

**SECTION MANAGEMENT, MARKETING, ECONOMIC,  
INFORMATICS AND CYBERNETICS**

**FLEXIBLE WORK. TRENDS AND PERSPECTIVES BASED ON  
LITERATURE INVESTIGATION**

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**Abstract:** *The study on flexible work has received increasing interest from researchers since 2000, but especially over the last years, when the coronavirus pandemic turned many people into remote workers overnight. The COVID-19 crisis has forced many employers to let their employees work from home. But what at first was a necessity becomes now a preferred way of working. Remote work allows employees to maintain a good work-life balance. This is essential to being more satisfied at work, and therefore to performing higher quality work. Commuting is not only mentally and physically stressful, but it also takes time, which is a valuable resource for people with busy schedules. Flexible working arrangements also have financial benefits, both for employers and employees; telecommuting allows employees to work from less expensive locations. COVID-19 has been the biggest engine of digital transformation, proving to businesses around the world that employees do not need to be in an office to get their work done. As flexible working becomes more popular due to its benefits, also the research on the topic grows swiftly. This study aims to explore the interest of specialists in investigating topics related to flexible work using bibliometric analysis. We conducted the study based on the investigation of the literature in this field from the Scopus database using the PRISMA methodology. The applications used in the data analysis process are VOSviewer and Microsoft Excel. The study involved the investigation of articles published in the period between 2000 and 2023. The major objective of the bibliometric analysis is the research of the scientific productivity of the literature focused on the subject under investigation.*

**Keywords:** *flexible work; working from home; remote worker; coronavirus pandemic; benefits; challenges; bibliometric analysis.*

**JEL classification:** M50; M54.

## **1. Introduction**

In recent years, the concept of flexible work has gained significant traction all around the globe. Flexibility is recognized as one of the major shifts in the future of work and workplaces (Kossek, Gettings, & Misra, 2021). Over the past few years, the pace of flexible work environments has rapidly increased. Work flexibility is a common

denominator of many non-standard arrangements, where workers enjoy more autonomy over how they fulfill their work responsibilities. (Dunn, Munoz, & Jarrahi, 2023). The flexible work arrangements (FWAs), hybrid work model combines both office and remote work; into certain days of the week the employees work in the office and remotely on others. This model gives the employees the flexibility to work from home and also collaborate with their colleagues in the office environment.

Even before the pandemic, in many countries, the remote-capable employees had a hybrid work arrangement. 8% of the U.S. full-time employees worked exclusively from home, 32% had a hybrid work arrangement, while 60% was fully-on site (Wigert, 2022). But the beginning of 2020 was the beginning of the pandemic that has drastically changed the way people work, putting front and center the concept of work from home (WFH) for the majority of employees all over the world.

WFH is a relatively new experience for most workers, including those that manage them. Consequently, there has been an ongoing debate among organizational leaders with those advocating to make WFH a permanent fixture on one end, and those opting for a return to the more traditional, 8 hours-in-the-office on the other end (Kim&Dirks, 2023).

Immediately after the onset of the pandemic, working from home received special attention, with many researchers looking to find ways to increase productivity. The research on the effectiveness of WFH has generally shown that employees are just as, if not more, productive working from home than when they are in the office. According to a recent survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, 44% of respondents shared that WFH has made it easier for them to meet deadlines and get their job done. Studies have demonstrated that productivity for remote workers were consistently higher than those based in the office (Deole, Deter, & Huang 2023, Blahopoulou et al. 2022, Belzunegui-Eraso&Erro-Garcés, 2020). The most of remote-capable employees continued to work from home at least part of the time. While the employees prefer being fully remote, managers have considerable hesitation about this way of working. The compromise is the flexible, hybride work. Most employees have developed an affinity for remote-work flexibility that has grown into an expectation for the future. While permanent plans for remote flexibility are certainly trending in their favor, there are still a fair number of employees who will not receive the flexibility they desire. According to a recent Gallup study (Wigert&Agrawa, 2022), 32% of the employees prefer working exclusively remote, 59% prefer the hybrid work, while only 9% prefer fully on-site jobs. Not only younger generations prefer hybrid work, but also experienced specialists want to work in flexible companies with a modern work style.

