



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Emerging Frontiers in Succession Planning: Mapping Research Trends

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to systematically map the intellectual structure, research trends, and thematic evolution of succession planning literature through bibliometric analysis

Design/methodology/approach: The quantitative analysis of the 591 datasets from Lens.org covering the period from 2010 to 2025 was conducted for the study. Open-access journal articles were involved in the study, and data were analysed utilising R, Biblioshiny, and VOSviewer software. This study analysed annual scientific production, average citations, three-field plots, core sources, local impact, prolific authors, global citations, locally cited documents, the most relevant keywords, trend topics, keyword co-occurrence networks, and co-authorship networks.

Findings: The findings of the study revealed tremendous research in the field of succession planning, the highest average citation in the initial stage, and the SA Journal of Human Resource Management ranked in the first position with the highest number of publications. Similarly, the most prolific contributors included Silver MP, followed by Plessis TD. Trend topics and co-occurrence networks revealed leadership, succession planning, management, and talent management as vibrant keywords.

Implications: Corporate practitioners can embrace compatible strategies to cultivate the succession planning practice while preparing successors, and researchers can emphasise emerging trends in these areas to explore in future investigations.

Originality/value: This research contributes to the existing theoretical foundation and extends a supportive base for practitioners and academics.

JEL Classification: M12, M50, M51

Introduction

Succession planning refers to the shift of managerial authority between individual employees, reflecting the power transfer from senior personnel to the successor (De Oliveira Müller et al., 2024). The succession programme builds a systematic mechanism with planning for retirement or involuntary departures of employees, enhancing potential leaders within the organisation who contribute to the perpetual growth of entities (Christy & Kowalewski, 2023; Li et al., 2024; Sayeeduzzafar-Qazi, 2025). Similarly, adequate effort by the organisation in the succession programme supports retaining competent human resources, enhancing a satisfactory level of loyalty of personnel towards the organisation (Li et al., 2024).

Interestingly, embracing effective management of succession planning is indispensable for an organisation that makes a regular supply of competent human resources

for the vital positions (Klugah et al., 2025; Othman et al., 2024). Similarly, proper practice of managerial transfer through the transition of smooth leadership develops a conducive atmosphere to concentrate on strategic focus and mitigates challenges of the organisation (Bills et al., 2017; Zhou, 2023). Moreover, a succession programme helps manage a possible shortage of future leaders in the organisation, which assures continuous and smooth functioning (Magri et al., 2024). However, evidence has shown an increase in the trend of departure of higher-level employees from the organisation for several reasons, posing challenges in retention (Odoi-Yorke, 2024; Viljamaa et al., 2024). Thus, appropriate succession planning is essential to foster employee performance and retention in the organisation, which shows the importance of embracing leadership development programmes (Mehreen & Ali, 2022).

Additionally, the adoption of succession planning in the corporate sector has pragmatically been increasing in the recent era, which favourably supports organisations to acquire more benefits, including financial and non-financial performance, ensuring the sustainability of businesses (Li et al., 2025; McEntire & Greene-Shortridge, 2011; Sanchez-Urien et al., 2026). However, leaders of several organisations reveal less use of systems and procedures related to succession planning, which deteriorates expected outcomes (Barnett & Davis, 2008). Similarly, several entities pragmatically ignore the formal succession development process and rely on a contingency approach with a basic procedure of employee replacement, not embracing it as a strategic step of human resource development (Anos, 2025; Bano et al., 2022). Therefore, the apex organisational body and system require constructing a formal procedure and a clear strategic path for the transition of leadership, which reduces disruptions in business and strategies and maintains the perpetual viability of firms (Bae et al., 2023).

Succession planning has emerged as a strategic organisational practice that supports leadership continuity, talent development, and long-term organisational sustainability (Al Suwaidi et al., 2020). Despite the growing body of empirical research, the literature remains fragmented, with previous studies largely examining succession planning within specific organisational contexts, particularly family businesses and higher education, while providing limited insight into the broader intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and global development of the field (Ahmad et al., 2025; Benismael & Nabil El Mabrouki, 2021; Cisneros et al., 2018). This fragmentation highlights the need for a systematic examination of the knowledge base to better understand how succession planning research has evolved and where the field is heading.

Accordingly, bibliometric analysis provides an appropriate approach for systematically mapping the development of succession planning research, identifying influential contributors and sources, uncovering prominent and emerging themes, and examining evolving publication patterns (Al Hajri, 2024; Kamal et al., 2024; Phillips, 2020). Against this background, the present study addresses the following research questions:

- (a) What is the annual scientific production in succession planning research?
- (b) Which sources are the most dominant, and what is their local impact?
- (c) Which terms occur most frequently and represent the major research themes?
- (d) What characterises the profile of prolific authors in the field?

To address these questions, the study maps and analyses the research landscape of succession planning using

bibliometric analysis. The study draws on fifteen years of scholarly publications retrieved from Lens.org and focuses on relevant thematic areas within succession planning research. Open-access journal articles were incorporated into the dataset to examine publication trends and the evolution of the research landscape over time. By systematically mapping the intellectual structure, publication trends, influential contributors, and emerging themes, this study contributes to the succession planning literature by providing a comprehensive overview of the field and identifying directions for future research. The findings may also offer evidence-based insights for organisations seeking to strengthen succession practices, leadership continuity, and long-term talent development.

Research Methods

The bibliometric analysis of succession planning covered the period from 2010 to 2025 using data retrieved from Lens.org. Lens.org was selected as the data source because it provides a comprehensive, freely accessible database with broad coverage of high-quality scientific publications, making it a reliable source for bibliometric research (Tarazi, 2024). The data included open-access journal articles published in the field of study themes. A total of 591 datasets were included for the analysis of the theme areas. The data were analysed utilising R Biblioshiny (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017) and VOSviewer (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010).

This study employed bibliometric analysis to explore the trend, direction, and future path in the thematic areas (Al Hajri, 2024). Furthermore, this research analysed the annual scientific production, average citations per year, three-field plots, core sources by Bradford's law, sources' local impact, most prolific contributors and production over time, most globally cited document, most locally cited document, most relevant words, trend topics, co-occurrence network, and co-authorship of authors. The selection and search strategy comprises the process depicted below:

