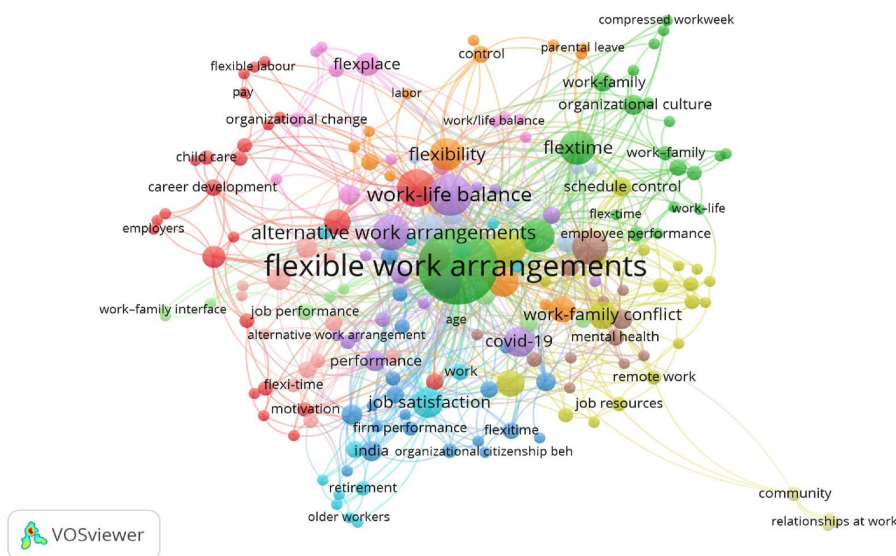


Source(s): Authors' own development

Figure 5. Theories used in the research studies

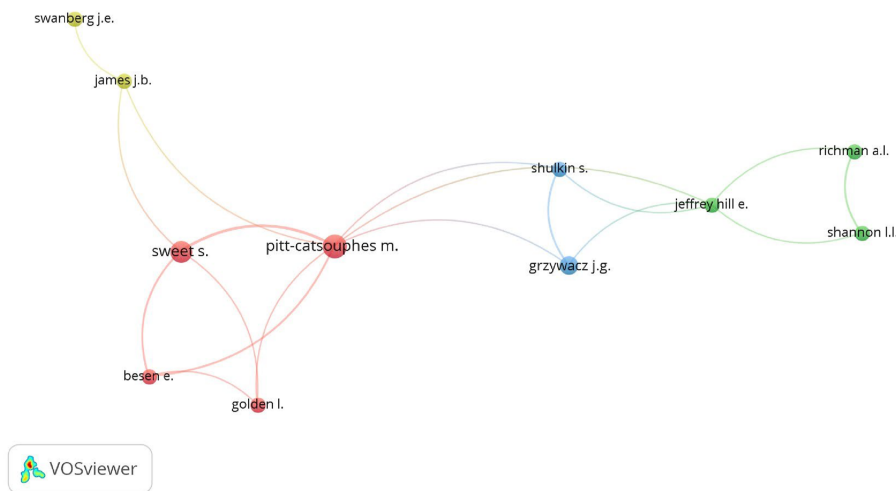
6. Co-authorship analysis

Figure 7 showcases the co-authorship analysis, highlighting the collaborative efforts of 91 authors from a pool of 923, enhancing research on complex topics (Donthu et al., 2021). Key



Source(s): Authors' own development

Figure 6. Author keyword analysis using Vos viewer



Source(s): Authors' own development

Figure 7. Co-authorship analysis using Vos viewer

studies include Hill *et al.* (2008), which presented a workplace flexibility framework, and Johnson, Lowe, and Reckers (2008), which emphasized its impact on job engagement. Grzywacz *et al.* (2008) and Richman, Civian, Shannon, Jeffrey Hill, and Brennan (2008) found that flexibility and supportive life policies enhance employee engagement and reduce work–life conflict. Swanberg, Watson, and Eastman (2014) noted that flexibility lowers stress

and burnout. Sweet, Pitt-Catsoupes, Besen, and Golden (2014) observed that while U.S. firms offer flexibility, it's not universally accessible and recommended training and support to improve its usage.

