FIFTY YEARS OF RESEARCH ON INTERNAL PROMOTIONS: WHERE ARE WE GOING? AN INTERDISCIPLINARY REVIEW AND BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS

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Abstract
Internal promotions allow businesses to fill vacant positions through their current workforce, as an alternative to external recruitment. In this study, we present the findings of the first quantitative review on promotions as a complete field, including publications spanning over the last fifty years and incorporating the branches of social science relevant to this topic: business and management, psychology, sociology, and economics. First, we provided the number of publications, the most prolific authors, and journals over time. Second, we organized the dispersed literature by identifying the six main research trends, and analyzing their relationship with promotions: (i) Internal promotions and career success, (ii) Employee job satisfaction, (iii) Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and tournament theory, (iv) Racial discrimination in leadership positions, (v) Gender inequality, (vi) Job performance and employee personality. Third, we conducted a content analysis of recent publications (2017-2023), outlining key findings from each of the six identified research trends in internal promotions, thus evaluating their present-day relevance. We further identified promising areas for future investigation, particularly in employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intention, and human resource management practices.

Keywords: Bibliometric analysis, career success, internal promotion, job satisfaction, literature review

1. INTRODUCTION

Internal promotions in organizations have both interested and fascinated scholars for decades. The interest comes from the multiple potential approaches to this field and its numerous research trends in the major branches of social science. On the one hand, for employees, it refers to a career opportunity and a shift in job tasks with increased responsibilities. Promotions can also reveal the merit and worth that firms place on the promoted employees and provide direct economic and psychological reinforcement (Sheridan et al., 1997; Zeytinoglu & Cooke, 2008). On the other hand, for employers, it is a means to generate worker incentives (e.g., promotion-based incentive systems) and to fill open positions with suitable candidates (Campbell, 2008).

Promotions are a transversal subject that affects all members of an organization, ranging from the board of directors to the newest junior employees. Consequently, research in this area was not limited to examining promotions to Chief Executive Officer (CEO) positions (Lee et al., 2008), but to middle-management (Wailerdsak & Suehiro, 2004), and blue-collar employees (Bayo-Moriones & Ortín-Ángel, 2006).

Previous literature on internal promotions has covered a diverse array of subtopics, including the influence of mentoring on career success (Bozionelos, 2006), factors that predict promotions (such as schooling or tenure) (Sheridan et al., 1997) or the promotion policies in multinational organizations (Mahnke et al., 2007). Researchers have employed literature reviews (LRs) and meta-analyses to synthesize the extensive body of publications on these various research trends. Chen et al. (2022) examined past research on the effects of political skills on enhancing the chances of career success. Schieu & Hüffmeier (2021) conducted a review of studies investigating the merit-based nature of promotions within companies.

In this study, we identified gaps in the literature on internal promotions that the existing LRs have not addressed. This paper aims to shed light on the following unexplored missing pieces:

First, prior literature reviews have primarily utilized qualitative methods to synthesize previously published research, resulting in data sets that are typically smaller and more manageable for manual examination (Donthu et al., 2021). Additionally, literature reviews are often tailored to address specific research questions in narrow
subtopics within the field of promotions (Palmatier et al., 2018; Snyder, 2019). However, this study represents a novel approach, as it is the first to analyze the last fifty years of internal promotions research as a complete field, including all of its subtopics and several hundred publications. Rather than focusing exclusively on a single academic discipline, this study incorporates all relevant branches of social science, including business and management, psychology, sociology, and economics.

Second, as already indicated, earlier analyses have solely focused on qualitative features of the literature. Our review differs from those of other authors as it provides, not only a qualitative approach; but also a quantitative interpretation and evaluation of earlier publications covering both, contemporary and former studies.

Third, due to their fragmentation and limited concentration on certain subtopics, the aforementioned LRs lack a comprehensive understanding of the most significant trends on internal promotions as a complete field. Scattered literature makes it difficult for interested scholars to review and become knowledgeable about the current research trends on a given topic. On account of these arguments, the next objective of this paper is to provide a scientific map by clustering the most relevant research trends.