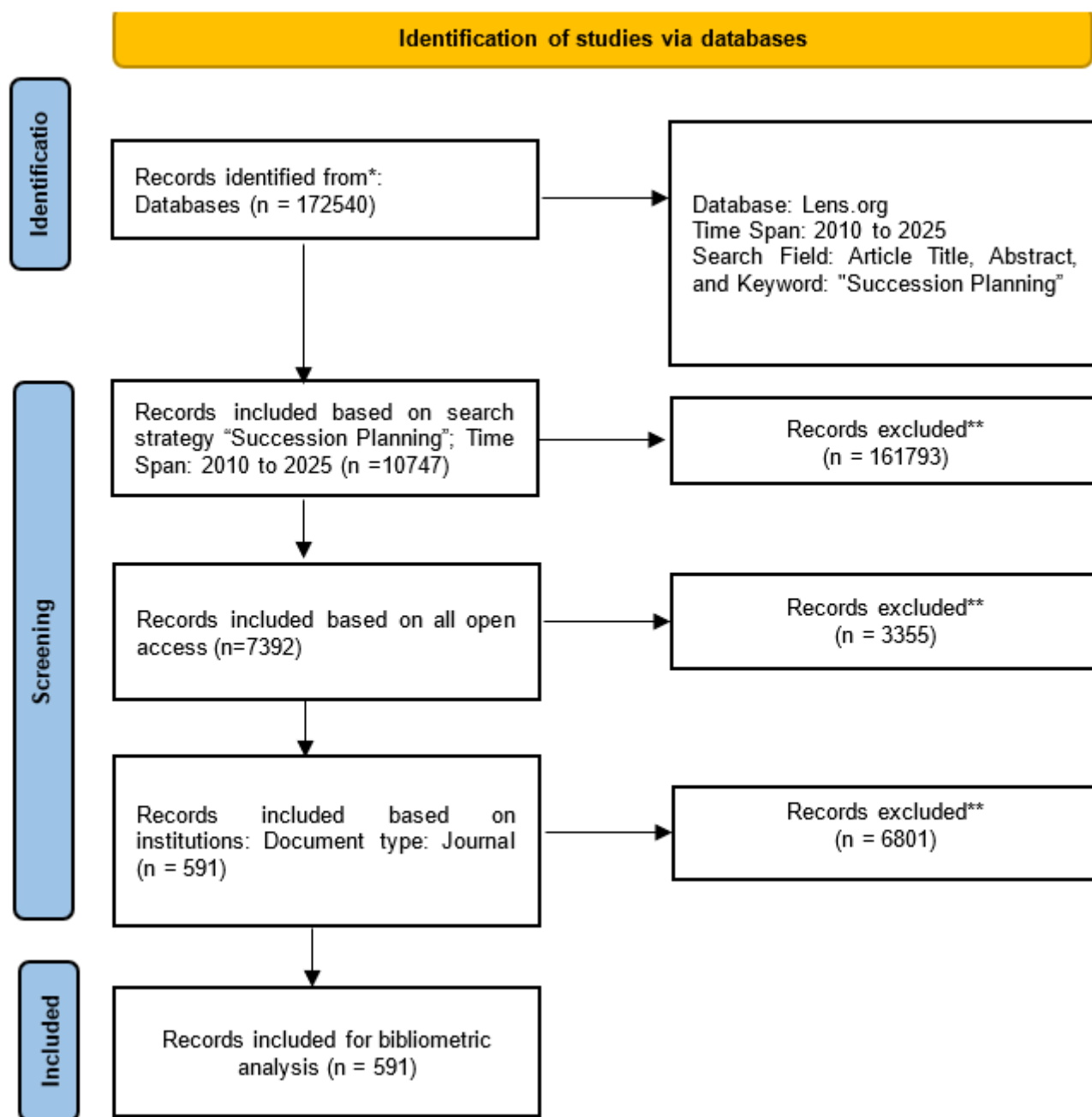


Figure 1: Search Strategy

Figure 1 shows the search strategy. The search strategy encompasses a total of 591 datasets accumulated from Lens.org sources representing the study period from 2010 to 2025. The key term "succession planning" is the study's main theme. The initial search found 172,540, and the search for the theme with "succession planning" contained 10,747, excluding the 161,793 datasets. Similarly, the records included based on all open access involve 7,392, excluding 3,355 data, and records included based on institutions and document type, with journals integrating 591, excluding 6,801. The final dataset for the analysis

involves 591 records.

Results

This section encompasses the outcome of the study computed through the bibliometric analysis based on the Lens.org data covering the fifteen years of data sources. The following results are depicted in this section:

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Description	Results
Main Information About Data	
Timespan	2010:2025
Sources (Journals, Books, etc.)	385
Documents	591
Annual Growth Rate (%)	2.86
Document Average Age	7.57
Average citations per document	20.98
References	16685
Document Contents	
Keywords Plus (ID)	1727
Author's Keywords (DE)	1727
Authors	
Authors	3955
Authors of a single-authored document	50
Authors Collaboration	
Single-authored document	56
Co-Authors per document	7.15
International co-authorships (%)	0
Document Types	
Journal article	591

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics. The timespan of data accumulation integrates the years from 2010 to 2025 for the 591 total data points accumulated from Lens.org. Similarly, the growth of documents every year represents 2.86; the average age of documents is 2.86; and citations for each document, on average, involve 20.98 and include 16,685 total references. The key terms, along with the integration of 1727 keywords for the author, involve the same data. Moreover, the number of research scholars involved in the scientific publication includes 3955 authors with 50 single-authored papers. The collaboration of authors with single-authored papers comprises 56 co-authors for each paper, revealing 7.15, and the total number of article documents includes 591.

Table 2: Annual Scientific Production

Year	Articles
2010	19
2011	24
2012	19
2013	25
2014	31
2015	39
2016	32
2017	43
2018	49

2019	50
2020	45
2021	44
2022	67
2023	30
2024	45
2025	29

Table 2 Exhibits the annual scientific production. The publication of research papers in the field of succession planning revealed tremendous progress during the study period. The initial nineteen papers found in 2010 increased to 24 papers in 2011. Article publications were found on 19, 25, 31, 39, 32, and 49 from 2011 to 2018. The publication in the subsequent years ranges from a minimum of 29 to 50 scientific publications from 2019 to 2025.

Table 3: Average Citations per Year

Year	Mean TC per Article	N	Mean TC per Year	Citable Years
2010	22.16	19	1.30	17
2011	36.58	24	2.29	16
2012	35.11	19	2.34	15
2013	33.88	25	2.42	14
2014	22.06	31	1.70	13
2015	32.67	39	2.72	12
2016	31.44	32	2.86	11
2017	26.84	43	2.68	10
2018	22.02	49	2.45	9
2019	20.98	50	2.62	8
2020	18.89	45	2.70	7
2021	33.02	44	5.50	6
2022	7.91	67	1.58	5
2023	8.93	30	2.23	4
2024	4.84	45	1.61	3
2025	.83	29	.42	2

Table 3 shows the average citations per year. The highest citation was found in 2011, with a mean total citation per document of 36.58, and the yearly average citation remained the highest in 2021, with a 5.50 citation score. The citation score for other years ranges from an average citation of .83 in 2025 to 35.11 in 2012 for each article-based research paper. Moreover, annual average citations revealed a minimum average citation of .42 to 2.86 in 2016.

