

Navigating Organizational Transformation: A Bibliometric and Systematic Literature Review of Employee Readiness for Organisational Change

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Abstract

In today's fast-paced business world, embracing change within organisations has become essential to survive and thrive. Understanding employee readiness for change is critical for ensuring the effectiveness of these transitions. This research employs a dual approach—bibliometric analysis and systematic literature review—to explore the academic discourse surrounding employee readiness for organizational change from 1982 to 2024. The analysis was done using programs such as Biblioshiny in R studio and VOSviewer. The analysis of 188 selected articles reveals key themes, including the conceptualization of readiness, its measurement, and the variables most frequently associated with successful change outcomes. The study further examines the methodological approaches employed in research and identifies major gaps in the literature, highlighting areas requiring further investigation. By mapping the evolution of the field, the study offers insights into how employee readiness impacts organizational change efforts, providing both a foundation for future research and practical recommendations for organizations navigating change. This research serves as a valuable resource for scholars and practitioners alike, shedding light on the critical role of employee readiness in change management.

Keywords: Employee readiness, organizational change, bibliometric analysis, change management.

Introduction:

In recent years, there's been growing interest in research on change management. Studies are diving into issues like why people resist change, what causes change initiatives to fail, and how change affects overall organizational performance (Jiménez-García & López-Fernández, 2025; Fonseca & Domingues, 2017; Kirrane et al., 2017; Nwinyokpugi, 2018; Thakur & Srivastava, 2018). Organizations face an urgent need to implement change in today's rapidly evolving environment (Voet, 2016). However, achieving organizational transformation is a complex and challenging process (Karp & Helgo, 2008; Kuipers et al., 2014). Successful transformation can only be realized when both individuals and organizations are prepared and ready for change (Al-Tahitah et al., 2020). Readiness of employees towards change is a key factor in successful change implementation as per the change management literature (Engida et al., 2022). Additionally, a variety of theories, models, strategies, and key factors have been developed to focus on how ready employees are for change.

Organizational change influences individual perceptions, which may either facilitate or disturb the change process (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). Support for change from employees reflects their readiness. Readiness is defined as “a belief, intention, attitude, and behaviour concerning the perceived need for change and the organization’s capacity to successfully implement it” (Armenakis et al., 1993; Rafferty & Simons, 2006; Susanto, 2008). Bernerth (2004) further defines readiness as a psychological state during the change process that reflects an individual’s willingness or receptiveness to altering their mindset. Before employees can develop a positive attitude toward organizational change, they need to evaluate the current state of the organization and its environment, comparing their past experiences with what they expect in the future. A substantial body of research exist on employee readiness, especially looking at the individual and workplace factors that play a role in shaping this mindset (Trivedi, T., 2018).

The growing scholarly interest in employee change readiness for organizational changes and change management, particularly in recent years (Kebede & Wang, 2022; Rahi et al., 2022; Widyastuti & Ardiyanti, 2024; Zulkarnain et al., 2024), underscores the increasing importance of understanding how employees prepare for and adapt to organizational change. As change management practices continue to evolve, there is clear potential for further exploration of this area. The aim of the research is to bridge the gap in the field of change management literature, with a specific focus on employee change readiness. By systematically reviewing and synthesizing relevant publications, this investigation seeks to achieve the following objectives.

Research Objectives:

1. Identify the predominant themes and trends in the literature on employee readiness for organizational change.
2. Examine how conceptualizations and measurements of employee readiness have evolved over time in the research community.
3. Explore the variables most commonly studied in relation to employee readiness and analyse their relationship to the success of organizational change initiatives.
4. Examine the methodological approaches employed in empirical research on employee readiness for organizational change.
5. Identify the major gaps in the literature on employee readiness for change and analyse how future research can address them to improve understanding.

The primary objective of this research is to review past studies on employee readiness in organizational change, highlighting key trends, current research, and emerging topics. It aims to provide a clear overview of how change readiness has been understood and addressed, particularly in social science research. The paper is structured to first outline the research methodology, followed by the results and discussion. It concludes with a look at the implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

Research Methodology:

Bibliometric analysis is a computer-based method used to identify key research topics, authors, and their connections by examining relevant publications in a specific field (Han et al., 2020). It primarily involves five techniques: a) citation analysis, b) co-citation analysis, c) bibliographic coupling, d) co-authorship analysis, and e) keyword co-occurrence analysis (Zupic & Carter, 2015). To conduct an effective bibliometric analysis, it’s important to gather

high-quality literature from a trusted database (Zhang & Quoquab, 2022). In this study, using Scopus, the search term “employee readiness for change” returned 200 results spanning from 1982 to 2024. The final search formula for the title search on "employee readiness for organisational change" was TITLE-ABS-KEY (employee AND readiness AND organizational AND change AND change AND management AND change AND readiness AND employee AND attitudes AND employee AND behaviour). After applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, 188 documents were selected for analysis, focusing on social science and management studies in English. The goal is to uncover patterns in employee readiness for organizational change research. A detailed summary of the search process can be found in Table 1. Compared to Web of Science, Scopus offers about 20% broader coverage, while Google Scholar may vary in accuracy (Falagas et al., 2008; Mesdaghinia et al., 2015). For this study, we used the Scopus database due to its broad coverage and reliability. The data were then processed using VOSviewer software and Biblioshiny for the bibliometric analysis (Sadam & Yusoof, 2023).