Fourth, the research trends in our scientific map have been formed through fifty years of literature and thus, it remains uncertain whether these trends, formed over such an extended period, continue to have relevance or spark interest in today’s academic community. To alleviate this uncertainty, we undertook a quantitative investigation, thoroughly examining the volume of publications from 2017 to 2023, the most recent period included in our analysis. We reveal the number of publications associated with each cluster, and conduct a content analysis of the latest trending topics and major findings within each research trend. By doing this, we aim to steer scholars toward the dominant trends in the field of internal promotions, providing crucial insights that can influence the direction of future research.

We investigated the formerly pinpointed issues by answering the following research questions (RQs):

- RQ1: How have the patterns of publication evolved in the field of internal promotions?
- RQ2: What are the primary research trends that have emerged from five decades of literature on internal promotions?
- RQ3: Which research trends currently sustain the highest level of academic engagement?

In this study, we utilized a blend of systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis techniques to shape our investigation. A cornerstone of our methodology is the R-package ‘bibliometrix’, particularly its interactive application, Biblioshiny. This software provides an expansive set of tools for comprehensive and insightful exploration and visualization of our dataset. Serving as an invaluable tool for quantitative literature analysis and science mapping (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). Bibliometrix allows for more extensive techniques and visualization options than the rest of the available science mapping analysis tools (i.e., VOSviewer, SciMAT, or ScientoText) (Moral-Muñoz et al., 2020).

2. METHODOLOGY

In this section, we describe the process through which we refined our dataset for bibliometric analysis. The search protocol process is summarized in Figure 1.

We selected the databases Thomson Reuters’ Web of Science (WoS) and Elsevier’s Scopus, the most universal databases used for discerning existing literature in various fields (Guz & Rushchitsky, 2009). Scopus has a broader article coverage in social sciences than WoS (Norris & Oppenheim, 2007).

We followed the guidance of Cooper (2010) in selecting keywords that are broad enough to encompass a wide range of literature but specific enough to ensure that only studies directly related to the topic are captured. To ensure a comprehensive search, we included the keywords 'internal promotion' OR 'upward mobility' OR 'career advancement'. These keywords were selected due to their relevance to the topic and their consistent usage in previous literature reviews that encompassed various aspects of internal promotions (Chen et al., 2022; Schleu
& Hüffmeier, 2021). By searching for these keywords in titles and abstracts, we aimed to capture studies that directly addressed the concept of internal promotions. The initial extraction resulted in 7,625 hits.

To ensure the quality and relevance of the literature included in our analysis, we implemented several exclusion criteria. Firstly, we limited our search to peer-reviewed articles, excluding non-source items and grey literature such as conference papers, working papers, reports, or theses. Additionally, we focused on publications published in the English language, which accounted for 93% of the initial search results. Furthermore, we excluded literature published before 1972 due to a substantial discontinuity in total publications during that period.

To prevent the exclusion of relevant academic fields, we meticulously reviewed the content in every category provided by Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus. Our investigation revealed that the concept of promotion was relevant not only in business and management fields (57%), but also in economics (18%), psychology, sociology, and their respective sub-fields (18%), such as applied psychology. Consequently, we selected not only business and management-related peer-reviewed papers but also other disciplines that provided different perspectives on internal promotions. When articles are strongly aligned with a specific category, WoS and Scopus perform well at classifying those journals into their categories (Wang & Waltman, 2016). Previous studies have demonstrated that WoS exhibits the highest journal classification accuracy, followed by Scopus (Pranckute, 2021). After refining the inclusion criteria based on these considerations, the extraction count was reduced to 3,938 articles.

