

INNOVATION MANAGEMENT IN HUMAN RESOURCES: TRENDS IN CREATIVE PRACTICES. A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract. Driven by rapid change and fierce global competition, organisations are embracing innovative human resource management (HRM). Through a comprehensive bibliometric study, this paper explores the evolution of creative and innovative HRM, identifying major trends, pivotal contributions, and emerging themes that impact the role of HRM in fostering creativity and innovation. The research reveals a notable integration of technology and data analytics into talent strategies, as well as a growing emphasis on agility. As globalisation and digital transformation intensify, it becomes increasingly important to strike a balance between conventional and innovative HR methods. In recent years, there has been significant growth in research focused on digital transformation, artificial intelligence (AI), and talent-related innovation. The bibliometric analysis highlights how HRM practices are adapting to cultivate organisational agility and creativity within a dynamic technological environment. The findings provide valuable benchmarks for future research and practical applications, reinforcing the need for flexible, forward-thinking HR policies that champion innovation and reaffirming the overarching significance of creativity and innovation in modern HRM.

Keywords: human resources management, human resources, creativity, innovation, organizational culture

Résumé : Poussées par des changements rapides et une concurrence mondiale féroce, les organisations adoptent une gestion des ressources humaines (GRH) innovante. À travers une étude bibliométrique, cet article explore l'évolution d'une GRH créative et innovante, identifiant les principales tendances, les contributions essentielles et les thèmes émergents qui influencent son rôle dans la promotion de la créativité et de l'innovation. La recherche révèle une intégration notable des technologies et de l'analyse de données dans les stratégies de gestion des talents, ainsi qu'une importance croissante accordée à l'agilité. Face à l'intensification de la mondialisation et de la transformation numérique, il devient de plus en plus important de trouver un équilibre entre méthodes RH conventionnelles et innovantes. Ces dernières années, les recherches axées sur la transformation numérique, l'intelligence artificielle (IA) et l'innovation liée aux talents ont connu un essor significatif. L'analyse bibliométrique met en évidence l'adaptation des pratiques de GRH pour cultiver l'agilité et la créativité organisationnelle dans un environnement technologique dynamique. Les résultats fournissent des repères précieux pour les recherches futures et les applications pratiques, renforçant la nécessité de politiques RH flexibles et avant-gardistes qui favorisent

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l'innovation et réaffirmant l'importance primordiale de la créativité et de l'innovation dans la GRH moderne.

Mots-clés : gestion des ressources humaines, ressources humaines, créativité, innovation, culture organisationnelle

Rezumat. Impulsionate de schimbările rapide și de concurența globală acerbă, organizațiile adoptă un management inovator al resurselor umane (HRM). Printr-un studiu bibliometric, acest articol explorează evoluția HRM-ului creativ și inovator, identificând tendințele majore, contribuțiile esențiale și temele emergente care au impact asupra rolului HRM în promovarea creativității și inovării. Cercetarea relevă o integrare notabilă a tehnologiei și a analizei datelor în strategiile de gestionare a talentelor, precum și un accent tot mai mare pus pe agilitate. Pe măsură ce globalizarea și transformarea digitală se intensifică, devine din ce în ce mai important să se găsească un echilibru între metodele de resurse umane convenționale și cele inovatoare. În ultimii ani, s-a înregistrat o creștere semnificativă a cercetării axate pe transformarea digitală, inteligența artificială (IA) și inovația legată de talente. Analiza bibliometrică evidențiază modul în care practicile HRM se adaptează pentru a cultiva agilitatea și creativitatea organizațională într-un mediu tehnologic dinamic. Constatările oferă repere valoroase pentru cercetări viitoare și aplicații practice, consolidând necesitatea unor politici de resurse umane flexibile și orientate spre viitor, care să promoveze inovația și reafirmând importanța generală a creativității și inovării în HRM-ul modern.