Figure 1: Main Information

Table 1: Data Statistics

Description	Results
Timespan	1982:2024
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	149
Documents	188
Annual Growth Rate %	2.65
Document Average Age	8.51
Average citations per doc	16.85
References	8411
DOCUMENT CONTENTS	
Keywords Plus (ID)	798
Author's Keywords (DE)	589
AUTHORS	
Authors	542
Authors of single-authored docs	27
AUTHORS COLLABORATION	
Single-authored docs	27
Co-Authors per Doc	3.14

International co-authorships %	17.55
DOCUMENT TYPES	
article	144
book chapter	9
conference paper	24
conference review	2
note	1
review	8

(Source: Author)

Results and Discussion:

Figure 2 illustrates the yearly scholarly work of research articles on employee readiness for organizational change from 1982 to 2024. The early years showed limited research output, with only one article published in 1982 and no publications between 1983 and 1992. The mid-1990s saw slight increases, followed by a more noticeable rise in the 2000s, particularly in 2005, when three articles were published. The trend continued in the 2010s with steady growth, reaching 4 articles in 2010, 5 in 2015, and 8 in 2016. A significant surge in publications occurred from 2017 to 2022, peaking at 23 articles in 2021 and 25 in 2022. This increase can be attributed to the growing relevance of organizational change amid technological advancements, globalization, and evolving work environments. The pandemic further accelerated this trend, as organizations worldwide had to rapidly adapt to new ways of working, boosting research on employee readiness for change. However, in 2023, the number of publications slightly decreased to 16, possibly due to shifts in research priorities. Despite this, the overall trend indicates a continued rise in interest and research output.

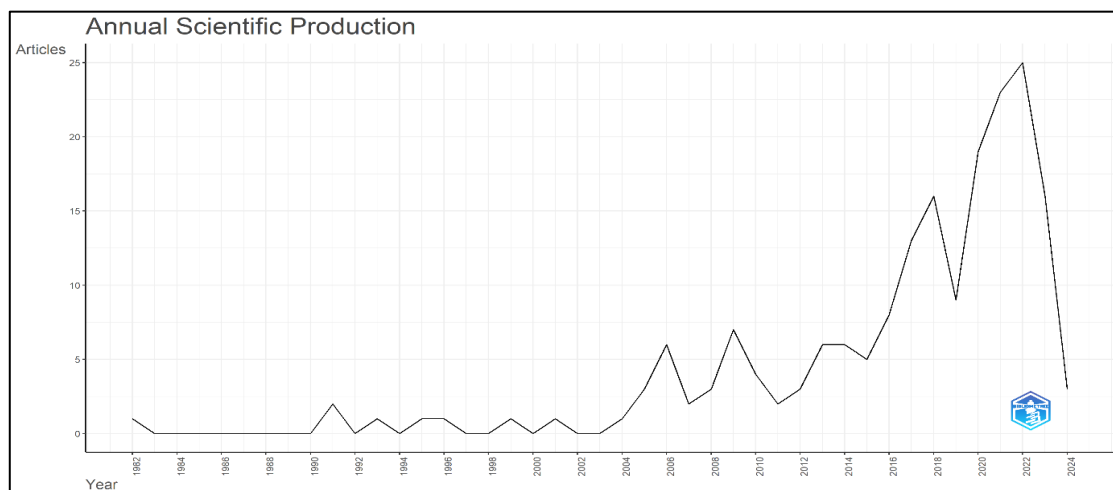


Figure 2: Yearly Scholarly Work

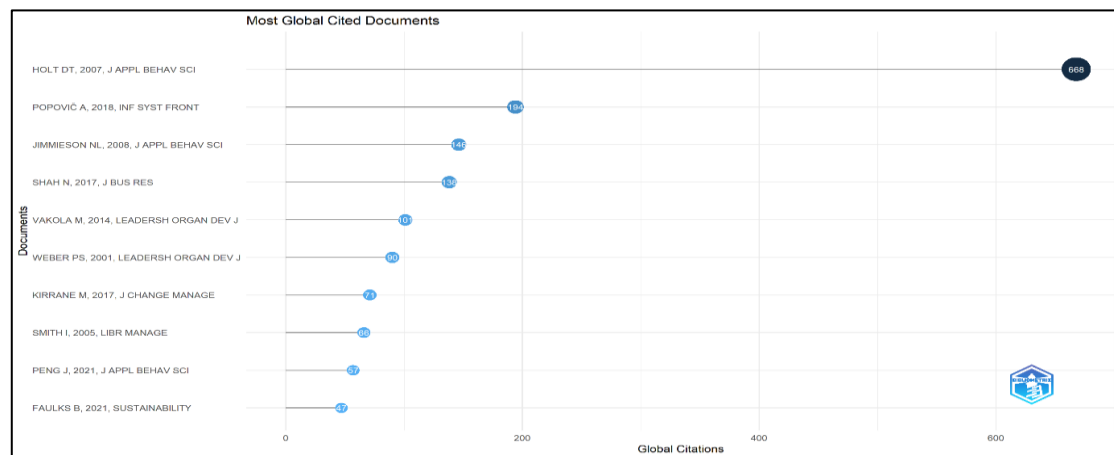


Figure 3: Most Global Cite Documents

Figure 3 highlights the top 10 most globally cited documents in the field of change management, specifically focusing on employee readiness for change. The most highly cited article is "Readiness for Organizational Change: The Systematic Development of a Scale" by Holt et al. (2007), which has received 668 citations. This is followed by "Utilizing the Theory of Planned Behaviour to Inform Change Management: An Investigation of Employee Intentions to Support Organizational Change" by Jimmieson et al. (2008), with 196 citations, and "Big Data in an HR Context: Exploring Organizational Change Readiness, Employee Attitudes, and Behaviours" by Shah et al. (2017), which has garnered 146 citations. These three articles are among the most influential studies on employee readiness for change in the social sciences, based on data from the Scopus database spanning from 1982 to 2024.