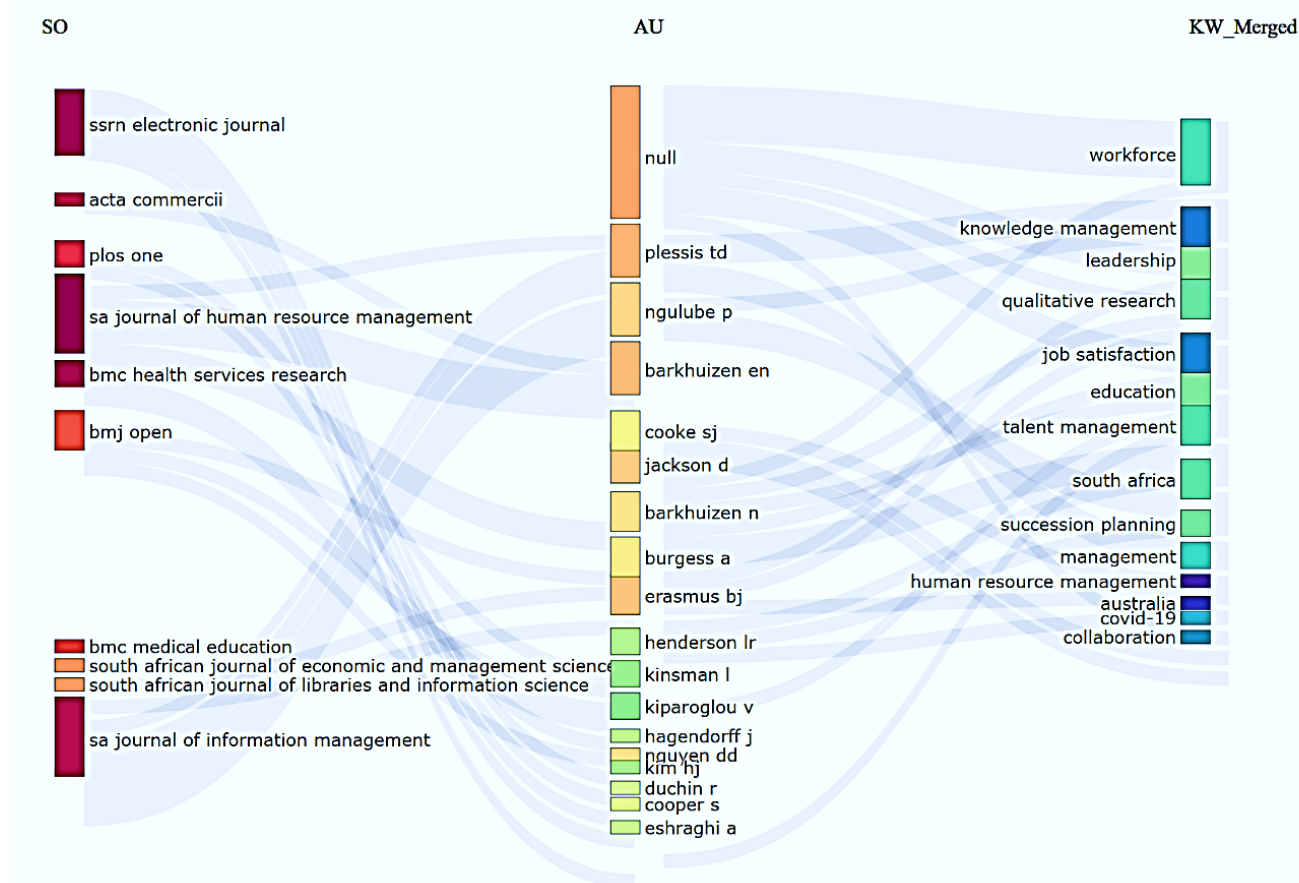


Figure 2: Three-Field Plot

Figure 2 depicts the three-field plot. This graphical outcome integrates three distinct fields with major key terms, a list of authors, and sources revealed during the study period. The key terms found were 'knowledge', 'leadership', 'job satisfaction', 'talent management', 'succession planning', 'management', and 'human resource management'. The

contributing research scholars found were *Plessis T.D.*, *Ngulube P*, *Barkhuizen EN*, and others. Finally, the major journals depicted in the three-field outcome were SA 'Journal of Human Resource Management', 'SA Journal of Information Management', and 'SSRN Electronic Journal'.

Table 4: Core Sources by Bradford's Law

Sources	Frequency	Rank	Zone
SA Journal of Human Resource Management	30	1	Zone 1
SSRN Electronic Journal	20	2	Zone 1
BMC Health Services Research	13	3	Zone 1
SA Journal of Information Management	12	4	Zone 1
SA Journal of Industrial Psychology	11	5	Zone 1
Acta Commercii	8	6	Zone 1
HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies	7	7	Zone 1
Plos One	7	8	Zone 1
South African Journal of Business Management	7	9	Zone 1
BMC Medical Education	6	10	Zone 1

Table 4 presents sources through Bradford's law. The ten most contributing sources in the field of succession planning are included in this result. The 'SA Journal of Human Resource Management' contains thirty entries, which

occupy the first rank, followed by the 'SSRN Electronic Journal' with 20 entries of scientific papers. Similarly, 'BMC Health Services Research' reflects 13 documents, 'SA Journal of Information Management' 12, 'SA Journal

of *Industrial Psychology*’ 11, and *Acta Commercii*’ eight documents. Next, *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, *PLOS ONE*, and the *South African Journal of Business Management* each published seven documents

on succession planning during the study period. Finally, *BMC Medical Education* ranked tenth, contributing six publications to the field.

Table 5: Sources Local Impact

Source	H_index	G_index	M_index	TC
SA Journal of Human Resource Management	12	17	0.706	357
BMC Health Services Research	11	13	0.647	421
SA Journal of Information Management	7	10	0.412	103
South African Journal of Business Management	7	7	0.438	121
SSRN Electronic Journal	6	10	0.353	111
BMJ Open	5	6	0.455	109
HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies	5	7	0.385	58
Academic Medicine: Journal of The Association of American Medical Colleges	4	4	0.286	124
Acta Commercii	4	5	0.235	28
American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education	4	5	0.235	98

Table 5 reveals the source’s local impact. The source’s local impact is measured by the h-index (Bihari et al., 2023). The source ‘*SA Journal of Human Resource Management*’ contains twelve h-index, holding the first rank with the highest impact, followed by ‘*BMC Health Services Research*’ with an h-index of 11. Similarly, ‘*SA Journal of Information Management*’ and ‘*South African*

Journal of Business Management’ have seven h-indices. The ‘*SSRN Electronic Journal*’ involves six h-index. Next, ‘*BMJ Open*’ and ‘*HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies*’ include a five-h-index. Moreover, ‘*Academic Medicine: Journal of The Association of American Medical Colleges*’, ‘*Acta Commercii*’, and ‘*American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*’ include four h-indices.

