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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Pay satisfaction bibliometric research and its implications

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Abstract
Pay satisfaction is an important topic in core domains of human resource management, such as employee engagement, motivation, and job satisfaction. We present an overview of the research on pay satisfaction by conducting a bibliometric analysis to examine the performance and intellectual structure of the pay satisfaction literature, curated from 539 articles in the Web of Science between 1966 and 2024. Using citation and co-word analysis with VOSviewer software, we identified emerging themes, dominant trends, and critical knowledge gaps. Our review highlights (1) the most cited articles, (2) the most prolific authors, journals, countries, affiliations and (3) the major clusters or themes of research. The results provide practical insights for management and suggest future research directions to strengthen the strategic relevance of pay satisfaction in organizational contexts.

Keywords: job satisfaction; bibliometric research; work-related attitudes/behaviors; human resource management; pay satisfaction; bibliometric analysis

Introduction

Employees' compensation has been one of the fundamental pillars of business management, given its direct influence on employee motivation, performance, and satisfaction (Fulmer, Gerhart & Kim, 2023). Employee compensation is part of an integrated reward system with two main dimensions: financial pay (such as salaries, incentives, and benefits) and non-financial pay, which include extrinsic aspects as recognition or favorable work conditions, and intrinsic ones derived from personal fulfillment, such as satisfaction, autonomy, and opportunities for growth or learning (Almadana Abón, Molina Gómez, Mercadé Melé & Núñez Sánchez, 2024). Although in this study we focus mainly on the financial component of compensation, we also take the other non-financial components into account.

Companies devote significant resources to providing satisfactory pay to their employees. A satisfactory pay system makes it possible to adequately reward employees' efforts and competencies, in addition to contributing to talent retention and strengthening the organizational culture (Alterman et al., 2021; Gerhart & Fang, 2015). Given its importance, it is not surprising that fields related to human resource management and organizational behavior have devoted considerable interest to analyzing employees' pay satisfaction, particularly its antecedents and consequences.

However, the large volume of research in this field, along with the diversity of theoretical and practical approaches in organizations and the evolution of the concept over time, makes it necessary

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to review the existing literature in order to summarize the main conclusions and identify potential research gaps that warrant further attention (Öztürk, Kocaman & Kanbach, 2024). Over time, the study of pay satisfaction has evolved from isolated theoretical formulations to a multifaceted field that reflects broader economic, social, and organizational transformations. The construct now encompasses not only individual attitudes toward compensation but also the strategic role of pay in shaping organizational culture, equity perceptions, and employee well-being. This evolution underscores the need to integrate dispersed findings and to understand how different contexts and methodological approaches have shaped current knowledge on the topic.

For this reason, this paper presents a bibliometric study with the following aims: (1) to assess productivity within this line of research by identifying the most influential agents (documents, authors, journals, countries, and affiliations); (2) to provide a comprehensive overview of how pay satisfaction has been addressed in the academic literature by analyzing publication trends in the field; and (3) to explore the social and conceptual structure of the field in order to reveal its evolutionary development.

Furthermore, by identifying trends and gaps in the existing research, this article aims to offer a roadmap for future investigations, highlighting the need to develop new approaches and practices that respond to the changing demands of today's labor environment (Conroy et al., 2015).

Literature review

Understanding how pay motivates employees has traditionally received great attention from academic research. In this sense, research examining how pay motivates employees has drawn on expectancy theory, which proposes that individuals, based on their previous experiences, are likely to engage in certain behaviors when they expect to receive something of value in return (Vroom, 1964). However, it remained unclear how experience influenced future behavior. Studies on satisfaction with pay introduced an intermediary variable – pay satisfaction (PS) – to explain the relationship between pay experiences and subsequent behavioral outcomes. During the following decades, various theoretical and methodological approaches enriched its analysis.

The earliest approaches to the study of PS can be found in the work of Klein and Maher (1966), who analyzed the dynamics involved in the relationship between education and PS. Models such as those proposed by Adams (1963, 1965) and Lawler (1971), offered a deeper understanding of the antecedents of PS, while the development of the Pay Satisfaction Questionnaire (PSQ) by Heneman III and Schwab (1985) marked a milestone in measuring this construct. Research based on the PSQ dominated academic discussions from the mid-eighties to the nineties, exploring not only the determinants of PS but also its implications for performance and organizational behavior (e.g. Judge, 1993; Judge & Welbourne, 1994). This transformed the way companies managed their human capital, paying greater attention to performance and productivity (Welbourne, Johnson & Erez, 1998).

Subsequent empirical evidence has linked PS to a wide variety of organizational attitudes and behaviors. For example, PS has been shown to be essential for job satisfaction and employee well-being (Clark, Kristensen & Westergård-Nielsen, 2009; Shaw, Duffy, Mitra, Lockhart & Bowler, 2003), highlighting its importance in specific contexts such as the healthcare sector (Lum, Kervin, Clark, Reid & Sirola, 1998) or accounting (Lynn, Cao & Horn, 1996). PS has also been shown to influence motivation (Igalens & Roussel, 1999), sustainable innovation, and job performance (De Gieter & Hofmans, 2015; Delmas & Pekovic, 2018; Williams, McDaniel & Nguyen, 2006). It significantly contributes to reducing turnover and turnover intentions (DeConinck & Stilwell, 2004; Weiner, 1980; Williams, Brower, Ford, Williams & Carraher, 2008; Williams et al., 2006), increases organizational commitment (DeConinck, 2009; Kulikowski, 2018), and encourages employees to take on leadership roles as well as both in-role and extra-role behaviors at work, due to a greater sense of value and commitment to the firm (Harold, Hu & Koopman, 2022).

At the start of the new century, the financial crisis led to an economic slowdown and, consequently, a global recession that affected labor relations, organizational changes, and an increase in unemployment (Duffy et al., 2017). Until the disruptions caused by COVID-19, in the context of globalization,

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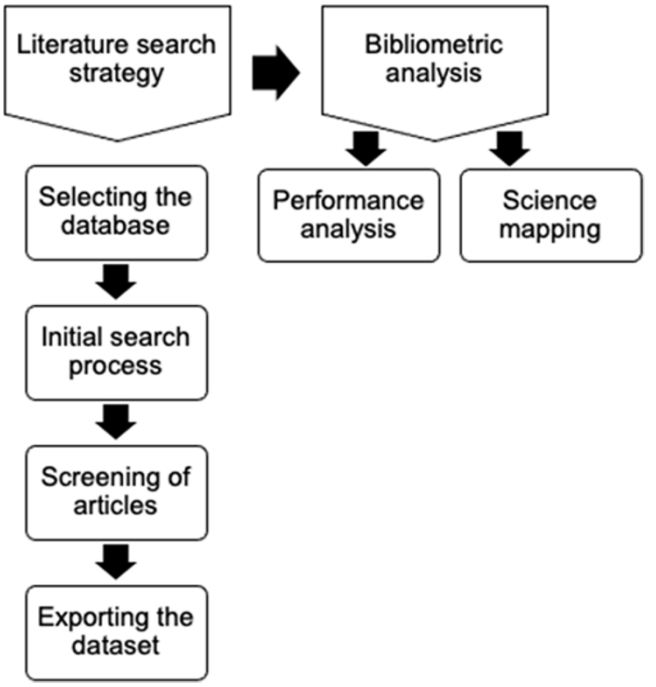


Figure 1. Methodological flowchart of the research.
Source: Adapted from Öztürk et al. (2024).

studies on this type of satisfaction focused on increasing the efficiency of human resources to allow companies to obtain maximum business benefits under normal circumstances (e.g., Gibbs, Merchant, Stede & Vargus, 2004; Schneider, Hanges, Smith & Salvaggio, 2003; Welbourne et al., 1998), as well as on managing business risks in high uncertainty and measuring whether working conditions met the standards ensuring suitable, fair work (e.g., Duffy et al., 2017; Judge, Piccolo, Podsakoff, Shaw & Rich, 2010; Kolodinsky, Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2008). After COVID-19, with the massive adoption of telework, companies adjusted their compensation policies due to pay reductions, inflation, and the challenges of accelerated digitalization.

Even though current research on PS has generated an impressive array of literature, the field remains fragmented in terms of theoretical approaches, methodological designs, and contextual applications. This dispersion makes it difficult to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the intellectual structure and evolution of the topic over time. Therefore, a bibliometric analysis is particularly valuable, as it allows for the systematic identification of research trends, influential works, and emerging themes, providing an integrated perspective on how the study of PS has developed and where future research efforts could be directed.

Methodology

To conduct the bibliometric research, we follow Öztürk et al.'s (2024) two-step methodology for data collection and a comprehensive evaluation of the selected field of study. Öztürk et al. (2024) offer a functional framework for researchers who wish to conduct bibliometric research in any field, especially in business and management. Their contributions are practical in nature, particularly regarding best practices for designing and conducting bibliometric studies. The framework provides guidance for each decision in the process, outlining actions that support well-founded choices to carry out the

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Table 1. Web of Science Consultation on Pay Satisfaction

#QUERY	TI/AB/KEY = ('pay satisfaction' OR 'pay level satisfaction' OR 'salar* satisfaction' OR 'wage* satisfaction' OR 'compensation satisfaction' OR 'benefit satisfaction' 'reward* satisfaction' OR 'satisfaction with benefit*' OR 'satisfaction with pay' OR 'satisfaction with reward*' OR 'satisfaction with compensation' OR 'satisfaction with wage*' OR 'satisfaction with salar*' OR 'satisfaction with pay level')
Period	From 1966 until 2024
Document type	Articles
Index	SSCI, ESCI, SCI-EXPANDED

Source: Own elaboration.

research effectively and generate meaningful contributions. By adhering to this guidance, bibliometric studies can achieve greater rigor and robustness. The methodological flow diagram is presented in Fig 1.

