



Bibliometric Analysis of Organizational Cynicism

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ABSTRACT

Organizational cynicism represents a highly negative attitude held by employees towards their employing organizations. In recent years, research on organizational cynicism has been steadily increasing, often positioning it as a new paradigm in employer-employee relationships. Cynicism has significantly impacted organizations and societies in regions from the United States and Europe to Asia. However, bibliometric studies focusing on organizational cynicism are relatively scarce. Hence, this study systematically reviews the existing literature on organizational cynicism. This study conducted a comprehensive review of 163 articles from the Scopus database that pertain to organizational cynicism. Furthermore, utilizing bibliometric methods, the study analyzed publication trends, sources, co-authorship, citations, affiliated countries, organizations, funding sources, subject areas, and popular topics within the selected articles. This study systematically synthesizes the current literature on organizational cynicism and suggests emerging trends and potential directions for future research. This study holds substantial significance for guiding forthcoming inquiries in this domain.

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INTRODUCTION

Cynicism traces its origins back to ancient Greek philosophy, notably in the thought of Antisthenes (445–365 B.C.). Ancient Greek cynics were renowned for their critical perspectives on society and institutions, employing exaggeration, drama, and humor to convey their viewpoints and stimulate discussion and dialogue (Schmitz et al., 2018). In modern times, cynicism has evolved to encompass a different connotation. Rather than being a comprehensive philosophy or way of life, it is now frequently employed to describe a negative attitude or skepticism regarding the motives of others.

The landscape of employee-employer relationships has undergone significant transformations since the 1980s and 1990s, driven by factors such as globalization and the imperative for enterprises to adapt to environmental changes through organizational shifts (Parks and Kidder, 1994; Robinson, 1996). However, the change also meant massive layoffs. In addition, unethical leadership, short-sightedness, and greed further lead to negative employee attitudes (Dhar, 2009; Mo and Shi, 2017). As a result, more and more employees begin to re-examine honesty and give a new interpretation of the organization (Dean et al., 1998).

Dean et al. (1998) suggested that organizational cynicism is a person's negative attitude toward the organization composed of three dimensions: cognition, affection, and behavior. Wanous et al. (2000) pointed out that the popularity of Dilbert comic strips showed the prevalence of organizational cynicism in contemporary organizations. Feldman (2000) argued that organizational cynicism influences various organizations. A national survey conducted by Mirvis and Kanter (1989) among American employees revealed a shift from loyalty and collective spirit to a climate of distrust, self-caution, self-service, and increasing cynicism, while empathy declined. Subsequently, Mirvis and Kanter (1991) reported a rise in cynics among American workers, escalating from 43% to 48%. Alarming, organizational cynicism remains pervasive in today's workplace settings (Dean et al., 1998; Gündüz, 2017; Soomro et al., 2022).

Recognizing the implications of organizational cynicism, Thomas and Gupta (2018) emphasized the necessity for leaders to address this issue promptly, as its unchecked growth can exact a steep toll. Consequently, organizational cynicism has garnered substantial attention from contemporary scholars. Surprisingly, previous literature reveals inadequate systematic bibliometric analyses concerning organizational cynicism. In response to this gap, this study utilizes the Scopus database to conduct a comprehensive search of organizational cynicism literature. On this basis, this study uses bibliometrics methods and knowledge mapping to assess the temporal trends, significant contributors, and major themes of organizational cynicism.

METHODOLOGY

Search Strategy

This study conducted a systematic literature search using the Scopus database. One significant factor is that Scopus is widely recognized as a superior alternative to WoS with greater precision, as Franceschini et al. (2016) stated. The keyword used to search for article titles and abstracts was organizational cynicism. This process produced a total of 185 documents. The latest search date was October 24, 2022.

Limit-to and Exclusion Criteria

Since the study discusses the overall development of organizational cynicism, the study does not limit time, country, or language. However, the current study did not consider the article in the press. Therefore, this study limit-to the PUBSTAGE to FINAL. Second, the study selected only the literature type as the article. Figure 1 shows the limit-to and exclusion criteria strategy.