To ensure the integrity of our dataset, a rigorous examination of all titles and abstracts was conducted to identify and eliminate duplicates, reducing our sample to 2,393 unique publications. Abstracts were meticulously reviewed to ensure the inclusion of studies that directly aligned with our definition of 'internal promotions', outlined in the introduction. We implemented a blind review process where two independent reviewers assessed each sample. Only those papers that met our definition and received agreement from both reviewers were included in the final sample (Neuendorf, 2002; Levy and Ellis, 2006). We discarded papers that discussed outcomes related to the regulatory focus theory but did not directly address the concept of internal promotions as per our definition.

This systematic and rigorous approach ensured that our final bibliometric dataset, consisting of 642 publications, was directly and exclusively relevant to our research questions.

![FIGURE 1 - SEARCH PROTOCOL PROCESS](image-url)
3. INTERNAL PROMOTIONS RESEARCH PERFORMANCE

In the following section, we performed a quantitative overview of the last five decades of literature on promotions. We provided the number of publications, the most prolific authors, and journals over time.

3.1. Internal promotions publications over time

The review analyzed a total of 642 relevant articles published between 1972 and 2023. We illustrated the growing pattern of the literature in Figure 2 showing an increasing interest from researchers in the field of promotions. We aggregated data every 5 years due to the number of years included in this study, and for the latest period, spanning from 2017 to 2023, which encompasses 7 years.

We identified two momenta in the growth of the literature on promotions: the first explosion of the topic, from 1972 to 1996, and the second growth, from 2007 to 2023.

![FIGURE 2 - INTERNAL PROMOTIONS PUBLICATIONS OVER TIME](image)

3.2. Authors researching internal promotions

Authors researching the field of employee promotions tend to collaborate with other academics, 642 papers were written by 1317 authors (2.05 authors per paper). We showed in Figure 3 the top 20 authors that published more works on promotions in our sample. The most relevant was DeVaro with 8 publications and a local h-index of 7. Local h-index is defined as the authors or journals that have published h papers contained in our sample, and they have been cited at least h times. Spilerman and Kalleberg issued 5 publications each with a local h-index of 5 for both authors.

![FIGURE 3 - AUTHORS RESEARCHING INTERNAL PROMOTIONS](image)
3.3. Journals publishing literature on promotions

The 642 articles of the sample were published in 226 journals. We illustrated the top 20 sources that published more studies in Figure 4. The top 5 are the International Journal of Human Resource Management, Journal of Vocational Behavior, Industrial Relations, Journal of Applied Psychology, and Journal of Business Research. The average local h-index for the top 5 is 13 and the average Journal Impact Factor is 8.54.

4. SCIENTIFIC MAP: RESEARCH TRENDS ON INTERNAL PROMOTIONS

In subsection 4.1, we defined the methodology used to identify and segment the most prominent research trends in internal promotions, derived from five decades of studies. In subsection 4.2, the findings from each cluster are comprehensively discussed.

4.1. Methodology: keywords co-occurrence analysis

The author’s keywords are used as a representation of the main themes of promotions. The co-occurrence of keywords is a means to cluster different research areas from a corpus of scientific literature on a given topic (Callon et al., 1991). Two keywords, i and j, co-occur if they simultaneously appear in the same document (Cambrosio et al., 1993). This methodology is based on the assumption that if keywords appear together in a research paper, they have a topic connection. The more frequently they appear together, the stronger the correlation will be in the network. Thus, a co-occurrence network will allow us to pinpoint the distinct research trends belonging to promotions (Cambrosio et al., 1993; Czachesz, 2017). To obtain the conceptual structure and the scientific map, the following steps were taken:

We reviewed the author’s keywords of the sample to ensure the robustness of the results. We converted singular and plural keywords to match (e.g., promotions to promotion), and we coupled the synonyms that were expressing the same meaning (e.g., work satisfaction to job satisfaction).

Based on the co-occurrence of the keywords in the articles, Biblishiny, the web interface for bibliometrix, generated a network map of the different subtopics on promotions that can be visualized in Figure 5. The more frequently they co-occur in the publications, the stronger their link is. As a result, they have been clustered in the same group of keywords belonging to a specific research trend on promotions.

