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Progressive Change in Management Science: A Systematic Bibliometric Review of Publication Patterns, Intellectual Foundations, and Emerging Research Frontiers

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ABSTRACK

Progressive change has become a central concept in management science, representing an approach to organizational transformation that emphasizes incremental, planned, and sustainable improvement rather than radical disruption. Despite its practical significance, the intellectual evolution of this concept across different management paradigms has not been comprehensively mapped using bibliometric methods. This study aims to analyze the development of scientific literature related to progressive change in management through a bibliometric approach. Research data were obtained from the Scopus database, comprising 124 articles published between 2003 and 2026, selected using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) method. The analysis was conducted through performance analysis and science *mapping R Studio and the bibliometrix package*. The results reveal that progressive change research has experienced fluctuating growth patterns with notable peaks around 2007 and 2019, indicating periodic surges of academic interest aligned with major organizational challenges. The field is dominated by contributions from Western institutions, particularly the United States, with limited representation from developing countries. Thematic mapping identifies leadership, human factors, and organizational development as motor themes driving the field, while planned change and sustainability emerge as developing themes. The co-occurrence network analysis reveals two distinct conceptual clusters centered on change management and organizational change. Reference analysis confirms the foundational influence of classical works by Lewin (1947) and Armenakis (1993), while the zero local citation pattern among analyzed documents indicates that the corpus functions as parallel contributions to the broader change management discourse rather than a tightly integrated research community. This study contributes to management theory by providing the first comprehensive bibliometric mapping of progressive change literature, identifying research gaps in non-Western

Keywords: Progressive Change, Organizational Change, Change Management, Bibliometric Analysis, R Studio, bibliometrix packagE

contexts, ethical dimensions, and digital-era applications of progressive change.

INTRODUCTION

The landscape of organizational management has undergone profound transformations over the past century, driven by shifts in economic structures, technological advancements, and evolving social expectations. Among the various approaches to organizational transformation, progressive change has emerged as a concept that captures the essence of planned, incremental, and sustainable improvement processes within organizations (Burnes, 2004; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002; Weick & Quinn, 1999). Unlike radical or revolutionary change that seeks to fundamentally restructure organizations in short timeframes, progressive change embraces a philosophy of continuous evolution, building on existing strengths while systematically addressing areas requiring improvement. This distinction is particularly relevant in contemporary management contexts where organizations face increasing pressure to adapt continuously while maintaining operational stability and stakeholder confidence.

The concept of progressive change in management science is grounded in the broader discourse on organizational transformation and management evolution. Patel (2007) , in the textbook "Concepts and Issues in Management," dedicates a specific chapter to "Progressive Change in Management," underscoring that progressive change represents a distinct and recognized area of inquiry within contemporary management education. This treatment of progressive change as a standalone topic reflects the growing acknowledgment that organizational improvement does not always require disruptive transformation but can be achieved through systematic, incremental approaches. From Frederick Winslow Taylor's scientific management principles in the early twentieth century, which introduced systematic approaches to improving work processes, to the contemporary emphasis on organizational agility and continuous improvement through frameworks such as Kaizen and Total Quality Management, the concept of progressive change has evolved significantly (Deming, 1986; Imai, 1986) . The current business environment, characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA), has intensified the need for organizations to adopt progressive change approaches that enable sustained adaptation without the disruptive consequences often associated with radical transformation (Appelbaum et al., 2017; Bennett & Lemoine, 2014). Recent global disruptions, including the COVID-19 pandemic and accelerating digital transformation, have further underscored the importance of building organizational capabilities for continuous, progressive adaptation rather than relying solely on episodic change initiatives.

The research problem that motivates this study is the absence of a comprehensive bibliometric analysis that systematically maps the evolution of the progressive change concept

across different eras and paradigms of management science. While individual studies have examined specific aspects of progressive change, such as readiness for change (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Weiner, 2009) , change management processes (Da Ros et al., 2023; Stouten et al., 2018) , and organizational development interventions (Beckhard, 1969), no existing study has provided an integrated bibliometric overview that traces how these diverse streams of research have developed, converged, and diverged over time. Previous bibliometric studies in the broader field of change management have tended to focus on specific subtopics, such as resistance to change (Oreg et al., 2011) or transformational leadership (Choi, 2011; Rafferty et al., 2013), without addressing the overarching concept of progressive change as a unifying framework.

Several significant research gaps emerge from this analysis of the existing literature. First, there is a notable lack of understanding regarding the intellectual structure of progressive change research, including the identification of foundational works, core journals, and influential authors that have shaped the field. Second, the thematic evolution of progressive change research across different management paradigms, from classical to contemporary, has not been systematically documented. Third, the geographical distribution of progressive change research and the extent to which findings from Western organizational contexts are applicable to developing countries remain insufficiently explored. Fourth, the relationship between progressive change and emerging management concepts such as organizational resilience, digital transformation, and sustainability has not been adequately mapped.

