

Navigating the Hybrid Workplace: Insights from the Literature for Leaders

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ABSTRACT

The last few years have witnessed a dramatic shift in the way we work with the adaptation of a technology-driven and people-focused: hybrid work model. Realizing the unparalleled advantages for both employees and employers, organizations have globally transformed their business processes to incorporate hybridity. The emerging inclination toward this contemporary work model demands robust research to understand its implications and measures of effective implementation. This review article aims to identify the recent trends in the related research by analyzing the growth of year-on-year publications, the top five contributing countries, the research methodologies utilized, the dominant themes, and suggested directions for future research. The five prevalent themes identified were: flexibility, technology, mental wellbeing, learning agility, and affective commitment. Overall hybrid workplace once anticipated as the future is today a reality that has burdened managers with the responsibility of effectively managing and utilizing a dispersed workforce.

Keywords: Hybrid Workplace, Flexibility, Digital Transformation, Mental Wellbeing, Learning Agility, Affective Commitment

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INTRODUCTION

Companies worldwide have recognized the necessity of adopting hybrid work models to accommodate diverse work preferences. Both employees and employers understand the benefits that hybridity provides in terms of enhanced engagement and productivity. Leading global companies such as Microsoft, Citi Bank, Infosys, British Airways, Apple, American Express, Uber, Cisco, and Google have responded to this work preference by adapting hybrid work models (O'Loughlin, 2023). While employees prefer to work for organizations that offer the flexibility of time and location (Krajčik et al., 2023), employers prefer to offer hybrid work models to tap into a wider talent pool and save on operational costs (Siddika, 2023).

Hybrid work can be traced back to the 1960's when it was practiced by countries such as the USA and Europe as an alternate work arrangement. By 2014, nearly half of the mid-level managers in

Western countries had the privilege of considering working from home as an option (*Make-work-more-human*, n.d.). According to a study on hybrid workplace statistics globally, approximately 65% of workplaces have incorporated hybridity in their work models (Poblete, 2024). This number is estimated to witness heightened growth, reaching more than 80% of businesses adapting hybrid work arrangements by 2025. This enormous adaptation of the hybrid work model has thus gained increased attention from researchers and scholars. The implications and complexities involved in hybrid work arrangements need to be understood better. Studies conducted to examine the engagement and performance of employees in hybrid workplaces have expanded the Job Demand – Resource Model to include hybridity (Naqshbandi et al., 2023).

The impact of hybridity on employee well-being is debatable. A study conducted on 200 IT employees advocates that adaptation of a hybrid work model provides a better work-life balance fostering happiness and further ensuring attraction and retention of talent (R. Santiago Antony Selvi & Vandana Madhavkumar, 2023). Research conducted in the public sector has further highlighted the different advantages and implications of flexible work for men and women. However, certain scholars (Kumari, 2023) have investigated the negative implications of hybrid and remote work setups on employee well-being.

This continuously evolving work model with its varied benefits and drawbacks, demands thorough research on various work-life parameters.

This study aims to review the accumulated insights available in literature related to hybrid workplaces, highlight prevalent themes, recommend theoretical and practical implications, and outline scope for future analysis. To achieve this objective, we conducted a systematic review of empirical research on hybrid workplaces and identified 157 articles published in business, management, accounting, and psychology journals. This paper is organized as follows:

We first describe the research design, then present the results and analysis, concluding with future implications of our study.

METHODS

The existing literature was analyzed using a software-aided tool to trace the evolution of a hybrid work model and identify the emerging themes. We used the Scopus database, recognized as the most inclusive database to ensure that only quality research articles were reviewed. (Pranckute, 2021). A Boolean search using “Hybrid AND Workplace” as keywords was conducted for the preliminary research, resulting in 1,083 documents published between 1979 to March 2024. The study was further refined by narrowing down to the journal articles published in areas of business, management, accounting, and psychology in the English language only. The articles were then screened basis the content to ensure consistency with our subject of interest resulting in a final database of 157 articles. This research attempted to accumulate studies related to hybrid workplaces and aimed to provide a comprehensive view using bibliographic mapping methodologies. (Lazarides et al., 2023). Bibliometric analysis provides a novel approach for categorizing and quantitatively evaluating bibliographic content such as publications, authors, institutions, and citations within a scientific field. Using a bibliometric approach, this research examines the publication trend over the years, the contributing countries, methods used, and topics explored in the studies related to hybrid workplaces. Co-occurrence analysis was conducted using the bibliometrix R package to identify the conceptual structure of a hybrid workplace. The analysis

facilitated the identification of themes and connections across the studies gathered but did not produce any concrete categories. The final compilation of research clusters was determined through subjective judgment.

