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Mapping the Intellectual Landscape of High-Involvement Work Practices (HIWPs): A Bibliometric Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and research trends in High-Involvement Work Practices (HIWPs). Despite growing scholarly interest, the field remains conceptually fragmented, lacking a systematic bibliometric synthesis that captures its development and interdisciplinary expansion. The study adopts a bibliometric analysis approach, utilizing performance analysis, bibliographic coupling, and co-word analysis based on 390 studies, retrieved from the Scopus database. Biblioshiny and VOSviewer tools are employed to visualize the results and identify thematic clusters, key contributors, and intellectual linkages in the HIWPs literature. The analysis reveals seven thematic clusters, with core topics including employee commitment, well-being, innovation, and knowledge sharing. There is also a visible interdisciplinary expansion into digital HRM, technology adaptation, and sustainability.

Keywords: Bibliographic Coupling, Bibliometric Analysis, Co-word Analysis, Employee Participation, High-involvement Work Practices, High-involvement Work System, HIWPs.

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INTRODUCTION

High-involvement work refers to the continuous experience of having significant influence over decisions that shape work processes, as perceived by employees based on their job roles and work environment (Boxall and Winterton, 2018). The high-involvement approach entails decentralizing decision-making authority regarding work practices, enabling employees to take a more active role within the organization. High-Involvement Work Practices (HIWPs) or High-Involvement Work Systems (HIWS) are a set of Human Resource Management (HRM) practices that actively engage employees in decision-making processes, fostering a sense of ownership and commitment to organizational goals. HIWPs can be categorized into four key dimensions - PIRK: power, information, rewards, and knowledge sharing (Boxall *et al.*, 2019; Lawler III, 1986). These elements determine the degree to which employees can influence work-related processes and outcomes.

The implementation of HIWPs varies depending on organizational contexts and the specific combination of practices adopted (Kilroy *et al.*, 2017). Beyond enhancing employee experiences, HIWPs have been empirically linked to improved job crafting, innovation, productivity, team creativity, customer satisfaction, and employees' proactive and adaptive behaviors that support organizational change and routine development (Nguyen *et al.*, 2024). However, scholars have increasingly emphasized the paradoxical nature of HIWPs, noting that while they aim to empower employees, they may also intensify work demands and blur boundaries between autonomy and accountability (Yang *et al.*, 2024). This duality, often described as the "mutual-gains versus conflicting outcomes" debate, suggests that HIWPs can simultaneously enhance engagement and contribute to burnout when managerial support or job resources are insufficient (Kilroy *et al.*, 2017). Yet, despite these theoretical and practical advances, the landscape of HIWP research remains complex and fragmented.

Theoretical models, such as the RBV framework, the AMO framework (encompassing ability, motivation, and opportunity), and the PIRK model, offer conceptual clarity on how HIWPs function as synergistic systems (Barney, 1991; Boxall *et al.*, 2019). Despite a growing body of literature on HIWPs, the field remains conceptually scattered and under-structured. Prior reviews have predominantly focused on High-Performance Work Systems (HPWS), emphasizing performance-oriented HR bundles, with relatively less attention given to HIWPs as a distinct paradigm centered on empowerment, voice, and collaboration (Singh *et al.*, 2024; Boxall and Macky, 2009). Therefore, a more nuanced

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theoretical distinction is necessary to position HIWPs as a clearly defined and independent paradigm within the field of HRM research.

Moreover, the majority of prior studies rely on qualitative or interpretive approaches, and a comprehensive quantitative synthesis of the intellectual structure and thematic evolution of HIWPs research is still lacking. Therefore, this study seeks to contribute by conducting the first comprehensive bibliometric analysis of HIWPs' research over the period 1973-2024. It responds to growing scholarly interest in understanding how HIWPs evolve within complex, technology-driven, and socially dynamic organizational contexts. Building on recent calls to explore the paradoxical effects of HIWPs (Yang *et al.*, 2024), their role in digital transformation and organizational resilience (Nguyen *et al.*, 2024), and their influence on innovation performance across diverse employee groups (Jiang *et al.*, 2024), this research systematically maps the intellectual landscape of HIWPs. By using co-word and bibliographic coupling analysis, it identifies thematic clusters, theoretical gaps, and emerging intersections, offering a structured foundation for future inquiry. In doing so, it contributes a timely agenda to guide interdisciplinary and context-sensitive research that aligns HIWPs with the challenges of the modern workplace.

