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Potential work-life balance risks to HR management in the military: bibliometric analysis

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ABSTRACT

The ongoing war in Ukraine has drawn attention both to combat operations and military personnel readiness for action. Unlike classified security information, human resource management and risks associated with work-life balance and prioritization of family over army service remain an open research subject. This paper aims to examine publication feedback on current HRM trends in the perception of work-life balance, recognizing the potential risk of prioritizing personal life over military service. The data set consists of almost four hundred scientific studies published from 2000 to 2023 and indexed in the Web of Science. Using the VOSviewer software, a bibliometric analysis was performed, focusing on co-authorship, citation cartography and reference linking. The findings indicate a growing research interest in the issue, most of the relevant journal articles being published in the United States. Keyword cluster analysis suggests that the most frequent research topics are military deployments and performance, while, e.g., HR and career development or life and job satisfaction receive less attention.

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Introduction

The current Russia-Ukraine crisis poses increased risks, raising crucial questions regarding the defence and security policy of NATO member states, those of Central and Eastern Europe in particular. Emerging threats are approached in research studies from different angles, embracing geopolitical implications (cf. Ahmed et al., 2023; Caldara et al., 2022; Liadze et al., 2023; Rudischhauser & Mayer, 2019; Shahzad et al., 2023), global financial markets (Qureshi et al., 2022), environmental risks (Pata et al., 2023), or agricultural and food security policies (Glauben et al., 2022; Sohag et al., 2023), the publication sources available reflecting the range of risks and precarious situations caused by the ongoing war conflict.

The risk factor of uncertain military personnel loyalties that are under the pressure of war-induced circumstances is gaining attention, concerns having been voiced, for example, by the representatives of the Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic (a Central European NATO member country). The identified risk refers to attitudes of army staff in situations where they have to choose between the security of their own families and the performance of national defence tasks. A comparative gap analysis has revealed that the defence and security policies of the Czech Republic do not provide sufficient legal support for members of the armed forces and defence ministerial staff, their families and households' security and protection not being perceived as adequate in situations that require their maximum commitment. Although approaches to this issue (some aspects of which are classified) vary from country to country, a hierarchical model prevails, granting the greatest degree of security to constitutional officials and their families. (For example, U.S. Code 9-64.000 on the protection of government officials guarantees comprehensive care for military families on protected bases and provides a military housing rental programme.)

Recent HRM trends emphasize work-life balance (WLB) through flexible work arrangements and supportive policies. Baruch (2021) highlights the rise of hybrid models, offering employees greater flexibility. Tavares (2021) discusses how technology enables remote work, enhancing work-life integration.

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Jiang et al. (2022) emphasize mental health programs as key to maintaining well-being. Rudolph and Pury (2021) point out the importance of family-friendly policies like parental leave. Schiemann and Crook (2021) argue that increasing employee autonomy through flexible schedules is essential for improving WLB.

Recent HRM trends in the military emphasize improving work-life balance (WLB) through various support mechanisms. Meyer et al. (2022) highlight the importance of mental health programs for military personnel, addressing the challenges of deployment and combat stress. Schiemann and Johnson (2022) discuss the integration of flexible work options for non-deployed roles, aiming to reduce stress and improve job satisfaction. Zhang et al. (2023) explore the need for family support policies, such as housing allowances and childcare services, to help military families cope with the demands of military life. Li et al. (2022) focus on leadership initiatives that foster a culture of well-being, promoting a balance between personal and professional responsibilities. Finally, Brown and Sayer (2023) highlight the growing importance of mental health resilience training in military HRM strategies.

This paper represents the output of the first phase of a research project. Attention was paid to the area of human resource management in the perception of work-life balance and awareness of the potential risk of prioritising personal life over military service. In monitoring this issue, it is essential to recognise the potential of one perspective: the well-being of military personnel and the other, namely their performance. The aim of the paper is to reflect on trends and patterns in the field of human resources and risk management in the area of national defence policy, focusing on the work-life balance of military and administrative personnel and to verify whether a bibliometric method using VOSviewer software can be used to identify potential problems. In order to accomplish this goal, it is necessary to answer the following research questions:

1. In which countries and how consistently is national defence policy discussed on a scientific basis?
2. What topics are addressed in the scholarly discussion of defence policy in relation to well-being and human resource and risk management in the military?
3. Is cluster analysis of bibliometric data appropriate for such a narrowly defined issue? What are its disadvantages?

The solution to the article was created using data from both WOS and Scopus. On the basis of the evaluation of the information obtained, we chose the WOS database for the analytical part of the article, taking into account the clarity of the results and outputs from the VOSviewer program. The article was written as part of a project where the WOS database was chosen as the primary source of information.

Reliable data are obtained from the Web of Science (WoS) publication database, for which reason bibliometric analysis makes an innovative contribution to the investigation of the preference of family life over military service. This phenomenon can be better understood through research outputs that have the comparative advantage of being based on the most relevant sources available.

Translated with DeepL.com (free version). The present study consists of the following sections: introduction, literature review, methodology, bibliometric results, discussion and conclusion, the latter two also outlining limitations and possible directions for further research.

