

# GENDER DIFFERENCES IN MOTIVATION AND PERFORMANCE: A BIBLIOMETRIC ANALYSIS ON RESEARCH TRENDS

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**Rezumat:** Motivația și performanța angajaților reprezintă doi factori fundamentali în realizarea obiectivelor organizaționale, printre aceștia se remarcă importanța modului în care diferențele de gen au impact asupra lor. Această cercetare analizează legăturile dintre conceptele: „motivație”, „performanță”, „diferențe de gen” și „organizație” printr-o abordare de tip mixed methods research, care a implicat utilizarea analizei bibliometrice și a analizei de conținut. Într-o primă etapă, au fost investigate 137 de documente științifice din ultimele trei decenii, conturându-se o creștere a interesului pentru acest subiect. Metodologia include colectarea datelor din baza de date Web of Science, analiza cu ajutorul Biblioshiny și interpretarea rezultatelor. Evaluarea bibliometrică evidențiază creșterea atenției academice asupra subiectului, cu un punct maxim de publicații în 2024. Țări precum SUA și Canada se află pe primul loc la colaborările internaționale, iar Michigan State University, Aarhus University și University of Amsterdam se remarcă drept instituții-cheie în acest domeniu. În ceea ce privește analiza de conținut, s-a observat această diferență de motivare în funcție de gen în mai multe domenii (IT, economic, antreprenoriat etc.) și am extras factorii motivatori pentru fiecare gen în parte. Implicațiile teoretice sunt centrate în jurul abordării metodologice a cercetării în domeniul managementului organizațional, în timp ce implicațiile practice oferă perspective relevante pentru manageri și cercetători interesați de dezvoltarea unor strategii organizaționale mai inclusive.

**Cuvinte cheie:** motivație, performanță, diferențe de gen, organizație, bibliometric.

**Abstract:** Employee motivation and performance are two fundamental factors in achieving organizational goals, among which the importance of how gender differences impact them stands out. This research analyzes the links between the concepts of "motivation," "performance," "gender differences," and "organization" through a bibliometric approach. A total of 137 scientific documents from the last three decades were investigated, outlining a growing interest in this topic. The methodology includes data collection from the Web of Science database, analysis using Biblioshiny, and interpretation of the results. The bibliometric evaluation highlights the increasing academic attention to the subject, with a peak in publications in 2024. Countries such as the US and Canada are at the forefront of international collaborations, while Michigan State University, Aarhus University, and the University of Amsterdam stand out as key institutions in this field. Regarding the content analysis, this difference in motivation based on gender has been observed in several fields (IT, economics, entrepreneurship, etc.), and we have identified the motivating factors for each gender. The theoretical implications focus on the methodological approach to research in organizational management, while the practical implications provide relevant perspectives for managers and researchers interested in developing more inclusive organizational strategies.

**Keywords:** motivation, performance, gender differences, organization, bibliometric.

**JEL Classification:** D910, J160, J240, J710, M120, M540.

## 1. Introduction

Differences between men and women have been and continue to be an ongoing topic of interest, with numerous conversations about the basic disparities that exist between the genders. These have significant effects on management strategies and organizational development. Therefore, in terms of skills, men have a slight advantage in spatial performance, whereas women have a slight advantage in speaking, writing, and communication abilities (Hyde, 2014).

Employee motivation and performance cannot be addressed similarly in a diverse workplace, and it matters most to understand the various elements that influence these characteristics to promote an inclusive culture.

Catalyst (2020) found that companies that encourage diversity outperform their peers when it comes to both financial performance and employee engagement. Despite this, gender stereotypes continue to shape both women's and men's careers, and inequities persist.

Given the increasing interest in this field among researchers, this research aims to investigate the relationships between the concepts of "motivation," "performance," "gender differences," and "organization," as well as how these concepts interact with other terms and the relationships that develop between them, through a complex approach that includes both bibliometric and content analysis. Accordingly, the research seeks to address the following research questions:

- RQ1. How has scientific literature on this particular subject evolved over time, and how has this evolution impacted citation patterns?*
- RQ2. Which academic institutions are the most productive in this field, and how do they collaborate worldwide?*
- RQ3. What major themes were identified in the research regarding the impact of gender differences on motivation and organizational performance?*
- RQ4. What are the motivational aspects unique to each gender?*

Additionally, from a structural standpoint, a literature review was conducted to introduce readers to the analyzed issue, and the methodological techniques were meticulously described. The study's concluding sections provide the results and related factors to take into account. The analysis ends with a series of conclusions that illustrate the theoretical, practical, and implications of the research.

