

## TRENDS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS OF THE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

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**Abstract.** *Although a considerable amount of scholarly work has been written on the construct called employee engagement, there is a lot of rigorous academic research that needs to be done. In light of this, the current study conducts a literature analysis of works that analyze the dynamics of employee engagement. The current study has used a variety of bibliometric analytic approaches, such as frequency tables on publications broken down by year, nation, author, etc., using Biblishiny software. The most influential articles in this field of study are elaborated. The trending themes in this field of study are identified using keyword analysis and thematic maps.*

**Keywords:** Employee engagement, bibliometric analysis, trending themes

### **Introduction**

Kahn is the first researcher who wrote a scholarly work on employee engagement in the year 1990 (Bailey et al., 2017; Iddagoda and Opatha, 2017). Concept of employee engagement has gained substantial attractiveness in the scholarly world as well as in the business world in the past few decades however, it remains many areas to research. Kahn (1990) define employee engagement as harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances. The view of Kahn in 1990 is that employee engagement is an attitude. Bevan et al. (1997) as cited in Armstrong (2009) define employee engagement as someone "who is aware of the business context, and works closely with the colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the

organization. Employee engagement is a behaviour, is the view of Bevan in 1997. Iddagoda et al., (2016) defined employee engagement as the extent to which an employee gets involved in the job and the organization cognitively, emotionally and behaviourally. Iddagoda et., (2016) state that employee engagement is a combination of attitude and behaviour. The objective of this study is to identify the primary topics, contemporary dynamics and trends in the arena of employee engagement and to make recommendations for future research directions.

## Data and Methodology

The articles used “employee engagement” as a keyword is considered for the analysis. The first level search shows 1355 articles meet this criterion. In the next level, the study confined the search to only two subject areas, “business, management and accounting” and “social science” After filtering the database with select subject areas, only 1021 articles are left in database. Finally, only the English language journal articles are selected. The final database comprises 866 articles in this area of research.

The current study has used a variety of bibliometric analytic approaches, such as frequency tables on publications broken down by year, nation, author, etc. The most influential articles in this field of study are noted. The current field of research uses keyword analysis and thematic mapping to identify the prevailing topics.

## Results and Discussion

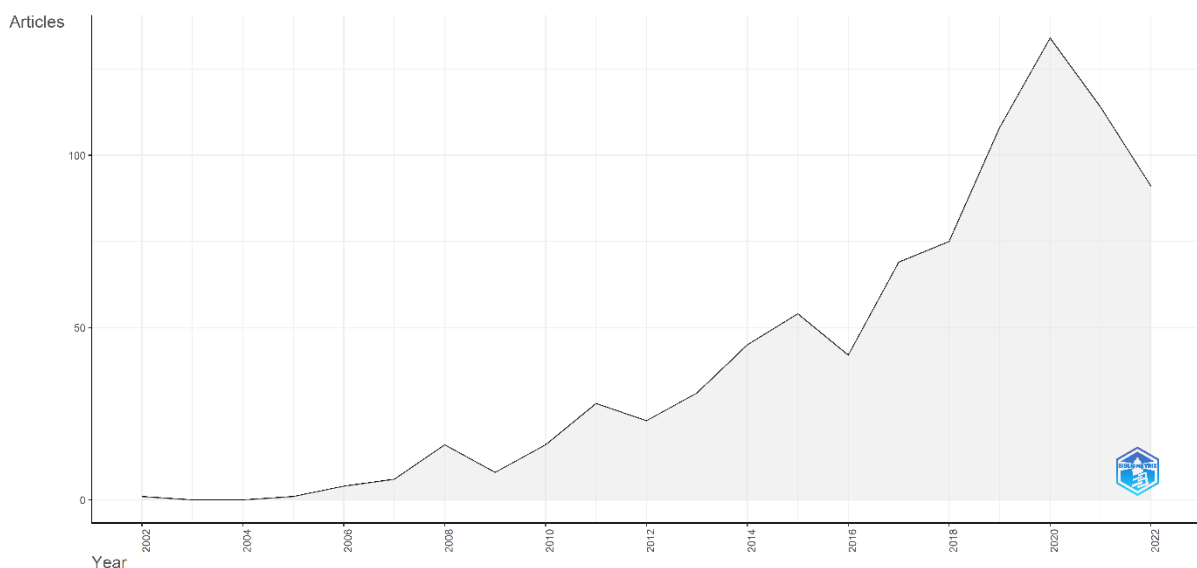


Figure 1. Year-wise Publications

Year-wise Publications depicts the publication trend in the research on “employee engagement” in journals related to human resource management from 2002 to 2022. The zero

number of publications was documented in the year 2003 and 2004, and the highest number of publications in the year 2020 and 2021. Significantly, employee engagement is expected to play a pivotal role in human resource management, and it is drawing much attention from researchers.