Cuvinte cheie: managementul resurselor umane, resurse umane, creativitate, inovație, cultură organizațională

Introduction

Organizations today face a real challenge in the management of their labor force which impacts on their capacity to retain competitive advantage in the labour market. Employees must not be seen as simply numbers or resources - they are human beings with passion, talent and creativity. If we lose sight of this fact, we lose any realistic hope of economic progress. Therefore, a topic as „Creative and Innovative Human Resource Management” is relevant and timely, and through a comprehensive research project, it can provide practical contributions to human capital management, offering concrete solutions for organizational environments aiming to enhance employee engagement and performance.

When the labor market changes so rapidly, organizations must be able to adapt and manage human capital in an agile manner. Re-engineering human resource management practices has to become the order of the day for companies looking to beat the competition and achieve long-term growth. Organizations are moving beyond traditional cost and performance criteria, turning to creativity and innovation in HR to ensure their success. The main issue we started with (based on long-term experience) is the lack of innovative and creative strategies in human resource management, even in multinational organizations that usually have the necessary resources. In many cases, human resource management remains rooted in traditional practices that are not aligned with the current needs of employees and the labor market. This can lead to decreased employee motivation, poor talent

retention, and ultimately, a lack of the desired level of performance set by the organization.

The aim of this paper is to provide a comprehensive and nuanced review of the current state of knowledge concerning creative and innovative approaches to human resource management. It will identify existing knowledge gaps and suggest areas for future research.

Defining concepts

Human resource management (HRM) is an essential area of organizational practice that focuses on managing human capital within an organization. This concept refers to the processes by which an organisation attracts, develops, motivates and retains employees in order to create a favourable working environment and encourage performance. Human resource management covers a wide range of activities, including recruitment and selection, training and professional development, performance appraisal, labour relations management and compensation policy development. These strategies are essential for ensuring the organisation runs smoothly, directly impacting employee well-being, productivity and, ultimately, organisational success.

In a study analysing the factors that influence creativity in the organisational environment, including the social and cultural context, Amabile (1996) presents a model that emphasises the importance of organisational culture and climate in stimulating employee creativity. This is essential for innovation in human resource management. In other words, recruiters and human resource specialists face a dual challenge: they must be creative in their recruitment procedures and encourage creativity in their recruits. Therefore, let us see how we can define creativity in the context of human resources.

Creativity in human resource management (HR) refers to an organization's ability to generate original ideas and innovative solutions in managing human capital. This means more than just divergent thinking; it also means approaching employee challenges, internal processes, and development strategies in ways that improve employee performance and satisfaction. Here are some of the most relevant ways creativity can be integrated into HR practices:

- a. **Innovative recruitment and selection strategies:** using unusual methods to attract talent, such as recruitment campaigns on unconventional platforms, online games or challenges, collaborations with influencers to promote jobs or recruitment on social media, and organizing interactive virtual events.
- b. **Creating a stimulating and flexible working environment:** implementing flexible working policies (e.g., teleworking, flexible hours), creative workspaces, or unusual team-building activities that encourage collaboration, free thinking, and support work-life balance, contributing to increased employee satisfaction.

- c. **Individual professional development programs:** creating training and development programs tailored to the individual needs of employees, using interactive methods such as virtual simulations, educational games, or reverse mentoring, which support collaborative learning and the use of modern technologies.
- d. **Innovative recognition and reward policies:** developing new and personalized ways to recognize employee achievements, such as experience-based reward programs (e.g., extra days off, unique experiences) and real-time feedback, so that employees feel appreciated and motivated.
- e. **Innovative assessment systems:** creating performance assessment models based on continuous feedback and employee recognition through creative methods, using gamification platforms to motivate teams and improve assessment efficiency.
- f. **Managing organizational change:** creatively approaching change by involving employees in the transformation process, using participatory and interactive techniques to reduce resistance to change and increase commitment.
- g. **Promoting diversity and inclusion:** implementing creative initiatives that support cultural, gender, and thought diversity, and that value the unique perspectives of each employee, contributing to the formation of an inclusive and dynamic organizational culture.

