

Introduction

Unwavering interest of researchers from different countries in workplace mobbing can be explained by the fact that it is a global phenomenon (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018), which affects representatives of different professions, while negative experiences at work are associated with increased stress, serious mental health disorders, and deterioration of quality of life or increased risk of suicides (Alfano et al., 2021; Beschoner et al., 2021).

Mobbing is described as a growing problem involving physical and emotional violence from co-workers, subordinates, or superiors, seeking to force someone to leave their workplace through lengthy use of rumours, innuendos, intimidations, humiliation, discrediting, isolation, etc. (Calabrò, 2021). Workplace mobbing affects numerous social, psychological, legal, and managerial aspects; therefore, new topics are constantly emerging in this area, while the methodological quality of research is becoming increasingly complex (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018). Efforts to distinguish trends of topics and scientific directions are aggravated by large amounts of scientific information and methodological diversity. In this case, the bibliometric analysis can be of service as it allows to study and analyse large amounts of scientific data, reveal the evolutionary nuances of a certain area, simultaneously showing new topics (Donthu et al., 2021). Therefore, the aim of this study is to perform the bibliometric analysis of research directions on workplace mobbing.

Methods

After The bibliometric analysis of keyword co-occurrence was performed. The use of this method can help researchers to detail the content of each thematic group and predict directions for further research (Donthu et al., 2021; Guo et al., 2019). The data was obtained using the VOSviewer tool, which can extract a bibliographic network from bibliographic data and allows to select several visualization options (Gutiérrez-Salcedo et al., 2018). Scientific articles were searched in the Web of Science Core Collection database using the keyword “workplace mobbing”. The search included publications from year 1995 to year 2023. When the minimum number of occurrences of the keyword was set to 2, out of 1224 keywords, 351 met the minimum threshold. The results of the analysis were visualised using the association strength method and the selected network visualization, which allows presenting keyword co-occurrence according to total link strength (TLS). The link means a connection between two keywords, and its strength is expressed by a numerical value. The higher the value, the thicker the line in the visualization. The size of the circles indicates the number of occurrences of keywords, and the colours indicate groups of keywords, which contain frequently co-occurring words. In other words, they show certain groups of topics. The connection and links between keywords are shown by lines and distances between circles.

Results

Key words reflecting the content of research, their importance and links are visualized in Figure 1. Keywords are divided into nine colour-coded groups. Naturally, the strongest connection is between the victim (green colour) and workplace mobbing (light blue colour), which shows that the researchers’ attention is most focused on that stage of the mobbing process when the target of the attack can already be identified as a victim of mobbing (cf. TLS= 726 of the victim, and TLS=91 of the mobbing target). Namely in the context of victims of mobbing, the behaviour of process participants, negative consequences, intervention measures, the role of gender, intentions to leave the job are investigated. A more detailed co-occurrence of 20 keywords by TLS is given in Table 1.

Conclusions

The results of the bibliometric analysis showed nine groups of topics on which researchers have focused their attention for the past three decades. Researchers were mostly interested in the victims of mobbing, organizations where mobbing occurred, the workplace, and mobbing behaviour. In addition, the study highlighted relatively new topics and the ones that received less attention from researchers, the development of which could improve the understanding of the mobbing phenomenon in the future.

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Table 1. Co-occurrence of top 20 keywords and TLS

Rank	Keywords	Cluster number	Links	Total link strength	Occurrences	APY*
1	Victim	2	65	726	46	2015
2	Workplace mobbing	6	64	684	48	2016
3	Organization	8	59	683	41	2015
4	Workplace	1	70	654	55	2014
5	Employee	3	55	409	31	2015
6	Behaviour	2	46	381	23	2012
7	Responsibility	8	31	369	15	2016
8	Person	5	47	330	23	2015
9	Relationship	5	44	322	26	2019
10	Individual	1	42	273	17	2014
11	Gender	2	26	224	14	2015
12	Bystander	2	18	222	10	2015
13	Consequence	6	38	184	13	2013
14	Conflict	6	26	175	12	2012
15	Cause	4	35	163	9	2008
16	Harassment	1	30	158	11	2012
17	CSR	8	13	156	6	2020
18	Anger	2	18	150	6	2015
19	Assistance	9	18	132	9	2019
20	Intention	2	21	125	5	2015

Table 1 presents links that mean co-occurrence connection between two keywords (the higher the numerical value, the stronger the connection). Keywords usually reflect the main content of the article, while co-occurrence can to some extent show highlights of the topic in a specific area. For example, the topic of the first cluster is connected by what is related to the workplace, individual aspects of experiences and characteristics of the participants in the mobbing process, harassment at work. In addition, the keywords presented in the table show that the least attention was given to corporate social responsibility (CSR), the feeling of anger, accompanying the mobbing process, assistance to the victims of mobbing and employee turnover intentions. In this context, CSR and assistance to the victims of mobbing were also relatively recent topics.