FWAs deliver individual and organisational benefits but also challenge the foundations of conventional control strategies, providing circumstances for evading managerial oversight while undermining the mechanisms that reproduce corporate culture (Stirpe, 2023).

Many employees prefer hybrid work to avoid commute time and the stress associated with commuting. They also want to maintain a better work-life balance and have a more comfortable environment. Some employees feel uncomfortable at work because they do not have enough autonomy to make their decisions independently. On the other hand, the hybrid model reduces workplace costs and offer the employer the opportunity to choose talented employees regardless of the region they are from.

Although FWAs are often presented as ‘employer friendly’ initiatives (CIPD, 2022), they also present organisational challenges. Working remotely involves a high risk of communication problems, which means it is essential that the company has the right tools and technologies to lead to effective collaboration. Keeping employees motivated and engaged is also more difficult when employees work from home, and employers must find appropriate strategies to address this issue. Implementing flexible work arrangements can be difficult if companies do not provide employees with the necessary tools. Therefore, it is essential to ensure a proper technological infrastructure in the workplace when implementing flexible work arrangements.

## 2. Research methodology

In the research we analyzed the interest of specialists in investigating topics related to flexible work using bibliometric analysis.

The research objectives are:

- Identification of the evolution in time of the interest for investigation of flexible work topic
- Identification of the countries have the highest scientific productivity and impact for the field under investigation
- Identification of the journals with the most scientific productivity and impact for the field under investigation

The research carried out is based on a bibliometric analysis of studies related to flexible work topic. “The bibliometric review methodology is important as it provides a categorized view of the documents published in each research area, based on objective criteria for analyzing and classifying publications.” (Cavalcante, Coelho and Bairrada, 2021). Statistical methods have an increasingly important role in the analysis of the flexible work topic. But their value depends on the clarity of reporting. The PRISMA methodology minimizes bad reporting and increases transparency in the way systematic review is conducted (Bulatnikov, Constantin, 2021).

By using PRISMA methodology researchers can improve their reporting of systematic reviews and analyzes based on statistical methods. Starting from these considerations, we used the PRISMA methodology in this research. Thus, inclusion and exclusion criteria are presented in Table 1 and the PRISMA Flow Diagram in Figure 1.

**Table 1.** Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
It must explore at least one topic related to flexible work reflected by the title or the abstract of the paper;	Papers containing the terms flexible work in authors' keywords section but in reality the papers main topic was about something else;
Papers released between 2000 and 2023;	Book, book chapter, letter, conference review, editorial, note, short survey;
Jurnal and Conference Proceedings;	Papers that focused mainly on work topics, but also mentioned the word flexible.

The papers are written in English

In PRISMA Flow Diagram the number of included and excluded articles can be found for every step.