METHODOLOGY

Literature Search and Screening

Scopus was selected as the primary database due to its broad coverage and suitability for bibliometric research. Following prior studies (Boxall *et al.*, 2019; Singh *et al.*, 2024), a comprehensive Boolean search query covering HIWPs and related terms was applied to titles, abstracts, and keywords on January 5, 2025. The full Boolean logic of the search query is as follows: ("high involvement work*" OR "hiwp*" OR "high involvement system*" OR "hiws*" OR "high involvement HRM" OR "high involvement human resource management" OR "high involvement innovation" OR ("high involvement" AND (employee* OR worker*)) OR "worker* participation program*" OR "worker* involvement program*" OR "employee* participation program*" OR "employee* involvement program*" OR "high involvement management" OR "high involvement practice*" OR "high involvement model"). The search and selection process followed the PRISMA 2020 framework (Page *et al.*, 2021). An initial 525 records were retrieved, of which 8 duplicates were removed. After screening and eligibility assessment based on relevance, publication type, language, and conceptual focus, 390 documents published between 1973 and 2024 were retained for bibliometric analysis.

Data analysis

This study combines performance analysis and science mapping to examine publication trends, influential contributors, and the intellectual structure of HIWPs. Following Donthu *et al.* (2021), bibliographic coupling was used to identify thematic relationships among studies through shared references, while co-word analysis mapped conceptual themes through keyword co-occurrences. The integration of these methods provides a comprehensive and robust understanding of the field. Data analysis and visualization were conducted using Excel, Biblioshiny in R, and VOSviewer.

FINDINGS

Performance Analysis

The bibliometric analysis of 390 publications reveals a growing scholarly interest in HIWPs. Research activity remained limited between 1973 and 1990, increased gradually from 1990 to 2009, and expanded substantially in subsequent years. The field has been shaped by 793 authors, reflecting a broad yet concentrated authorship structure in which a relatively small group of scholars has contributed a significant share of the literature. Geographically, research on HIWPs spans 68 countries, with the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia emerging as the most influential contributors, while increasing participation from Asian and European countries indicates the growing global relevance of the field.

Bibliographic coupling analysis

The content analysis in this study employed the bibliometric coupling method to identify key themes, subthemes, research diversity, and emerging trends. The coupling strength between documents is quantified by the extent of overlap in their bibliographies, with a greater number of shared references indicating a stronger interconnection (Donthu *et al.*, 2021). This, in turn, results in the formation of tightly linked thematic clusters. Through this approach and with a minimum citation threshold of 20 per document, 157 of 390 articles that met the threshold were selected for analysis and categorized into five clusters. A bibliometric map, as depicted in Figure 1, visualizes the bibliographic coupling process, wherein each cluster is represented by a distinct color, grouping papers based on thematic similarities.

The bibliographic coupling analysis reveals that HIWPs research has evolved from examining direct employee outcomes toward understanding the broader mechanisms through which involvement practices create organizational value. Rather than representing isolated topics, the five clusters reflect complementary perspectives on the development of the field.

The first cluster positions employee creativity, well-being, and retention as central outcomes of HIWPs, emphasizing psychological empowerment, knowledge sharing, and affective commitment as key mechanisms. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the AMO framework, this stream supports the mutual-gains perspective, suggesting that employee involvement generates reciprocal benefits for both employees and organizations

(Oppenauer and Van, 2018). However, the literature also indicates that these benefits depend on supportive organizational conditions rather than the mere adoption of HIWPs.