Literature review

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, geopolitical risks have increased markedly. As, for instance, Caldara et al. (2022) or Liadze et al. (2023) confirm, both policymakers and investors, as well as other market stakeholders agree that the war is destabilizing the global economy, raising the risk of serious macroeconomic consequences such as falling GDP and rising inflation. Glauben et al. (2022) and Sohag et al. (2023) argue that the current conflict has exacerbated tensions in international agricultural markets, evident since the COVID-19 pandemic, bringing with it rising prices of agricultural commodities reflected in the costs of final production.

Hitherto unseen multifaceted threats to European security and the international order are dealt with, for example, by Rudischhauser and Mayer (2019). Russia's aggressiveness and China's growing assertiveness and power projection capacity have fundamentally changed a general framework for Europe's

common security policy, the basis of which is also challenged by intra-European political tensions (Brexit, populism, friction between EU member states).

According to Manoilo et al. (2021), one of the recent international trends is the growing importance of the so-called power factor. In order to be prepared for other potential crises, NATO has launched its transformation, strengthening the allied military forces in the long run. This process is reflected both from a practical (political) and theoretical (academic) perspective. The analyses are based not only on NATO statistical reports, but also on official documents of military units and information centres, referring to the proposed transformation parameters of member states' armed forces.

Smaliukiene and Bekesiene (2020) tackle the military environment from a sociological point of view. The authors acknowledge a significant influence of generational differences on workplace well-being as a multidimensional phenomenon including physical experience, work performance and relationships, as well as social and emotional abilities. The three-generation sample of almost nine hundred Lithuanian army professionals having been surveyed, the research model was tested adopting a structural equation technique. The results support the general assumption that generational membership has a strong moderating effect on the components of subjective well-being at work. (Different generations have different expectations and goals reflected in their work attitudes—socio-emotional relationships are the most important aspects of well-being for Generation Z, while social and emotional skills play a central role for Generations X and Y.)

Iulian (2011) also focuses on well-being in the military, dealing with the impact of organizational stress on job satisfaction, i.e., on systemic motivation that plays a vital role in achieving organizational excellence when managing risks. The study points out that if stress is anticipated, a crisis situation can be successfully handled by implementing anti-stress strategies and non-financial motivation. Some articles discuss the feeling of well-being from a purely health point of view. Cesur et al. (2013), for example, state that active-duty US soldiers deployed in combat zones suffer from post-traumatic stress disorders and suicidal tendencies more often than their counterparts operating in non-combat zones.

Four basic problems associated with military lifestyle, impacting not only on army personnel but also their family members' well-being, are approached by Burrell et al. (2006). Specifically, they are (1) the risk of injury or death, (2) frequent relocation, (3) regular separation, and (4) residence abroad, i.e., the factors related to psycho-physical equilibrium and job and marital satisfaction of military personnel. The results of a questionnaire survey among partners of army service members showed that the above-mentioned problems can lead to relationship breakdowns. (Staying abroad [4] and fear for the soldier's safety [1] is negatively related primarily to the partner's physical and psychological well-being, whereas frequent relocations [2] affect army officers' satisfaction, constituting a sufficient reason for seeking a new job.)

Recruiting loyal and motivated staff along with strengthening citizens' trust in the army as an irreplaceable institution are of utmost importance for the defence of the country. Drawing on the experience of the Portuguese army, Rosado et al. (2019) argue how the specificities of the military career and environment, in which full institutional commitment, self-discipline and loyalty to the command hierarchy are expected, may dampen individual initiative in pursuing one's own career. In terms of qualified staffing stability, the authors also mention military reserve and early retirements, making way for career advancement and promotion of junior personnel. (Almost half of the survey participants transferred to the reserves before completing their active-duty service, citing not only financial reasons for early retirements.)

Another stabilizing factor is identification with the organizational culture of the institution, especially in private establishments across business sectors and countries, as evidenced by, e.g., Daud (2020), Nadeak and Naibaho (2020), or Yusof et al. (2017). Parashakti (2018) emphasizes that work culture affects not only motivation, but job performance as well. Motivation to lead, its measurement as well as willingness to accept leadership are explored by Kasemaa and Tallinn University (2016) in a survey of more than five hundred military and non-military personnel in the Estonian army, police and universities.

The aforementioned connection between the army credibility among the general public and the management of military human resources is highlighted by a couple of studies from Eastern European countries—Romania and Poland—Drăghici and Spînu (2019) and Adamkiewicz (2018), respectively. Describing the role of civil administration in the Polish state defence system, the former paper stresses the individual responsibility of every official within a complex national military system. Requiring an

immediate response, especially in risky situations, the ethos of service to the country and fellow citizens is transformed into concrete decisions that assume considerable ingenuity, the provision of security in adverse conditions being thus guaranteed by proper motivation and pro-active commitment of officials in charge. (Adamkiewicz, 2018) illustrates the failure of the human factor in 2017 critical situations when the responsible people reacted routinely, not even receiving adequate support from their superiors.)

