

Work Design and Employee Well-Being: A Bibliometric Analysis and Future Research Agenda

Siti Hajar Jamian¹, Nor Akmar Nordin²

Abstract

Work design is a critical determinant of employee well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational performance. Despite the growing body of research in this area, its intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and emerging research frontiers have not been comprehensively synthesised. This study addresses this gap by conducting a bibliometric analysis of 315 Scopus-indexed journal articles using VOSviewer to examine publication trends, citation networks, keyword co-occurrence, and thematic relationships. The findings demonstrate sustained growth in scholarly attention and identify core research themes centered on work design, job characteristics, leadership, mental health, job satisfaction, and burnout. Overlay visualization further reveals an increasing emphasis on employee engagement, psychological well-being, and occupational stress, reflecting the field's evolving priorities. In addition, the analysis identifies emerging opportunities for future research in the areas of digital leadership, artificial intelligence, readiness for change, and work design in public sector organizations. By mapping the field's knowledge structure and thematic development, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the literature and provides a research agenda to support both theoretical advancement and evidence-based organizational practice aimed at improving employee well-being.

Keywords: *Work design, employee well-being, bibliometric analysis, job characteristics, employee engagement, and occupational stress.*

Introduction

Work design has long been recognized as a fundamental determinant of employee behavior, motivation, and organizational effectiveness. It encompasses the content and organization of work tasks, responsibilities, autonomy, and social interactions that shape employees' daily experiences and influence both individual and organizational outcomes (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006). In recent years, increasing organizational complexity, technological advancement, and changing workforce expectations have renewed scholarly interest in understanding how work design contributes to employee well-being and sustainable performance (Parker et al., 2017).

Employee well-being has emerged as a strategic priority for organizations seeking to enhance productivity, reduce burnout, and promote long-term workforce sustainability. Research grounded in the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model suggests that appropriate job resources, including autonomy, feedback, and social support, can buffer job demands and improve employees' psychological well-being and work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Conversely, poorly designed work may increase stress, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intentions, ultimately reducing organizational performance.

The growing body of literature has demonstrated significant relationships between work design, job satisfaction, employee engagement, and mental health outcomes (Humphrey et al., 2007; Parker et al., 2017). Furthermore, emerging topics such as job crafting, flexible work arrangements, and digital transformation have expanded the scope of work design research, highlighting the need for organizations to redesign jobs in response to changing work environments (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Parker, 2022).

Despite the increasing volume of publications, research on work design and employee well-being remains fragmented across multiple disciplines, including human resource management, organizational behavior, occupational health, and psychology. Existing reviews have primarily focused on conceptual

¹Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. Corresponding author: hajarjamian97@gmail.com

² Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.

discussions or systematic evidence synthesis, while limited attention has been given to mapping the intellectual structure, research collaboration patterns, and thematic evolution of the field through bibliometric techniques. Consequently, scholars and practitioners may lack a comprehensive understanding of influential contributors, dominant research themes, and emerging directions.

To address this gap, the present study employs a bibliometric approach to analyze the scientific landscape of work design and employee well-being research using publications indexed in the Scopus database. Through keyword co-occurrence analysis, citation analysis, and network visualization using VOSviewer, this study aims to identify major research themes, influential authors, and future research opportunities. The findings are expected to provide valuable insights for researchers, policymakers, and organizational leaders seeking to advance knowledge and practice in work design and employee well-being.

Despite the increasing volume of publications on work design and employee well-being, limited studies have systematically mapped the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and research trends in this field using bibliometric techniques. Addressing this gap, the present study aims to provide a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of the existing literature on work design and employee well-being based on publications indexed in the Scopus database. Specifically, this study seeks to (1) examine publication trends, (2) identify the most influential authors and research themes, (3) explore the conceptual structure of the field through keyword co-occurrence and citation analyses, and (4) propose future research directions to advance scholarship and practice in work design and employee well-being. Thus, the bibliometric analysis conducted aims to find answers to the following questions:

RQ1: What are the publication trends in research on work design and employee well-being?

RQ2: Who are the most influential authors, and what are the dominant sources contributing to this field?

RQ3: What are the major research themes and conceptual structures identified through keyword co-occurrence analysis?

RQ4: What emerging trends and future research directions can be identified in the literature on work design and employee well-being?

Method

Data Collection Process

The Scopus database was used to identify publications related to work design and employee well-being. Scopus was selected because it is one of the largest and most comprehensive multidisciplinary databases, offering extensive coverage of high-quality peer-reviewed literature, and is widely recommended for bibliometric research (Donthu et al., 2021).

The data retrieval process was conducted on 11 June 2026. The search was performed using the following query in the title, abstract, and keywords fields:

("work design" OR "job design") AND ("employee well-being" OR well-being OR "psychological well-being")

The search results were subsequently refined by limiting the document type to journal articles and the publication language to English. After applying the predefined search criteria, a total of 315 documents were retained for bibliometric analysis.

The retrieved records were exported in CSV format from Scopus, including bibliographic information, citation data, abstracts, and keywords. These records were then analyzed using VOSviewer to examine publication trends, keyword co-occurrence, citation networks, and the conceptual structure of research on work design and employee well-being.

Analysis of Data

Bibliometric analysis is an established method for examining and mapping the evolution of knowledge within a specific research domain. By analyzing publication records, citation patterns, and keyword relationships, it enables researchers to assess the scientific contributions of authors, articles, journals, institutions, and countries while also identifying influential topics and emerging research directions (El Mohadab, 2020). As a research evaluation technique, bibliometric analysis has become increasingly important across scientific and applied disciplines and is widely used to measure research performance and to support institutional and university assessments (Ellegaard & Wallin, 2015).