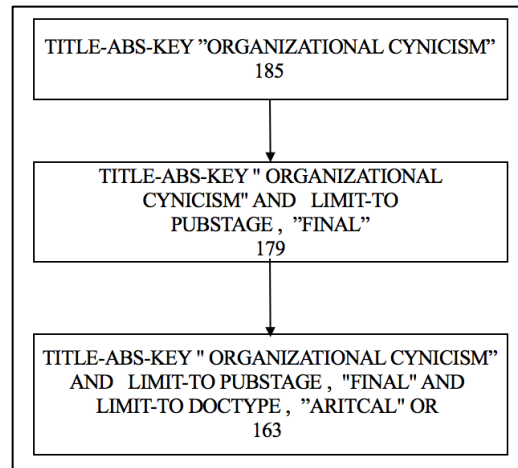


Figure 1 Strategy of limit-to and exclusion criteria

Analysis Method

The required document information includes publication, language, journal, title, author, affiliation, keywords, document type, abstract, and citation, and was exported in CSV format. This study performs a bibliometric analysis of the above information. The Bibliometric is a statistical method of research papers on a specific topic by mathematical methods (Chen et al., 2014). According to Khudzari et al. (2018), an atomized strategy examines global research trends in particular fields based on academic literature database outputs. Fellnhöfer (2019) describes it as a comprehensive analysis of specific variables from multiple angles, emphasizing its developmental trajectory. This study mainly relies on Excel and VOSviewer for linear regression, statistical, and co-word analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bibliometric Analysis of Published Trend on Organizational Cynicism

Based on the documents' statistics of compound requirements, articles related to organizational cynicism have continually increased since 1995. There have been more than ten articles each year on organizational cynicism after 2005 and more than 20 in 2018 and 2021. Through linear regression analysis of cumulative documents, this study found an exponential growth trend in published articles related to organizational cynicism. The fitted equation is $y = 1.8853e^{0.2176x}$, $R^2 = 0.96813$, indicating that the equation fits well and conforms to the law of exponential growth (see Figure 2).

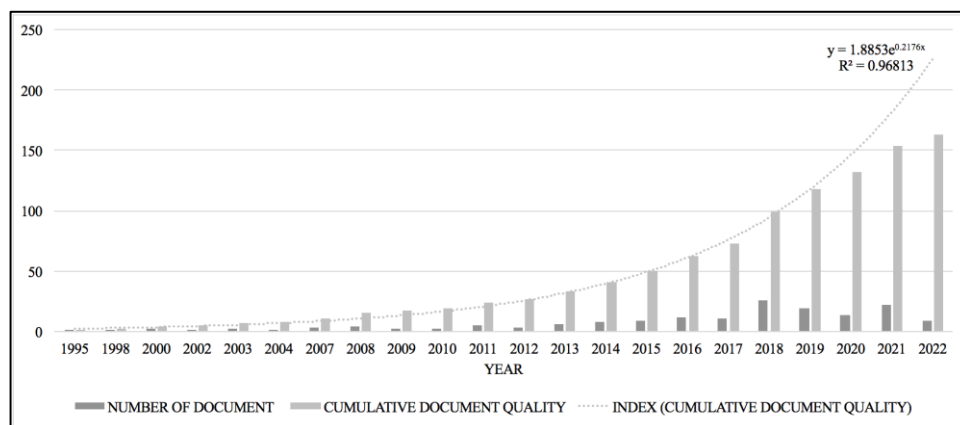


Figure 2 The published trend of organizational cynicism

This result underscores the increasing significance of this field of study. This surge in interest can be traced back to the seminal work of Mirvis and Kanter (1991), who brought attention to the rising prevalence of cynicism within organizations. Their findings prompted a gradual shift in focus, both among enterprise leaders and scholars, towards a more comprehensive exploration of organizational cynicism. Organizational cynicism, characterized by its inherently harmful nature, has been recognized to exert a cascade of passive effects on organizations, a notion emphasized by Abraham (2000). The pressures stemming from intensified global competition, as highlighted by Li and Chen (2018), have subjected organizations to frequent restructuring and change, consequently contributing to the proliferation of organizational cynicism (Kim et al., 2019). Numerous scholars have been drawn into this domain, endeavoring to unravel the intricate internal mechanisms underpinning organizational cynicism.