DISCUSSION

In this section, we review 157 articles spread across 47 countries to understand the growing curiosity of researchers to explore the functioning of a hybrid workplace. The congregate database analysis to identify the predominant methods employed and the industries focused on is also presented. Co-word analysis to discern the recurring patterns and themes in this area of research is an important part of this section.

Descriptive Analysis

The findings of this review article indicate a heightened interest amongst scholars about the nature of the hybrid workplace and its related issues. As Figure 1 depicts, the research pertaining to hybrid workplaces has witnessed an increase of 8.62% annually since 1995. The sudden spike in the interest of researchers and journals for studies related to hybrid, reaching its peak with forty-one articles in 2022, can be attributed to the post-pandemic global adaptation of the hybrid work model as a strategic initiative aimed at managing a distributed workforce and driving digital transformation. (Malkani, 2021)

[Figure 1 goes about here]

Our review encompasses data from 47 countries, with the United States (96 studies), the UK (69 studies), and India (45 studies) emerging as the primary contributor to research on this subject (Table 1). This coincides with the data that suggest that more than half of the working population in these countries prefer work hybridity – UK (70%), USA (57%) and India (54%). (*Hybrid Working: Why There's a Widening Gap Between Leaders and Employees*, 2022)

[Table 1 goes about here]

The systematic literature review of the accumulated database revealed that amongst the 157 articles studied, most of the researchers have utilized quantitative methods to understand hybrid workplaces employing structure equation modeling, ANOVA, regression, and descriptive analytics. (Table 2).

[Table 2 goes about here]

Qualitative methods were discovered as the next most popular method utilizing the longitudinal case study method and examining data collected through in-depth interviews and websites or newspapers using thematic analysis, narrative analysis, and inductive approach. Most of the research used managerial positions as samples for their study, with a few exceptions that focused on categories such as newcomers (Mazzei et al., 2023) or a generation like millennials (Ryan & Cross, 2024).

Thematic Mapping

To explore the intellectual structure of the papers based on the author's keywords co-word analysis was conducted. This approach has been widely used to identify the prevalent themes based on the co-occurrence count of the author's keywords (Huang et al., 2019).

[Figure 2 goes about here]

This analysis generated a visualized network structure reflecting the keywords used by authors investigating a hybrid workplace (Figure 2). This network comprised 43 nodes and the size of the node reflects the number of articles labeled with a given topic. Further, a qualitative assessment of the papers was also done to classify these forty-three nodes into five clusters to better understand the dominant themes in this area of study. (Table 3).

[Table 3 goes about here]

Flexibility- the key driver: Flexibility, trust, and technology have been the three pillars of the workplace's future, and the hybrid model is evolving on these grounds (Souza, Luis De, 2022). The option to occasionally work from home, initially viewed as a perk, has today transformed into an inevitable factor in the workplace (Caraianni et al., 2022). Research conducted in Slovakia and Kuwait suggests that employee's preference for flexibility is evolving with regard to location and time and only a few employees still wish to work from home completely (Krajčík et al., 2023). There is thus a growing need for a work environment that offers flexibility in structures, supportive technologies, digital innovations, and re-designed organizations (Meluso et al., 2022).

The hybrid work model offers a blend of work-from-home (WFH) and work-from-office (WFO) balancing the advantages of WFH: flexibility, autonomy, work-life balance, productivity, reduction of operational costs, and benefits of WFO: creativity, sense of belongingness and effective collaboration (Cook et al., 2020).

However, the contemporary work models are not just limited to working from home and office but extend in terms of flexibility by offering various arrangements that allow employees to either choose both when and where to work (remote flextime) or to decide the location of reporting but work for the designated hours of the day (remote fixed time), to report to the office on a few days and choose to work remotely on others (office first) or prefer to work remotely on most days and report to the office for a few days (remote first) or to report to the office on the compressed work days (compressed work week) as per the nature of business and organization strategy.

