



Conference Proceedings

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ICMS & ICSS

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Keynote Speakers' Biography

Dr. Severin Hornung

Professor of Applied Psychology, Universität Innsbruck



Severin Hornung holds the University of Innsbruck's newly minted professorship for applied psychology with a focus on social-ecological responsibility and sustainability in work, economy, and society. In preceding years, he worked there as habilitated lecturer and, together with his colleagues, Christine Unterrainer, Thomas Höge, and Wolfgang G. Weber, has founded the Innsbruck Group on Critical Research in Work and Organizational Psychology (I-CROP), as part of the international network for the Future of Work and Organizational Psychology (FoWOP). Prior to that, he has held temporary and visiting assignments in Germany, the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, and the United States. His PhD is from the Technical University Munich. His research examines psychological and sociological aspects of the observed neoliberal degradation and the envisioned socio-ecological transformation of work, organizations, and

employment relations, focusing on issues of power and control, social inequality and justice, worker wellbeing and mental health, and ethical and socio-moral concerns. He is actively involved in meta-theoretical and disciplinary debates regarding epistemology, ideology, and politics in the broader field of management and organization studies, as well as numerous projects and activities aimed at promoting critical and radical humanist perspectives in organizational scholarship. He serves on the editorial board of the journal *Human Relations* and is part of the collective of editors for the upcoming (2026) Edward Elgar Handbook of Critical Work and Organizational Psychology.

Keynote Speeches

Paradigm Conflicts in Management and Organization Studies

Severin Hornung, Thomas Höge

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Management and organizational studies (MOS) are the site of theoretical, methodological, and value-based disputes, termed “paradigm wars” (Shepherd & Challenger, 2013). This presentation analyzes discourses in the field, based on a meta-theoretical framework. Focal is the stream of Critical Management Studies (CMS), promoting alternative interpretations of management research, education, and practice (Adler et al., 2007). A pluralist umbrella-paradigm, CMS is a movement to expose and challenge research on management and organization, advocating for alternative approaches and unorthodox methodologies. Rooted in critical thinking, problematizing power and social justice, CMS subsumes various traditions, such as Marxist Labor Process Theory (LPT), Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, and other psychoanalytic, neo- and post-Marxist streams, including poststructuralist and postmodern theorizing, notably Foucault studies, phenomenology, discourse analysis, feminism, postcolonial and queer studies, critical race theory, post- and transhumanism. Common denominator is critical questioning of dominant, harmful, limiting, and under-challenged ideologies, institutions, interests, and identities through negation, deconstruction, re-voicing or de-familiarization. Practical aim is to instigate social reforms in the interest of the majority or those non-privileged, and to inspire resistance and emancipation from limiting influences. Questioning the taken-for-granted, challenging structures of domination, and problematizing non-neutrality of knowledge and positioning of researchers, are common themes. Denaturalization, reflexivity, and anti- or non-performativity are core paradigmatic

principles. CMS is institutionalized today, illustrated by specialized journals, handbooks, textbooks, conferences, representation in professional associations, editorial boards, and commissions (Parker, 2023). However, divisions along sub-paradigms are problematizing “criticality” and concern with structures, manifesting in intense controversies. Resembling paradigm wars, meta-theory is indispensable for understanding these academic debates.

Scientific paradigms are frameworks shared by researchers, organizing accepted assumptions, theories, models, concepts, methods, and results (Gioia & Pitre, 1990). Paradigms are defined by ontological (theories about reality), epistemological (methods for knowledge-creation), and axiological (values and objectives) beliefs. These are limitedly compatible, giving rise to incommensurability, where paradigms are mutually exclusive and self-contained, raising questions about multi- or meta-paradigmatic research. Theorizing on paradigms has made seminal contributions to MOS as an interdisciplinary, pluralistic, but also ideological field. Meta-theory of social science approaches in MOS differentiates functionalist and interpretive from radical structuralist and radical humanist paradigms, based on two dimensions: a) the objective vs. subjective nature of social science and investigated realities; b) orientation towards regulation vs. radical change, emphasizing social order vs. conflict as basic to society and organization. Resulting paradigms are rooted in sociological positivism (functionalist), German idealism (interpretive), historical materialism or Marxism (radical structuralist), and Freudo-Marxist critical theory (radical humanist). Influential adaptations and revisions of this taxonomy will be discussed (Hassard & Wolfram Cox, 2013). Drawing on meta-theory, the suggested model differentiates inter- and intra-paradigmatic conflicts, affirming or challenging paradigm boundaries. Distinguishing location and degree, the four quadrants resemble external and internal frictions and fractures. Frictions describe fundamental conflicts (first degree). Fractures (second degree) are foundational or constitutive for emerging paradigms. Former do not challenge existing paradigm boundaries; the latter introduce new demarcations. Conflict location differentiates between external and internal (inter- and intra-) paradigmatic disputes. Former reach across paradigm boundaries; the latter are contained within paradigms. Populating this matrix are four discourses involving CMS: (1) the evidence-debate, affirming paradigm boundaries between CMS and the

hyper-functionalist EBM movement; (2) the performativity-debate, differentiating positions on collaboration vs. conflict within CMS; (3) the managerialism-debate, as disintegrating conflicts between CMS pragmatists and radical fractions of Critical Theory and LPT; (4) the ideology-debate, reflecting inter-paradigmatic influences of CMS in fermenting critique in adjacent fields, exemplified by an emerging critical paradigm in work and organizational psychology.

The Evidence-Debate. External frictions across paradigm boundaries manifested in hostilities between proponents of CMS and EBM (Morrell et al., 2015). Seeking to “improve” management decisions and organizational practices, EBM is a functionalist movement, advocating systematic use of scientific methodology for the aggregation, synthesis, and transfer of research into practice. CMS scholars have deconstructed EBM as an ideologically-driven political project, naturalizing managerialism through positivistic scientism, reinforcing paradigmatic hegemony, marginalizing alternative methodologies and non-mainstream positions. In turn, EBM scholars have branded CMS as obstructionist, unconstructive, unscientific, unrealistic, and self-serving, employing criticism for its own sake without offering “viable” alternatives. The evidence-debate is an exemplary manifestation of clashing paradigms of order and regulation versus conflict and radical change, the archetype of which is the positivism dispute in German sociology.

The Performativity-Debate. Internal paradigmatic frictions underlie the performativity-debate within CMS (Fleming & Banerjee, 2016). Practical relevance and impact, concessions, compromise, and collaboration with management, clash with positions of conflict, confrontation, and counteractions. Anti-performativity, as refusal to participate in the managerial valorization agenda, is challenged by critical performativity, as active and subversive intervention into managerial discourses. Suggested is a transition from opposition, envisioning radical societal change or “macro-emancipation”, to a more empathetic stance towards management, pragmatic acceptance of real-world conditions, targeted collaboration on specific issues, and engaging in more limited, “micro-emancipatory” improvements for workers. CMS should focus on issues of public importance, engaging with non-academic groups, building social movements, and propagating deliberation. Critics have called attention to the

“collaborationist” character and high risk of failure and system-justifying functions of colluding with management, insisting that CMS should focus on the critique of management. Fractioning varieties of this controversy culminate in the managerialism-debate, as a continuation of the labor process debate between radical structuralists and poststructuralists.