PageRank was calculated for every keyword included in the sample to define the role and importance within the network. PageRank centrality (PR) (Brin & Page, 1998; Page et al., 1999), is an algorithm originally developed to rank the importance of web pages. However, the mathematics behind it can be implemented in any network (Gleich, 2015). It indicates the importance of a node in the network by assigning scores, the higher the score, the more important the node is in the network:
Where \( PR(a) \) is the PageRank score of node \( a \), \( d \) is the damping constant value between 0 and 1, \( PR(i) \) are the PageRank scores of the nodes \( i \) connected to node \( a \), and \( C(i) \) are the total number of outgoing links of node \( i \) to other nodes. These links can or cannot go to node \( a \). PR will form a probability distribution over nodes. Thus, the sum of all nodes’ PR scores must equal one (Brin & Page, 1998).

### 4.2. Results of the scientific map: research trends on internal promotions

In Figure 5 we presented the scientific map and its most significant research trends. In Table I we showed the keywords of each cluster and the results of the PageRank centrality measure.

**FIGURE 5 - RESEARCH TRENDS ON INTERNAL PROMOTIONS: NETWORK MAP OF THE KEYWORDS CO-OCCURRENCE**

**Cluster #1: Internal promotions and career success**

This cluster contains the fundamental theme of this article: promotion, with the highest PR value, closely followed by career success. Internal promotion and career success are closely related topics throughout their literature and thus, frequently co-occur. Career success can be understood as professional achievements that can be observed and evaluated by others (Jaskolka et al., 1985). Promotion, in this context, is used as a predictor of objective career success (Ng et al., 2005). Gender also appertains to this cluster as it regularly appears together with promotions and career success in researching family-to-work gender roles (Abele, 2003). Gender in this research front does not refer to discrimination suffered by women in terms of promotion opportunities. With hundreds of publications, this subtopic has developed to the point where it has its own research trend (cluster #5). Human capital is defined as an increase in cognitive skills, knowledge, and professional experience, leading to a growth in employee productivity (Becker, 1964; Davidsson & Honig, 2003). It belongs to this research trend as it is significantly tied to the rest of the topics, researchers on human capital investigate the impact that it has on potential promotions (Hedge et al., 2006; Kassis et al., 2017) and career success (Ng et al., 2005; Rieger et al., 2023).

**Cluster #2: Employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment, human resource management, turnover, and performance appraisal**

Job satisfaction is the central theme of this cluster with the most relevant centrality score, it refers to an individual’s inner opinion on their employment. It is strongly related to promotions research since employee job satisfaction is influenced by prospects of promotions (Bettencourt & Brown, 1997). An individual who reports higher levels of job satisfaction can also increase their organizational commitment, rated second most important topic, and defined as the strength of a person’s identification within an organization (Dirani & Kuchinke, 2011;
Dougherty et al., 1985; Nantavisit et al., 2023; Porter et al., 1974). Lack of internal promotions can weaken employee organizational commitment and increase staff turnover or intention to leave the company (Walsh & Deery, 2006). Human resource management is included in this cluster jointly with employee performance appraisal, as both can impact job satisfaction (Fletcher & Williams, 1996; Kaya et al., 2010) and organizational commitment (Fletcher & Williams, 1996; Jenkins & Delbridge, 2013).

Cluster #3: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and tournament theory

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and tournament theory are the key topics of this cluster. This research trend suggests that little differences in performance can cause large differences in reward (Connelly et al., 2014; Lazear & Rosen, 1981). Tournament theory frequently co-occurs with the most relevant topics of this research trend: CEO, pay gap, and executive compensation (Kim & Jang, 2023). It is also connected with the central theme, internal promotions. Tournament theory attempts to explain why there is a disproportionate pay gap between CEOs’ compensation and employees in lower ranks. This large pay gap motivates a broader base of workers to compete for a promotion in a winner-loser contest and thus, to increase their performance (Eriksson, 1999).