To identify the relevant bibliography from a transparent and reproducible approach this study was conducted following four stages (see Fig. 1).

(1) We selected the *Web of Science* (WoS) database. WoS is generally considered the most comprehensive database of scholarly work, covering thousands of journals, often including the most prominent ones (Županič & Čater, 2015).

(2) The initial search process begins with the selection of keywords. In this way, all possible variants of terms related to PS were identified, with the aim of comprehensively including most of the research studies in the field. The search string can be found in Table 1. After searching for the terms in the topic, 995 studies published between 1966 and 2024 were identified. The search was conducted by the end of December 2024.

(3) The 995 identified studies are filtered to ensure that they are indeed related to the research field of PS. To perform this filtering, we followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) protocol. We included only 'articles,' as commonly done in bibliometric studies (e.g., Öztürk & Dil, 2022). The selection was limited to categories directly related to the study topic – such as Management, Business, Psychology Applied… – for those fields where there could be some doubt, we reviewed each article's abstract – and in case of doubt, the full texts – . We excluded documents written in languages other than English. We followed the flow of inclusion and exclusion criteria applied to the dataset, as presented in a PRISMA diagram adapted from Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff and Altman (2009) and edited in Fig 2.

After applying all the restrictions, a total of 539 publications were included. Since Donthu, Kumar, Mukherjee, Pandey and Lim (2021) recommend having more than 500 articles to conduct a bibliometric analysis, our sample is considered sufficient.

(4) The final dataset was saved as a '*tab-delimited text file*,' suitable for the software used, with the option '*full record and cited references*' selected.

The bibliometric analysis was conducted using two procedures: performance analysis and scientific mapping (Cobo, López-Herrera, Herrera-Viedma & Herrera, 2011). It consists of revealing the social, conceptual, and intellectual structure in the evolutionary processes of a research field (Öztürk et al., 2024). Therefore, scientific mapping is used to gain an overall view of the interactions among scientific actors from multiple perspectives (Van Eck & Waltman, 2014).

For the bibliometric analyses, we used the free software package called *Visualization of Similarities (VOS) viewer* (www.vosviewer.com), developed by Van Eck and Waltman (2010), version 1.6.20, as well as the *Microsoft Excel* package. Additionally, we used biblioNetwork function of the R package bibliometrix (www.bibliometrix.org), developed by Aria and Cuccurullo (2017). Data cleaning is essential for drawing accurate conclusions in bibliometric research (Donthu et al., 2021; Öztürk et al., 2024; Županič & Čater, 2015). Therefore, a de-duplication process was carried out to refine the data before the analysis. First, we gathered the keywords assigned by the authors (Author Keywords)

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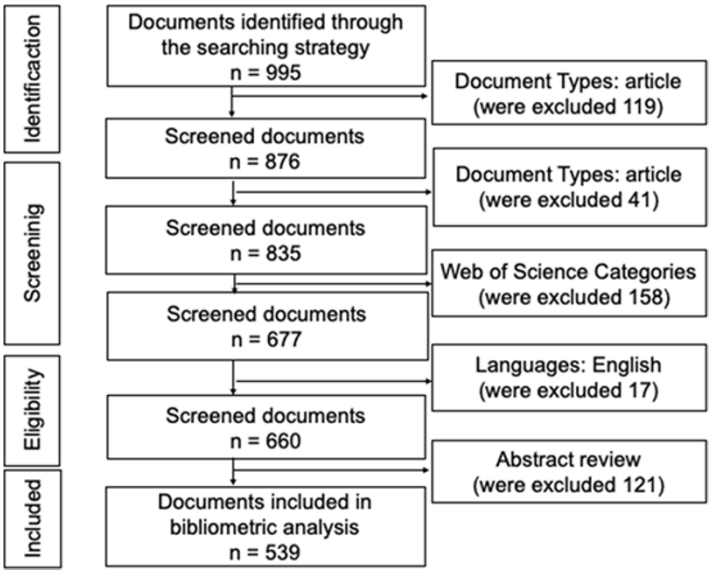


Figure 2. Flow of inclusion and exclusion criteria applied to the dataset.
Source: Adapted from Moher et al. (2009).

and by the database (Keyword Plus). The network is built by taking keywords that appear in at least 5 articles. This threshold is the default value set in the software tool (VOSviewer) and is a broadly accepted threshold within bibliometric analysis (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Additionally, the selection of this threshold facilitates visualization on the map while ensuring that the keywords are sufficiently relevant and significant in the literature. We excluded the keywords we used in the initial search (see, Table 1). Second, a VOSviewer thesaurus file was developed to perform data cleaning (Donthu et al., 2021) and to merge terms. This may be useful not only for merging synonyms (e.g. 'human-resource management´ and 'HRM´) but also, for correcting spelling differences (e.g. 'behavior´ and 'behaviour´). Thesaurus file can be used to merge different variants of an author name. This may for example be useful when the name of a researcher is written in different ways in different documents (e.g. 'Tang, Thomas Li-Ping´ and 'Tang, TLP´).

Results

Performance analysis

Annual evolution of publications and citations

The first study in the selected sample was published in the journal *Personnel Psychology,* by Klein and Maher (1966); since then and, especially in recent years, the number of articles published on this topic has increased considerably. The projected publication rate in this field of study grew steadily during the observed period, but showed some differences, reflecting three milestones in the development of the literature. In the first period, which corresponds to the first 42 years of research (1966 to 2007), referred to here as 'past research,' 162 documents were published (30.22% of the total), with an overall average of 4 publications per year. With 12 articles, 1998 was the year with the highest publication peak. This past research coincides with different economic phases, notably the economic expansion that began in the 1990s (Duffy et al., 2017). This phase was characterized by economic growth driven by globalization and the emergence of new technologies and the digital economy. The year 2007 marks the first milestone in the PS research field. Thus began the second period (spanning 12 years), called 'recent research,' which corresponds to a rise in PS publications from 2008 to

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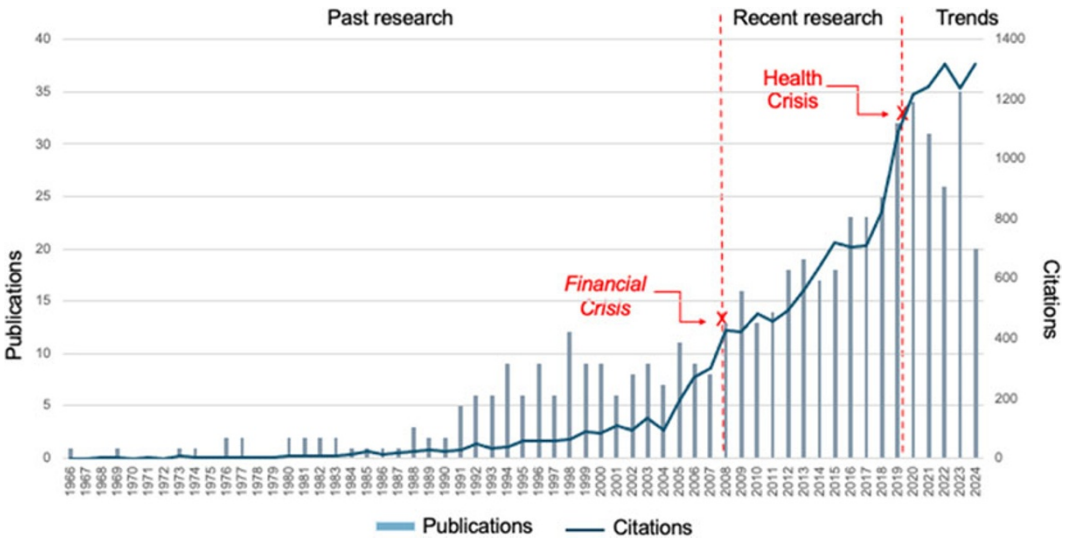


Figure 3. Publication impact by year on pay satisfaction.
Note: The dataset includes articles published up to 2024. The figure is based on a sample of 539 articles from data obtained from the Web of Science database.
Source: own elaboration.

2019, totaling 231 (43.10% of the total) and an average of 19 articles published per year. In 2019, the highest number of articles – 32 – was published. In this context, human resource practices prioritized the study of pay equity to determine the impact that pay adjustments triggered by the financial crisis could have on PS (Conroy et al., 2015). Finally, in the last period (5 years), from 2020 to 2024, referred to here as 'trends,' it coincides with the emergence and spread of COVID-19. This stage represented an unprecedented shift, disruptively transforming the way we work. A total of 146 articles were published (26.68% of the total), with an average of 29 articles published per year, marking the historical peak in this research field in 2023, with 35 articles published. The results show that, despite the already growing interest in investigating PS, the COVID-19 pandemic brought a turning point. In this context, human resource practices prioritized well-being and flexibility (Bolino, Henry & Whitney, 2024). Figure 3 shows the evolution of the number of publications and citations per year on the PS field.