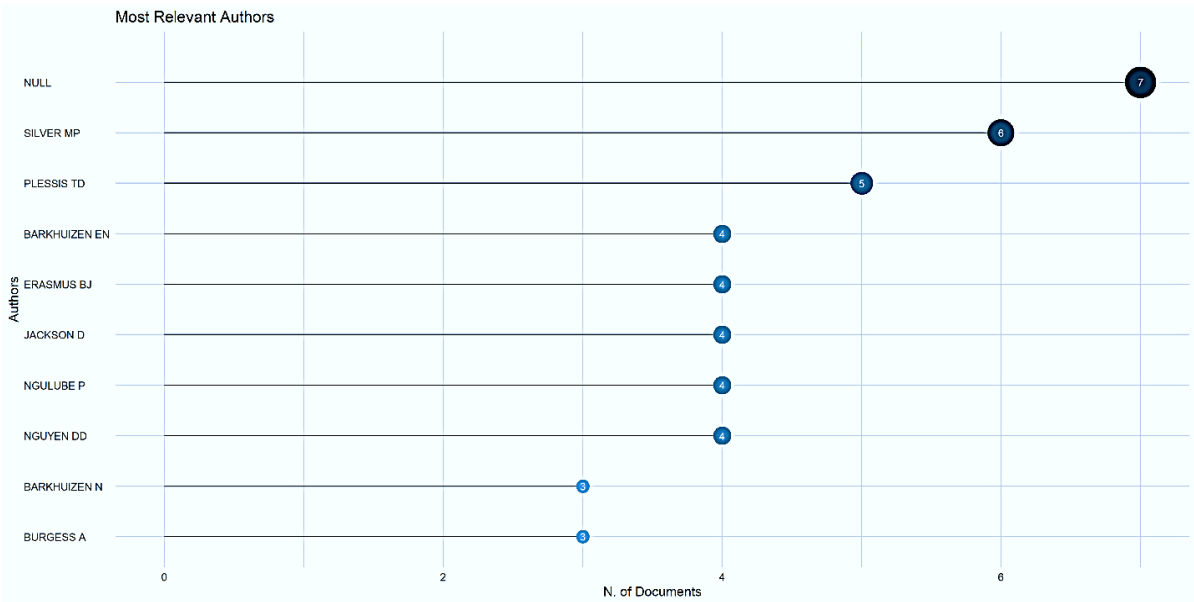


Figure 3: Most Relevant Authors

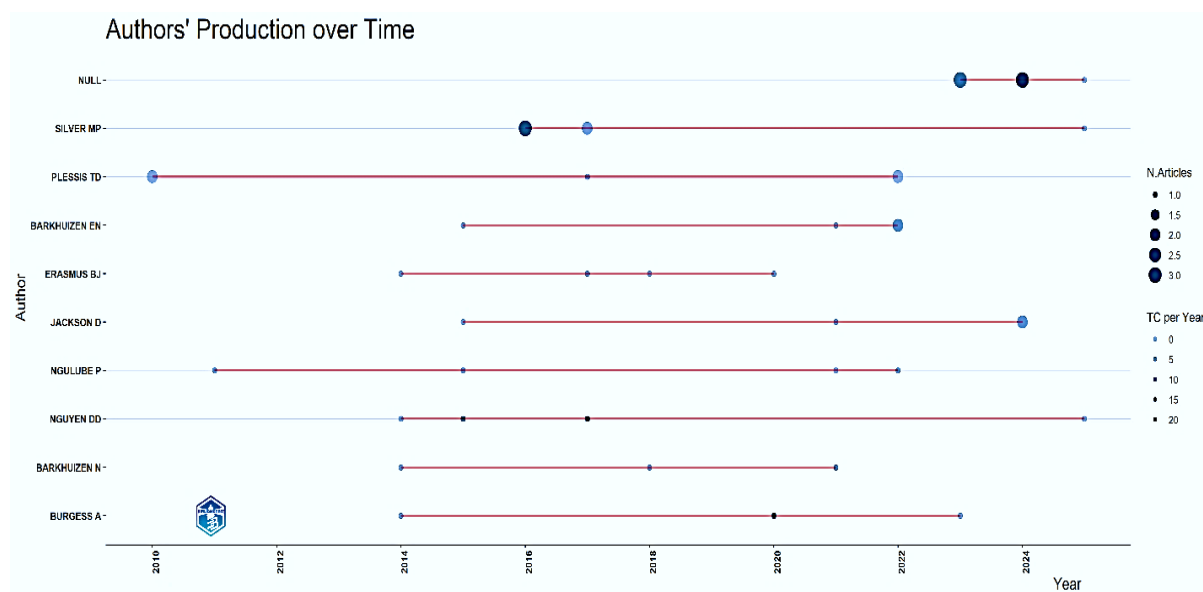


Figure 4: Authors' Production over Time

Figure 3 and 4 exhibit the most relevant authors and production over time. The highly contributing research scholars in the field of succession planning are included in the graphical outcomes. The author *Silver MP* has six publications during the study period in the research themes, followed by *Plessis TD* with five scientific publications in the study period. Moreover, *Barkhuizen EN*, *Erasmus BJ*, *Jackson D*, *Ngulube P*, and *Nguyen DD* reveal four documents during the study period. Finally, *Barkhuizen N* and *Burgess A* have three papers for both authors.

Table 6: Most Globally Cited Documents

S.N.	Authors	Articles	DOI	TC	Journal
1	Duchin and Sosyura (2013)	Divisional managers and internal capital markets	10.1111/jofi.12003	245	The Journal of Finance
2	Bloom et al. (2015)	Do private equity-owned firms have better management practices?	10.1257/aer.p20151000	201	American Economic Review
3	Maseda et al. (2022)	Mapping women's involvement in family firms: A review based on bibliographic coupling analysis	10.1111/ijmr.12278	189	International Journal of Management Reviews
4	Silver et al. (2016)	A systematic review of physician retirement planning	10.1186/s12960-016-0166-z	137	Human Resources for Health
5	Ulrich et al. (2013)	The State of the HR Profession	10.1002/hrm.21536	130	Human Resource Management
6	Frank Li (2014)	Mutual monitoring and corporate governance	10.1016/j.jbankfin.2013.12.008	111	Journal of Banking & Finance
7	Seidl et al. (2013)	Applying the 'comply-or-explain' principle: Discursive legitimacy tactics with regard to codes of corporate governance	10.1007/s10997-011-9209-y	97	Journal of Management & Governance
8	Bourgeois and Cousins (2013)	Understanding dimensions of organizational evaluation capacity	10.1177/1098214013477235	97	American Journal of Evaluation
9	Hanggraeni et al. (2019)	The impact of internal, external and enterprise risk management on the performance of micro, small and medium enterprises	10.3390/su11072172	67	Sustainability
10	Meyer et al. (2018)	Employee commitment before and after an economic crisis: A stringent test of profile similarity	10.1177/0018726717739097	57	Human Relations