Cluster #4: Racial discrimination in leadership positions

Leadership is clustered with race/ethnicity as this research trend attempts to explain the limited access of various races to leadership roles and fewer promotions in different contexts (Eagly & Chin, 2010; Khatibi, 2023; Walumbwa et al., 2007). Furthermore, different leadership roles can determine the organizational culture defined as the set of shared ideals and principles that influence how people behave and think in an organization (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988).

Cluster #5: Gender inequality

Discrimination has the highest PR score. Diversity and women are then listed after it, sorted by relevance in the cluster. Gender discrimination is an important subtopic of the promotions literature. It includes the glass ceiling and gender inequality concepts. This research trend aims to investigate the barriers that prevent women from advancing in a profession (Chen et al., 2023; Liff & Ward, 2001; Rowe, 1990; Weyer, 2007).

Cluster #6: Job performance and employee personality

This cluster grouped job performance and personality according to their similar PR ratings. The literature on the big five personality traits: neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, frequently contains both subtopics to study how personality affects job performance and prospects of promotion (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Kassis et al., 2017; Stephan et al., 2023).

**TABLE 1 - RESEARCH TRENDS ON INTERNAL PROMOTIONS: KEYWORDS CO-OCCURRENCE PAGE RANK MEASURES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster #1</th>
<th>Cluster #2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keyword</td>
<td>PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td>.11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career Success</td>
<td>.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Capital</td>
<td>.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>Incentives</td>
<td>.01</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster #3</th>
<th>Cluster #4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keyword</td>
<td>PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tournament Theory</td>
<td>.02</td>
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<tr>
<td>Executive Compensation</td>
<td>.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pay Gap</td>
<td>.01</td>
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<tr>
<th>Cluster #5</th>
<th>Cluster #6</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keyword</td>
<td>PR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women</td>
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PR: PageRank score
5. DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE ACADEMIC RESEARCH

In our scientific map, we delineated the six predominant research trends that have evolved over the past half-century of literature. However, it is unclear if these research trends are still actively pursued or hold contemporary relevance within the academic community. To guide researchers toward the prevailing trends in the field of internal promotions, we performed a quantitative study of the publication volume from 2017 to 2023, the most recent time frame included in this study. We searched in WoS and Scopus the keywords of each cluster during the specified time frame only excluding duplicates and limiting to the fields of science included in this study: business and management, economics, psychology, and sociology. In Table II, we provided the number of publications of each cluster and a content analysis of the most recent trending topics and key findings of each research trend. While all clusters have been examined in Table 2, our analysis especially highlights potential areas for further investigation in topics from cluster #2, which has attracted substantial scholarly attention and a high number of publications.