Most cited articles

Publications during the three indicated periods (see Fig. 3) generated 1,953; 7,534 and 6,056 citations, respectively. According to Wang (2013), the most cited publications are often those published in earlier years due to the time that elapses between publication and being cited. Given the observed evolution pattern, it is reasonable to assume that this positive trend will continue. Table 2 shows the most cited publications. This numerical data is essential to present the most influential studies in the dataset. In addition to the ten most cited articles, we include in the table information on citation performance (the ratio of actual to expected citations) based on the Category Normalized Citation Impact (CNCI). CNCI is a normalized impact indicator, provided by InCites Benchmarking & Analytics, that compares documents of the same type, within the same category, and year. It is used to check a document's citation performance. When performance is above average, the ratio is greater than one (CNCI > 1).

Considering the ten most cited articles in the analysis of PS, various studies have contributed significantly to understanding the factors that influence how employees perceive their compensation and its relationship to job performance. One pioneering work in this area is by Welbourne et al. (1998), who developed the Role-Based Performance Scale (RBPS), grounded in Katz and Kahn's Role

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Table 2. Most cited publications in the dataset

Rank	Publication	Title	Journal	TC[1]	CNCI[2]
1	Welbourne et al. (1998)	The role-based performance scale: Validity analysis of a theory-based measure.	Academy of Management Journal	460	5,75
2	Clark et al. (1996)	Is job satisfaction U-shaped in age?	Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology	457	7,44
3	Judge et al. (2010)	The relationship between pay and job satisfaction: A meta-analysis of the literature	Journal of Vocational Behavior	348	7,41
4	Lum et al. (1998)	Explaining nursing turnover intent: job satisfaction, pay satisfaction, or organizational	Journal of Organizational Behavior	314	4,56
5	Kolodinsky et al. (2008)	Workplace values and outcomes: Exploring personal, organizational, and interactive workplace spirituality	Journal of Business Ethics	305	10,94
6	Schneider et al. (2003)	Which comes first: Employee attitudes or organizational financial and market performance?	Journal of Applied Psychology	301	3,44
7	Heneman III and Schwab (1985)	Pay satisfaction – Its multidimensional nature and measurement	International Journal of Psychology	285	11,15
8	Gibbs et al. (2004)	Determinants and effects of subjectivity in incentives	Accounting Review	242	4,41
9	Duffy et al. (2017)	The Development and Initial Validation of the Decent Work Scale	Journal of Counseling Psychology	215	9,30
10	Gazioglu & Tansel (2006)	Job satisfaction in Britain: individual and job-related factors	Applied Economics	212	5,85

Note: 1. TC: Total Citations. 2. CNCI Ratio: Category Normalized Citation Impact.
Source: Own elaboration.

Theory (1978) and Identity Theory (Burke, 1991). This approach provided insight into how employees take on different roles within the company, directly influencing their PS. Indeed, their findings revealed that PS is more closely linked to the career role, whereas an emphasis on other organizational roles may generate dissatisfaction, thus highlighting the complexity of the relationship between PS and performance.

In general, the most frequently cited literature reviewed suggests that PS is a multidimensional construct (Heneman III & Schwab, 1985) influenced both by tangible factors, such as pay level and benefits (Judge et al., 2010), and by intangible elements, such as professional recognition, trust, career opportunities, and alignment with organizational values (Gibbs et al., 2004), challenging the traditional belief that a higher pay level always leads to greater satisfaction (Judge et al., 2010).

Other impactful topics indicated by several highly cited works include, for example, changes in job expectations with age (Clark, Oswald & Warr, 1996), financial performance in companies

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(Schneider et al., 2003), or turnover in the healthcare sector (Lum et al., 1998). Finally, studies such as those by Kolodinsky et al. (2008) and Duffy et al. (2017) broadened the traditional focus of PS by including factors such as workplace spirituality and the perception of decent work. These studies highlight that, while PS remains a fundamental pillar, employees also seek an environment that respects their values and offers them a sense of purpose and fairness in their work.

We observe that all the documents, when compared to other documents of the same type (i.e., articles), within the same category and published in the same year, perform above average (see CNCI > 1 in Table 2). The best-performing article is Heneman III and Schwab (1985), with a ratio of 11.15. Table 3 summarizes the main articles according to its relevance, indicating their methodologies, theoretical frameworks, hypotheses, and key findings.

Most productive authors

On the other hand, the 539 articles in our sample included a total of 1,396 authors. Those authors who contributed four or more articles are mentioned in Table 4. Their publications have been divided among the three analyzed periods (see Table 4). A total of 17 authors were included, who together account for over 16% of all the articles analyzed. Tang is the most prolific author in terms of article production, as he is the author of twelve articles.

We also analyzed whether the articles were written by a single author or by multiple authors, and found that 70 articles (i.e., 12.99%) were written by a single author. This means that more than three-quarters of the articles in our sample were written by more than one author, which can be interpreted as the presence of a research community on this topic and the tendency for authors to collaborate. Among the most cited authors, Judge ranks first.

Most active journals, measured in number of articles and citations

The 539 articles were published in 278 different journals. Table 5 shows the 17 journals in which six, or more, articles on PS were published in our dataset, covering about 29% of the sample's articles. The 2023 impact factor and the total citations of the listed journals are also shown in Table 5. More than 34% and 14% of the publications are in the 'Management' and 'Business' areas, respectively.

The most productive journal is *Personnel Psychology*, with 16 published articles. Table 5 shows that these journals have reasonably high impact factors, which allows us to assert that the journals publishing articles related to PS are of relatively high quality. With very high impact factor values (for the year 2023), the *Journal of Business Research* (JIF: 10.5) is the top-ranked journal.

Most active countries and affiliations, measured in number of articles, citations, and collaborations

A total of 74 different countries and 708 different affiliations participated in the research for the 539 articles in the sample. Tables 6 and 7 show the most prominent countries and affiliations in the literature on PS, based on the number of publications and the total number of citations. The United States of America was undoubtedly the most productive country, with 211 articles (39.15% of the total) and 41.09 citations per article. The highest percentage of international collaboration was from the United Kingdom (52.17%), while the lowest was from South Africa, which did not collaborate internationally in the scientific production within the sample. Regarding affiliations, those with at least 5 articles in the dataset, the University of Wisconsin is the most active in scientific production in this line of research.

Science mapping

Scientific mapping makes it possible to establish the conceptual field by using a co-occurrence analysis of keywords. The co-occurrence analysis creates groups of keywords (Author Keyword and Keyword Plus) that appear together frequently, with each group representing a specific topic (Van Eck & Waltman, 2017). The purpose of this analysis is to highlight the connections among the keywords that, at a given time, are considered most relevant (Callon, Courtial & Laville, 1991).

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Table 3. Summary of the most cited articles in the sample according to their relevance

Rank	Article	Methodology	Theoretical frameworks	Hypotheses	Key findings
1	Heneman III and Schwab (1985)	Three phases. Phase 1, construction of the questionnaire items (PSQ). Phase 2/phase 3, PSQ was administered to a sample of white-collar employees and nurses. Confirmatory/exploratory factor analyses.	Locke's view on job satisfaction, Lawler's perspective on pay satisfaction, Dyer and Theriault's modified model.	Pay satisfaction is multidimensional and can be evaluated in five dimensions (level, benefits, increases, structure, and administration).	Development of the Pay Satisfaction Questionnaire (PSQ). Support for the multidimensional hypothesis, although a four-dimensional solution (level, benefits, raises, structure/administration). Strong support for the dimensions of level/ benefits, indicating they are distinct aspects of pay satisfaction.
2	Kolodinsky et al. (2008)	Empirical multilevel approach that distinguishes between personal, organizational, and interactive spirituality. Five samples of full-time workers postgraduate studies. Two-step regression analysis: Step 1 regressed outcomes on personal and organizational spirituality; Step 2 added an interaction term.	Person-organization fit (P-O fit), Spillover theory. The relationship between spiritual values and work attitudes is examined.	Personal spirituality is positively related to intrinsic, extrinsic, and total work rewards satisfaction. Organizational spirituality is positively related to job involvement, organizational identification, and work rewards satisfaction, and negatively related to organizational frustration. The interaction of personal/organizational spirituality is related to total work rewards satisfaction.	Organizational spirituality was positively related to job involvement, organizational identification, and rewards satisfaction, and negatively associated with organizational frustration. Perceptions of organizational spirituality affect attitudinal and attachment-related worker consequences.
3	Duffy et al. (2017)	Two separate phases. Phase 1, exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Phase 2 confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Collected data using Mechanical Turk (MTurk). – Employed structural equation modeling (SEM) to evaluate models and address nonnormality.	Psychology of Working Theory (PWT)	Efficient measure of decent work with scores supporting evidence of reliability and validity that captures all five components of the construct. Decent Work Scale (DWS).	15-item scale, 5 factors of decent work: (a) physically and interpersonally safe working conditions, (b) access to health care, (c) adequate compensation, (d) hours that allow for free time and rest, and (e) organizational values that complement family and social values.

