
SOCIAL MEDIA AND HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT. AN OVERVIEW FROM A BIBLIOMETRIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract:

The fast-paced expansion of social media has reshaped how human resources management (HRM) functions in everyday organizational life. It has changed the way companies attract and recruit talent, interact with employees, support performance, and communicate across the organization. This paper presents a clear and accessible overview of academic research that explores the connection between social media and HRM, drawing on a bibliometric analysis of 1,927 articles published between 2016 and 2025 in the Web of Science–Clarivate database. By using bibliometric mapping tools, including citation, co-citation, and keyword co-occurrence analyses, the study follows the key topics in the literature and shows how this area of research has evolved over the past ten years. The findings indicate that recruitment remains the most widely studied application of social media in HRM, while interest is steadily growing in areas such as employee performance, human capital development, and the broader organizational impact of digital platforms. The analysis also highlights the strongly interdisciplinary nature of this field, combining insights from management, social sciences, and computer and information systems research. While many studies emphasize the strategic benefits of social media for strengthening HRM practices, they also raise important concerns related to productivity, ethics, and digital governance. Overall, the study confirms the growing role of social media in modern HRM and outlines meaningful directions for future research in this dynamic and constantly evolving area.

Key words: *social media, human resources management, recruitment, employment, performance*

1. Introduction

Social media has become, over the last decades, one of the most important, if not the primary, communication platforms used by the general public, as well as by businesses, employees, and employers. At the same time, one must consider also how

social media has changed the way human resources management, and especially the recruitment and and selection process of employees has adjusted to the new means of communication used at this time.

If we look at how social media is defined within the organizational context, we can see them as digital platforms that facilitate communication, collaboration, and information sharing among employees, stakeholders, and the wider community. These platforms, such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook, allow users to create, share, and engage with content in real time, significantly impacting organizational practices (Carpentier et al., 2019). As more and more organizations increasingly adapt to a rapidly changing digital landscape, the relevance of Human Resource Management (HRM) has grown substantially. HRM in the digital era goes beyond traditional personnel management, it includes strategic partnerships that leverage technology to attract, develop, and retain employees while shaping organizational culture (Naldi et al., 2021; Gunawan & Mikhail, 2025).

The intersection of social media and human resource management (HRM) is a rapidly evolving area of study that reflects significant shifts in workplace communication, employee engagement, organizational culture, and strategic management. Recent research highlights both the benefits and challenges associated with incorporating social media into HR practices, offering a nuanced understanding of its role in modern organizations.

2. Literature review

To start, social media has fundamentally transformed internal communication dynamics within organizations. Linke & Zeffass (2013) emphasize that merely implementing social media toolkits is insufficient; organizations must also consider the broader context of their communication governance to maximize effectiveness. The significance of having a well-defined social media communication policy is echoed by Omary and Britto (2024), who advocate for comprehensive social media policies and training, further supporting the need for strategic alignment in communication practices. This sentiment is reinforced in studies by Men et al. (2020a), which indicate that many initiatives aimed at integrating internal social media fail primarily due to limited employee participation and engagement.

The intersection of social media and HRM is evident across various functions including recruitment and talent acquisition, employee engagement, and organizational culture management. Social media platforms serve as tools for enhancing employer branding, providing a direct channel for organizations to communicate their values and culture to potential employees, as well as a means for current employees to engage with and promote their workplace (Carpentier et al., 2019; Norliani et al., 2024). The usage of social media platforms in HRM enables a two-way interaction flow, allowing organizations to not only convey their message, but also to get feedback and insights from current and potential employees and customers.

Employee engagement is a critical aspect of HRM, which is increasingly influenced by the usage of social media. The literature suggests that when used effectively, social media can enhance transparency and foster a collaborative culture that leads to increased

productivity (Men et al., 2020; Salem, 2019; Sharma & Bhatnagar, 2016). Sivertzen et al., (2013) mentions that organizations that are employing social media for employer branding and recruitment strategies improve their attractiveness to potential candidates, thereby enhancing overall employee engagement. Furthermore, Fusi and Zhang's (2018) analysis of workplace communication shows that both work-related and personal use of social media promotes interaction among colleagues, which supports a community-centric workplace environment.

