A Bibliometric Exploration on Employees' Perception of Organisational Ethics

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ABSTRACT

This study explores employees' perception of organisational ethics through quantitative bibliometric analysis of 1,088 scientific records from the Web of Science repository, covering research from 1990 to 2024. The analysis employs the scientific network tool VOSviewer 1.6.20 to visualise the research landscape, including author keyword co-occurrences, reference co-citations, and patterns of collective authorship, highlighting prominent research directions. Findings indicate frequent associations among keywords such as „Organisational Ethics", „Ethical Climate", and „Ethical Perceptions" among others. Assessment of cited references and co-authorship mapping reveals significant growth in research evolution and interdisciplinary collaboration, notably involving authors from the USA, China, and England. This approach deepens understanding of employees' perception of organisational ethics by providing a quantitative perspective on research patterns, themes, and discourse advancement over time, benefiting academics and professionals studying ethical dimensions of organisational behaviour and management.

KEYWORDS: *bibliometric analysis, employees' perception, organisational ethics.*

JEL CLASSIFICATION: *O1, O15*

1. INTRODUCTION

The body of scientific literature on organisational ethics and employee perception has experienced significant growth, particularly over the past decade. This trend reflects an increasing scholarly interest and presents a valuable opportunity to critically assess the advancements made in academic publications within this area. The assessment and synthesis of these publications provide insights into the progression and impact of knowledge in the research field. Bibliometric methods improve scholarly comprehension by examining research productivity, citation patterns, and collaboration among authors and countries. This analysis highlights key research developments and underscores the practical significance of these academic contributions in the advancement of collective knowledge. Employing quantitative metrics, our research seeks to enhance the body of knowledge by examining research trends in employee perception of organisational ethics.

Key stages include: (1) exploring thematic links between publications, (2) identifying impactful works and primary themes in research areas, and (3) assessing collaborative trends among scholars over different periods and regions, thereby mapping pathways of knowledge development. Science mapping uncovers the prevailing trends, study interests, and helps researchers identify future investigations. This approach mitigates redundant research efforts and fosters innovative contributions to the research field. The current study is structured as follows: (a) a critical review addressing organisational ethics, employee perception, and bibliometric exploration, (b) the research methods detailing research objectives and employed thematic analyses, (c) the findings, including research output and assessment of utilised quantitative analyses, (d) a discussion, and (e) a conclusion, which encompasses limitations and recommendations for future research.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Organisational Ethics and Employee Perception

Employees' perception of organisational ethics considerably influences job satisfaction, organisational commitment and performance, developing a reinforcing cycle that enhances outcomes for both employees and the organisation. Evidence suggests that when employees regard their organisation as ethical, it cultivates a positive work environment that improves organisational commitment and job satisfaction. Specifically, psychological empowerment and ethical leadership directly affect job satisfaction, leading to heightened loyalty to the organisation and enhanced work effectiveness (Qing et al., 2020).

Similarly, job satisfaction moderates perceived ethical environment in relation to employee misconduct, with perceived organisational support for ethical behaviour acting as a key intermediary (Hsieh & Wang, 2016). Additionally, organisational ethics enhance employee productivity both directly and indirectly by improving job satisfaction and fostering workplace allegiance (Fu & Deshpande, 2014). Research indicates that sustainable business practices optimise job performance by improving job attitudes and fostering organisational trust (Silva et al., 2023; Vuong et al., 2022). Furthermore, perceived ethical sustainable initiatives, integrated with intellectual capital, influences employees' innovative work behaviour, impacting overall organisational performance (Farouk & Jabeen, 2018). Employees' perception of ethical business approaches also enhances their ethical behaviour by increasing organisational commitment, with the relationship being stronger when co-workers' ethical behaviour is weaker (Sarfo et al., 2022).

This dynamic indicates that promoting a perception of strong ethical standards can be especially effective in environments where ethical behaviour is inconsistent. It emphasises the significance of transparent communication and reinforcement of ethical norms to ensure all employees align with the organisational values. Ultimately, the perception of socially responsible external initiatives is significantly correlated with the public corporate status, indicating that ethical practices not only improve internal dynamics but also enhance corporate reputation (Vuong & Bui, 2023).

2.2 Determinants Influencing Employees' Perception of Organisational Ethics

Ethical leadership and management, defined by the adherence to ethical principles, has a profound influence on shaping employees' ethical perception and organisational behaviour. Fostering a culture of integrity, ethical leadership enhances employee performance and reduces occupational strain, stimulating a productive work environment (Schwepker & Dimitriou, 2021).

Ethical leaders set standards for conduct, encourage organisational citizenship behaviour, and reduce moral disengagement (Fuller, 2022). Ethical leadership mitigates organisational politics, creating a transparent and efficient workplace (Lee et al., 2021). Enhancing justice perception across various dimensions, it promotes ethical behaviour (Al Halbusi et al., 2021) and reduces turnover intentions by addressing work exhaustion and psychological contract breaches, especially in high-stress environments (Li et al., 2022).

Changes in ethical leadership perception affect employees' feedback and turnover behaviours (Ng et al., 2021). Trust in ethical leaders influences middle managers' ethical behaviour, emphasising the importance of reducing a bottom-line mentality (Malik et al., 2023). Ethical leadership mediates the influence of organisational politics and uncertainty on project achievement, highlighting the need for ethical behaviour to enhance engagement and reduce negative perception (Turi & Sarfraz, 2023). Underlining the importance of ethical training programs, organisational commitment serves as a mediator for ethical leadership and ethical work conduct (Guo et al., 2023). Ethical policies and procedures, when effectively implemented and perceived as just and consistent, affect significantly employees' ethical perception, cultivating a moral environment within organisations. An ethical

climate, defined by perception of ethical correctness, can either mitigate or exacerbate unethical behaviours depending on organisational policies (Gorsira et al., 2018).