Bibliometric Analysis of Source on Organizational Cynicism

From 1995 to the present (as of June 24, 2022), 163 articles about organizational cynicism have been published across 123 journals. An interesting observation is that linear regression shows that the distribution of publications per journal follows a power function (see as Figure 3), suggesting a pattern related to the Matthew effect described by Merton (1968). As can be seen from Figure 3, when the number of documents is less than 1, the exponential curve tends to flatten out. This phenomenon implies that when the number of publications in a journal exceeds one, it can be considered more likely to publish articles related to organizational cynicism, thereby establishing itself as a primary source within this domain. Specifically, 25 journals significantly contributed to the literature on organizational cynicism, collectively accounting for 39.88% of cumulative publications (see Table 1). Compared with other journals, the Journal of Business Ethics contains more articles related to organizational cynicism. These results further hint at a significant growth in research activity around organizational cynicism.

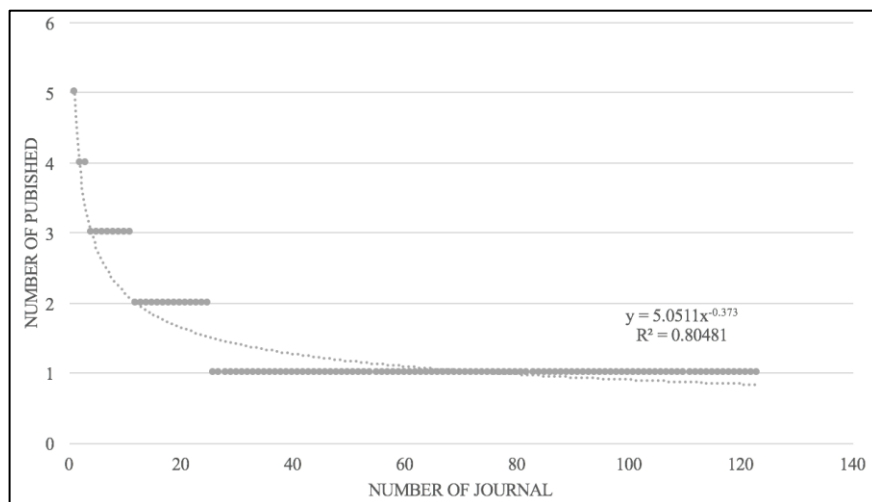


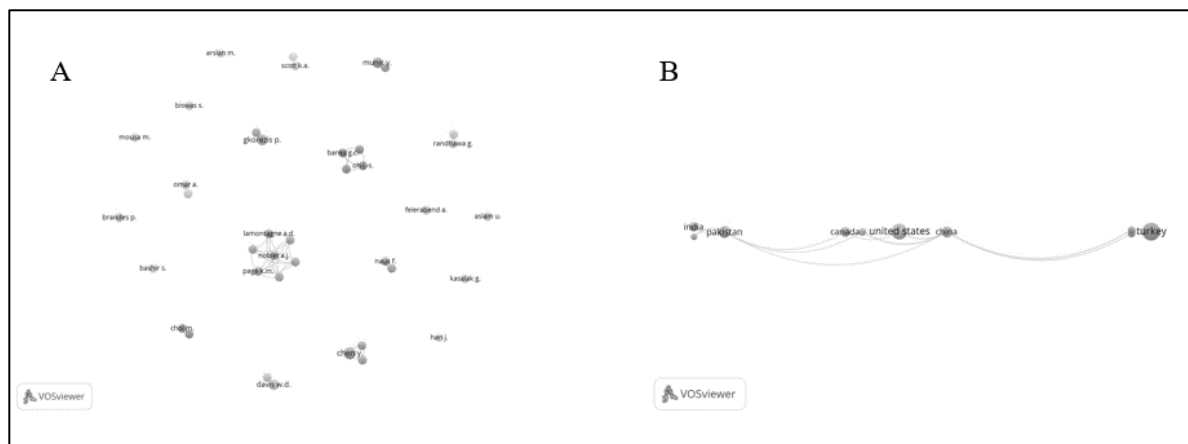
Figure 3 Frequency distribution of articles published by sources on organizational cynicism