**TABLE 2 - CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH TRENDS DURING THE PERIOD 2017 TO 2023**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research trends on internal promotions</th>
<th>Trending topic</th>
<th>Key findings</th>
<th>Observed in:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cluster #1 Internal promotions and career success</td>
<td>Human capital</td>
<td>There is a strong and favorable correlation between a person’s employment history and the number of roles they have held and their chances of being promoted to a top management position. Engaging in entrepreneurial endeavors helps individuals develop human capital skills that can benefit their future corporate careers, even if their entrepreneurial ventures are unsuccessful. Graduates who experienced entrepreneurial failure may actually possess an advantage in pursuing corporate careers compared to those who initially entered the corporate world.</td>
<td>(Frederiksen &amp; Kato, 2018) (Rieger et al., 2023)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Effects of mentoring and networking on promotions</td>
<td>The authors discovered that when employees receive mentoring, they appear to develop more useful network resources, which in turn increases their access to training and development and improves their chances of getting promoted. Finding a mentor is strictly linked to career success. Having a male mentor and informal mentoring relationships is linked to higher salaries and organizational levels. Not all dimensions of networking are equally important to predict objective career success and promotions. For instance, promotions in China are more influenced by intraorganizational networking (i.e., creating, maintaining, and using internal contacts) than extra-organizational networking (i.e., maintaining and using external contacts).</td>
<td>(Gara Bach Ouerdian &amp; Mansour, 2019) (Singh et al., 2018) (Volmer et al., 2018)</td>
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<td>Cluster #2 Employee job satisfaction</td>
<td>Organizational commitment and employee turnover intention</td>
<td>Promotion opportunities are positively associated with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover reduction. The authors confirmed a strong inverse association between organizational commitment and turnover intention. Among the three facets of organizational commitment, (dis)satisfaction with internal promotions was negatively associated with affective commitment (affection for your job and identification with the organization), and normative commitment (sense of duty to remain in the company). However, it was positively associated with continuance commitment (investments in the company that become “sunk costs” which bind employees to the company). Contrary to previous research, in Turkey and for white-collar employees, the authors found that promotion opportunities did not predict employee organizational commitment.</td>
<td>(Harun et al., 2017; Kang et al., 2021; Nantavisit et al., 2023; Wen et al., 2018) (Rawashdeh &amp; Tamimi, 2020) (Naila et al., 2020) (Cicekli &amp; abasakal, 2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td><strong>Human Resource Management (HRM) practices: employee appraisals</strong></td>
<td>How employees view fairness in promotion systems and evaluations within their organization can have an impact on their attitudes toward the company, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction.</td>
<td>(Qureshi et al., 2017)</td>
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<td>Appraisals are differentiated between those that have monetary effects, such as promotions, and those that do not. The findings show that appraisals connected to promotion outcomes are an effective HR management tool to increase employee job satisfaction.</td>
<td>(Kampkötter, 2017)</td>
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<td>Despite being tedious and unpleasant activities, appraisals have a direct impact on promotion decisions. Even though narrative text comments are frequently collected as part of the performance appraisal process, traditional research has been almost exclusively focused on conventional numerical ratings. This study demonstrates how narrative text comments might improve performance assessment.</td>
<td>(Cappelli &amp; Conyon, 2018)</td>
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<td>The pay differential between the CEO and its subordinate executives is the tournament incentive that in turn, motivates executives to compete for a promotion. The risk of failure of Initial Public Offerings (IPOs) is significantly reduced by higher tournament incentives, and this effect is more pronounced when internal promotion contests are more likely to take place.</td>
<td>(Colak et al., 2021)</td>
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<td><strong>Cluster #3</strong> (Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and tournament theory)</td>
<td>The authors investigated tournament incentives’ effects on the performance of corporate acquisitions. Stronger tournament incentives lead to worse acquisition performance. A deeper analysis reveals that senior executives’ risk-seeking behavior, which was encouraged by tournament incentives, is what is responsible for the negative effect.</td>
<td>(Hasan et al., 2020)</td>
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<td>Applying tournament theory the authors examine the impact of manager proactivity on career outcomes, revealing that proactivity enhances promotion through leader schema matching but is hindered by unethical behavior, resulting in derailment instead of advancement in senior leadership roles. Competition for promotion among non-CEO senior executives could be detrimental to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) performance.</td>
<td>(Crossley et al., 2023)</td>
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<td><strong>Cluster #4</strong> (Racial discrimination in leadership Positions)</td>
<td>The authors discovered that in some academic fields, full professor promotions for members of racial or ethnic minorities are less common than for their white peers. Some candidates also reported that racism has been present in the promotion process to full professor positions.</td>
<td>(Groom, 2017; Durodoye et al., 2020)</td>
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<td>Organizations use claims of equality, diversity management, and silencing practices to avoid addressing underrepresentation, ultimately perpetuating the exclusion of Indigenous Australians from leadership position, termed as ‘discrimination by avoidance.’</td>
<td>(Khatibi, 2023)</td>
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<td><strong>Cluster #5</strong> (Gender inequality)</td>
<td>In Italian universities, men are about 24% more likely than women to be promoted to full professor when scientific production is equal. A similar pattern in Turkey where there is evidence of the existence of gender inequality, especially in promotions from associate professor to full professor levels.</td>
<td>(Bülbül, 2021; Marini &amp; Meschitti, 2018)</td>
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<td>In France and Norway, women are promoted later and less frequently than men. Discrimination against women with children in particular due to a lower scientific production after having children.</td>
<td>(Loison et al., 2017)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research trends on internal promotions</td>
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<td>Universities in the western USA have lowered the number of years that each academic spends as an associate professor before being promoted to full professor and minimizing gender differences.</td>
<td>(Van Miegroet et al., 2019)</td>
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<td>Significant gender disparities among neurologists specializing in multiple sclerosis (MS) were found in Colombia, with more female participants but notable differences in academic positions, publication records, income, and leadership roles compared to their male counterparts. Despite a higher number of trained female MS neurologists, gender gaps persist across various aspects of their academic and professional careers.</td>
<td>(Casallas-Vanegas et al., 2022)</td>
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<td>In Australia, Canada, Ireland, Jamaica, New Zealand, and the UK, there is evidence of a small female citation advantage over time. Avoiding citation count for promotion processes may disadvantage women in these countries.</td>
<td>(Thelwall, 2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citations among men and women and its influence on promotion prospects</td>
<td></td>
<td>Training and internal promotions motivate employees and in turn, it has a positive and significant effect on job performance. Job promotions have a bigger effect on job performance than training. The authors conclude that promotions depend on relative comparisons of employees’ performance since higher output and better quality of peer-reviewed publications are associated with a higher probability of being promoted in academia. Perceptions of promotion opportunities can directly influence job performance In Japan and USA, extroversion, one of the big five personality traits, is positively related to internal promotions. In Japan, being agreeable helps male employees increase their earnings each year but it negatively affects male employees in the United States. People with a low tendency to act morally but with a high cognitive processing speed might enjoy higher prospects of promotion.</td>
<td>(Haryono et al., 2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cluster #6 Job performance and employee Personality</td>
<td>42 publications</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Jokinen &amp; Pehkonen, 2021)</td>
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<td>(Xie &amp; Yang, 2021)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>(Lee &amp; Ohtake, 2018)</td>
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<td>The authors conclude that promotions depend on relative comparisons of employees’ performance since higher output and better quality of peer-reviewed publications are associated with a higher probability of being promoted in academia. Perceptions of promotion opportunities can directly influence job performance In Japan and USA, extroversion, one of the big five personality traits, is positively related to internal promotions. In Japan, being agreeable helps male employees increase their earnings each year but it negatively affects male employees in the United States. People with a low tendency to act morally but with a high cognitive processing speed might enjoy higher prospects of promotion.</td>
<td>(Kassis et al., 2017)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5.1. Future research in cluster #2: Employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment, human resource management, turnover, and performance appraisal