Ethics training and shared ethics codes, especially when aligned with corporate sustainability, enhance job satisfaction and employee retention (Valentine & Godkin, 2016). The effectiveness of ethics codes fluctuates: while informal codes may increase self-interested behaviours, formal guidelines enhance compliance (Kotzian et al., 2021). Organisational responses to ethical transgressions critically influence employees' ethical judgments and perceptions of the ethical climate (Decoster et al., 2021). Supervisor role modelling and formal ethical policies promote ethical intentions, especially when tailored to individual moral ideologies (Ruiz-Palomino & Martinez-Cañas, 2011). Ethical leadership, which fosters trust and fair treatment, encourages employees to voice ethical concerns, improving organisational integrity and performance (Foglia & Cohen, 2019). Employees' ethical attitudes significantly impact corporate sustainable development, emphasising the importance of aligning ethical policies with social and environmental responsibilities (Mansour et al., 2022).

Ethical culture exerts a multidimensional impact on employees' ethical perception, highlighting the need for organisations to cultivate a robust ethical framework to encourage moral conduct and decision-making among employees. Studies indicate that a strong ethical culture, characterised by clear values and systems advocating ethical conduct, mitigates corruption by controlling unethical practices such as fraud and bribery through supportability and sanctionability (Klinkhammer, 2013). Ethics training strengthens ethical culture, positively affecting job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and employee retention, emphasising a value-oriented approach over mere compliance (Kancharla & Dadhich, 2020). Individual factors like personal values and organisational values such as honesty and responsibility influence ethical reasoning, especially under situational pressures like low wages or perceived injustice (Derfler-Rozin & Park, 2022). The perception of ethical business practices is closely tied to organisational culture and ethical leadership, shaping employees' perception of their organisation's ethical standards (Malik et al., 2023). Cultural factors and personality traits like the dark tetrad moderate ethical decision-making, impacting perception of ethical misconduct and counterproductive work behaviours (Marcatto et al., 2024).

Heightened perception of ethical culture correlate with elevated work motivation, where factors such as peer alignment, clarity, and feasibility serve as notable predictors (Colaco & Loi, 2019). Ethical leadership enhances perception of organisational justice, fostering ethical behaviour among employees (Al Halbusi et al., 2021). Shared ethical culture within work units reduces burnout and increases engagement, suggesting that departmental support for ethical practices enhances well-being and ethical perception (Huhtala et al., 2015). In paternalist organisational cultures, fair performance appraisals significantly impact ethical decision-making, highlighting the importance of transparent evaluation systems (Goksoy & Alayoglu, 2013).

Corporate ethical communication is integral to shaping employees' ethical perception, requiring a strategic, transparent, and heterogenous approach to ensure alignment between corporate values and employee behaviour. Effective communication of ethical values and codes of conduct necessitates collaboration across internal units to foster adherence to ethical standards (Pastoriza et al., 2015). Managers must communicate transparently and leverage corporate culture to promote ethical communication, despite inherent power dynamics (Enciso et al., 2017). Employees' perception of fair and ethical treatment by their organisation influences their attitudes and behaviours, extending to the treatment of external stakeholders (Hu et al., 2020). Conversely, failure to meet moral responsibility pledges can increase perception of corporate hypocrisy, damaging corporate reputation and stakeholder relationships (Goswami & Bhaduri, 2022). Effective communication of business strategy and coordinated decision-making foster perception of corporate ethical values

(Valentine & Hollingworth, 2015). The connection between corporate ethical values and employee performance is significant, with perceived fairness playing a moderating role. Strong alignment between employees' and corporate ethical values enhances performance, yet perceived fairness can temporarily mitigate the effect of ethical breaches (Sharma, 2018).

2.3 Exploring Bibliometrics: Author Keyword Co-Occurrence, Cited References Co-Citation, and Country-Level Co-Authorship Mapping

Bibliometric analysis employs statistical tools to quantitatively assess relationships and impacts among publications, authors, and countries within a defined research field. It systematically studies scientific literature to measure outputs like publication and citation count, and author influence (Öztürk et al., 2024). Employing data collections from databases like Web of Science and tools like VOSviewer, it visualises relationships between different elements. Key indicators include productivity and impact indexes, and metrics such as total link strength to assess interdependence (Castillo-Vergara et al., 2023). Bibliometric analysis maps research trends, identifies influential papers and authors, and tracks the evolution of topics over time. It also assesses the quality and visibility of scientific events and publications, facilitating evidence-based knowledge management (Donthu et al., 2021; Kamila & Jasrotia, 2023).

Author keyword co-occurrence mapping is a bibliometric technique that visualises and analyses relationships and trends in a research field by examining how often keywords appear together in scientific literature. It generates a network diagram in which nodes denote keywords and edges denote their co-occurrence (Gorzeń-Mitka et al., 2020). The approach reveals leading concepts, emerging trends, and thematic clusters, providing insights into the research domain's structure. This technique is useful in rapidly growing fields, assisting in managing and interpreting large data volumes by highlighting significant patterns and trends (Lozano et al., 2019).