Table 1 Major source of organizational cynicism

SOURCE TITLE	NO.	RATIO	CUMULATIVE RATIO
Journal of Business Ethics	5	3.07%	3.07%
Hacettepe Egitim Dergisi	4	2.45%	5.52%
Journal of Organizational Behavior	4	2.45%	7.98%
Frontiers in Psychology	3	1.84%	9.82%
Journal of Managerial Psychology	3	1.84%	11.66%
Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology	3	1.84%	13.50%
Leadership and Organization Development Journal	3	1.84%	15.34%
Leadership Quarterly	3	1.84%	17.18%
Policing	3	1.84%	19.02%
Social Behavior and Personality	3	1.84%	20.86%
Sustainability Switzerland	3	1.84%	22.70%
Cogent Business and Management	2	1.23%	23.93%
Development and Learning in Organizations	2	1.23%	25.15%
Egitim Ve Bilim	2	1.23%	26.38%
Human Relations	2	1.23%	27.61%
Human Systems Management	2	1.23%	28.83%
International Journal of Hospitality Management	2	1.23%	30.06%
International Journal of Human Resource Management	2	1.23%	31.29%
International Journal of Human Rights in Healthcare	2	1.23%	32.52%
Journal of Applied Behavioral Science	2	1.23%	33.74%
Journal of Global Responsibility	2	1.23%	34.97%
Journal of Management Development	2	1.23%	36.20%
Kuram Ve Uygulamada Egitim Bilimleri	2	1.23%	37.42%
Personnel Review	2	1.23%	38.65%
Universal Journal of Educational Research	2	1.23%	39.88%

Bibliometric Analysis of The Co-authorship

A total of 417 authors have done and published research on organizational cynicism. Therefore, this study set the minimum number of documents of an author as 2. Namely, the threshold was 2. Figure 4A shows co-authorship relations. The group represented by Chen Y. has the maximum number of documents, four. However, scholars still need to form a relatively stable cooperative relationship. This result further highlights the need for organizational cynicism as a concept still in its infancy. Also, it indicates that there needs to be a unified concept of organizational cynicism. Figure 4B shows cooperation in each country, with 3 clusters. The United States, China, Australia, and Canada belong to a cluster with the highest number of documents. Besides, there is no significant link between different organizations.



Note: Different colors indicate different clusters. The circle size indicates the number of documents. The thickness of the line indicates the strength of the link. The distance between the two circles indicates their correlation.

Figure 4 Co-authorship map of A: authors, B: country

Moreover, in terms of measurement scales, the current studies also do not adopt a unified, standard scale. According to their understanding of organizational cynicism, researchers borrowing existing scales for appropriate revision, such as the 7-item scale developed by Anderson and Bateman (1997), mainly reflects employees' beliefs. Cole et al. (2006) also developed a 7-item scale based on the attitude definition method. Dean et al. (1998) proposed that organizational cynicism is an attitude that includes belief, affective, and behavior and proposed a 14-item scale. Although many scholars have recognized the concepts, they often

supplement and extend the definition of organizational cynicism based on the conceptual model proposed by Dean et al. (1998). For instance, Brandes (1999) modified this scale and determined a 13-item scale. Chinese scholar Liao (2009) revised the 13-item scale based on Dean et al. (1998)'s 14-item scale and Chinese language habits. Most Chinese scholars also adopt the definition of organizational cynicism proposed by Dean et al. (1998) (e.g., Yang et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2019; Jiang et al., 2017).

Notably, the majority of Chinese scholars have shown a preference for adopting Dean et al.'s (1998) definition of organizational cynicism, as evidenced in Figure 4B. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that organizational cynicism, as a manifestation of negative work attitudes among employees, is inevitably influenced by the unique social and cultural characteristics of individuals. In the context of Chinese organizations, where Confucian cultural values have exerted a significant influence, employees may exhibit distinctive cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses when confronted with organizational injustices, differing from the responses of their Western counterparts. This recognition underscores the importance of researching organizational cynicism within the specific cultural context of China, with the ultimate goal of developing a culturally sensitive scale for assessing organizational cynicism in this environment.