Creativity in human resource management goes beyond simply coming up with new ideas. It involves breaking away from traditional methods and trying something new to inspire innovation, cooperation and increased employee output.

The renowned author, Armstrong (2014), discusses innovation as a key component of human resource management strategy. In his work, he explains how HR can use modern technology and methods to enhance recruitment, performance evaluation and professional development processes. For instance, he discusses the use of data analytics and digital platforms to attract talent and customise development programmes. He also suggests ways to implement innovative HR strategies, such as assessing employee, training and development needs. Armstrong's work significantly contributes to our understanding of the role of creativity and innovation in HR, emphasising that these aspects improve organisational performance and support the development of an adaptable and innovative culture, essential for long-term organisational success.

Innovation in human resource management (HRM) can be defined as the process of developing and implementing new and effective practices, technologies, and strategies that improve talent management, work processes, and organizational culture. It focuses on introducing fundamental changes that bring tangible benefits to both employees and the organization. Key Aspects of HR Innovation:

- a. **Advanced HR technologies:** implementation of technological solutions such as artificial intelligence for talent recruitment, automation of human resources processes, and the utilization of data-driven performance management platforms such as predictive analytics tools for talent management.
- b. **Innovative recruitment and selection processes:** introducing new ways of identifying and attracting talent, including the use of video interviews, competency-based assessments, and games and simulations to test candidates' skills.
- c. **Employee experience:** developing innovative programs that enhance the employee experience, including personalized onboarding, tailored benefits packages, and fostering an organizational culture that promotes flexibility and diversity.
- d. **Training and professional development:** developing continuous and adaptive learning programs using technologies such as microlearning, interactive online learning, and reverse mentoring to ensure that employees' skills develop at the pace of technological and economic change.
- e. **Flexible working policies:** the way work is organized can be adapted to facilitate remote working, flexible working schedules, and coworking spaces that meet the current needs of employees and contribute to a better work-life balance.
- f. **Managing organizational change and transitions:** introducing innovative ways to manage change within organizations, including the use of agile methodologies in HR, managing transition with personalized coaching, and involving employees in the decision-making process.

Creativity and innovation in human resource management are distinct yet interconnected concepts. Creativity involves generating new and original ideas in human capital management, encouraging free thinking and non-traditional approaches. Innovation, on the other hand, involves turning these ideas into effective practices and strategies that improve HR processes and organisational culture. While creativity can generate innovative solutions, it is innovation that turns these solutions into reality, directly impacting the organisation's performance. Together, creativity and innovation create an adaptable and dynamic work environment that can respond to employee needs and support the organisation's sustainable development.

Creativity and innovation in human resources.

Bibliographic references

Several sources of literature highlight the importance of innovation and creativity in human resource management as key factors in organisational success.

In addition to the aforementioned (Amabile and Armstrong), Rainey, Fernandez and Malatesta (2021) analyse the importance of innovation in HR

strategy and the integration of creative skills into employee professional development. Creative management in HR is presented as a solution to address the challenges of modern organizations. Other authors [Ulrich & Dulebohn (2015)] provide a detailed analysis of the evolution of the role of HR in organizations and the need to adopt innovative methods. The authors emphasize that HR must become a strategic player, integrating innovation into human resource development to support organizational performance. Starting from the idea of the link between human resource management and employee engagement, Guest (2017) emphasized the importance of implementing innovative HR practices to increase employee engagement, a crucial aspect for creative and innovative management.

An important aspect of creativity analysis in HR relates to comparative analyses of HR practices in different cultures. It is already well established that HR strategies are clearly contextual, requiring adaptation to the local context (especially in the case of companies with geographically dispersed divisions). Thus, Hofstede (2018) and Brewster, Chung & Sparrow (2016) analysed the issue of adapting HR strategies to different organizational cultures, emphasizing innovation as a central element in human capital management in international markets.

