

Mapping 15 Years of Intrapreneurship Research: Trends and Themes

Ms. Jhuma Das*
Dr. Shefali Nandan**

Abstract

This study offers a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of research on intrapreneurial behavior, with the objective of identifying key trends, influential authors, highly cited documents, and emerging themes in the field. Utilizing the PRISMA framework, a systematic search was conducted in the Web of Science database, resulting in the selection of 384 relevant articles published between 2008 and 2023. The study employed a range of bibliometric tools, including citation analysis, co-word analysis, three-field plot analysis, thematic mapping, and world collaboration mapping. These tools helped in visualizing the intellectual, conceptual, and social structures of intrapreneurial behavior research.

The analysis also highlighted the most cited countries, offering insights into the global distribution and contribution of research in this domain. By identifying the leading scholars and core literature, the study facilitates a deeper understanding of the academic landscape surrounding intrapreneurship.

This research holds practical value for both scholars and practitioners. It not only synthesizes the current body of knowledge but also points toward potential avenues for future research.

The findings can support the development of more focused theoretical models and enhance comprehension of intrapreneurial behavior in diverse organizational settings. Overall, this study contributes to advancing the strategic understanding of innovation-driven employee behaviour.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial orientation, Corporate entrepreneurship, Intrapreneurial Behaviour, Organisational entrepreneurship, Bibliometric analysis, Entrepreneurship, Bibliometrics.

Introduction

The concept of intrapreneurship has gained prominence in recent decades. The intricacies of today's business environment, characterized by intense competition, extensive globalization, changes in technologies, the standard of living, elevated consumer expectations, and brief product lifespans, necessitates that corporations explore different strategies to secure their sustainability and expansion Galván *et al.* (2021). In response to such challenges, organizations need to transform themselves to secure a favorable position in their respective industries. In this context role of intrapreneur becomes progressively essential. In essence, the role of the intrapreneur involves creativity and ambition to find solutions to longstanding organizational challenges (Saka, 2014).

Synonyms for intrapreneurship have emerged over time and have been used interchangeably. These include: corporate entrepreneurship (Kuratko and Audretsch, 2013), organizational entrepreneurship (Kearney *et al.*, 2020), intra-corporate entrepreneur (Pinchot, 1985), corporate venturing, and

strategic entrepreneurship (Zahra, 1991). The studies on intrapreneurship are still scattered which highlights the need for further analysis in this field (Gawke *et al.*, 2019). Despite the escalating interest in the area of intrapreneurship, a recent review has revealed that research on the agentic and strategic employee behaviors contribute to new venture creation and strategic renewal (i.e., employee intrapreneurship) remains limited and fragmented (Blanka, 2018). There has been call for research and the current study aims to address the gap.

We conducted a literature review to achieve a greater insight of intrapreneurship. This review not just synthesizes existing knowledge as well as identified key areas for further studies, providing a more cohesive framework for understanding how intrapreneurial behaviors can be effectively fostered and leveraged within organizations. The aim of this study is:

- To trace the evolution of the field of intrapreneurship.
- To identify emerging research areas in the field of intrapreneurship.
- Identifying the various themes and keywords used in the research on intrapreneurship.

*Research Scholar, Department of Commerce and Business Administration, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj, Email: jhuma5896@gmail.com

**Associate Professor, Department of Commerce and Business Administration, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj, Email: eshefali@allduniv.ac.in

Theoretical Background

In their 1985 book, *“Intrapreneuring: Why You Don’t Have to Leave the Corporation to Become an entrepreneur”*, Drucker and Pinchot emphasized that innovation and marketing are the two only constant factors in business, the importance of continually reinventing and adapting business organization to meet current and future market demand has been a consistent theme in management literature, with intrapreneurship being one such theme. Since then, the notion of employees taking entrepreneurial initiative within established organizations started to gain recognition and traction. Intrapreneurship is rooted in various management and organizational theories that explain its determinants and outcomes (Blanka, 2019).

A comprehensive definition of intrapreneurship is proposed by Naseen et al., (2019, p. 551), “Intrapreneurship is a process whereby employee(s) recognize and exploit opportunities by being innovative, proactive and by taking risks, for the organization to create new products, processes, and services, initiate self-renewal or venture new businesses to enhance the competitiveness and performance of the organization”. Intrapreneurs are also described as employees who engage in internal corporate venturing or act as catalyst for developing new or enhanced projects, products, or processes (Zahra, Randerson et al., 2013). These individuals, much like independent entrepreneurs, are frequently described as challenge-driven, tenacious, proactive, and innovative.

Research Methodology

Bibliometric analysis involves the use of quantitative and analytical methods to examine the distribution, relationships, and growth in literature. It helps understand the knowledge structure in a specific field and identify emerging trends (Verma and Gustafsson, 2020).

We used R software, VoS Viewer and Biblioshiny software to conduct the study, an open-source software that display information about co-authorship, bibliographic coupling, thematic analyses, and keyword analysis along with tree maps and co-citations (Blanco et al., 2022).

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The data for the study were retrieved from the Web of Science database using Boolean search terms: “Intrapreneur,” OR “Intrapreneurship,” OR “Intrapreneurial Behaviour,” OR “Corporate entrepreneurship,” OR “Organizational Entrepreneurship.” The initial search yielded 1,495 documents. Applying filters for publication years (2008–2023), the document types were refined to Articles and Review Papers, only Web of Science categories Business and Management, were considered, the language was restricted to English. Finally, only open-access articles were selected within the Open Access category. A PRISMA diagram (Figure 1) illustrates the results of keyword search.