Figure 4 illustrates one of the most relevant authors in the field of employee readiness for organizational change is Shah N., who has significantly contributed to this area with five key publications between 2009 and 2017. Some of his key works include titles like "Impact of Employees' Psychological and Financial Predictors for Readiness to Organizational Change," "Relationships Between Employee Readiness for Organizational Change, Supervisor and Peer Relations, and Demography," "Examining Employee Attitudes and Behaviours Towards Organizational Change Using Supervisor and Peer Relations," "A Study of the Relationship Between Organizational Justice and Employee Readiness for Change," and "Big Data in an HR Context: Exploring Organizational Change Readiness, Employee Attitudes and Behaviours" Shah N.'s research output has grown over time, particularly from 2009 to 2017, reflecting a sustained interest in understanding the multifaceted aspects of organizational change. On a global scale, the highest scientific production related to employee readiness for change as shown in Table 2 below comes from the USA (159 publications), followed by the UK (29), India (28), Malaysia (26), and Sweden (26), highlighting the international interest and collaboration in this area. These trends suggest that the field of employee readiness for change has gained significant traction across different countries.

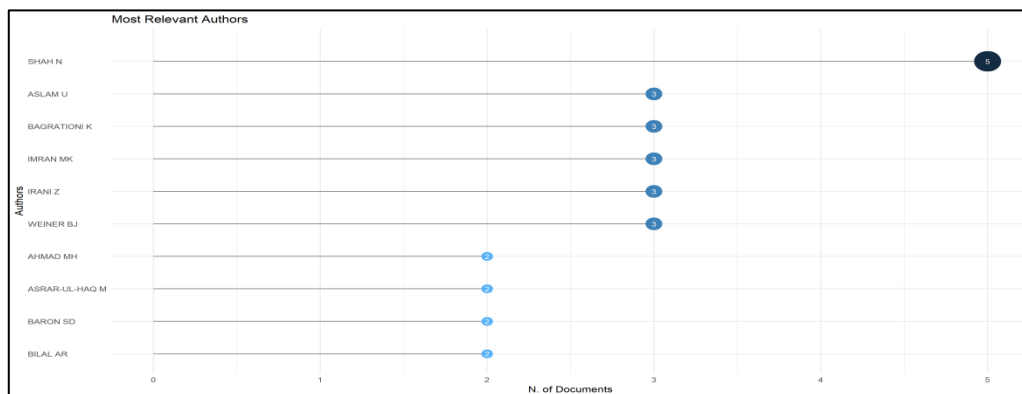


Figure 4: Key Authors

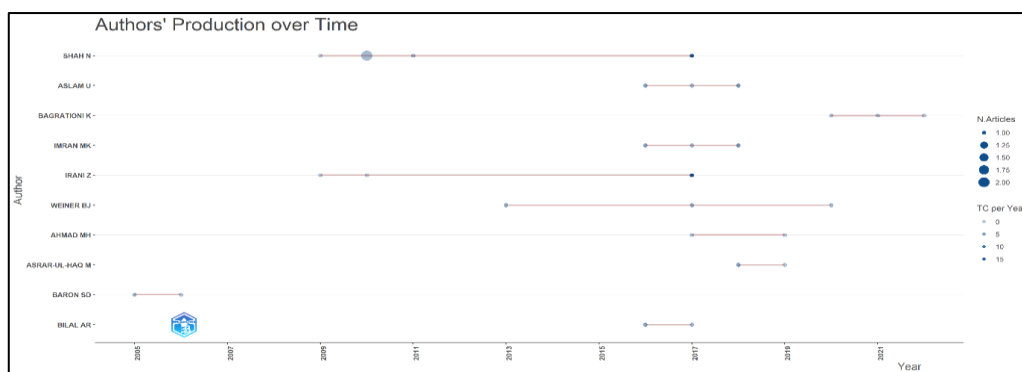


Figure 5: Author Publication Trends

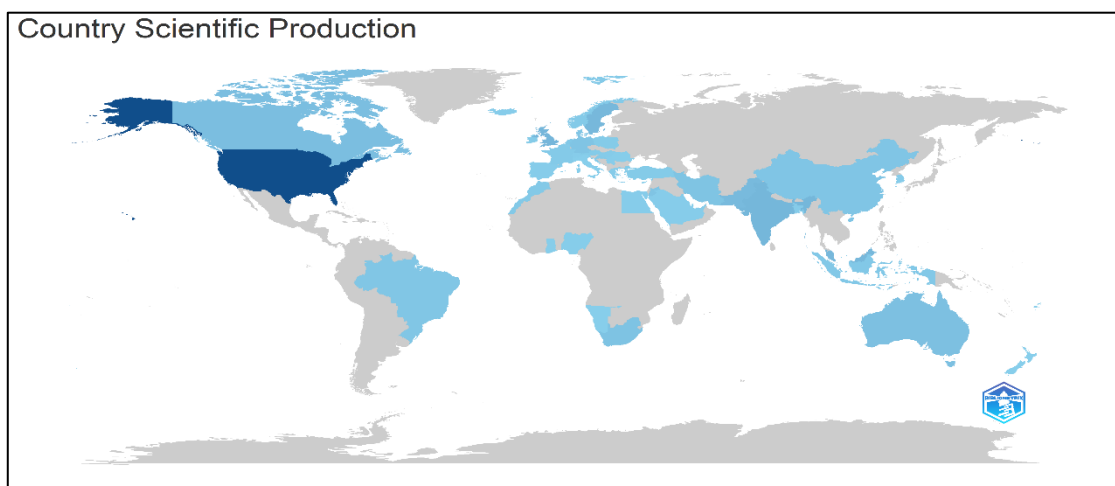


Figure 6: Country Scientific Production

Table 2: Top 15 Regions Frequency of Production

Region	Freq
USA	159
UK	29
INDIA	28
MALAYSIA	26

SWEDEN	26
PAKISTAN	24
CANADA	19
AUSTRALIA	17
SOUTH AFRICA	14
IRAN	13
GERMANY	12
JORDAN	12
CHINA	11
DENMARK	11
BRAZIL	10

Figure 7 below presents the top 10 most relevant sources or most prolific journals in the field of employee change readiness. The data shows that the Journal of Organizational Change Management leads with 7 publications, followed by BMC Health Services Research, Journal of Applied Behavioural Science, Journal of Change Management, and Sustainability (Switzerland), each with 4 publications. This