## 2. Literature Review

Motivation is based on a complex interaction of ideas, perceptions, values, interests, and actions that are all inextricably linked (Lai, 2011). Motivation, as a psychological process, guides and sustains voluntary activities to achieve personal and organizational goals (Bogáthy, Erdei, & Ilin, 2007). In the organizational context, employee motivation is a critical factor for success. Over time, it has become obvious that individuals can be genuinely motivated only when their diverse needs are understood. This observation generated one of the most important motivational theories, Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Maslow (1943) claimed that people are motivated by a hierarchy of needs, beginning with requirements like safety and advancing to personal development. Herzberg (1966) offered another notable theoretical contribution by proposing that recognition and professional achievement serve a significant part in employee motivation.

Every individual can be motivated if the unique factors impacting this process are correctly identified (Bogáthy, Erdei, and Ilin, 2007). However, responses to motivational cues are not universal and might vary greatly, even across gender lines. Deci and Ryan (2000) discovered that women emphasize work-life balance and the significance of their jobs, preferring tasks that require collaboration and contribute to team well-being. Men, on the other hand, are more likely to be driven by recognition and the chance to demonstrate their skills in competitive circumstances. Through motivation, human resources are utilized to their full capacity, and this can be possible by strengthening employees' desire to work. Thus, the outcome will be favorable, resulting in increased output and performance, as well as improved overall efficiency (Shahzadi et al., 2014). Person performance refers to how well an employee executes duties, responsibilities, and objectives, therefore contributing to the attainment of desired organizational outcomes. These involve both job-related performance and characteristics that raise the organization's overall effectiveness, such as initiative, adaptability, and collaboration (Campbell et al. 1990).

A significant difference between genders consists of practiced leadership styles. Women are prone to use a transformative leadership style that emphasizes team development, collaboration, and inspiration. This way of leading is correlated with greater organizational performance, especially in a dynamic and creative work environment. In contrast, men more frequently exhibit a transactional leadership style, which relies on clearly defined rewards and sanctions linked to performance. This style proves its efficiency in settings that require discipline

and focus on measurable goals. However, these differences may create preconceptions: women are seen repeatedly lacking authority, while men may be criticized for lacking empathy (Eagly et al., 2003). To understand why such differences among genders regarding motivation and performance exist, it is necessary to examine the key factors that influence gender disparities. Cultural stereotypes, social norms, and organizational structures are factors that perpetuate inequality (Hyde, 2014).

Gender stereotypes are limiting views about the characteristics and actions that men and women should show (Castillo-Mayén & Montes-Berges, 2014). Such preconceptions influence views of competence and potential in professional settings. Men, for example, are typically perceived as powerful, competitive, and ambitious, all of which are natural characteristics of leaders. Women, on the other hand, are frequently perceived as being more sympathetic, cautious, and risk-averse, characteristics that may be discounted or even penalized in some workplace environments (Ridgeway, 2011). Given the diverse approaches to gender differences, a bibliometric analysis of the relevant academic literature will be conducted. The purpose of the analysis is to identify research trends, approaches, and central topics within the field.

### 3. Methodology

This study was conducted using the bibliometric analysis method, with the help of which we investigated the connection between the keywords "motivation", "gender", "difference", "performance", and "organization" and the interdependence of these concepts in the specialized literature. In addition, content analysis was used, which was selected by the number of citations, considering the first 7 scientific articles resulting from the bibliometric analysis, in order to track with high precision the differences between genders in terms of motivation.

The methodology underlying this study was carried out by executing the following steps:

**Bibliographic data collection:** At this stage, the database where the search for scientific articles was carried out was chosen, namely Web Of Science (Clarivate, 2025). To collect the necessary data, the search was based on the following keywords: "motivation\*" AND "gender\*" AND "difference\*" AND "performance\*" AND "organization\*", which were entered into the search engine of the Web of Science database. In carrying out a comprehensive search for relevant data on the impact of gender differences on motivation and performance in organizations, the "\*" function was used, the asterisk (\*), which helps to include all forms of the word (e.g., motivation, motivated, motivational). The search obtained 165 scientific documents from the Web Of Science database, and this result was filtered by limiting the results to the year 2024, thus the year 2025 was excluded, because the research aims to analyze completed years, only the document type article and early access were selected, and the selected language was only English, resulting in 137 documents. The database query was performed on March 18, 2025.