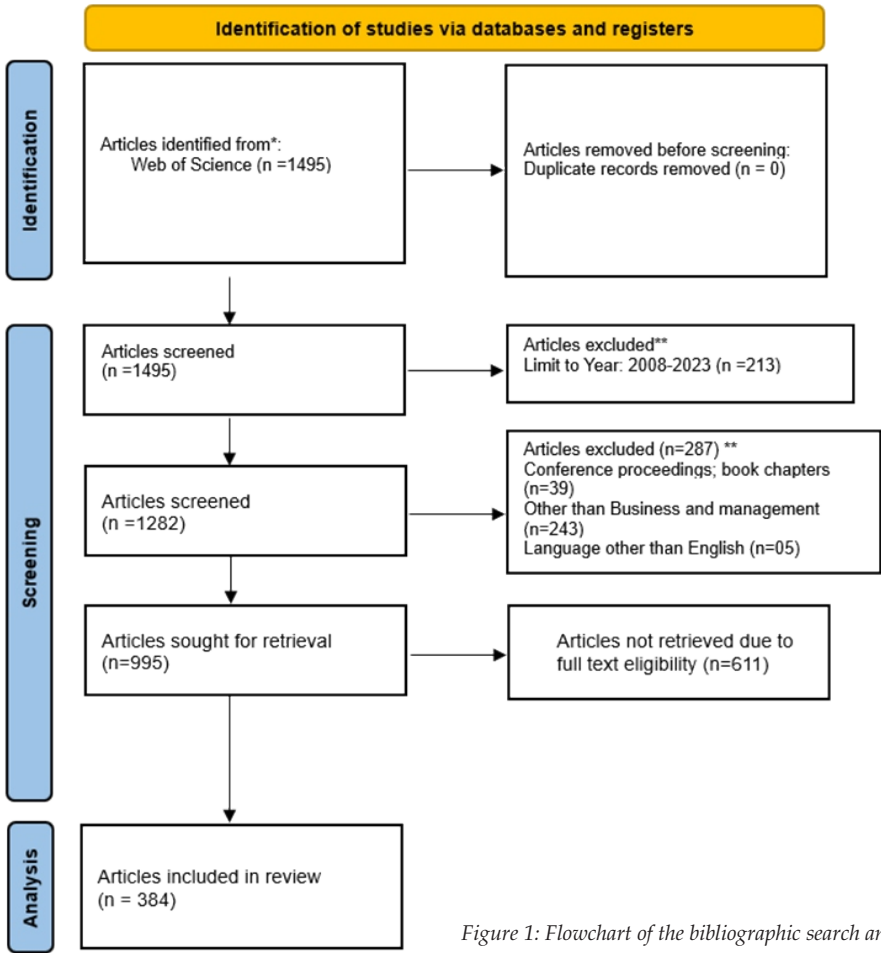


Figure 1: Flowchart of the bibliographic search and selection process

Bibliometric Analysis and Results

The results are analysed in the following sections:

Annual scientific production

It is evident from the Figure 2 that interest in the topic of intrapreneurship reached its peak in the year 2020. Hernández-

Perlines *et al.* (2020) noted in their article that from 1985 to 2007, there was very little interest in intrapreneurship, with only 2–3 publications annually and some years with none. However, from 2008 onwards, interest increased, reaching a peak in 2020 (44 papers).

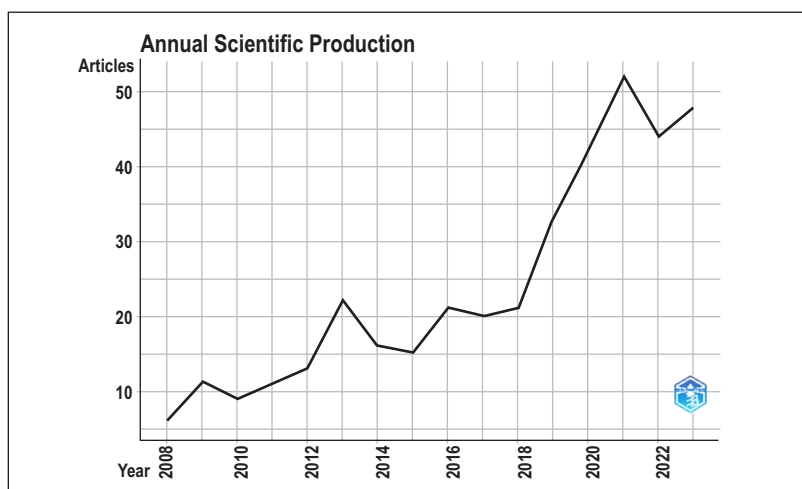


Figure 2: Annual Scientific Production

Most Relevant Sources

Source-wise analysis (Figure 3) revealed that the 'International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal' as the top contributor with 24 articles, followed closely by 'The Journal of Business Research'. Other notable sources include 'Small Business Economics' with 18 articles and Entrepreneurship

Theory and Practice with 16 articles. The Journal of Management Studies also makes a substantial contribution with 13 articles. The spread of articles across different journals shows the wide-ranging nature of intrapreneurship research and highlights the need for various scholarly sources to cover varied aspects of the field.