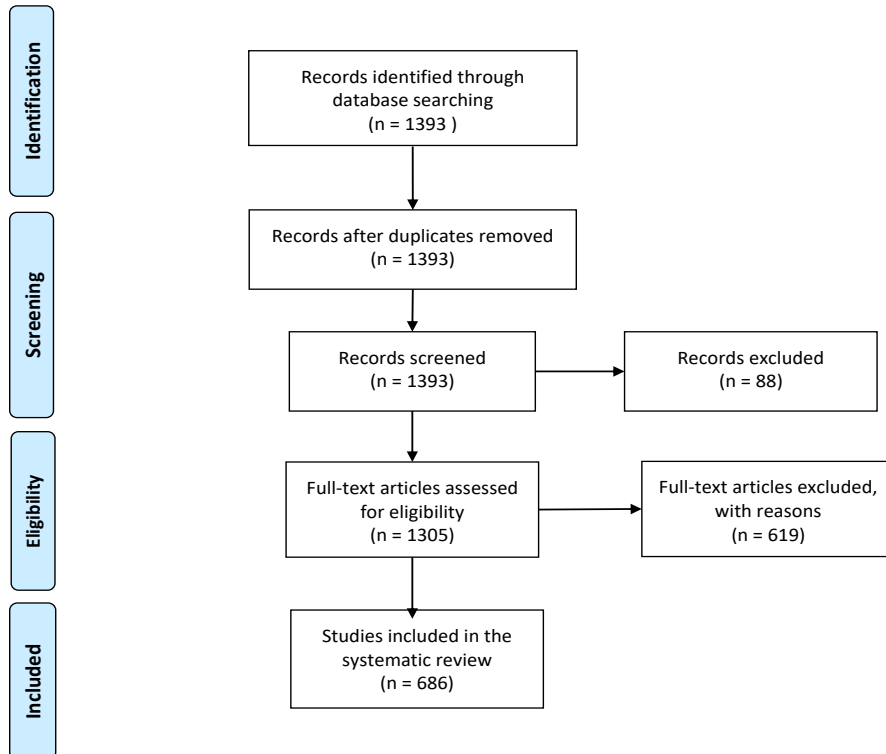


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram

The data for the research were collected in October 2023 from the Scopus database, this being one of the most important bibliographic databases.

For the veracity of a bibliometric analysis, an important step is the selection of papers. Initially, for the selection of articles from the database we developed the following search algorithm: TITLE-ABS-KEY ("flexible work" OR "hybrid work" OR "remote and in-person work" OR "mix of work from home and office time" OR "split the time between home and office" OR "work from home" OR "teleworking") and we obtained a number of 6.946 results.

Through a refinement of the terms searched, we chose the following searching algorithm: TITLE-ABS-KEY ("flexible work" OR "hybrid work") and we obtained a number of 2.488 results.

To filter the results, we used Year: 2000-2023; Document type: Article, Review and Conference Paper; Source Type: Journal and Conference Proceeding; Subject Area: Business, Management and Accounting, Social Sciences, Economics, Econometrics and Finance, Computer Science; Language: English and we obtained a number of 1393 results.

The selection algorithm used is the following:

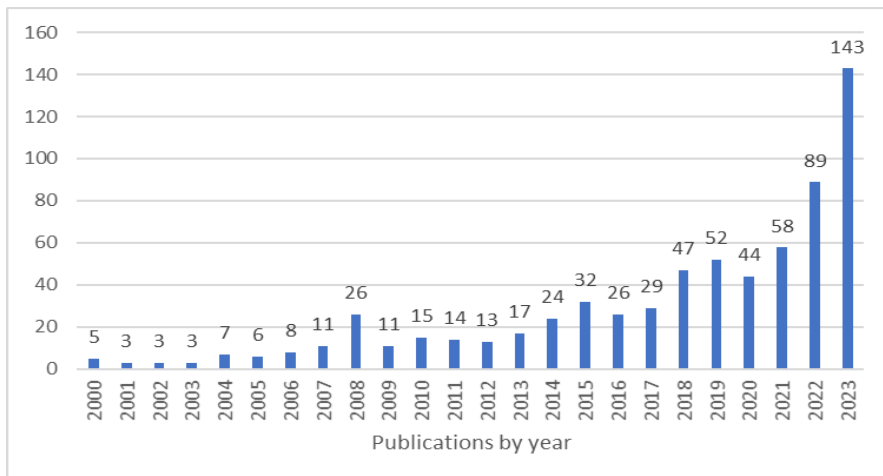
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TITLE-ABS-KEY ( "flexible work" OR "hybrid work" ) AND PUBYEAR > 1999 AND  
PUBYEAR < 2024 AND ( LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "ar" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE  
, "cp" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "re" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( SRCTYPE , "j" ) OR  
LIMIT-TO ( SRCTYPE , "p" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "SOCI" ) OR LIMIT-  
TO ( SUBJAREA , "BUSI" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "ECON" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-  
TO ( LANGUAGE , "English" ) ) .
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After excluding the inconclusive journals for the flexible work field, we obtained 1305 results. Also, we analyzed the papers evaluating the title and keywords and kept 686 papers in the database.

### 3. Data analysis

In order to achieve the research objectives, we performed several analyzes on the database with the selected papers. The software used in the data analysis process are Microsoft Excel and VOSviewer. The results are shown below.