Cited references co-citation is a bibliometric approach that explores connections between documents by examining their frequency of citation together in subsequent papers (Gheno, 2021). This method unveils the intellectual framework of a research area by isolating clusters of interconnected works, assuming frequently co-cited papers share similar themes (Hota et al., 2020). It generates a matrix quantifying how often document pairs are cited together, which can be visualized as a network showing relationships among documents (Bradley et al., 2020). This aids in understanding research communication, identifying influential papers, and mapping the evolution of research areas.

Country-level co-authorship refers to the collaborative efforts between researchers from different countries in creating scientific publications. This collaboration has grown due to the need to share knowledge, expertise, resources, and funding, and to gain prestige in the global research community (Fu et al., 2022). The network analysis highlights regional research concentrations, providing insights to inspire initiatives in less-developed areas. It also charts collaborations over time, aiding scholars in assessing intellectual progress and networking with established and emerging researchers (Donthu et al., 2021). International co-authorships often result in higher citation counts and research visibility, especially in the Social Sciences, and typically produce higher quality research. However, the benefits differ by field and country, contingent on the scientific impact of the collaborating regions (De Moya-Anegon et al., 2018).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The bibliometric study employed a core set of publications from the Web of Science (WoS) repository considering its extensive scope of influential academic literature and essential scientific citation indices. The subsequent research questions have been formulated:

1. What are the thematic links among the contents of the reviewed publications?

2. Which publications are the most impactful, and what are the core themes within the intellectual frameworks of the explored research field?
3. How do scholars collaborate on the discussed topic, and how does this collaboration vary over different time periods and regions in terms of intellectual progression?

The following thematic analyses were carried out to discern research trends:
1. A performance summary analysis using generic citation metrics provided by WoS.
2. A thematic analysis using co-occurrence mapping of authors' keywords to explore key concepts and connections within the research area.
3. A thematic analysis through co-citation mapping of cited references to uncover influential publications within the research area.
4. A thematic analysis using country-level co-authorship mapping to examine collaborative efforts among researchers from different countries.

Table 1 exhibits the primary steps undertaken regarding the data collection and processing approach. To determine the volume of publications on organisational ethics related to employee perception, the WoS search used specific keywords like „organisational ethics" and „employee perception". The search query identified 1,116 relevant publications, capturing the topics explored in this research area. To narrow down the selection adjusting filters were applied, such as specific index selection, covering all years from 1990 – 2024, as well as the inclusion of document types such as articles, proceeding papers and early access written in English language.

Table 1. The primary phases entailed in the bibliometric examination

Phase I – Preliminary Actions:	
Data Interrogation Platform	Clarivate Analytics Web of Science – Core Collection
Data Extraction Approach	Advanced Search
Search Query in WoS	((((ALL=(business ethics)) OR ALL=(organizational ethics)) OR ALL=(organisational ethics)) OR ALL=(ethics)) AND ALL=(employee perception)
Phase II – Adjusting Filters:	
Edition Index Selection	SSCI, SCI-EXPANDED, AHCI, CPCI-S, CPCI-SSH, ESCI
Publication Years	All years from 1990 – 2024, except ESCI 2005 – present
Document Types	Articles, Proceeding Papers, Early Access, Review Articles
Language	English
Volume of total records retrieved based on the selected filters and included in the study	1,088
Employed bibliometric mapping software	VOSviewer version 1.6.20 (release October 2023)
Phase III – Advanced Thematic Assessment:	
Assessment of author keyword co-occurrence	
Assessment of cited references co-citation	
Assessment of country-level co-authorship	
Phase IV – Outcome Summary:	
Identifying patterns in the research field based on current or prospective interrelationships among topics derived from textual content, citations, and author collaborations, interpreting the results, drawing conclusions, acknowledging limitations, and suggesting future explorations.	

Source: author's contribution

Data extracted from WoS includes detailed information for each publication, including author, title, source, abstract, keyword, addresses, cited reference and use, and other. Based on the selected filters, a total volume of 1,088 retrieved records were included in the study. These data were then transferred and subsequently processed using the bibliometric mapping tool VOSviewer 1.6.20 (2023).

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Research Output

Table 2 provides an overview of each employed research approach, including total count of identified items, threshold limit, and overall assessed items. From a total of 1,088 publications spanning from 1990 to 2024, 2,578 author keywords were identified. After applying a minimum occurrence threshold of 5 keywords, 113 items were included in the analysis. The dataset also comprised 43,481 co-cited references, and by setting a minimum occurrence threshold of 20 citations, 204 references were selected for detailed assessment. The publications originated from 87 countries. With a threshold of at least 5 documents per country, 44 countries met the criteria and were included in the final evaluation.

Table 2. Overview of the charted findings derived from targeted search parameters in WoS

Research Approach	Total Count of Items	Threshold Frequency	Assessed Items
Author keyword co-occurrence	2,578	5	113
Cited references co-citation	43,481	20	204
Country-level co-authorship	87	5	44

Source: author's contribution

Figure 1 depicts the performance analysis of the examined data retrieved from WoS, reflecting 1,088 records, spanning from 1990 to 2024. It reveals the productivity level, quantified by the annual count of scientific records published, and the volume of total citations, which determines the most impactful publications. As illustrated, there is an ascending trend in both productivity and impact of publications. Starting with 2008, there is a sharp rise in publication volume, depicted by the purple columns, reaching its peak in 2018, and then experiencing a slight decline until 2023.