The novelty of this research lies in its application of bibliometric analysis to provide the first comprehensive mapping of the progressive change concept within management science literature. By combining performance analysis with science mapping techniques, including co-occurrence network analysis, thematic mapping, and reference spectroscopy, this study offers a multidimensional view of how the progressive change concept has been constructed, debated, and refined across different periods and scholarly communities. Furthermore, R Studio and the bibliometrix package platform for analysis ensures methodological rigor and reproducibility, contributing to the growing body of bibliometric research in management science.

The primary objective of this study is to map and analyze the evolution of the progressive change concept in management science literature using a bibliometric approach. To achieve this objective, the study addresses three specific research questions: First, what are the publication trends, influential sources, and key authors that have shaped progressive change research in management science? Second, what are the dominant themes and conceptual structures that characterize the progressive change literature, and how have these themes evolved over time? Third, what are the intellectual foundations of progressive change research as revealed through reference and citation analysis, and what research gaps can be identified for future investigation?

Theoretical Foundations of Progressive Change in Management

The theoretical foundations of progressive change in management science can be traced to the earliest systematic attempts to improve organizational processes and outcomes. Frederick

Taylor (1911) principles of scientific management established the foundational premise that work processes could be systematically analyzed, optimized, and improved through rational investigation and incremental modification. Taylor's approach, though often criticized for its mechanistic view of workers, introduced the revolutionary idea that organizational improvement could be achieved through methodical, evidence-based changes rather than arbitrary decisions or wholesale restructuring. Similarly, Fayol (1916) administrative theory contributed to the progressive change framework by identifying universal management functions, including planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating, and controlling, that provided a structured approach to organizational governance and improvement.

Weber, (1947) theory of bureaucracy further enriched the theoretical foundations of progressive change by articulating how organizations could achieve efficiency and predictability through formalized rules, hierarchical authority structures, and standardized procedures. While Weber's ideal-type bureaucracy is often associated with organizational rigidity, his emphasis on rationalization and systematic organization laid the groundwork for later theories of planned organizational change. The transition from classical management theory to the human relations movement, catalyzed by the Hawthorne studies (Mayo, 1933) and subsequently developed by theorists such as McGregor (1960) and Maslow (1954), represented a progressive evolution in management thinking that recognized the importance of social and psychological factors in organizational performance.

Lewin (1947) three-stage model of change, encompassing unfreezing, changing, and refreezing, represents perhaps the most influential theoretical framework for understanding progressive change in organizations. Lewin's model conceptualized organizational change as a deliberate, managed process that required systematic preparation, implementation, and stabilization, a perspective that aligned closely with the progressive change philosophy. Despite critiques regarding the model's linear assumptions and its adequacy for capturing the complexity of contemporary organizational dynamics (Burnes, 2004) , Lewin's framework has remained a foundational reference point in the change management literature, as confirmed by bibliometric analyses showing it among the most cited references across decades of research.

The contingency theory perspective, developed by scholars such as Lawrence & Lorsch (1967) and Woodward (1965) , added an important dimension to the theoretical foundations of progressive change by demonstrating that effective organizational structures and management practices depend on environmental and situational factors. This contingency perspective implies that progressive change must be context-sensitive, adapting its pace, scope, and methods to the specific circumstances facing an organization rather than following a universal prescription. The integration of contingency thinking with change management has produced more nuanced and practical approaches to progressive organizational improvement that acknowledge the diversity of organizational contexts and challenges.

Conceptual Evolution: From Continuous Improvement to Organizational Readiness

The conceptual evolution of progressive change in management science has been marked by the emergence of several interconnected streams of research, each contributing distinct

theoretical and practical insights. The continuous improvement (CI) movement, rooted in the quality management philosophies of Deming (1986) and the Japanese Kaizen approach articulated by Imai (1986), represents one of the most significant conceptual developments in progressive change thinking. Continuous improvement emphasizes the importance of small, incremental changes implemented consistently over time, arguing that sustained organizational excellence is achieved through the cumulative effect of minor improvements rather than through dramatic interventions. The CI philosophy has been operationalized through various methodologies, including Total Quality Management (TQM), Six Sigma, and Lean Management, each providing structured frameworks for identifying and implementing progressive improvements.

The organizational development (OD) tradition, pioneered by scholars such as Richard Beckhard (1969) and Schein (1969) , contributed a humanistic and systems-oriented perspective to progressive change. OD approaches emphasize the importance of planned interventions that address not only technical and structural aspects of organizations but also the human dimensions, including organizational culture, interpersonal relationships, and group dynamics. The OD tradition has been particularly influential in establishing the principle that sustainable progressive change requires attention to both the formal and informal systems within organizations, and that effective change processes must engage organizational members as active participants rather than passive recipients of externally imposed modifications (Cummings et al., 2016) .