Building sufficient pools of military reserves and active-duty soldiers is also widely discussed in the literature. Referring to specific Canadian conditions, Busby (2010) considers crucial the reservists' decision-making between maintaining their civilian occupations versus joining the army.

Mental health programs are becoming increasingly vital for addressing challenges like deployment and combat stress (Meyer et al., 2022). Flexible work options are being integrated into non-deployed roles to reduce stress and enhance job satisfaction (Schiemann & Johnson, 2022). Family support policies, such as housing allowances and childcare services, are recognized as essential for helping military families manage the demands of military life (Zhang et al., 2023). Leadership initiatives are also fostering a culture of well-being, supporting a balance between personal and professional responsibilities (Li et al., 2022). Additionally, mental health resilience training is gaining prominence in military HRM strategies (Brown & Sayer, 2023).

Methodology

The bibliometric analysis followed a structured methodological approach using the Web of Science database as the primary data source. The following steps ensured a systematic selection process:

- Data source: the Web of Science database was selected for its comprehensive indexing of peer-reviewed journal articles.
- Search criteria: keywords such as “military”, “work-life balance”, “human resource management” and related terms were used.
- Selection filters: publications were filtered by year of publication (2000–2023), document type (articles and reviews), research area (business management, sociology, military studies) and language (English).
- Data analysis tool: VOSviewer software was used for keyword clustering, co-authorship mapping and citation network analysis. Its algorithmic processing enabled clear visualization and thematic clustering of research content.

VOSviewer

VOSviewer, developed in Java for platform independence, is widely used for constructing and exploring bibliometric maps based on network data. In this study, VOSviewer was used to create maps of keyword co-occurrence and author networks. Its main features include:

- Compatibility with input data: bibliographic data from Web of Science, Scopus and other databases.
- Mapping techniques: distance-based maps that show the strength of relationships through proximity, and graph-based maps that highlight the connectivity of items.
- Visualization modes: label views for detailed analysis, density views for cluster strength, and network views for connections between items.

By leveraging the advanced mapping and visualization capabilities of VOSviewer, this study provided a nuanced bibliometric analysis that addressed key research trends and thematic relationships in military human resource management and work-life balance.

Limitations

Cluster analysis can provide evidence of previous and current state of knowledge and changes in the research base. This evidence needs to be further interpreted and used to identify whether there is a gap

between practice and scientific debate. A limitation is that the nature of the topic prevents the publication of many projects due to confidentiality issues. We anticipate that there will be more papers on the topic, but they are not found in public databases due to confidentiality.

Source database

The Web of Science reference database serves as a reliable source for bibliometric analysis (Testa, 2009). This globally integrated interdisciplinary platform for searching scientific data (cf., e.g., Guan & Ma, 2004) does not favour any publisher (Cohen, 2017; Harsanto & Firmansyah, 2023). WoS inclusive database contains more than 15,000 journals, 160,000 conference proceedings. Professional periodicals are included in the database according to the following criteria: (a) publication standards (peer reviewing, regularity), (b) content (added value in the given field), (c) diversity (international/regional influence of authors/editors), (d) citation analysis (previous scientific works), and (e) language (most articles in English).

Search inclusion/exclusion criteria

Research papers for this study were selected according to their relevance to the issue of prioritizing family life over military service. Figure 1 summarizes the selection procedure which took place in two stages, the first one using the following WoS keyword search strings:

- “army” or “military” and
- “defence” or “defense” and
- “state” or “policy” or “conception” and
- “human resource” or “well being” or “well-being” or “work life balance”

The data filtering was framed by “topic”, “title” and “keyword” categories. The first phase of the search generated 3 278 publications, including those not directly related to the subject under investigation. In the second step, narrowing criteria were therefore applied, namely filtering according to document type, research area and language. Filtering documents based on title and abstract reading to exclude the manuscripts irrelevant to the research topic, as suggested by Öztürk et al. (2024). Other limiting criteria were not employed in order to ensure the widest possible spectrum of papers addressing the given issue from different points of view.

Methodological procedure

While quantitative meta-analysis examines data gathered from multiple sources simultaneously, literature analysis provides a comprehensive overview of publications available within a specific field of research utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods, facilitating their interpretation. The latter approach was chosen for this study since it is applicable to diverse research topics not requiring quantitative data

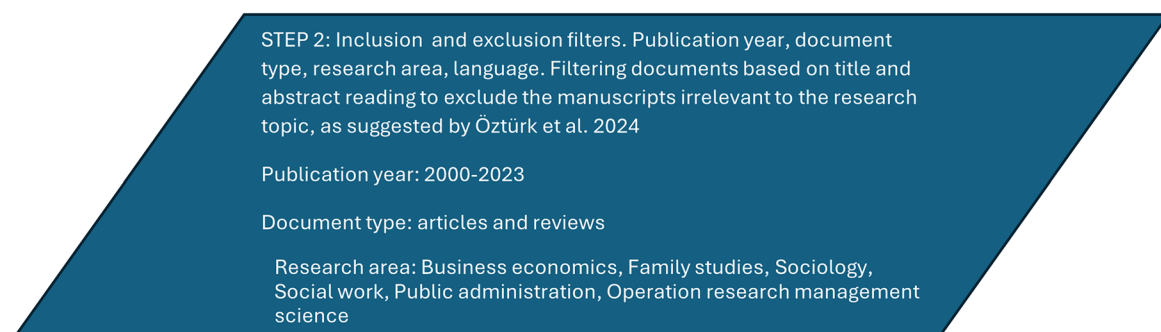


Figure 1. Search selection procedure and criteria.

synthesis, while taking into account socio-economic and political contexts. Moreover, literature analysis does not require sophisticated application of statistical models.