indicates that these sources and journals are some of the major contributors to the global literature on employee change readiness. While, Figure 8 shows the most relevant affiliations in the field of employee readiness for organizational change include the University of Washington, with 18 publications, Superior University, contributing 11 publications, and Brunel University, with 9 publications. These institutions are leading contributors to the research landscape, reflecting their significant role in advancing knowledge on this topic.

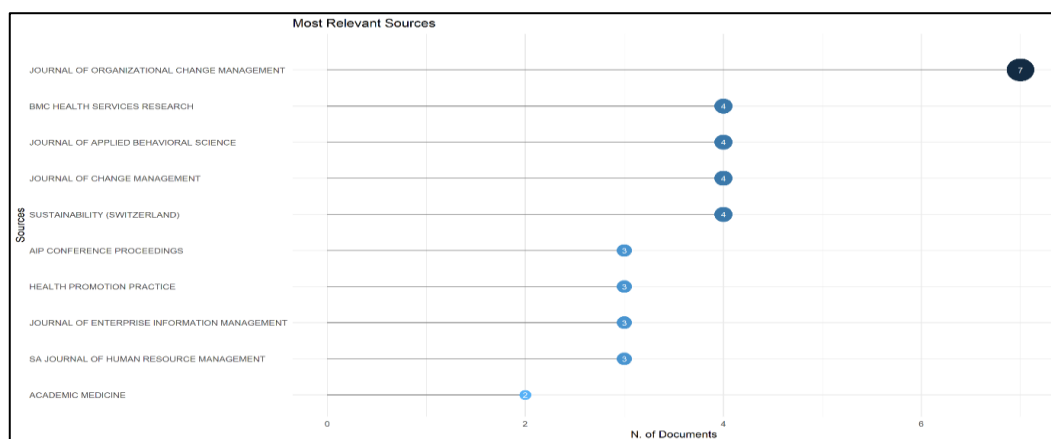


Figure 7: Most Relevant Sources

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Figure 9: Word Cloud Author Keywords

Table 3: Word Frequency (Top 10)

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
change	6	2592	3.90
organizational	14	1342	2.02
readiness	9	748	1.13
employee	8	459	0.69
employees	9	388	0.58
management	10	369	0.56

https	5	357	0.54
research	8	353	0.53
organization	12	316	0.48
leadership	10	303	0.46

Figure 10 below shows that the USA leads in terms of corresponding authors, followed by India and the UK. Lotka's Law explains how authors' productivity is distributed within a particular subject area, helping to highlight the most influential contributors to the field. The country collaboration map illustrates global research partnerships, with collaborations like Australia and Fiji (1 collaboration), Australia and Germany (1), China and Bahrain (1), and China and Croatia (1), as shown in Figure 11. Figure 12 presents a graph based on Lotka's Law, created using Biblioshiny, which depicts the relationship between the percentage of authors and the number of publications they've made. The graph clearly shows that most authors have published fewer articles, while only a small group has produced more than four publications. This follows the typical pattern outlined by Lotka's Law, where a small number of authors contribute the majority of publications, and most authors publish only a few. The most cited countries in the field of employee readiness for organizational change are led by Pakistan with 323 citations, followed closely by the USA with 316 citations, and Slovenia with 194 citations, as shown in Figure 13 below.