The second and third clusters collectively expose a central tension within the HIWPs literature. While employee voice, participation, and workplace democracy are associated with improved governance, retention, and organizational performance (Guthrie, 2001; Wilkinson *et al.*, 2020), increased involvement may simultaneously intensify work demands and psychological strain (Boxall and Macky, 2009; Wood *et al.*, 2012). This paradox challenges the assumption that HIWPs are universally beneficial and suggests that their effectiveness is contingent upon contextual and institutional factors.

The fourth and fifth clusters demonstrate a recent shift from operational performance toward organizational adaptability. By linking HIWPs with innovation, organizational learning, and resilience, these studies reposition employee involvement as a strategic capability that enhances firms' capacity to respond to technological change and environmental uncertainty (Shin *et al.*, 2018; Gu *et al.*, 2023). Collectively, the clusters indicate that the intellectual trajectory of HIWPs has expanded from workplace participation to a broader strategic framework encompassing innovation, sustainability, and long-term organizational resilience.

Trending topics

Figure 2 illustrates the trend topics in HIWPs over time, highlighting the evolution and prominence of key research terms from 2000 to 2024. The figure demonstrates a significant increase in scholarly interest in terms such as "high-involvement work practices," "high-involvement work systems," "employee involvement," and "organizational performance" from the mid-2000s onwards. This indicates that these topics have become central areas of focus within the HIWPs research domain. Other topics, such as "employee participation," "organizational commitment," "work engagement," and "job satisfaction," have also seen periodic increases in interest, reflecting their relevance to organizational performance and employee well-being. This trend analysis not only shows the dynamic growth of HIWPs as a research area but also identifies emerging themes such as "burnout," "innovation," and "knowledge sharing" that have become more prominent since 2015. The temporal distribution of these topics provides insight into the shifting focus and expanding scope of HIWPs research, reflecting both theoretical development and practical implications in the field.

Keyword co-occurrence analysis

Keyword co-occurrence analysis is a key bibliometric technique used to examine the conceptual structure of a research field by identifying the co-occurrence of keywords within scholarly literature. A total of 1,499 original keywords were extracted from the Scopus dataset. Before the analysis, a thesaurus file was created to merge synonymous and closely related terms for consistency and clarity, for instance, "HRM" was standardized to "human resource management," "well being" to "well-being," "employee involvement programs" to "employee involvement program," and "trade unions" to "trade union". The analysis was conducted using the "All Keywords" field in VOSviewer, and a minimum threshold of three keyword co-occurrences was set to ensure thematic relevance while maintaining sufficient breadth. Based on this threshold, 161 keywords met the inclusion criteria and were used to generate the co-occurrence network map. It revealed seven distinct thematic clusters, each representing a significant area of research within HIWPs (see Figure 3).

The first cluster (in red), which revolves around employee commitment and well-being, includes keywords such as affective commitment, burnout, employee engagement, employee satisfaction, work engagement, and job satisfaction. This cluster highlights the relationship between HIWPs and various employee-related outcomes, emphasizing how HIWPs contribute to employee motivation, emotional attachment to organizations, and overall well-being (Kilroy *et al.*, 2017). However, this cluster also points to more nuanced and potentially contradictory findings. For example, while the AMO framework suggests that HIWPs enhance employee outcomes by improving ability, motivation, and opportunity, the emergence of burnout within this cluster raises theoretical questions about the JD-R model, which posits that excessive demands, even when paired with high involvement, can lead to strain (Kilroy *et al.*, 2017; Yang *et al.*, 2024).

The second cluster (in forest green) focuses on HRM strategies and knowledge sharing within HIWPs, with keywords such as HRM, strategic HRM, knowledge sharing, information sharing, knowledge management, empowerment, and technology adaptation. This cluster underscores the role of HRM in facilitating knowledge exchange, enhancing commitment, and leveraging technological advancements to improve workforce performance (Nguyen *et al.*, 2024).