Note. TC = Total citations

Table 6 shows the most globally cited documents. The work by Duchin and Sosyura (2013) concerned with “Divisional Managers and Internal Capital Markets,” published in “*The Journal of Finance*,” reveals a world citation position of 245 as the highest score for globally cited status. Similarly, the research by Bloom et al. (2015)000 firms, we find private equity firms are better managed than government, family, and privately owned firms, and have similar management to publicly listed firms. This is true both in developed and developing countries. Looking at management practices in detail we find that private equity owned firms have strong people management practices (hiring, firing, pay, and promotions on the scientific document “Do private equity-owned firms have better management practices?” revealed in the “*Journal of American Economic Review*” contains 201 global citations. Next, an investigation by Maseda et al. (2022) relating to the “Mapping women’s involvement in family firms: A review based on bibliographic coupling analysis” found in “*International Journal of Management Reviews*” depicts 189 citations. Silver et al. (2016), in ‘A systematic review of physician retirement planning’

published in ‘*Human Resources for Health*,’ revealed 137 overall citation statuses. (2013), related to ‘The state of the HR profession,’ found in the Journal of ‘*Human Resource Management*,’ integrated 130 total citation positions. Frank Li (2014), On ‘Mutual monitoring and corporate governance,’ found in the ‘*Journal of Banking & Finance*,’ depicted 111 citations. Seidl et al. (2013)With ‘applying the ‘comply-or-explain’ principle: Discursive legitimacy tactics about codes of corporate governance,’ found in the ‘*Journal of Management & Governance*,’ it indicated 97 citation scores. Bourgeois and Cousins (2013)In ‘*Understanding dimensions of organisational evaluation capacity*,’ published in the ‘*American Journal of Evaluation*,’ it had 97 citations. Hanggraeni et al. (2019) on the title ‘The impact of internal, external, and enterprise risk management on the performance of micro, small, and medium enterprises,’ found in the journal ‘*Sustainability*,’ showed 67 citation scores. Meyer et al. (2018) The paper ‘employee commitment before and after an economic crisis: A stringent test of profile similarity,’ found in the Journal ‘*Human Relations*,’ revealed 57 citations.



Figure 5: Most Local Cited Documents

Figure 5 presents the most locally cited documents within the dataset, highlighting the publications that have exerted the greatest influence on subsequent research in the field. Among these, the studies by Silver et al. (2016), “A Systematic Review of Physician Retirement Planning” published in *Human Resources for Health*, and Wamundila and Ngulube (2011), “Enhancing Knowledge Retention in Higher Education: A Case of the University of Zambia” published in *SA Journal of Information Management*, achieved the highest local citation score of three, indicating their substantial contribution to the intellectual

development of the research domain. Furthermore, several other influential publications recorded a local citation score of two, indicating their continued relevance and contribution to the intellectual development of the field. These include Ovseiko et al. (2016), “Markers of Achievement for Assessing and Monitoring Gender Equity in Translational Research Organisations: A Rationale and Study Protocol,” published in *BMJ Open*; Rycroft-Malone et al. (2017), “Accessibility and Implementation in the UK NHS Services of an Effective

Depression Relapse Prevention Programme: Learning from Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy Through a Mixed-Methods Study,” published in *Health Services and Delivery Research*; Pannor Silver and Easty (2017), “*Planning for Retirement from Medicine: A Mixed-Methods Study*”; Silver and Williams (2018), “*Reluctance to Retire: A Qualitative Study on Work Identity, Intergenerational Conflict, and Retirement in Academic Medicine*,” published in *The Gerontologist*; Starr et al. (2015), “*Achieving Human and Machine Accessibility of Cited Data in Scholarly Publications*,” published in *PeerJ Computer Science*; Bradford et al. (2023), “*The Cancer Nursing Workforce in Australia: A National Survey Exploring Determinants of Job Satisfaction*,” published in *BMC Nursing*; and

Kalpazidou Schmidt et al. (2020), “*Understanding the Athena SWAN Award Scheme for Gender Equality as a Complex Social Intervention in a Complex System: Analysis of Silver Award Action Plans in a Comparative European Perspective*,” published in *Health Research Policy and Systems*. Collectively, these publications constitute important scholarly contributions across diverse institutional and professional contexts and demonstrate the breadth of research informing the field. Their repeated presence within the local citation network suggests that, despite receiving fewer citations than the most prominent publications, they have contributed meaningfully to the development, diffusion, and interconnectedness of knowledge throughout the study period.