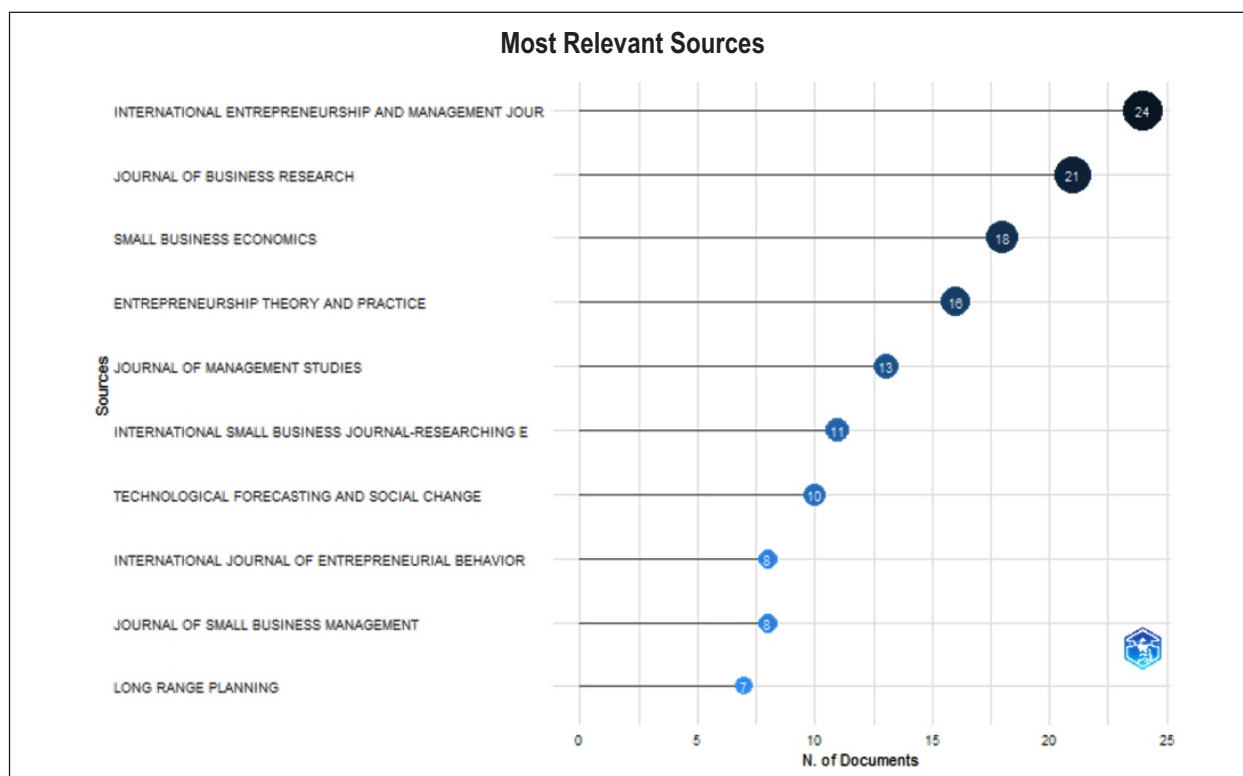


Figure 3: Most Relevant Sources

Three Field Plot

The three-field plot examines the connections between three distinct elements of academic research which includes keywords, sources, institutions, references, authors, affiliations, and more. Figure 4 illustrates the relationship between author countries (AU_CO), research domains (DE), and source journals (SO).

The plot is based on the Sankey diagrams, in which the bigger boxes represent more occurrences (Riehmnn et al.,2005). The left column lists the countries in which it can be seen that the United Kingdom and the USA are the prominent key contributors. The middle column represents the research topic and the extreme right column indicates the academic journals where these studies are published.

Scholars from different countries show their preferences in their research keywords and publication sources. For instance,

the keyword 'corporate entrepreneurship' is widely used keyword in many countries like the UK, USA, Spain, Netherlands, and Germany.

The keywords at the right column include 'corporate entrepreneurship' and 'intrapreneurship' as most featured in the Journal of Business Research, Small Business Economics, and the International Journal of Management Reviews. Additionally, 'entrepreneurial orientation' appears frequently in these journals as well as in Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice.

The USA and the UK have significant contributions to the Journal of Business Research, Small Business Economics, International Journal of Management Reviews, and other high-impact journals. Analysing these relationships helps in facilitating a better understanding of the global research landscape.