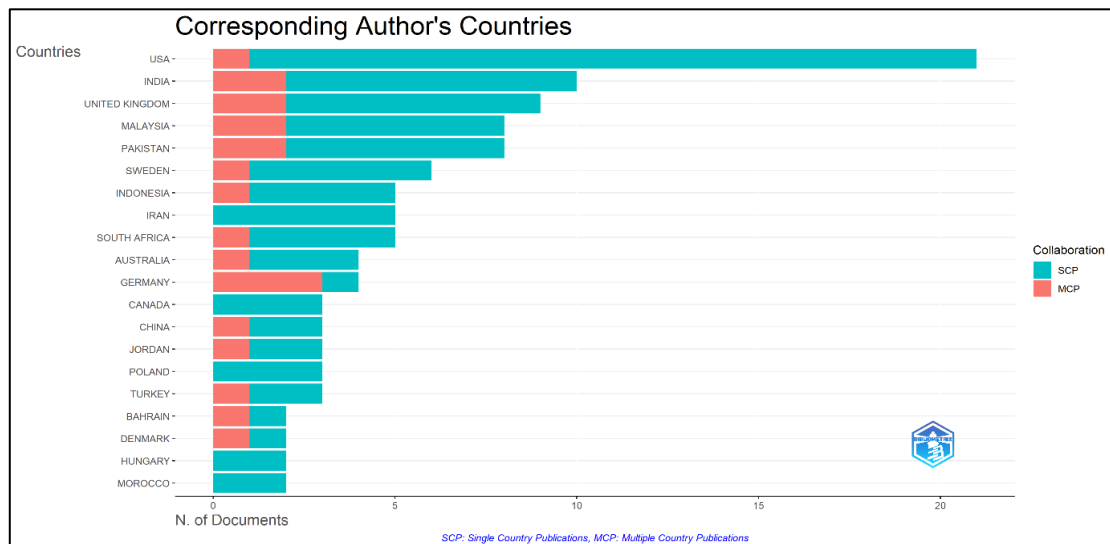


Figure 10: Corresponding Author's Countries

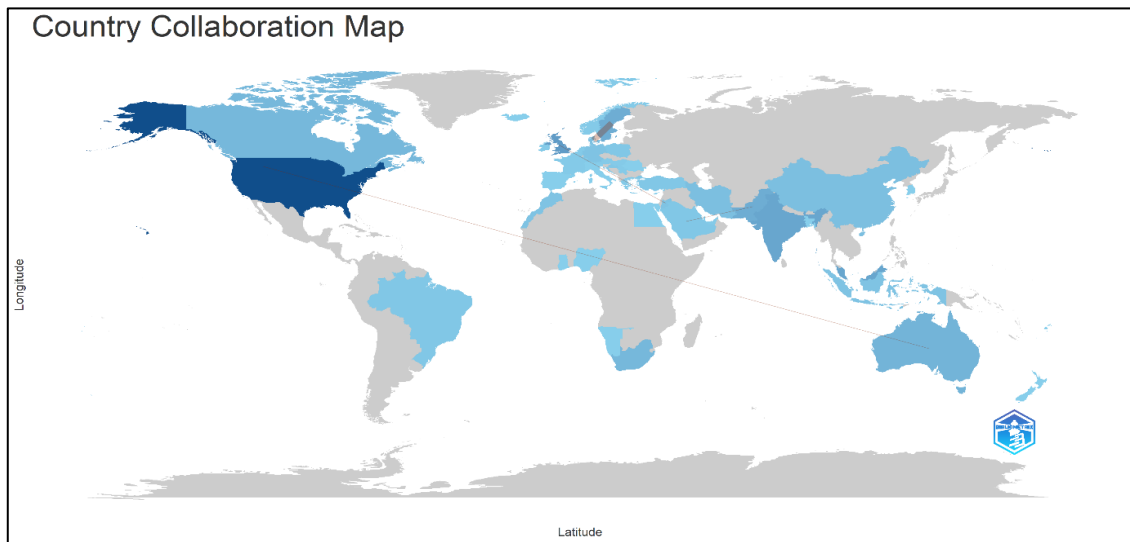


Figure 11: Country Collaboration

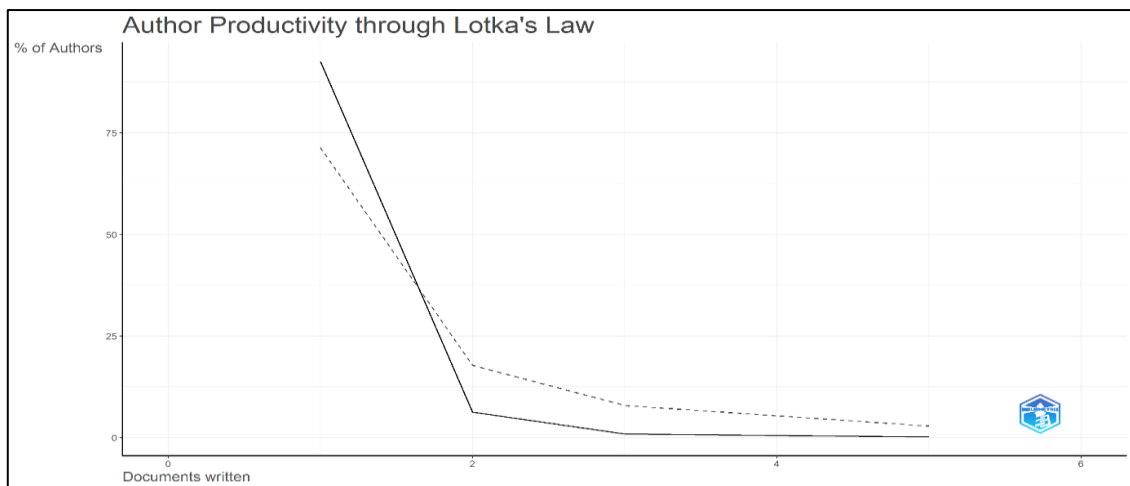


Figure 12: Author Productivity

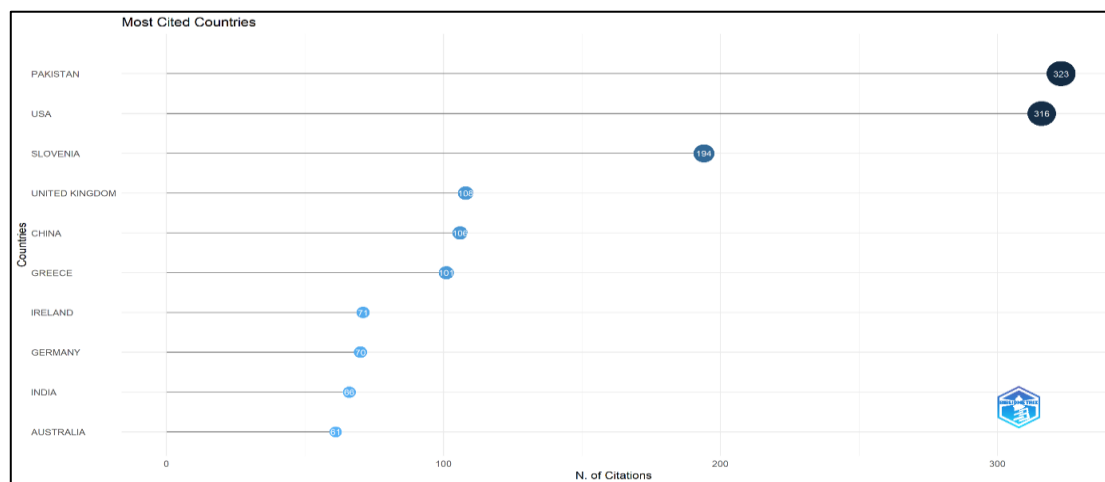


Figure 13: Most Cited Country

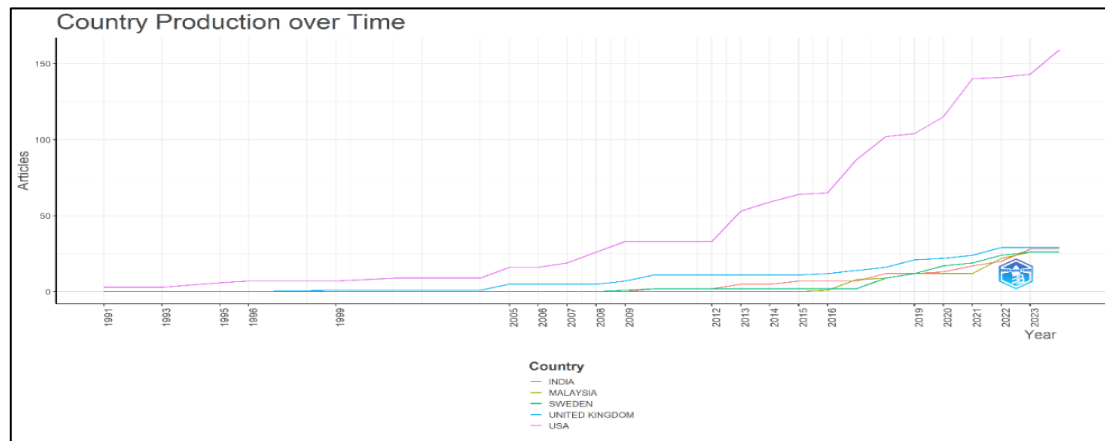


Figure 14: Country Production Over Time

Biblioshiny generates a thematic map (Figure 15) that visually organizes the most frequently occurring keywords or themes, showing how they are connected to one another. This map allows researchers to identify dominant themes and explore how they cluster together. In the context of employee readiness for organizational change, thematic evolution (Figure 16) shows a growing emphasis on "leadership, employee involvement, organisation culture and HRM practices" in recent years, indicating emerging trends in the field.