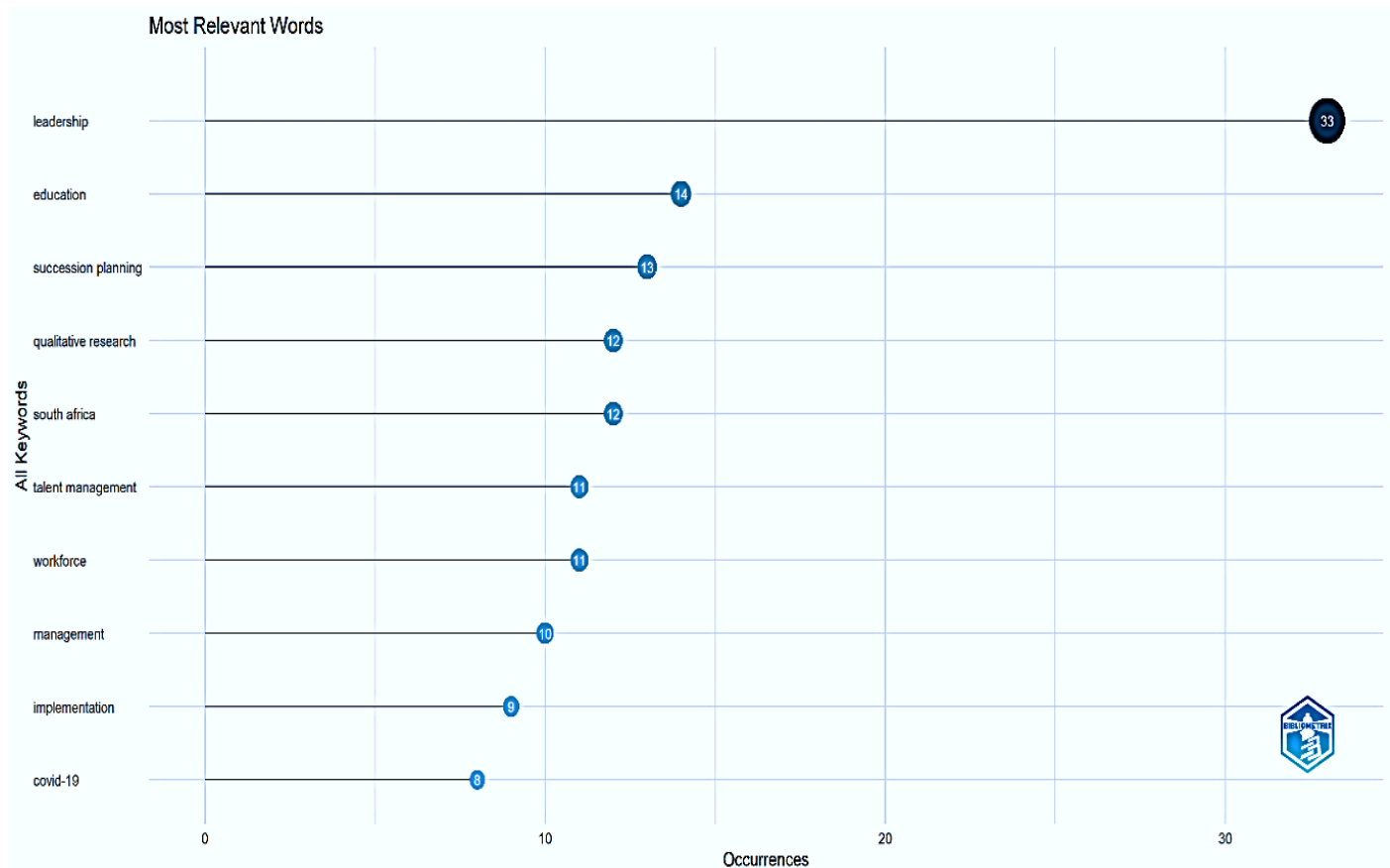


Figure 6: Most Relevant Words

Figure 6 shows the most relevant words. The outcome contains the leading and most frequently occurring key terms in the field of study. The term “leadership” occurred most, with 33 occurrences, ranking in the first position in the study period, followed by “education” terms with 14 occurrences. Most importantly, the study keyword “succession planning” had 13 occurrences, showing its prominence. Moreover, “talent management”, “workforce”, and management key terms depicted 11 and ten occurrences respectively. Next, the term “implementation” includes nine occurrences during the study period.

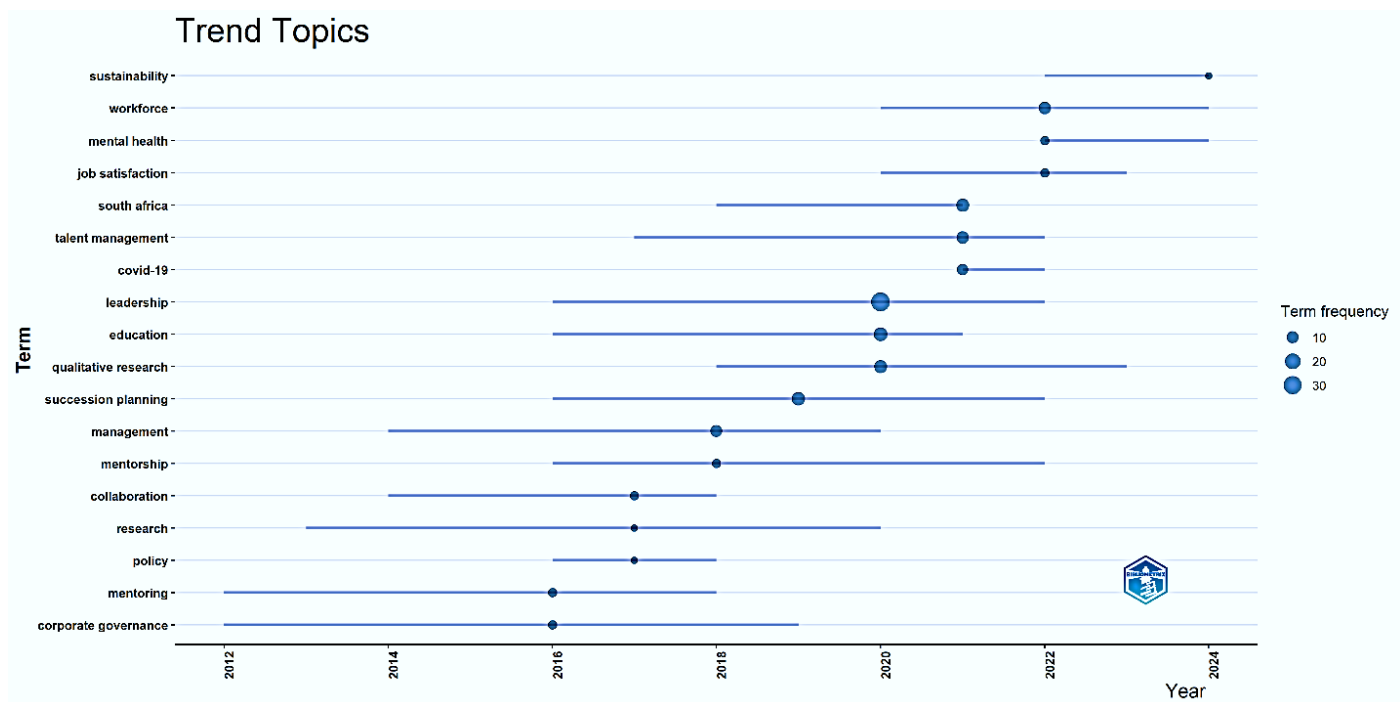


Figure 7: Trend Topics

Figure 7 reveals trend topics. The term “succession planning” revealed thirteen occurrences from 2013 to 2022. Similarly, the term “talent management” involves 11 frequencies from 2017 to 2022, “workforce” 11 from 2020 to 2024, “job satisfaction” six from 2020 to 2023, “corporate governance” six from 2012 to 2019, “management” ten from 2014 to 2020 “leadership” 33 frequencies from 2016 to 2022, and “mentorship” with six frequencies from 2016 to 2022.