The Managerialism-Debate. Fractures within the CMS paradigm surface in the critique of its pragmatic approach as a manifestation and instrument of managerialism, colluding with and providing legitimacy to domination and exploitation of workers. Klikauer (2015, 2018) deconstructs CMS as domesticated, tamed criticism and incremental reformism, striving for “better” management, instead of overcoming or subverting managerial hegemony. The author suggests differentiating between CMS and Traditional Management Theory (TMT), but also introducing Critical Management Theory (CMT) and Marxist (Labor Process) Management Theory (MMT) as paradigms with constitutive theoretical foundations, epistemological interests, themes, key publications, authors, institutions, and journals. Arguably, Humanistic Management Theory (HMT) can be included as a fifth stream. TMT employs functionalist social science, serving empirical-technical managerial interest in efficiency and effectiveness. HMT enriches the mainstream with ethical-moral aspects, arguing for their instrumentality for profitability. Eventually, both serve and legitimize the managerial functionalist domination agenda. Klikauer comes to similar conclusions with regard to CMS. Accordingly, CMS combines more or less critical positions, but its grounding in Critical Theory is spurious. CMS is attested a hermeneutic interest in understanding subjectivity and power in historical contexts, but no critical-emancipatory intent of promoting resistance and ending domination. No coincidence, this taxonomy corresponds with meta-theory: CMT reflects the radical humanist, MMT the radical structuralist, and TMT the functionalist paradigm. CMS is “downgraded” to the interpretive paradigm concerned with understanding and description from a regulation agenda. The paradigm of MMT implies a “resurrection” of LPT, while CMT reflects the unfulfilled promise of CMS as a paradigm based on critical theory. Aspiring to such a genuinely critical project is also the emerging paradigm of CWOP.

The Ideology-Debate. Identified as “external fractures” are impacts of

CMS on emergence of paradigm boundaries in adjacent fields. The focus here is on Critical Work and Organizational Psychology (CWOP). The impact of CMS on CWOP is documented in several contributions. A comprehensive review by Islam and Sanderson (2022) elaborates how mainstream work and organizational psychology is distorted by a matrix of scientism, individualism, managerialism, neoliberalism, and hegemony. CWOP is positioned between this mainstream and CMS, contrasting core themes, disciplinary roots, socio-political context of emergence, dominant conceptions of the person, epistemological or methodological orientations, and relations to practice of these paradigms. Associated criticisms reflect considerations underlying CMS, regarding the need for an alternative paradigm that transcends scientific positivism, rejects the supremacy of performance and profits, and does not naturalize managerial power and exploitative structures (Parker, 2023). From a dialectic and dynamic perspective, emergence of CWOP is tied to exertions of CMS in exposing managerialism, positivism, and politics in EBM. Fractures in psychology, thus, are the “blowback” of EBM’s assault on theoretical and methodological pluralism in management research. Emergence of CWOP is interpreted as the synthesis of the dialectic antagonism between CMS and EBM.

Concluding, four paradigm conflicts involving CMS were discussed. Analyzed dynamics resemble dialectics of “fermenting” and “fragmenting” forces. Fermenting critique, CMS has fortified its boundaries against EBM (delineation) and affected paradigm boundaries in other fields (dissemination). This has coincided with the “overextending” of CMS, losing shared understanding of legitimate cooperation versus conflict with management, pronouncing fragmenting tendencies of paradigm differentiation and disintegration (Hassard et al., 2001). Domestic conflicts within the pluralistic CMS paradigm mirror inter-paradigmatic tensions, resembling self-similar “fractals” on different levels of analysis. Each of the analyzed debates warrants more attention. Emergence of CWOP exhibits the most open and dynamic trajectory (Islam & Sanderson, 2022). Coming decades will show whether this paradigm will become incommensurate with the functionalist mainstream, dissolve and transform the mainstream from within, collapse and be integrated, or fragments into marginalized sub-paradigms, precariously existing at the fringe. Different trajectories are

plausible. Resembling a dialectic dynamic, which scenario will manifest is not predetermined, but subject to emergence.

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Abstracts

Teacher Students' Views on the Anchoring of the Shoah into the Czech Normative Educational Curriculum

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Of the aim of this paper is to present the ways and forms of anchoring the term Shoah in normative educational documents. We present partial results of a research investigation, the purpose of which was to find out the preconceptions of students of teaching in the field of including the phenomenon of the Shoah in the educational process. The quantitative research survey was conducted through a non-standardized questionnaire consisting of twenty-four questions. The first eight were aimed at obtaining information about the respondents (e.g. year and form of study, study program, etc.). Based on the students' responses, it can be concluded that future teachers of Czech Language and Literature would welcome the normative anchoring of the term Shoah in the Framework Educational Program for Primary Education, even though the term is not currently included in this curriculum document.

Keywords: Shoah, Curriculum Documents, Educational Process, Implementation

Teleworking and Retention: Are They False Friends?

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We are studying the effect of telecommuting on retention. The topic is highly relevant given the increasing use of telecommuting as a new work organization mode worldwide and in Canada, particularly since the COVID-19 pandemic. We present a review of the literature on telecommuting and retention and explore the other side of the coin by pointing out the possible perverse effects of telecommuting on retention, especially in the context of the shortage of skilled labor that many Western countries are suffering from. It has been found that teleworking is a highly relevant type of individual arrangement that through the increase of job resources enables a good work-life balance, autonomy, self-efficiency, etc. However, through other mediating factors, this flexible work mode can also lead to the intention to leave. The results of the literature review indicate the risk of negative attitudinal and/or compartmental outputs like the intention to leave may occur either in the case of teleworkers because of other negative factors considered as job demands (workload, hyper-connectivity, lack of organizational support, etc.) or for non-teleworking colleagues because of a feeling of inequity (equity theory) and because of comparison with the benefits acquired by teleworkers (social comparison theory). A theoretical model inspired by several theories is presented at the end of this study.

Keywords: Telework, Retention, Job Demands, Job Resources, Equity

Mediating Effect of Green Competencies towards Green Marketing Advertising and Ecological Behaviour in Malaysia

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As more research has focused on these market niches, green marketing has become a central concept in the marketing literature in recent years. An increasing number of consumers are growing doubtful about the environmental performance and advantages of green products as a result of widespread social concern that businesses are distributing confusing environmental information. To fill the theoretical and practical gap, we therefore include green competences as a mediating variable between ecological behavior and green marketing advertising. We employ a quantitative approach, utilizing PLS-SEM to examine the information collected from 259 participants. Our findings demonstrate that green marketing and advertising have an impact on ecological behavior, with green competences acting as a mediating factor.