Context for Leaders

Enhanced flexibility in the workplace today with its merits of better work-life balance, productivity, innovation, creativity, motivation, and overall performance also poses challenges such as increased stress for managers to coordinate the widely dispersed teams and unbiasedly evaluate performance, reduced social learning, low team cohesiveness and ultimately frail organization culture. Today, managers have to put in extra effort to ensure remote workers' involvement in spontaneous discussions and minor decision-making. (Haas, 2023). Unfortunately, more than 70% of managers surveyed admit they lack formal training to manage the workforce in a hybrid setup (Williams, 2024). Successful implementation of flexible work arrangements thus requires sensitizing and equipping managers with skills for effective, efficient, and unbiased decision-making

Technology as an enabler: Organizations have successfully adopted a hybrid work model integrating office work with flexibility through digital transformation (N. Chellam, Dr. Divya D, 2022). To enable employees to work from anywhere, hybrid workplaces are continuously investing in technology-led initiatives such as cloud computing, artificial intelligence, video conferencing, and data security. According to a McKinsey 2020 report, the companies investing in digitization are expected to earn twice the revenue compared to the companies that are reluctant to do so (LaBerge et al., n.d.).

The key aspects related to the role of technology in a hybrid workplace that emerged from the review of literature were improved communication, enhanced collaboration, automation of redundant tasks, and effective knowledge sharing. However, the dependency on advanced technology also posits challenges such as technostress.

Improved Communications: A 2023 study on technology-mediated communication reinforces that hybrid communication involving some in-person communication and video conferencing enables employees to share non-verbal information and develop social bonding which aids in moderately generating affective organizational outcomes and fostering emotional connection (Skootsky et al., 2023). Research considers technology as a socio-material dimension creating virtual spaces for employees to collaborate, learn, and communicate in a hybrid workplace (Petani & Mengis, 2021). Social media platforms also help organizations to fulfill the challenging task of engaging employees, building trust, the feeling of belongingness, and inclusivity through storytelling and sharing company-related updates (Jacobs, n.d.).

Automation of redundant tasks: Artificial intelligence also empowers employees to automate and optimize redundant activities, enabling them to focus on developing higher skills, manage strategy, and undertake effective decision-making (Tsipursky, 2023). A survey conducted in 2021 revealed that automation of tasks not only improves customer experience but also enhances employee experience with higher job satisfaction, better work-life balance, and reduced stress for employees. (The Hybrid Workplace: Automating for Better Employee Experiences - Smarten Spaces, n.d.)

Effective knowledge-sharing and collaboration: The hybrid work model leverages digital transformation and revolutionizes the way of working through these artificial intelligence tools that aid in sharing knowledge and improving productivity (Teevan, 2022). A Forbes Article published in 2023 emphasized the significance of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and natural language processing tools to effectively manage knowledge, collaborate, enhance efficiency, and ensure data security (Tsipursky, 2023). Sharing knowledge is indeed a vital aspect to ensure an organization's success, however, even implementing a culture of knowledge sharing cannot guarantee the flow of information due to a lack of relational confidence. Building relational confidence to ask a colleague for knowledge is further challenging in a remote or hybrid workplace environment due to a lack of face-to-face interaction and relationship building (Keppler & Leonardi, 2023). Research conducted on hybrid workplaces suggests that people seeking advice were less inclined to sustain their connections for seeking advice if they perceived a difference in the ease of using technology compared to their advisors. This impact was particularly pronounced when advice seekers spent a substantial amount of time working remotely (Wu et al., 2023). A study executed in a telecommunication company practicing hybrid work arrangements recommends the use of Enterprise social media (ESM) platforms to build relational confidence and motivate employees to ask for the required knowledge (Keppler & Leonardi, 2023).

Technostress: It is found that the modern way of working demands employees to continuously learn the evolving Information and communication technologies (ICTs) and cope by working faster and for longer durations which results in technostress. A review conducted to understand the impact of hybrid working on employee well-being reveals that the dependency on technological advancement in hybrid workplaces is resulting in intellectually demanding tasks, inflated expectations of performance, and employee stress. (Kumari, 2023).

Context for Leaders

The technostress hampers an employee's personal life and causes an adverse impact on work engagement and productivity (Tarafdar et al., 2007). Research conducted on academicians of a South African University suggests organizations ease the adoption of ICTs by providing adequate support and training to use different devices and software efficiently and further establishing policies to clearly define work-life boundaries. (Harunavamwe & Kanengoni, 2023). In line with the JD-R model, research suggests leaders' demand for being available beyond working hours amplifies technostress among the employees. To ensure that the performance is not hampered by the technostress in a hybrid setup, leaders are advised to provide resources such as support, autonomy, and empowerment to the followers. (Rademaker et al., 2023)

Mental Well-Being: Working from home blurred the work-life boundaries, induced a feeling of isolation, reduced socialization, and thus adversely impacted the employee's well-being (Siddika, 2023). In particular, women balancing childcare with work were found to face negative consequences on their well-being while working from home (Moore, 2006).