Table 1. Country-Wise Publications

Country	TP	TC	Average Article Citations
USA	429	4575	40.85
Canada	33	3466	346.60
United Kingdom	95	2037	58.20
India	393	1676	17.10
Australia	77	1652	59.00
China	86	583	21.59
Netherlands	23	447	149.00
Korea	42	375	25.00
Malaysia	142	212	5.58
New Zealand	17	208	34.67

This section analyzes the most productive and impactful countries, publishing articles on “employee engagement”. Seventy-one countries have made significant contributions in the last two decades. Table 1 reveals that the USA, Canada, United Kingdom, India and Australia are the top five countries with the highest citations. As the most productive country in this area of research, 429 articles were published in the USA and received the highest number of citations. However, the 393 articles from India, which has the second highest number of publications only received 1676 citations which ranked fourth. The highest average article citations received by Canada was 3466 citations for 33 documents.

Table 2. Journal-Wise Publications

Element	h_index	g_index	m_index	TC	NP	PY_start
Journal of Managerial Psychology	6	6	0.353	2310	6	2006
Human Resource Development Review	9	11	0.692	954	11	2010
Human Resource Management Review	7	7	0.412	865	7	2006
Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology	3	3	0.231	802	3	2010
International Journal of Human Resource Management	11	12	1.1	636	12	2013
Journal of Business Ethics	7	7	0.778	571	7	2014
International Journal of Productivity And Performance Management	7	9	0.778	557	9	2014
Advances in Developing Human Resources	6	7	0.5	492	7	2011
Human Resource Development International	5	6	0.417	468	6	2011
Human Resource Development Quarterly	4	6	0.444	462	6	2014

The database contains 866 documents that were published in 345 sources. Table 2 highlights the top 10 journals with the highest citations for “employee engagement.” Out of the total publications, 8 percent of the publications identified are published in these journals. Journal of Managerial Psychology, published by Emerald Group Publishing, has the most cited publications, with 2310 citations for six documents, followed by Human Resource Development Review, published by SAGE publications (954 citations). Both journals are ranked as Q1 journals by the SCIMAGO ranking. It indicates the research works on employee engagement are published in top-ranked journals worldwide; hence, these articles have influenced the subsequent literature.

Table 3. Author-Wise Publications

Element	h_index	g_index	m_index	TC	NP	PY_start
Saks AM	8	8	0.471	3368	8	2006
Shuck B	17	21	1.308	1720	21	2010
Gruman JA	3	3	0.25	920	3	2011
Alfes K	5	5	0.455	781	5	2012
Bakker AB	2	2	0.154	736	2	2010
Dollard MF	3	3	0.231	704	3	2010
Bhatnagar J	4	4	0.25	470	4	2007
Bailey C	3	3	0.429	420	3	2016
Jr	4	4	0.333	383	4	2011
Albrecht SI	4	5	0.5	379	5	2015

The top 10 authors publishing their research on “employee engagement” are listed in Table 3. The findings reveal that Saks AM, Shuck B, Gruman JA, Alfes K, Bakker AB and Dollard MF are the five authors who have received citations greater than 700. According to the number of publications highest number of articles published by Shuck B with 21 publications.

Table 4. Keyword Analysis

Words	Occurrences
employee engagement	551
engagement	69
job satisfaction	49
work engagement	34
transformational leadership	30
human resource management	28
organizational commitment	27
leadership	25
social exchange theory	24
corporate social responsibility	23
employee performance	23
motivation	22
india	20

organizational performance	19
performance	19
organizational culture	17
turnover intention	16
employee attitudes	15
human resource development	15
psychological empowerment	15

Table 4 and Figure 1 present the keyword analysis using a frequency table and word cloud. Keyword analysis brings to light the antecedents of employee engagement. It indicates that employee engagement studies consider the relationship with job satisfaction, organisational commitment, employee and organisational performance and corporate social responsibility. Most studies use social exchange theory to examine this concept. In addition, leadership, human resource management, organisational culture, and empowerment are the keywords which frequently used with employee engagement. India is also highlighted because the second highest number of articles published in the Indian context and which are used as keywords.