**Software selection:** To analyze the selected data and create relevant visual elements on the selected topic, the data were exported from Web Of Science and imported for bibliometric analysis into the Biblioshiny program developed by Aria and Cuccurullo (2017).

**Bibliometric analysis of the data:** focused on examining the characteristics of the documents and keywords. Within the analysis of the 137 selected documents, the following were addressed: the annual evolution of scientific production and citation average, analysis of collaborations between authors, the most cited articles, and identification of institutions with the most relevant contributions to the subject studied. In addition, keywords from 137 documents were analyzed to identify relationships between concepts such as motivation, gender differences, organization, and performance. The relationship and frequency of appearance of the respective terms were evaluated, and the findings from document selection and analysis are presented in the following section of the article. Figure 1 illustrates the methodological approach that was followed.

**Content analysis:** The Content analysis was done by analyzing differences in specific motivating factors between men and women in an organizational context. In this regard, the first 7 articles considered most relevant to the subject addressed were selected for analysis from the

total documents obtained by querying the Web of Science database (Clarivate, 2025), with the selection being made according to the relevance and degree of correspondence of the content with the research objective. The summaries of these articles were imported into the Ligre v.6.5.1 platform (Logiciels Ex-l-tec, 2025), which allowed the coding and classification of information according to recurring themes related to motivation and gender. Thus, mentions of factors influencing motivation and how they are perceived or valued differently by gender were specifically tracked. This approach provided a complementary qualitative perspective to the bibliometric analysis, bringing clarity to the directions of interest of academic research on the topic of gender-differentiated motivation.

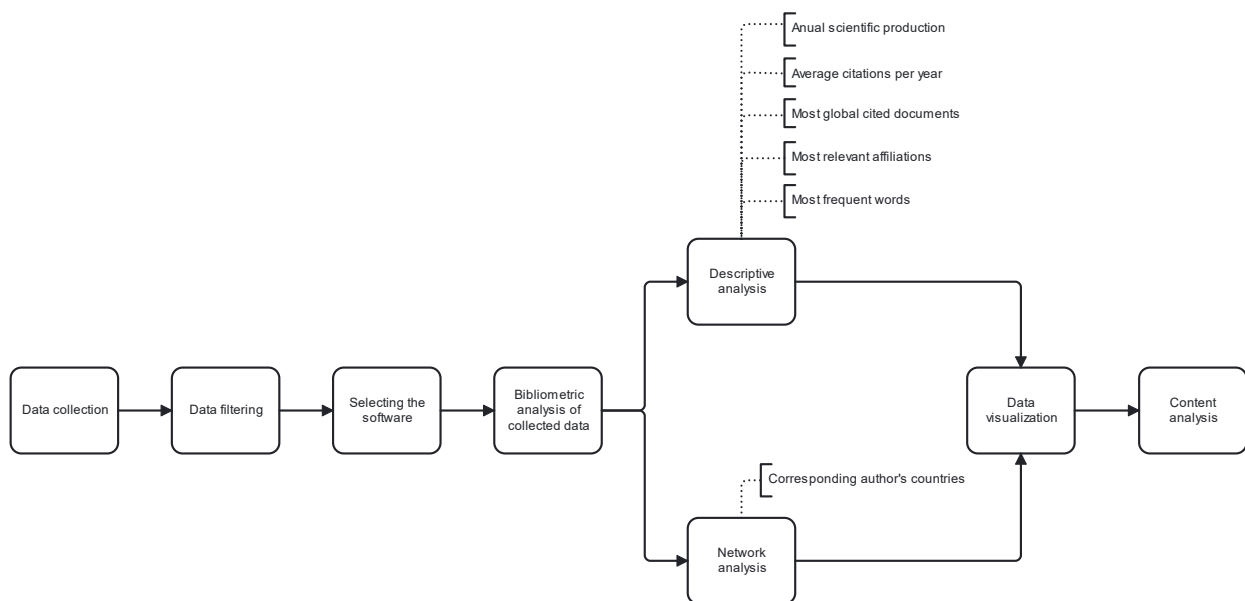


Fig. 1. Visual Map of the Bibliometric Process

Source: Created with bpmn (2025)