A similar pattern is observed for citation frequency, indicated by the blue curve, with an average of 35 citations per item, peaking in 2022, followed by slight decrease in 2023 and a sharper decline in 2024. However, considering that 2024 is not yet complete, it is expected that the publication and citation volumes will change by the end of the year as additional publications are indexed in WoS. Despite the recent slight decline in publication volume, research in organisational ethics, as defined by the specific search criteria, which might constrain the breadth of the analysis, continues to be intricate and multidimensional, due to its complexity, global significance, and impact on organisational performance.

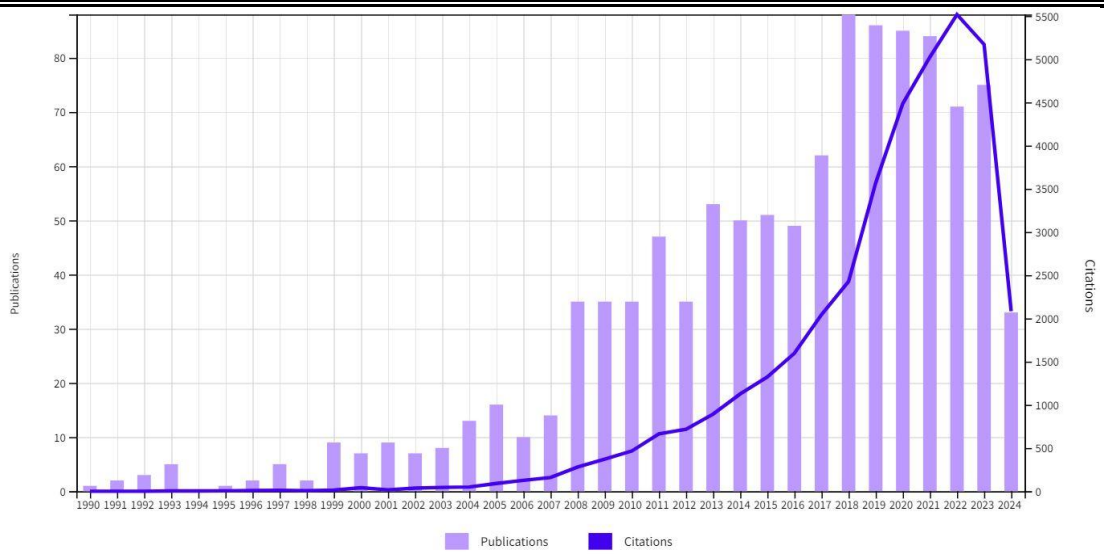

Figure 1. The volume of publications and times cited determined through WoS citation report
Source: WoS and author's contribution

It encompasses interconnected themes such as ethical leadership, climate, and justice, which are essential to understand the influence of ethics on employee perceptions and behaviours. The field is continuously evolving, with emerging trends like digital transformation and artificial intelligence introducing new ethical challenges and opportunities. It is imperative for academia to remain engaged in exploring these developments and their implications for organisational ethics. The universal relevance of organisational ethics underscores its significance across various cultures and business practices.

This global perspective enhances research, providing diverse insights that are valuable for both academia and practice. Ethical practices are intrinsically linked to organisational performance, employee satisfaction, and corporate reputation. Ongoing research can offer valuable insights into how organisations can leverage ethics to enhance these areas, making it a vital topic for sustained academic inquiry. Notably, approximately 70 % of all publications on the considered topic were published in the last decade.

This rising trend may indicate the expansion of the scope of covered topics together with the progression of relevant research fields, and the increased co-authorship patterns across various cross-cutting domains within a multidisciplinary context. Furthermore, the findings from the assessment using WoS classifications highlight the prevalent fields of study and their corresponding publication output: 51 % of the published works pertain to the „Business", 44 % are in „Ethics", 22 % in „Management", with 5 % in „Psychology Applied" and „Economics" research domains.

4.2 Assessment of Author Keyword Co-Occurrence

The bibliometric analysis of the 1,088 publications identified 2,578 distinct author keywords. By setting a minimum threshold frequency of 5 keywords, 10 thematic groups (clusters) emerged, encompassing a combined total of 113 specific keywords (items). The assessment revealed 772 associations between keywords, with these connections collectively valued at 1,155. The scientific representation of keyword co-occurrence is graphically illustrated in Figure 2 through network examination. Each colour denotes a distinct thematic group. Nodes within these groups depict keywords, while connections between nodes indicate occurrences of keyword co-occurrences. The dimensions of each node correlate with the occurrence rate of its keyword, reflecting the overall number of appearances. The thickness of the connections signifies the occurrence frequency of keyword associations.

As per the VOSviewer guide (Van Eck & Waltman, 2023), each connection represents a relationship where co-occurrence occurs, with its intensity represented by a positive numeric value.

Stronger connections indicate more robust keyword associations, with the cumulative strength indicating how frequently two keywords appear together in publications. Each grouping is defined by a collection of author keywords and represents a particular theme, providing perspectives on the examined literature.

The Red Cluster comprises a total of 22 items and demonstrates significant associations among keywords such as „Leadership", „Employees", „Professional Ethics", „Employees Performance" and „Perception". The Green Cluster, totalling 18 items, encompasses a broad range of keywords relevant to the analysed topic, including „Ethical Leadership", „Ethical Climate", „Ethical Decision Making", „Corporate Ethical Values", „Ethical Culture", „Codes of Ethics", and „Ethical Perceptions".