Another study I would like to mention here refers to how innovative HR strategies, such as providing continuous feedback and personal development planning, can improve employee engagement and organizational performance (Alfes *et al.*, 2013).

The authors pose a challenge: what is the role of MRU in influencing employee behaviour? The study concluded that organizations that cultivate a climate of reciprocity will have positive results in terms of employee attitudes and behaviours. However, the authors' warning is firm: employees take into account their experiences in the field of MRU, to which they add the organizational environment and their daily lives. Only by understanding these things can managers and HR specialists act holistically. In this context, much research is focused on identifying those practices that can lead to increased organizational performance.

An important source of information comes from Patricia Buhler's research (2015), according to which we must use our own creativity in the HR profession, but also be aware of the limits of this process. When we talk about creativity, the first thought is that in any human resource management issue, says Buhler, there are always several possible solutions, and choosing the right one would highlight our creativity. Beyond these clarifications, we should ask ourselves a series of questions to decide whether we are creative in terms of human resource management: Are we able to push the limits or boundaries? Are we open-minded and adaptable to change? Do we take risks? Can we overcome fear? The author adds: „Our ability to innovate affects the performance of our organizations, regardless of company or industry. A survey found that 98% of respondents said innovation is either important or very important to their company's future success.

Furthermore, those companies that are open to change and focus on innovation tend to be market leaders” (p. 3).

There are also some novel perspectives on the subject. Zhou & George (2001) show that work dissatisfaction can lead to creativity among employees in general, including human resources specialists. This is a sign, say the authors, that employees are not giving up and want to remain in the organisation/company. These employees need to perceive that their creative performance has the potential to be effective. In this context, organisational support must be consistent and visible.

We also have Romanian authors who have written on the topic of creativity and innovation in HR and who highlight modern HR strategies that facilitate the development of a stimulating and adaptable work environment. Popescu (2007), for example, examines essential aspects of HR, including recruitment, selection, and performance evaluation strategies. He pays special attention to creativity and innovation in HR processes, emphasizing that successful organizations must take a proactive approach to talent management. He argues that investing in the development of employees' creative skills not only improves productivity but also contributes to the creation of a positive and stimulating work environment, which is essential for adapting to contemporary challenges.

In his work, Păcurar (2012) analyses the impact of innovation on human capital management. He discusses recruitment, selection, training and professional development processes, as well as how organisations can use creativity in HR processes to improve their internal structures and respond to market challenges. He believes that HR should not be limited to administrative activities, but should become a strategic partner within organisations, focusing on developing human capital as a valuable competitive resource.

Popescu (2011) also points out the importance of creative and innovative practices in effective human resource management. He argues that, in a competitive environment, organizations need to adopt innovative HR strategies that support the continuous development of employees and promote a stimulating work environment. He highlights that creativity not only improves the recruitment and selection process but also facilitates rapid adaptation to market changes. By implementing innovative methods such as real-time feedback and personalised training programmes, organisations can maximise their employees' potential, thereby contributing to the company's overall success.

Facing contemporary challenges such as digitization and rapid market changes, organizations are forced to rethink their human resource management practices to remain competitive. Creativity and innovation are becoming important not only for attracting and retaining talent, but also for building an organizational culture that promotes employee engagement and satisfaction. Therefore, according to the literature, human resource management must constantly evolve to reflect the needs of both companies and employees in order to contribute to the long-term success of organizations.

Methodology – Bibliometric analysis

In order to identify developments, thematic trends, and relevant scientific contributions in the field of creative and innovative human resource management, we conducted a bibliometric analysis to provide a solid and contextualized foundation for the research presented in this thesis.

The methodological approach is based on the use of *R-Studio Bibliometrix* bibliometric software and the results of a search in the *SCOPUS* international database, where we selected articles in the field of human resource management, creativity, and innovation from the last ten years, i.e., 2015-2025. This resulted in 67 documents (articles, papers presented at scientific conferences, etc.) that were analysed, allowing us to observe the evolution of creative and innovative human resource management between 2015-2025 from the following perspectives: *thematic evolution*, cluster analysis based on two concepts: centrality and density (Callon *et al.*, 1991), *co-occurrence network*, an approach that facilitates the understanding and visualization of the structure of different text elements and their content (Puerta *et al.*, 2020) and *thematic maps*, which are a spatial representation of the relationships between disciplines, fields, and documents or authors.