#### 4. Results and discussions. An analysis of the selected documents

Figure 2 illustrates the evolution over time of published studies on the topics of “motivation”, “performance”, “gender”, “differences”, and “organization”. According to the figure, the first article that analyzed this topic was published in 1992. The purpose of this first article was to develop and validate a measurement instrument for “microcomputer playfulness” (the tendency to approach computer use in an exploratory, creative, and playful way) and to analyze its implications in the workplace. As a result of the research, it was observed that women are less inclined towards “playfulness” in computer use than men, and this influences adaptability to new technologies. For 14 years, until 2006, this topic recorded a low number of studies, more precisely, an average of approximately one scientific article per year. This low frequency suggests limited interest in the topic of gender differences in motivation and performance in organizations. Also, in certain years (1994, 1999, 2001, 2003, and 2004) from the specified interval, no study was conducted on this topic. At the end of 2006, an increasing trend in the number of research studies can be observed. Between 2004 and 2007, the average number of studies conducted increased 7 times compared to the previous period, which suggests an increase in interest in scientific research on the topic of organizational performance from the perspective of gender differences and motivational factors. Therefore, during that period, 91.24% of all scientific articles related to the selected subject were published. The previous year, 2024, brought 14 scientific

articles, which is the greatest number recorded to date. This observed increase indicates that the topic's significance and interest are steadily increasing.

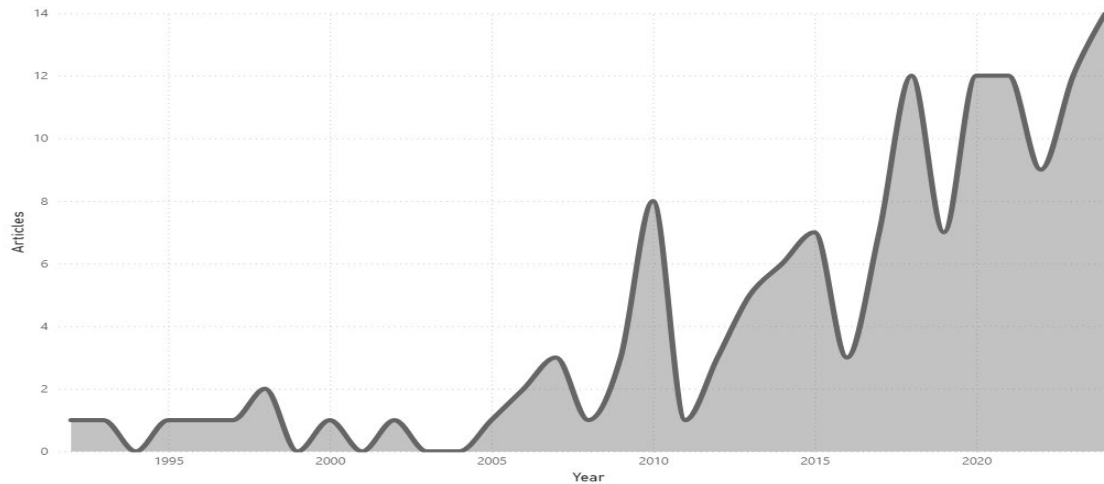


Fig. 2. Annual Scientific Production

Source: Data collected from WoS Core Collection (2025)

The bibliometric research determined that the 137 publications included in the database were written by authors from 37 different countries. Figure 3 illustrates the 15 countries that produced the most significant scientific contributions to the subject. The United States of America provided 41 scientific articles (29.9%), followed by China with 9 published pieces (6.5%), and Canada and the Netherlands with 7 articles apiece (5.1%). Figure 3 depicts the two key indicators: MCP (pink) and SCP (purple). MCP (Multi-Country Publications) refers to scientific documents that were produced through the collaboration of at least one other author from a different country, while SCP (Single-Country Publications) refers to scientific documents that were produced through the collaboration of authors from the same country. According to these indicators, the total number of scientific articles produced is divided into 98 produced at the individual country level, while 37 of the articles were produced through international collaborations. The contribution of countries such as Belgium, Germany, Serbia, and India is observed, which do not register any association with other countries. These results indicate a low degree of international collaboration, which may suggest that labor policies, cultural and economic factors, and gender equality differ from one country to another, so researchers may prefer to analyze their national context.