The Blue Cluster, consisting of 15 items, shows strong connections between keywords like „Organizational Identification", „Moral Disengagement", and „Moral Identity".

The Yellow Cluster, with 15 items, reveals robust associations among keywords such as „Business Ethics", „Organizational Ethics", „Employee Engagement", and „Ethics Training". The Purple Cluster, with 10 items, highlights robust links among keywords like „Corporate Social Responsibility", „Perceived Organizational Support", and „Job Satisfaction". The Cyan Cluster, comprising 8 items, demonstrates significant correlations among keywords such as „Unethical Behavior", „Affective Commitment", „Organizational Culture", and „Behavioral Ethics". The Orange Cluster, containing 7 items, uncovers close associations among keywords such as „Employee Attitudes", „Ethical Behavior", and „Behavioral Integrity". The Brown Cluster, including 7 items, presents strong connections between keywords like „Organizational, Distributive, Procedural", and „Interactional Justice". The Pink Cluster, consisting of 6 items, affirms strong connections between keywords like „Justice" and „Fairness".

Finally, the Rose Cluster, comprising 5 items, shows the highest occurrence of the keywords „Ethics" and „Human Resource Management".

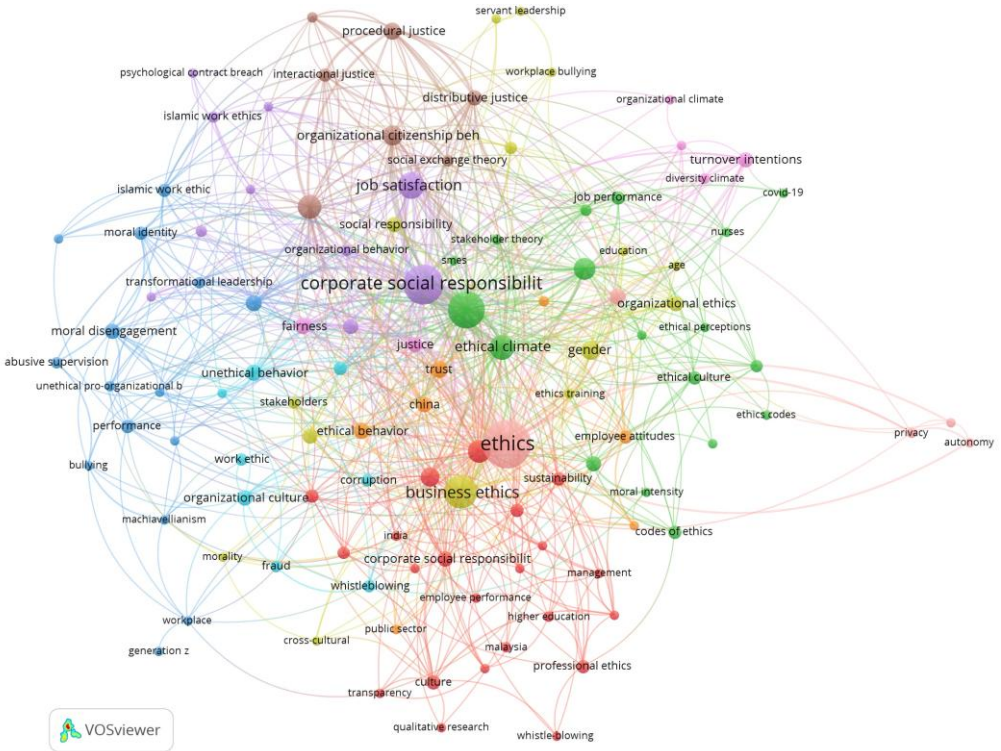

Figure 2. Visual mapping of author keyword co-occurrence based on 1,088 scientific records, analysed using VOSviewer 1.6.20 with a threshold frequency limit of 5 co-occurrences

Source: author's contribution

4.3 Assessment of Cited References Co-Citation

The bibliometric analysis of the 1,088 publications identified a total of 43,481 citations spanning the period from 1990 to 2024. By setting a threshold limit of 20 citations per referenced item, the mapping revealed 4 different thematic clusters, including 204 co-cited references for further examination.

Additionally, the study uncovered 14,556 co-citation links between items, with the cumulative strength of these connections totalling 51,555. Figure 3 illustrates the science mapping of the co-cited items within each cluster, demonstrating the coherence of thematic concepts derived from references consistently cited together.

The co-citation analysis uncovers highly cited publications and knowledge dynamics in the examined domain of research. Within the Red Cluster, scientific publications with the highest co-citation count are associated with authors such as Fornell and Larcker (119 citations), Ashforth and Mael (74 citations), Brammer et al. (59 citations), Valentine and Fleischman (54 citations), and Rupp et al. (54 citations). The most consistently cited publications within the Green Cluster are Victor and Cullen (107 citations), Treviño et al. (69 citations), Treviño (84 citations), Anderson and Gerbing (67 citations), and Jones (71 citations).

The following articles are cited most frequently together within the Blue Cluster: Podsakoff et al. (190 citations), Brown et al. (145 citations), Brown and Treviño (90 citations), Mayer et al. (67 citations), and Treviño et al. (55 citations). The Yellow Cluster features Baron and Kenny (76 citations), Colquitt et al. (68 citations), Blau (46 citations), Preacher and Hayes (45 citations), and Cropanzano et al. (33 citations) as the most influential scientific papers.