7. Bibliographic coupling

Bibliographic coupling is a method of analyzing shared references among research articles (Donthu *et al.*, 2021). Articles from 2000 to 2024 were examined (Zupic & Čater, 2015), revealing relationships between topics through shared citations. Using VOS viewer software and the Linlog Modularity method (Newman, 2004; Noack, 2007, 2009), 131 articles met the threshold limit out of 400 papers with over 25 citations. Article selection based on criteria from Nagariya, Kumar, and Kumar (2021). These formed four distinct clusters, highlighting various issues related to flexible work culture see Figure 8.

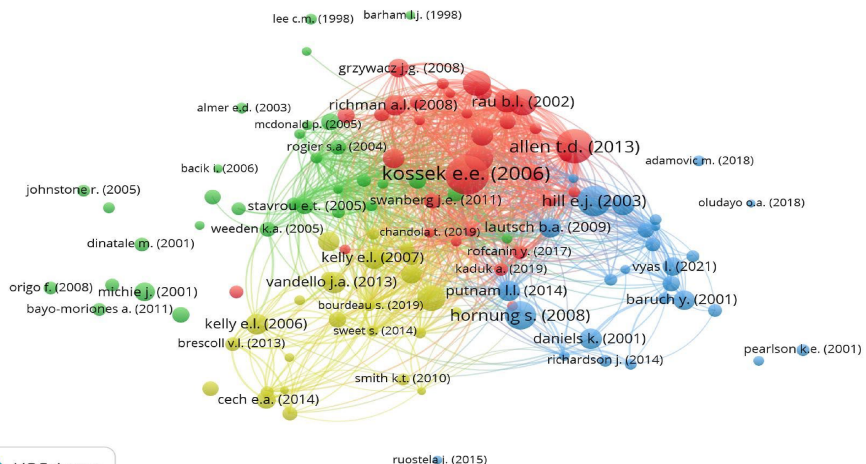
Cluster 1 (33 articles) explores flexible work frameworks, job perspectives, work–family conflict and work–life balance. Cluster 2 (32 articles) delves into demographic studies, supervisor support, flexibility usability, employee experiences and career development. Cluster 3 (26 articles) focuses on parental experiences, childcare and virtual office spaces. Cluster 4 (27 articles) discusses future agendas, work intensification, telecommuting and traditional versus modern workspaces see Table 5.

7.1 Content and thematic analysis

Content analysis is crucial for analyzing large volumes of textual data in research. Content and thematic analysis of the articles selected in the coupling process was conducted. Articles with a Total Global Citation >25 were included, while recent developments from lower-cited papers were covered under recent trends. This approach offers a comprehensive understanding of the research findings and their relevance to the field.

Cluster 1. Framework, Employee Well-Being and Work Experience.

In this cluster, Allen, Johnson, Kiburz, and Shockley (2013) are the most cited, followed by Chen, Zhang, Sanders, and Xu (2018). The *first sub-theme*, based on Hill *et al.* (2008)



Source(s): Authors' own development

Figure 8. Bibliographic coupling of documents

Table 5. Clusters and themes details

Clusters	Colour	Total articles	Themes
Cluster 1	Red	33	Focused on Framework, Employee Well-Being and Work Experience
Cluster 2	Green	32	Focused on Gender-Based Study, Supervisor Support, Perceived Usability and Career Development
Cluster 3	Yellow	26	Focused on Parental Experience, Child Care and Virtual Offices
Cluster 4	Blue	27	Focused on Present and Futuristic Agenda, Work-Intensification, Teleworking and Traditional vs Modern Work Environment

Source(s): Authors' own development

framework, emphasizes how flexible work culture (FWC) enhances work engagement and influences individual behavior, home life and community, relying on mutual trust between employer and employee. The *second sub-theme* addresses employee well-being in the form of work–family conflicts, where [Kossek, Lautsch, and Eaton \(2006\)](#) suggest flexible workers don't always experience better job control or reduced conflicts. Also, family-supportive policies have little impact on work–family conflict (WFC), highlighting the need for deeper insight into flexibility's effects. Benefits like flex time ([McNall, Masuda, & Nicklin, 2009](#)) and compressed workweeks ([Facer & Wadsworth, 2008](#)) show organizational care, and managers favor flexibility to reduce family-based stress, though preferences vary by country ([Masuda et al., 2012](#)). [Allen et al. \(2013\)](#) found that while flexibility helps reduce WFC, traditional work arrangements are still preferred due to gender differences in perceptions of job satisfaction and turnover ([Chen et al., 2018](#)).