The concept of organizational readiness for change, developed through the influential work of Armenakis, Harris, and Mossholder (1993) and subsequently refined by scholars such as Holt et al (2007) and Weiner (2009), represents a critical evolution in progressive change thinking. Readiness for change refers to the cognitive and affective states of organizational members that determine their willingness and capacity to support and implement change initiatives. (Armenakis et al., 1993) identified five key components of change readiness messages: discrepancy, appropriateness, efficacy, principal support, and valence. This framework, later extended by Rafferty, Jimmieson, and Armenakis (2013) into a multilevel model, transformed the understanding of progressive change from a primarily structural and procedural phenomenon to one that recognized the central role of individual and collective psychological factors in determining change outcomes.

Weiner's (2009) theory of organizational readiness for change further advanced this conceptual stream by proposing a multilevel model that distinguishes between individual-level change readiness and organizational-level change readiness. Weiner argued that organizational readiness is a shared psychological state characterized by organizational members' commitment to implementing change (change commitment) and their collective belief in their capacity to do so (change efficacy). This theoretical contribution, which has received over 1,600 global citations according to bibliometric data, has been particularly influential in shifting the focus of progressive change research from prescriptive models of how change should be managed to

descriptive and explanatory models of why change succeeds or fails in specific organizational contexts.

Progressive Change in the Contemporary Management Context

The contemporary management landscape has introduced new dimensions and challenges to the concept of progressive change, driven by the convergence of digital transformation, globalization, and heightened expectations for organizational sustainability and social responsibility. The emergence of agile methodologies, originally developed in software engineering but increasingly applied to organizational management more broadly, represents a significant contemporary evolution of progressive change thinking (Rigby et al., 2016; Worley & Mohrman, 2014) . Agile approaches emphasize iterative development, rapid feedback cycles, and adaptive planning, principles that align closely with the progressive change philosophy while introducing new practices for accelerating the pace of incremental improvement.

Organizational resilience has emerged as another important contemporary framework that intersects with progressive change theory. Resilience, defined as an organization's capacity to anticipate, prepare for, respond to, and adapt to incremental change and sudden disruptions in order to survive and prosper (Duchek, 2020; Mohrman & Worley, 2009), shares with progressive change an emphasis on continuous adaptation and learning. However, resilience theory extends the progressive change framework by explicitly addressing the organization's ability to withstand and recover from unexpected shocks, a capability that has proven critical in the wake of global disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The digital transformation of organizations presents both opportunities and challenges for progressive change approaches. Digital technologies, including artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and cloud computing, have created new possibilities for implementing and monitoring progressive change through enhanced data collection, real-time performance tracking, and evidence-based decision making (Vial, 2019). However, the disruptive potential of these technologies also raises questions about whether progressive, incremental approaches remain adequate in contexts where technological change may require more fundamental organizational restructuring. This tension between incremental adaptation and radical transformation in the digital era represents one of the most important contemporary challenges for progressive change theory and practice.

Furthermore, the growing emphasis on sustainability and corporate social responsibility has introduced ethical and environmental dimensions to progressive change that were largely absent from earlier management frameworks. Progressive change approaches are increasingly expected to address not only organizational performance and efficiency but also the broader social and environmental impacts of organizational activities (Lozano, 2015). This expansion of the progressive change mandate has led to the development of integrated frameworks that seek to align organizational improvement with sustainable development goals, creating a more holistic and socially responsive approach to organizational transformation that reflects the evolving expectations of stakeholders in the twenty-first century.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Approach

This study employs a bibliometric approach as an analytical strategy to map and evaluate the development of scientific literature related to progressive change in management science. Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative method for examining the characteristics of published literature, including patterns of authorship, citation, and thematic development, enabling researchers to identify intellectual structures and emerging trends within a given field of study (Donthu et al., 2021). The selection of bibliometric analysis as the primary research method is grounded in its demonstrated capacity to provide objective, systematic, and reproducible assessments of large bodies of scholarly literature, thereby complementing traditional narrative literature reviews with data-driven insights (Zupic & Cater, 2015). This approach combines two fundamental analytical strategies: performance analysis, which examines the productivity and impact of various research constituents, and science mapping, which reveals the conceptual, intellectual, and social structures underlying the research domain (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017).

Data Source and Type

The primary data source for this study is the Scopus database, which is widely recognized as one of the most comprehensive and authoritative repositories of peer-reviewed academic literature across multiple disciplines (Baas et al., 2020). Scopus was selected over alternative databases such as Web of Science and Google Scholar due to its broader coverage of social science and management journals, its rigorous quality control mechanisms for indexed publications, and its compatibility with bibliometric analysis software. The data extracted from Scopus consists of bibliographic metadata including author names, article titles, source journals, publication years, abstracts, author keywords, index keywords, cited references, affiliations, and document types, all exported in BibTeX format for subsequent analysis.

Data Collection Process

The data collection process involved a systematic search of the Scopus database using a carefully constructed Boolean search string designed to capture the breadth and specificity of progressive change literature in management science. The search strategy combined key terms including "progressive change," "organizational change," "change management," and "continuous improvement" using Boolean operators to maximize recall while maintaining relevance. The search was limited to articles published in English, restricted to journal articles and conference papers as document types, and encompassed all available publication years to capture the full historical development of the research domain. The initial search yielded approximately 300 documents, which were subsequently subjected to a systematic selection process to identify the final corpus for analysis.