Inspired by international studies, the present research applies a bibliometric method exploiting—both qualitatively and quantitatively—the existing literature on sustainable human resources, well-being and work-life balance in the army environment (cf. Alhossini et al., 2021; Ibrahim et al., 2022; Lu & Zhang, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2020). Bibliometrics include indicator analysis of relevant documents through cartographic mapping of a given research corpus, aiming at the identification of impactful publications. The four components of bibliometric analysis of (1) co-authorship, (2) citation database, (3) keywords, and (4) citation links (Bartolacci et al., 2020; Effah et al., 2023) are explored and analytical outcomes presented in the corresponding thematic blocs of the results section underneath.

The data obtained from the WoS database were processed by the VOSviewer software tool version 1.6.18 (see Antwi et al., 2022), which allows the full application of bibliometric cartography principles to construct and visualize author, journal and keyword networks based on co-citation and co-occurrence data, respectively. Comparing previous and current publications, VOSviewer programme reveals how particular areas of research are developing (see Van Eck & Waltman, 2007a). The present study utilizes the bibliometric method to find primary authors and most frequent keywords, examining (co-)citations and publication sources along with their geographical distributions.

Results

Annual publication trend

Figure 2 illustrates the trend of increasing research interest in the issue in question. There were, however, some fluctuations in the number of publications. A substantial drop between 2013 and 2015 was followed by growth over the 2016–2017 period and a further decline in 2018. Since 2019, an upward trend in the number of published articles has been observed. Greater scholarly attention to the given area may be affected by external factors such as the COVID-19 pandemic or the war conflict in Ukraine in which the military plays an important or even irreplaceable role. In any case, risk management in challenging situations where people weigh between service to the society/state and personal/family life is becoming increasingly demanding. The issues of sustainable HR management, work-life balance and employee well-being are now relevant not only in corporate practice, but also in the armed services.

Authorship analysis

First, the analysis focused on authors who explore the issue of human resources (including well-being and work-life balance). Table 1 lists the ten most prolific researchers, showing the number of documents they published on the present topic compared to the total number of their publications in the WoS database. Furthermore, H-index indicating the author's citation ranking within WoS is provided. The three most prolific authors—Jay A. Mancini (18 articles on the given topic out of a total of 72 contributions in

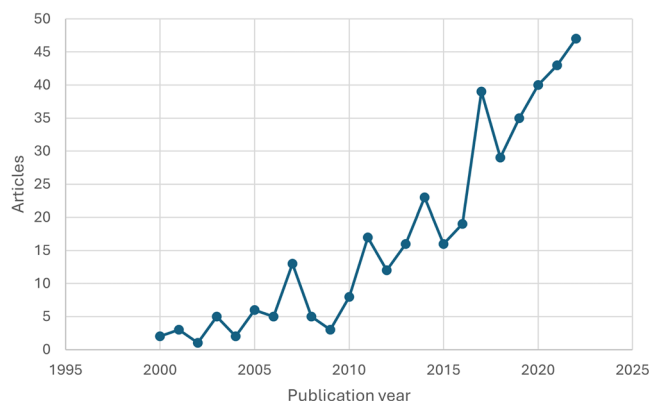


Figure 2. Interest in the research topic—publications.

WoS, H-index 20), Catherine Walker O'Neal (17/113, 16) and Mallory Lucier-Greer (7/50, 16)—are US nationals. (According to some, H-index expresses the citation impact and the quality of published work (cf. Smith & Gardner, 2007), while others argue that a higher H-index is achieved by those who publish in open access journals as their papers are freely available, which increases their chance of being cited (Evans et al., 2013).

Mutual cooperation between researchers indicated by co-authorship link strength also deserves attention, as it allows for sharing and dissemination of acquired knowledge (see Table 1). Figure 3 displays the co-authorship network, its graphical representation being based on the adopted methodology (Khan, Parvaiz, et al., 2022a; Khan, Vibhute, et al., 2022b) and the following criteria derived from it:

1. At least ten citations of the author's articles on the given research topic
2. At least two articles by the author on the given research topic

Both the above conditions were fulfilled by 91 out of a total of 1073 authors to whom the criteria were applied, only those collaborating mutually on the research project being included in the visualization in Figure 3. There are three coloured clusters. The red and green ones contain five reference items (authors) each, the latter showing the highest link (the number of articles represented by the size of

Table 1. Top 10 most prolific authors.