Bibliometric Analysis of Citations

According to the Bibliometric Analysis of Citations, we have identified vital scholars and articles that have significantly shaped the field of organizational cynicism. Notably, Chen Y. emerges as a prominent contributor with four publications and an average of 22 citations per paper (see Table 2). Table 3 lists the citation status of the author. Brandes, P. leads the list of scholars with the most citations, totaling 485 (see Table 3). It is noteworthy that Dean, J. W. and Dharwadkar, R., with an average of 456 citations (see Table 3), have played a pivotal role in pioneering research on organizational cynicism, collaborating extensively with Brandes, P. This collaboration has undeniably played a crucial role in advancing the understanding of organizational cynicism.

Table 2 Authors with documents greater than 2

Author	Number of Documents	Citations	Average
Chen Y.	4	88	22.0
Davis W.D.	3	241	80.3
Gkorezis P.	3	67	22.3
Munir Y.	3	5	1.7

Table 3 Top 5 authors in number of citations

Author	Number of Documents	Citations	Average
Brandes P.	2	485	242.5
Dean, J. W.	1	456	456.0
Dharwadkar, R.	1	456	456.0
Johnson J.L.	1	361	361.0
O'leary-Lelly A.M.	1	361	361.0

Table 4 Top 10 article in number of citations

Rank	Title	Author (Years)	Citations
1	Organizational cynicism	Dean et al. (1998)	456
2	The effects of psychological contract breach and organizational cynicism: Not all social exchange violations are created equal	Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly (2003)	361
3	The additive value of positive psychological capital in predicting work attitudes and behaviors	Avey et al. (2010)	343
4	Organizational Cynicism: Bases and Consequences	Abraham (2000)	224
5	Organizational cynicism: Extending the exit, voice, loyalty, and neglect model of employees' responses to adverse conditions in the workplace	Naus et al. (2007)	157
6	The positive group affect spiral: A dynamic model of the emergence of positive affective similarity in work groups	Walter and Bruch (2008)	142
7	Justice, cynicism, and commitment: A study of important organizational change variables	Bernerth (2007)	137
8	Antecedents and consequences of employee organizational cynicism: A meta-analysis	Chiaburu et al. (2013)	135
9	Perceptions of politics and organizational cynicism: An attributional and leader-member exchange perspective	Davis and Gardner (2004)	125
10	An upward feedback field experiment: Supervisors' cynicism, reactions, and commitment to subordinates	Atwater et al. (2000)	120

Furthermore, we have compiled a list of the top 10 most-cited articles in Table 4. These seminal works have significantly shaped the conceptualization of cynicism and its various dimensions. Among these, the groundbreaking research by Dean et al. (1998) marked a watershed moment in the conceptualization of cynicism, notably opening the door to exploring organizational cynicism.

Andersson (1996) has proposed a significant insight, suggesting that employee cynicism is often influenced more by individual experiences than an inherent personality trait. Building upon this foundation, Dean et al. (1998) categorized cynicism research into five distinct dimensions, encompassing personality cynicism, social cynicism, professional cynicism, employee cynicism, and organizational change cynicism. Abraham (2000) has provided valuable insights into the underpinnings and consequences of organizational cynicism by analyzing it from five distinct perspectives.

One noteworthy aspect highlighted by Abraham (2000) is the attribution of societal, employee, and organizational change cynicism to psychological contract violation. Empirical support for this connection was provided through the pioneering work of Johnson and O'Leary-Kelly (2003), who were the first to verify the positive impact of psychological contract breaches on organizational cynicism, as demonstrated through a survey of bank employees. Since then, most scholars have taken psychological contract breaches as the trigger for organizational cynicism.