Data Selection Process

The data selection process followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to ensure transparency, reproducibility, and

methodological rigor (Page et al., 2021). The PRISMA framework provides a structured process encompassing identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion determination. During the identification stage, all documents retrieved from the Scopus database were recorded. The screening stage involved the removal of duplicate entries and the exclusion of documents that did not meet predetermined inclusion criteria, including relevance to progressive change concepts, availability of full text, and publication in peer-reviewed outlets. The eligibility assessment stage entailed a detailed review of abstracts and, where necessary, full texts to verify that remaining documents substantively addressed progressive change in the management context. The final corpus comprised 124 unique documents published between 2003 and 2026, consisting of 101 journal articles (81.5%) and 23 conference papers (18.5%). The complete PRISMA flow diagram illustrating the data selection process is presented in Figure 1.

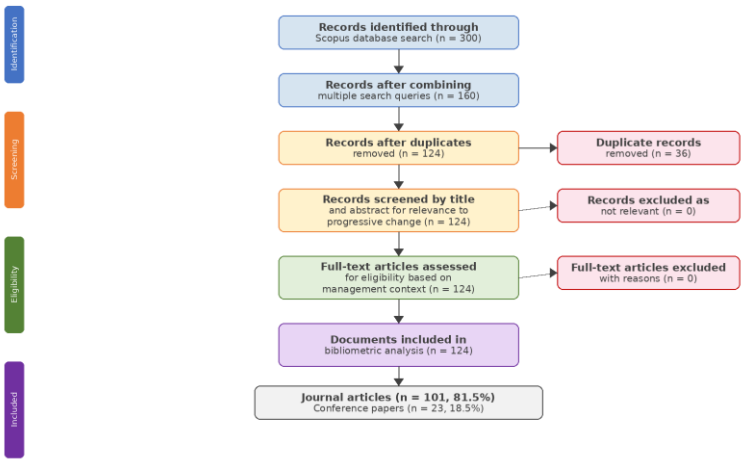


Figure 1. PRISMA flow diagram of the data selection process

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis and interpretation were conducted R Studio and the bibliometrix package, which is the web-based interface of the bibliometrix R package developed by Aria and Cuccurullo (2017). R Studio and the bibliometrix package was selected for its comprehensive suite of bibliometric analysis tools, its user-friendly graphical interface, and its capacity to generate both quantitative performance metrics and visual science mapping outputs. The analysis was structured in two phases. The first phase involved performance analysis, which examined publication trends, source productivity and impact, author contributions, citation patterns, and geographical distribution of research. The second phase involved science mapping, which employed techniques including keyword co-occurrence network analysis,

thematic mapping based on Callon's centrality-density framework, three-field plot analysis, Reference Publication Year Spectroscopy (RPYS), and collaboration network analysis to reveal the conceptual and intellectual structures underlying the progressive change research domain.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Overview of Research Data

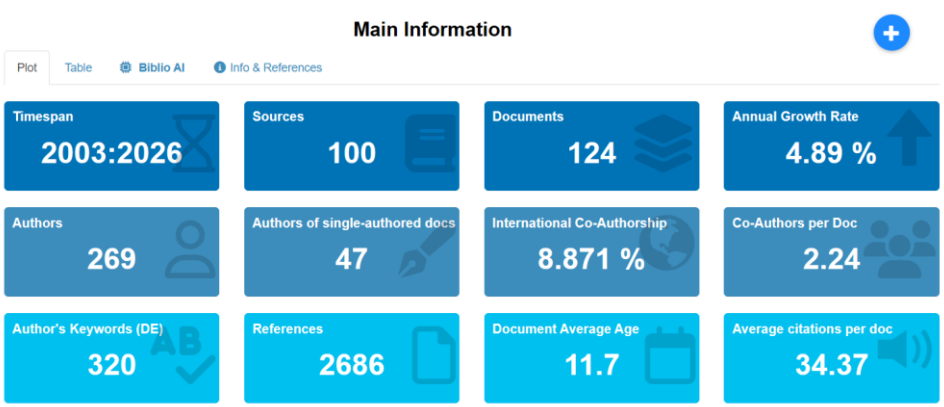


Figure 2. Main information about data

The descriptive overview of the research corpus, presented in Figure 2, reveals the fundamental characteristics of progressive change literature in management science. The dataset comprises 124 documents published across 100 sources between 2003 and 2026, produced by 269 authors. The annual growth rate of 4.89% indicates a moderate but sustained expansion of scholarly interest in progressive change concepts. The corpus contains 2,686 references and 320 author keywords, providing a rich foundation for bibliometric analysis. The average document age of 11.7 years suggests that the field has established a relatively mature knowledge base, while the average citation rate of 34.37 per document indicates a substantial impact of progressive change research within the broader management literature.