Author	Documents on the present issue vs. all author's works listed in WoS	Author's H-index	Overall link strength
Mancini, Jay A.	18/72	20	39
O'Neal, Catherine W.	17/113	16	31
Lucier-Greer, Mallory	7/50	14	20
Perkins, Daniel F.	7/88	10	17
Aronson, Keith R.	5/37	12	17
Ford, Dwaine G	3/65	9	11
Richardson, Evin V.	4/20	6	11
Mallette, Jacquelin K.	4/20	6	10
DeVoe, Ellen R.	4/31	0	11
Arnold, Amy	3/16	0	11

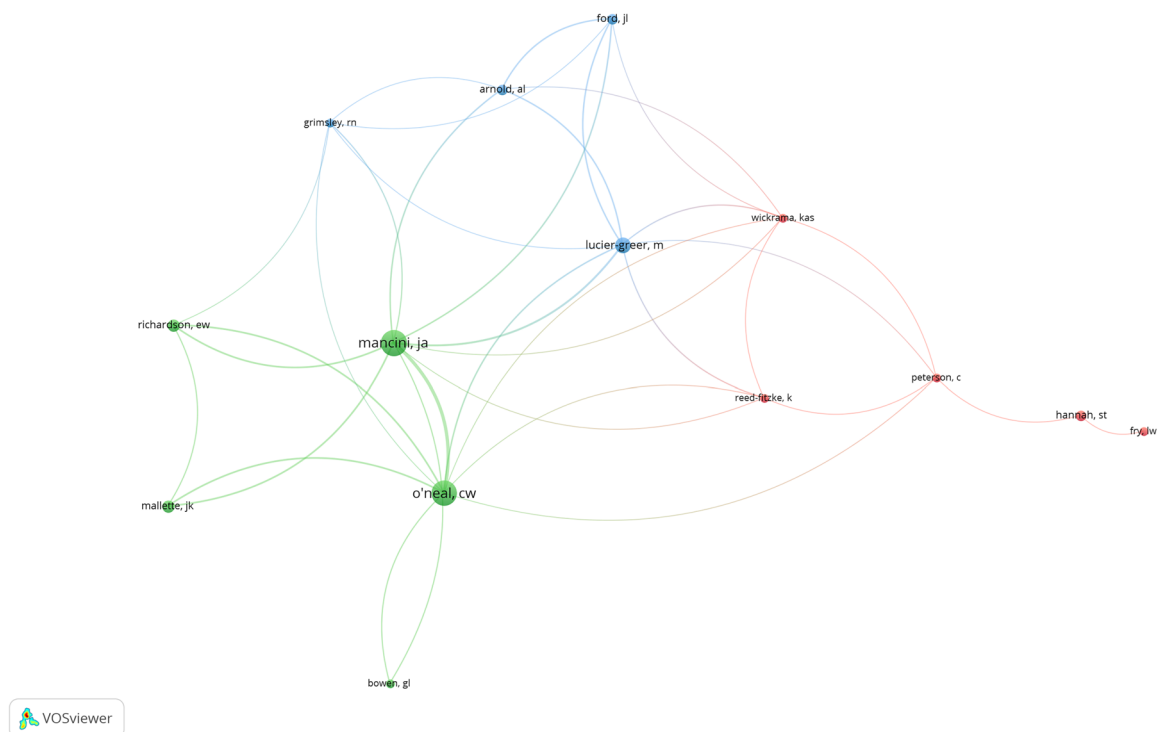


Figure 3. Interest in the research topic—authors.

circle nodes). Co-authorship is indicated by the lines connecting the nodes. (The most active co-author is Mancini [10] followed by Lucier-Greer [8], whereas only one joint research project is reported for Hannah and Fry).

Publishing activity in international comparison

As for the number of relevant publications recorded in the WoS database, a geographical comparison was also made. The map in Figure 4 below shows the countries with the largest number of articles published on the topic, using a blue-shaded scale from 230 to 8 studies. Between the two extreme values reported by the U.S. and India, respectively, there are statistics from the U.K. (27), Canada (20), Australia (17), China (15), Israel (11), Germany (10), the Netherlands (10) and France (9).

Journals and publishing houses

Table 2a and 2b show that the majority of relevant articles were published by renowned publishers such as Wiley (90 items) and Sage Publishing (63), both based in the U.S., and Taylor & Francis (62) headquartered in the U.K. The first two publishing houses published most of the papers in their quarterly periodicals Human Resources Management (15) and Armed Forces Society (17) or Advances in Developing