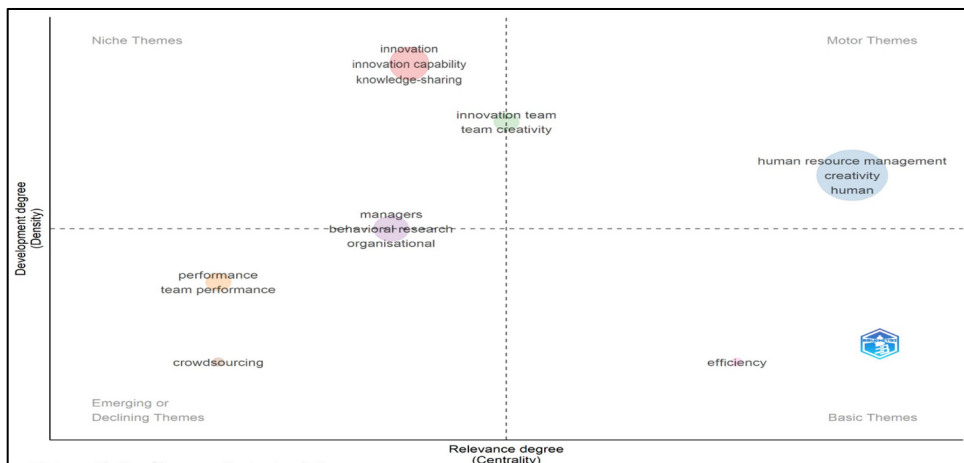


Figure 1. Thematic map – strategic diagram
Own processing of source authors in R-Stata Bibliometrix

This image in Figure 1 represents a thematic map, a strategic diagram that serves to highlight the structure and evolution of research topics in a particular field, in this case, creative and innovative human resource management. The map is divided into four quadrants, based on two dimensions: the *X-axis (horizontal)*, which represents the degree of relevance or centrality (themes further to the right are better connected to other themes, and therefore more central to the field) and the *Y-axis (vertical)*, which represents the degree of development or density (the themes above are better developed internally).

Quadrant 1 (top right) – Motor Themes. These are central and well-developed themes that drive research in the field, and our identified themes are: human resource management, creativity, and human resources. These are essential to my research topic, creative and innovative human resource management, and are well represented in the literature. The keywords confirm the importance of creativity in HR and can form the backbone of the literature to be reviewed.

Quadrant 2 (top left) – Niche Topics. Well-developed topics but less connected to the rest of the field: innovation, innovation capacity, and knowledge sharing. These are deeply developed but niche topics. They can add value through a specific approach, such as studying innovation capability or knowledge sharing in HR teams. Useful, for example, for exploring more sophisticated perspectives within the thesis.

Transition zone (top center). Developed themes, but with medium centrality: innovation team, creativity in teams. They are relevant to the theme and show the current direction of research on creativity in innovation teams. These could become driving themes in the future, so they deserve special attention.

Quadrant 3 (bottom left) – Emerging or declining topics. Weakly developed and marginal topics: crowdsourcing, team performance, and performance. These may be either declining themes or emerging topics that have not yet been thoroughly studied. Crowdsourcing may be relevant in the context of digital and innovative HR, but it requires solid reasoning to be relevant to the research topic.

Quadrant 4 (bottom right) – Basic themes. Central themes, but poorly developed: efficiency. This is a central theme in HR and management, but relatively little is addressed in relation to creativity and innovation. It may constitute an interesting research niche, for example: how is efficiency maintained in innovative teams?