However, the dual nature of social media presents challenges. While social media can foster a sense of community, it can also lead to workplace distractions that may negatively impact productivity. Studies have noted mixed effects concerning the impact of social media usage on work behaviors, with some demonstrating a correlation between social media and counterproductive behaviors, such as workplace loneliness and communication stress (Zhou et al., 2024; Carlson et al., 2016). This highlights a critical need for HR professionals to create frameworks that maximize the advantages of social media while mitigating its potential downsides (Fusi & Feeney, 2016).

Furthermore, the generational aspect of social media usage cannot be overlooked. As digital natives increasingly occupy the workforce, expectations around social media integration shift (Sharma & Bhatnagar, 2016). These employees typically prefer using platforms that allow for greater transparency and immediacy in communication (Men et al., 2020; Sharma et al., 2021).

Social media also serves a crucial role in employer branding and public outreach. The application of social media in promoting organizational values and culture has garnered interest from HR scholars (Sivertzen et al., 2013; Song et al., 2019). It provides firms with a platform to enhance their public image, attract talent, and maintain employee satisfaction through consistent engagement (Chansukree et al., 2022). However, this reliance on social media also raises concerns regarding privacy and the potential for information misuse, necessitating robust policies to safeguard employee data and organizational interests (Nel, 2012; Young & Hinesly, 2014).

Social media has revolutionized traditional recruitment methods by providing organizations with platforms to interact directly with potential employees. It enables companies to communicate their culture, values, and job opportunities to a wider audience, thereby enhancing their employer brand. For instance, platforms like LinkedIn facilitate targeted advertising to job seekers while allowing employers to showcase their corporate environment through engaging content (Gunawan & Mikhail, 2025). Effective social media strategies not only attract applicants but also contribute positively to the overall perception of the organization in the job market. Younger generations, who actively participate on these platforms, often rely on social media for insights into company culture, making it essential for employers to maintain a positive and engaging online presence (Gunawan & Mikhail, 2025). This transformation is crucial for positioning organizations as employers of choice within competitive job markets.

Social media's role within organizations extends beyond recruitment; it significantly enhances employee engagement and internal communication. Platforms like Slack and Microsoft Teams facilitate real-time communication, fostering collaboration among employees regardless of geographical boundaries (Norliani et al., 2024). By using these

platforms, organizations can create virtual communities where employees share ideas, achievements, and feedback, thereby fostering a culture of openness and inclusivity. Effective internal communication through social media can lead to higher employee morale and a sense of connectivity amid digital work environments (Norliani et al., 2024). However, organizations must address challenges related to information overload and the potential for distractions, ensuring that social media tools are employed in a manner that enhances rather than hinders productivity (Berkelaar, 2017).

HR analytics powered by social media data allows organizations to gain insights into employee behaviors and preferences. By analyzing digital footprints left by employees on social media, HR departments can tailor their strategies to enhance engagement and satisfaction (Albishri et al., 2025). This involves leveraging publicly available data to monitor employee sentiment and engagement levels, but organizations utilizing these methods face ethical dilemmas surrounding privacy and consent. The challenge lies in balancing the benefits of data-driven HR practices with the need to respect individual privacy rights (Albishri et al., 2025). Consequently, organizations must develop robust policies governing the use of social media data to protect employee privacy while optimizing recruitment and engagement strategies.

With the integration of social media into HRM practices comes significant ethical concerns, particularly regarding privacy. Cybervetting, the practice of screening candidates' social media profiles during recruitment, raises questions about fairness and potential bias (Albishri et al., 2025). Furthermore, the blurred lines between personal and professional online identities complicate how employees manage their digital footprints. Organizations must ensure that they establish comprehensive digital governance policies that address these concerns while promoting ethical standards, transparency, and accountability in their HR practices (Berkelaar, 2017). Such policies are crucial in fostering trust between employers and employees, ensuring that digital innovations do not compromise individuals' rights.