(*Continued*)

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Table 3. (*Continued.*)

Rank	Article	Methodology	Theoretical frameworks	Hypotheses	Key findings
4	Clark et al. (1996)	Data source: British Household Panel Study (1991 wave). Sample size: 5,192 employees from a random sample of 10,000 individuals. Data collection method: Home interviews. Analytical technique: Ordered probit analysis.	Relationship between age and the three forms of job satisfaction: overall job satisfaction, satisfaction with pay (extrinsic); satisfaction with work itself (intrinsic).	Arguments suggesting a U-shaped relationship (decreasing at first and then increasing)	U-shaped strongly significant for overall job satisfaction, satisfaction with pay/with the job itself. A highly significant U-shape for satisfaction with pay. Younger/older employees report greater satisfaction with pay than those in middle age.
5	Judge et al. (2010)	Used meta-analysis to estimate the population correlation between pay level and measures of pay/job satisfaction. Searched PsycINFO database for relevant studies.	Models of pay satisfaction. Hulin's integrative model. Lawler's discrepancy model. Self-determination theory. Adaptation level theory.	The popular theory that a high salary leads to high satisfaction is being questioned.	The results suggest that pay level is marginally related to pay and job satisfaction. It uses pay level (amount of money) and correlates it with reported pay satisfaction scores to determine their relationship. The key finding was that the correlation is low ($r = 0.23$).
6	Gazioğlu & Tansel (2006)	Data source: Workplace Employee Relations Survey (WERS97). Survey type: Matched employer-employee survey. Data collection: Interviews with employees and managers. Job satisfaction measure: Five-category ordered measure. Analytical method: Ordered probit estimation	Based on the interest in job satisfaction, which is correlated with behavior in the labor market (productivity, turnover, absenteeism).	Analysis of how personal and job characteristics relate to four specific measures of job satisfaction, including satisfaction with pay amount.	Higher level of income is associated with higher levels of job satisfaction. The strongest relationship is found between weekly income and satisfaction with the amount of pay.
7	Welbourne et al. (1998)	Validation of the Role-Based Performance Scale (RBPS). Stage1, was the development of the RBPS. Stage2, focused on the psychometric properties. Stage3, examine the construct validity. Confirmatory factor analysis and hierarchical regression.	It is implicitly based on Role/Identity Theory to develop a performance measure. Introduces a theory-based measure of employee performance.	Hypothesis 1: The five roles assessed in the RBPS (job holder, organization member, career, innovator, and team member) measure components of behavior that, while related to each other, are unique. Hypothesis 2: The five roles suggested in the RBPS measure components of behavior above and beyond what is assessed in a company's traditional performance appraisal instruments.	Pay is significantly related to pay satisfaction. However, traditional performance appraisal is not related to pay satisfaction. The RBPS adds predictive power above and beyond what is available with the firm's own performance appraisal instruments. Using this measure as a diagnostic tool for investigating a firm's ability to elicit specific roles using different compensation methods.

(*Continued*)

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Table 3. (*Continued.*)

Rank	Article	Methodology	Theoretical frameworks	Hypotheses	Key findings
8	Lum et al. (1998)	Target population: Pediatric nurses eligible for pay policies. Sampling method: Non-proportional stratified sample. Data collection: 12-page questionnaire over 4 months. Measurement scales: Established scales for job satisfaction, pay satisfaction, and organizational commitment using a 5-point Likert scale. Analysis: Structural equations and path-analytic models with demographic variables.	Complex models of association to explain nurses' turnover behavior as a multistage process that includes attitudinal, decisional, and behavioral components.	H1: Job satisfaction effects on turnover intent are mediated by organizational commitment. – H2: Pay satisfaction affects directly both job satisfaction and turnover intent.	Pay satisfaction is a key variable that influences on turnover intentions, although organizational commitment proved to be the factor with the strongest influence. Job satisfaction had only an indirect influence.
9	Gibbs et al. (2004)	Sample of 526 department managers at 250 car dealerships. Objective measures (financial data) and subjective/perceptual measures (surveys) are used. Perception of subjectivity in incentives.	Incentive compensation. It examines how subjectivity in bonds complements weaknesses in quantitative measures. Contracting theory.	When do companies make greater use of subjectivity in awarding bonuses. Effects of subjectivity on employee pay satisfaction and firm performance.	The effects of subjective bonuses on pay satisfaction and performance are greater the longer the manager has been with the firm, which is related to greater trust.
10	Schneider et al. (2003)	Lagged analyses, for 8 years in 35 firms at the organizational level. Used archival data from a consortium of U.S. corporations. Principal-components analysis and confirmatory factor analyses were used.	Research into the causal relationship between employee attitudes (including satisfaction) and organizational financial (ROA) and market performance (EPS).	Causal relationship between employee attitudes and organizational performance.	Satisfaction with pay suggested a more reciprocal relationship (bidirectional causality) with financial performance (ROA) and market performance (EPS), unlike other attitudes (such as satisfaction with security or overall job satisfaction).

Note: We integrated quantitative (cited) and qualitative (Category Normalized Citation Impact ratio) data.
Source: Own elaboration.

Table 4. Most prolific authors in the dataset

Rank	Author	TA[1]	Period			TC[2]
			1st	2nd	3rd	
1	Tang, Thomas Li-Ping	12	6	5	1	519
2	Carraher, Shawn M.	7	4	3	0	175
3	De Gieter, Sara	6	1	5	0	146
4	Leider, Jonathon P.	6	0	4	2	150
5	Luna-Arocas, Roberto	6	2	2	2	193
6	Cordón-Pozo, Eulogio	5	0	2	3	40
7	de la Torre-Ruiz, José Manuel	5	0	2	3	40
8	Deconinck, James B.	5	3	2	0	237
9	Sellers, Katie	5	0	4	1	133
10	Vidal-Salazar, María Dolores	5	0	2	3	40
11	Welbourne, Theresa M.	5	5	0	0	601
12	Blau, Gary	4	4	0	0	124
13	Bryson, Alex	4	1	2	1	142
14	Castrucci, Brian C.	4	0	3	1	88
15	Judge, Timothy A.	4	3	1	0	626
16	Pepermans, Roland	4	1	3	0	85
17	Tremblay, Michel	4	3	1	0	198

Note: Articles by period: 1st = 1966–2007; 2nd = 2008–2019; 3rd = 2020–2024. 1. TA: Total Articles. 2. TC: Total Citations.
Source: Own elaboration.

The concept underlying this network is based on the idea that when certain keywords appear frequently in literature, they are more likely to be thematically related (Donthu et al., 2021). Therefore, the goal is to locate these subgroups, or clusters, that are closely linked to one another and correspond to areas of interest or research issues (Öztürk et al., 2024). Once the clusters are identified, through trend maps, we provide a deeper view of the interconnections and relationships among the various concepts within the cluster over time (see Van Eck & Waltman, 2014).

Keyword co-occurrence analysis

We created a graphical representation of the research areas on PS and how each area relates to the others. Therefore, the objective is to locate the subgroups, or clusters, that are closely linked to each other and correspond to areas of interest or research problems (Öztürk et al., 2024). Six clusters were obtained, corresponding to the main research topics in the field of PS. The cluster #1 (red) is named 'gender'; the cluster #2 (green) is named 'commitment'; the cluster #3 (blue) is named 'antecedents'; the cluster #4 (yellow) is named 'job satisfaction'; the cluster #5 (purple) 'performance'; and the cluster #6 (cyan) is named 'motivation.'

By using the keyword co-occurrence method, it was established that a set of 'signal words' reflect the core content of the research literature (see, Vermaut, Burnay & Faulkner, 2024). These signal words were obtained by extracting the 10 most important nodes of each cluster in terms of total occurrences and total link strength (or degree of centrality). The degree of centrality measures the number of times a keyword is linked with other keywords in the keyword co-occurrence network (Vermaut et al., 2024). The higher the degree, the more central the keyword is. Table 8 summarizes the top 60 most prolific and trending topics on PS of each cluster, classified according to the total number of keyword occurrences (TO) and their degree of centrality (DC). Among the most prolific topics, job satisfaction, performance, organization commitment, and turnover have appeared.

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Table 5. The most active journals in the dataset

Rank	Journal	TA[1]	Period			TC[2]	JIF™
			1st	2nd	3rd		
1	Personnel Psychology	16	13	2	1	827	4.7
2	Public Personnel Management	14	9	3	2	350	3.1
3	Journal of Applied Psychology	13	10	3	0	1110	9.4
4	International Journal of Human Resource Management	12	2	8	2	227	4.9
5	Journal of Business Ethics	12	3	8	1	825	5.9
6	Psychological Reports	11	10	0	1	65	1.7
7	Journal of Business and Psychology	10	7	2	1	438	3.7
8	Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology	9	8	1	0	938	4.9
9	Journal of Organizational Behavior	9	6	3	0	641	6.2
10	Frontiers in Psychology	7	0	2	5	47	3.3
11	Human Relations	7	5	2	0	334	4.5
12	Journal of Business Research	7	4	3	0	353	10.5
13	Industrial Relations	6	4	2	0	305	2.4
14	International Journal of Manpower	6	0	4	2	269	4.6
15	Journal of Managerial Psychology	6	0	6	0	189	3.1
16	Journal of Public Health Management and Practice	6	0	4	2	146	2.2
17	Personnel Review	6	2	2	1	39	3.3

Note: Articles by Period: 1st = 1966–2007; 2nd = 2008–2019; 3rd = 2020–2024. 1. TA: Total Articles. 2. TC: Total Cites. JIF: Journal Impact™ Factor 2023. We only include journals that contribute six or more articles to the field.
Source: Own elaboration.

