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GENERATIVE ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN HUMAN RESOURCES: SCIENTIFIC TRENDS, EMERGING APPLICATIONS, AND ETHICAL GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES

INTELIGENCIA ARTIFICIAL GENERATIVA EN RECURSOS HUMANOS: TENDENCIAS CIENTÍFICAS, APLICACIONES EMERGENTES Y DESAFÍOS DE GOBERNANZA ÉTICA

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ABSTRACT:

Research on generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in human resource management (HRM) is rapidly expanding, yet its knowledge structure and governance treatment remain unclear. This review integrates bibliometric science mapping with document-level coding of 201 peer-reviewed publications indexed in Web of Science and Scopus through May 2026. The analysis explores publication trends, conceptual structures, recurring themes, collaboration patterns, research focus, evidence types, and ethical considerations. The field is in its early consolidation phase, with recruitment and selection organized into partially connected technical and HRM-oriented streams. Ethical issues often surface in application-oriented studies without governance being the primary research focus. Sensitivity analysis shows that the magnitude of the application–governance asymmetry depends on the classification boundary, while application-oriented research remains dominant. Comparing growth-period cohorts from 2024 to 2026, with 2026 only partially observed, the annual comparison detected no association between publication year and ethics-governance orientation. The resulting agenda prioritizes integrated selection-system validation, multi-actor theory, longitudinal research on employee and work outcomes, and empirical tests of governance mechanisms. While governance research within this body of work is predominantly empirical, it has yet to establish an independent or widely adopted foundation for future studies.

Keywords: Generative artificial intelligence, Large language models, Human resource management, Science mapping, AI governance.

RESUMEN:

La investigación sobre la inteligencia artificial generativa (GenAI) en la gestión de recursos humanos (GRH) se expande rápidamente, pero su estructura de conocimiento y el tratamiento de la gobernanza siguen sin estar claros. Esta revisión integra el mapeo bibliométrico de la ciencia con la codificación a nivel documental de 201 publicaciones revisadas por pares e indexadas en Web of Science y Scopus hasta mayo de 2026. El análisis explora las tendencias de publicación, las estructuras conceptuales, los temas recurrentes, los patrones de colaboración, el enfoque de la investigación, los tipos de

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evidencia y las consideraciones éticas. El campo se encuentra en una fase inicial de consolidación, con el reclutamiento y la selección organizados en corrientes parcialmente conectadas de orientación técnica y de GRH. Las cuestiones éticas suelen surgir en estudios orientados a la aplicación sin que la gobernanza sea el principal foco de investigación. El análisis de sensibilidad muestra que la magnitud de la asimetría entre aplicación y gobernanza depende del límite de clasificación, mientras que la investigación orientada a la aplicación sigue siendo dominante. Al comparar las cohortes del período de crecimiento de 2024 a 2026, con 2026 observado solo parcialmente, la comparación anual no detectó ninguna asociación entre el año de publicación y la orientación hacia la ética y la gobernanza. La agenda resultante prioriza la validación integrada de los sistemas de selección, la teoría de múltiples actores, la investigación longitudinal sobre los resultados de los empleados y del trabajo, y las pruebas empíricas de los mecanismos de gobernanza. Aunque la investigación sobre gobernanza dentro de este conjunto de trabajos es predominantemente empírica, aún no ha establecido una base independiente o ampliamente adoptada para futuros estudios.

Palabras clave: Inteligencia artificial generativa, Modelos de lenguaje de gran tamaño, Gestión de recursos humanos, Mapeo científico, Gobernanza de la inteligencia artificial.

INTRODUCTION

The public release of ChatGPT in late 2022 accelerated interest in generative artificial intelligence (AI), expanding its applications in knowledge-intensive tasks, decision-making, and workforce management. Unlike traditional predictive systems, generative models produce content through natural-language interactions, increasing their organizational accessibility (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Research demonstrates productivity improvements across organizational contexts (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Brynjolfsson et al. (2025) reported a 15% increase in customer-support productivity, reaching 30% among less experienced employees, illustrating the potential of these technologies to transform organizational practices (Korzynski et al., 2023).

Human resource management (HRM) represents a significant application area, encompassing recruitment, performance evaluation, employee development, workforce analytics, and organizational communication (Aguinis et al., 2024). These developments extend earlier advances in electronic HRM, people analytics, and algorithmic decision-making (Tambe et al., 2019). While algorithmic management facilitates recruitment automation, monitoring, and task allocation (Meijerink et al., 2021), generative technologies introduce conversational interfaces and automated employee services (Gkinko & Elbanna, 2023; Korzynski et al., 2023). Their adoption nevertheless raises concerns about discrimination, transparency, privacy, accountability, and algorithmic fairness (Bankins et al., 2024; Chowdhury et al., 2024; Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022).