This study adopts bibliometric network analysis because it offers a systematic approach to synthesising a large and continuously expanding body of literature. The method facilitates the exploration of connections among publications and provides a comprehensive understanding of the intellectual landscape and temporal development of a research field. Furthermore, bibliometric network analysis enables the visualization of relationships among authors, keywords, journals, institutions, and countries, helping researchers identify influential contributors, collaboration patterns, and thematic clusters within the literature (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010).

The bibliographic data retrieved from the Scopus database were analyzed using VOSviewer (version 1.6.20), a software tool specifically developed for constructing, analyzing, and visualizing bibliometric networks (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). VOSviewer has been widely adopted in bibliometric research due to its capability to generate network maps based on citation, co-citation, bibliographic coupling, and keyword co-occurrence analyses, thereby facilitating the exploration of knowledge structures and research trends (Van Eck & Waltman, 2011; Donthu et al., 2021).

In the present study, a total of 315 journal articles were analyzed to examine the research landscape of work design and employee well-being. Three bibliometric techniques were employed: keyword co-occurrence analysis, citation analysis, and overlay visualization. Keyword co-occurrence analysis was used to identify the conceptual structure and dominant research themes, while citation analysis was conducted to determine influential authors and their scholarly contributions. Overlay visualization was subsequently utilized to examine the temporal evolution of research topics and identify emerging areas of interest within the field (Donthu et al., 2021).

The resulting network maps were interpreted based on node size, link strength, and clustering patterns. Larger nodes represent items with higher frequencies or citation impact, whereas links indicate the strength of relationships between items. Distinct colors denote different research clusters, enabling a systematic understanding of the intellectual structure and thematic development of the literature on work design and employee well-being (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010).

Results

Main Information about Database

Table 1: Main Information about Database

Table 1 presents the main characteristics of the bibliometric dataset. The analysis included 315 journal articles published between 1990 and 2026, retrieved from the Scopus database. These publications were distributed across 211 academic sources and produced by 1,001 authors, indicating a substantial level of scholarly activity in the field. The dataset contained 18,357 references, reflecting the extensive knowledge base underpinning research on work design and employee well-being.

Furthermore, the average number of citations per document was 29.46, while the average age of the publications was 12.3 years. The international co-authorship rate reached 29.81%, suggesting a moderate level of global research collaboration. On average, each publication involved 3.53 authors, highlighting the collaborative nature of research within this field.

Annual Distribution of Publication

Description	Database
Timespan	1990-2026
Sources (Journal)	211
Document	315
Authors	1001
References	18,357
Authors of Single-Authored Documents	45
International Co-authorship	29.81%
Co-authors per Document	3.53
Average Citations per Document	29.46
Document Average Age	12.3 Years

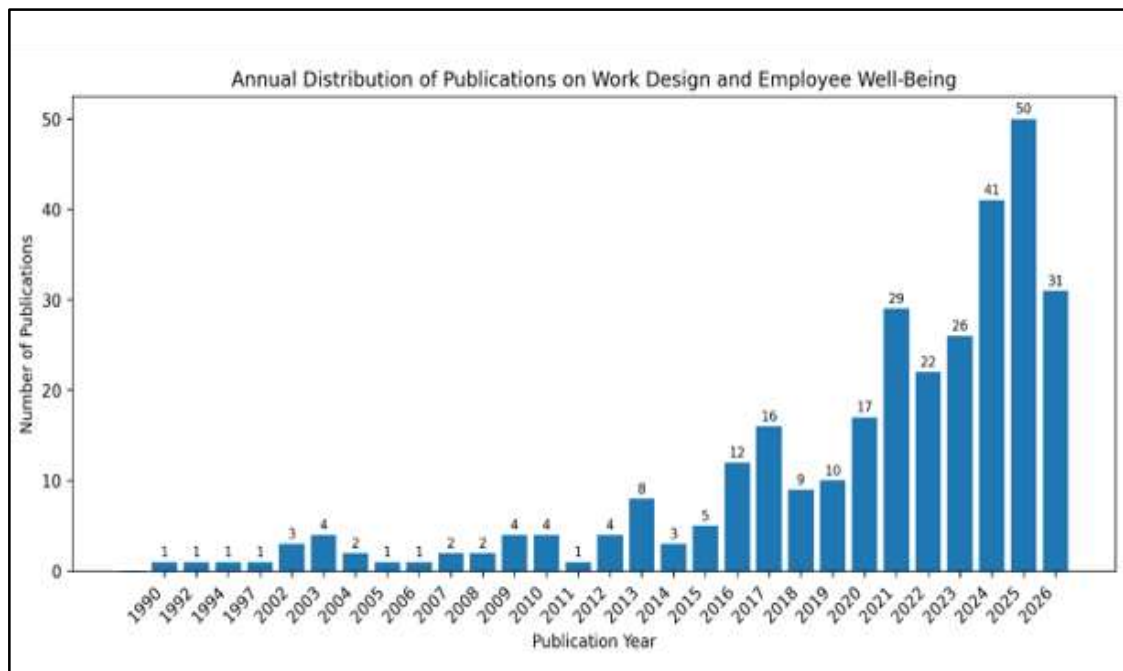


Figure 1: Illustrates the annual distribution of publications on work design and employee well-being.

Figure 1 presents the annual distribution of publications on work design and employee well-being indexed in the Scopus database. The results reveal a gradual increase in research output over the study period, with relatively few publications recorded before 2015. From 2016 onwards, the number of publications increased substantially, indicating growing academic interest in understanding the role of work design in enhancing employee well-being and organizational outcomes.