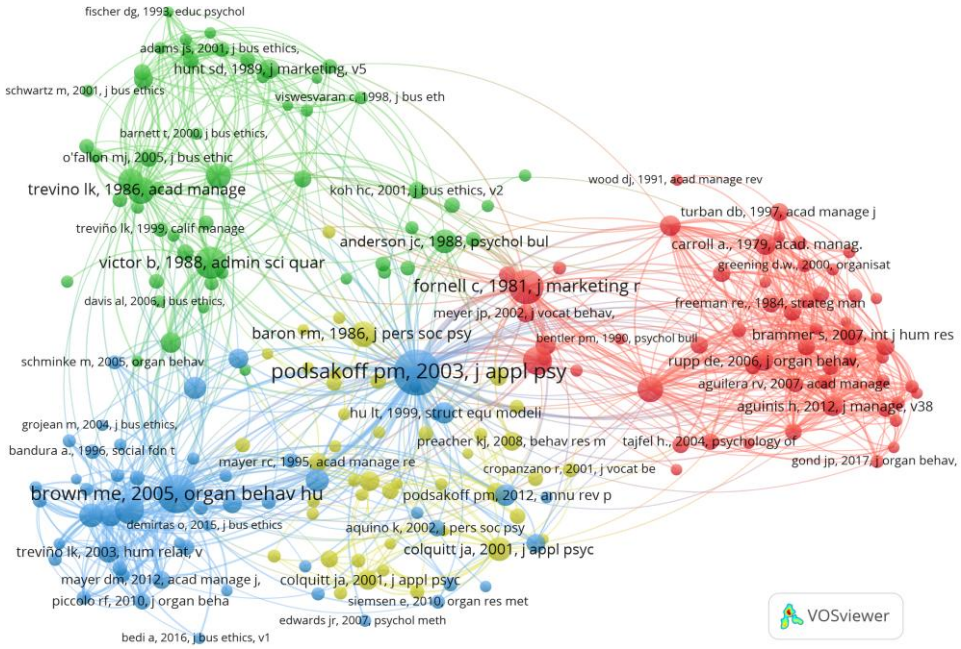

Figure 3. Visual mapping of cited references co-citation based on 1,088 scientific records, analysed using VOSviewer 1.6.20 with a threshold frequency limit of 20 citations

Source: author's contribution

To deepen understanding of the intellectual advancement within the research field, a concise analysis of the written content was performed on the top 5 most influential scientific records, commonly cited together within each cluster. The addressed topics encompass the concept of organisational ethics, employee perception and their interaction with various aspects of organisational dynamics.

The Blue Cluster focuses primarily on ethical leadership. Considering social learning theory, which posits that moral leadership shapes employees' moral behaviour, the authors (Brown et al., 2005) devised a novel tool to evaluate its impactful influence on ethical values such as integrity, confidence, and equity. The ethical aspects of leadership are further explored by the authors (Brown & Treviño, 2006) through literature review rooted in theory from the social sciences.

Additional studies emphasise the pivotal importance of ethical leaders in shaping employee ethical conduct, as they serve as a primary influence on how corporate values are perceived (Mayer et al., 2009). Organisations can benefit by promoting ethical leadership through measures like hiring ethically sound leaders and providing training. Moreover, the concepts of personal morality and managerial ethics are mirrored in an additional study (Treviño et al., 2000).

In this context, a moral manager acts as an ethical guide, consistently disseminates ethical values, and upholds standards through incentivisation. The most frequently referenced paper in this cluster (Podsakoff et al., 2003) addresses control techniques for managing typical methodological biases in research statistical models, particularly emphasising „common method variance". The reviewed publications emphasise ethical leadership's significant influence on organisational culture and employee behaviour, supporting the advancement of ethical practices through leadership training and development programs.

Within the Red Cluster the main topics are related to positive correlations with ethical guidelines, ethics codes and training, ethical climate and employee commitment. Fornell and Larcker (1981) have contributed a valuable insight by developing a novel testing framework aimed at mitigating common biases in structural equation models assessment, according to metrics of shared variability. Ashforth and Mael (1989) further investigate employees' perception of inclusion regarding organisational identity, ethical values and conduct standards aligned with their individual identity. Brammer et al. (2007) delve deeper into how employees perceive ethical organisations, and specifically the ethical climate in correlation with their affective commitment. Additional evidence of positive correlations between employees' perception, ethical guidelines and corporate practices is provided (Valentine & Fleischman, 2008). „Ethics codes" and „ethics training" are both considered as independent variables in the survey study.

Further exploration is undertaken regarding how employees' moral obligations and the pursuit of purposeful existence influence their perception of organisational practices, particularly in relation to their association with an ethically righteous institution (Rupp et al., 2006). The records highlight the importance of ethical practices and guidelines in developing employees' perception and their moral engagement with their organisation. Understanding these elements can assist organisations in establishing a more ethical and inclusive workplace, leading to increased employee contentment and dedication.

Within the Green Cluster the primary topics revolve around ethical climate, ethical culture, and ethical leadership emphasising frameworks for ethical decision-making. Victor and Cullen (1988) introduced a novel „ethical climate theory" based on employee perception, expanding upon organisational theory. While other authors (Treviño et al., 1998) analyse the intersections and distinctions between „ethical climate" and „ethical culture" with significant ramifications for „unethical behavior" in ethical guideline and non-ethical guideline-oriented organisations, alternatively a new model grounded in Kohlberg's framework of moral development is suggested (Treviño, 1986). This approach aids in comprehending managers' viewpoints on ethical challenges and the classification of moral judgement.