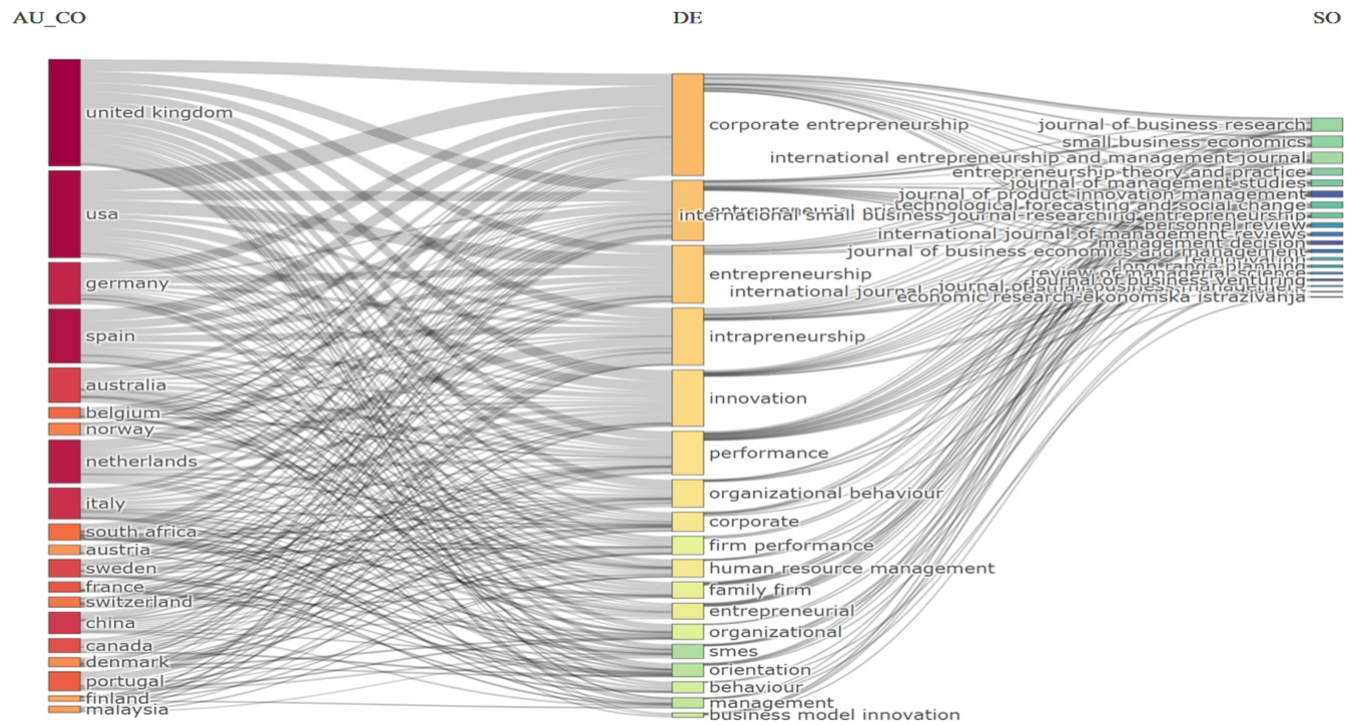


Figure 4: Three-Field Plot

Most Relevant Authors

Figure 5 and Table 1 presents the top ten most impactful authors. The author who emerges as a leading contributor is 'Hughes M' with a total of 11 articles indicating a major impact and primary authorship or substantial contributions in multi-author papers. 'Chirco F and Dada OL' also have notable contributions, with 7 articles and fractionalized counts of 2.417 and 2.57 respectively, indicating a strong influence in their respective research areas. 'Watson A and Covin JG' also have moderate contributions with 6 and 5 articles respectively.

Hughes M. research has majorly focused on corporate entrepreneurship and intrapreneurial. He explored how

individual and organisational determinants promotes entrepreneurial behaviour within the firm specifically focusing on innovation and performance outcomes. Other themes include: Role of trust and workplace dynamics in nurturing innovative behaviour. The themes on which Dada OL have worked upon focuses on entrepreneurial orientation particularly in SMEs and franchise network whereas Chirco F have delved into the role of senior management in fostering intrapreneurial culture, performance implication of entrepreneurial strategies and family businesses.

Authors	Articles	Articles Fractionalized
Hughes M	11	3.13333333
Chirico F	7	2.41666667
Dada OL	7	2.75
Watson A	6	2.25
Covin JG	5	1.48333333
Kraus S	5	1.2
Martin-Rojas R	5	1.66666667
DE	4	0.76666667
Rigtering JPC	4	1.45

Table 1: Most relevant authors

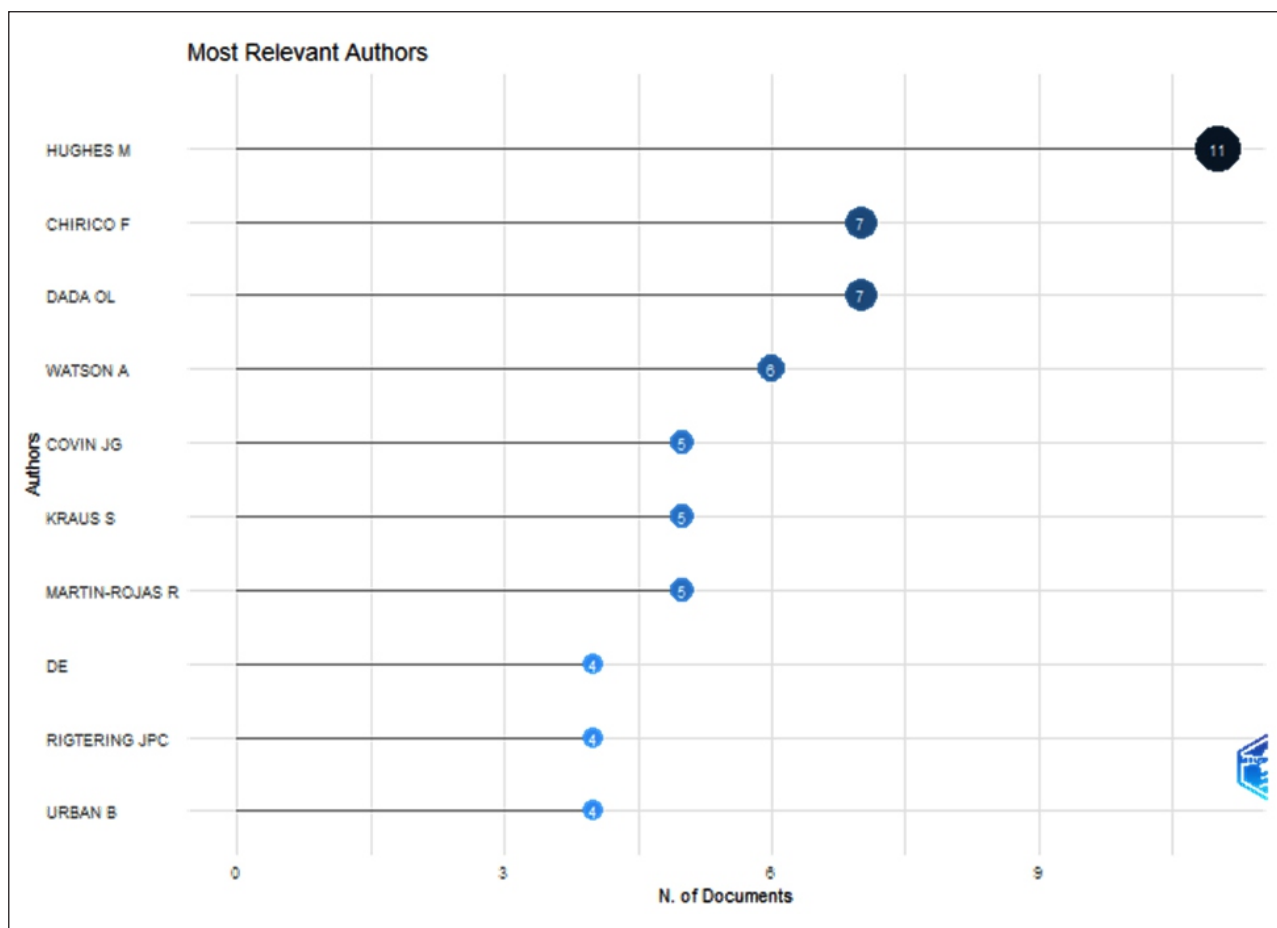


Figure 5: Most Impactful Author

Most Relevant Affiliation

Figure 6 highlights top 10 institutions contributing to intrapreneurship research. Lancaster University leads with 25 publications, followed by Erasmus University, England (22), University of Nottingham, England (16), and both Indiana

University, and University of Valencia, with 13 each. These institutions collectively represent substantial research in the field of intrapreneurship. Their contributions are important in shaping and advancing our knowledge, influencing practical application, and guiding future research studies.