The third cluster (in blue) pertains to quality management, industrial performance, and organizational decision-making, comprising terms such as employee participation, industrial management, decision-making, productivity, quality assurance, and total quality management. This theme suggests that HIWPs are closely linked to improving operational efficiency, quality control, and employee involvement in decision-making processes (Wilkinson *et al.*, 1992). This cluster aligns with the logic of sociotechnical systems theory (Trist and Bamforth, 1951), which emphasizes joint optimization of social and technical subsystems. HIWPs in this context are not only about increasing employee voice but also about harnessing that voice to influence core operational metrics such as productivity, quality, and efficiency.

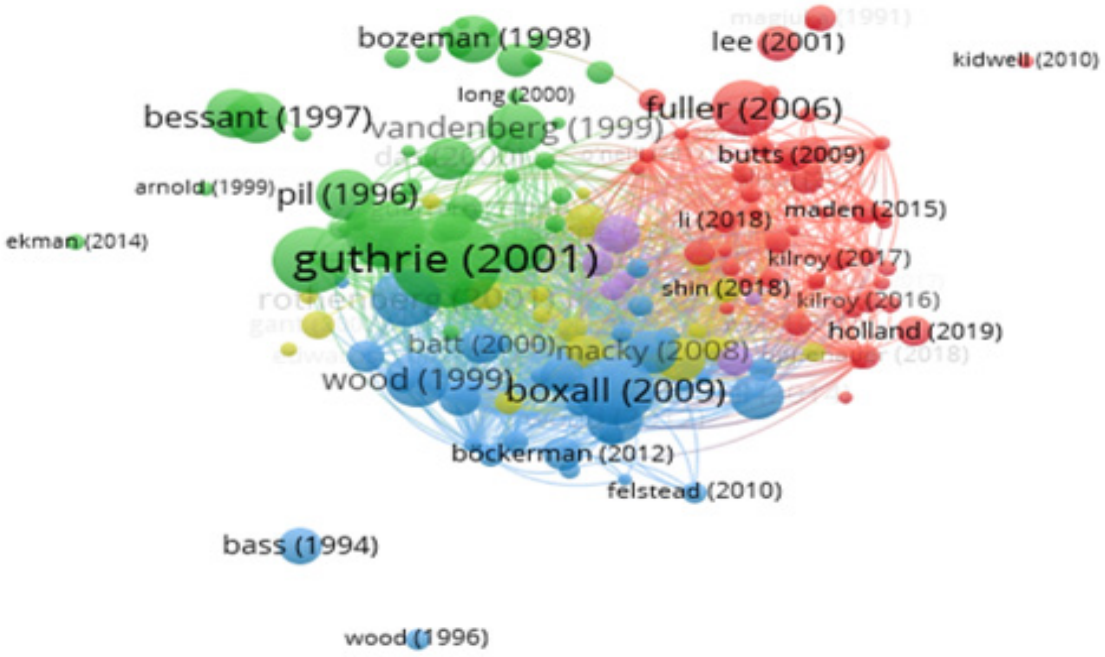

Figure 1: Bibliographic coupling network of influential publications on HIWPs.