Despite growing scholarly interest, research remains fragmented across organizational management, information systems, business ethics, and employee development (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Gkinko & Elbanna, 2023). Theoretical perspectives addressing technological capabilities and employment relationships remain insufficiently integrated (Chowdhury et al., 2023; Raisch & Krakowski, 2021). Existing bibliometric studies frequently examine AI broadly without distinguishing generative applications in HRM (Rana & Kumar, 2026), whereas specialized reviews predominantly emphasize ChatGPT without systematically examining intellectual structures, thematic relationships, and governance (Li & Cheng, 2025; Sakib et al., 2024).

These gaps are particularly important given tensions between workforce augmentation and substitution, organizational efficiency and responsibility, and technological trust and institutional oversight (Bankins et al., 2024). Although technology acceptance models, job demands–resources theory, and signaling theory offer explanatory foundations, their integration into generative AI research remains limited. Furthermore, technological adoption has outpaced understanding of ethical governance, accountability, fairness, and organizational responsibilities (Chowdhury et al., 2024).

Bibliometric analysis enables systematic examination of scientific production, intellectual structures, thematic evolution, and collaboration, complemented by documentary analysis of research orientations. Accordingly, this study aimed to analyze the evolution, intellectual structure, emerging applications, and ethical governance of generative AI research in HRM through bibliometric and documentary analysis of 201 peer-reviewed publications indexed in Scopus and Web of Science between 2022 and May 2026. The analysis examines publication trends, thematic structures, citation relationships, international collaboration, and application- and governance-focused research to identify knowledge gaps and future priorities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a bibliometric design using records from the Web of Science Core Collection and Scopus to examine scientific production and intellectual relationships in generative artificial intelligence research within human resource management. The search covered January 2020 to May 2026 to capture developments before and after ChatGPT's introduction. However, no eligible studies published before 2022 were identified, establishing 2022–2026 as the analytical period, with 2026 representing a partial year.

The search strategy combined more than 25 generative artificial intelligence terms with over 40 human resource management expressions using the Boolean operator AND. Searches targeted the Topic field in Web of Science and TITLE-ABS-KEY fields in Scopus. Conducted in May 2026, the searches initially included English-language articles, reviews, conference papers, and book chapters, retrieving 1,245 Scopus and 549 Web of Science records. Only journal articles and reviews were subsequently retained. Complete search strategies are provided in Supplementary A.

Eligible publications substantively examined generative artificial intelligence in organizational human resource management, including recruitment, selection, employee development, and workforce management. Studies with incidental references to these topics, unrelated populations, or generative models used exclusively as methodological tools were excluded. Journal disciplinary classification alone did not determine eligibility. However, journals listed in Cabells Predatory Reports or exhibiting serious editorial transparency deficiencies were excluded.

As shown in Figure 1, the searches identified 1,794 records. After merging datasets in bibliometrix, 474 duplicates were removed using DOI and title matching, prioritizing Web of Science records for their more complete references. Document-type filtering excluded 663 of the remaining 1,320 records. Subsequently, 329 of 657 publications (50.1%) were excluded because their journals and titles or abstracts lacked relevance to human resource management. Relevant interdisciplinary publications were retained, leaving 328 records for eligibility assessment.