Table 6. The most active countries in the dataset

Rank	Country	TA[1]	TC[2]	AAC[3]	CAC[4]	SCP[5]	MCP[6]	CP[7] %
1	USA	622	8669	41.09	211	182	29	13.74
2	Peoples Republic of China	205	840	15.6	54	38	16	29.63
3	Canada	74	815	38.8	21	17	4	19.05
4	United Kingdom	73	954	41.5	23	11	12	52.17
5	Spain	56	338	17.8	19	15	4	21.05
6	South Korea	53	173	10.8	16	11	5	31.25
7	Netherlands	40	264	22	12	8	4	33.33
8	Germany	39	105	8.1	13	9	4	30.77
8	India	39	60	4.6	13	12	1	7.69
9	Australia	30	189	17.2	11	8	3	27.27
9	South Africa	30	41	3.4	12	12	0	0
10	Malaysia	29	119	14.9	8	6	2	25

Note: 1: Total Articles; 2: Total Citations; 3: Average Article Citations; 4: Corresponding Author's Countries; 5: Single Country Publications; 6: Multiple Country Publications. 7: Collaboration percentage.
Source: Own elaboration.

Visualization keyword co-occurrence analysis

Figure 4 presents the visualization of the keyword co-occurrence network in the field of PS, from 1966 to 2024. Readers interested in an in-depth analysis can use VOS viewer interactively and zoom in on the map at the following URL: https://tinyurl.com/2c4339fu

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Table 7. The most active affiliations in the dataset

Rank	Affiliation	Country	TA[1]	TC[2]
1	University of Wisconsin	USA	12	364
2	University of Minnesota System	USA	10	170
3	Middle Tennessee State University	USA	9	269
4	Cornell University	USA	8	654
5	Renmin University China	Peoples Republic of China	8	74
6	Temple University	USA	7	459
7	Concordia University	Canada	7	157
8	University Washington	USA	7	153
9	University of Florida	USA	6	1215
10	Purdue University	USA	6	243
11	Vrije University of Brussels	Belgium	6	144
12	Aalto University	Finland	6	71
13	University of Valencia	Spain	6	193
14	University of Missouri	USA	5	151
15	Texas A&M University	USA	5	99
16	Indiana University	USA	5	49
17	University of Granada	Spain	5	40

Note: Affiliations with at least 5 articles in the dataset. 1: Total Articles; 2: Total Citations.
Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 5 shows the temporal mapping of the identified topics. This map allows us to establish a chronological order of the developments that research on PS has undergone. The temporal mapping, generated in *VOS viewer*, is identical to the network visualization, except that the elements are colored differently to reflect the relative importance of the average year of publication. In the lower right corner of the visualization, there is a color bar (see Fig. 5). This color bar indicates how the scores are assigned to colors. The scores of the keywords (average publication year) are represented by colors ranging from blue for scores lower than or equal to the minimum score (2007), to green for intermediate scores (2008–2019), and to yellow for scores higher than or equal to the maximum score (2020).

Sensemaking is applied to interpret the co-occurrences patterns and interrelations among the topics within each cluster (see Figures S5.1–5.6 in Supplementary material), with keywords structure to construct a coherent narrative that encapsulates both the essence and the scope of the cluster (Donthu et al., 2021).

Cluster #Antecedents. Among the various factors that may explain PS, previous studies have analyzed administrative, environmental, structural, and situational factors (e.g., Dyer & Theriault, 1976; Weiner, 1980). Nevertheless, as reflected by the predominant keywords in this cluster, research on the causes of PS has been based on two key models: equity theory (Adams, 1965) and discrepancy theory (Lawler, 1971). Both models highlight the importance of subjective evaluations in predicting PS. In this context, Heneman III and Schwab (1985) propose and validate a multidimensional model for PS, according to which employees evaluate their pay using relative standards (equity and comparisons) that predict satisfaction. This model has been developed further by subsequent research aiming to determine the antecedents of PS (e.g., Berkowitz, Fraser, Treasure & Cochran, 1987; Bygren, 2004; DeConinck & Stilwell, 2004; Heneman & Judge, 2000; Major & Testa, 1989). In more recent years, these equity-based models have been developed further, for example, by incorporating the moderating effect of pay level when explaining the impact of pay discrepancies on PS (Yao, Locke & Jamal, 2018). Because equity perceptions are considered one of the standards that trigger the perception of

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Table 8. Top ten most frequent keywords by cluster

Cluster #Antecedents			Cluster #Performance			Cluster #Gender		
Keyword	*TO*	*DC*	*Keyword*	*TO*	*DC*	*Keyword*	*TO*	*DC*
model	62	378	performance	97	585	work	67	383
antecedents	55	373	turnover	71	438	attitudes	47	271
perceptions	45	286	management	31	200	determinants	46	271
compensation	31	210	personality	11	63	gender	46	223
equity perceptions	30	160	age	10	59	justice	37	225
organizational justice	30	193	organizations	9	55	consequences	32	213
procedural justice	28	203	diversity	8	49	validation	31	156
predictors	27	181	perspective	6	43	behavior	30	179
outcomes	26	146	work attitudes	6	36	income	24	129
employees	24	134	moderator	5	41	wage	21	83
Cluster #Job satisfaction			Cluster #Commitment			Cluster #Motivation		
Keyword	*TO*	*DC*	*Keyword*	*TO*	*DC*	*Keyword*	*TO*	*DC*
job satisfaction	221	1138	organization commitment	71	463	pay	31	177
satisfaction	61	310	turnover intention	62	433	motivation	28	156
employee turnover	31	208	impact	53	292	productivity	15	68
burnout	27	142	commitment	48	294	happiness	14	70
retention	25	133	meta-analysis	42	266	incentives	9	59
stress	23	122	hrm practices	24	145	education	7	25
nurse	22	100	perceived organization support	19	123	participation	7	42
leave	16	105	mediating role	17	122	relative-income	7	42
health	14	65	resources	15	104	inequality	6	27
intention	13	83	work engagement	14	103	firm performance	5	33

Note: TO: total occurrences; DC: degree of centrality.
Source: own elaboration.

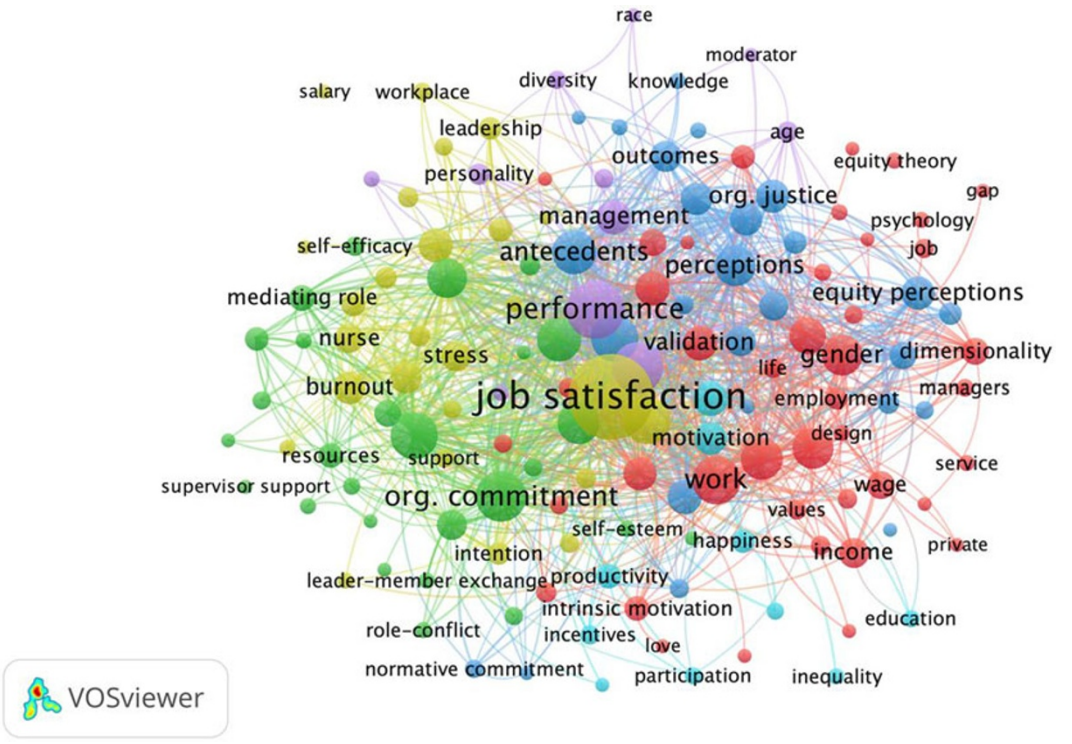


Figure 4. Keyword co-occurrence network map.
Note: All keywords network map of co-occurrences of the 539 articles dealing with compensation satisfaction from 1966 to 2024. Node size: occurrences. Minimum number of 5 documents. Out of 1,984 Keywords, 142 meet the threshold. Cluster #1 (red) 'gender'; cluster #2 (green) 'commitment'; cluster #3 (blue) antecedents; cluster #4 (yellow) 'job satisfaction'; cluster #5 (purple) 'performance'; cluster #6 (cyan) 'motivation.'
Source: authors' elaboration through VOS viewer. Readers interested in an in-depth analysis can use VOS viewer interactively and zoom in on the map at the following URL: https://tinyurl.com/2c4339fu.

a type of organizational justice – specifically distributive justice – it is not surprising that within this cluster, we find studies that use organizational justice as a theoretical foundation and incorporate its different dimensions (distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational) into models of PS research (e.g., Heneman & Judge, 2000; Welbourne, 1998).