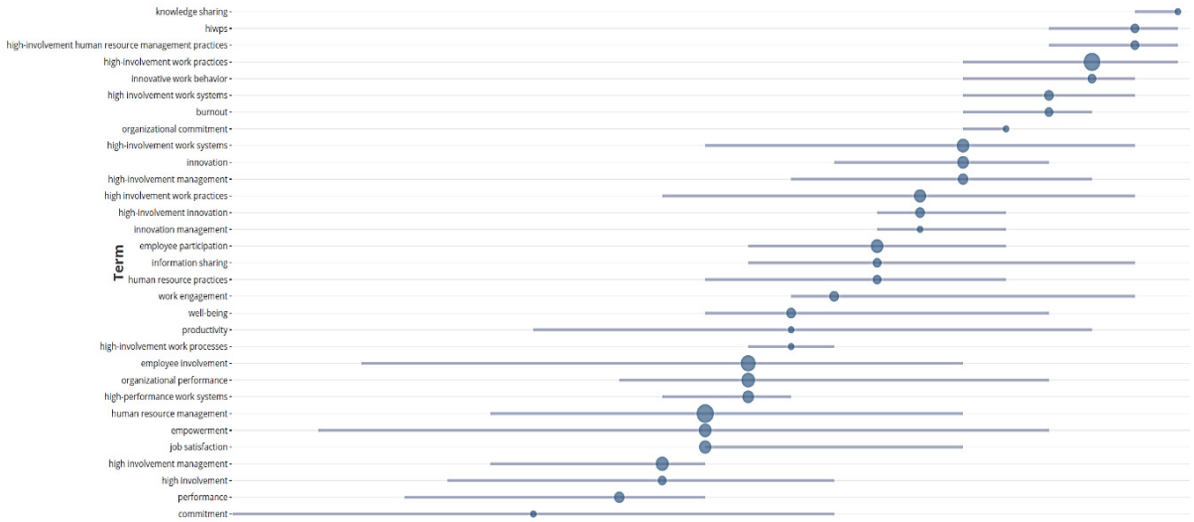

Figure 2: Trending topics in HIWPs.

The fourth cluster (in yellow-green), centers on innovation and performance, includes keywords such as innovation management, high-involvement innovation, problem-solving, performance, and continuous improvement. This highlights the critical role of employee involvement in driving innovation and sustaining high-performance work environments (Li *et al.*, 2022). This cluster resonates with the RBV and dynamic capabilities theory (Barney, 1991), which posits that sustained competitive advantage stems from internal capabilities, particularly those that enable adaptation and innovation.

The fifth cluster (in purple) focuses on employee involvement and workplace autonomy, encompassing terms such as autonomy, employee participation, high-involvement HR practices, high-involvement management, and job crafting. This cluster underscores the empowerment aspect of HIWPs, emphasizing how autonomy in decision-making and participatory management contribute to employee motivation and organizational adaptability (Jiang *et al.*, 2024).

The sixth cluster (in aqua) focuses on employment relations and workplace dynamics, including keywords such as employment, labor relations, management practices, trade unions, and work environments. This cluster suggests that HIWPs interact with industrial relations frameworks, where labor unions and

employment policies play a role in shaping employee participation and managerial practices (Turner and Cross, 2018).

The final cluster (in orange) represents the broader relationship between HRM and organizational performance, encompassing key terms such as high-involvement management, high-performance work practices, HRM practices, and organizational performance. This cluster consolidates the fundamental principles of HIWPs, emphasizing their impact on both HRM strategies and overall organizational outcomes (Wood *et al.*, 2012).

DISCUSSION

The findings of this bibliometric and content analysis highlight the evolving trajectory and intellectual structure of research on HIWPs from 1973 to 2024. Several key trends can be observed:

First, HIWPs research has grown substantially since the early 2000s, particularly over the last 15 years, reflecting increasing academic interest in employee engagement and organizational performance. The uneven growth pattern suggests that research activity has been shaped by emerging organizational and societal challenges. The analysis reveals a concentration of highly cited publications in the early 2000s (e.g., Guthrie, 2001; Boxall and Macky, 2009), which have laid the theoretical and empirical foundation for contemporary studies. These works underscore the dual impact of HIWPs on both employee outcomes and firm-level performance, providing critical insights into the mechanisms and conditions under which such practices thrive.

Second, the bibliographic coupling analysis reveals that HIWPs research is primarily structured around employee well-being, participation, innovation, and organizational resilience. While the literature generally emphasizes positive outcomes such as creativity, commitment, and performance, it also highlights tensions associated with increased workload and emotional demands, reflecting the complex and multidimensional nature of HIWPs (Oppenauer and Van, 2018; Wood *et al.*, 2012; Gu *et al.*, 2023).

Third, the co-word analysis identified seven thematic clusters centered on employee commitment, knowledge sharing, organizational performance, and workplace autonomy. The appearance of terms such as "digital HRM" (Nguyen *et al.*, 2024), "burnout" (Kilroy *et al.*, 2017), and "knowledge management" (Nguyen *et al.*, 2024) suggests that the field is expanding into new interdisciplinary domains, reflecting the integration of HRM with information systems, psychology, and sustainability.