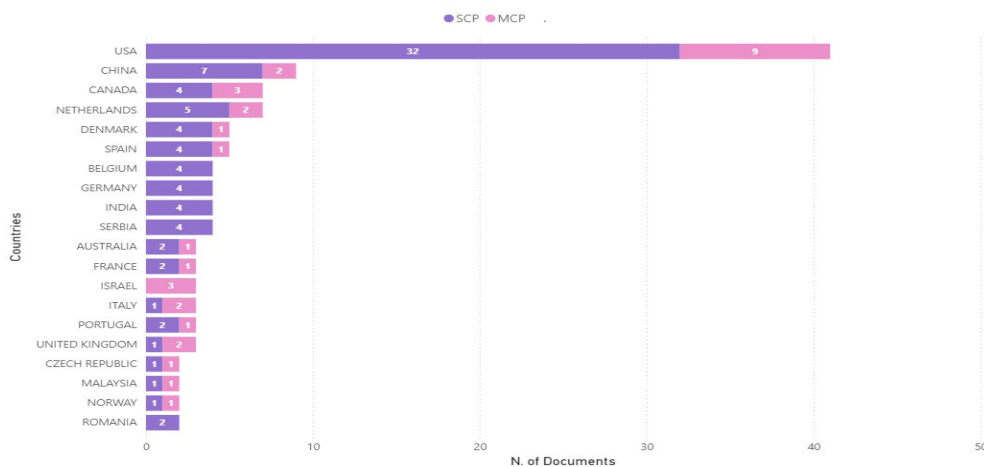


Fig. 2. International Collaborations on the Topic of Gender Differences in Motivation and Performance

Source: Data collected from WoS Core Collection (2025)



Figure 4, based on 137 scientific articles, shows that Michigan State University has the most publications (11) for the chosen topic, followed by Aarhus University (10) and the University of Amsterdam (9). Penn State University, University of Novi Sad, and Vrije University Amsterdam all have six publications, while Grand Valley State University, Tech University Zvolen, University of Ghent, and the University of Michigan each have five. These findings suggest that research in the analyzed subject is largely conducted by universities in the United States and Europe.

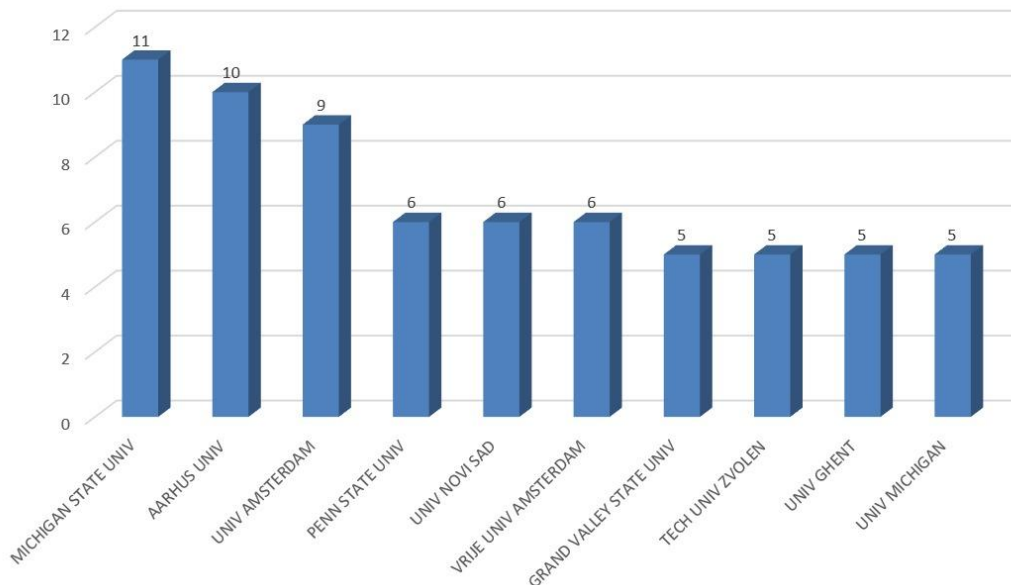


Fig. 4. The Most Relevant Academic Institutions

*Source: Data collected from WoS Core Collection (2025)*

Figure 5 depicts a word cloud showing the important themes discovered in bibliometric study on the impact of gender disparities on motivation and performance in companies. The dominating terms, such as performance, gender disparities, and motivation, indicate a strong emphasis on the impact of these variables on professional achievement. Furthermore, the use of terminology such as work satisfaction, behavior, and self-efficacy suggests a comprehensive approach that considers both psychological and organizational elements. Management, impact, and work stress the significance of the professional context, whereas sex differences and women indicate a special interest about how gender effects motivation and performance in a variety of work environments.