In recent decades, the major changes in compensation systems (for example, the rising importance of benefits and variable pay) have led researchers to develop new theoretical models of PS, broadening its scope to reflect all aspects of compensation (e.g., Williams et al., 2008). Within this context, pay communication emerges as a relevant topic (e.g., Day, 2011; de la Torre-ruiz, Cordón-Pozo, Vidal Salazar & Ortiz-Perez, 2024; Jawahar & Stone, 2011; Till & Karren, 2011; Xavier, 2014). Although firms invest money and resources in implementing human resource management practices designed to improve employee well-being, they often fail to communicate clearly and effectively about the characteristics and advantages of these practices. The latest research carried out in this cluster focuses on benefits communication as a means of influencing employees' pay comparisons and consequently its positive association with satisfaction (e.g., Cordón-Pozo, Vidal-Salazar, de la Torre-ruiz & Gómez-Haro, 2023). Hence, attention to communicating benefits is a critical variable in ensuring the effectiveness and return on investment of the total compensation packages offered by the organization. The implementation of communication strategies is not optional but rather a strategic imperative to maximize the effectiveness of compensation systems and meet the expectations of an increasingly informed and demanding workforce. In this sense, it can also help companies adapt to

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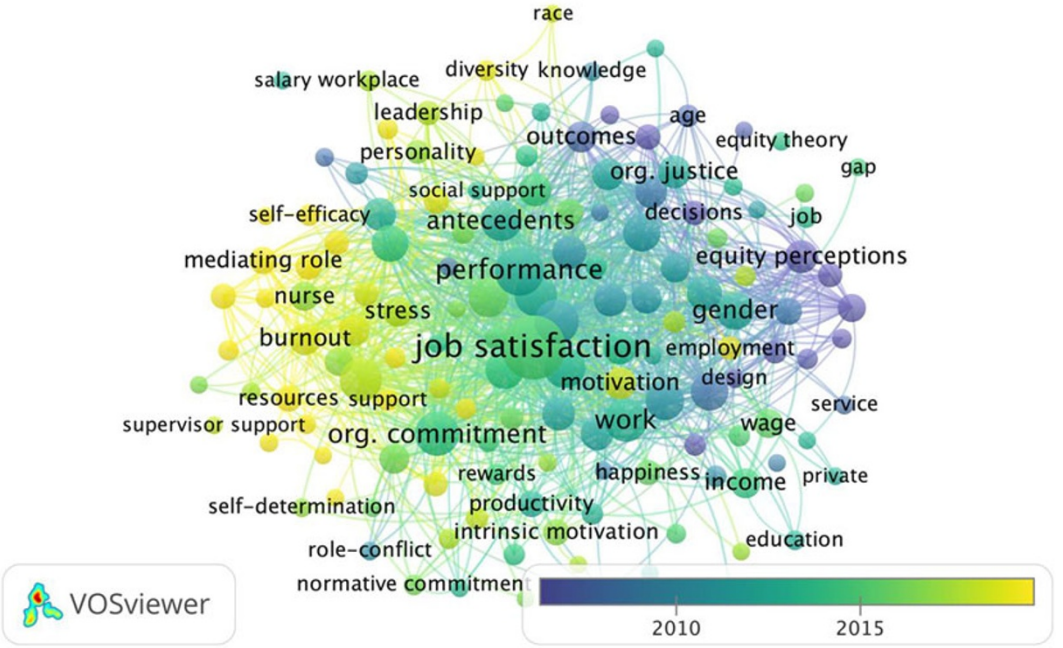


Figure 5. Keyword co-occurrence overlay map.
Note: All keywords network map of co-occurrences of the 539 articles dealing with compensation satisfaction from 1966 to 2024. Node size: occurrences. Minimum number of 5 documents. Out of 1,984 Keywords, 142 meet the threshold. Minimum score (Avg. Pub. Year) is 2007 (i.e., keywords from 1966 to 2007) blue, the intermediate score is 2008-2019, green, and the maximum score is 2020 (i.e., keywords 2020-2024), yellow.
Source: authors' elaboration through VOS viewer. Readers interested in an in-depth analysis can use VOS viewer interactively and zoom in on the map at the following URL: https://tinyurl.com/2c4339fu.

expanding transparency requirements in the European Union, where the principle of equal pay has recently been strengthened through new pay transparency measures (see Directive (EU) 2023/970).

Cluster #Performance. This cluster is closely related to the studies identified in the previous cluster, as performance has been considered a determining factor in pay judgments. People who evaluate their own performance positively are often less satisfied with their pay, due to the perception of a greater discrepancy between effort and reward (Lawler, 1971). This is why many of the studies included in this cluster analyze the factors that may influence how that performance is perceived. Thus, external performance evaluations, along with objective factors such as age, seniority, and education (e.g., Motowidlo, 1982), or subjective ones such as social comparisons (e.g., Major & Testa, 1989), are potential sources of variation in self-perceived performance. Furthermore, perceived performance is not only an intrinsic factor; it is also influenced by the social and business environment (Vest, Scott & Markham, 1994). Understanding these factors has proven relevant in studies on PS, given the close relationship between performance perception and PS. Within this cluster, we also find studies that have analyzed the effectiveness of performance-based compensation systems and their effect on employees' PS (e.g., Welbourne et al., 1998). Recent research highlights performance management in employees' PS processes (e.g., Xavier, 2014). It addresses the complexity of modern work environments, from generational perspectives, where people are considered a key factor within companies. Therefore, research focuses on aligning personal and organizational goals by emphasizing performance-based reward systems (e.g., Conroy & Gupta, 2019; Kulikowski, 2018).

Cluster #Gender. Early research on the field of PS and gender focused on a simplistic perspective that considered several objective factors – such as education, pay, or sex – as predictors of PS (e.g., Klein & Maher, 1966; Penzer, 1969; Ronan & Organt, 1973). However, subsequent studies found

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that although objective factors, primarily pay and sex, partly predict PS, incorporating employees' subjective perceptions could substantially improve that predictive capability (e.g., Dreher, 1981). Moreover, some studies have considered the moderating effect of gender to analyze the measurement invariance of Pay Satisfaction Questionnaire (PSQ) – a commonly used tool to measure PS – to determine whether it works adequately in different contexts and populations (e.g., De Gieter, Hofmans, De Cooman & Pepermans, 2009). This is because previous research has shown how cultural or social factors can affect, for instance, how men and women interpret career success differently (e.g., Fernández Puente & Sánchez Sánchez, 2021), have varying attitudes toward different career stages (e.g., Lynn et al., 1996), or value work-life balance policies differently (e.g., Kanu, Odinko & Ujoatuonu, 2023). Considering the moderating effect of gender, cultural, and organizational context would ensure the equivalence of the questionnaire's measurement structure, allowing for comparison of PS in international studies and across genders (e.g., Arya, Mirchandani & Harris, 2019; Dreher, Carter & Dworkin, 2019). In this way, these studies have examined to what extent the influence of various antecedents of PS – such as equity perceptions (e.g., Gomez-Mejia & Balkin, 1984), the referents used for comparison (e.g., Ataay, 2018), the perceived value of money (e.g., Li-Ping Tang, Luna-Arocas & Sutarso, 2005; Luna-Arocas & Tang, 2004) or attitudes toward money (e.g., Sahi, 2023) – differs between women and men. Previous research has confirmed these discrepancies, revealing differences between men and women regarding perceptions of their pay (e.g., Davison, 2014). Especially notable are those studies that have examined the so-called 'satisfied female paradox,' which explores why some women are more satisfied with their pay than men despite earning less (e.g., Brüggemann & Hinz, 2023; Smith, 2020).

Cluster #Job satisfaction. Initially, past research in the field of PS and job satisfaction focused on understanding how better educated and more highly trained workers affected labor relations and increased expectations about employment (e.g., Klein & Maher, 1966; Penzer, 1969). The Job Descriptive Index (JDI) developed by Smith, Kendall and Hulin (1969) measured job satisfaction through five key dimensions: the work itself, pay, opportunities for promotion, supervision, and coworkers. These dimensions laid the groundwork for establishing PS as a crucial component of job satisfaction (e.g., Schwab & Wallace Jr, 1974). Subsequently, sector-specific studies in nursing (e.g., Lum et al., 1998) or accounting (e.g., Lynn et al., 1996), emphasized the importance of considering specific contexts when analyzing job satisfaction. Likewise, in more recent years, studies have focused on countries such as China (e.g., Liu et al., 2022), South Korea (e.g., Opoku, Yoon, Kang & You, 2021), United Kingdom (e.g., Kang & Malvaso, 2023), the Netherlands (e.g., Celbiş, Wong, Kourtit & Nijkamp, 2023), or among others, the USA (e.g., Chonody, Kondrat, Godinez & Kotzian, 2023), and studies conducted in cross-country comparison such as USA *vs* Spain (e.g., Luna-Arocas & Tang, 2004, 2015). Cultural values (such as family identity and collectivism), unionization, and sectoral differences determine both the antecedents and consequences of pay satisfaction.