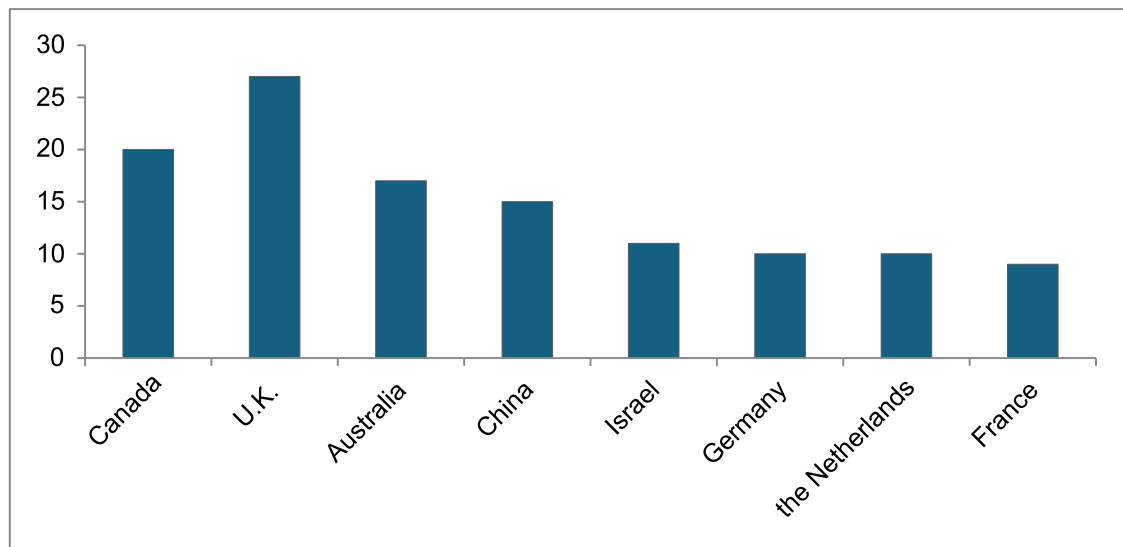


Figure 4. The most productive countries in terms of publication (according to the number of articles).

Table 2a. Top 5 publishing houses by number of publications.

Publisher	No. of documents
Wiley	90
Sage publishing	63
Taylor & Francis	62
Elsevier	43
Emerald group publishing	29

Table 2b. Top 5 journals by number of publications.

Journal	No. of documents	Publisher/country
Armed forces society	17	Sage/USA
Journal of human resources	16	UWP/USA
Human resources management	15	Wiley/USA
Advances in developing human resources	11	Sage/USA
International journal of human resource management	10	Routledge/UK

Human Resources (11), respectively. Among the top five scholarly journals are also the Journal of Human Resources (University of Wisconsin Press) and the International Journal of Human Resources Management (Routledge).

Literature citations

Quantitative citation analysis is a common part of bibliometric review studies when evaluating a topic, researcher or journal (cf., e.g., Khan, Parvaiz, et al., 2022a, Khan, Vibhute, et al., 2022b). Figure 5 below shows the rising trend of scholarly citations in the monitored area. (The data for the ongoing year 2023 are not yet complete, the indicated decrease is therefore currently irrelevant.)

The most cited research paper on the topic entitled *Spiritual leadership and army transformation: Theory, measurement, and establishing a baseline* by Fry et al. (2005) has collected 288 citations so far. With 195 reference citations, the study by Laker and Powell (2011) with the title *Differences between hard and soft skills and their relative impact on training transfer* took the second place. The third most quoted paper by Bedwell et al. (2012) entitled *Collaboration at work: An integrative multilevel conceptualization* has been quoted 154 times. An overview of the eight most cited articles is presented in Table 3 underneath. Interestingly, three of them are contributions made to Human Resources Management journal published by Wiley.

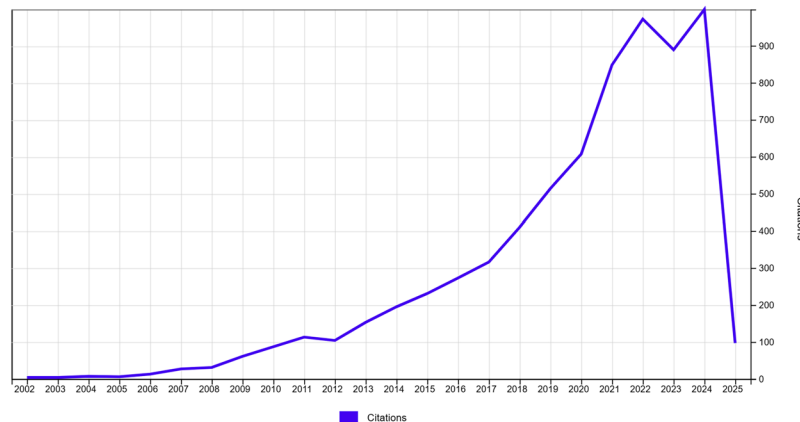


Figure 5. Article citations.

Table 3. Top 8 cited articles.

Author (year of publication)	Article	Journal	No. of citations
Fry et al. (2005)	<i>Spiritual leadership and army transformation: Theory, measurement, and establishing a baseline</i>	Leadership	288
Laker and Powell (2011)	<i>The differences between hard and soft skills and their relative impact on training transfer</i>	Human resources development	195
Bedwell et al. (2012)	<i>Collaboration at work: An integrative multilevel conceptualization</i>	Human resources management review	154
Burrell et al. (2006)	<i>The impact of military lifestyle demands on well-being, army, and family outcomes</i>	Armed forces and society	131
Shuck et al. (2017)	<i>The employee engagement scale: Initial evidence for construct validity and implications for theory and practice</i>	Human resources management	85
Blass and Ferris (2007)	<i>Leader reputation: The role of mentoring, political skill, contextual learning, and adaptation</i>	Human resources management	79
Dupre and Day (2007)	<i>The effects of supportive management and job quality on the turnover intentions and health of military personnel</i>	Human resources management	74
Cesur et al. (2013)	<i>The psychological costs of war: Military combat and mental health</i>	Journal of health economics	71



Figure 7. Keyword network visualization.