Keywords: Green Marketing Advertising, Green Competencies, Ecology Behaviour, Malaysia

Gender Aspects in ICT Managers Education at PUE Czech Republic

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The ongoing digitalisation of the economy places great emphasis on the number and quality of ICT professionals. In addition, it is very important for master's degree programmes that the investment in individuals' education is effective, i.e. that they complete their studies successfully and enter the workforce after the standard period of study. The ICT sector has long suffered from a lack of women and the female factor in project teams. Does the gender factor play a role in these realities? Therefore, for the purposes of this article, we have selected the following three research questions from our long-term research, and formulate answers to them in this article: -RQ1: Is the share of women in master's informatics degree programs growing over time? -RQ2: Do women graduate from master's informatics study programs earlier than men? -RQ3: Is the completion rate of women higher than that of men? The source of the data is time series data on students at the Prague University of Economics and Business (PUEB) for the academic years 13/14 - 22/23. On the basis of the analysis, we can conclude that the proportion of women studying master's degree programmes is increasing over time (from 20% in AY 13/14 to about 40% in AY 22/23), as is the number of successful female graduates. The duration of the Master's degree is approximately 0.65 semester shorter for women than for men, and the completion rate is also higher for women.

Keywords: ICT Managers, ICT Management Studies, Gender Aspect in ICT Education, Completion Rate

The Betrayal of Human Dignity From Government Failure Amid Economic Catastrophic Collapse: The Case of Lebanon

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This year we celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). This document has been a cornerstone to countless countries to develop the legal frameworks and systems needed to secure women's rights, children's rights, the right to asylum, to education, to adequate standard of living, etc. However, human dignity in the small Mediterranean country of Lebanon seem to be betrayed by its government and by the devastating economic crisis. The case of Lebanon involves an intricate crisis of complex layers: vanishing foreign reserves, capital controls, "lollars";, dire public debt, extravagant deficits, resulting in widespread poverty in the land of billionaires. While these layers have trampled many human rights, we will focus on their impact on the economic rights indispensable for human dignity. Furthermore, the purpose of this paper is to stimulate conversations on the protection and promotion of the rights of the Lebanese people. It is our hope that the recommendations outlined here will encourage key players in Lebanon and internationally to implement the needed actions and changes that will secure the rights outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Keywords: Dignity, Lebanon, Collapse, Lollars, Poverty

Influence of Perceived Quality Health Messages, Source Credibility and Demographic Factors on Trust in Government During Health Crisis

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Trust in the government is essential in guiding the public's behaviour in times of health catastrophes like the Covid-19. However, the level of confidence may be lowered if the health messages are obscured, contradictory, lacking in transparency, or emanating from an unreliable source. In accordance with this point of view, it was suggested that this research gather empirical data on the impact of perceived health messages on public trust in the Malaysian government during COVID-19. By using the Elaboration Likelihood Model to examine the persuasion process of online health messages and how source credibility can influence the effect of the messages on public trust, the study is important for filling in theoretical gaps. This study employs quantitative methods, and 384 samples collected via an online survey using Google Forms. Results indicate that Covid-19 messages disseminated by the Malaysian government in online media had been clear, consistent, and transparent. They also had positive perceptions towards the Covid-19 government spokespersons, who were viewed as having integrity, competence, positive images on media, trustworthiness and not driven by money or personal interests in delivering Covid-19 information to the public. In terms of trust in government, most of respondents demonstrated a high level of trust in the Malaysian government to manage and control the Covid-19 outbreak. The results can be used to help the government and public health authorities understand how crucial it is to communicate Covid-19 messages to the public in a clear, consistent, and transparent manner to win their trust and ultimately persuade them to follow the advised preventive measures, such as social seclusion, handwashing, getting vaccinations, etc. The study's findings can also be a helpful guide for explaining why choosing reputable officials as Covid-19 spokespersons is crucial for boosting the persuasiveness of the organization's communications.

Keywords: Health Message, Source Credibility, Trust, Government, COVID-19

Exploring Volunteer Engagement in Rural Communities: Identifying Opportunities and Challenges in Malaysia and Indonesia

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The issue of volunteer participation in rural communities that has potentially becoming tourist spot in Malaysia has been steadily advancing over the years. The Ministry of Tourism and Culture (MOTAC) has established a multitude of volunteer programs with the primary objective of promoting sustainable tourism and preserving the country's natural and cultural heritage. To what extent do volunteers possess awareness and a willingness to engage in volunteer work within rural communities? The objective of the study is to offer valuable perspectives on the determinations of volunteer engagement, the effects of volunteers' initiatives on rural progress, and the distinct obstacles encountered by volunteers and organizations functioning in these settings. The study aims to investigate the motives of volunteers, evaluate the efficacy of current volunteer programs. And analyze the social, economic, and infrastructural determinations that influence volunteer involvement in rural regions, utilizing a qualitative research approach. The project seeks to provide cross-cultural insights and best practices for promoting volunteerism in rural communities by comparing the experiences of volunteers and organizations in Malaysia and Indonesia. The result of this study will provide valuable information for the creation of customized approaches and intervention aimed at maximizing volunteer involvement in rural regions, thereby making a significant contribution to the long-term growth and empowerment of communities. Furthermore, the findings of this research will offer significant contributions in opening new doors to the government and non-governmental organizations in fostering community engagement and societal progress within tourist areas.

Keywords: Volunteer Participation, Sustainable Tourism, Rural Communities, Volunteer Engagement, Community Empowerment

Organisational Creativity: A Study on Moderating Effect of Participative Leadership

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Organisational culture plays an important role in developing employees' creativity. The culture within an organisation differs from one organisation to another. The four main organisational cultures are adhocracy culture, market culture, clan culture and hierarchy culture. These cultures impact employees' creativity differently and exist in public learning institutions. Public learning institutions are too rigid by nature and highly bureaucratic compared to private institutions. Consequently, rigidity and bureaucracy become an obstacle to developing organisational creativity. Nevertheless, the literature argues that leadership plays a vital role in shaping organisational culture and becomes an agent of change to encourage creativity within a public learning institution environment. This study aims to investigate the moderating effect of participative leadership on organisational creativity. The population of this study was the top 20 Thai universities in the innovation ranking by Scimigo Institutions Ranking for 2022. The questionnaires were distributed to 250 staff working in those universities, and 183 questionnaires were returned. The findings showed that participative leadership had a moderating effect on clan culture and market culture. Nevertheless, participative leadership did not have a moderating effect on hierarchical culture. The paper shows that an organizational culture plays an important role for an innovation as well as a leadership especially a participative leadership. A leader should play a role in shaping an organizational culture which can facilitate an innovation within an organization. Therefore, a process of selecting a leader within a public agency is very vital for promoting creativity and innovation.

Keywords: Organisational Culture, Participative Leadership, Organisational Creativity

Analysis of Effects of Macroeconomic Policies on the Economic Recovery of Laos PDR after the Covid-19 Pandemic

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This study investigates the effects of monetary and international economic factors on the economic growth and stability of Laos by using quarterly time series data from Q1 2017 to Q3 2023. An auto regressive distribution lag (ARDL) model was applied to the model estimation. This study also revealed the problem and transmission mechanism of Laos' economic recovery. Based on empirical results, a negative relationship between CPI and GDP can be affirmed. Furthermore, it can be confirmed that money supply, bank interest rates and exchange rates have a positive impact on CPI and GDP. However, the relationship between goods export value and GDP is negative. Moreover, it can be concluded that all independent variables have more varied effects on GDP than on CPI. Thus, the government can adapt the empirical results as tools and guidelines for effective and efficient monetary and international economic policy implementation to enhance economic recovery and accelerate sustainable economic development and growth. Currently, the critical economic problem of Laos that needs to solve is rapidly increasing inflation. Therefore, high inflation rate must be reduced to avoid the long-term risk of hyperinflation.