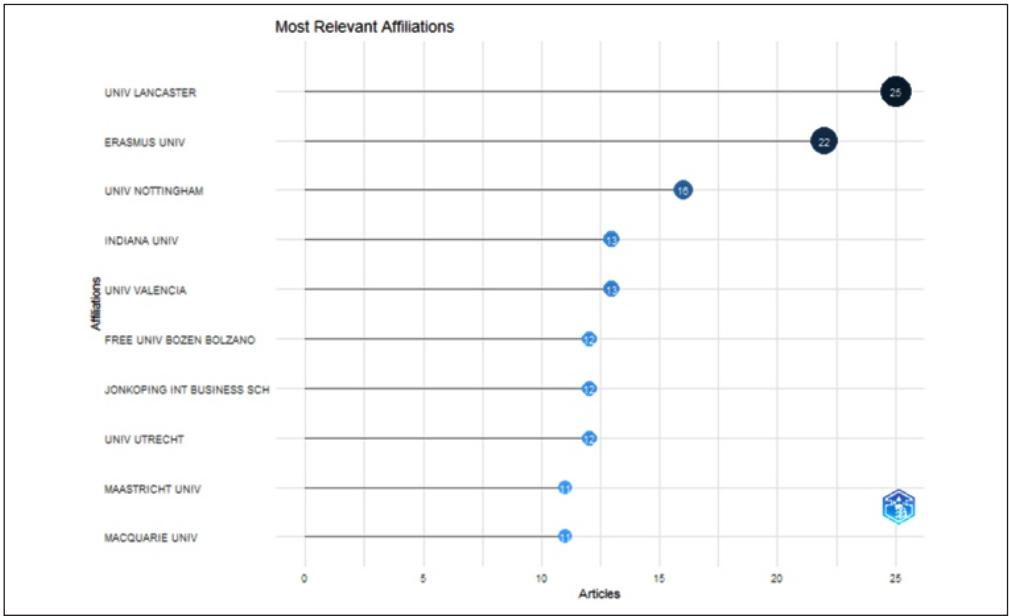


Figure 6: Most Relevant Affiliation

Most Influential Countries

In Figure 7 and Table 2, the UK and the USA and Italy are the top three most influential countries in terms of intrapreneurial research, with citation counts of 4242, 4190 and 1789 respectively. This highlights their dominance and extensive research output. The Netherlands and Australia also show

strong citation figures of 1581 and 1340 respectively. Spain, and Canada follow with a moderate citation number indicating steady but less prolific contribution. Other countries such as Spain, France, Austria, and Malaysia show moderate to low average citations per article.

Country	TC	Average Article Citations
UK	4242	60.6
USA	4190	104.8
Italy	1789	94.2
Netherlands	1581	51
Australia	1340	70.5
Spain	1223	34
Canada	875	79.5
Sweden	838	64.5
China	466	33.3

Table 2: Total Citation and Average Article Citation

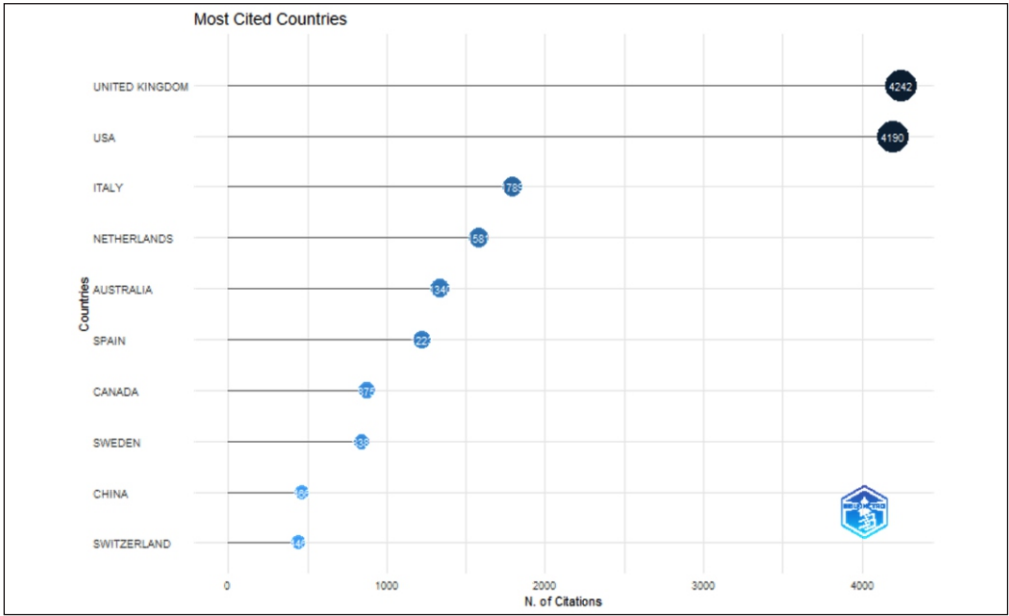


Figure 7: Most Cited Countries

Most Global Cited Documents

The Table 3 and Figure 8 show the Top 10 most cited research articles in management and entrepreneurship journals. Impact is assessed using two key metrics: Total Citation (TC) and Citation per year. Citations per year provide a dynamic view of article's relevance over time.

Article by Anderson N, (2014) in the Journal of Management leads with 1719 citations, closely followed by Rauch A, (2009) in Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice with 1715 citations. These citation counts suggest a strong influence of these

documents in the field of intrapreneurship. Anderson *et al.*, (2014) elucidate innovation and creativity in their article which are the dimensions of an intrapreneur. The author sees creativity (generating ideas) and innovation (implementing ideas) as parts of the same process and offers a new definition that combines both.