In conclusion, the central themes of my research are creativity, human resource management, and innovation, for which I propose to explore the connections between them to build a solid theoretical basis. Complementary and emerging themes: innovation capacity, knowledge sharing, and team creativity can represent and bring elements of originality to the research, based on which hypotheses can be built regarding team dynamics and the impact of innovative management on creative performance, for example. And the underrepresented themes, crowdsourcing and efficiency, can be mentioned, but only with clear reasoning and contextualization.

This second image represents a co-occurrence map of keywords, frequently used in bibliometric analysis to highlight thematic relationships between concepts in the literature. *The nodes* (words) are connected by links that indicate the frequency with which they appear together in scientific articles. *The size of the nodes* indicates the frequency with which the term appears in the analysed literature. *The color of the clusters* indicates cohesive thematic groups (topics that are researched together). *The thickness of the lines* represents the strength of the association between terms (their frequent co-occurrence).

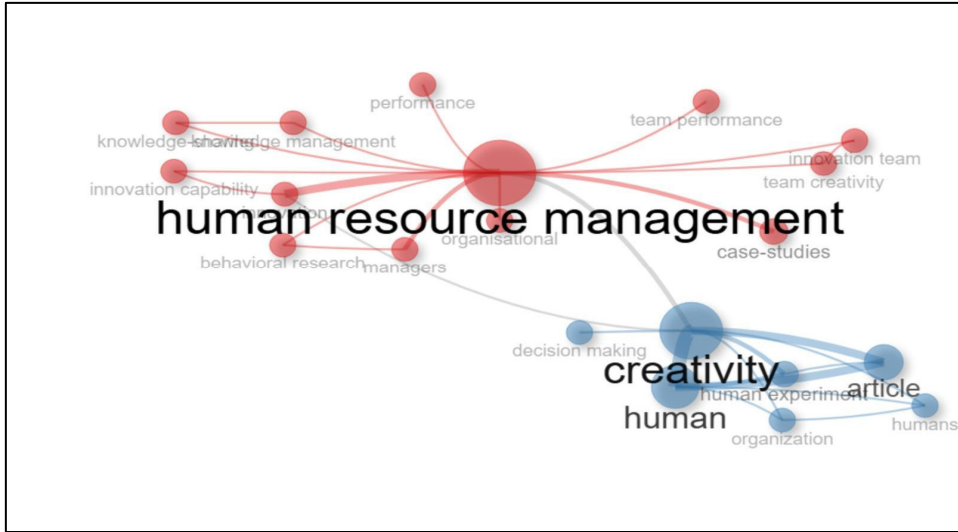


Figure 2. Co-occurrence map of keywords
Own processing of source authors in R-Stata Bibliometrix

The red cluster focuses on human resource management, with the following key nodes: HRM (central and dominant), performance, knowledge management, innovation capacity, team creativity, innovation team, organizational, behavioural research, and managers. This cluster reflects the practical and applied side of human resource management research. Major themes associated with HRM include: team performance, innovation capacity, knowledge exchange and management, creative teams, and case studies. This cluster captures the relevance of research through solid empirical support for how creativity and innovation fit into HRM. It shows how these concepts are integrated into organizational, behavioural, and performance management studies.

The blue cluster focuses on creativity and human resources, with the following key nodes: creativity, human resources, decision-making, article, and organization. This cluster indicates a more theoretical approach and a psychological perspective on creativity in an organizational context: human creativity and decision-making, organization, and scientific studies. It supports the integration of cognitive and experimental perspectives in research on employee creativity or HR teams. This approach can form part of the theoretical framework of the topic, possibly in contrast to the practical approach in the red cluster.

There are clear connections between human resource management and creativity, as evidenced by the fact that literature frequently links these two topics, thus providing a solid theoretical basis for the research topic. The term human resource appears as a pivotal node between the two worlds (practical and theoretical), emphasizing the importance of human resources as a connecting point. Areas for further exploration: we can investigate how human resource

management supports the development of creativity through knowledge sharing, innovative teams, creative leadership, etc.