Social media significantly impacts organizational culture and employee behavior by shaping norms, communication styles, and expectations within the workplace. An engaged workforce that actively utilizes social media can contribute to a vibrant organizational culture characterized by collaboration and shared identity (Norliani et al., 2024). Conversely, reliance on social media can also propagate negative behaviors such as gossip or misinformation, which may detrimentally affect workplace dynamics (Jeske & Shultz, 2015). The ongoing challenge for HRM is to harness the positive aspects of social media while mitigating its potential drawbacks, creating an adaptive culture that embraces technological change (Gunawan & Mikhail, 2025). Ultimately, organizations must focus on fostering an environment where social media platforms serve as tools for enhancing organizational culture and employee satisfaction.

In summary, the integration of social media into HRM practices represents a paradigm shift in employee engagement, communication, and organizational culture. While it offers significant opportunities for enhancing collaboration and efficiency, it simultaneously poses a set of challenges that require careful navigation. As organizations navigate this landscape, they must prioritize ethical considerations and governance

frameworks to ensure that the benefits of social media are fully realized while protecting employee rights and fostering a constructive workplace environment.

3. Methodology

In order to get a better understanding of the literature review findings in the current literature published in Web of Science – Clarivate we have undertaken a bibliometric analysis of **1927 articles** published in the last 10 years (2016 – 2025). The objective of the research was to see how social media is linked to human resources management in mostly journal articles and conference proceedings.

From a methodological perspective we have started our analysis with **5739** articles, using the following query TS=("social media" OR "social network*" OR "SNS" OR "online platform*" OR "digital platform*" OR LinkedIn OR Facebook OR Twitter OR Instagram OR "social recruiting" OR "e-recruitment" OR "digital recruitment") AND TS=("human resource*" OR "HRM" OR "human capital" OR "talent management" OR "personnel management" OR "recruitment" OR "employee engagement" OR "employer branding" OR "workforce management" OR "HR analytics" OR "people analytics"). Following this initial finding we have refined the initial results by focusing on on the type of publication (Article, Early access article and Proceeding paper) and the general topic of the journal, as it will be seen in the next section.

The main methods of analysis used included the creation of bibliometric maps, including citation, co-citation, and keyword co-occurrence networks. In the bibliometric analysis process we have used a combination of VOSviewer 1.6.20, the refining options used by Web of Science (WOS) – Clarivate and Microsoft Excel, to get a better visual representation of the findings.

The software also supports cluster identification, density visualization, and overlay maps, which help illustrate the main research themes and the structure of the academic field (Van Eck and Waltman, 2010 in Popsa, 2025).

4. Results

As mentioned before, the initial query yielded a total number of 5739 works, with a total of 68.250 times cited (within 60.071 citing articles) which results in an average of 8,4 average citations per article, the H-index for the initial query was 94. The refinement process, which resulted in **1927 articles** was based on narrowing the journal / publication topics to the following top 10 topics (Table 1).

Table 1: Journal topics – top 10

| Nr. Crt. | Journal Topic | Count | Percentage |
|----------|--------------------------------------|-------|------------|
| 1 | Economics, Management and Business* | 424 | 22.00% |
| 2 | Computer Science Information Systems | 277 | 14.37% |
| 3 | Social Sciences Interdisciplinary | 201 | 10.43% |
| 4 | Education Educational Research | 195 | 10.12% |
| 5 | Information Science Library Science | 151 | 7.84% |

| Nr. Crt. | Journal Topic | Count | Percentage |
|-----------------|---|--------------|-------------------|
| 6 | Computer Science Theory Methods | 149 | 7.73% |
| 7 | Computer Science Artificial Intelligence | 143 | 7.42% |
| 8 | Communication | 132 | 6.85% |
| 9 | Computer Science Interdisciplinary Applications | 130 | 6.75% |
| 10 | Multidisciplinary Sciences | 125 | 6.49% |
| 11 | Total | 1927 | 100.00% |

* Authors have merged several topics into one

Source: Authors' compilation based on data extracted from the WOS - Clarivate

From Table 1, we can observe that the general social sciences topic (which includes also Economics, Business and Management) represents more than 30% of the published papers. It is worth noting that five of the top ten topics are related to Computer and Information studies. The next step in the current analysis was to identify the number of publications per year and examine their relationship with the number of citations (Figure 1 and Table 2).