Fig. 5. Word Cloud

Source: Data collected from WoS Core Collection (2025)

Figure 6 depicts a large change in scientific output and average annual citations. Despite very low scientific output in the 1990s, average citations were extremely high. This shows that the articles produced during that time had a significant impact, as they were likely more focused on specific subjects and widely cited. Beginning in the 2000s, we see a fall in average citations, while scientific production continuously increases. This shift could reflect a diversification of research and an increase in the number of publications, resulting in a broader dispersion of citations and lower individual impact of papers. Since 2010, scientific production has increased at a rapid pace, setting new records. However, average citations continue to fluctuate without proportional increases, indicating increased competition for visibility or a decline in average publication quality. Finally, the analysis emphasizes the shift from a research model with a small number of high-impact articles to one with widespread scientific production but a more distributed average citation rate. This tendency raises critical questions regarding the long-term viability of the current academic system, the true impact of the high volume of publications, and the significance of quality assurance procedures in research.

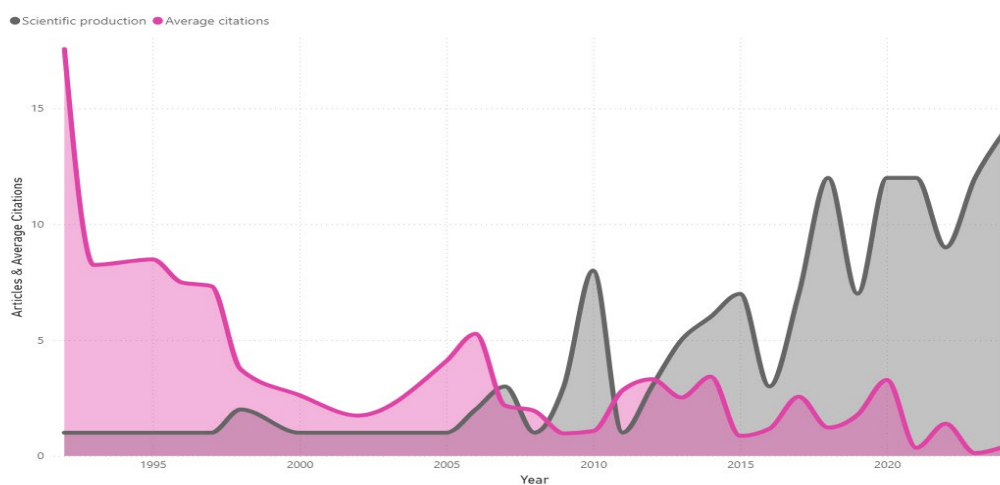


Fig. 6. Scientific Production and Annual Average Citations

Source: Data collected from WoS Core Collection (2025)

The first important aspect in the analysis of the most cited publications (Table 1) is the year of publication. These studies, conducted between 1992 and 2009, reflect a growing academic interest in how factors such as gender, motivation and performance influence the professional environment. The high number of citations suggests that these works have had a significant impact on subsequent research. The topics addressed in these works add an interesting touch to the research. They analyze the theme of gender differences and performance in various fields, including IT (Webster and Martocchio, 1992), business (Cliff, 1998), entrepreneurship (Lerner, Brush and Hisrich, 1997) and the labor market (De pater et al., 2009). Thus, we can say that the topic of gender differences is discussed from a variety of perspectives and that the results are consistent: gender differences have a significant impact on motivation and performance in organizations (Webster and Martocchio, 1992) and businesses (Cliff, 1998). Gender differences have been an increasingly discussed topic in the last 10 years, but employee motivation strategies have benefited men more, with better performance and being favored. Thus, the difficulties faced by women, their different motivation and work styles, but also their ability to adapt are highlighted. Stereotypes, organizational culture and moral standards are just some of the reasons that influence motivation strategies that favor men. At the same time, these works offer solutions to current challenges, such as a more dynamic work environment that promotes experimentation and active learning, flexible policies that respond to the needs of both genders and mentoring programs.