Number of publications by year (2000-2023) - shows the evolution in time of the interest for flexible work topic (Figure 2).



**Figure 2:** Number of publications by year  
Source: own representation

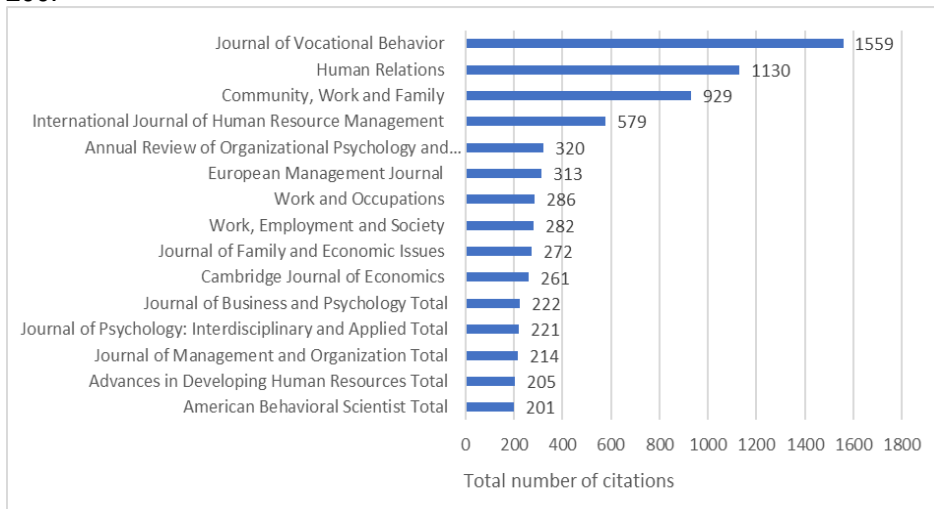
Figure 2 shows us that in the period 2000-2012 the interest for flexible work topic is quite low. A significant increase in this interest is manifested starting with the year 2018. In the year 2023, until October, the number of works ended up being almost three times higher than the one in 2018 and almost two times higher than the one in 2022.

Number of publications by journal - the hierarchy of journals that contain papers with flexible work topic is presented in Figure 3.



**Figure 3:** Productivity by journal: number of papers published  
Source: own representation

A hierarchy of the journals according to the total number of citations that the papers published in a certain journal have is presented in Figure 4. We have included in the diagram journals with a number of citations greater than 200.



**Figure 4:** Impact by journal: Total number of citations  
Source: own representation

Top 10 journals according to the total number of citations that the papers published in a certain journal have is presented in Table 2.

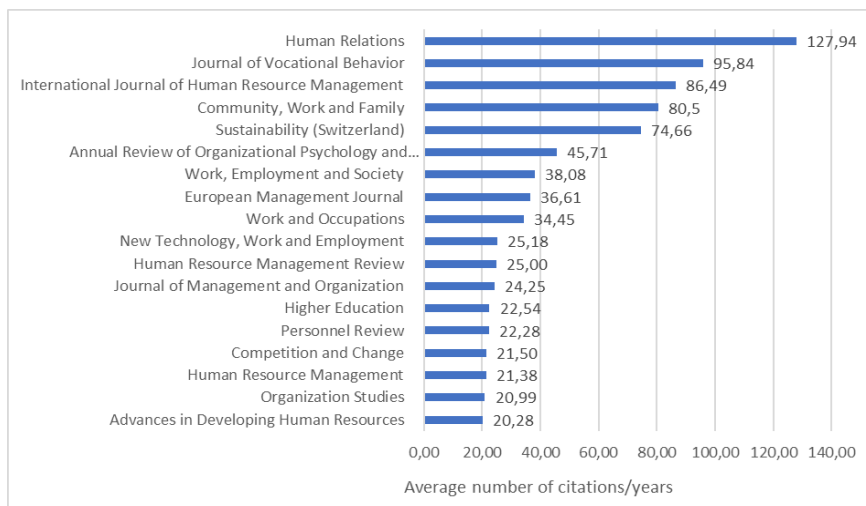
**Table 2:** Top 10 journals with the most cited articles.