Table 2 Number of publications and citations per year (2016 – 2025)

| Nr. Crt. | Year | Publications | Citations |
|-----------------|--------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 1 | 2016 | 142 | 64 |
| 2 | 2017 | 172 | 277 |
| 3 | 2018 | 166 | 634 |
| 4 | 2019 | 207 | 1.296 |
| 5 | 2020 | 207 | 2.220 |
| 6 | 2021 | 243 | 2.293 |
| 7 | 2022 | 177 | 3.905 |
| 8 | 2023 | 206 | 4.206 |
| 9 | 2024 | 220 | 5.454 |
| 10 | 2025 | 187 | 5.663 |
| 11 | Total | 1927 | 26.012 |

Source: Authors' compilation based on data extracted from the WOS - Clarivate

From the above table stems Figure 1, which represents a depiction of the evolution of publications and citations, where we can see the steady increase in citations, but a up and down evolution of published works.

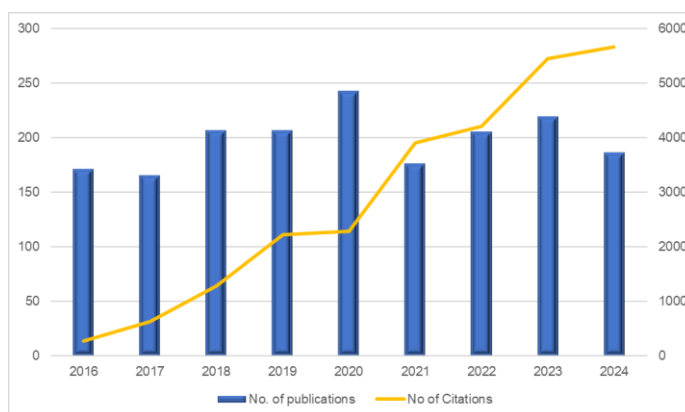


Figure 1: Graphic presentation of Table 1

Source: Authors' development based on data extracted from the WOS - Clarivate

Analyzing the above presented table and figure, we can observe that 2021 was the year with the highest number of published papers (243), while the highest number of citations was in 2025 (until November) when the data was extracted. Regarding citations, it should be noted that they accumulate from year to year and do not include self-citations. For the 10 year period we can calculate an average of 192,7 papers published each year and 2601 citations per year.

Regarding the cited papers, the top 10 most cited papers average a 254 citations per article in the analysed period. Of the ten most cited articles (Table 3), we can observe that the most cited publication is a conference proceeding, while the remaining ones are journal articles.

Table 3: Top 10 most cited papers included in the analysis (2016 – 2025)

| Nr. Crt. | Title | Author (s) | Publication year | Published in ... | No. of citations |
|----------|---|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 1 | BotOrNot: A System to Evaluate Social Bots | Davis, Clayton A.; Varol, Onur; Ferrara, Emilio; Flammini, Alessandro; Menczer, Filippo | 2016 | Proceedings | 499 |
| 2 | Mapping the Intellectual Structure of Social Entrepreneurship Research: A Citation/Co-citation Analysis | Hota, Pradeep Kumar; Subramanian, Balaji; Narayanamurthy, Gopalakrishnan | 2020 | Journal | 286 |
| 3 | On the path towards open innovation: assessing the role of knowledge management capability and environmental dynamism in SMEs | Martinez-Conesa, Isabel; Soto-Acosta, Pedro; Carayannis, Elias George | 2017 | Journal | 282 |
| 4 | Employer Image and Employer Branding: What We Know and What We Need to Know | Lievens, Filip; Slaughter, Jerel E. | 2016 | Journal | 250 |
| 5 | A systematic literature review | Pereira, Vijay; Hadjielias, Elias; | 2023 | Journal | 232 |