Expanded discussion on keyword clusters

The bibliometric analysis conducted using VOSviewer revealed several prominent keyword clusters related to work-life balance (WLB) risks in military human resource management (HRM). These clusters provide valuable insights into the prevailing research trends and thematic priorities in this area.

1. Prevalence of certain keywords
The dominance of keywords such as “military,” “deployment,” “veterans,” “mental health,” and “family support” indicates a strong research focus on the challenges faced by military personnel during and after deployments. The frequent occurrence of terms like “resilience” and “stress” highlights the growing recognition of psychological resilience as a critical factor in maintaining military readiness and reducing attrition rates.
2. Implications of keyword clusters
The prevalence of keywords related to “mental health” and “family support” reflects an increasing acknowledgment of the role of supportive environments in enhancing personnel well-being. The inclusion of terms such as “work-life balance” and “human resource management” underscores the shift toward comprehensive HR policies aimed at reconciling professional duties with personal life.
3. Indicators of research trends

The clustering of keywords into thematic groups reveals distinct research trends:

- Operational and deployment challenges: this cluster includes terms like “deployment,” “combat stress,” and “post-traumatic stress disorder,” reflecting the operational pressures faced by military personnel.
- Support systems and family dynamics: keywords like “family support,” “childcare services,” and “housing allowances” highlight the importance of institutional support for families.
- Career development and retention: the occurrence of terms such as “career development” and “job satisfaction” suggests ongoing interest in retention strategies and career advancement mechanisms.

Research gaps and future directions

Despite the comprehensive coverage of psychological resilience and operational readiness, keywords like “leadership development,” “career advancement,” and “gender dynamics” appear less frequently. This gap indicates potential areas for future research to explore leadership’s role in fostering a supportive organizational culture, career progression frameworks, and gender-specific challenges in military HRM. By analyzing these keyword clusters, the study sheds light on key thematic priorities and research gaps, offering a roadmap for future investigations aimed at enhancing work-life balance in military HR management.

Discussion

The aim of this article is to assess research reflections on work-life balance in the military environment in the context of current trends in human resource management, considering the risk of prioritizing family life over military service.

Despite the general shortcomings of bibliometrics (i.e., its quantitative nature, results biased in favour of fields producing more research outputs and references, potential language barriers to word searches), the applied bibliometric method facilitates the content analysis of texts and the mapping of citations, tracing the links between authors.

Also, the cluster analysis carried out here has been generally undertaken in a multidisciplinary manner (cf. Frades & Matthiesen, 2010), encompassing a range of techniques and their combinations when grouping objects of a similar kind into appropriate categories. The disadvantage, however, is that the clustering algorithm divides the items into a prescribed number of groups regardless of real data clustering, ad hoc methods of comparing the number of groups usually not leading to the simplest, i.e., one-group clustering (Frades & Matthiesen, 2010; Landau & Ster, 2010). Groups are based on pre-selected variables which predetermines the resulting clusters that would take on a different form if some data were added or removed. Moreover, some procedures are too slow and thus inapplicable to large samples (Everitt et al., 2001). Nevertheless, cluster analysis provides evidence of both previous and current state of knowledge and changes in the research base.

According to available sources, work-life balance which is essential to employee well-being is intensively addressed in the military environment, keywords with professional connotations (such as “military, performance, management”) becoming intertwined with those from the sphere of personal or family life. The army is no longer associated exclusively with its staff performance but is also viewed from the perspective of efficient HR management aimed at the job satisfaction of military personnel and their family members (see, e.g., Adamkiewicz, 2018; Burrell et al., 2006; Busby, 2010; Iulian, 2011).

By delving deeper into the implications of the findings, it is clear that the growing attention to work-life balance within military contexts reflects broader changes in HR management practices that could reshape the way military personnel are supported, both professionally and personally. The integration of family life and personal well-being into military HRM strategies presents both opportunities and challenges for HR professionals in the armed forces. One practical step is the expansion of family support programs, such as offering relocation services, psychological counseling, and assistance with the transition to civilian life after service. These services can be tailored to meet the specific needs of military families during and after deployments, thereby promoting stability and indirectly enhancing personnel satisfaction and retention.

Another recommendation involves introducing flexible deployment models, allowing service members to better balance professional and personal obligations without compromising operational effectiveness. Clearly defined deployment policies and open communication in this area can help maintain a balance between family life and service commitments. Simultaneously, it is essential to implement mental health and resilience programs, including pre-deployment training, peer support groups, and enhanced post-deployment care, to strengthen the psychological well-being of both soldiers and their families.