Fourth, HIWPs research has evolved considerably over time. Early studies focused on labor relations, workplace democracy, and job satisfaction, before shifting toward strategic HRM,

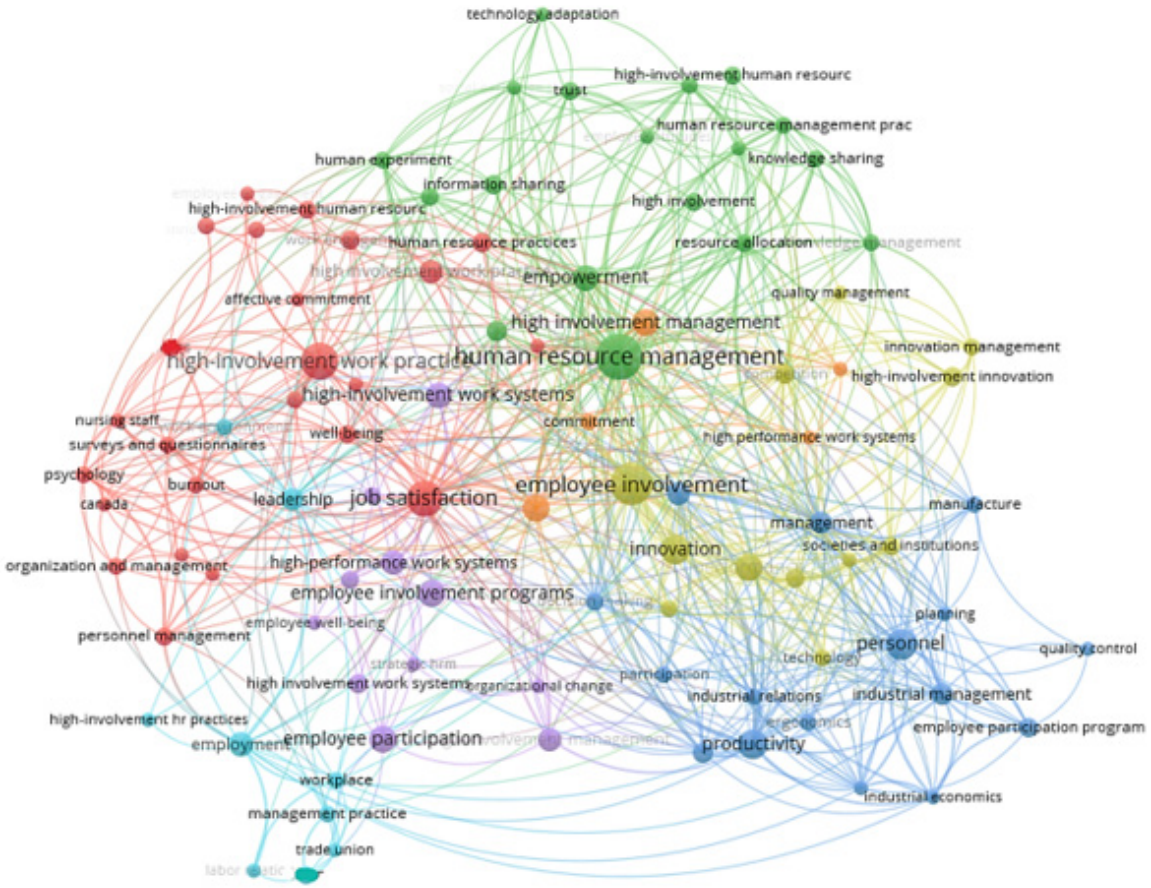

Figure 3: Keyword co-occurrence map in HIWPs literature.

employee empowerment, and high-performance work systems. More recently, themes such as innovation, knowledge sharing, digital transformation, and employee well-being, including burnout, psychological safety, and work-life balance, have become increasingly prominent, reflecting the growing influence of technological change and sustainable work practices (Boxall and Macky, 2009; Nguyen *et al*., 2024; Islam *et al*., 2025; Oppenauer and Van, 2018).