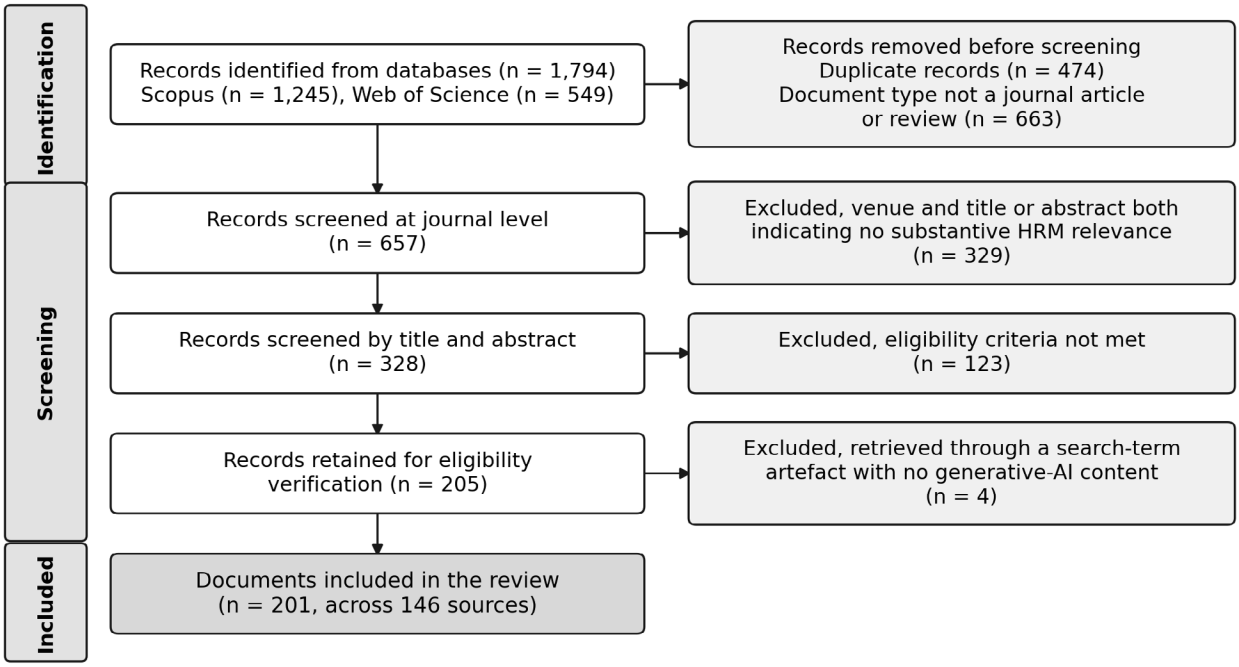


Fig 1. Selection process for the review corpus.

The remaining 328 records underwent title and abstract screening. A deterministic rule-based procedure provisionally classified 174 records across four signal dimensions, with first-author verification resulting in 24 revisions. Screening excluded 123 records, leaving 205 for final assessment. Four additional records were removed because of misleading search-term matches, yielding 201 publications across 146 journals.

Bibliometric analyses employed bibliometrix (version 5.4.0), Biblioshiny, and R (version 4.6.0), following established science-mapping methods. Keyword standardization identified 706 unique terms, with the 50 most frequent selected for co-occurrence analysis. Procedures included thematic mapping using centrality and density, three-field diagrams, co-citation networks, trend analysis, and international collaboration mapping. Communities were detected using the Louvain algorithm. Cluster interpretation considered size, centrality, density, and term composition. Thematic evolution analysis was omitted because 96.0% of publications appeared from 2024 onward. Co-citation analysis included only 137 Web of Science records because of incompatible reference formats. Parameters are detailed in Supplementary C.

Complementary content analysis classified all 201 publications by research orientation, evidence type, and ethical engagement using a predefined codebook. Research orientation comprised four mutually exclusive categories:

application-functional, ethics-governance, conceptual-agenda, and method-field mapping. Evidence types included empirical, conceptual, and review-based studies, while ethical engagement ranged from central focus to absence. The 21 governance-oriented studies were further classified as diagnostic, principle-oriented, mechanism-oriented, or regulatory. Automated matching across 11 application-related and 13 governance-related expression families supported manual coding, which remained authoritative.

The first coder evaluated all publications using database records for 164 (81.6%) and publisher abstracts or full texts for the remainder. A second coder reviewed classifications, resolving 13 discrepancies across 12 documents. An independent third coder assessed a random sample of 60 records. Cohen's κ was 0.68 for research orientation (95% CI [0.50, 0.84]) and 0.97 for evidence type (95% CI [0.88, 1.00]); weighted κ reached 0.82 for ethical engagement (95% CI [0.71, 0.91]). Binary governance classification achieved 95.0% agreement (κ = 0.77).

Inferential analysis included 193 publications from 2024–2026, excluding the small 2022 (n = 1) and 2023 (n = 7) cohorts from statistical testing while retaining them descriptively. A 3 × 2 contingency table examined the association between publication year and governance orientation using the two-sided Fisher–Freeman–Halton exact test.

The bibliometric corpus comprised 201 eligible publications, whereas the reference list includes only the sources explicitly cited to support the manuscript's theoretical, methodological, and interpretive discussion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The final corpus comprised 201 publications authored by 652 researchers between 2022 and 2026, averaging 13.78 citations per document. As shown in Figure 2, scientific production increased from one publication in 2022 and seven in 2023 to 32 in 2024 and 88 in 2025. The 73 publications recorded in 2026 represent partial-year data. Approximately 80% of the corpus was published during 2025–2026, indicating rapid recent expansion rather than sustained long-term growth.

Citation impact was concentrated in earlier publications. The most cited contributions were Bankins et al. (2024), with 445 citations, with 444; and Korzynski et al. (2023), with 179. Although publications from 2022–2024 represented approximately 20% of the corpus, they accounted for 11 of the 12 most-cited documents. Conceptual studies and reviews accumulated over 70% of citations among these leading publications, indicating that scholarly influence remains concentrated in foundational contributions, while recent research has had limited time to accumulate citations.