Table 1

## List of The Most Cited Articles

No.	Authors/Researchers	Number of Citations	% of Total Citations
1	Webster, J., & Martocchio, J. J. (1992)	597	12,54
2	Ng, E.S.W., Schweitzer, L. & Lyons, S.T. (2010)	480	10,80
3	Cliff, J. E. (1998)	439	9,22
4	Lerner, M., Brush, C., & Hisrich, R. (1997)	239	5,02
5	De Pater, I. E., Van Vianen, A. E. M., Bechtoldt, M. N., & Klehe, U.-C. (2009)	131	2,75

Source: Data collected from WoS Core Collection (2025)

Given that the bibliometric analysis previously conducted facilitated the content analysis process, the figure below highlights the main conceptual directions identified regarding gender-differentiated motivational factors. Thus, a new structure is proposed that emphasizes the relationship between gender and motivation, emphasizing the methods, means and mechanisms that influence individual motivation in an organizational context. Figure 7 reflects both male and female gender-specific factors, highlighting the distinct effects and preferences that can influence professional career paths.

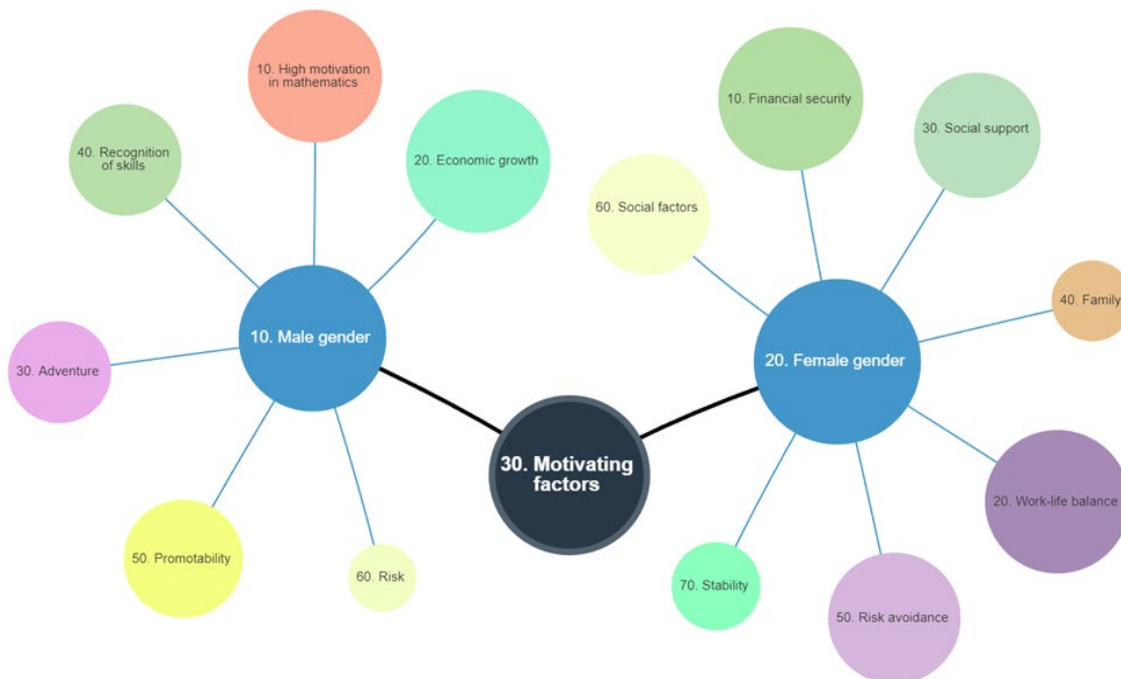


Fig. 7. Coding Tree for Content Analysis

Source: Author's Processing with the help of Ligre v.6.5.1 (Logiciels Ex-I-tec, 2025)

In the case of men, motivation is closely linked to individual achievements, status and challenges. There is a strong desire for recognition of skills, which indicates a need for professional validation and appreciation from others (De pater et al., 2009). At the same time, economic growth is another strong motivating factor, suggesting that financial success and career advancement are priorities (Cliff, 1998).