Similarly, the effect of such satisfaction on voluntary turnover (e.g., Li-Ping Tang, Kim & Shin-Hsiung Tang, 2000) or on motivation (e.g., Igalens & Roussel, 1999) was also explored. Beginning in the 2000s, research on job and PS developed by examining additional organizational factors, such as performance-based pay (e.g., Green & Heywood, 2008) and human resource practices (e.g., Ileana Petrescu & Simmons, 2008), as well as well-being (e.g., Clark et al., 2009). In this context, the importance of compensation strategies to facilitate employee retention (Judge et al., 2010) and the pressures to become more sustainable led to new lines of research focusing on rewards and work-related stress (e.g., Delmas & Pekovic, 2018), or decent work (e.g., Duffy et al., 2017).

The COVID-19 pandemic marked a turning point in research on job and PS (Liu et al., 2022), placing greater emphasis on employee well-being and mental health (Zhu, Xie, Liu, Yang & Zhou, 2022). Consequently, the latest trends in PS have produced studies on burnout (e.g., Atkins, Sener, Drake & Marley, 2023), especially in the healthcare and caregiving sectors (e.g., Opoku et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2024; Young, Aronoff, Goel, Jerome & Brower, 2023; Zhu et al., 2022). During the COVID-19 pandemic, pay satisfaction played a key role in employee well-being and retention. Although research suggests that compensation alone may not be sufficient to offset the detrimental effects of burnout

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on job turnover intentions (Wong et al., 2024), pay satisfaction can reduce burnout, particularly by decreasing emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Zhu et al., 2022). Likewise, in recent years, there has been a growing focus on diversity and individual differences in the workplace (e.g., Kang & Malvaso, 2023).

The relationship between pay satisfaction and job satisfaction varies according to sector and geographical context (see Table 9). In sectors directly affected by COVID-19, such as nursing or mental health work, pay satisfaction was investigated as a measure to reduce burnout (Liu et al., 2022; Opoku et al., 2021; Zhu et al., 2022). In some geographical contexts, where there were regulatory distinctions regarding the COVID-19 crisis, the relationship between pay satisfaction and job satisfaction was examined as an individual dimension of social welfare (Celbiș et al., 2023; Kang & Malvaso, 2023), or as a cost-reduction measure in hiring (Chonody et al., 2023). This involved the choice between prioritizing job preservation at the expense of average salary levels (as seen in Spain, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands) and tolerating job destruction while upholding income via unemployment insurance (U.S. approach). European countries leveraged salaries as the primary adjustment mechanism, implementing temporary reductions through short-time work schemes (such as ERTEs and furloughs) to mitigate the risk of mass unemployment, with regulation focused on preserving the productive sector and the workforce's skills. Conversely, the U.S. adjustment was characterized by significant job losses and a disproportionate fall in salaries at the lower end of the distribution, suggesting less protection and greater reliance on layoffs and direct pay cuts in firms' strategies.

Beyond salary, other dimensions of job satisfaction are emerging in recent literature, such as psychosocial factors like autonomy, job stability, work-life balance, and supportive leadership, among others. For example, Ritter, Small and Everett (2022) found that exchange relationships built on loyalty and respect directly affected performance appraisal satisfaction, which also positively impacted job and reward satisfaction. Filandri, Pasqua and Tomatis (2024) found that, when different dimensions of satisfaction are considered, both job stability and salary are relevant to job satisfaction, and there does not appear to be any compensatory effect. The 'psychosocial dimensions' mentioned are not mere peripherals, but structural determinants of employee well-being.

Cluster #Commitment. Within this cluster, we primarily find research analyzing the relationship between PS and organizational commitment, demonstrating that this relationship is complex. While most studies find a positive relationship between PS and organizational commitment (e.g., Luna-Arocas, Danvila-Del Valle & Lara, 2020), other works are less conclusive. For example, Piotrowska (2022) highlights that certain non-pay elements of a job, such as the ability to telework, exert a greater influence on organizational commitment than PS. Meanwhile, Giauque, Resenterra and Siggen (2010) do not find any relationship between PS and the commitment of highly qualified workers. However, an explanation for this absence of a relationship can be found in the work of Jayasingam and Yong (2013), who find that the relationship between PS, and the affective commitment of highly qualified workers only occurs when they perform tasks that are not knowledge intensive. Other studies have incorporated the intention to leave the organization into the analysis of this relationship, again yielding complex and diverse results. While some studies show that the relationship between PS and the intention to leave the organization is mediated by organizational commitment (e.g., Panaccio, Vandenberghe & Ben Ayed, 2014), others indicate that PS acts as a moderator of the relationship between organizational commitment and the intention to leave the organization (e.g., Hung, Lee & Lee, 2018). Finally, within this cluster, we also find studies that have examined the relationship between PS and other attitudes or behaviors that are, in some ways, related to commitment, such as the intention to leave (e.g., DeConinck & Stilwell, 2004; Redondo, Sparrow & Hernández-Lechuga, 2023).

Cluster #Motivation. In this cluster, we can highlight studies that have analyzed the motivating nature of pay in general, and PS, in particular. Although PS and the motivating effect of pay have traditionally been considered to relate directly to the amount of money received, various studies have shown that money is not the only factor that can influence employee motivation and its impact depends on how employees value money (Luna-Arocas & Tang, 2004).

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Table 9. Summary of the relevance of contextual differences

Country	Pay regulations[a]	Article	Work contexts	Objective	Key findings
South Korea	Hybrid Systems/Moderate Adjustment. Support measures were implemented, but with a different structure than the massive European one.	Opoku et al. (2021)	Public hospitals. Conflict between labor unions and the management of hospitals.	The perception of compensation mitigates the negative effect of emotional exhaustion (burnout) on job satisfaction.	A favorable perception of the pay received is key in keeping employees satisfied.
China	Negative overall impact, yet it had doubled real salaries before the crisis, acting as a buffer. Key player in global supply chains.	Liu et al. (2022) Zhu et al. (2022)	Nurses. Distinction between established and non-established nursing positions affect the level of salary and benefits package. Mental health workers. Online cross-sectional design. High work pressure in the post-pandemic era.	Nurse job satisfaction with a weighted, multidimensional perspective. To examine the demographic and work characteristics that are associated with burnout during the COVID-19 epidemic.	Satisfaction with salary and benefits was extremely important for nurses' job satisfaction Pay satisfaction was associated with decreased emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.
United Kingdom	Furlough Scheme. The government paid 80% of the salaries of furloughed workers. A massive state intervention in direct pay regulation. Decline in real average salaries.	Kang and Malvaso (2023)	UK households British Household. Panel Survey (BHPS)	How personality traits contribute to facets of job satisfaction, including total pay.	Extraversion had a weak negative association with satisfaction with pay.

(*Continued*)

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Table 9. (*Continued.*)

Country	Pay regulations[a]	Article	Work contexts	Objective	Key findings
Netherlands	Retention subsidies. Like the models used in Spain and the United Kingdom, strong protection schemes were implemented to maintain employment ties.	Celbiş et al. (2023)	Dutch households Dutch survey data '*LISS Panel.*'	This study examines the determinants of job satisfaction. Individual dimension of social welfare. Great Resignation is observed.	Pay satisfaction alone was not enough to guarantee job satisfaction, although low pay satisfaction can have a strong negative effect.
USA	Market adjustment (layoffs). Less emphasis on salary retention and greater use of unemployment benefits. The regulation facilitated adjustment by quantity (layoffs). Salary polarization.	Chonody et al. (2023)	Survey of social work faculty. The financial investment for universities in recruiting, hiring, and training new faculty is high. Retainer agreements.	Explore the effect of pay satisfaction on job satisfaction as a cost-reduction measure in hiring.	Subjective perceptions were more important than objective factors.

Note.
[a]COVID-19 Answer (ILO Global Wage Report 2020–21).
Source: Own elaboration.

Recent worldwide crises (e.g., the Covid-19 pandemic) have changed employees' expectations about compensation and working conditions, resulting in phenomena such as the Great Resignation (Celbiş et al., 2023). Therefore, it is considered necessary to consider other types of intrinsic motivators that complement extrinsic motivators, such as money (e.g., Aljumah, 2023; Wang et al., 2021). These intrinsic motivators include so-called psychological rewards, ranging from perceived supervisor support and recognition (e.g., De Gieter, De Cooman, Pepermans & Jegers, 2010; Honig, 2021). In this regard, other studies have proposed a reverse relationship; that is, they consider that intrinsically motivated employees perceive the pay they receive in a particular way, which in turn increases their PS (Wang et al., 2019). In summary, the evolution of research shows a shift from purely economic models toward approaches that view pay as part of a broader set of psychological, social, and cultural factors associated with motivation (Ten Hoeve, Drent & Kastermans, 2024). This underscores that, while pay is important, it alone is not sufficient to ensure happiness, commitment, or optimal performance (Almadana Abón et al., 2024).