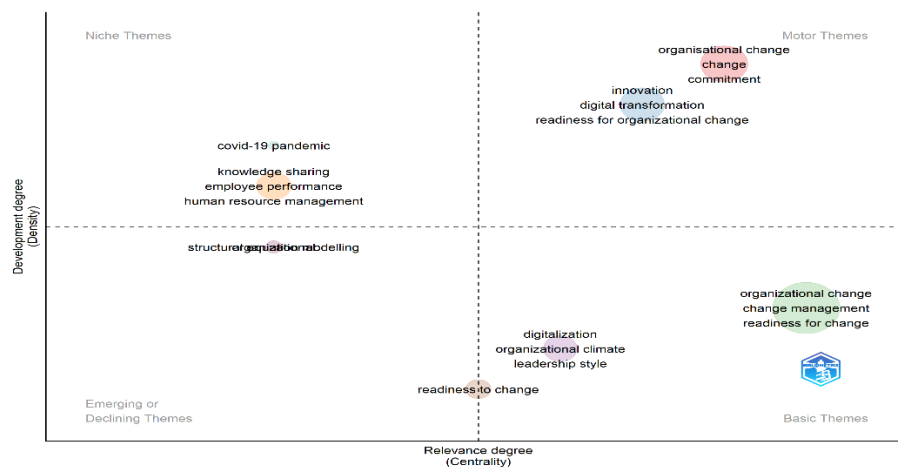


Figure 14: Theme based Mapping

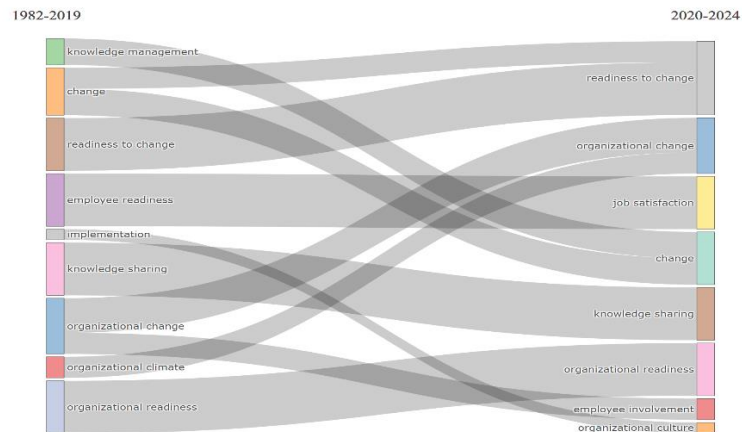


Figure 15: Thematic Development

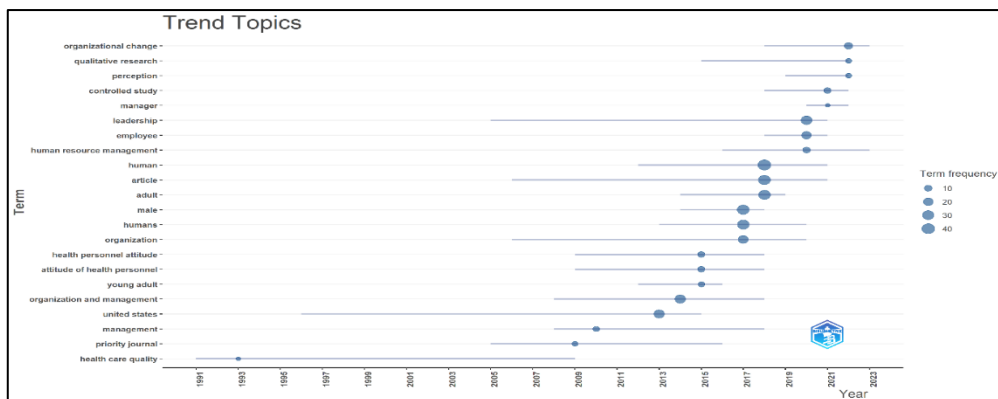


Figure 16: Trending Topics

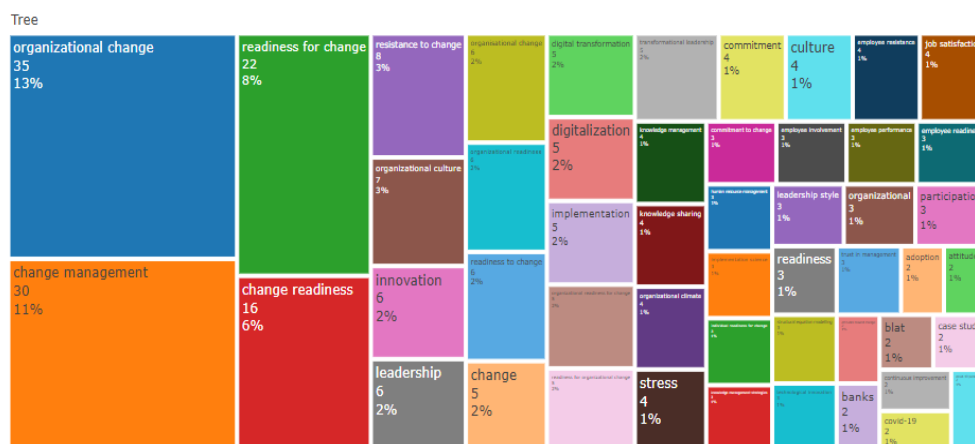


Figure 17: Treemap

In the study of employee readiness for organizational change, the tree map in Figure 17 shows the distribution of publications across various themes, such as “Organisational Change”,

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Co-Occurrence Analysis:

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and resistance to change. This visualization illustrates the interconnectedness of these themes, highlighting their relevance in the current literature on organizational change and employee readiness.

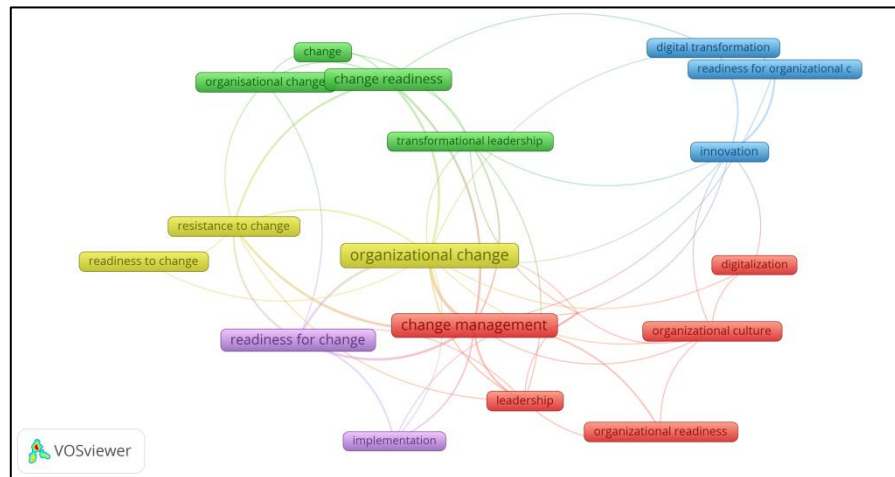


Figure 20: Co-occurrence by Author Keywords

Co-Citation Analysis:

Citation network analysis has the ability to identify authors who have made significant contributions to a specific subject (Zhang & Quoquab, 2023). “In citation network analysis, the journals, articles, and authors within a specified research field with the highest citation frequencies can be found. The higher the citation frequency of an article, journal, or author, the more influential they are” (Zhang et al., 2023).