Journal name	Total number of citations
Journal of Vocational Behavior	1559
Human Relations	1130

Community, Work and Family	929
International Journal of Human Resource Management	579
Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior	320
European Management Journal	313
Work and Occupations	286
Work, Employment and Society	282
Journal of Family and Economic Issues	272
Cambridge Journal of Economics	261

Source: own representation

The number of years since publication varies from one article to another. Therefore we also calculated an average of the citations by year. We thus obtained a hierarchy of journals according to the average number of citations by year, which I presented in Figure 5. We included in the diagram journals with an average number of citations per year greater than 20.



**Figure 5:** Impact by journal: Average number of citations/year

Source: own representation

Top 10 journals according to the average number of citations by year that the papers published in a certain journal have is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Top 10 journals with the highest average number of citations/year

Journal name	Average number of citations/year
Human Relations	127,94
Journal of Vocational Behavior	95,84

International Journal of Human Resource Management	86,49
Community, Work and Family	80,5
Sustainability (Switzerland)	74,66
Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior	45,71
Work, Employment and Society	38,08
European Management Journal	36,61
Work and Occupations	34,45
New Technology, Work and Employment	25,18

The most cited papers - the papers with great impact, based on the number of citations, which refers to the flexible work topic. To measure the impact we considered two aspects: the total number of citations per article and the average number of citations/year per article. A hierarchy of papers according to the total number of citations obtained is presented in Table 4. We have included in the table papers with a number of citations greater than 200.

**Table 4:** The most cited papers: total number of citations

<b>Title</b>	<b>Authors, Year of publication</b>	<b>Journal</b>	<b>Total number of citations</b>
Does it matter where you work? A comparison of how three work venues (traditional office, virtual office, and home office) influence aspects of work and personal/family life	(Hill&Ferris& Martinson, 2003)	Journal of Vocational Behavior	352
Alternative Work Arrangements: Two Images of the New World of Work	(Spreitzer et al., 2017)	Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior	320
Defining and conceptualizing workplace flexibility	(Hill et al., 2008)	Community, Work and Family	258
When flexibility helps: Another look at the availability of flexible work arrangements and work-family conflict	(Shockley&Allen, 2007)	Journal of Vocational Behavior	248
Labour market deregulation, 'flexibility' and innovation	(Michie& Sheehan, 2003)	Cambridge Journal of Economics	244



Flexible work arrangements, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions: The mediating role of work-to-family enrichment	(McNall et al., 2009)	Journal of Psychology: Interdisciplinary and Applied	221
Precarious, Informalizing, and Flexible Work: Transforming Concepts and Understandings	(Arnold & Bongiovi, 2013)	American Behavioral Scientist	201

Source: own representation

The papers were published in different years. Therefore we also calculated an average of the citations/year per article. A hierarchy of papers according to the average number of citations/year is presented in Table 5.

We have included in the table papers with a average number of citations/year greater than 20.

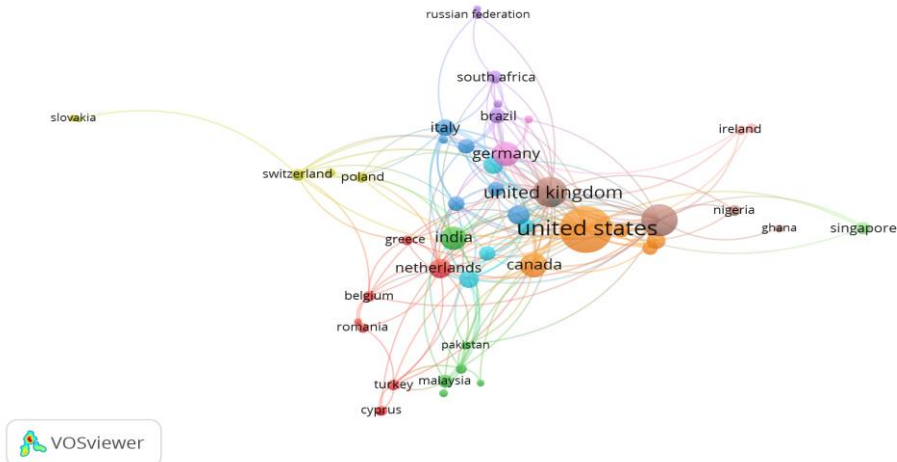
**Table 5:** The most cited papers: average number of citations/year