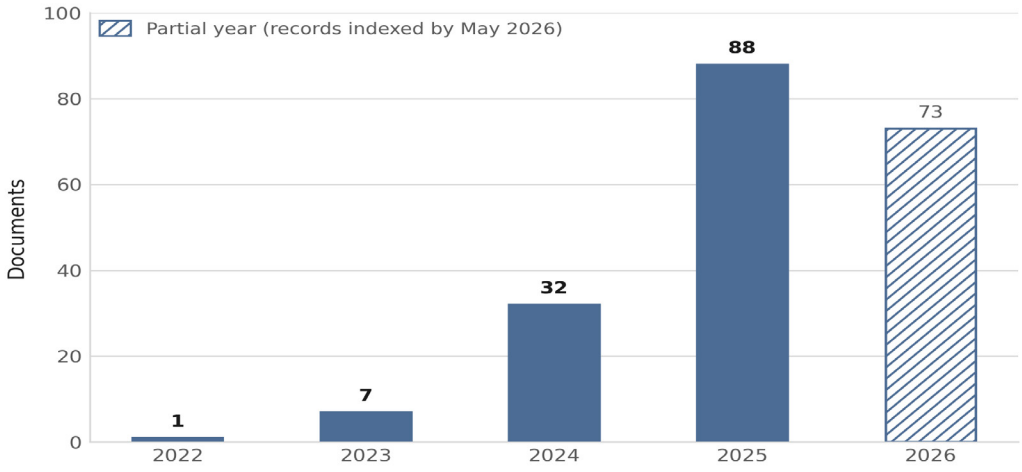


Fig 2. Annual scientific production of GenAI in HRM, 2022–2026 (2026 is partial year at the time of data collection).

The final corpus comprised 201 publications across 146 journals (2022–May 2026), involving 652 authors and 11,869 cited references. Documents averaged 0.88 years in age, 13.78 citations, and 3.42 co-authors, with 22.39% international collaboration. The corpus included 181 articles, 20 reviews, and 23 single-authored publications.

Citation impact was concentrated in earlier contributions. Bankins et al. (2024), and Korzynski et al. (2023) led with 445, 444, and 179 citations, respectively. Gkinko & Elbanna (2023) received 140 citations, followed by Chowdhury et al. (2024), with 98 citations, and Aguinis et al. (2024), with 69 citations.

These findings indicate greater citation influence among foundational studies.

Publication outlets were highly dispersed. The ***International Journal of Selection and Assessment*** led with six articles, while ***Applied Sciences***, ***Human Resource Development International***, ***Human Resource Management Journal***, and ***Journal of Innovation & Knowledge*** published four each. Eight additional journals contributed three articles each, and 111 published only one. Learning, development, and knowledge management accounted for 17 articles among leading sources, compared with nine addressing selection and assessment.

The United States led production (30 articles), followed by China (23), India (19), and the United Kingdom (18), collectively representing 44.8% of publications. Spain (9), Italy (8), Canada (7), Poland (5), Australia (4), the Netherlands (4), and Portugal (4) followed. International collaboration was highest among the four leading producers in the United Kingdom (38.9%), followed by China (30.4%), the United States (23.3%), and India (5.3%).

Citation leadership differed from productivity. France (542), the United Kingdom (457), and Australia (452) recorded the highest citation totals, followed by the United States (307), Poland (191), and China (132). The Netherlands (72), Slovakia (70), Canada (66), and Turkey (61) followed. Average citation impact was highest in France (271.0) and Australia (113.0), although their small publication counts limit generalization. Only the United States and the United Kingdom ranked among the four leading countries in both productivity and citations.

The co-occurrence network of 50 author keywords identified four communities connected by 238 edges (Figure 3), accounting for 45%, 21%, 19%, and 15% of total PageRank. The largest community (20 nodes) focused on organizational adoption, led by generative artificial intelligence (0.149), human resource management (0.068), and ChatGPT (0.060). The second (10 nodes) addressed organizational transformation, centered on artificial intelligence (0.108). The third (11 nodes) linked large language models (0.061) and natural language processing (0.030) with recruitment and gender bias, while the fourth (nine nodes) connected recruitment (0.032), personnel management, and ethics (0.021). Although ethics ranked eighth, it appeared in only four documents without forming an independent community. Technical and human resource management selection communities shared just nine of 99 possible connections, suggesting limited conceptual integration. Robustness tests confirmed these patterns across 40, 50, and 60 nodes.