Reviewing the literature on hybrid workplaces, it was discovered that technological transformation has provided employees with enhanced flexibility and autonomy, resulting in profound mental wellness. The literature also suggests that supportive leadership would be an essential factor in ensuring employee's well-being.

A study conducted in Pakistan suggests that a hybrid workplace with increased digitization aids in improving employees' mental health through IT infrastructure, business spanning, and a proactive stance (Jianmin, Sun et al., 2022). A hybrid workplace provides employees with flexibility, autonomy, empowerment to maintain their work-life balance, supportive leadership, opportunities to frequently communicate in person, information communication technologies (ICTs), and reduced personal distractions ensuring better mental health in comparison to both remote work and enforced work from the office. Hybrid work with its increased flexibility enables employees to maintain a better work-life balance resulting in enhanced performance and reduced stress (Stella, 2020). A hybrid workplace eradicates household distractions that employees experience while working from home, enabling them to maintain their mental well-being. Further, an aspect of a hybrid workplace that allows employees to work from anywhere has proven to not only improve employees' mental health but also boost their emotional, spiritual, and financial health in comparison to the mandatory work-from-office scenario. (Bolisetty et al., 2023)

Context for Leaders

Research also suggests that depending on the team type (co-located, remote, and hybrid), different organizational resources have varied impacts on employee well-being. This research found that flexibility in working hours and exchanges between leader-members were universal factors

ensuring employee well-being, irrespective of the team type. However, trust issues, relationships with team leaders, and face-to-face communication rather than communication frequency impacted employee well-being in a hybrid workplace (Grobelny, 2023). According to a study by “The Workforce Institute at UKG”, managers have the highest impact on a person’s well-being. (*Mental Health at Work: Managers and Money | UKG*, n.d.). To ensure improved mental well-being of employees, leaders are expected to be responsive, available and generate a feeling of purpose towards the organization and its vision for employees. (Brower, 2023)

Learning Agility: Learning agility is defined as the “ability and willingness of a person to learn from experience and apply the lessons learned to improve performance in the future” (DeRue et al., 2012). The systematic literature review suggests that an agile workforce ensures that even in a dynamic environment where all factors of the business environment can vary, the organizations remain relevant.

The dynamic environment of business demands the workforce to be agile ensuring that the organizations can realize the unprecedented changes, and transform their processes and strategies to survive and succeed. Driven by technological transformation and fast-paced evolving business processes, the complex environment today considers learning agility as a necessity to remain relevant (Gupta, 2023).

Research has in fact identified learning agility as a more reliable antecedent of an employee’s potential as compared to job performance (Dries et al., 2012). A hotel industry-based study also found learning agility as a critical factor in establishing resilient organizations (Kim, 2023). E-learning has also proven to encourage learning agility and agile learners further benefit through generous increments in salaries, enhanced perceived value to the organization, the smooth adaption of digital transformation, profound work experience, and increased commitment to the organization (Vinesian et al., 2023).

Context for Leaders

Leaders are considered the driving force for establishing an environment that promotes employees to be proactive and agile (Alavi et al., 2014). The role of motivating leaders is considered vital to promote learning agility among employees and further ensure heightened productivity. The Contemporary work model with enhanced flexibility fosters employee agility required to meet the dynamic job demands (Salmen & Festing, 2021). The leadership in a hybrid workplace offers flexibility, open communication, and trust within the teams, fosters team cohesiveness, promotes collaboration, and frequently recognizes efforts (Mitchell & Brewer, 2022). Such leadership style generates awareness of collective purpose and aids employees in understanding themselves and others, which further impacts the learning agility of the workforce and alignment of team perceptions. The team members then comprehend the objective of the team and are thus motivated to collaborate effectively (Nugroho & Hermawan, 2022).

Jamali & Keshishian (2006) have recognized knowledge as an essential factor in ensuring agility. However, research suggests that the hybrid work model encompasses two types of agile knowledge workers- independent agile knowledge workers (IAKW) who demand autonomy, independence, and empowerment, and dependent agile knowledge workers (DAKW) who rely on leaders for relational and structural support to acquire knowledge (Khatri et al., 2023). Poly (2022) reported

that 72% of organizations have witnessed improved productivity ever since the shift to hybrid. This can be attributed to IAKW leveraging on their self-efficacy and enhanced autonomy of a hybrid workplace to successfully acquire knowledge (Jamali & Keshishian, 2006).