Keywords: Laos PDR, Monetary Policy, Trade, GDP, Inflation Rate and Exchange Rate

Sonic Influence: Exploring Podcasts as Influential Tools in Branding and Influencing Purchase Intentions for Green Marketing in the Digital Era

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In recent years, Pakistan has seen a rise in green marketing initiatives by well-known brands, accompanied by an increased adoption of eco-friendly products among consumers. Given that the concept of green marketing is relatively novel in Pakistan, a substantial number of consumers remain unfamiliar with it. Nevertheless, companies, ranging from established international brands to emerging startups, are increasingly incorporating green marketing strategies with the aim of contributing to environmental conservation. This raises a crucial question: How influential is the eco-conscious messaging by companies in shaping consumer purchasing decisions? To address this gap, many brands are actively promoting awareness through influencer marketing, recognizing its pivotal role. Contrary to traditional advertising channels such as broadcast, print, and outdoor advertisements, consumers tend to follow influencers for product recommendations. Marketers are drawn to influencer marketing due to budget constraints and its extensive reach. Influencers, with their significant impact and vast followership, offer an effective platform to introduce green products to consumer markets. Beyond grabbing attention, influencers consistently succeed in fostering positive attitudes towards brands. This research aims to investigate the impact of displayed environmental advertisement (displayed/not displayed) on influencer's credibility. The research focuses on the podcast as the subject of investigation. Additionally, the study explores whether green marketing awareness serves as a mediating factor in the relationship between influencer credibility and purchase intention. The questionnaire was meticulously designed, and data were collected from 385 respondents through convenience sampling, targeting participants from various universities who actively listen to podcasts. SmartPLS was employed to test the hypotheses. The research findings underscore the significance of environmental advertising disclosure and influencer credibility in influencer marketing, highlighting that green marketing awareness, fostered through influencers' credibility, significantly influences participants' purchase intentions when displayed advertising disclosure is present.

Keywords: Green Marketing, Influencer Marketing, Podcast

First Steps towards Eco systemic Governance for Health and Recreational Tourism Destinations

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The concept of the business ecosystem emerged at the turn of the century, drawing inspiration from biology to describe the economic community. Since its inception, this concept has found applications across various domains, including technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship, where it significantly contributes to strategic management. However, within the realm of tourism, there remains a notable dearth of literature on this subject. While it is acknowledged that tourism destinations embody many characteristics of a business ecosystem, concrete tools for adopting an ecosystemic approach in tourism management, particularly across different tourism types, are lacking. The current study seeks to address this gap by undertaking a theoretical exploration of health and recreational tourism. It aims to identify socio-economic aspects that could facilitate the adoption of an ecosystemic approach in the governance of tourism destinations, with a specific focus on these types of tourism. As a result of this endeavor, an initial model delineating the ecosystem of a health and recreational tourism destination is proposed. This model lays the groundwork for empirical validation and further refinement through subsequent studies.

Keywords: Tourism Destination Governance, Business Ecosystem, Health Tourism, Recreational Tourism

Supply Chains and Sustainable Production and Consumption. A Systematic Literature Review

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Sustainability is currently playing a key role, driven by growing concern about the future of the global environment. Organizations are required to comply with a set of demands and obligations in terms of sustainability, which implies restructuring and updating the operating model they use to adapt and adapt to the current reality, with the main objective of responding to the concerns of stakeholders and end consumers. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a key element in this process. Among them, the 12th SDG addresses the "sustainable consumption and production" issue and is the focus of this research. Supply chains are a fundamental part of the processes of production and distribution of goods, enabling their final consumption. It is also through supply chains that organizations seek to address their sustainability shortcomings, seeking to implement more sustainable practices, bringing benefits both to the organization and to all those involved in the process. This study presents the results of a systematic analysis of published literature linking the 12th SDG goal and "Supply Chain" to understand the relationship between the two topics, through a characterization of the sample and lexical analysis of the content. Since 2018, there has been an increase in published works, with evidence of these studies on all continents except Oceania. The lexical analysis concluded that there is a link between the most frequently used terms and the economic, social, and environmental vision underlying the concept of sustainability. It was also concluded that all the goals of the 12th SDG are reflected in the published literature, with a greater emphasis on food waste and environmental management. The study also highlighted the existence of gaps in the articles published, as there are still no studies on the circularity of goods.

Keywords: Sustainability, Supply Chains, SDG 12, Sustainable Production and Consumption, Systematic Literature Review

People Analytics: A Comparison Between Random Samples Without Replacement and Cluster Samples in Organizational Climate Research

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This study examines the efficacy of two sampling techniques - Simple Random Sampling Without Replacement (SRSWOR) and Cluster Sampling - applied to Organizational Climate Research, using a dataset of 2,975 individuals from a Brazilian financial institution linked to the technology department. The study follows the CRISP-DM model, covering from business understanding to the evaluation of sampling techniques. The results reveal that SRSWOR offers greater efficiency and precision in representing the population of interest, outperforming Cluster Sampling. The study found that Simple Random Sampling Without Replacement (SRSWOR) performed better across all measured metrics, from statistical descriptions such as mean, median, standard deviation, variance, and quartiles, to Student's t-tests and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests. However, we cannot dismiss the application of Cluster Sampling in scenarios relatively close to the one analyzed, such as in the pursuit of understanding organizational climate variables of specific groups, identifying aspects that require attention, and creating a capacity for effective and targeted intervention. Another point is that grouping the population into clusters can significantly simplify the logistics of data collection, reducing costs and efforts required to achieve a representative sample. This work highlights the importance of the proper choice of sampling technique in People Analytics and talent management, offering valuable insights for data-driven decision-making in an organizational context.

Keywords: People Analytics, Organizational Climate Research, Simple Random Sampling Without Replacement, Human Resource Management

Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic and the Russian-Ukraine War on the European Union's Wheat Supply

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The recent global COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine have strongly impacted global food supply chains in practically all parts of the world. One of the most recognisable and important foods for humanity, wheat, which is also part of the aforementioned supply chains, has been highlighted as crucial for maintaining stability and sustainability in the global food market during both periods. Because the European Union and its member states are directly connected to both the pandemic and the war, this paper investigates how both crises have affected the EU's wheat supply. Based on secondary data from existing research and statistical data from official European and international statistical databases, price and quantity were identified as important indicators of the impact on the EU's wheat supply. It was found that the COVID-19 pandemic influenced a reduction in wheat stocks, consumption, availability, and production in the EU, while the global wheat market prices remained practically identical or in a trend during this period. The later war did not significantly affect the quantities of wheat in the EU, but it primarily impacted wheat export quantities. However, the war drastically affected global wheat prices, especially in the initial months. Both periods thus had a significantly negative impact on the EU's wheat supply, with the impact of the war being more pronounced. Further, more in-depth research would be needed to establish more detailed cause-and-effect relationships between the pandemic, the war, and the EU's wheat supply.