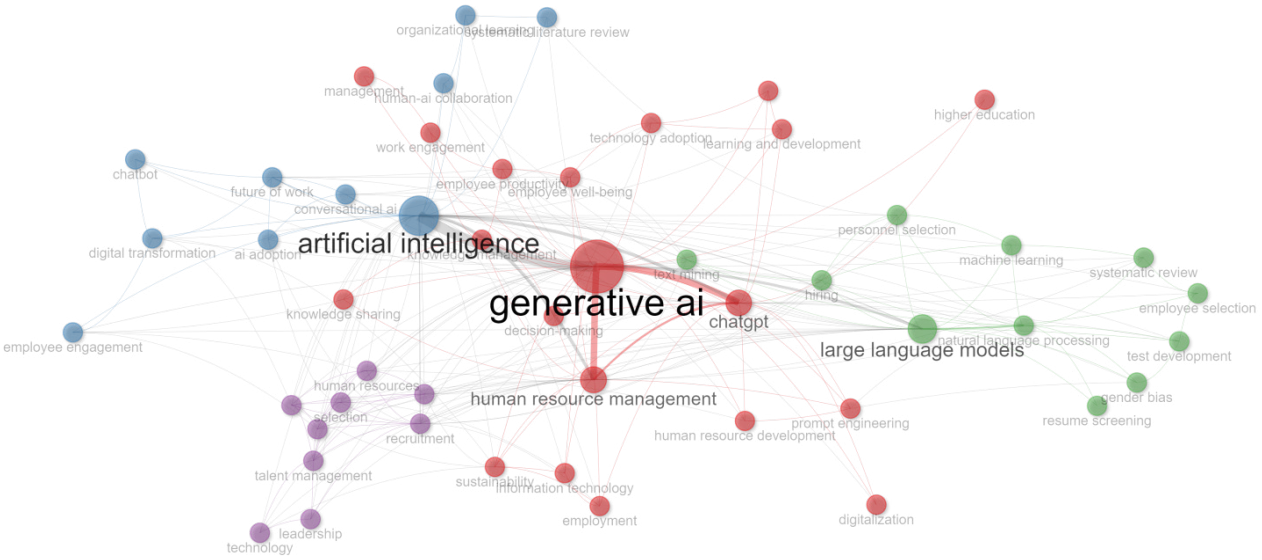


Fig 3. Co-occurrence network.

The thematic map identified nine themes from 98 standardized keywords occurring at least twice, using Callon's centrality and density measures (Figure 4). The two largest themes focused on generative artificial intelligence and human resource management (182 occurrences) and artificial intelligence and ChatGPT (132). Recruitment (43) exhibited the highest centrality but relatively low density, connecting personnel management, selection, analytics, and ethics. Conversely, the technical theme (86), dominated by large language models and natural language processing, showed limited centrality. A smaller personnel selection theme (six occurrences) emphasized theoretical approaches, revealing a distinction between technical and conceptual research. Employee engagement (27) and learning and development (21) formed relatively developed themes, with the latter exhibiting the highest density but lowest centrality. The remaining micro-clusters were excluded from interpretation. Given the sensitivity of thematic quadrants to threshold settings,

interpretations considered theme size, centrality, density, and composition. Ethics consistently remained associated with recruitment and selection across alternative thresholds.