Moreover, Chiaburu et al. (2013) proposed that the antecedents of organizational cynicism include individual differences and work environment (e.g., organizational support and psychological contract breach). However, it is regrettable that less attention has been paid to the influence of individual differences on organizational cynicism. While both positive and negative work environments undoubtedly influence organizational cynicism, the role of individual differences should not be underestimated. For instance, employees with a weaker sense of exchange ideologies may exhibit reduced sensitivity to unsupportive social climates, potentially diminishing the impact of organizational climate factors on cynicism. Similarly, individuals with higher equity sensitivity may respond more firmly to perceived injustices, as highlighted by Scott and Colquitt (2007). Although research exploring the influence of personality traits on organizational cynicism exists (Soomro et al., 2022), there remains a need for more in-depth investigations into the interplay between individual differences and organizational cynicism, including examining traits associated with the Dark Tetrad.

The consequences of organizational cynicism are predominantly negative, as evident through its associations with low job satisfaction (Durrah et al., 2019), reduced organizational citizenship behavior (Hamayoun et al., 2021), and an increased likelihood of turnover (Çınar et al., 2014). These findings underscore the critical importance of addressing and mitigating organizational cynicism within the workplace, given its far-reaching implications for individuals and organizations.

Bibliometric Analysis of Countries, Organization, Funding Sponsor and Subject Area

This study, encompassing 163 articles on organizational cynicism, reveals a global landscape of scholarly engagement in studying this concept. Scholars from 48 countries have significantly contributed to the understanding of organizational cynicism. Remarkably, Turkey is a leading contributor, with 38 articles showcasing the depth of research interest in this field (see Table 5). Additionally, the United States leads in citations, with a substantial total of 2,444 citations (see Table 5).

Table 5 The Top Five Countries and Organization with The Most Documents

Subject	Documents	Citations	Average
Country:			
Turkey	38	171	4.5
United States	30	2444	81.5
Pakistan	18	166	9.2
China	14	219	15.6
Canada	12	143	11.9
Organization:			
China University of Mining and Technology	3	74	24.7
Florida State University	2	111	55.5
Lincoln University	2	15	7.5
Aristotle University of Thessaloniki	2	51	25.5
Ryerson University	2	16	8.0
Mohammad Ali Jinnah University	2	48	24.0
Guru Nanak Dev University	2	1	0.5

Noteworthy contributions also stem from scholars in Pakistan, China, and Canada, indicating the widespread impact of organizational cynicism on a global scale. Furthermore, the China University of Mining and Technology stands out as the organization with the most significant number of documents. It is worth highlighting that China plays a substantial role in sponsoring research in this domain, contributing to 33.3% of the 33 documents with funding sponsors.

The pervasive presence of organizational cynicism across diverse subject areas, including business, management, accounting, and social sciences (see Figure 5), underscores the far-reaching implications of this phenomenon. This multifaceted impact is closely tied to the dynamic nature of modern organizations, which undergo multidimensional changes that directly affect their competitive advantage (Brueller et al., 2018). In such a volatile environment, employment relations become inherently affected, contributing to the growing prominence of organizational cynicism within the study of various subject areas (see Figure 5).

The prominence of multiple countries, including Turkey, the United States, Pakistan, China, and Canada, underscores the international significance of organizational cynicism research, reflecting the breakdown of traditional industrial barriers and their prevalence across diverse organizational contexts (Feldman, 2000).