Keywords: Covid-19, Russian-Ukraine War, Food Supply Chain, European Union, Impact Analysis

How Can Digital Presence Improve the Reputation of a Territorial Brand? Case of Casablanca's Brand "Wecasablanca"

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The purpose of this research is to question the relevance of the implementation of a digital marketing approach within the framework of a territorial brand and to assess its capacity to support the brand in order to honor the promises; those whose objective is to raise the profile of the territory at national and international level towards the targets of territorial attractiveness. The city of Casablanca in Morocco selected for research for three main reasons: the first is that we are close to the problem since we collaborate in scientific research with the local development company "Casablanca Events & animation" pilot of the territorial brand "WeCasablanca", the second is that "Wecasablanca" represents the first African territorial brand and the third is that the brand has gained notoriety and reputation thanks to its digital presence. We have chosen a multi-target device incorporating the three territorial marketing targets (inhabitants, tourists and investors) and a methodological mix combining two approaches conducted simultaneously; a qualitative approach for an in-depth investigation, and a quantitative approach for a measured diagnosis. The main results show that the "Wecasablanca" brand is a brand that has evolved in terms of reputation and brand image thanks to the implementation of a digital marketing strategy and that there are also great positive and unifying perspectives of stakeholders via digital but that should continue to be built.

Keywords: Territorial Marketing, Digital Strategies, Territorial Brand

Supporting Cooperation Between Supply Chain Members through a Combination of Soft and Hard Coordination Tools

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One of the most important tasks of supply chain management is to ensure that members cooperate properly. It is necessary to integrate value-adding processes, as this is the only way to maintain a high level of customer service. This is the way to create the value that the final customer will pay for and have his needs fully met. However, the question arises: do all companies really want to cooperate with each other at a high level? Alternatively, the question can be looked at from another angle: do all the links in the chain need to cooperate at a high level? The aim of this study is to examine to what extent corporate attitudes influence the form and extent of cooperation. To this end, the paper examines the use of contracting, one of the most popular instruments in the supply chain management literature. Using a case study, the result of the study is a composition matrix that shows the relationship between the preferred form of collaboration of companies and the contracts that best support this. To do this, it is first necessary to identify the possible forms of cooperation and their characteristics, after which the contracts and their conditions and characteristics of application must be understood. By putting the two pieces of information together, a matrix can be created, which can be used to recommend the most appropriate contract for the relationship that best matches the company's attitudes, with the aim of improving cooperation and coordination between the members.

Keywords: Supply Chain Management, Supply Chain Coordination, Contracts

Sustainability Concepts Polysemy. Text Mining Approach on Sustainability Reports

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Achieving sustainability has become in the last decade a fundamental global orientation of both public policy, enforcement mechanisms, and corporate transnational firms' approaches of business models transition. The literature has underlined the premises that could ensure an effective transformation of the public and private governance practice to support corporate sustainability performance. The aim of this paper is to provide insights on how the main concepts defining corporate sustainable business models are used in the sustainability reports published by firms included on the GRI Sustainability Disclosure Database. Text mining analysis is performed on sustainability reports for 21 firms that operate in different areas of supply chain management activities. The research design has at its core the main concepts that are derived from the main review articles addressing the problem of sustainability following a conceptual framework approach. As an output, the paper is aimed to generate a bag-of-words. Additionally, we run a mapping analysis to connect main sustainability reporting keywords with different SDGs addressed. Reliability and research validity is emphasized along the paper to ensure results value relevance for further research in sustainability reporting that can generate financial net benefits along the entire supply chains.

Keywords: Sustainability, GRI, Corporate Reporting, N-Grams, Sentiment Analysis

Measuring Corporate Social Responsibility – Choosing the Right Measurement Approach

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Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a business approach and also a tool that integrates economics, social, and environmental concerns into operations and satisfies its stakeholders. The notion of CSR is not only concerned with society but also with creating long-term value for the community at large. Similarly, UN Sustainability Goals provide a baseline for selecting and adopting precise CSR activities and actions. It is also essential to assess the effectiveness of CSR activities to measure business performance in the CSR sphere. Measuring CSR actions provides detailed information about a particular business's CSR themes, integration of CSR activities in business operations, fulfillment of legal requirements if any, and continuous engagement of stakeholders. There are different approaches to measuring CSR actions of business but those are general and do not apply to all economies. Thus, a country-specific measurement approach is required which accurately measure the CSR performance of firms. The most common approaches to measure CSR are content analysis, reputational indices, questionnaire-based surveys, and one-dimensional measures. This study aims to discuss the CSR measurement approaches and suggest a specific approach to measure the CSR activities of listed companies at the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX). Oman is a progressing country and has made significant development in various aspects of its development over the past decades. This study provides valuable insight to researchers, regulators, policymakers, and society as a whole on CSR measurement approaches that fit Oman's economy.

Keywords: CSR Measurement, Content Analysis, Reputational Indices, Questionnaire-Based Surveys, One-Dimensional

Understanding Public Engagement on Government Social Media: A Structural Equation Modeling Approach

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The study investigates the determinants of public engagement on government social media platforms in Malaysia, employing structural equation modeling (SEM) to analyze the relationships between key variables. The research examines the influence of performance expectancy, effort expectancy, perceived content, social influence, facilitating conditions on public engagement, while also exploring the mediating effects of gratification. The relationship model demonstrates strong fit, supported by the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) values nearing 1, indicating a high degree of model fit. This suggests that the model accurately captures the relationships between observed variables and their underlying constructs. Additionally, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) values fall below the recommended thresholds of 0.08, further affirming the model's adequacy in representing the complexity of the relationships among the variables. While the structural model exhibits slightly lower CFI and TLI values compared to the measurement model, indicating potential room for improvement, the RMSEA and SRMR values remain within an acceptable range. This suggests that while there may be areas for refinement, the structural model adequately represents the relationships between the variables. The results provide valuable insights for policymakers and government agencies seeking to optimize their social media communication strategies and foster greater citizen participation.

Keywords: Public Engagement, Government Social Media, Structural Equation Modeling, Mediating Effects

Evaluation of Participation in Public Innovation Support Programs in Colombia

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Innovation plays an essential role in economic and social development, enabling companies to enhance their competitiveness and adapt to technological changes. However, developing countries face challenges in fostering entrepreneurial innovation, such as a lack of financing, qualified human resources, and a culture oriented toward innovation. Overcoming these obstacles has motivated policies aimed at promoting innovation, including financial incentives and public-private collaboration. Although Colombia has invested in public innovation support programs, the evaluation of their effectiveness is limited. The literature highlights that these programs can increase business productivity but face barriers such as lack of awareness about the programs and capacity to manage the development and presentation of an R&D project. In the Colombian context, notable programs include the National System of Science, Technology, and Innovation, the Science, Technology, and Innovation Fund of the General Royalties System, the Productive Transformation Program, and the Partnership for Innovation Program. These programs provide funding and support for R&D projects, in addition to tax incentives. Despite the existence of previous studies on business participation in innovation programs, more specific research is needed to address the challenges faced by Colombian companies. This paper analyzes, for the Colombian case, the participation of companies in public innovation support programs, with the aim of contributing to the understanding of the factors determining awareness and participation in these programs, and thus improving the design of effective strategies to drive innovation and economic growth in the country.