Rauch, *et al.*, (2009) analysed about entrepreneurial orientation (EO) which has been used as a synonym for 'Intrapreneurship'. The study found that EO has a moderately strong positive effect on business performance.

Paper	DOI	Total Citations	TC per Year
Anderson N, 2014, <i>Journal of Management</i>	10.1177/0149206314527128	1719	156.272727
Rauch A, 2009, <i>Entrepreneurship theory practice</i>	10.1111/j.1540-6520.2009.00308.x	1715	107.1875
Foss NJ, 2017, <i>Journal of Management</i>	10.1177/0149206316675927	1018	127.25
Gagne M, 2015, <i>European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology</i>	10.1080/1359432X.2013.877892	471	47.1
Wilden R, 2013, <i>Long Range Planning</i>	10.1016/j.lrp.2012.12.001	412	34.3333333
Zahra SA, 2014, <i>International Small Business Journal- Researching and Entrepreneurship</i>	10.1177/0266242613519807	384	34.9090909
Wiklund J, 2009, <i>Small Business Economics</i>	10.1007/s11187-007-9084-8	344	21.5
Kraus S, 2012, <i>Review of Managerial Sciences</i>	10.1007/s11846-011-0062-9	316	24.3076923
Chirico F, 2011, <i>Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal</i>	10.1002/sej.121	310	22.1428571

Table 3: Most Global Cited Documents

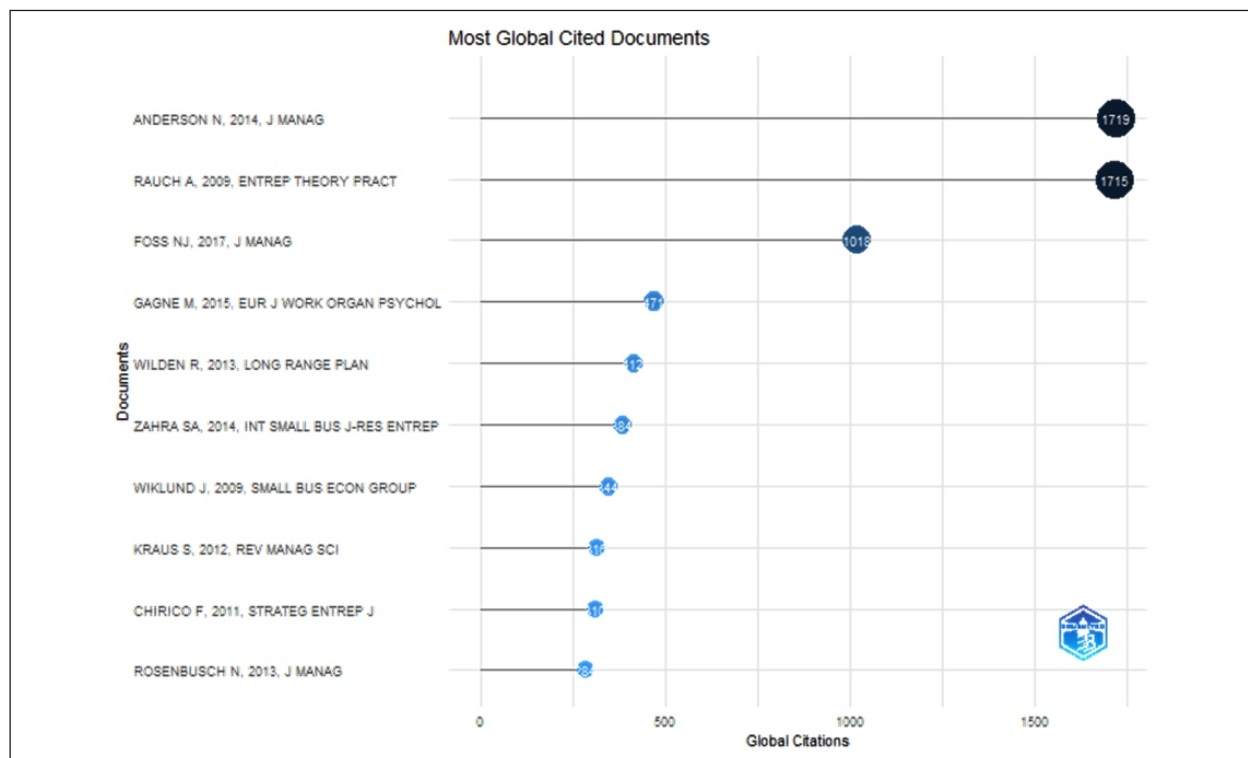


Figure 8: Most Global Cited Documents

Co-Word Analysis

The words in a co-word analysis are often derived from “author keywords”, and in its absence, notable words can also be extracted from “article titles,” “abstracts,” and “full texts” for the analysis (e.g., Baker, Kumar, & Pandey, 2020). Similar to co-citation analysis, the co-word analysis assumes that words that frequently appear together have a thematic relationship

with one another (Donthu et al., 2021). The greater the occurrence of the keyword, the bigger the node (Donthu et al., 2021). In Figure 9, keywords like 'corporate entrepreneurship', 'entrepreneurial orientation', and 'intrapreneurship' exhibit high prominence. The keywords related to human resource management and organizational behavior signify the area of the studies.