The *last sub-theme*, discusses employee work experience where [Timms et al. \(2015\)](#) noted that flexible work affects turnover intentions more than work engagement, underscoring the importance of a supportive work culture. Extended hours can boost careers, and different flexible work types impact job attitudes differently. [Grzywacz et al. \(2008\)](#) found that flexibility reduces stress, with varying effects based on gender and partner status. [Shockley and Allen \(2010\)](#) showed that flexitime helps separate work from personal life, appealing to those with high work ambitions and family demands. Peer support can also encourage flexible habits ([Lambert, Marler, & Gueutal, 2008](#)), though organizations offer limited work–life balance support ([Grotto & Lyness, 2010](#)). The rise of virtual work, including digital nomadism, indicates growing digitalization in the U.K. and Europe ([Valenduc & Vendramin, 2017](#)). Flexible hours and sabbaticals improve job satisfaction, while remote work reduces turnover, though health impacts are minimal ([Kröll & Nüesch, 2019](#)).

Cluster 2. Gender-Based Study, Supervisor Support, Perceived Usability and Career Development.

In this cluster, the most cited authors are [Michie and Sheehan-Quinn \(2001\)](#) and [Stavrou \(2005\)](#), with works from [Bacik and Drew \(2006\)](#) and [Hayman \(2009\)](#) contributing significantly. The *first sub-theme* highlights demographic issues, particularly gender. Research shows that employee involvement, multi-skilling and training improve satisfaction, with non-monetary rewards being more valued ([Origo & Pagani, 2008](#)). Flexibility preferences show little gender difference, though younger employees favor functional flexibility. Women, especially in the legal profession, benefit from flexible work arrangements, often relying on partners for childcare ([Bacik & Drew, 2006](#)). Gender biases in accounting firms favor women in performance appraisals ([Johnson et al., 2008](#)), and while men prefer traditional hours, women often choose part-time roles due to uncooperative environments ([Macermid, Dean Lee, Buck, & Williams, 2001](#)). Flexibility and its impact on turnover, absenteeism and productivity vary across organizations and regions, with limited

research in some areas (Stavrou & Kilaniotis, 2010). Social exchange theory links flexible work to lower absenteeism and turnover and higher productivity.

The *second sub-theme* focuses on remote employees, who need consistent support to remain motivated. Even minimal support reduces turnover intentions, while positive assistance fosters collaboration and retention, preventing a shift to full-time remote work (McDonald, Pini, & Bradley, 2007). Flexible policies can reduce work–life conflicts and job pressures (Hayman, 2009), though they may not significantly boost innovation. Smaller companies often excel in innovative practices like job rotation, teamwork and quality circles, reducing mental health risks (Michie & Sheehan-Quinn, 2001), though these practices vary across cultures and can cause strain (Brenner, Fairris, & Ruser, 2004).

The *last sub-theme* highlights how reduced workloads allow employees to spend more time with family, recharge or pursue other tasks (Lee, MacDermid, Williams, Buck, & Leiba-O'Sullivan, 2002). In the hotel industry, flexible schedules are valued more (Knox & Walsh, 2005). Part-time female employees often have more opportunities and report greater job satisfaction than full-time workers (Lee *et al.*, 2002; McDonald, Guthrie, Bradley, & Shakespeare-Finch, 2005). Employers who promote efficient work practices also encourage organizational citizenship (van Dyne, Kossek, & Lobel, 2007). Flexible workers also tend to earn more than traditional full-timers (Glass, 2002), but wage disparities between mothers and non-mothers persist, needing organizational attention (Weeden, 2005). While flexibility can enhance career growth, it may also undermine job autonomy and stability for women.

Cluster 3. Parental Experience, Child Care and Virtual Offices.

The most cited authors in this cluster are Vandello, Hettinger, Bosson, and Siddiqi (2013), Lyness *et al.* (2012), Leslie *et al.* (2012), Kelly and Kelly (2006), Kelly and Moen (2007), Golden (2008) and Cech and Blair-Loy (2014). The *first sub-theme* addresses the experiences of dual-earner parents balancing caregiving and professional responsibilities. Women in flexible work arrangements report higher comfort levels (Chesley & Moen, 2006), but African American employees face more obstacles to accessing such flexibility (Golden, 2008). Experts recommend state-supported policies to enhance parental control and family support (Den Dulk, Groeneveld, Ollier-Malaterre, & Valcour, 2013).