Discussion

Advancing any field requires a prior understanding of its existing literature (Paul, Lim, O'Cass, Hao & Bresciani, 2021). This study analyzes the scientific literature on pay satisfaction, conducting bibliometric research of 539 articles available in the *Web of Science Core Collection* database for the period 1966–2024. The analytical approach encompassing both a descriptive perspective and a more in-depth approach using bibliometric techniques and tools, particularly the *Visualization of Similarities (VOS) viewer* software.

One of the key findings of this research is the steady growth of publications and citations since the year 2000, with a notable increase in the last decade. This upward trend underscores the growing interest and advances in the field of pay satisfaction research. In this vein, this review first provides a more comprehensive understanding of the main actors shaping research on pay satisfaction – articles, authors, journals, countries, and affiliations – thus offering academics and professionals a useful reference repertoire for identifying sources of expert knowledge in the field (practical contribution). Second, the review outlined the nomological network of the most relevant thematic groups and showed the multiple ways in which pay affects employee satisfaction. This influence is manifested through its interactions with antecedents (e.g., antecedents, performance, and gender) and consequences (e.g., job satisfaction, commitment, and motivation), as well as in different situational contexts (e.g., sector and country). This constitutes a theoretical contribution. These contributions align with the objectives of bibliometric reviews, which aim to promote theoretical and practical advances (Mukherjee, Lim, Kumar & Donthu, 2022).

Future lines research

Moving forward, future researchers may find motivation in the sustained growth of publications in this field.

From the #Antecedents, pay communication thus stands out as a cost-effective and efficient tool for companies to convey recognition and support to employees, consolidating its status as a relevant topic in human capital management (e.g., de la Torre-ruiz et al., 2024; Young et al., 2023). The findings reinforce the importance of designing transparent, equitable, and consistent compensation systems to improve satisfaction and well-being at work. Nevertheless, despite new global regulations, with a particular and growing focus on pay transparency and corporate social responsibility (e.g., Cullen, 2024), research on pay communication is still in its early stages (Bamberger & Alterman, 2024). Research on the dimensions of pay transparency and pay satisfaction not only adds value to organizational theory, but also has practical applications for designing more inclusive and equitable policies. This line of research is essential to meet the expectations of an increasingly informed and demanding workforce, as well as to help firms adapt to growing transparency regulations in the European Union, where

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the principle of equal pay has recently been consolidated through pay transparency measures (see Directive (EU) 2023/970). Exploring this area will allow for unraveling the dynamics among communication, equity, and satisfaction, providing companies with key tools for talent management in fairer.

From the #Performance mainly encompasses research that in some way links performance and pay satisfaction. This performance can affect how employees value their pay, and at the same time, pay satisfaction can influence employees' performance. Despite advances in this field, recent studies highlight the need to consider workforce diversity and analyze whether these relationships are influenced by certain individual characteristics. For example, Li, Duan, Chu and Qiu (2023) identified four distinct worker profiles differing in their satisfaction with their pay, which, in turn, resulted in differences in their job performance. Therefore, organizations need to transform the concept of management into that of classification management to design the reward system. Future research is encouraged to explore how the personalization of reward systems, taking diversity into account, affects work performance, and what strategies maximize pay satisfaction for different profiles within the firm.

From the #Gender highlights the crucial role of gender in pay satisfaction studies. This line of research underlines the ´paradox of the contented female worker', and the challenges associated with the pay gap and job segregation (e.g., Brüggemann & Hinz, 2023). The findings of the studies in this cluster emphasize the need for more inclusive and equitable approaches in pay policies to address persistent inequalities and foster fairer work environments. Future research is encouraged to explore how perceptions of pay satisfaction vary according to the type of reference point used (same sex, opposite sex, or same industry). This approach would allow for a deeper understanding of how perceptions of pay satisfaction are formed and to what extent employment increase awareness of inequality.

From the #Job satisfaction, pay satisfaction is emphasized as a key component of job satisfaction. The findings from these studies can help companies design more effective compensation strategies to increase job satisfaction and thus reduce turnover. For instance, recent studies have highlighted the relationship between pay satisfaction and burnout, especially in high-pressure sectors, such as healthcare (e.g., Atkins et al., 2023). On the other hand, given the cost pressures faced by many firms, paying higher salaries to employees is not always an option. Given that firms can retain and train employees to acquire the necessary skills (Atkins et al., 2023), future research is encouraged to explore how other aspects beyond the monetary component can influence pay satisfaction. For example, emotional compensation and purpose, and search for meaning in work as a complement to traditional compensation.

From the #Commitment involves creating explicit models to illustrate the causal relationships among pay satisfaction, commitment, employee attitudes and behaviors (i.e. Redondo et al., 2023). Although pay-related aspects remain relevant, non-pay factors are recognized as playing an increasingly crucial role. This shift reflects an adaptation to a work environment marked by more complex relationships. A relevant future line of research would be to examine how personalized human resource policies contribute to strengthening pay satisfaction, especially in contexts where workers have autonomy, learning opportunities, and enriching work experiences. It would be interesting to analyze the extent to which these practices enhance organizational commitment and the perception of pay equity among high-potential employees. Future research could also explore the moderating role of individual characteristics – such as gender, age, or career path – in the relationship between such personalization policies and pay satisfaction, which would allow for progress toward a more inclusive model tailored to the needs of a diverse workforce.

From the #Motivation highlights that although monetary compensation is important, it is not the only determinant of worker satisfaction and motivation. The increasing relevance of intrinsic motivation and psychological rewards in promoting satisfaction and job commitment, especially in environments such as healthcare and caregiving, where monetary rewards are limited (De Gieter et al., 2010; Ten Hoeve et al., 2024), makes it interesting to investigate how to effectively combine financial incentives and psychological rewards to maximize satisfaction. Future research is encouraged to explore the extent to which the balance between extrinsic and intrinsic rewards

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enhances employee retention, pay satisfaction, and well-being, while also considering individual differences (e.g., professional values, gender, or age) that could moderate this relationship.

Limitations

Notwithstanding the state-of-the-art overview of pay satisfaction, this study remains limited in several ways. First, we focus on the financial component of compensation (i.e., monetary pay and benefits), which is consequently included as a keyword in our search. However, other non-financial components of compensation (e.g., learning or recognition) could also be included in future studies to develop a broader conceptualization of compensation.

Second, the study is based on a single data source. Like most literature databases, *Web of Science* does not cover every scientific journal, but only a carefully selected set of the most important core journals for scientific disciplines. Moreover, bibliometric data are not designed exclusively for bibliometric analysis and may therefore contain errors that affect the outcomes of any analysis based on them. To minimize these inaccuracies, the authors have undertaken rigorous efforts and applied due diligence to ensure that the dataset was thoroughly cleansed of erroneous entries prior to conducting the analysis.

Third, the nature of bibliometric methodology itself is a limitation. Qualitative claims stemming from bibliometrics can be quite subjective, given that bibliometric analysis is quantitative in nature, and the relationship between quantitative and qualitative results is often unclear (Donthu et al., 2021). Although fundamental ideas have been presented, this review still has limitations in terms of the breadth and diversity of the bibliometric knowledge considered. Future reviews may extend methods available to guide future research.

Practical implications for management

We believe that this work has important implications for business management and practice. First, the design of hybrid compensation systems that strategically combine monetary and non-monetary rewards (e.g., Almadana Abón et al., 2024) and adapt to the needs of different employee profiles would help companies generate a competitive advantage. This personalization of rewards can help organizations address the challenge of managing generational, sectoral, and gender diversity. Hence, organizations should consider flexible systems that allow employees to choose among different benefits according to their preferences. In this sense, the use of digital platforms that enable employees to manage their benefits in a personalized way through artificial intelligence and technology can be especially relevant.

Likewise, phenomena such as the Great Resignation or employees' quiet quitting have highlighted the need to consider employee well-being, especially in high-pressure sectors (e.g., health and education). This implies that managers must prioritize psychological support strategies, recognition, and reasonable workloads, beyond pay. Organizations that successfully integrate equitable compensation with a sustainable work environment that combats burnout will be better positioned to increase job satisfaction and ensure the retention of valuable talent in the new post-pandemic era. Related to this, the newer generations of employees are taking into account factors beyond money, such as the purpose of their work, when deciding to remain in their organizations. In this sense, organizations need to offer meaningful jobs that allow them to fulfill these more emotional needs.

Also, managers need to be aware of the importance of implementing transparency policies aligned with new European regulations in order to clearly communicate the components of total compensation. This would help employees better understand all elements of their pay, recognize companies' efforts to address their needs, and consequently increase the effectiveness of pay policies (de la Torre-ruiz et al., 2024).

Finally, human resources departments must carry out continuous evaluations and adjustments. To this end, they should implement periodic feedback mechanisms on pay and job satisfaction to adjust

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compensation policies in an agile manner. Continuous measurement of pay satisfaction, for example through pulse surveys and analytics to monitor compensation satisfaction in real time, would contribute to this purpose.

Conclusion

This paper provides an overview of the literature on pay satisfaction through a bibliometric investigation. It also offers valuable insights for academics and professionals interested in designing and managing more effective, fair, and equitable compensation systems. Our bibliometric research provides guidance for those wishing to investigate in the field of pay satisfaction, informing them about its most interesting aspects, its research structure, and its theoretical foundations. With this work, we aim to contribute to the proper development of this emerging research field and to encourage compensation researchers to explore new study topics.

Supplementary material. The supplementary material for this article can be found at https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2025.10072.

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