Between 2017 and 2023, Cluster #2 topics emerged as the primary focus for both researchers and practitioners, as evidenced by an impressive tally of 289 publications during this period.

Scholars are focused on investigating employee turnover intentions, primarily how employees’ intentions to stay in their current jobs are influenced by their job satisfaction which in turn, is positively affected by promotion prospects (Harun et al., 2017).

The impact of teleworking on job satisfaction and employee well-being has been the subject of recent research (Bentley et al., 2016; Lu & Zhuang, 2023). The extent of teleworking in organizations forty years ago was very constrained and thus, traditional turnover models such as the Price-Mueller (Price & Mueller, 1981) could not include teleworking as a factor determining job satisfaction and employee turnover. If both teleworking and prospects of internal promotion are variables that have been reported to increase job satisfaction, future researchers might investigate which of the two, teleworking or internal promotions, is more efficient and has longer-lasting effects on employee job satisfaction. If future researchers determine that teleworking has a superior effect on employee job satisfaction than promotions, practitioners could use these results to create work-at-home incentive packages and reduce employee promotions expenditure.
Academics have long concurred that employee organizational commitment, or the degree of attachment and loyalty to an organization, is positively impacted by prospects of promotions (DeConinck & Bachmann, 1994). The conventional wisdom on this subject, however, has recently been put in doubt by Cicekli & Kabasakal (2017), who discovered that while promotions have no effect, positive or negative, on organizational commitment, recognition, and development opportunities do. Internal promotions were found to be negatively associated with affective commitment and normative commitment (both types of organizational commitment described in Table II); but positively associated with continuance commitment (the third type of organizational commitment also described in Table II) (Nalla et al., 2020).