A particularly notable surge in publication activity was observed between 2021 and 2025, with the highest number of publications recorded in 2025 ($n = 50$), followed by 2024 ($n = 41$) and 2026 ($n = 31$). The lower publication count for 2026 should be interpreted with caution, as the bibliographic data were retrieved on 11 June 2026, meaning that records for the year were still incomplete at the time of data collection.

Overall, the upward publication trend demonstrates the increasing importance of work design and employee well-being as research domains. This growth may be attributed to heightened scholarly and organizational attention to employee mental health, job satisfaction, sustainable work practices, and evolving workplace arrangements in response to technological and societal changes.

Keyword Analysis: Most Common Keywords in the Articles

Table 2: Keyword Analysis: Most Common Keywords in the Articles

Keyword	Research Focus
Work design	Design and organisation of work tasks and responsibilities
Job design	Structuring of jobs to improve employee performance and satisfaction
Employee well-being	Employees' physical, psychological, and social well-being at work
Job satisfaction	Positive evaluation of one's job and work experience
Mental health	Psychological health and emotional functioning in the workplace
Leadership	Leadership practices that influence employee outcomes
Burnout	Work-related exhaustion and emotional depletion
Job Characteristics	Features influencing motivation and performance
Human Resource Management	HR practices related to work design
Psychological Well-being	Mental and emotional wellness at work

Table 1 presents the most frequently occurring keywords identified in the retrieved publications on work design and employee well-being. The analysis indicates that work design, job design, and well-being are among the most dominant terms, reflecting their central role in the existing literature. Other commonly used keywords include "job satisfaction," "mental health," "leadership," "burnout," "job characteristics," and "human resource management," suggesting that research in this field extends beyond job structure to encompass psychological, behavioral, and organizational dimensions.

The prominence of these keywords highlights the multidisciplinary nature of the research area, integrating perspectives from organizational behavior, human resource management, occupational health, and psychology. Furthermore, the co-occurrence of terms such as leadership, burnout, and mental health with work design suggests an increasing emphasis on creating work environments that not only enhance performance but also support employees' psychological well-being and long-term sustainability.

Keyword Co-occurrence Network Analysis

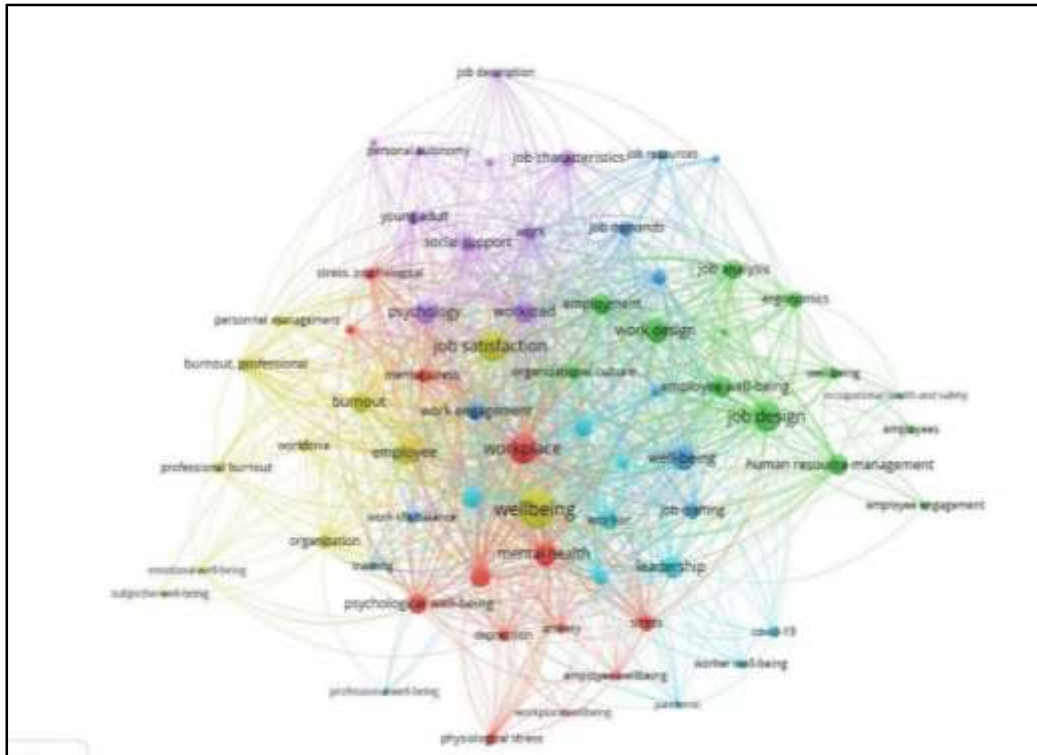


Figure 2: The keyword co-occurrence network of research on work design and employee well-being, generated using VOSviewer.

The keyword co-occurrence network presented in Figure 2 reveals five major thematic clusters that collectively represent the intellectual structure of research on work design and employee well-being. The size of each node reflects the frequency of keyword occurrences, whereas the links between nodes indicate the strength of their relationships. The clustering pattern suggests that the field has evolved into a multidisciplinary area integrating organizational behavior, occupational health, psychology, and human resource management.

The green cluster is centered on “work design” and “job design,” with strong associations to keywords such as “human resource management,” “employee well-being,” “ergonomics,” and “job analysis.” This cluster represents the core of the research domain and focuses on how jobs are structured and redesigned to improve employee performance, motivation, and well-being. The close relationships among these keywords indicate that effective work design is increasingly recognized as a strategic organizational practice that supports both productivity and employee health.