Figure 1. Word Cloud

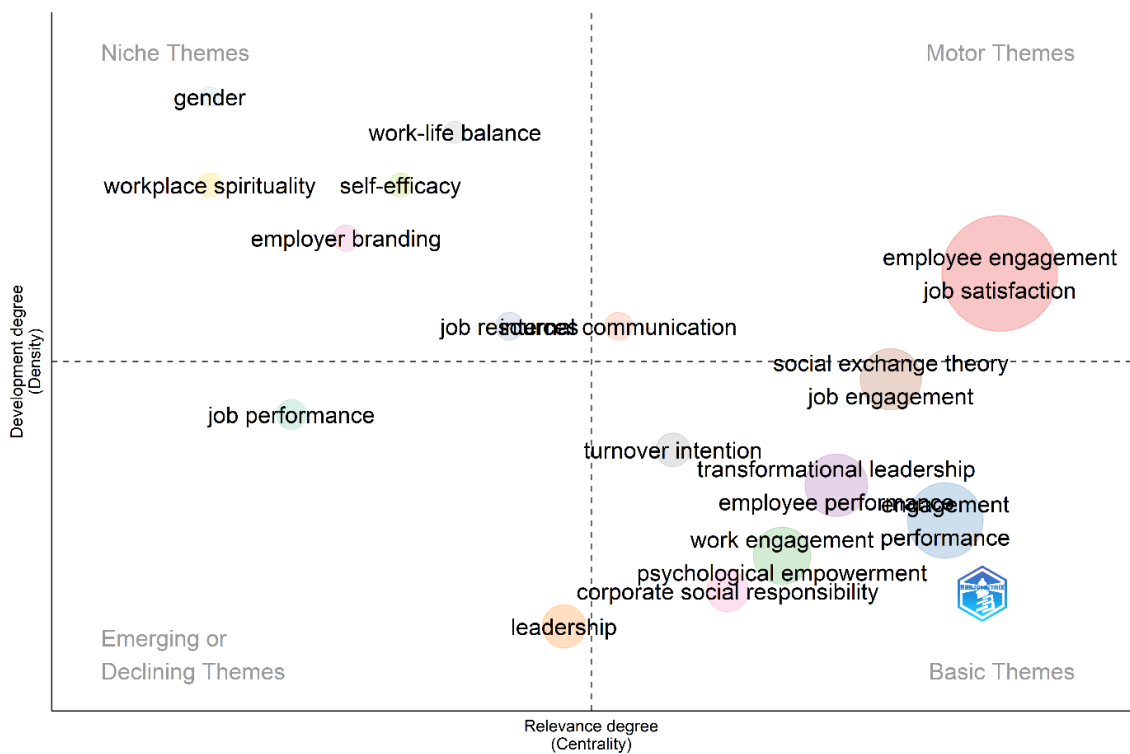


Figure 2. Thematic Map

Figure 2 exhibits the thematic map related to employee engagement. It provides a pictorial presentation of the trending themes in this area of research. Bottom-right part of the map shows the basic themes representing the well-established research issues in this area. The themes including job engagement with social exchange theory, turnover intention, transformational leadership with employee performance, engagement with performance and psychological empowerment with corporate social responsibility are considered as basic themes.

The themes gaining importance in the recent past are presented in the top-right part of the map. It mainly includes three research issues: employee engagement, job satisfaction and communication. The top-left part shows the niche themes. This includes gender, spirituality, work-life balance, self-efficacy and employee branding, which future research needs to be further explored. Finally, “job performance” and “leadership” is classified as emerging theme/declining theme. It is mainly because most of the studies discussed these, and it is required to investigate these themes with different variants not the same as these keywords.

### Literature review

According to Saks (2006) employee engagement is a unique concept. The view of Saks in 2006 is that the work related attitudes such as job involvement, work involvement, organizational citizenship behaviour and job satisfaction are related to employee engagement. Iddagoda et al.,

(2016) state that when comparing the other work related attitudes, job involvement and work involvement are closely related with employee engagement. Saks (2006) points out those employees who perceive higher organizational support are probable to interchange with significant levels of employee engagement with their job and with their organization. Shuck and Wollard in 2010, conducted an integrative literature review and developed a definition on employee engagement. Shuck and Wollard (2010) defined employee engagement as an individual employee's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed toward desired organizational outcomes. Saks and Gruman (2014) the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model is one of the common theory that used to explain employee engagement.