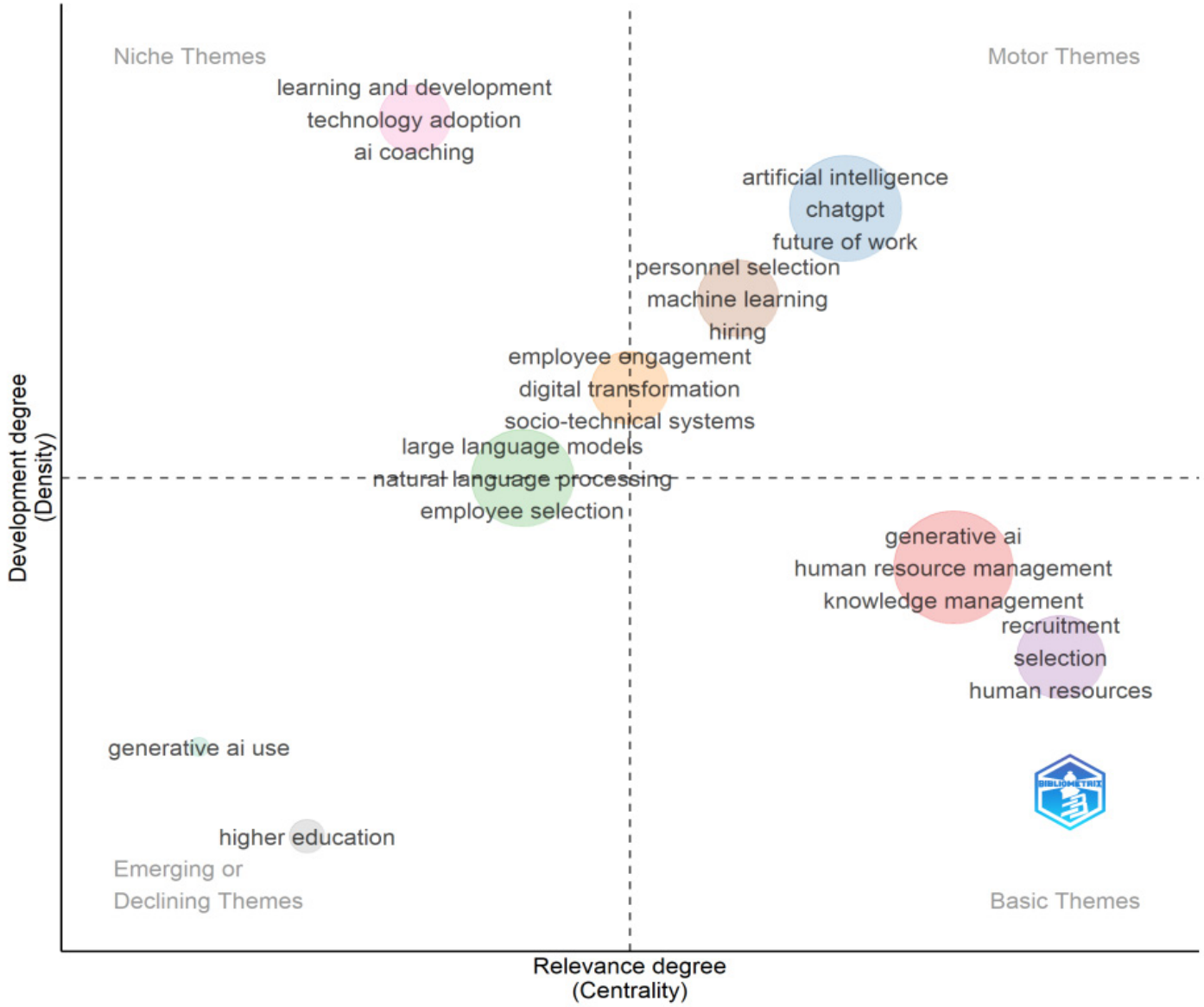


Fig 4. Thematic map. Centrality reflects the relevance of a theme to the literature, while density reflects its degree of internal development.

The co-citation network of 137 Web of Science records identified 49 references grouped into four clusters (Figure 5). The first (17 references) represented human resource management foundations (Aguinis et al., 2024; Feuerriegel et al., 2024), alongside Tambe et al. (2019). The second (19 references) focused on artificial intelligence in management (Chowdhury et al., 2023; Dwivedi et al., 2023; Kelan, 2024), alongside Pereira et al. (2023); and Raisch & Krakowski (2021).

The third (11 references) integrated technology adoption theories and methodological frameworks. The fourth addressed generative model foundations. Ethical scholarship appeared without forming an independent cluster (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022). These findings indicate limited governance consolidation, although cluster assignments reflect citation proximity and apply only to the Web of Science subset.