The blue cluster primarily comprises keywords such as “job demands,” “job resources,” and “employment.” This cluster reflects research examining the balance between workplace demands and available resources in shaping employee outcomes. The strong interconnections among these terms suggest the widespread application of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework, in which excessive demands may contribute to strain and burnout, whereas adequate job resources can enhance engagement, resilience, and employee well-being. The prominence of these concepts

highlights the importance of creating supportive work environments that mitigate stress while fostering positive organizational outcomes.

The red cluster is characterized by keywords including “mental health,” “psychological well-being,” “stress,” “depression,” and “physiological stress.” This cluster demonstrates the increasing emphasis on psychological health within the workplace and reflects growing scholarly interest in understanding how work-related factors influence employees’ emotional and mental functioning. The inclusion of both psychological and physiological outcomes suggests that contemporary research extends beyond traditional performance indicators to consider holistic employee well-being.

The purple cluster encompasses concepts such as “job characteristics,” “personal autonomy,” “social support,” and “job description.” These keywords represent foundational theories of work design and highlight the role of intrinsic job features in shaping employee motivation and behavior. The prominence of autonomy and social support within this cluster indicates that meaningful job characteristics remain central determinants of employee satisfaction and overall workplace well-being.

Finally, the yellow cluster focuses on "burnout," "professional burnout," "employee," "organization," and "work-life balance." This thematic group reflects increasing attention to occupational stress and its consequences for individuals and organizations. The presence of burnout-related keywords alongside organizational concepts suggests that recent studies are not only concerned with identifying workplace challenges but also with developing organizational strategies that enhance employee resilience, improve work-life balance, and reduce the negative effects of prolonged job stress.

Overall, the keyword network demonstrates that research on work design and employee well-being has progressed from traditional investigations of job structure towards a broader and more integrated perspective encompassing mental health, leadership, organizational practices, and sustainable employee development. The strong connections among clusters indicate that these themes are closely interrelated and collectively contribute to a comprehensive understanding of employee well-being in contemporary workplaces.

Overlay Visualization Analysis

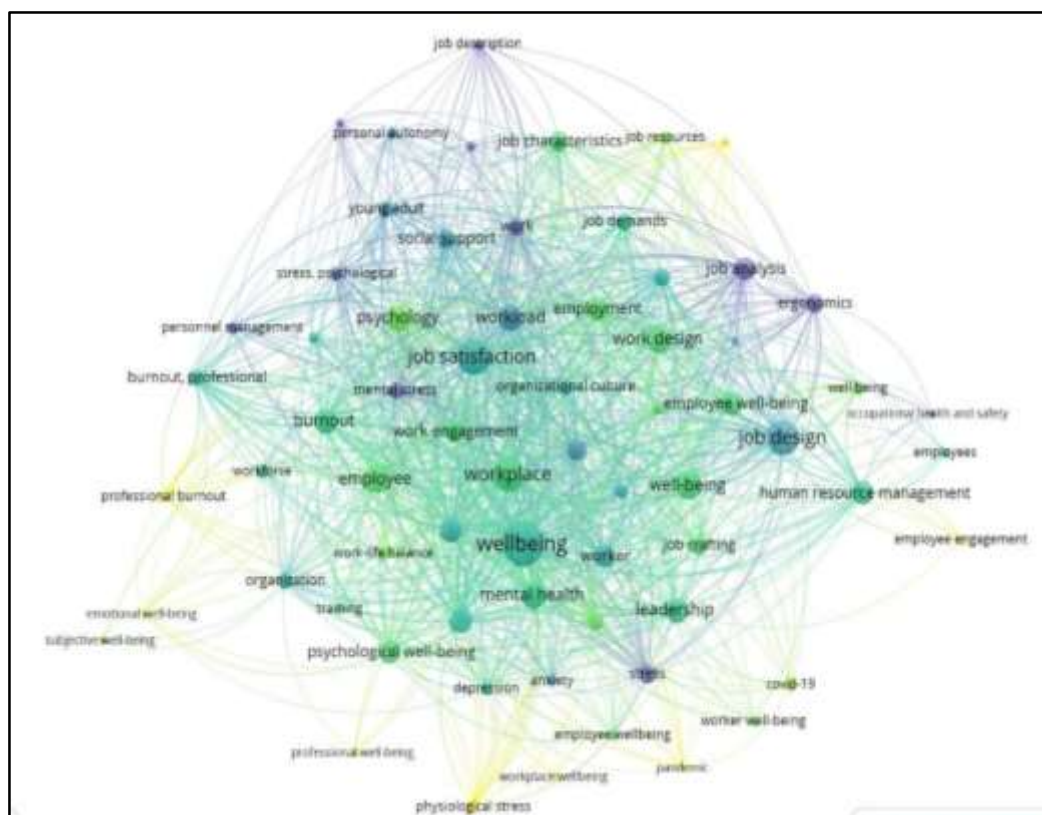


Figure 3: Overlay visualization of keyword co-occurrence in research on work design and employee well-being generated using VOSviewer.

Figure 3 presents the overlay visualization of keyword co-occurrence, illustrating the temporal evolution of research topics in the field of work design and employee well-being. In this visualization, the color gradient represents the average publication year of each keyword, with blue and purple indicating earlier research themes, green representing intermediate topics, and yellow highlighting more recent and emerging areas of investigation.

The analysis suggests that earlier studies were primarily centered on traditional work design concepts, including job description, personal autonomy, ergonomics, and job analysis. These keywords formed the foundational basis of the literature, reflecting an emphasis on job structure, task characteristics, and workplace organization.

Over time, the research focus expanded to include broader organizational and psychological dimensions. Keywords such as work design, job design, well-being, leadership, and mental health occupy central positions in the network, indicating their sustained importance and their role in linking multiple research streams. Their interconnection suggests that scholars increasingly recognize the influence of work design on employee health, motivation, and organizational performance.