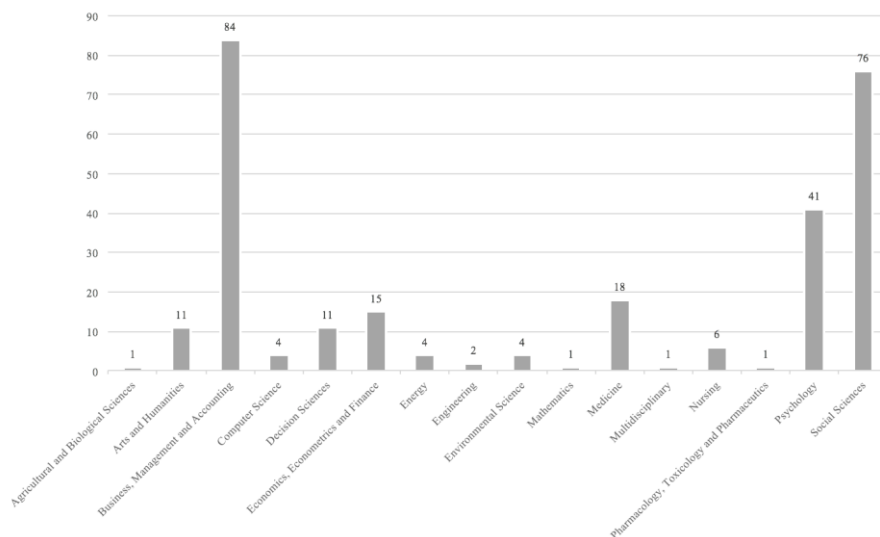
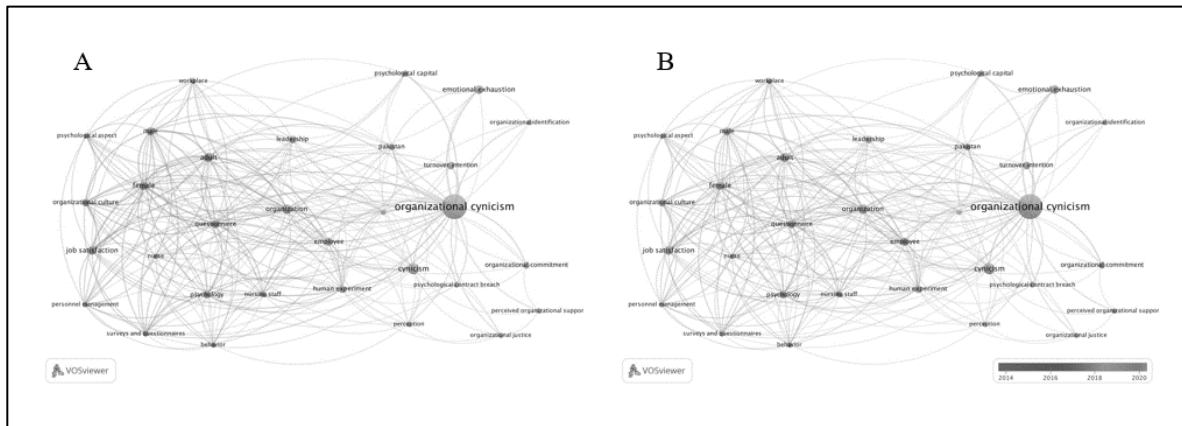


Figure 5 Subject area of organizational cynicism

Bibliometric Analysis of Popular Topic

The co-word analysis of 673 articles on organizational cynicism reveals that the research in this field can be categorized into three main topics, as depicted in Figure 6A. The red cluster predominantly explores the relationship between organizational cynicism and other organizational behavior variables, such as turnover intention, cynicism, organizational identification, and psychological contract breach. The green clusters revolve around sample characteristics and survey methodologies associated with the study of organizational cynicism, including questionnaires, demographic variables like gender and age, and psychological aspects. The blue clusters are closely tied to the organizational context, focusing on aspects related to organizations and workplaces. Furthermore, Figure 6B presents a network map highlighting the trends and hot topics within recent research on organizational cynicism. In recent years, emotional exhaustion, organizational identification, psychological contract breach, and turnover intention have emerged as prominent areas of investigation.



Note: A: The size of the circle indicates the frequency of the keyword. Different colors indicate different clusters. The thickness of the line indicates the strength of the link. The distance between two words refers to correlation. B: The size of the circle indicates the frequency of the keyword. Different colors show different years. The distance between two words refers to correlation.

Figure 6 Bibliometric analysis of topics (A) Distribution of the topics. (B) Network map of the trend topics

The findings from the analysis underscore that the primary focus of research in organizational cynicism centers on unraveling its antecedents and consequences (see Figure 6A). This emphasis has led to an intriguing debate about the role of personality traits in shaping organizational cynicism. While some researchers argue for the significance of a "cynicism personality," as demonstrated by Abraham (2000) and Davis and Gander (2004), others, as indicated by FitzGerald (2002), question the predictive power of personality cynicism concerning organizational cynicism. Instead, the perspective proposed by Chiaburu (2013) emphasizes the role of dispositions and contextual factors within the work environment as primary drivers of organizational cynicism.