It is reasonable to assume that there is a lack of consensus regarding how promotions affect organizational commitment given the fact that different publications and authors present contradicting results. Do internal promotions affect organizational commitment? If they do, is it a positive effect or a negative effect? How much internal promotions are responsible for organizational commitment? It is crucial to reach a common understanding of how promotions affect employees’ organizational commitment because that commitment directly affects the intention of leaving or staying in the firm (Rawashdeh & Tamimi, 2020). These proposed questions have significant ramifications for human resource management practices. If scholars determine that internal promotions do not affect organizational commitment, a counterintuitive argument, employers might prioritize providing opportunities for recognition rather than promotions (Cicekli & Kabasakal, 2017) or promote supervisor and organizational support (Panaccio et al., 2023). If scholars determine that promotions do affect organizational commitment, practitioners need to consider them if they want to keep their employees committed to the firm and reduce turnover intentions.

Research on Human Resource Management (HRM) practices has emphasized the importance of performance appraisals on internal promotions decisions and how they can increase employee job satisfaction. Past publications have solely gathered and examined data from on-site workers to gauge the influence of performance appraisals for promotions purposes. Since the widespread adoption of teleworking and the emerging importance of this topic, future research can investigate how HRM practitioners currently assess homeworking candidates for promotions. Future researchers may also explore if HRM departments are offering the same prospects for promotion to teleworking employees as to on-site ones as well as compare the promotion speed. Scholars might also compare the rates of promotion at businesses that generally permit employees to work from home with those that do not.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

This paper uses systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis to investigate internal promotions in organizations. The conclusions of this research are presented as follows:

First, the initial contribution of this study has been to provide, emerging and established researchers on internal promotions, with a holistic review of the past fifty years of literature to set the ground for future investigations. It is the first one to include all perspectives and research trends from the principal academic disciplines researching this field: business and management, psychology, sociology, and economics. We showed in the performance analysis an increasing interest from researchers and practitioners in the field of promotions. Particularly, there are two points in time where the literature has rapidly advanced: from 1972 to 1996, and the second growth, from 2007 to 2023.

Second, the scientific map obtained through the keywords co-occurrence analysis will allow scholars, regardless of the academic discipline, to identify the six principal research trends: (1) internal promotions and career success, (2) employee job satisfaction, organizational commitment, human resource management, turnover and performance appraisal, (3) Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and tournament theory, (4) racial discrimination in leadership positions, (5) gender inequality and, (6) job performance and employee personality. The content analysis revealed a perfect match between the research trend identified through the keywords selected by the authors and the actual content of the articles. These findings demstrate that the keywords co-occurrence analysis is an effective method to identify research trends for mature topics with thousands of publications, such as promotions, where authors meticulously select the keywords for their publications.
It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study, as bibliometric analysis is a research tool that provides a comprehensive overview of any particular field, highlighting connections and relationships among different topics. It is a method that has certain limitations. This type of analysis alone cannot capture the nuances and complexity of the research areas, and it should not be used as the sole method for evaluating the research trends. A deeper understanding of the subject requires a thorough examination of each subtopic, which can be obtained through in-depth reviews and other research methods (Andersen, 2021). It is also important to note that the results obtained through a bibliometric analysis can be subject to bias due to the choices made regarding the keywords, software, and techniques used. Additionally, while PageRank centrality is a commonly used statistic, future researchers may want to consider alternative methods to rank the importance of the topics within the clusters.

REFERENCES