Title	Authors, Year of publication	Journal	Average nr of citations by year
Alternative Work Arrangements: Two Images of the New World of Work	(Spreitzer et al., 2017)	Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior	45,71
Factors influencing home-based telework in Hanoi (Vietnam) during and after the COVID-19 era	(Nguyen, 2021)	Transportation	32
Post-pandemic office work: Perceived challenges and opportunities for a sustainable work environment	(Chafi M. et al., 2022)	Sustainability (Switzerland)	27
Caring human resources management and employee engagement	(Saks, 2022)	Human Resource Management Review	24
Women's employment patterns after childbirth and the perceived access to and use of flexitime and teleworking	(Chung et al., 2018)	Human Relations	22,5

Source: own representation

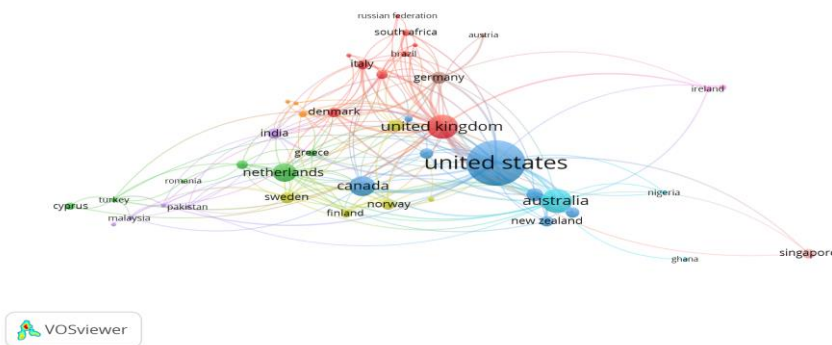
### Country Productivity

The countries with the largest number of published papers are United States of America (354 documents), Australia (144 documents), the United Kingdom (131 documents), Canada (76) and Germany (74 documents). The graphic representation obtained by using the VOSviewer application is presented in Figure 6.



**Figure 6:** Productivity by country: number of publications.  
Source: own representation

### Country Impact



**Figure 7:** Impact by country: number of citations.  
Source: own representation

In terms of impact, determined by the number of citations, the countries with the highest impact of published works are the United States of America (12719 citations), the United Kingdom (3132 citations), Australia (3036 citations), Canada (1992

citations) and Netherlands (1655 citations). The graphic representation obtained by using the VOSviewer application is presented in Figure 7.

#### 4. Conclusion

Today's business world is different from the one before the pandemic and is constantly changing. The hybrid work model replaces the traditional work models in present-day dynamic environment. Combining both in-office and remote work, the hybrid work model combines the advantages of both models. The employees are determined to work when, where and how is best for them. Their workplace must offer a better wellbeing, work-life balance and flexibility. The employees still need to feel connected to their coworkers and their organization. The option to work in-person makes them feel more connected to their team and their organization.

We consider that the use of bibliometric analysis in the field of flexible work can contribute to a better understanding of the trends in the approach to this field. We also consider that the quantitative results generated on the basis of the bibliometric analysis can be established as benchmarks for outlining the framework of qualitative research that would bring even more relevance to the investigated topic.

The results of our research show that of the total of 686 works selected in the database, more than 60% were published in the period 2018-2023. This fact highlights the growing interest of specialists in the field of flexible work in recent years.

According to the results of our study, the journals with the most papers on the subject of flexible work are: International Journal of Human Resource Management, Community, Work and Family and Sustainability. The journals with the greatest impact, from the point of view of the number of citations are: Journal of Vocational Behavior, Human Relations, Community, Work and Family.

Also, scientific productivity on topics related to flexible work places the United States of America in the first place, followed by the Australia and the United Kingdom. Regarding the evolution over time of the number of papers published in the field of flexible work, the year 2018 indicates a time when the number of papers began to increase, the trend continuing until now.

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