| Nr. Crt. | Title | Author (s) | Publication year | Published in ... | No. of citations |
|----------|--|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | on the impact of artificial intelligence on workplace outcomes: A multi-process perspective | Christofi, Michael; Vrontis, Demetris | | | |
| 6 | Customer experience management in hospitality A literature synthesis, new understanding and research agenda | Kandampully, Jay; Zhang, Tingting (Christina); Jaakkola, Elina | 2018 | Journal | 229 |
| 7 | Gig-workers' motivation: thinking beyond carrots and sticks | Jabagi, Nura; Croteau, Anne-Marie; Audebrand, Luc K.; Marsan, Josianne | 2019 | Journal | 218 |
| 8 | Employer Branding: A Brand Equity-based Literature Review and Research Agenda | Theurer, Christian P.; Tumasjan, Andranik; Welpel, Isabell M.; Lievens, Filip | 2018 | Journal | 189 |
| 9 | A Multilevel Integrated Framework of Firm HR Practices, Individual Ambidexterity, and Organizational Ambidexterity | Mom, Tom J. M.; Chang, Yi-Ying; Cholakova, Magdalena; Jansen, Justin J. P. | 2019 | Journal | 182 |
| 10 | AI-enabled recruiting: What is it and how should a manager use it? | Black, J. Stewart; van Esch, Patrick | 2020 | Journal | 181 |

Source: Authors' development based on data extracted from the WOS - Clarivate

While, as mentioned before, the first paper is a conference proceedings paper, the rest of the papers are journal articles which fall into the Q1 category (8 papers) and Q2 category (1 paper). Another interesting aspect in this analysis is the country of origin of the authors, as seen in Figure 2, which also shows the cross country collaboration in the development of research.

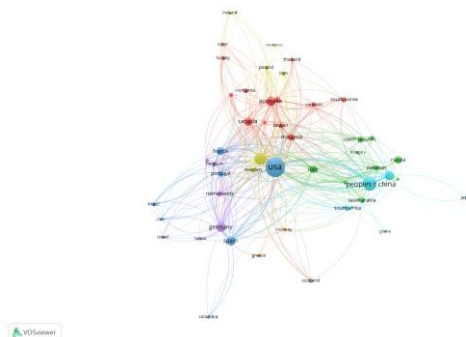


Figure 2: Authors' country of origin and cross country collaboration
 Source: Authors' development based on data extracted from the WOS – Clarivate

Analysing the above figure, we can observe at least 5 important clusters of keywords (out of a total of 9 clusters) that resulted from the analysis. Going over these clusters, we can see that the largest clusters (with the largest number of links) are *social media* and *social networks* which represent basically almost the same thing in the context of this analysis. It is worth noting that the minimum size of the clusters is of 20 items / keywords, in order to reduce the spread / impact of a low number of occurrences.

Cluster 1 and 3 (social media and social networks) include a combined number of items of 161 items, cluster 2 (recruitment) is comprised of 80 items, followed by cluster 4 (performance) with 62 items, cluster 5 (impact) has 60 items and together with clusters 2 and 4 have the largest number of links to the concept of human resources management and other associated concepts.

The 6th cluster (human capital) has a number of 55 items, and strongly connects to the social networks / media, performance and impact clusters. Clusters 7, 8 and 9 are connecting clusters of 32 to 55 items that show connections between technology / communication platforms and employee engagement and recruitment.