An important structural characteristic of the research community is the co-authorship pattern, which shows an average of 2.24 co-authors per document with 47 single-authored documents, representing approximately 38% of the corpus. This relatively high proportion of single-authored work distinguishes the progressive change domain from more collaborative fields such as digital transformation research. The international co-authorship rate of 8.871% is notably low, indicating limited cross-national collaboration and suggesting that progressive change research has developed largely within national scholarly communities. In terms of geographical distribution, the United States dominates the research landscape, followed by Western European countries, while representation from developing regions including Southeast Asia, Africa, and Latin America remains minimal. This concentration raises important concerns about the cultural generalizability of progressive change theories.

Publication Trends and Citation Impact

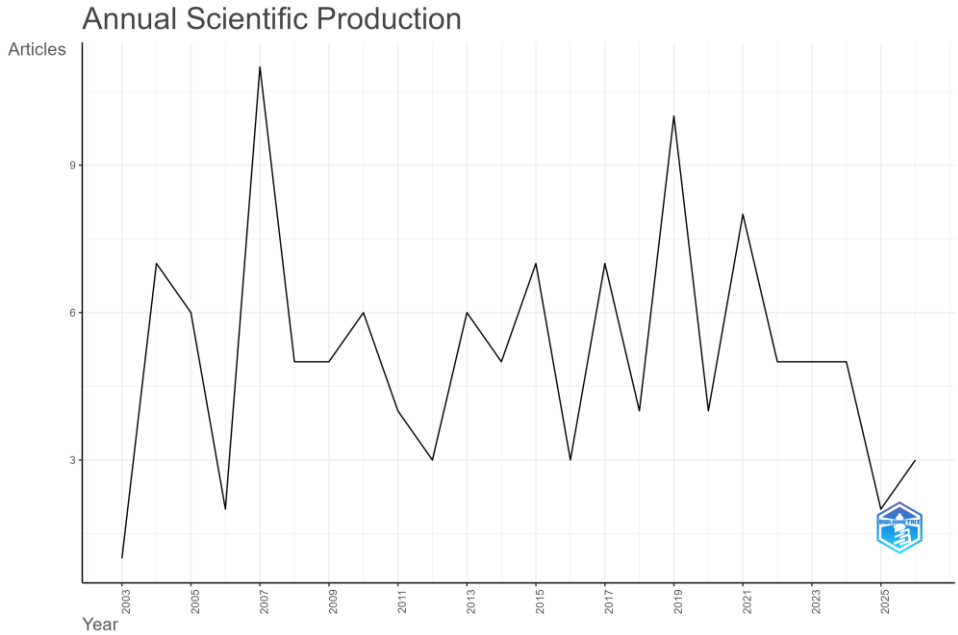


Figure 3. Annual scientific production

The annual scientific production trend, illustrated in Figure 3, reveals a fluctuating pattern of publication activity in progressive change research from 2003 to 2026. Two notable peaks are observable: the first around 2007 with more than 10 publications, and the second around 2019 with approximately 10 publications. These peaks appear to coincide with periods of significant organizational and economic challenges, including the post-dot-com era restructuring in the mid-2000s and the pre-pandemic period of digital transformation acceleration in the late 2010s. The non-linear growth pattern contrasts with the exponential growth observed in more emergent fields such as digital leadership, suggesting that progressive change research has reached a phase of periodic renewal rather than continuous expansion.

The citation impact analysis further reveals that the field's influence is concentrated around landmark publications rather than distributed evenly. Average article citations show two prominent peaks: around 2009 with approximately 18 citations per article, coinciding with Weiner's (2009) highly influential organizational readiness theory, and around 2018 with approximately 17 citations, aligned with Stouten et al.'s (2018) evidence-based change management framework. This pattern indicates that progressive change research advances through periodic theoretical breakthroughs that reshape the discourse, interspersed with periods of application and incremental extension.