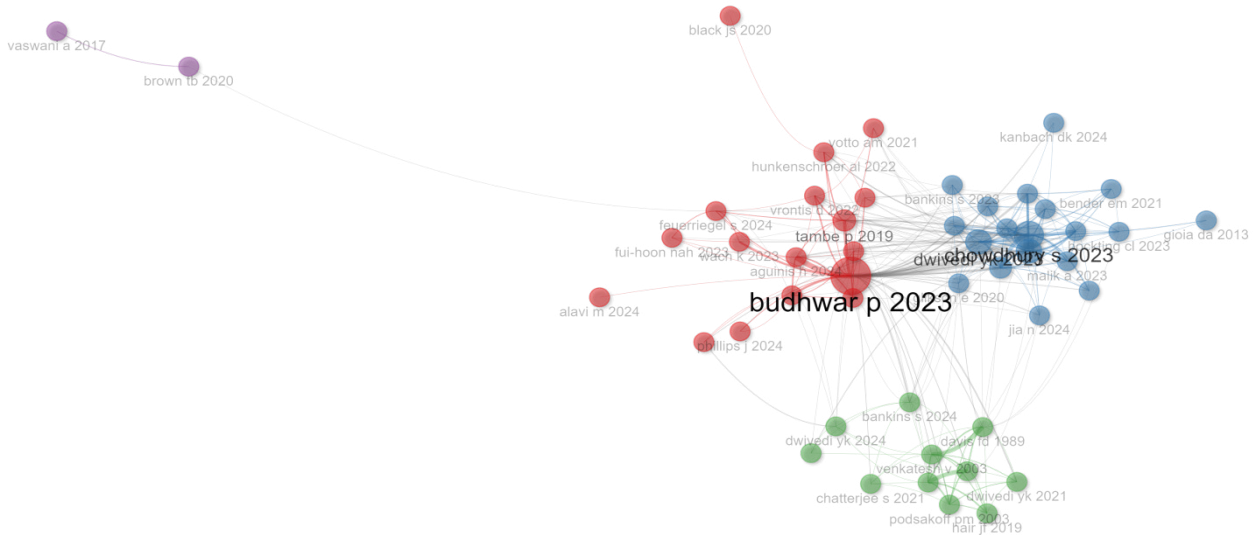


Fig 5. Co-citation network of the most frequently co-cited references.

Co-citation analysis of 137 Web of Science records identified four intellectual clusters. The most frequently cited references were Budhwar et al. (2023), with 28 citations; Dwivedi et al. (2023), with 18; and Chowdhury et al. (2023), with 17. The clusters addressed artificial intelligence and human resource management foundations, artificial intelligence in management, technology acceptance and methodological frameworks, and large language model foundations. Other influential contributions included Tambe et al. (2019), Raisch & Krakowski (2021). Overall, the findings reveal a multidisciplinary intellectual structure in which ethical governance has not emerged as an independent research cluster.

Trend-topic analysis revealed a shift from general concepts toward specific human resource management applications. Using a minimum keyword frequency of two, ethics, employment, and decision-making showed median publication years of 2024, while generative artificial intelligence, artificial intelligence, large language models, ChatGPT, and human resource management concentrated in 2025. Personnel selection, hiring, artificial intelligence coaching, conversational artificial intelligence, and higher education emerged as recurrent topics with median years of 2026. These findings suggest increasing specialization in recruitment, selection, and employee development. However, trends for 2026 remain provisional because of partial-year coverage.

The country collaboration network includes 39 countries and is divided into four clusters using the International collaboration involved 45 of the 201 publications (22.39%), revealing a sparse network in which 78 of 96 country pairs shared only one publication. The strongest connections linked the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands, with four joint publications per leading tie, followed by Ireland and Germany with three. Other clusters connected Asian, European, and Australian researchers, particularly through the Australia–Vietnam partnership. Among the leading publishing countries, the United Kingdom showed the highest international collaboration rate (38.9%), followed by China (30.4%), the United States (23.3%), and India (5.3%). These findings indicate that scientific productivity does not necessarily correspond to international research integration.

Document-level analysis revealed a substantial imbalance between application-oriented and governance-oriented research (Table 1). Of the 201 publications, 140 (69.7%) focused on functional applications, 21 (10.4%) on ethics and governance, 21 (10.4%) on conceptual agendas, and 19 (9.5%) on methodological mapping. The application-to-governance ratio was 6.67:1, decreasing to 4.75:1 when seven borderline studies were reclassified. Coding reliability was moderate for primary orientation ($\kappa = 0.68$) and substantial for governance identification ($\kappa = 0.77$). Governance-oriented publications represented 9.4% in 2024, 9.1% in 2025, and 12.3% in 2026, without significant differences across years ($p = 0.818$).

Ethical engagement was initially classified as central in 13.9% of publications, substantive in 16.9%, incidental in 13.9%, and not visible in 55.2%. However, full-text verification identified substantive ethical discussions in 19 of 26 documents initially classified as lacking ethical content (73.1%), reducing the estimated proportion genuinely lacking such engagement to approximately 17% (95% CI [11%, 27%]). This finding highlights the limitations of abstract-based coding.

Among the 21 governance-oriented studies, 14 were empirical and seven conceptual. Their contributions included diagnostic analyses (seven), governance mechanisms (seven), ethical frameworks (four), and regulatory approaches (three). Citation relationships were asymmetric: 13 governance studies cited application-oriented research, whereas only 15 of 140 application studies cited governance research. Furthermore, no governance-focused review or independent co-citation cluster emerged, and governance terminology remained scarce among author keywords. Although ethical concerns are more prevalent than bibliographic records suggest, governance research has yet to establish a consolidated intellectual foundation within the field.

Table 1. Cross-tabulations of primary orientation with role of ethics and evidence type (n = 201).