More recent research trends are represented by keywords appearing in yellow shades, including employee engagement, professional burnout, physiological stress, and job resources. The emergence of these topics reflects a growing interest in occupational health, employee resilience, and strategies for creating sustainable and supportive work environments. This shift indicates that contemporary research extends beyond job structure to address psychological well-being and the challenges associated with modern workplaces.

Overall, the overlay visualization demonstrates a clear evolution from traditional job design perspectives towards more holistic approaches that integrate work design with mental health, employee engagement, and organizational sustainability. These findings highlight the dynamic nature of the field and suggest promising directions for future research.

Country Collaboration Analysis

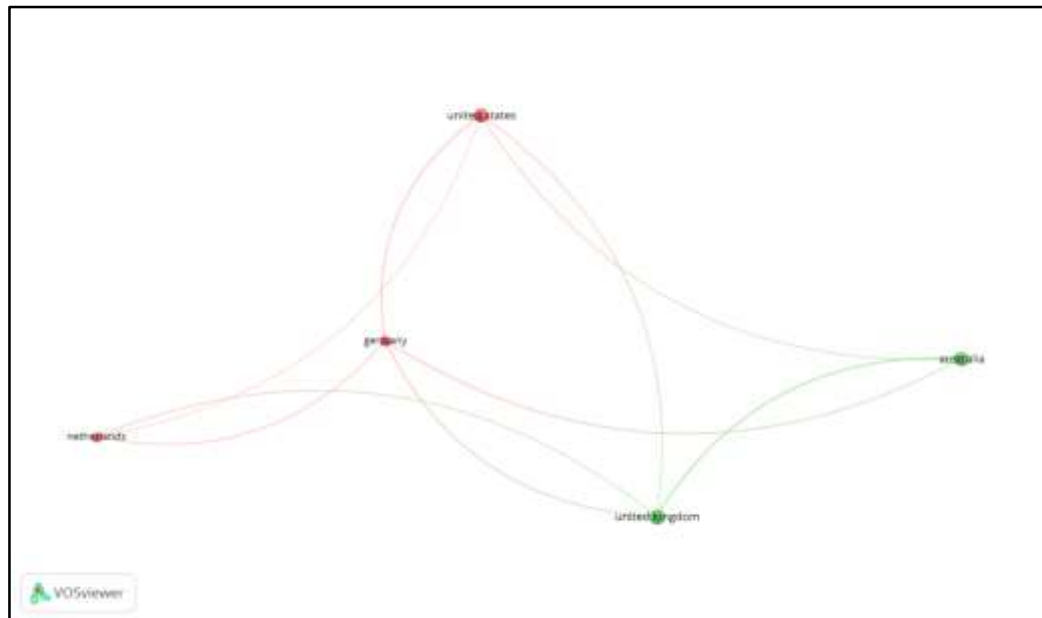


Figure 4: Country collaboration network in research on work design and employee well-being generated using VOSviewer.

Figure 4 illustrates the country collaboration network in research on work design and employee well-being based on co-authorship analysis. The size of each node represents the relative contribution of a country, while the connecting lines indicate collaborative relationships between countries. Different colors denote collaboration clusters identified by VOSviewer. The analysis reveals that the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, and the Netherlands are among the most prominent

contributors to the field. The United States demonstrates extensive collaborative links with other countries, highlighting its influential role in advancing research on work design and employee well-being. Similarly, the United Kingdom and Australia exhibit strong collaborative relationships, suggesting active international partnerships and shared research interests. Germany occupies a central position within the network by connecting with multiple countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands, thereby serving as an important hub for international collaboration. Although the Netherlands appears as a smaller node, it maintains meaningful research connections within the network, reflecting its contribution to the development of the field. Overall, the country collaboration network indicates that research on work design and employee well-being is concentrated among a group of highly interconnected countries with established research capacities. The strong international collaborations observed in the network may facilitate knowledge exchange, interdisciplinary research, and the advancement of evidence-based practices related to employee well-being and work design.