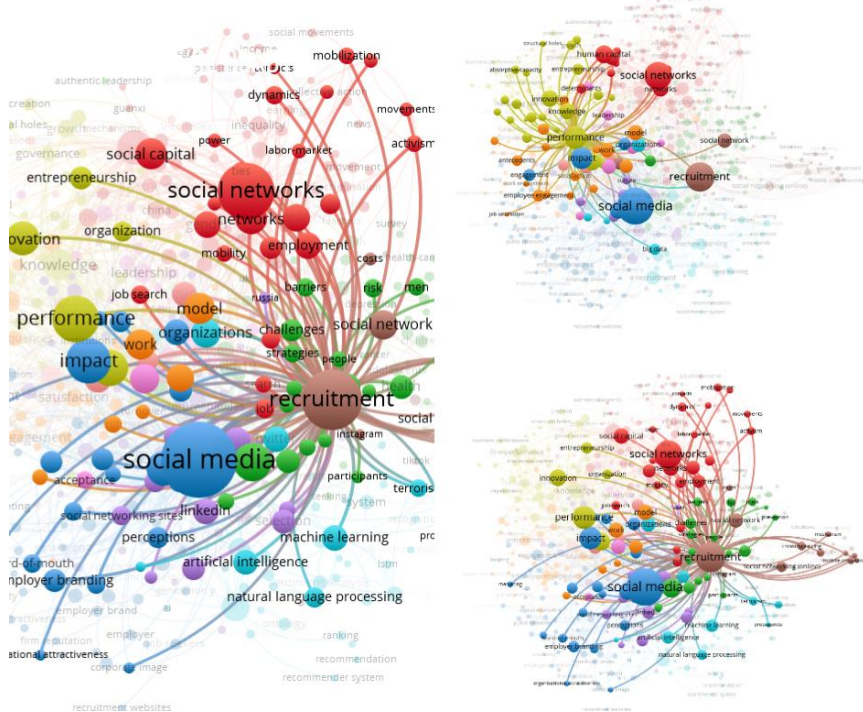


Figure 5: Main keywords clusters

Source: Authors' development based on data extracted from the WOS – Clarivate

In terms of keywords occurrence we have identified, as seen in the cluster analysis several main words like: (a) Social media – with 417 occurrences and a link strength of 2116; (b) Recruitment – with 262 occurrences and a link strength of 1304; (c) Social networks – with 230 occurrences and a link strength of 1149; (d) Performance – with 153 occurrences and a link strength of 1009; (e) Impact – with 139 occurrences and a link strength of 916; (f) Facebook – with 102 occurrences and a link strength of 598; (g)

Management – with 92 occurrences and a link strength of 651; (h) Human capital – with 91 occurrences and a link strength of 549.

Considering this, we can merge elements a, c and f, which basically are the same things, which would result into 749 occurrences of the same or very similar keywords. Next we have studied the main 3 keywords and their connections: Social media/networks, Recruitment and Performance, the results can be seen in Figure 5. From the human resources management perspective, the most important connections were developed into the Recruitment cluster, having links with: *Crowdsourcing, e-Crowdsourcing, Employment, Strategies, People, Management, Mechanism, Job Search and jobs*.

So we can observe that there is a strong connection from the perspective of a bibliometric analysis of more than 1900 papers published in the last decade, with regard to the usage of social media/networks in the process of developing Human Resources Management and Strategies development.

5. Discussions and Conclusions

The results of this study show that the connection between social media and human resources management (HRM) has grown into a broad and well-developed area of research. Over the past ten years, this topic has attracted steady attention from scholars across different disciplines. The analysis of 1,927 publications indexed in the Web of Science–Clarivate database between 2016 and 2025 points to a clear increase in the number of studies, as well as a wider range of topics related to how social media is used in HRM.

One of the clearest findings is the strong focus on social media, social networks, and recruitment. The way these themes cluster together shows that recruitment, recruitment strategies and employer branding are still the main areas where social media is used in HRM (Allal-Chérif et. al., 2021; de Zubielqui et. al, 2019; Wang et.al., 2019; Roth et.al., 2013). A common point in the aforementioned articles is the personalization of the recruitment process, with modern technologies enabling a more tailored selection experience that meets candidates' needs, and Wang et al. 2019 highlighting the use of social network-based algorithms to address each candidate's specific requirements.