Affective Commitment: Affective commitment is defined as the “affective attachment to an organization characterized by shared values, a desire to remain in the organization, and a willingness to exert effort on its behalf” (Allen & Meyer, 1990). The emotional commitment of employees toward the organization ensures employee engagement, striving for excellence, enhanced job satisfaction, and lower absenteeism. It is found that the more time that an employee spends at home, they start feeling socially disconnected and lose the experience of collective purpose leading to reduced affective commitment (Simon et al., 2023). A study conducted on Indian IT employees exhibits that affective commitment acts as a mediator between high-performance work systems and the learning orientation of employees, this relationship prevails in hybrid as well as in-office settings with virtual space as an exception (Audenaert et al., 2020). In a hybrid workplace, employees have a heightened intention to leave the organization due to a less cohesive relationship with the organization. However, it was also found that permanent employees experience affective commitment towards the organization and are thus, less likely to engage in counterwork behavior despite their intention to leave the organization (Liu et al., 2023).

Context for Leaders

The challenge of developing affective commitment and employee engagement in a hybrid workplace can be resolved through supportive leadership and the implementation of supportive policies. A hybrid workplace with its benefits of flexibility, autonomy, and better work-life balance offers challenges such as developing affective commitment among employees, especially for the new joiner during the onboarding process. Research suggests that even in a hybrid context where social isolation acts as an inhibitor, affective commitment can be instigated in the new joiner by providing them support from the organization and the supervisors in particular (Mazzei et al., 2023). Further, workplace friendship fulfills an employee's social needs and mediates the relationship between supervisor behavior and affective commitment (Guohao et al., 2021).

An analysis carried out by a social enterprise advocate that supportive HR practices, perceived impact on society, and an organization's inclusive strategies toward a diverse workforce foster their emotional connection and commitment towards the organization (Lee et al., 2018). Leaders that tend to promote the welfare of their subordinates, share quality feedback, and have more exchanges with their followers also encourage affective commitment among the employees (Wang et al., 2021; Audenaert et al., 2020). High-performing Working Systems (HPWs) with their holistic and coordinated HR practices such as recruitment, training, performance management, and knowledge management systems also ensure that employees feel emotionally connected with the organization and thus develop affective commitment towards the organization.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

- The hybrid work model is indeed the present and the most expected future of the workplace. However, one size doesn't fit all; thus, organizations should design a customized work model after carefully analyzing the business strategies and preferences of employees.

- The digital transformation enabling the adaptation of a hybrid workplace has blurred the work-life boundaries. The organization should, therefore, undertake measures to clearly demarcate work and life for both employees and managers like ensuring that employees get some breaks during working hours and keeping a cap on work duration to avoid burnout.
- The workforce employed today faces the pressure to continuously learn-unlearn- relearn, this has emerged as a source of technostress. The organizations are advised to recognize their efforts and provide technical and personal support to the employees ensuring their mental well-being and reduced technostress.
- Developing affective commitment among employees has emerged as a challenge for hybrid workplaces. We thus suggest that communication between employees and leaders should be encouraged through in-person meetings or video conferences. We further recommend organizations design a work model ensuring that the team and the leaders meet at least a few days in a month to foster workplace friendship, collaboration, and cohesiveness.
- Building a culture that gives employees a sense of belongingness is also foreseen as a challenge when shifting to a hybrid workplace. The management is thus advised to formulate and implement supportive organizational policies and practices. We appreciate and reinforce the use of social media as an effective tool to build trust, a sense of belongingness, and confidence to ask for information and ultimately develop a strong work culture.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

- This study is a review solely based on the research articles extracted from the Scopus database, future researchers can conduct similar studies using multiple sources such as Web of Science, Dimensions, etc.
- This quantitative review of research articles does not provide a comprehensive framework, future researchers can formulate a conceptual framework to better understand the hybrid workplace.
- Since this study showcased the inflated stress of managers for managing a team dispersed across location and time, future research can examine and compare the job satisfaction of managers in a hybrid workplace vs work from the office.
- The modern way of working empowers organizations to creatively design their own hybrid work model, future researchers can attempt to benchmark the hybrid model according to the industries.
- Managers should be trained to be empathetic, motivating and develop cordial relationships with all their members. Organizations should also equip them with the skills to share constructive and unbiased feedback with their subordinates.
- Future researchers can also investigate the psychological safety of employees in hybrid workplaces to ensure that despite reduced in-person interactions, what measures can the organization adopt to ensure that employees feel comfortable in sharing their ideas or concerns with the management.
- Most of the research advocating the adaptation of this contemporary work model highlights the improved performance and productivity of employees. Future avenues should focus on inspecting the profile of these workers to understand what age, education, experience, and

personality of employees can assure enhanced outcomes and further success in a hybrid model.