Most Relevant Author

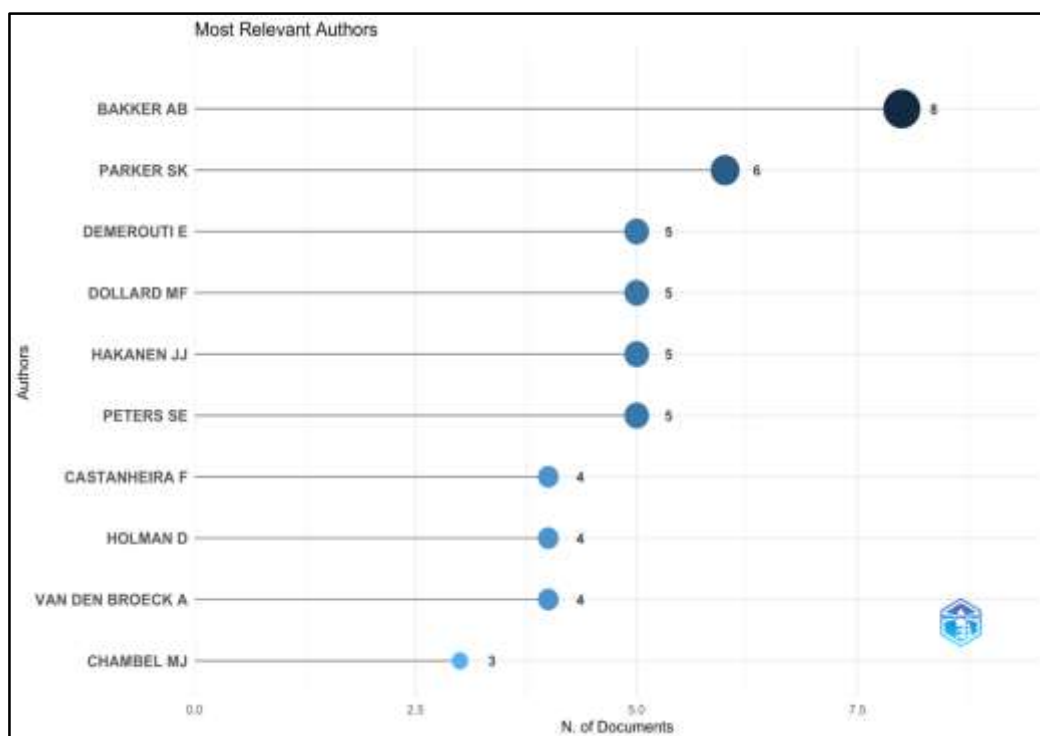


Figure 5: Most Relevant Authors in Work Design and Employee Well-Being Research

Figure 5 presents the most relevant authors contributing to research on work design and employee well-being. Among the identified scholars, Bakker ($n = 8$) emerged as the most productive author, followed by Parker ($n = 6$). Several authors, including Demerouti, Dollard, Hakanen, and Peters, each contributed five publications, while Castanheira, Holman, and Van den Broeck contributed four publications.

The prominence of these authors reflects their substantial contributions to the theoretical and empirical development of the field. In particular, Bakker and Demerouti are widely recognized for their development and advancement of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, one of the most influential frameworks for explaining how job demands and job resources influence employee well-being, work engagement, and burnout. Their extensive body of work has provided a strong foundation for understanding the mechanisms through which work environments affect employee outcomes.

Similarly, Parker has made significant contributions to work design theory, particularly through research on proactive work behavior, job crafting, and contemporary approaches to job redesign. Parker's work has been instrumental in expanding traditional perspectives of job design by emphasizing

employee agency and the dynamic nature of work in modern organizations. These contributions have strengthened the understanding of how work design can enhance both individual well-being and organizational effectiveness.

The appearance of authors such as Dollard, Hakanen, and Van den Broeck further highlights the interdisciplinary nature of the field. Their research has focused on occupational health, psychosocial work environments, employee engagement, and workplace well-being, providing important insights into the relationship between organizational practices and employee outcomes. The diversity of expertise represented by these scholars demonstrates that research on work design and employee well-being draws upon multiple disciplines, including organizational psychology, occupational health, human resource management, and organizational behavior.

Overall, the concentration of publications among a relatively small group of influential scholars suggests that these researchers have played a pivotal role in shaping the intellectual foundation of the field. Their theoretical frameworks, empirical findings, and methodological contributions continue to guide contemporary research on work design and employee well-being and serve as key references for future investigations.

Most Relevant Sources



Figure 6: Most Relevant Sources in Work Design and Employee Well-Being Research

Figure 6 presents the most relevant publication sources in the field of work design and employee well-being. The *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* emerged as the leading source with nine publications, followed by *Frontiers in Psychology* and the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, each publishing seven articles. The *International Journal of Workplace Health Management* ranked fourth with six publications, while the *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* contributed five publications. Other notable publication outlets included *Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing*, *BMJ Open*, *Collegian*, *Ergonomics*, and *Human Resource Management*, each contributing four publications.

The concentration of publications within these journals highlights the increasing scholarly interest in understanding how work design influences employee well-being across different organizational contexts. The findings indicate that research in this area is no longer confined to a single discipline but has expanded across multiple fields, including occupational psychology, human resource management, public health, ergonomics, and workplace health management. This multidisciplinary distribution

reflects the complex and multifaceted nature of employee well-being, which is shaped by organizational, psychological, social, and environmental factors.

The prominence of the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* and the *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* demonstrates the strong theoretical foundations of the field within occupational psychology and organizational behavior. These journals have consistently served as important platforms for studies examining job characteristics, work engagement, burnout, leadership, employee motivation, and psychological well-being. Their continued presence among the most relevant sources suggests that psychological perspectives remain central to understanding how work design affects employee outcomes.

Similarly, the strong representation of the *International Journal of Workplace Health Management* and *Ergonomics* indicates growing attention towards workplace conditions, occupational health, and the physical and psycho-social aspects of work. Research published in these journals frequently explores how workplace environments, job demands, and organizational interventions influence employee health, performance, and quality of working life. The inclusion of ergonomics-related research further highlights the importance of designing work systems that support both productivity and employee well-being.

The leading position of the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* is particularly noteworthy. Traditionally associated with public health research, the journal's prominence suggests that employee well-being is increasingly recognized as a public health issue rather than solely an organizational concern. This trend reflects broader societal awareness of mental health, occupational stress, burnout, and sustainable employment practices. It also indicates that contemporary research is increasingly adopting holistic perspectives that integrate workplace well-being with broader health and societal outcomes.

Furthermore, the presence of journals such as *Human Resource Management* demonstrates the strategic importance of work design within organizational management. Research published in these outlets frequently examines how human resource practices, leadership approaches, and organizational policies can be leveraged to enhance employee well-being and organizational effectiveness. This finding reinforces the view that employee well-being should be considered a strategic organizational asset rather than merely an individual outcome.

The diversity of publication sources identified in this study suggests that work design and employee well-being have evolved into a mature, interdisciplinary research field. The wide range of journals represented indicates strong academic interest from multiple disciplines and reflects the increasing recognition that employee well-being is essential for organizational sustainability, workforce resilience, and long-term performance. As organizations continue to navigate challenges associated with digital transformation, hybrid work arrangements, and changing workforce expectations, these journals are likely to remain influential platforms for future research and knowledge development in the field.