Keywords: R&D Subsidies, Public Policy Evaluation, Innovation Policy, Additionality, Developing Countries

Financial Reporting Quality, CEO Age, and Investment Efficiency: Evidence from the U.S. Market

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Financial Reporting Quality (FRQ) is crucial for the accurate representation of a company's financial performance and position. Corporate documentation, such as annual reports, is used by managers to enhance their investment decisions. Better reporting could improve the investment decisions of managers, thus improving the Investment Efficiency (IE) of the company, avoiding both overinvestment and underinvestment. This study examines the impact of financial reporting quality on the firms' investment efficiency using accounting and stock data for U.S. listed firms from 2010 to 2022. The data were acquired through CRSP, Compustat and BoardEx databases. Our final sample consists of 10,350 firms yielding 70,939 firm-to-year observations. We adopted the Chen et al. (2011) approach defining FRQ and Biddle et al. (2009) for IE. Our results show that financial reporting quality is positively related to investment efficiency and that this positive effect is more pronounced in firms with aged CEOs. The paper conducts robustness checks on these results by utilizing alternative empirical models. The results lend support to the theory by Biddle et al. (2009), suggesting that firms with high reporting quality are less likely to overinvest or underinvest. Moreover, this study extends the research by demonstrating that CEO age has an enhancing effect on the impact of financial reporting quality (FRQ) on investment efficiency (IE).

Keywords: Financial Reporting Quality, Information Asymmetry, Investment Efficiency, CEO Age

Harnessing Coaching Skills for Children's Mental Health and Well-Being

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The power of the environment in shaping children's productivity is truly remarkable. Many children nowadays are absorbed in trivial activities and artificial entertainments, often overlooking the real-life world surrounding them. As Tolstoy famously wrote, "Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself." Coaching, as a skill, has gained significant traction globally. Through mastering this skill, individuals can courageously embark on their personal transformation and navigate the "inner game" within their minds. This research draws from Slovenian and foreign literature, alongside empirical research utilizing statistical methods. It adopts a retrospective approach, examining past influences through a combination of qualitative content analysis and quantitative data evaluation, including surveys and interviews with children, parents, and teachers. The current topic aims to illuminate the positive significance and impact of coaching skills on children. Moreover, it intends to introduce a new skill set to educational institutions, thereby integrating coaching skills into the teaching process.

Keywords: Environment, Productivity, Coaching, Personal Transformation, Retrospective Analysis

The Relationship Between Gender and Motivational Factors in the Job of Track and Field Managers in 2022

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Track and field managers are an important presence in the care of athletes, organising meetings and mediating communication between World Athletics and athletes. Their importance gained in particular, especially after it was approved through World Athletics that every athlete in the TOP 30 should have an authorised manager to represent them, and also after the introduction of limits for top events through strict entry standards or ranking. Despite the favorable development of the job of track and field manager, there is a strong competitive environment and lower incomes comparing to other sports. Currently, the profession of track and field manager is more or less a male issue, so we decided to gather information regarding the motivational factors of both female and male track and field managers. Therefore, we decided to examine the relationship between gender and motivational factors in the work of track and field managers in 2022. In our study, we focused on authorised track and field manager. We obtained data from 38 authorized track and field managers from all over the world through an online questionnaire. Using The Chi-Square Contingency Table Analysis, we searched for the relationship between managerial motivation and gender, which wasn't confirmed ($\chi^2 = 0.614$; $p = 0.736$). We also evaluated the data using the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire, which revealed the job satisfaction of our research sample and then we compared the job satisfaction of male (79.77) and female (82.00) track and field managers. Findings will be useful for our further research, in which we would focus on the job satisfaction of all authorised track and field managers and in particular we would like to carry out the research in the long term. Results could help World Athletics to understand the functioning of track and field managers and to interpret to them the job satisfaction results of the track and field managers in question.

Keywords: Motivational Factors, Track and Field Manager, Job Satisfaction

Influencer Marketing Trends and Future Research Directions: A Bibliographic Mapping Analysis

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Influencer marketing (IM) has emerged as a powerful strategy, proving indispensable for practitioners aiming to elevate their brand image and connect with diverse consumer bases. Despite its potential, the adoption of IM has primarily been experimental, and a comprehensive understanding of strategic influencer utilization is needed. Recently, there has been a surge in academic exploration of IM, providing valuable insights into its impact on consumer behavior. This study utilizes bibliometric analysis and science mapping via Cite Space software to examine 2,440 scholarly outputs on IM from the SCOPUS database in the business and management domain up to April 2024 (screened using SPAR 4 SLR). The review delineates the evolution of IM concepts and identifies five key clusters: consumer influence, practitioner perspectives, endorsements, transparency, and disclosure. The article concludes by offering recommendations for future research and guidance for industry professionals regarding influencer endorsement strategies.

Keywords: Influencer Marketing, Social Media Influencers, Social Media, Bibliometric Analysis, Science Mapping

Governance of Electronic Health Records based on archival techniques and Blockchain and Smart Contracts technologies

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This research addresses the importance of the Electronic Health Record (EHR) for Health 4.0, by advances provided by robotics, artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, among other technologies, which together will work towards increasingly interconnected, efficient, and secure patient services. Recognizing EHR as a digital archival document, the study is based on the premise that the application of archival methods, Blockchain, and Smart Contracts can contribute to improving the management of these records. This research employs systematic literature review (SLR) methods, explores archival concepts, and analyzes the characteristics of Blockchain and Smart Contracts. As a result, a method called 'EHR Lifecycle' was proposed, consisting of a macroprocess and subprocesses containing activities related to technical archival management with the use of Blockchain and Smart Contracts technologies for EHR management, as well as the implementation and monitoring of maturity levels in EHR governance. The applied and exploratory approach reveals the need for greater involvement of Archival Science professionals in studies related to records management, using these technologies in the EHRs context, aiming to contribute to the advancement of this thematic field and with the emergence of 'patient 4.0', who will be the greatest beneficiary of this technological evolution, without compromising the governance and security of their personal data.