Saks and Gruman (2014) wrote:

“The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model was used to demonstrate that burnout can develop through two processes. First, burn-out is the result of high job demands, which leads to exhaustion. Second, a lack of job resources leads to withdrawal behavior or disengagement from work (p.161).”

Dollard and Bakker (2010) developed and tested a conceptual framework/nomological network with workplace psychosocial safety climate, worker psychological health, employee engagement and job demands and resources. Dollard and Bakker (2010) mention that workplace psychosocial safety climate impact on employee engagement. Rewards and recognition will be lead to high level of employee engagement. This can be explained with the Social Exchange Theory. When the organization provide rewards and recognition appropriately, the employee in return will be more loyal the organization, take extra effort in-order to achieve organizational goals which are the aspects of employee engagement. Gruman and Saks (2011) point out that providing appropriate performance increment, promote high level of employee engagement. Bailey et al., (2017) tested a model with the constructs such as task performance, individual morale, extra-role performance and organizational performance. Bailey et al., (2017) state that employee engagement has a positive relationship with task performance, individual morale, extra-role performance and organizational performance. Albrecht et al., (2015) also has the similar view. In the study of Albrecht et al., (2015) found that employee job performance can be achieved by facilitating employee engagement.

Anitha (2014) identified healthy collegiality, work place environment and workplace wellbeing are the determinants of employee engagement. Anitha (2014) states that these determinants enhance employee engagement. Iddagoda et al. (2021) define work life balance as ensuring the balance between fulfilling the duties for the family members, either in a nuclear family or extended family, and fulfilling duties for the employer. Cartwright and Holmes (2006) mention

that work-life balance is a driver of employee engagement. Bhatnagar (2007) mentions that various aspects of talent management are recruitment, selection, on-boarding, mentoring, performance management, career development, leadership development, replacement planning, career planning, recognition and reward (p.641). Employee engagement as a key to the retention of talent is a finding of Bhatnagar in 2007.

Table 5. Most Influential Articles on employee engagement

<b>Author</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Total citations</b>	<b>Key points</b>
Saks	2006	2199	-Employee engagement is a unique concept but it is related with job involvement, work involvement, organizational citizenship behaviour and job satisfaction
Dollard and Bakker	2010	446	-Workplace psychosocial safety climate influence on employee engagement
Shuck and Wollard	2010	331	-Conducted an integrative literature review -Presented a definition on employee engagement as a solution for the conceptual confusion in employee engagement
Gruman and Saks	2011	354	-Employee engagement can be increased by providing appropriate performance increments
Anitha	2014	314	- Healthy collegiality, work place environment and workplace wellbeing leads to high level of employee engagement
Bailey, Madden, Alfes and Fletcher	2017	303	-Employee engagement has a positive relationship with task performance, individual morale, extra-role performance and organizational



			performance
Bhatnagar	2007	292	-Employee engagement is a key to the retention of talent
Albrecht, Bakker, Gruman, Macey and Saks	2015	290	There is a relationship between employee engagement and employee job performance

## Conclusion

In the current study, the dynamics of employee engagement is investigated through a bibliometric review of the literature. There is 2002-dated literature on journals related to the human resource management this field of study. Up till the end of 2022, the literature has been gathered. There are 866 articles in total that meet the criteria for selection. The current study has used a variety of bibliometric analytic approaches, such as frequency tables on publications broken down by year, nation, author, etc. The most influential articles in this field of study are noted. In order to identify the popular themes in the current research area, keyword analysis and thematic mapping are used. The results show a significant increase in research publications in 2019 and 2022. USA (with 429 articles) and India (with 393 articles) are the largest publishing nations. "Journal of Managerial Psychology" and "Human Resource Development Review" are the top journals. The authors who have received the most citations, with over 1000, are Saks AM and Shuck B. It was needed to examine the relationship between employee engagement, job satisfaction and communication according to keyword analysis and thematic maps. In addition, it is essential to research on spirituality, work-life balance, self-efficacy and employee branding in detail.

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