Given the multidisciplinary nature of the issue, HR departments should collaborate with experts in psychology, sociology, and related fields to ensure the effective implementation of these measures. Drawing inspiration from global trends and best practices in other military settings will enable the adaptation of strategies

to local conditions and the improvement of HR policies. Emphasizing data analysis, such as through cluster analysis, will allow HR professionals to anticipate future developments and optimize policies aimed at personnel satisfaction, retention, and operational readiness. These steps will support the transformation of HR management toward a more sustainable and efficient model of care for military personnel and their families.

The growing focus on work-life balance in the military reflects broader changes in HR management, driven by real-world events like extended deployments and the recognition of mental health challenges. Programs such as the U.S. Department of Defense's Military Family Readiness initiative demonstrate the impact of family support on retention and satisfaction (Burrell et al., 2006). Global events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, highlight the need for flexible deployment models that balance service commitments with personal well-being.

Mental health programs, including pre-deployment training and post-deployment reintegration services, are crucial given the rise in PTSD and mental health issues (Busby, 2010). HR departments must collaborate with experts in psychology and sociology to implement evidence-based strategies. Learning from global best practices, such as the Australian Defence Force's initiatives, can help adapt policies to different contexts. Using data-driven approaches, like cluster analysis, will enable HR professionals to optimize strategies to enhance both operational readiness and personnel well-being.

The present findings are to be properly interpreted and used to identify possible gaps between practice and academic discussion, while being aware of the fundamental limitations of this research. The very nature of the topic implies the incompleteness of the source data, some of which cannot be published and made available in public databases as they have to be treated confidentially. Other drawbacks to be taken into account are as follows: (a) Web of Science as the only source of data, (b) the word "war" excluded from the keywords, (c) the selected time period since the Russia-Ukraine crisis. (While in the Czech Republic the above-mentioned risks have been examined systematically since the outbreak of the war, in other countries the topic could have been reflected on earlier.)

Despite these limitations, bibliometric clustering has proved to be a useful and effective technique for quick orientation in a specific scientific discourse, allowing to confirm or refute whether there is a research gap, provided that it is complemented by a systematic literature search.

Research on subjective well-being in the military was pioneered by US authors who continue to produce the majority of publications. Having exposed security risks impacting on army personnel loyalty, the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine aroused interest in the issue among European researchers as well.

Conclusion

The present bibliometric analysis has focused on papers indexed in the Web of Science database exploring national defence and armed forces policies in the context of human resource management, staff well-being and systemic risks.

In terms of the geographical distribution and frequency of scientific publications on security and defence policies of the state, the dominance of anglophone countries is evident – the U.S., the U.K., Canada, Australia and India registering a total of 302 articles compared to China, Israel, Germany, the Netherlands and France that follow with just 55 items.

Another area examined was the spectrum of topics pursuing national defence and army agendas in relation to sustainable human resources, subjective feeling of well-being and associated risks. Omitting the dominant word "military", the most important keyword appears to be "deployment" (38 occurrences) closely followed by "veterans, health, resilience, children, stress, well-being, work, military families, behaviour". This outcome demonstrates the growing research attention paid to issues of balancing personal and work life along with staff well-being within HR management in the military context.

The last research question concerned the verification of the suitability and limits of cluster analysis of bibliometric data for a narrowly defined problem. It has been confirmed that the clustering technique facilitates smooth orientation in the scientific discussion on a given topic, allowing for the identification of a possible research gap. This paper covers a relatively exclusive issue, the exploration of which is likely to be largely kept secret. Nevertheless, it can be concluded that cluster analysis is suitable and efficient even in the case of a narrowly defined subject, provided that it is supplemented by a thorough research of sources.

In summary, this bibliometric approach yields the following valuable insights:

1. Growing publication output: bibliometric results demonstrate an upward trend in the number of studies and their citations which indicates an increased interest in the given topic.
2. Emerging research topics: the themes come from both work and personal life of military personnel which suggests the need for a well-balanced lifestyle, implying possible HR risk of prioritizing family over military service.
3. Geographical research dissemination: studies on the given topic have been published in many countries which indicates a global research interest, the number of US journal articles, however, dramatically exceeding the publication output of the rest of the world, that of the developing countries in particular.
4. Journal focus: the journals of reputable publishing houses such as Wiley, Sage Publishing and Taylor & Francis dominate the worldwide dissemination and enhancement of knowledge about the given issue.
5. Limited collaboration: the analysis reveals a lack of collaborative research projects, the strength of linkages and joint publishing cooperation being generally low, which challenges the researchers to direct their efforts towards interdisciplinary collaboration.

Although the bibliometric analysis yields important findings revealing overall trends, the data sample drawn exclusively from Web of Science may not have been representative enough, other aspects of the investigated issue having probably escaped scholarly attention. During further research, it will therefore be necessary to expand the dataset with relevant articles from other databases such as Scopus or Google Scholar.

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Data availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. The authors agree to share the data and materials in accordance with the Taylor & Francis Share upon Reasonable Request policy, except when sharing is restricted by ethical, privacy, or security concerns. Raw data were generated at Web of Science database. Derived data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author on request.

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