Discussion

This bibliometric analysis provides a comprehensive overview of the intellectual structure, thematic development, and research trends within the field of work design and employee well-being. The findings reveal a substantial increase in scholarly interest over recent years, particularly after 2015, indicating the growing recognition of employee well-being as a critical factor influencing organizational effectiveness and workforce sustainability. The continuous growth in publication output suggests that organizations and researchers increasingly acknowledge the importance of designing work environments that support both employee performance and psychological well-being.

The keyword analysis and co-occurrence network reveal that work design, job design, employee well-being, job satisfaction, mental health, leadership, and burnout constitute the core themes within the literature. The strong interconnections among these concepts suggest that contemporary research has expanded beyond traditional job design perspectives to embrace broader organizational and psychological dimensions. This finding is consistent with previous studies that emphasize the role of work design in influencing employee motivation, engagement, and well-being (Parker et al., 2017). The prominence of mental health and burnout further reflects growing concerns regarding occupational stress and the need to create healthier and more sustainable workplaces.

The identified thematic clusters demonstrate the multidisciplinary nature of the field. While early work design research primarily focused on job structure, autonomy, and task characteristics, contemporary studies increasingly incorporate perspectives from occupational psychology, workplace

health, and human resource management. This evolution reflects the growing understanding that employee well-being is influenced not only by job characteristics but also by organizational support, leadership practices, and workplace conditions.

The overlay visualization analysis provides further evidence of the field's evolution. Earlier studies focused predominantly on concepts such as job description, personal autonomy, ergonomics, and job analysis. More recent research has shifted towards employee engagement, professional burnout, physiological stress, and job resources. This transition suggests that scholars are increasingly interested in understanding how organizations can foster employee resilience and psychological well-being in response to changing workplace demands. The emergence of these topics may also reflect the impact of digital transformation, remote work arrangements, and increasing concerns regarding employee mental health.

The country collaboration analysis demonstrates that research on work design and employee well-being is highly internationalized. The United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Germany, and the Netherlands emerged as major contributors to the field, reflecting their strong research traditions in occupational psychology and organizational behavior. Furthermore, Australia recorded the highest citation impact, indicating the significant influence of research produced within this context. The extensive collaborative relationships observed among these countries suggest that international partnerships play an important role in advancing knowledge and facilitating the exchange of theoretical and methodological expertise.

The author analysis identified Bakker, Parker, and Demerouti as the most influential contributors within the field. Their prominence is unsurprising given their substantial contributions to the development of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, work design theory, and job crafting literature. The continued influence of these scholars indicates that contemporary research remains strongly grounded in established theoretical frameworks that explain how work characteristics influence employee well-being and organizational outcomes.

Similarly, the source analysis revealed that research on work design and employee well-being is disseminated across a diverse range of journals, including occupational psychology, workplace health, public health, ergonomics, and human resource management outlets. The prominence of journals such as the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *Frontiers in Psychology*, and the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* suggests that employee well-being is increasingly viewed as both an organizational and societal concern. This multidisciplinary publication pattern further highlights the complexity of contemporary workplace challenges and the need for integrated approaches to understanding employee well-being.

Overall, the findings indicate that work design and employee well-being have evolved into highly interconnected and multidisciplinary research domains. The increasing emphasis on mental health, burnout, employee engagement, and job resources reflects a broader shift towards sustainable and employee-centered approaches to organizational management. As workplaces continue to undergo digital transformation and organizational change, future research should continue exploring how work design can be leveraged to enhance employee well-being, organizational resilience, and long-term performance.

Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of research on work design and employee well-being based on 315 journal articles indexed in the Scopus database. By employing bibliometric techniques, including keyword co-occurrence analysis, citation analysis, and overlay visualization, the study mapped the intellectual structure, thematic development, and emerging research trends within the field.

The findings revealed a significant increase in scholarly interest in work design and employee well-being, particularly during the past decade. The analysis identified work design, job design, employee well-being, job satisfaction, mental health, leadership, and burnout as the dominant themes within the literature. Furthermore, the keyword co-occurrence network demonstrated that research in this area has evolved into a multidisciplinary domain that integrates perspectives from organizational behavior, occupational psychology, workplace health, ergonomics, and human resource management.

The study also highlighted the influential contributions of countries such as Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, and the Netherlands, as well as prominent scholars including Bakker, Parker, and Demerouti. Their contributions have played a significant role in advancing

theoretical and empirical understanding of how work characteristics influence employee well-being and organizational outcomes. These findings are consistent with previous research emphasizing the importance of work design in shaping employee motivation, engagement, and well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Parker et al., 2017). Overall, the findings suggest that work design remains a critical organizational mechanism for promoting employee well-being, enhancing work engagement, reducing burnout, and supporting sustainable organizational performance. As workplaces continue to experience rapid technological advancement, digital transformation, and changing workforce expectations, the importance of effective work design is expected to increase further. By providing a systematic overview of the existing literature, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the field and offers valuable insights for researchers, practitioners, and policymakers seeking to develop healthier, more productive, and sustainable work environments.

Future Research Direction

The findings of this bibliometric analysis reveal several important opportunities for advancing future research on work design and employee well-being. The keyword co-occurrence network, overlay visualization, and citation analyses collectively indicate that the field is undergoing a significant transformation, moving from traditional job design perspectives towards broader concerns relating to employee well-being, mental health, organizational sustainability, and workplace resilience. Consequently, several research directions deserve greater scholarly attention.