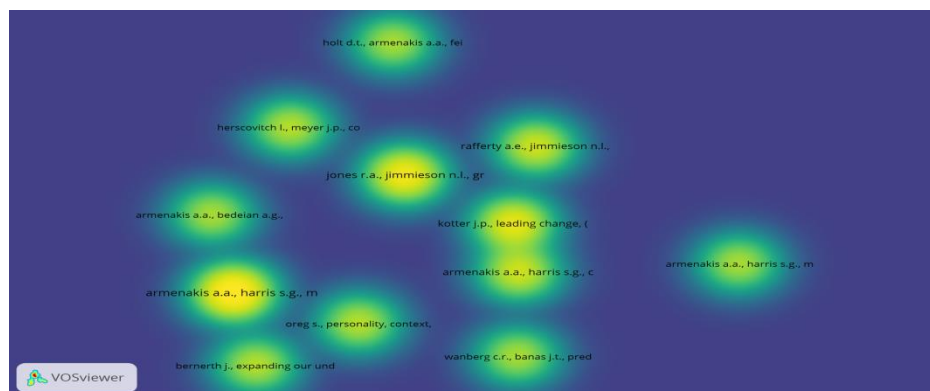


Figure 21: Co-citation by cited References

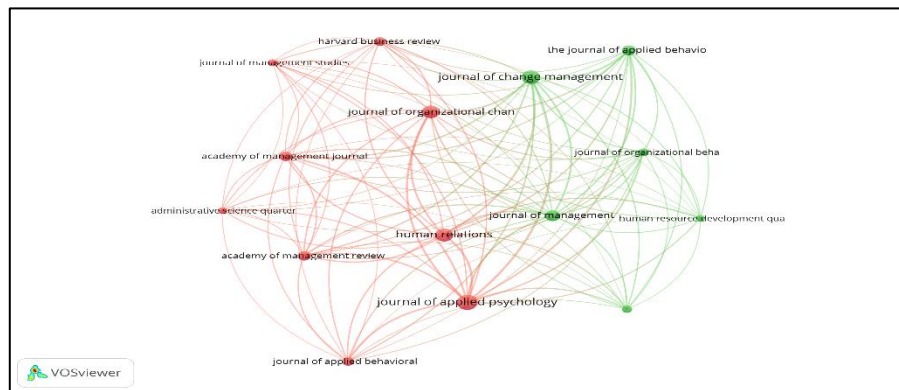


Figure 22: Co-citation by cited Source

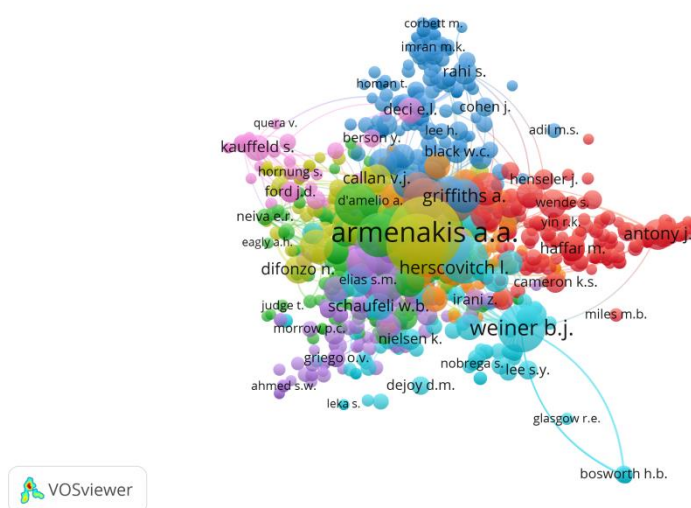


Figure 23: Citation Network by Authors

Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

Organizational change is often perceived as a vague and uncertain situation that can create anxiety and uncertainty among employees. Employees may develop varying feelings, thoughts, beliefs, behaviours, and attitudes towards organizational change depending on the level of organizational support and their own perceptions. Change management professionals and academic researchers are focused on finding ways to help employees actively accept and engage in the change process. Researchers have emphasized that organizations should consider predictors of employee readiness for change before developing policies and strategies to manage the transition effectively. The scope of study on change management and employee attitude towards change has grown, reaching a high in and around 2020, indicating that it is still a developing field that has yet to be fully investigated.

Research on employee readiness for organizational change has evolved significantly over time, with key themes including the development of cognitive and affective readiness, leadership, organizational culture, and HRM practices. Initially grounded in Lewin's unfreezing model and Armenakis et al.'s five-component model (1993), the conceptualization of readiness has expanded to encompass both individual and organizational factors, with a growing emphasis

on multilevel analysis. Key variables such as leadership, HRM practices, and employee attitudes are frequently studied for their relationship to readiness and change success (Armenakis et al., 1993; Rafferty et al., 2012). Methodologically, studies have evolved from primarily quantitative surveys measuring individual attitudes to incorporating qualitative approaches, such as interviews and case studies, and mixed-methods designs to capture both the emotional and cognitive aspects of readiness (Rafferty et al., 2013). Longitudinal studies are increasingly being used to track changes in readiness over time (Kishore et al., 2025). Despite significant progress, the field remains underexplored, with researchers calling for a more integrated approach that considers the dynamic nature of organizational change and its global implications (Erlyani & Suhariadi, 2021).

This study offers a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of employee readiness for change, providing valuable insights for scholars in the field of organizational change. It examines key elements such as annual scientific production, the most cited articles, influential authors, active sources, and co-authorship and co-citation patterns. The findings offer a clear understanding of the current state of the field and help predict emerging trends. Focusing on the keyword "employee readiness for change," the study suggests that future research could expand to include related concepts and utilize alternative analysis tools. Furthermore, while both bibliometric analysis and systematic literature reviews were employed, the study recommends other future research directions, including conducting longitudinal studies to track changes in employee readiness over time and across diverse organizational contexts.

Conclusion:

To sum up, this study offers important insights into employee readiness for organizational change and emphasizes the value of publishing in respected journals like the *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, *Journal of Applied Behavioural Science*, *Journal of Change Management*, and *Sustainability* (Switzerland). These journals consistently contribute to the scientific community with high-impact research on this topic. Our analysis also uncovered the evolving research themes from 1982 to 2024, which mainly include organizational change, leadership, employee and organizational readiness, and job satisfaction. To advance the field, it is essential that these themes be further developed through theoretical frameworks to address existing knowledge gaps. Future research should focus on emerging trends such as qualitative studies on organizational change and employee readiness, the influence of leadership, organizational culture and innovation, as well as HRM practices and their impact on readiness for change. Continued exploration of these areas will significantly enhance our understanding of effective change management practices and improve strategies for fostering employee readiness in organizational settings.

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