Source Analysis

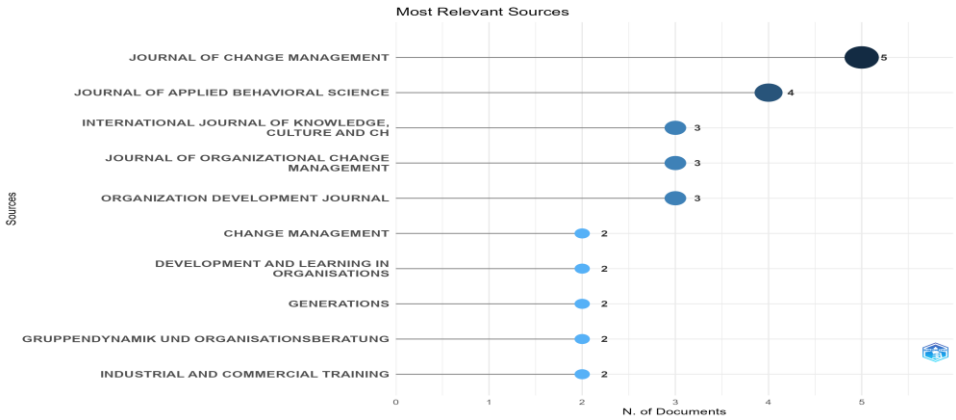


Figure 4. Most relevant sources

The source analysis, depicted in Figure 4, identifies the most productive journals in progressive change research. The Journal of Change Management leads with five publications, followed by the Journal of Applied Behavioral Science with four publications, and the International Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Change Management, the Journal of Organizational Change Management, and the Organization Development Journal each contributing three publications. This distribution reveals that progressive change research is concentrated in specialized change management and organizational development journals, suggesting a well-defined disciplinary identity. Bradford's Law analysis classifies the sources into three productivity zones: a core zone of 18 sources, a second zone of 41 sources, and a third zone of 41 sources, with a Bradford multiplier of k=1.64 and an R-squared value of 0.8733, indicating a reasonable fit to the expected concentration pattern.

Citation Analysis

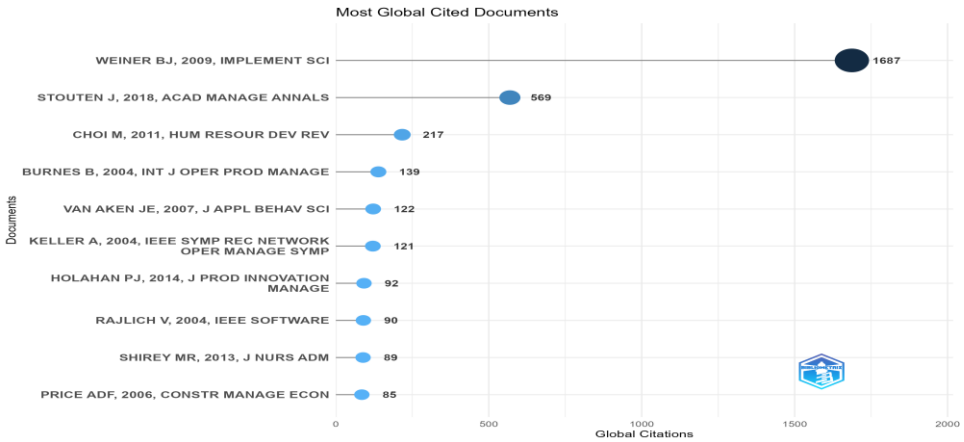


Figure 5. Most global cited documents

The global citation analysis, illustrated in Figure 5, identifies the most influential documents in the corpus. Weiner BJ (2009) leads with 1,687 citations for the article on

organizational readiness for change theory, followed by Stouten J et al. (2018) with 569 citations for the evidence-based change management framework. Other highly cited works include Choi M (2011) with 217 citations on employees' attitudes toward organizational change, Burnes B (2004) with 139 citations on Kurt Lewin's approach to change management, Van Aken JE (2007) with 122 citations, and Keller A (2004) with 121 citations. The substantial gap between the top two cited documents and the remaining corpus indicates that a small number of landmark publications have disproportionately shaped the field's intellectual direction.

A particularly noteworthy finding is the local citation pattern within the corpus: all 124 documents exhibit zero local citations, meaning that none of the articles in the dataset cites another article within the same dataset. This finding is critically important because it indicates that the progressive change corpus functions as a collection of parallel contributions to the broader change management discourse rather than as a tightly integrated, self-referencing research community. Each document draws on the broader management and organizational change literature but does not engage directly with other documents addressing progressive change from similar bibliometric search parameters.