Most scholars concur that organizational cynicism is linked to negative behaviors, such as counter-productive work behavior (Li et al., 2018; Bari et al., 2022) and a heightened turnover intention (Bari et al., 2022). However, it is notable that some scholars have introduced a compelling notion that organizational cynicism may have positive effects, such as making employees more resistant to immoral or unethical directives from leaders (Andersson and Bateman, 1997).

Theoretical models of organizational cynicism are continuously evolving, offering substantial opportunities for future scholars to explore this phenomenon more deeply by introducing different variables and research subjects. However, the studies on organizational cynicism are mostly surveys, and the research methods are relatively single. A single research method cannot capture the whole phenomenon (Zhang et al., 2019). Future research endeavors could benefit from embracing mixed methods or longitudinal approaches to gain a more comprehensive understanding of organizational cynicism.

Moreover, the literature has unveiled the presence of change-specific organizational cynicism, which arises when individuals doubt the underlying motivations of specific organizational changes, resulting in a unique form of cynicism characterized by a negative attitude toward change-oriented initiatives (Stanley et al., 2005). Future studies seeking to establish causality may find it advantageous to focus on change-oriented cynics, as employees may exhibit a higher propensity for context-based cynicism after experiencing unsuccessful change initiatives. This recognition underscores the significance of adopting a longitudinal perspective in future research on organizational cynicism.

In sum, these results underscore the multifaceted nature of organizational cynicism, highlighting the diverse antecedents and consequences that continue to shape this evolving field of study.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Like all studies, this study has limitations that need to be acknowledged. Firstly, the literature used for this study was exclusively collected from the Scopus database for publication. While this database is comprehensive, it is essential to recognize that some valuable literature may have been inadvertently omitted

due to database constraints. Future research should consider diversifying data sources to ensure a more comprehensive coverage of relevant studies.

Secondly, it is essential to note that some non-English speaking countries, notably China, also exert a significant influence on the phenomenon of organizational cynicism. Consequently, the exclusive reliance on English-language literature may result in a limited perspective. In future research, it is advisable to incorporate a more inclusive approach by including literature in various languages, especially when investigating the impact of organizational cynicism in culturally diverse contexts.

In addition to addressing these limitations, there are several promising avenues for future research in this field. Researchers may consider exploring the following areas:

- 1) Given the influence of social and cultural factors, the development of culture-specific organizational cynicism scales, such as in the context of Chinese culture, is warranted.
- 2) Although the analysis of past research highlights the prevalence of organizational cynicism and its antecedents and consequences (e.g., Aboramadan et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2019; Jiang et al., 2017), there is a significant gap in exploring individual differences and their impact on organizational cynicism. Understanding how personality traits and other individual characteristics influence cynicism is an area that warrants further investigation. Personality traits, such as the Dark Tetrad, and their associations with organizational cynicism should be explored to grasp the nuanced factors at play better. Moreover, the interplay between individual differences and the work environment in shaping organizational cynicism is an area that requires more comprehensive research. Future studies should delve into the role of individual characteristics in moderating the relationship between work environment factors and cynicism outcomes.
- 3) In today's dynamic and ever-changing organizational landscape, the structure, design, and scope of organizations continue to evolve (Brueller et al., 2018). Such shifts have implications for employment relations and may influence the prevalence of organizational cynicism (Pfrombeck et al., 2020; Andersson, 1996). Investigating the connection between organizational change and cynicism is an important avenue for future research. The study of organizational cynicism in the context of rapidly changing organizations and its effects on competitive advantage and employment relations can provide valuable insights into the dynamics of modern workplaces.
- 4) While existing research has advanced the understanding of organizational cynicism, theoretical models in this field remain in development (Soomro et al., 2022). Future scholars should explore and validate these models by considering different variables and research contexts. Moreover, research in this area has predominantly relied on survey methodologies. Future research could employ mixed methods or longitudinal approaches to gain a more comprehensive understanding of organizational cynicism.

CONCLUSION

This study has unveiled the current landscape of organizational cynicism research through a bibliometric approach, emphasizing its increasing relevance and the need for further exploration and standardization. By addressing the identified limitations and pursuing the proposed avenues for future research, scholars can advance the understanding of organizational cynicism and its far-reaching implications for organizations and their employees.

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