In addition, men are also motivated by factors that involve a dose of uncertainty or challenge, such as adventure and risk. This openness to the unknown may reflect a propensity for competitiveness or a desire to step out of one's comfort zone (Selmer & Lauring, 2010). Also, promotion is a frequent motivation, which reinforces the image of a person focused on career advancement and affirmation (De pater et al., 2009). On the other hand, for women, motivation seems to be mainly oriented towards stability, social relationships and balance between personal



and professional life. Unlike men, women are motivated by financial security, rather than by the idea of enrichment or accelerated growth (Cliff, 1998). Social support is represented by the lack of stereotypes, equal opportunities and mutual support in the work field (Lerner, Brush & Hisrich, 1997), and social factors represent a need for connection and collaboration (De Cooman et al., 2009).

At the same time, a specific element in female motivation is the balance between personal and professional life, which indicates a real concern for general well-being, beyond career achievements (Cliff, 1998). Family also appears as a central factor, suggesting that professional decisions are often integrated in the context of personal relationships (Selmer & Luring, 2010). In contrast to the male gender, women show a clear preference for risk avoidance, which emphasizes the desire for predictability and security.

Comparing the two perspectives, we can see that male motivation is rather oriented outward, more precisely towards performance, advancement and rewards. This implies more courage in the face of uncertainty. In contrast, female motivation is more inwardly oriented, towards balance, stability, and human connections. These differences do not necessarily indicate a greater value of one perspective over the other but rather highlight distinct ways of understanding personal or professional success and fulfillment.

## **5. Conclusions**

The bibliometric analysis was based on the 137 scientific documents, which were carried out over 32 years to analyze gender differences in employee motivation and performance. The research highlighted an increasing trend in the number of articles published on this topic, indicating an increased interest of the authors in terms of all the components of gender differences in the organizational context. Reason for which the data collection included scientific materials that intersect important topics for the delimitation of gender differences.

Thus, the complexity of the subject and the factors that influence it were noted. The main results of the research are: the production of scientific materials, the year 2024 presents the greatest interest in studying the aspects generated by gender differences in motivation and organizational performance, having the largest number of published articles. Regarding the collaborations of the authors, the contribution of the United States of America is observed with the most scientific articles, but also the most collaborations with other nations, followed by Canada. Regarding the institutions that contributed to these studies, we note "Michigan State Univ", followed by "Aarhus Univ" and "Univ Amsterdam". The most used keywords, as shown in Figure 5, are performance, motivation, gender differences and work, which coincide with the elements of interest of this research. Finally, the research presents the correlation between scientific production and the average annual citations, an interesting result is noted regarding the fluctuation of the average annual citations, which records a downward trend. The analysis highlights the transition from a small number of scientific works with a major impact, to an extensive scientific production, but with a lower average citation.

The content analysis managed to provide a much clearer perspective of the topic addressed. The evaluation of the 5 most cited articles revealed the diversity of areas in which gender-based differences in motivational factors can influence performance. Motivational factors were also identified for each gender, resulting in men preferring extrinsic motivation (recognition, promotion, reward, etc.), while women prefer personal-professional balance and effective collaboration.

The research provides important and relevant information to managers and business leaders to substantiate the decision-making process, especially regarding motivation strategies and performance management in organizations. At the same time, the study represents a significant contribution to specialized literature, providing a reference framework for theorists and researchers interested in delving deeper into the subject. Highlighting gender differences in motivation and

organizational performance through the analysis carried out emphasizes their implications for organizational efficiency and culture. Thus, the results obtained contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of this topic in the development of better-founded motivation strategies that are gender-inclusive, favoring a sustainable increase in performance and internal cohesion in organizations. This study can have a significant impact on managers that can help them adopt an inclusive, equitable and cohesion-oriented management style that will reduce potential conflicts and internal barriers generated by the lack of understanding of diversity.

In conclusion, the study emphasizes the need for in-depth analyses and interdisciplinary approaches that integrate various perspectives for a more complete understanding of the impact of gender differences in the organizational environment.

Regarding the limitations of this study, it should be noted that bibliometric databases do not cover all journals or publications equally, which may create an imbalance in favor of certain fields, journals or regions. Also, being a bibliometric analysis, the research focuses on quantitative aspects and does not analyze in depth the content of the articles, which means that further studies are needed to understand the real impact of these works in scientific discussions. Future research can try to reduce these limitations to provide a more complete picture on the subject.

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