Keywords: Archivistic, Blockchain, Electronic Health Record, Health 4.0, Smart Contracts

Artificial Intelligence and Aesthetic

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Placing AI in the scenario of organizations, it can act as a catalyst for the beauty and attractiveness of organizations, when its application is oriented in that direction. So, beyond the technological and economic benefits that AI can bring, as a consequence of its application, it can also bring intangible aesthetic benefits such as reduced stress at work. Aesthetics, Ethics, and Logic are linked, and coherence between them is to be expected in an organization. The research carried out begins with an inquiry into what AI methods and tools the respondents know and which, if any, they apply. Then it explores three research questions: 1) Which strategies (Aesthetics) are identified as those that most enhance the use of AI in organizations? 2) Which benefits or achievements (Ethics) are obtained as a result of its use? 3) What are the main purposes (Logic) that justify implementing AI methods and tools? A questionnaire was applied to a sample of professionals. It has a total of 39 variables or propositions that the respondents had to evaluate on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 the least valued and 10 the most valued). The answers are grouped, and the results are analyzed, using segmentation technique and correlation analysis to corroborate relationships between quantitative random variables. The results obtained show that there is little knowledge of the AI methods and tools currently being developed. Likewise, the recognized use of these tools is limited. The correlation analysis revealed a close association between the variables referring to Aesthetics and Ethics. AI is perceived as a valuable technology for increasing productivity and reducing operational costs. It is not appreciated, for example, that increasing the automation of processes brings a benefit in reducing stress at work or as a catalyst for the beauty and attractiveness of organizations.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Aesthetic, Ethics, Attractiveness, Organizational Analysis

Navigating the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Case Study of Challenges and Opportunities for the Automotive Industry

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The car manufacturing industry was one of the most affected industries during Covid-19 pandemic. This paper will begin by presenting the overall impact that the Covid-19 pandemic has had on the global economy and will then focus on the case study exploring both the obstacles faced by the automotive sector and the potential benefits post-Covid-19. Specific challenges faced by the automotive industry were, production shutdowns caused by government measures, and supply chain disruptions. We will explore how the automotive industry is overcoming these obstacles and can capitalize on new demands and trends to build a more resilient future. Examining the strategies companies have adopted during the Covid-19 era, the case study provides valuable insights for automakers looking to not only weather the storm, but also become stronger and more adaptable in the turbulent waters of the global economy. The end of the paper criticizes some measures that governments have taken to minimize the impact of the pandemic, demonstrating that locking people in their homes has caused far greater social, economic and resilience crises than it should have solved.

Keywords: Covid-19, Automotive Industry, Supply Chain Networks, Production Workforce, Consumer Behavior

Does CEO characteristics affect the sustainability performance: Evidence from the European Countries

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The purpose of this study is to empirically examine the effect of the chief executive officer (CEO) characteristics such as (age, gender, education) on sustainability performance of the European listed firms index (STOXX Europe 600). This paper aims to bridge the gap using the data set of 600 firm year observations comprising of firms listed at the European stock exchange. Data were obtained from BoardEx, Thomson Reuters, annual reports, and sustainability reports. The analysis has been done using ordinary least squares regression (OLS), random effect and fixed effect. The results of the study show that there is a significant association of the age of the CEO on the level of sustainability performance. Additionally, it is found that there is an association of the educational level of the CEO on the level of sustainability performance. Moreover, firms led by female CEOs demonstrate superior carbon performance in comparison to those led by male CEOs.

Keywords: CEO Characteristics, Carbon Performance, Europe, Sustainability Performance

Effects of Communication Climate on Conflict Management Strategies of the Readymade Garment Industry in Bangladesh

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Readymade garment (RMG) is the lifeline of the economies of several Asian countries. Bangladesh's RMG accounts for over 84% of the total export earnings. Even though the industry generates most of the nation's export revenue, it frequently faces instability and serious worker unrest due to poor communication. In all industrial businesses, conflict is inevitable and disrupts the company's functioning. Conflict arises among employees in the industry as a result of an inadequate communication environment. One of the most critical aspects of organizational effectiveness is effective communication. The communication climate (CC) is suggested in this study as a remedy for industrial conflict. The contingency and pluralist theories are applied in this study to suggest that CC provides resources, including knowledge, constructive criticism, and chances for RMG development. Data for this quantitative study were gathered using structured questionnaire surveys and a random sample approach. Information was acquired from Bangladesh's top 10 factories. A total of 150 workers took part in the survey. PLS-SEM and SPSS were utilized for the data analysis. The results show that low performance and conflict at work are caused by inadequate communication in the RMG workplace. The study's conclusions also assessed how the industry's workforce perceived the benefits of CC for resolving conflicts.

Keywords: Communication Climate, Conflict Management Strategies, Manufacturing Industries

A Tool for Privacy Culture Assessment

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The concept of privacy points to several elements, such as the search for equality, freedom of choice and the desire not to be discriminated against. Privacy is linked to personality and its development, thus forming a complex web of relationships that is under constant study by law. This research aims to propose an Organizational Culture assessment tool so that institutions can diagnose and develop the privacy culture. For the established objective to be achieved, this research included both a survey and an assessment, along with 100 market professionals, of the requirements considered necessary for developing a privacy culture; in addition, an Organizational Culture assessment was carried out in 06 organizations utilizing the suggested tool, the OCAI questionnaire. The assessment allows for knowledge about the organization's cultural levels, including the current perception of the dominant culture and the future status to be achieved. The results indicate the possibility of using the OCAI to assess the culture of privacy and provide 13 requirements that help in the development of this culture in organizations. As future work, the authors recommend the OCAI form's application within organizations through a case study, with wide dissemination to employees or servers. Furthermore, it is important to carry out an evaluation of the effectiveness of this research's identified requirements, to verify whether they contribute to the desired state's achievement according to the intended types of culture.

Keywords: Organizational Culture, Data Privacy, Privacy Culture

Factors Threatening Generational Change in Wood-Working and Furniture Family Businesses in Slovakia

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Over time, family businesses have become a fundamental part of the economy of most countries. Generational change or succession is a critical point in the life cycle of every family business from the point of view of the sustainability of the company. It is therefore necessary for family businesses to be sufficiently prepared for this change and not to underestimate it. The main purpose of the research is to identify significant factors threatening the generation change in wood-working and furniture family businesses in Slovakia which are crucial for their sustainability. To obtain relevant results, the study surveyed 443 family enterprises operating in wood-working and furniture industry. To meet the stated goal, the methodological tool of the research was a questionnaire survey. The established hypotheses were tested using the following statistical methods: Binomial test, Interval estimation of relative abundance, Friedman test, Wilcoxon test. From the achieved results obtained through the evaluation of the questionnaire survey, it was found that the key factors that threatened the implementation of succession in wood-working and furniture enterprises in Slovakia are the failure to solve the process of succession, lack of experience with succession, the absence of a succession plan, the age of the founder of the company, lack of qualified workforce and the fact that family members are not interested in business. Based on the results of the research, recommendations were formulated for theory, science and practice which have potential to improve the quality of succession and thus also the sustainability of these enterprises of the enterprise.

Keywords: Family Business, Family Enterprises, Generational Change, Succession, Sustainability. Furniture Industry, Wood-Working Industry

Employee Happiness and Green Practices: A Case Study of Internal Corporate Social Responsibility

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The concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) has arisen as a result of the increase in pollution and excessive exploitation of the Earth's resources, as well as the human resources caused by the activities of companies that seek to make profits at any cost. As resources have become increasingly limited and human performance has decreased due to burnout, and also because current generations move from one job to another if they consider that the organizational environment does not provide them a certain degree of comfort, companies have had to adapt certain policies to support both the environment and employees. Thus, the role of the current research is to identify those components of internal CSR that impact employee happiness, as well as green practices. In this sense, by applying a questionnaire addressed to a number of 123 respondents whose answers were imported into Smart PLS, it was wanted to validate the hypotheses according to which the variables work-life balance and equal opportunities, adaptability to change and occupational health and safety have a role in defining employee happiness, as well as green practices within companies.