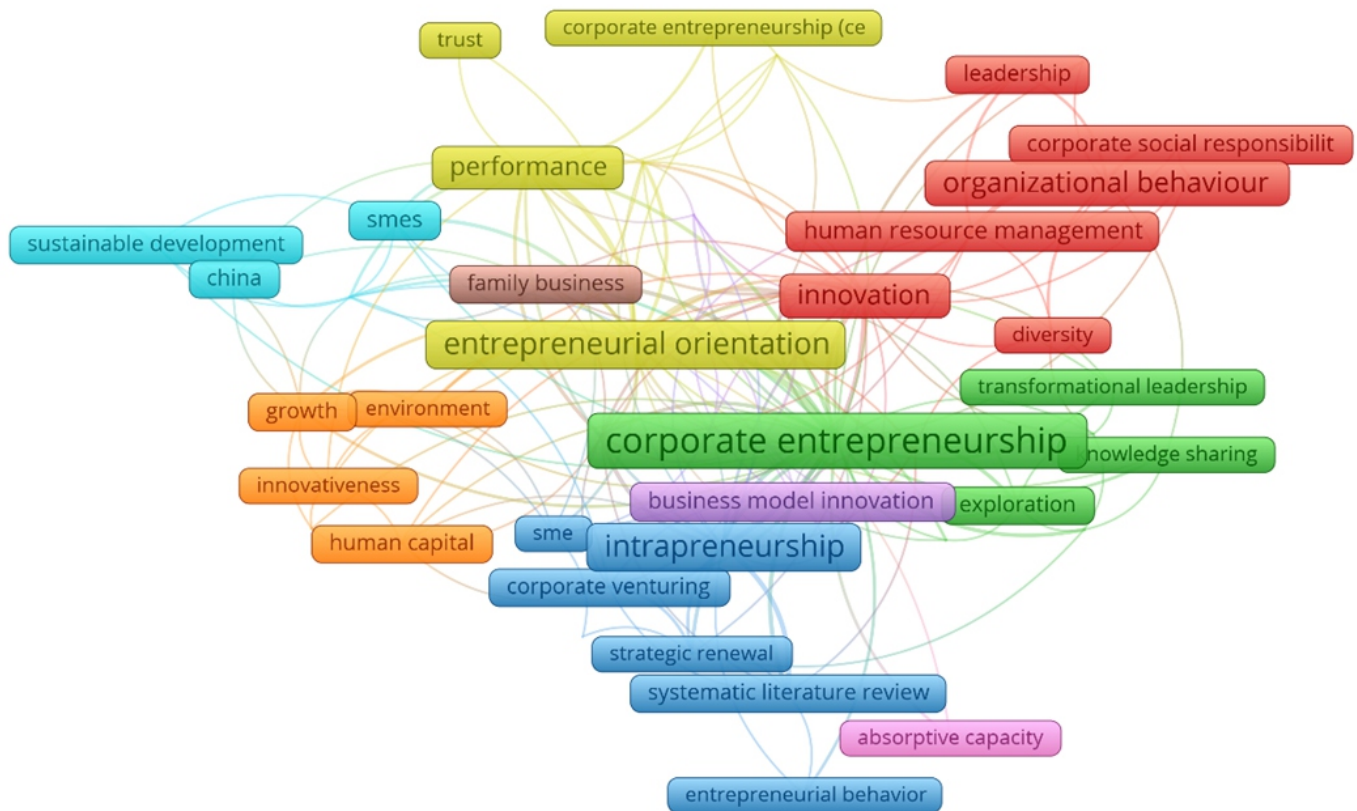


Figure 9: Co-Word Analysis

Thematic Map

To gain deeper insights into the intrapreneurship research, a strategic diagram (Figure 10), plots keywords by centrality (x-axis) and impact (y-axis). In this context, centrality refers to the importance of topics, on the other hand, impact reflects to development and influence of topics within the given field. The thematic map is graphically represented and divided into four quadrants, following the typology defined by Cahlic (2000).

- **Motor themes** (upper-right): Highly developed and influential topics like “corporate entrepreneurship” and “firm performance,” essential for high-impact research.
- **Transversal themes** (bottom-right): Core but underdeveloped areas such as “performance,” “innovation,” and “management,” needing further exploration.
- **Emerging/Declining themes** (lower-left): Low in both relevance and development, e.g., “behavior,” “antecedents,” and “mediating role,” possibly indicating new trends or fading topics.
- **Niche themes** (upper-left): Specialized but impactful areas like “culture,” “job satisfaction,” and “perceptions,” offering focused research potential.

This thematic map helps researchers identify mature, emerging, and underexplored areas, guiding future research priorities effectively.