Conversely, Jones (1991) constructs a novel theoretical framework concerning ethical decision-making centred on the specific ethical concern. The author introduces a fresh array of factors

centred on the moral significance of ethical matters, which greatly influences their perceived importance. Consequently, individuals tend to behave more ethically when they recognise the moral issue as highly significant. Aligned with the overarching theme of the cluster is another suggested methodology concerning the development and assessment of structural equation modelling within the social sciences (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). By understanding these theories and frameworks, researchers can better comprehend how ethical climates and cultures within organisations influence employee behavior and decision-making. This knowledge is essential for creating environments that promote ethical conduct and align with employees' moral values.

The primary theme of the Yellow Cluster centers on organisational justice dimensions as perceived by employees. Through a meta-analysis, the authors (Colquitt et al., 2001) found that while justice dimensions are interrelated, each contributes distinctly to employees' perception of impartiality, professional dedication, satisfaction and performance. An additional influential study (Blau, 1964) explores how social interactions evolve into intricate structures, using concepts like authority, exchange, and cooperation to analyse group dynamics and conflict. In their study, the authors (Cropanzano et al., 2001) investigate employees' perception of organisational justice, examining how they develop evaluations, the motivations behind these evaluations, and the specific aspects they assess.

The subsequent study (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) focuses on techniques for evaluating multiple mediators and compares different methods for examining indirect mechanisms. The concluding research article (Baron & Kenny, 1986) emphasises the importance of correctly distinguishing between moderators and mediators, discussing the conceptual and strategic significance of this distinction, and offering analytical techniques for researchers to use these terms accurately. Recognising that justice dimensions are interrelated, yet directly contribute to employee perception, organisations can strategically target specific areas of justice to achieve an improved ethical environment. This approach can enhance employee satisfaction, organisational commitment, and overall performance.

4.4 Assessment of Country-Level Co-Authorship

The bibliometric review of 1,088 publications covering the period from 1990 to 2024 identified contributions from 87 different countries. By setting a minimum threshold occurrence of 5 documents per country, the assessment revealed 7 different thematic clusters encompassing 44 items for further examination.

Additionally, the study uncovered 182 co-authorship links between items, with the cumulative strength of these connections amounting to 368. Figure 4 depicts the science mapping within each cluster, demonstrating the coherence of thematic concepts derived from collaborative authorship. Node size reflects the volume of published documents on the considered topics. Robust connections between countries are indicated by the close proximity of the nodes. The size of the arcs represents the extent of cooperation, as measured by the links value.

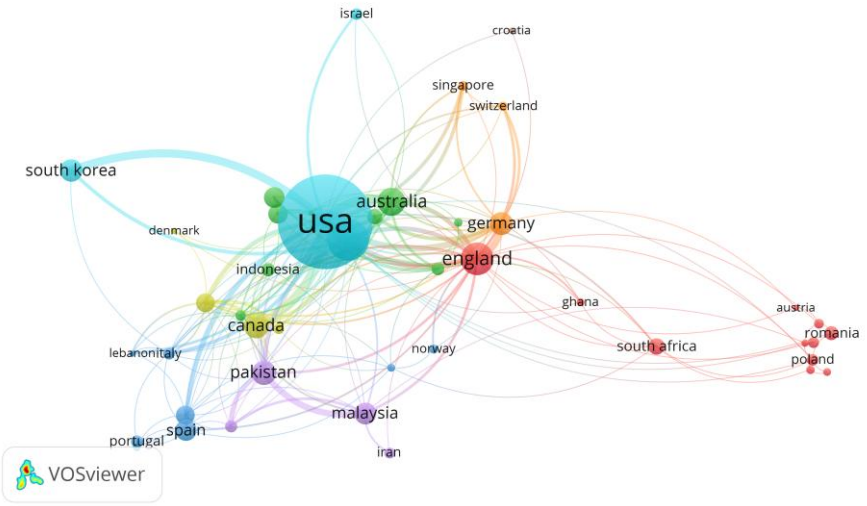

Figure 4. Visual mapping of country-level co-authorship based on 1,088 scientific records, analysed using VOSviewer 1.6.20 with a threshold frequency limit of 5 documents
Source: author's contribution

Within the Red Cluster, countries such as England (66 documents, 29 connections), Poland (13 documents, 8 connections), and South Africa (22 documents, 7 connections) exhibit the highest count of publications with a moderate degree of collaboration. In contrast, Romania (17 documents, 3 connections) ranks fourth in terms of publication volume, but demonstrates a relatively low level of cooperation with other countries in the cluster.

Within the Green Cluster, countries like Australia (52 documents, 18 connections), the Netherlands (19 documents, 9 connections), and New Zealand (15 documents, 12 connections) display the most pronounced associations with a substantial volume of publications. Conversely, Taiwan (29 documents, 5 connections) and Turkey (32 documents, 5 connections) rank second and third in publication volume within the cluster, respectively, but exhibit a significantly lower level of collaborative authorship compared to other countries in the cluster.

Within the Blue Cluster, Italy (13 documents, 14 connections), India (28 documents, 11 connections), and Spain (34 documents, 8 connections) reveal the most notable cooperation levels and the highest number of publications. Within the Yellow Cluster, France (27 documents, 16 connections) and Canada (43 documents, 8 connections) display the most noteworthy collaboration levels and publication counts.