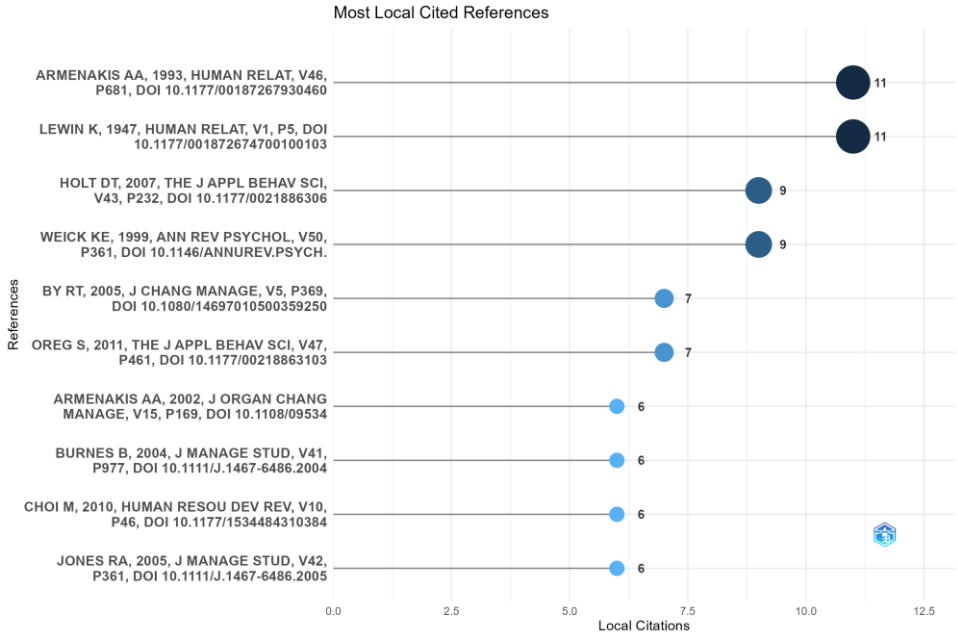


Figure 6. Most local cited references

The analysis of locally cited references, presented in Figure 6, reveals the intellectual foundations upon which progressive change research is built. Armenakis AA (1993) and Lewin K (1947) share the top position with 11 local citations each, confirming their status as the foundational pillars of the field. These are followed by Holt DT (2007) and Weick KE (1999) with 9 citations each, By RT (2005) and Oreg S (2011) with 7 citations each. This reference pattern demonstrates that progressive change research remains deeply grounded in mid-twentieth century change management theory while simultaneously engaging with more contemporary frameworks for understanding individual and organizational readiness for

change. The Reference Publication Year Spectroscopy (RPYS) analysis further confirms this pattern, showing elevated citation activity during two key historical periods: 1991-1993, aligned with Armenakis et al.'s foundational work, and 2009-2013, corresponding to a period of theoretical consolidation including Weiner's (2009) organizational readiness theory and Choi's (2011) attitudinal framework.

Keyword and Thematic Analysis

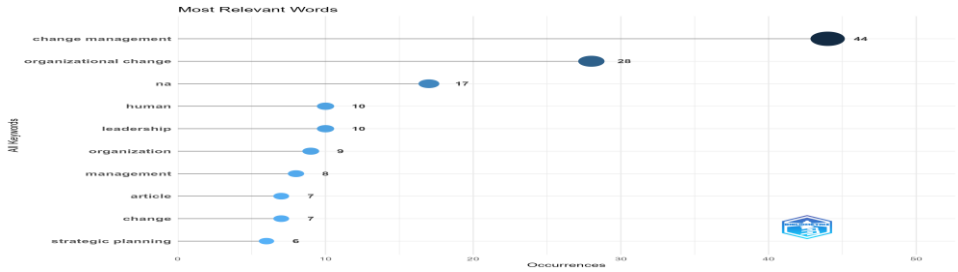


Figure 7. Most relevant keywords

The keyword analysis, displayed in Figure 7, reveals the dominant conceptual vocabulary of progressive change research. "Change management" is the most frequent keyword with 44 occurrences (16% of the thematic space), followed by "organizational change" with 28 occurrences (10%), "human" with 10, "leadership" with 10, "organization" with 9, "management" with 8, "article" with 7, "change" with 7, and "strategic planning" with 6. The dominance of "change management" and "organizational change" confirms that progressive change research is firmly embedded within the broader change management discourse. The prominence of "human" and "leadership" highlights the field's growing recognition of human and leadership factors as central to successful progressive change implementation.

Thematic Mapping and Conceptual Structure

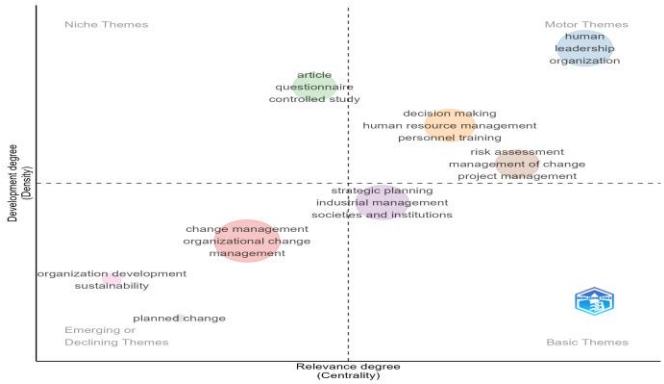


Figure 8. Thematic map (Callon's centrality-density framework)

The thematic map, constructed using Callon's centrality-density framework and presented in Figure 8, classifies research themes into four quadrants. The motor themes quadrant (high centrality, high density) contains clusters related to human factors, leadership, and organization, indicating that these topics are both central to the field and internally well-developed. The emerging or declining themes quadrant (low centrality, low density) includes planned change,

the combination of change management with organizational change and management, and organization development with sustainability, suggesting that these topics are either newly emerging or losing momentum. The niche themes quadrant (low centrality, high density) contains methodological clusters such as article/questionnaire/controlled study, reflecting specialized but peripheral research streams. The basic themes area includes strategic planning and industrial management, which serve as foundational concepts underpinning the field without being at the forefront of current attention.

The positioning of decision making, human resource management, and personnel training near the motor themes border suggests that these applied management topics are gaining centrality within progressive change research, reflecting a practical turn toward implementation-oriented concerns. Notably absent from the motor themes are concepts related to ethics, sustainability, and digital transformation, indicating significant blind spots in the current research agenda that warrant attention in future studies.