Primary orientation	Documents (n)	Role of ethics				Evidence type		
		Not visible	Passing mention	Substantive discussion	Core object	Empirical	Conceptual	Review
Application-functional	140	86	22	25	7	115	12	13
Ethics-governance	21	0	0	0	21	14	7	0
Conceptual-agenda	21	8	6	7	0	2	12	7
Method-field mapping	19	17	0	2	0	10	0	9
Total	201	111	28	34	28	141	31	29

Note: Counts are document-level. Ethics-governance documents take ethics or governance as a core object by definition, so primary orientation and role of ethics are not statistically independent.

The findings characterize generative artificial intelligence research in human resource management as an emerging field experiencing rapid growth but limited theoretical consolidation. Research has shifted toward specific applications, particularly recruitment, selection, and employee development, while citation influence remains concentrated in early conceptual contributions (Bankins et al., 2024; Budhwar et al., 2023; Korzynski et al., 2023). This fragmentation resembles earlier developments in electronic human resource management and workforce analytics.

A significant gap persists between technical research on language models and organizational studies of recruitment and selection. Their limited integration restricts understanding of how algorithmic design, employment decisions, and organizational accountability interact (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022; Meijerink et al., 2021; Tambe et al., 2019). Application-oriented studies also substantially outnumber governance-oriented research, although full-text verification reveals that ethical considerations are more widespread than bibliographic records suggest. Governance scholarship includes empirical evaluations and oversight mechanisms but lacks an independent intellectual structure. This imbalance remains provisional and sensitive to classification criteria (Chowdhury et al., 2024).

Theoretical development remains dominated by technology acceptance frameworks which insufficiently address evolving generative systems, affected stakeholders, and the distribution of decision-making responsibilities (Meijerink et al., 2021). Geographic generalizability is similarly limited: only seven of 141 empirical studies involved multiple countries, restricting comparisons across institutional and regulatory contexts (Mayrhofer et al., 2024).

Unlike previous reviews combining different artificial intelligence technologies (Rana & Kumar, 2026) or focusing on ChatGPT and conversational systems (Bernik & Šprajc, 2025; Li & Cheng, 2025; Sakib et al., 2024), this study integrates bibliometric mapping with document-level classification across generative technologies and human resource management functions.

These findings support function-specific implementation with integrated governance. Recruitment systems require bias assessment, transparency, accountability, and human oversight, while technology providers should facilitate auditing and model validation. Employee development applications require evaluation of learning, well-being, and fairness. Effective governance also demands enforceable organizational mechanisms.

Future research should prioritize integrated selection-system validation, multi-actor theoretical frameworks, longitudinal employee outcomes, and empirical governance evaluation. Selection studies should examine predictive accuracy, fairness, and human oversight through longitudinal validation, experiments, and audits (Hunkenschroer & Luetge, 2022), incorporating organizational accountability and documented decision processes (Tambe et al., 2019).

Theoretical frameworks should address the distribution of benefits, risks, and responsibilities among managers, employees, applicants, and technology providers, integrating algorithmic management, job demands-resources theory,

and sociotechnical perspectives (Meijerink et al., 2021), alongside signaling theory.

Longitudinal studies should determine whether productivity gains improve learning and well-being or intensify workloads and displace tasks (Brynjolfsson et al., 2025), considering technological augmentation and substitution (Bankins et al., 2024; Raisch & Krakowski, 2021).

Finally, governance research should empirically assess audits, independent reviews, appeals, and accountability mechanisms, examining their effectiveness across institutional contexts and their capacity to ensure meaningful sociotechnical oversight.

CONCLUSIONS

This study analyzed 201 peer-reviewed publications on generative artificial intelligence in human resource management indexed through May 2026, combining bibliometric mapping with document-level coding. The findings reveal an emerging field characterized by rapid growth, increasing specialization, and limited theoretical consolidation. Recruitment and selection dominate the research landscape, although technical and organizational approaches remain insufficiently integrated.

Application-oriented research substantially exceeds governance-focused scholarship, even after sensitivity adjustments. Although ethical concerns are widespread, governance has not developed into an independent intellectual foundation. Furthermore, adoption-centered theories insufficiently address the multiple stakeholders affected by algorithmic decisions, highlighting a theoretical gap that requires further investigation rather than constituting a directly quantified finding.

The study is limited to English-language journal articles and reviews indexed in Scopus and Web of Science, potentially excluding relevant research from other sources and disciplines. The incomplete 2026 coverage, small governance-oriented subset, and reliance on bibliometric and documentary evidence also restrict temporal and causal interpretations. Future research should integrate technical and organizational perspectives, develop multi-actor frameworks, and empirically evaluate long-term workforce outcomes and governance effectiveness.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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