Within the Purple Cluster, Pakistan (41 documents, 14 connections) and Malaysia (35 documents, 11 connections) display a robust affiliation, whereas in the Cyan Cluster, USA (366 documents, 29 connections) and China (98 documents, 21 connections) demonstrate the strongest association and the highest volume of publications including at the map level.

Within the Orange Cluster, Germany (38 documents, 14 connections) and Singapore (10 documents, 6 connections) exhibit the highest publication volume alongside moderate collaboration levels. At the map level, the Green Cluster (Australia, Netherlands, New Zealand) and the Cyan Cluster (USA, China) exhibit the closest proximity, indicating a high level of co-authorship.

The second shortest span is represented by the Yellow (France, Canada), Orange (Germany) and partially the Red Cluster (England), demonstrating a strong collaboration between these countries. Positioned farther away are the Blue Cluster (Italy, Spain), the Purple Cluster (Pakistan, Malaysia) and partially the Orange (Switzerland, Singapore) and Red Clusters (Poland, South Africa), reflecting a moderate co-authorship pattern.

5. DISCUSSION

The bibliometric analysis of publications on employees' perceptions of organisational ethics reveals key insights through the examination of 2,578 distinct author keywords across 1,088 publications. Ten thematic clusters emerged, reflecting the main research areas such as ethics, corporate sustainability, ethical leadership, ethical climate, and organisational justice. The 772 associations between keywords indicate the interconnectedness of these themes, emphasising that topics like ethical leadership, employee performance, and decision-making are central to understanding organisational ethics.

Organisational identification, moral disengagement, and moral identity significantly influence organisational ethics, with corporate sustainability and job satisfaction closely linked to perceived organisational support, highlighting ethics' role in employee well-being. The analysis emphasises the complexity of this research area and the diverse factors influencing employees' ethical perceptions in the workplace.

The co-citation analysis covered 43,481 citations, revealing a comprehensive body of research in organisational ethics. Four thematic clusters were identified, each reflecting different aspects of the field, including ethical leadership, guidelines, climate, and justice. The analysis found 14,556 co-citation links, indicating a robust and interconnected research network with a cumulative connection strength of 51,555, highlighting the collaborative nature of this field. Notably, publications within the Blue and Green Clusters, focusing on ethical leadership and climate, were identified as foundational works.

The analysis highlights the importance of ethical leadership and decision-making frameworks in shaping employees' perceptions of organisational ethics. The Yellow Cluster's emphasis on organisational justice underscores the importance of fairness in shaping employee perceptions and behaviours. The findings demonstrate the interconnectedness of research in organisational ethics, particularly how ethical leadership, climate, and justice impact employee perceptions. Additionally, the country-level co-authorship analysis highlighted significant international collaboration, showcasing the diverse perspectives within the field. Contributions from 87 countries underscore the global relevance of organisational ethics across diverse cultures and business practices. The study identified seven thematic clusters, indicating collaboration among countries with shared interests or challenges.

Only countries contributing at least 5 documents were included in the final evaluation, resulting in 44 countries with significant input. The Green and Cyan Clusters showed the strongest collaboration, followed by Yellow, Orange, and Red, with Blue, Purple, and parts of Orange and Red Clusters displaying moderate collaboration. The 182 co-authorship links underline the importance of international collaboration in advancing research on organisational ethics.

Following practical implications convey the application of this research endeavour within organisational settings, providing valuable insights for enhancing ethical practices and employee perceptions, and offering guidance on fostering ethical cultures within organisational context, essential for improving employee satisfaction. By identifying factors influencing employees' views on ethics, organisations can implement strategies to foster a positive work environment and strengthen organisational commitment.

The highlight on ethical leadership underscores its role in shaping employees' ethical perceptions, suggesting the need for leadership training that emphasises ethical decision-making and justice. Transparent communication and reinforcement of ethical norms are highlighted as critical for

aligning employees with organisational values, especially in inconsistent ethical environments. The study also advocates for international collaboration and diversity, encouraging organisations to engage in cross-cultural exchanges to broaden their understanding of ethical practices. Comparative and longitudinal studies are recommended to address industry-specific ethical challenges, allowing organisations to tailor their practices accordingly.

Furthermore, the influence of digital transformation on ethical perspectives necessitates that organisations incorporate ethical considerations into their digital strategies. The relationship between ethical practices and corporate reputation indicates that adopting socially responsible initiatives can enhance both internal dynamics and market positioning.

6. CONCLUSION

This study analyses 1,088 scientific records from the WoS repository between 1990 and 2024, providing a comprehensive overview of the academic landscape in organisational ethics. Utilising VOSviewer 1.6.20 for scientific network analysis, the research applies advanced bibliometric techniques to explore keyword co-occurrences, co-citations, and authorship patterns, thereby contributing methodological insights to the field.

The findings enhance understanding of employees' perceptions of organisational ethics, relevant for both organisations promoting ethical cultures and researchers exploring the complexities of ethics. However, the study's exclusive reliance on the WoS database may limit the literature scope, potentially omitting significant contributions from other sources.

Additionally, the bibliometric approach, while useful for mapping research trends, may not fully capture the qualitative nuances of employees' ethical perceptions, particularly regarding individual and cultural differences.

These limitations highlight the need for complementary qualitative research. Future studies could integrate multiple databases for a more comprehensive review and undertake comparative, longitudinal studies across industries and cultures to reveal evolving perceptions over time and cultural influences on ethical practices.

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