The *second sub-theme* examines the impact of flexibility on the pay gap for working mothers who work from home or part-time (Fuller & Hirsh, 2019) and the unclear career progression for mothers in the tertiary sector (Webber & Williams, 2008; Brown, 2010). Additionally, parental leave benefits for fathers regarding childcare are uncertain, with some studies suggesting it may cause stress (Brandth & Kvande, 2016; Munsch, 2016). The *final sub-theme* considers virtual offices, where internet access is crucial for remote employees, who often use it more for personal than work-related tasks (Wajcman, Rose, Brown, & Bittman, 2010). Monitoring is necessary to prevent remote work from causing mental stress and affecting work–life balance (Kelly & Moen, 2007). Managers may perceive flexible employees as less committed (Leslie *et al.*, 2012). Studies indicate that men require more support in flexible work arrangements due to workplace partiality, while women are eager to participate and advance their careers (Vandello *et al.*, 2013; Brescoll, Glass, & Sedlovskaya, 2013). Effective implementation of flexible work policies requires cooperation between employees and managers (Lirio, Lee, Williams, Haugen, & Kossek, 2008) and strong managerial support. Balancing flexibility and structure is vital for the success of virtual offices (Kelly & Kelly, 2006).

Cluster 4. Present and Futuristic Agenda, Work-Intensification, Teleworking and Traditional vs Modern Work Environment.

The most cited authors in this cluster are Hill *et al.* (2003), Morganson, Major, Oborn, Verive, and Heelan (2010), Lautsch, Kossek, and Eaton (2009) and Baruch (2001). The *first sub-theme* examines how employers in India's I.T. sector use remote work to control employees, pushing them to accept excessive workloads and reducing employer costs (Bathini & Kandathil, 2019).

The *second sub-theme* focuses on teleworking, which gained popularity in the 1980s and 1990s (Nilles, Carlson, Gray, & Hanneman, 1976). Effective teleworking requires good communication, facilities and a proper work–life balance. Supervisors should maintain close contact with their teams and share information promptly (Tavares, Santos, Diogo, & Ratten, 2020; Putnam, Myers, & Gailliard, 2014). Teleworking reduces travel expenses, improves well-being (He & Hu, 2015; Henke *et al.*, 2016) and highlights behavioral differences between remote and on-site workers (Lautsch *et al.*, 2009). A multilevel analysis is needed to understand its impact on health and productivity fully. While telecommuting can lead to isolation (Virick, DaSilva, & Arrington, 2010), it can also improve negative perceptions (Cañibano, 2019). Differences in teleworking experiences can occur across departments (Maruyama & Tietze, 2012). Teleworking benefits both employees and organizations but requires careful management.

The *third sub-theme* compares traditional, home and virtual work environments, noting that all three offer benefits like motivation, performance and retention, but do not significantly affect career advancement (Hill *et al.*, 2003). Home workdays provide better mental stability for complex tasks (Biron & van Veldhoven, 2016), while traditional office environments result in higher job satisfaction and participation (Morganson *et al.*, 2010). The *last sub-theme* focuses on the Present and Futuristic Agenda. Managers must ensure a seamless integration of workspaces and home life, showing confidence in their colleagues (Richardson & Mckenna, 2014). HR managers should lead in maximizing employee participation in these practices by identifying five critical aspects of work: identity, competency, context, role demand and outcome Baruch (2001). Performance appraisal often involves subjective or traditional methods requiring group or leader input. The focus should be shifted from performance to the impact on global growth and business ecosystems, emphasizing the role of global virtual teams.

8. Recent trends

Through text data analysis in VOS Viewer, we examined documents from 2021 to 2024 to identify current trends in flexible work arrangements. Previous research emphasizes that managerial and organizational support is crucial for success (Arora & Anon, 2022), with ineffective culture being a major barrier (Kwon, Cho, & Song, 2021). Employees prefer job-crafting roles over flexible work due to perceived benefits (Waples & Brock Baskin, 2021). Organizational culture significantly influences virtual team effectiveness and work–life balance, impacting employee happiness, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic (Sunaryo *et al.*, 2022). While flexible work attracts job seekers, it requires effective task management and can negatively impact career success, with varied effects on men and women (Coron & Garbe, 2023). To implement flexible work successfully, key requirements include advanced technology and effective managerial communication (Hosoi, Reiter, & Zabel, 2021). Recent studies also explore trends like the 4-day workweek (Jahal, Bardoel, & Hopkins, 2024) and parental leave policies, highlighting differential treatments for mothers and fathers (Shum *et al.*, 2023; Augustine, Kim, & Lee, 2024).