This fits with the current changes that lead from traditional hiring methods toward online platforms that help organizations reach more people and more diverse candidates. Social media has become an important tool for companies to present their culture, values, and job opportunities, influencing potential employees long before any formal hiring process starts (Men et al., 2020b; McRobert et.al., 2019). The analysis also shows that research in this area continues to grow, especially as tools like artificial intelligence (van Esch and Black, 2019) and data analytics become part of digital recruitment.

Another important result is the growing attention given to employee performance, impact, and human capital, as seen in the cluster analysis. This suggests that researchers are no longer just looking if social media is used, but at what results it produces. Many studies now examine how social media affects employee performance, engagement, teamwork, and knowledge sharing (Zhang et.al, 2019). As human capital continues to grow in strategic importance, the technological landscape of recruitment has evolved accordingly. Organizations are now entering what can be described as Digital Recruiting 3.0, a phase characterized by the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) into recruitment

processes. AI enables systems to perform tasks and make decisions that traditionally require human intelligence. This shift offers several potential benefits, including enhanced capabilities to identify, attract, screen, evaluate, interview, and engage with job candidates more efficiently and effectively (Black and van Esch, 2020)

The strong link between social media and human capital shows that employees are increasingly seen as valuable resources whose skills and digital abilities can be improved through the smart use of online platforms. In addition, social media acts as a platform for self-promotion, allowing users to showcase their expertise, share achievements, and emphasize the qualities that make them appealing to potential employers or collaborators. As a result, social media significantly contributes to the growth and application of human capital by providing greater access to career-enhancing resources, encouraging knowledge sharing, and aiding in the development of new skills.

At the same time, the literature analysis also points out that social media does not always have positive effects. Relying on social media for recruitment can lead to biased hiring, as recruiters may favor candidates who present themselves well online, possibly overlooking more qualified individuals. The fast spread of information can also result in incomplete or inaccurate representations of candidates, making it harder to assess their true qualifications. Moreover, privacy concerns arise, as candidates may feel their personal lives are being scrutinized or misrepresented, which could discourage them from applying. While social media has benefits, it's important to balance its use with awareness of these potential issues.

The analysis also confirms that the research on social media and HRM is still developing. Even though the number of published studies changes from year to year, the steady rise in citations shows that knowledge in this area is building up and gaining influence. The fact that earlier studies are still widely cited suggests that the field is becoming more stable and better defined. The presence of many highly cited journal articles also shows that this topic matters for wider discussions in management and organizational studies.

Looking at where the research comes from, most studies are published by authors based in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, China, Germany, and Australia. This shows how global the topic is, but also points to differences in research capacity and visibility across regions. The findings also show that publishing more papers does not always lead to greater impact, which may reflect differences in focus or quality. At the same time, growing international collaboration suggests that researchers are increasingly working across borders, which makes sense given the global nature of social media and modern labor markets.

Finally, the keyword analysis shows new links between social media, HR analytics, artificial intelligence (Black and van Esch, 2019), and digital platforms. This points to a future where HRM relies more on data and automated decision-making. While these developments can improve efficiency and support better decisions, they also raise concerns about privacy, monitoring, and fairness. Although these ethical issues are starting to receive more attention, they are still less explored than topics like recruitment and performance.

However, Pereira et al. (2023) also emphasize the importance of considering each HR function separately when examining the impact of artificial intelligence in the workplace. This line of work has been largely overlooked in HRM literature, but it is important in helping diverse HR functions to understand how to best incorporate intelligent technologies to improve their performance.

Overall, this study shows that social media is now a central part of HRM research, especially in areas such as hiring, employer branding, employee performance, and human capital development. Social media is no longer seen as just a communication tool, but as something that shapes how organizations work and how employees experience their jobs. At the same time, the findings underline the need for a balanced approach that considers both the benefits and the risks. Future research should focus more on long-term effects, ethical issues, and employee perspectives to help organizations use social media in ways that support both performance and employee well-being.

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