Finally, another key trend is the interdisciplinary expansion of HIWPs research. The inclusion of concepts such as digital HRM, technology adaptation, and knowledge management suggests that HIWPs are no longer confined to traditional HRM and organizational behavior fields but are increasingly intersecting with emerging areas of digital transformation and workplace innovation (Gu *et al*., 2023).

CONCLUSION

Implications and Future Research Directions

The findings of this study provide several important implications for advancing HIWPs research. First, the bibliometric evidence suggests that the field has evolved into a multidisciplinary domain, yet its theoretical foundation remains fragmented. While most studies rely on individual perspectives such as the RBV, AMO, JD-R model, or SET, the intellectual structure identified in this study indicates that no single framework sufficiently explains the complex mechanisms through which HIWPs influence employee well-being, participation, innovation, and organizational performance. Future research should, therefore, integrate these complementary perspectives to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how HIWPs simultaneously create organizational capabilities while managing the psychological demands associated with employee involvement.

Second, this study reinforces the position of HIWPs as a distinct paradigm within strategic HRM. Unlike HPWS, which primarily emphasizes performance-enhancing HR bundles, the intellectual structure revealed by the bibliographic coupling and co-word analyses consistently places employee voice, empowerment, participation, and autonomy at the center of HIWPs. This distinction contributes to a clearer conceptual boundary between HIWPs and related HRM approaches and encourages future research to further examine involvement-oriented practices as mechanisms for organizational learning, collaboration, and long-term capability development rather than solely performance enhancement.

Third, the thematic evolution demonstrates that the field is undergoing a significant transition. Traditional concerns with labor relations and employee participation have gradually expanded toward digital transformation, knowledge sharing, innovation, organizational resilience, and employee well-being. This shift suggests that HIWPs are increasingly viewed as strategic capabilities that enable organizations to adapt to rapidly changing technological and competitive environments. Consequently, future studies should investigate how AI-driven HRM, digital collaboration platforms, and hybrid work arrangements reshape employee involvement, organizational learning, and innovation performance. Likewise, greater attention should be given to sustainability-related issues, including green HRM, ESG initiatives, and ethical leadership, where employee participation may serve as a catalyst for sustainable organizational change.

The findings also emphasize the importance of contextual perspectives. Since the current literature is heavily concentrated in Anglo-Saxon countries, comparative research across emerging economies and different institutional settings is needed to better understand how cultural values, labor regulations, and employment relations influence the implementation and effectiveness of HIWPs.

Finally, the coexistence of themes related to employee engagement and burnout highlights the paradoxical nature of HIWPs. While involvement practices consistently promote commitment, innovation, and organizational performance, they may also increase work intensity, emotional exhaustion, and role overload when implemented without adequate organizational support. Future research should therefore move beyond examining the benefits of HIWPs in isolation and instead investigate the conditions under which involvement practices generate mutual gains for both employees and organizations.

LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations. It relies solely on the Scopus database and English-language publications, which may limit coverage and introduce language bias. Additionally, bibliometric methods such as co-word analysis and bibliographic coupling are quantitative in nature, and co-word results may be influenced by variations in author-assigned keywords. Finally, studies published after the data collection cutoff were not included. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating multiple databases, mixed-method approaches, and broader linguistic and regional coverage.

ABBREVIATIONS

HIWPs: High-Involvement Work Practices; **HIWS:** High-Involvement Work Systems; **HRM:** Human Resource Management; **PIRK:** Power, Information, Rewards, and Knowledge Sharing; **RBV:** Resource-Based View; **AMO:** Ability, Motivation, and Opportunity; **SET:** Social Exchange Theory; **HPWS:** High-Performance Work Systems; **PRISMA:** Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses; **JD-R:** Job Demands-Resources; **ESG:** Environmental, Social, and Governance.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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