Co-occurrence Network Analysis

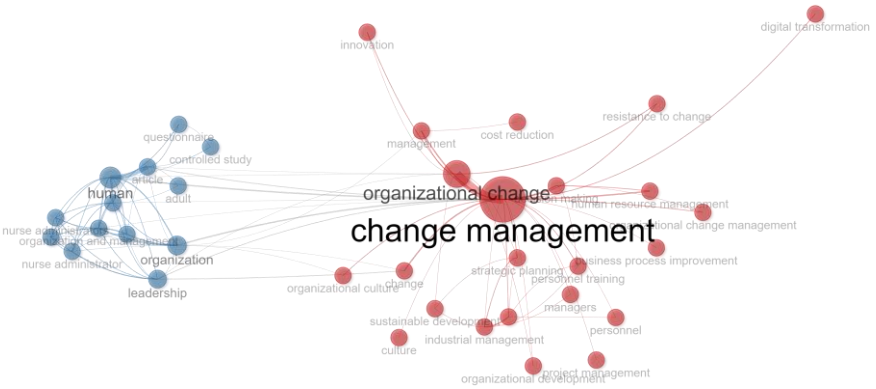


Figure 9. Keyword co-occurrence network

The keyword co-occurrence network, depicted in Figure 9, reveals two distinct conceptual clusters represented in blue and red. The red cluster is centered on "organizational change" and encompasses concepts related to individual and psychological aspects of change, while the blue cluster focuses on management processes and implementation strategies. The separation into two clusters suggests a bifurcation in the progressive change literature between scholars who approach the topic from a behavioral and psychological perspective and those who adopt a more process-oriented and strategic management perspective. The bridges between these clusters represent important integrative concepts that connect these two research traditions, highlighting opportunities for cross-fertilization (Beer, 2021; Boonstra, 2023) that could strengthen the overall theoretical coherence of the field.

The three-field plot analysis further illuminates the knowledge flow within progressive change research, revealing that Lewin (1947) and Armenakis (1993) are the most connected foundational works on the cited references side, channeled through authors such as Ismail S

and Ahmad MH, and expressed through the dominant keywords of "change management" and "organizational change." The collaboration network analysis reveals a fragmented structure consisting of numerous small, disconnected clusters of two to three authors, consistent with the low international co-authorship rate of 8.871% and indicating that the field would benefit from increased collaborative initiatives across institutional and national boundaries.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

This bibliometric analysis of 124 Scopus-indexed documents has provided a comprehensive mapping of the evolution of the progressive change concept in management science from 2003 to 2026. The findings reveal that progressive change research has developed as a moderately growing field with a 4.89% annual growth rate, characterized by broad authorial participation, a concentration of publications in specialized change management journals, and a pronounced dominance of Western, particularly American, scholarly contributions (Pettigrew et al., 2001).

The performance analysis demonstrates that the field's intellectual impact is significantly shaped by a small number of landmark publications, most notably Weiner's (2009) theory of organizational readiness for change and Stouten et al.'s (2018) evidence-based change management framework. The zero local citation pattern across the corpus represents a critical finding, indicating that progressive change research functions as a collection of parallel contributions to the broader change management discourse rather than as a tightly integrated, self-referencing research community.

Science mapping analyses reveal that the conceptual structure of progressive change research is organized around two primary anchors: change management (process-oriented) and organizational change (entity-oriented), with supporting themes related to leadership, human factors, and strategic planning. The thematic evolution from structural concerns in early periods to human-centered approaches in recent years reflects a significant paradigmatic shift that aligns with broader trends in management science toward recognizing the primacy of human agency in organizational transformation. The foundational influence of Lewin's (1947) change model and Armenakis et al.'s (1993) readiness framework continues to shape contemporary research, as confirmed by both the most locally cited references analysis and the RPYS findings.

Several important research gaps emerge from this analysis that warrant attention in future studies. First, the geographical concentration of research in Western contexts highlights the need for more studies examining progressive change in developing country organizations, where institutional, cultural, and resource conditions may require different approaches. Second, the absence of themes related to ethics, sustainability, and digital transformation in the thematic map suggests that progressive change research has not yet fully engaged with these increasingly important contemporary management concerns. Third, the fragmented collaboration network indicates a need for more coordinated, cross-institutional research programs that can build a more integrated and cumulative body of progressive change knowledge.

Future researchers are encouraged to conduct empirical studies that examine progressive change processes in non-Western organizational contexts, investigate the role of digital technologies in enabling or constraining progressive change, and explore the ethical dimensions of organizational transformation. Longitudinal research designs that track progressive change implementation over extended periods would be particularly valuable for understanding the temporal dynamics of progressive organizational transformation (Girod & Whittington, 2015; Van De Ven & Sun, 2011). Additionally, mixed-method approaches that combine the breadth of quantitative bibliometric analysis with the depth of qualitative case studies could provide more nuanced insights into the mechanisms through which progressive change produces sustainable organizational improvement.

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