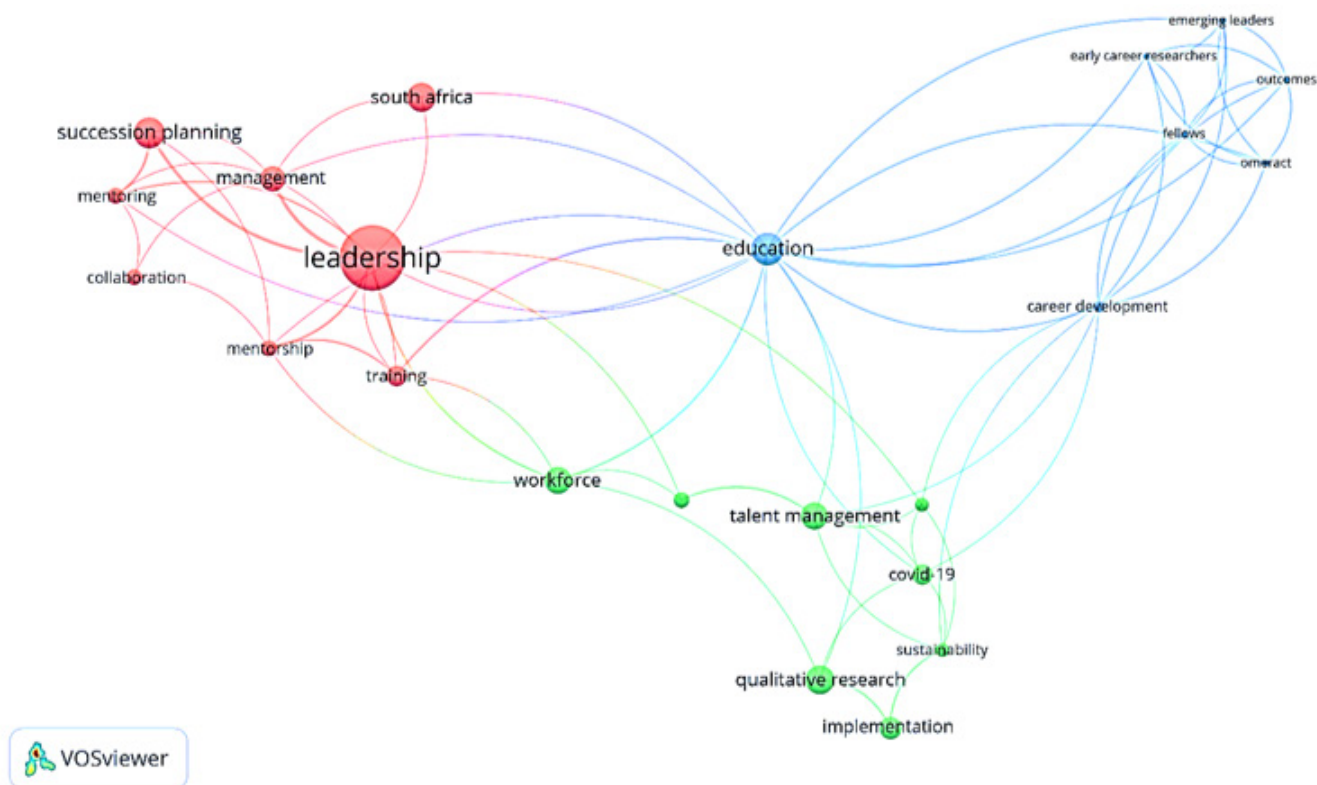


Figure 8: Co-occurrence Network

Figure 8 shows a co-occurrence network. The data selection for this result involves the “co-occurrence of authors’ keywords”, comprising the “minimum number of occurrences of a keyword”, which is two. Out of 1729 key terms, the final ones included for the analysis were 30. The graphical outcome comprises mainly three distinct clusters depicted through green, red, and blue colours. Cluster one involves the key terms “collaboration”, “leadership”,

“management”, “mentoring”, “mentorship”, “succession planning”, and “training”. Similarly, cluster two involves “implementation”, “job satisfaction”, “qualitative research”, “sustainability”, “talent management”, “training and development”, and “workforce”. Moreover, cluster three includes the key terms “career development”, “early-career researchers”, “education”, “emerging leaders”, “fellows”, “omeraact”, and “outcome”.

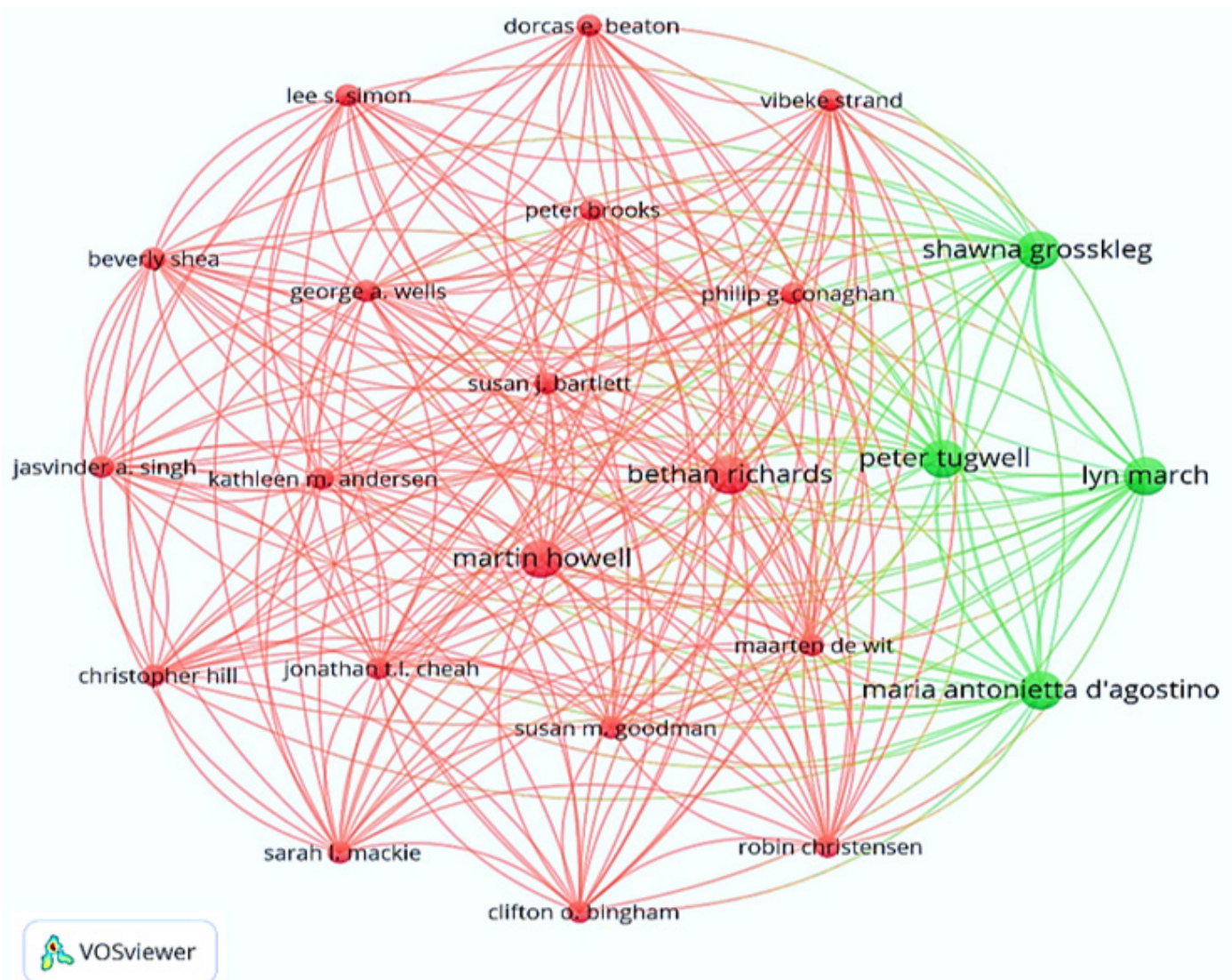


Figure 10: Co-authorship of Authors

Figure 10 illustrates the co-authorship network of authors, revealing the patterns of scholarly collaboration within the dataset. The network was generated using the following thresholds: a maximum of 25 authors per document, a minimum of one document per author, and a minimum of one citation per author. Of the 2,396 authors identified in the dataset, 2,055 met the specified thresholds, from which the 40 most representative authors were selected to construct the co-authorship network.