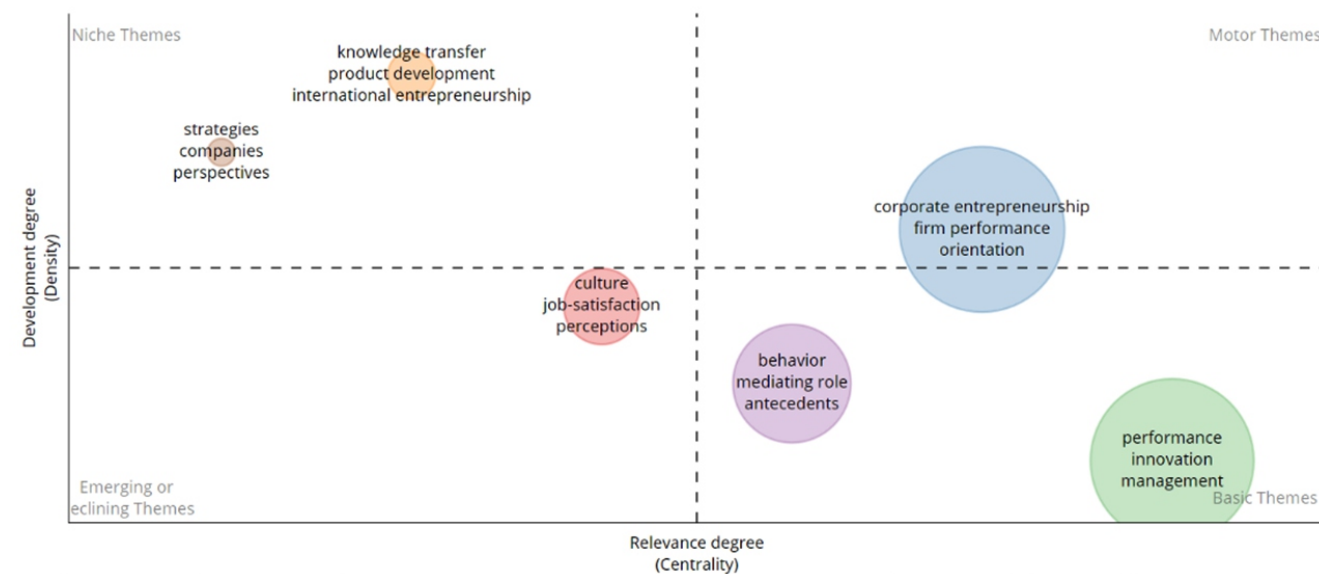


Figure 10: Thematic Map

Tree Map

Figure 11 shows a tree map illustrating frequency and importance of various research topics. Larger rectangle represents more extensively studied area. These visual representative highlights current research priorities, research gaps and opportunities for future research. The largest segment is “corporate entrepreneurship” which has a frequency of 161 representing 10% of the dataset emphasizing

its prominence as a primary area of research. It is followed by “Firm Performance” (73 times), underscoring its relevance in assessing intrapreneurial outcomes. Other key topics include “Management” (63; 4%), “Orientation” (51; 3%), “Construct” (25; 1%), “Mediating role” (26; 2%), “Perspective” (22; 1%), “Risk-Taking” (19; 1%), and “Intrapreneurship” (18; 1%). Notably, “Corporate entrepreneurship” is used more frequently than “intrapreneurship,” suggesting it is the preferred term in existing literature.

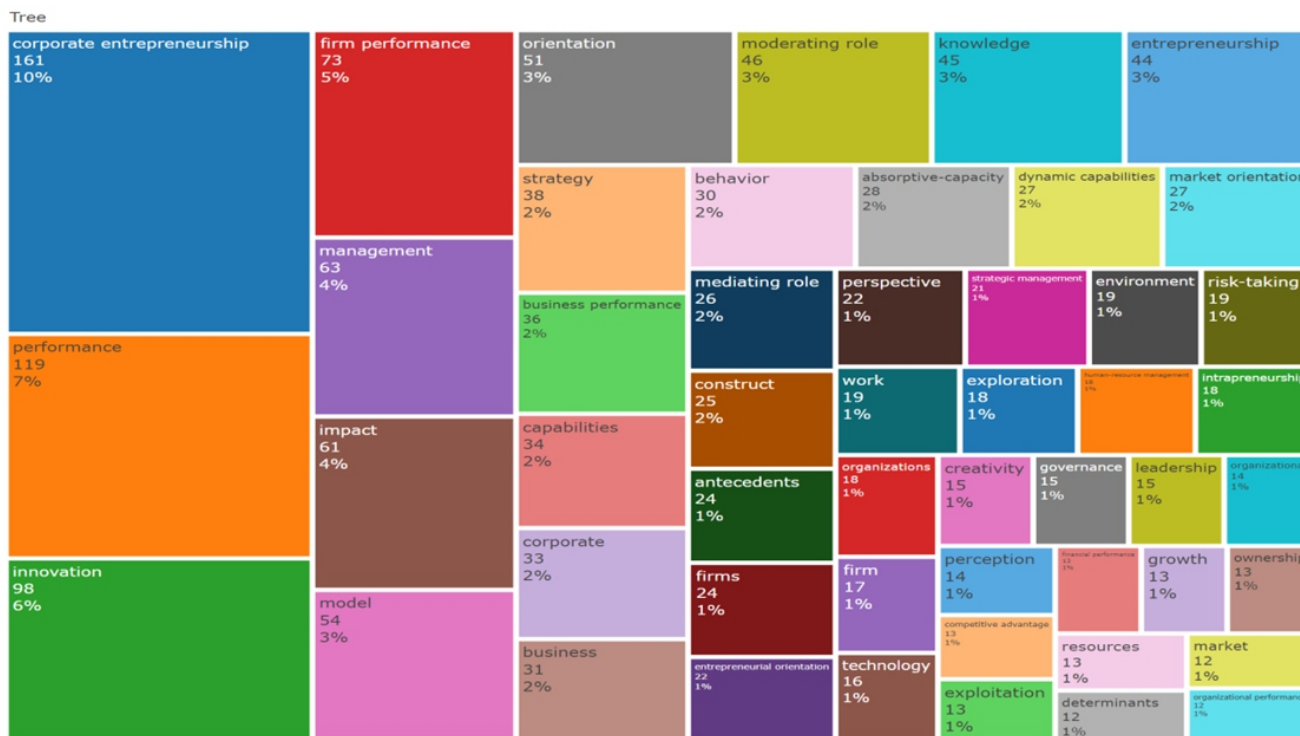


Figure 11: Treemap

Conclusion

Intrapreneurship challenges conventional organizational structures and practices, prompting organizations to adopt new approaches. The growing interest in intrapreneurship reflects a broader corporate objective to sustain agility and innovation within existing organizational structures. Intrapreneurship is steadily gaining prominence, with researchers shifting from focusing solely on conceptual clarity to exploring its practical applications across various organizational contexts. The study offers valuable insights for both novice and expert researchers in the field of intrapreneurship.

The present study provides an overview of research trends in intrapreneurship by combining a bibliometric analysis with a literature review and PRISMA framework which has been utilized in relatively few studies. It will assist researchers in identifying underexplored intrapreneurship themes for future research. As with all studies, our review also has several limitations that offer opportunities for further research. The articles analyzed were sourced from the WoS. By utilizing only the WoS database, we limited our access to the comprehensive body of intrapreneurship publications. Future studies could incorporate papers from a larger database or conducting comparative analyses across multiple databases such as SCOPUS, EBSCO JSTOR, PubMed, and Science Direct. Over time, researchers have developed a comprehensive understanding of its connection to organizational growth and employee development. This study helps to deepen this understanding and provides useful insights to various stakeholders.

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