First, future studies should investigate the implications of digital transformation and emerging technologies on work design and employee well-being. The rapid adoption of artificial intelligence (AI), automation, digital platforms, and remote working technologies has fundamentally altered the nature of work. While these technological developments may improve efficiency and productivity, they may also introduce new challenges, including techno-stress, digital fatigue, job insecurity, and work-life boundary blurring. Future research should therefore examine how digital work environments can be designed to maximize employee well-being while minimizing potential negative consequences.

Second, the increasing prominence of keywords such as employee engagement, mental health, burnout, and job resources suggests a growing need to better understand the psychological mechanisms through which work design influences employee outcomes. Although previous studies have established direct relationships between work design and well-being, less attention has been devoted to explaining the underlying processes. Future research should explore mediating variables such as perceived organizational support, psychological empowerment, work engagement, resilience, and meaningful work. Such investigations would contribute to a deeper understanding of how work design translates into positive psychological and organizational outcomes.

Third, future studies should examine contextual and individual factors that may influence the effectiveness of work design practices. The contemporary workplace is characterized by increasing uncertainty, continuous organizational change, and evolving employee expectations. Variables such as readiness for change, digital competence, leadership style, organizational culture, psychological safety, and workplace flexibility may significantly influence how employees respond to work design initiatives. Investigating these moderating factors would help organizations develop more tailored and effective interventions that accommodate diverse workforce needs.

Fourth, greater attention should be directed towards public sector organizations and developing economies. The country analysis revealed that research on work design and employee well-being is largely concentrated in developed countries, particularly Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, and the Netherlands. As a result, current knowledge may not fully reflect the experiences of employees working in different institutional, cultural, and economic contexts. Public sector organizations, in particular, face unique challenges associated with bureaucratic structures, resource constraints, policy reforms, and digital transformation initiatives. Future research conducted in these settings would enrich the literature and enhance the generalisability of existing theories.

Fifth, future scholars should explore the growing importance of sustainable work design and employee well-being in the context of organizational sustainability. As organizations increasingly prioritize environmental, social, and governance (ESG) objectives, employee well-being is becoming an essential component of sustainable organizational performance. Future studies may investigate how sustainable work practices, employee-centered job redesign, and inclusive workplace policies contribute to both employee well-being and long-term organizational success.

Sixth, more research is needed to examine the relationship between leadership and work design in shaping employee well-being. Although leadership emerged as one of the important themes within the keyword network, the interaction between leadership behaviors and work design characteristics remains under-explored. Future studies may investigate how leadership styles, particularly digital leadership, transformational leadership, and servant leadership, influence employees' perceptions of work design and their subsequent well-being outcomes.

Finally, future researchers are encouraged to adopt longitudinal, mixed-method, and multi-level research designs to capture the dynamic and evolving nature of work design and employee well-being. Most existing studies rely heavily on cross-sectional survey designs, limiting the ability to establish causal relationships. Longitudinal studies would enable researchers to examine how changes in work design affect employee well-being over time, while mixed-method approaches could provide richer insights into employees' lived experiences. Multi-level studies may further explore how individual, team, and organizational factors interact to influence well-being outcomes.

Overall, the future of work design and employee well-being research lies in developing more holistic, interdisciplinary, and context-sensitive perspectives. As organizations continue to navigate technological disruption, workforce diversification, and changing societal expectations, future research will play a critical role in identifying evidence-based strategies that promote healthier, more engaged, and more resilient workforce..

Acknowledgement

This research was funded by the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia (MOHE), through Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) under the Grant No : FRGS/1/2023/SS09/UTM/03/1. The authors gratefully acknowledge the financial support provided through this grant.

Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this work.

References

- Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2017). Job Demands–Resources Theory: Taking stock and looking forward. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 22(3), 273–285. <https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000056>
- Donthu, N., Kumar, S., Mukherjee, D., Pandey, N., & Lim, W. M. (2021). How to conduct a bibliometric analysis: An overview and guidelines. *Journal of Business Research*, 133, 285–296. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2021.04.070>
- El Mohadab, M. (2020). (Please verify the exact source used.) I recommend checking your Scopus export or reference manager because there are several publications by authors with this surname in bibliometrics.
- Ellegaard, O., & Wallin, J. A. (2015). The bibliometric analysis of scholarly production: How great is the impact? *Scientometrics*, 105(3), 1809–1831. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-015-1645-z>
- Hackman, J. R., & Oldham, G. R. (1976). Motivation through the design of work: Test of a theory. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 16(2), 250–279.
- Humphrey, S. E., Nahrgang, J. D., & Morgeson, F. P. (2007). Integrating motivational, social, and contextual work design features: A meta-analytic summary and theoretical extension of the work design literature. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92(5), 1332–1356.
- Morgeson, F. P., & Humphrey, S. E. (2006). The Work Design Questionnaire (WDQ): Developing and validating a comprehensive measure for assessing job design and the nature of work. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 91(6), 1321–1339.
- Parker, S. K. (2022). Please verify the exact publication cited. There are multiple work design publications by Parker in 2022, so the full reference cannot be determined from the manuscript alone.
- Parker, S. K., Morgeson, F. P., & Johns, G. (2017). One hundred years of work design research: Looking back and looking forward. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 102(3), 403–420.
- Van Eck, N. J., & Waltman, L. (2010). Software survey: VOSviewer, a computer program for bibliometric mapping. *Scientometrics*, 84(2), 523–538.
- Van Eck, N. J., & Waltman, L. (2011). Text mining and visualization using VOSviewer. *ISSI Newsletter*, 7(3), 50–54.
- Wrzesniewski, A., & Dutton, J. E. (2001). Crafting a job: Revisioning employees as active crafters of their work. *Academy of Management Review*, 26(2), 179–201.