CONCLUSION

The hybrid model has proven to be a win-win scenario for both employees and employers. As per the organization's strategy, workforce demographics, and business needs, companies have designed their own work model that offers time and location flexibility to employees. Our study with supportive literature suggests that a hybrid workplace leveraging advanced technology blends the merits of both work-from-office (WFO) and work-from-home (WFH). With enhanced autonomy, empowerment, and flexibility, employees enjoy a better work-life balance, nurture mental wellbeing, communicate effectively, collaborate efficiently, develop social bonds, automate redundant tasks, reduce personal distractions, and perform better. Employers, on the other hand, benefit from a motivated, agile, engaged, creative, and productive workforce. The hybrid model also enables employees to save on their operational costs.

However, adaptation of hybridity has burdened managers today with the stress of managing a diverse workforce working at different locations/ times. They are also held responsible for building trust with their subordinates, motivating them to be agile and proactive. Leaders' role is also considered critical in developing affective commitment and ensuring employee wellbeing by increasing the exchanges, sharing feedback, and unbiasedly evaluating the performance of their team members.

The hybrid work model is still evolving, and it remains to be seen how the workplace dynamics would emerge in this context. Concepts like team building, organization culture, psychological safety, and employee engagement may require deeper investigation by researchers.

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Table 1: Country’s scientific production

Country	Freq
USA	21%
UK	15%
INDIA	10%
AUSTRALIA	7%
CANADA	4%

Source: Compiled from Biblioshiny Package by Author

Table 2: Methods Used for Research

Methods	
Literature Review	12%
Qualitative Methods	35%
Quantitative Methods	45%
Mixed Methods	8%

Source: Literature Review conducted by Author

Table 3: Clusters of Hybrid Workplace Literature

Enablers	Benefits	Challenges
Flexibility - the key driver	Mental Well Being	Affective Commitment
Working from home	Well-being	Culture
Hybrid choice model	Work-life balance	Motivation
Work-from-home	Job satisfaction	Performance
Flexibility	Work environment	Employee participation
Hybrid work model	Social support	Organizational culture
Hybridity		Affective commitment
		Employee motivation
Technology as Enabler	Learning Agility	
Artificial intelligence	Self-efficacy	
Machine learning	Leadership	
Digital transformation	Action learning	
Digital workplace	Knowledge work	
Social Enterprise	Hybrid learning	
Social media	Communities of practice	

Training Effectiveness
Work-based learning
Training
Skills
Workplace learning

Source: Author Conceptualized

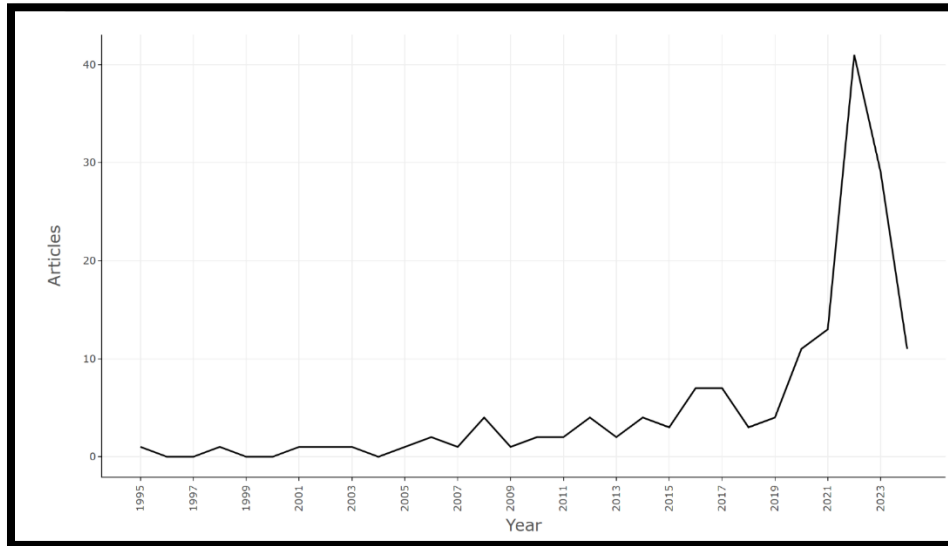


Figure 1: Annual Scientific Production
Source: Compiled from Biblioshiny Package by Author