The visualisation reveals two major collaboration clusters, represented by the green and red colours. The first and larger cluster (green) comprises a closely connected

network of researchers, including Bethan Richards, Beverly Shea, Christopher Hill, Clifton O. Bingham, Dorcas E. Beaton, George A. Wells, Jasvinder A. Singh, Jonathan T. I. Cheah, Kathleen M. Andersen, Lee S. Simon, Maarten de Wit, Martin Howell, Peter Brooks, Philip G. Conaghan, Robin Christensen, Sarah L. Mackie, Susan J. Bartlett, Susan M. Goodman, and Vibeke Strand. These authors demonstrate strong collaborative relationships, suggesting an active research community with frequent co-authorship.

The second cluster (red) consists of a smaller collaboration network involving Lyn March, Maria Antonietta D’Agostino, Peter Tugwell, and Shawna Grosskleg. Although

comparatively smaller in size, this cluster reflects another established group of researchers contributing to the field through collaborative publications. Thus, the co-authorship network highlights the presence of well-defined research collaborations, indicating that scholarly contributions in the field are concentrated within a few interconnected author groups during the study period.

Discussion

This study presents a bibliometric analysis of succession planning research, comprehensively examining the intellectual landscape and publication trends over the period from 2010 to 2025. The findings of the study revealed that annual scientific production manifested a tremendous number of publications during the study period. It demonstrated that the publication of scientific papers in the theme areas showed a rise during the study period. As the term succession planning gained popularity in corporate practices pragmatically, the evolution of the investigation was mostly accomplished by research scholars. This finding is consistent with earlier studies (Al Hajri, 2024; Kamal et al., 2024). Similarly, the outcomes on average citations per year reflected the highest in 2011, and the mean total citations on a yearly basis remained the highest in 2021.

The result for the citation score exhibited fluctuation, with a higher average citation status in the initial stages and a lower one in the subsequent years. Moreover, the findings from three field plots represented the outcomes of key terms, authors, and sources, which manifested workforce, job satisfaction, and succession planning as leading terms, and authors Plessis TD and the “SA Journal of Human Resources Management” and “SA Journal of Information Management” were found as leading sources.

Furthermore, core sources by Bradford’s law depicted the “SA Journal of Human Resource Management” ranked in the first position with the highest publication volume. Next, the sources’ local impact was reflected in the same journal with the highest h-index. The prolific author and publication volume of the researcher, Silver MP, was followed by Plessis TD. Additionally, most globally cited documents found for the work of Pollock et al. (2021) on “Undertaking a scoping review: A practical guide for nursing and midwifery students, clinicians, researchers, and academics” were found in the “Journal of Advanced Nursing”. Similarly, the most locally cited document was the work of Silver et al. (2016) related to the research on “A systematic review of physician retirement planning,” published in “Human Resources for Health,” found the highest local citation score.

Furthermore, this research demonstrated that the most relevant words found for leadership and succession planning stood in the third position. It showed that the theme areas related to “succession planning”, “collaboration”, “leadership”, “management”, “mentoring”, “mentorship”, and “training”. Similarly, other terms found mostly embraced during the study period were “implementation”,

“job satisfaction”, “qualitative research”, “sustainability”, “talent management”, “training and development”, and “workforce”. Moreover, key terms “career development”, “early-career researchers”, “education”, “emerging leaders”, “fellows”, “omeract”, and “outcome” were mostly employed by the researchers during the study period. Trend topics depicted succession planning gaining popularity from 2013 to 2022. The co-occurrence network revealed integrated leadership, succession planning, management, and talent management as vibrating keywords. Co-authorship of the authors included a group of authors, Maria Antonietta D Agostino, Martin Howell, and others, depicting their links.

Conclusion and Implications

This research attempts to explore the trajectory of emerging frontiers of succession planning research covering the fifteen years of data. The findings of the research reveal a tremendous evolution of the investigation in the field of theme areas. It concludes that the embracement of the term succession planning exists among research scholars during the study period, which gains popularity simultaneously among scholars and corporate practitioners. Moreover, succession planning pragmatically occupies a higher importance in the era of modern organisational practices, fostering the cultivation and preparation of leadership. Additionally, the apex position of an organisation requires perpetual leadership; the preparation of a successor is most significant. Thus, it exhibits the importance of the theme of succession planning that gains attention from researchers and corporate practitioners. Similarly, the most relevant words comprise leadership and succession planning. Trend topics further depict succession planning gaining popularity. Co-occurrence network integrates leadership, succession planning, management, and talent management as vibrating keywords. It concludes that several other terms gain popularity, including succession planning, in the period of study.

The outcomes of this study contribute to the existing theoretical foundation by compiling the research trends. Similarly, the practitioner gains benefiting to align this outcome with the strategic decision-making process to explore and understand the significance of succession planning, and the adaptation of effective succession planning can take place in the organisational atmosphere. The research scholars could gain fundamental ideas to emphasise popular key terms for further investigation. However, this research manifests a few limitations, as it encompasses mainly the data source from Lens.org, excluding the other important sources of Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar, and Dimensions. Next, the data comprises only fifteen years, which excludes other investigations accomplished in other periods. Additionally, this study contains only the research articles with open access status, which excludes other vital sources of documents.

Future research may extend the bibliometric analysis by

incorporating additional databases, such as Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and Dimensions, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the succession planning literature. Beyond journal articles, future studies may also include other scholarly outputs, such as conference proceedings, books, book chapters, and dissertations. Additionally, researchers may broaden the scope of analysis by incorporating emerging and related keywords, including *succession planning*, *leadership*, *management*, *mentoring*, *mentorship*, *training*, *implementation*, *job satisfaction*, *qualitative research*, *sustainability*, *talent management*, *training and development*, *workforce*, *career development*, *early-career researchers*, *emerging leaders*, *fellows*, and *outcomes*, to capture evolving research trends and identify new directions in the field.

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Conflict of interest

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Authors Contributions

Padam Bahadur Lama: Conceptualisation, Methodology, Writing-Original Draft, Data analysis, Visualization, Validation, Resources, and Investigation

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The authors acknowledge the use of AI-assisted tools, including generative AI applications, solely for language editing, grammar checking, readability enhancement, and the organization of ideas during manuscript preparation. No AI tools were used for data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, or generating original scientific content. The authors take full responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the manuscript.