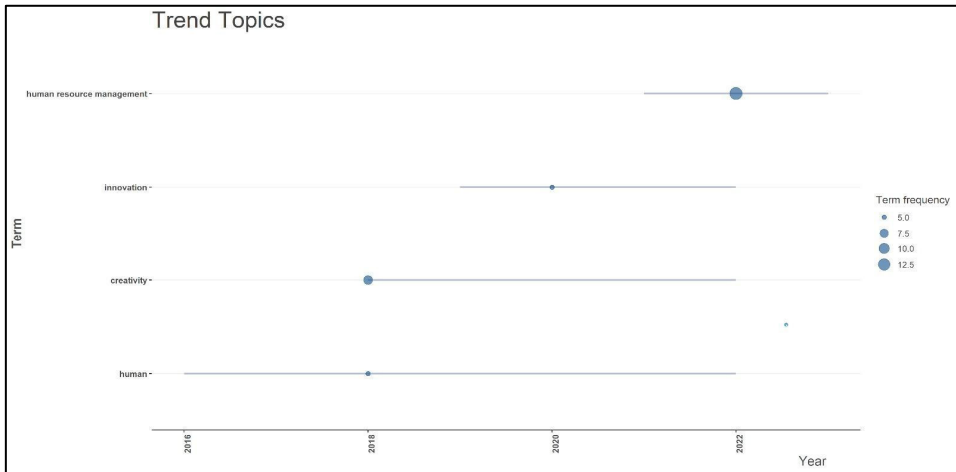


Figure 3. Map with temporal trends of keywords
Own processing of source authors in R-Stata Bibliometrix

This image, from Figure 3, represents an analysis of temporal trends in key terms in scientific literature. It is a temporal map showing the evolution of researchers' interest in concepts relevant to research topics, in this case, creative and innovative human resource management.

The X-axis indicates the years of publication, i.e., the selected period, 2015–2025, and on *the Y-axis*, we find the analysed keywords: human resource management, innovation, creativity, and human resources. *The size of the bubble* represents the frequency of the term's appearance in academic literature, and *the length of the horizontal line* represents the time period during which the term was present in the literature.

For the keyword *HRM*, the active period is predominantly between 2020–2023, with a high frequency, it is the term with the largest bubble → the most frequently used theme in the analysed corpus. HRM is a topical and growing subject in recent years. Its relevance to innovation and creativity in contemporary management is confirmed by this upward trend, supporting the choice of this concept as the theoretical core of the thesis.

Innovation, active period, 2019–2023, with average frequency, the bubble is smaller, but the term is stable over time, being a consistent and emerging theme in literature. It appears mainly in connection with HRM, performance management, and creativity, thus supporting the integration of innovation as a central component of modern human resource management.

Creativity, active period 2017–2022, with good frequency, was very present in the period 2018–2021. It was a topic of great interest, but has been declining slightly in recent years. This may indicate saturation or integration into broader

themes such as HRM or innovation. For the research theme, this supports the positioning of creativity as a variable mediated/moderated by HRM or as a driver of innovation.

Human resources, active since 2016, with low but persistent frequency.

A generic term used in broad contexts, it is not a main theme in itself, but serves as a supporting term for other concepts, for example: human behaviour, human capital, and human creativity.

The graph shows that all key research concepts are bibliometrically validated, meaning they are terms that appear multiple times in recent literature. Human resource management is the most prominent and current topic. Creativity and innovation are connected to HRM, but must be approached dynamically: creativity as a precursor to innovation, and HRM as a facilitator of both.