9. Theoretical contribution, implications and future research agenda

The theoretical contribution of this research highlighted in Cluster 1 (2008) examines FWC's effects on family conflicts and traditional work preferences, suggesting comparisons across various work settings. Cluster 2 (2001) studies demographics in flexible arrangements, emphasizing gender and age studies to address specific employee needs. Cluster 3 (2005) explores parent and virtual worker experiences, highlighting flexibility preferences and pay disparities and recommending research on policy effects for parents. Cluster 4 links flexible work to work intensification, noting some still prefer traditional settings. Future studies should investigate employee outcomes using theories like Workplace Support and Social Interdependence (see Table 6).

Table 6. Future research questions (cluster wise)

Clusters and potential themes	Future research question
<i>Cluster 1: policies and Impact</i>	How does flexible work affect job embedding? Does flexibility make a workplace more attractive? Is flexible work beneficial for the digital economy? What benefits do family members gain from flexible schedules? Explore alternative work models like co-working, digital nomadism and online platforms
<i>Cluster 2: implementation and organizational culture</i>	How do organizations manage cultural diversity in flexible work? Can flexible work cultures become more professional? Does workplace flexibility lead to career rebranding? What organizational factors promote or hinder flexibility? How do routine work patterns normalize flexible scheduling? What are the neural impacts of flexible work experiences? How do leadership and organizational culture influence flexible workers?
<i>Cluster 3: gender, social class and financial impact</i>	How does workplace restructure support varied work styles? What flexible practices do men and women prefer? Does flexibility offer equal career opportunities for both genders? How does flexibility coexist with employees' social class? What impact does flexibility have on parenting and financial performance? How does flexibility shape employee perceptions and behavior? How does flexibility impact workload management and boundaries? How does the Internet of Things influence work cultures?
<i>Cluster 4: regulations and Telecommuting</i>	What supports caregivers who practice flexibility? How can biases around flexibility be reduced? What labour laws are needed to regulate flexibility? What factors help overcome job separation? How does supervisory support affect telecommuters? Investigate technology-enabled teleworking Explore new ways to manage work–life conflicts

Source(s): Authors' own development

9.1 Managerial and social implications

The FWC literature and thematic analysis suggest that managers should foster collaboration, offer career growth and address gender differences. *Social implications* emphasize increasing employee resilience and modernizing traditional work systems. Recommendations to improve workplace culture and employee well-being include:

- (1) Recognizing gender differences in work practice acceptance and providing teleworking training.
- (2) Promoting ethical work practices and interpersonal beliefs.
- (3) Enhancing leadership skills of managers through training.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of flexible work arrangements for employee satisfaction. Organizations should develop a flexible work culture tailored to their settings and regulations to address employee reluctance, loneliness, workload and health issues.

9.1.1 Future research agenda. Based on current literature and cluster findings, the study recommends further research on flexible work conditions (FWC), with key areas and potential themes outlined in [Table 5](#). Future studies should explore case studies across different regions,

sectors and economic contexts, as well as longitudinal studies for practical guidelines. Key research areas include:

- (1) Job-crafting roles,
- (2) Workplace transformation (e.g. gig workers),
- (3) Career development,
- (4) Counterproductive and innovative behavior,
- (5) Firm financial performance,
- (6) Organizational attractiveness and
- (7) AI's impact on work culture.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated these trends, and future studies should address workcation, hot desking, emotional exhaustion, collective bargaining and income disparities. Emerging variables include organizational fairness, ethical fit, employee control and job embeddedness.

10. Conclusion and limitations

This study provides new perspectives on FWC from 2000 to 2024, analyzing 400 items using bibliometric and SLR techniques. The analysis covers article publications, country contributions, citation trends, theoretical-methodological gaps, keyword frequency and co-authorship in areas like work—life balance, employee attitudes and supportive environments. Vos Viewer was used for thematic clustering and content analysis, with findings emphasizing global management practices. Future research could adopt advanced SLR methods (e.g. meta-analysis, ADO, TCCM) and explore multiple databases. Additional tools like Bibexcel, UCInet, Gephi and Microsoft Office are recommended for expanded analysis.

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Further reading

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