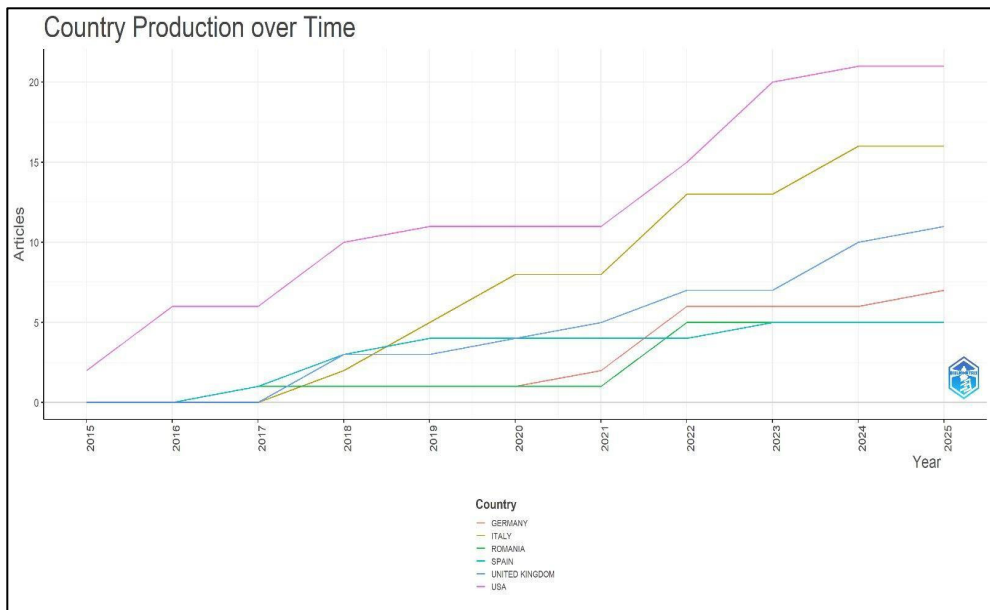


Figure 4. Time series chart of scientific output by country
Own processing of source authors in R-Stata Bibliometrics

The graph above shows that the US and Italy are leaders in scientific production on creative and innovative human resource management, with steady growth in recent years, while Romania has had an emerging but stable presence since 2017.

The *conclusion* of the bibliometric analysis highlights a significant increase in academic interest in the topics of human resource management, innovation, and creativity, reflecting the growing interdependence between human resource management practices and the stimulation of creativity in organizations. There is also a dominant scientific contribution from the United States and European countries such as Italy and the United Kingdom, confirming the global and dynamic

nature of research in this field, which validates the relevance and timeliness of the topic addressed in the thesis.

Research Gaps and Future Directions

To improve understanding of creative and innovative human resource management (HRM), this study identifies several significant research gaps requiring further academic investigation.

Contextualized HRM strategies: there is a significant lack of understanding regarding how HRM strategies can be adapted to suit different cultural and economic environments. Future research should consider the complexities of implementing creative HRM approaches in emerging markets such as Romania, bearing in mind the unique challenges and opportunities that these settings present.

The impact of digitalisation and AI on employee creativity remains underexplored. Further research is required to determine how technological advancements can be integrated into HR processes to encourage innovation while maintaining a human-centred work environment.

Employee-level dimensions of creativity: In order to identify the factors that encourage or inhibit innovative thinking, it is necessary to investigate the specific dimensions of employee creativity. This knowledge is essential for formulating strategies that enhance creativity among employees.

Measuring the impact of creative HRM: there is an urgent need for more rigorous methodologies with which to assess the impact of creative HRM on organisational performance. Future research should focus on developing metrics that can capture the tangible outcomes of these practices, such as increased employee engagement, improved talent retention and greater organisational innovation.

The role of leadership: although transformational leadership is known to influence the adoption of creative human resource management (HRM) strategies, there is a lack of empirical research addressing how these leadership styles can effectively implement such strategies. Therefore, in-depth studies are required to understand the role of leadership in promoting creative HRM in the unique cultural and economic context of Romania.

In conclusion, this research has the potential to significantly contribute to the field of human resource management by providing a foundation for a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between creativity, innovation and talent management. The study aims to bridge existing gaps and enrich the theoretical frameworks and practical applications of creative HRM practices in diverse organizational settings by formulating recommendations for future research.

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