Keywords: Well-Being, Green Economy, CSR, Smart PLS 4

Information Science Applied to Corporate Governance: A Methodological Possibility to Reduce Uncertainties

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Industry 5.0, understood as a continuous improvement effort that organizations are required to undertake to evolve their methods, processes, products, and services that are increasingly relevant to society, can be understood as a challenge for survival and perpetuity in meeting consumers' concerns. In capitalist relations, information is an invaluable input for decision-making, as it reduces the level of uncertainty. Understanding the properties of information and the flow of information, based on information science, can enhance the use of constructs that make it possible to structure information to add value to decision-making. The aim of this article is to demonstrate a methodological path that consolidates the structure and change of the business process, based on the properties and flow of information, to encourage the consolidation of governance in the organization. The methodology proposes capturing the ownership of information and the information flow of sectors of the organization, to structure and adapt the process to improve the information status of the decision maker. The result of this research is increased certainty for decision-makers. The continuity of the research and the use of other information modeling techniques is revealed in the final considerations as necessary to broaden the spectrum of results and to aim for the perpetuity of organizations, in a scenario of great volatility.

Keywords: Decision-Making, Information Flow, Information Science

Paradigm Conflicts in Management and Organization Studies

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Drawing on philosophy of science, the purpose of this conceptual contribution is to introduce and elaborate a meta-theoretical model that is instrumental for structuring, integrating, and explaining current academic disputes arising from epistemological heterogeneity and ideological incommensurability in the pluralist field of management and organization studies. Demonstrating the underlying fundamental controversies, basic ontological (theories), epistemological (methods), and axiological (goals) assumptions of mainstream (normative) functionalist, interpretive (hermeneutic), critical (radical structuralist, radical humanist), and postmodern (post-structural, deconstructionist) approaches are contrasted first. Presented subsequently is an integrative literature review and application of the meta-theory of scientific paradigms in organizational research. The developed model of paradigm conflict compiles and contextualizes conceptual and empirical contributions, establishing connections with prior controversies to deconstruct and reappraise current discourses in the broader field. Focusing on the emancipatory paradigm of critical management studies, four fundamental and foundational inter- and intra-paradigmatic conflicts are analyzed: a) the evidence-debate between critical scholars and the positivist, functionalist movement of evidence-based management; b) the performativity-debate problematizing internal opposition to versus collaboration with management; c) the managerialism-debate, exposing rifts between radical critical structuralists in the labor process tradition and postmodernists; and d) the ideology-debate, representing spill-over effects on adjacent fields, exemplified by an emerging critical paradigm in work and organizational psychology. Socio-historical backgrounds and connections of associated discourses are outlined, key publications for each are identified, and core controversies summarized with reference to underlying paradigmatic differences. Dialectic tensions and dynamics are analyzed as fermenting and fragmenting forces, driving paradigm delineation, differentiation, disintegration, and dissemination. Future trajectories of each of the four paradigm conflicts and implications for the field as a whole are speculated about. Finally, it is discussed, how the presented meta-theoretical model can facilitate critical and reflexive scholarly practice, politically informed navigation, and more conscious self-positioning of researchers within management and organization studies as a diverse and ideologically contested terrain of social science.

Keywords: Meta-Theory of Research Paradigms, Paradigm Conflicts, Critical Management Studies, Epistemology as Ideology, Dialectic Analysis

On Sentiment Shocks

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This paper decomposes investor sentiment to sentiment determined by fundamental information and to sentiment determined by noisy elements, to examine how both elements of investor sentiment react to extreme information arrival. The results seem to indicate that the element of investor sentiment that is determined by non-fundamental information is by far more prone to extreme reactions and that this reaction is more pronounced for positive shocks. In addition, the extreme information that results in a fundamentals-driven sentiment shock seems to be absorbed within the day of occurring, while the information that results to a non-fundamental sentiment shock has a significant and persistent effect on subsequent non-fundamental sentiment changes.

Keywords: Sentiment, Fundamental Information, Shocks, VIX

Corpus Analysis Global Leaders' Speech

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The importance of communication strategies for global CEOs has been increasingly recognized. It is believed that their effective messaging to stakeholders and society not only inspires employees but also impacts stock prices and business performance. However, previous research has primarily focused on qualitative studies, such as case studies and interviews. There have been few studies that collected large amounts of speech data from business leaders and analyzed it using reliable methods. This study employs corpus data analysis to examine the issues by analyzing a large amount of linguistic data from speeches and discussions of global CEOs. Speech data from 110 business leaders who made speeches at the Oxford Union, the world's largest debate organization, and TED Talks were collected, creating a corpus of approximately 300,000 words. Using the concordance software AntConc, a keyword analysis was conducted against representative large-scale English corpora to extract characteristic words frequently used by the global business leaders ($p < 0.01$). Similarly, a cluster analysis was performed on these characteristic words to investigate specifically how the communication strategies are constructed, how the audience is guided, and how persuasion is achieved. The results indicate that global CEOs effectively use significant communication strategies to achieve their goals.

Keywords: Global Business Leaders, Speech Data, Corpus Data Analysis, Communication Strategies

The Role of Safety Communication in Preventing Accidents at Work

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Safety communication is undoubtedly a factor that helps inform about hazards and safety measures that can be used to avoid accidents at work. The selection of communication channels and their effective use may be a key element in ensuring high safety level, which is the goal of almost every enterprise. This is especially important in the case of preventing accidents at work, the effects of which may have a multidimensional impact on the functioning of the enterprise. As part of the research undertaken, cases of safety communication in Polish enterprises were analyzed. Then, the effectiveness of the use of individual communication channels was analyzed and supplemented this analysis with an indication of barriers to communicating safety-related elements. In the part related to proposing actions that can increase the effectiveness of information in the field of safety, recommendations for the implementation of individual communication channels are presented (based on research results but also on scientific literature in this area). The undertaken research may be the beginning of an in-depth analysis related to communicating security-related topics in Polish enterprises (a research gap in this area can be noticed). The research conclusions can be used to develop a model for selecting security communication channels.

Keywords: Occupational Health and Safety, Safety Communication, Safety Culture

Comparative Analysis of Multinational Enterprises and Domestic Companies: A Propensity Score Matching Methodology Approach

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The study aims to utilize Propensity Score Matching (PSM) methodology to conduct a comprehensive comparative analysis of competitiveness and performance differences between multinational enterprises (MNEs) and publicly listed independent domestic companies (DCs). Utilizing panel data spanning from 2010 to 2022 and encompassing companies worldwide sourced from the Orbis database, this research endeavors to offer insights into the economic performance of MNEs and DCs and consolidate results on a global scale. By creating comparable treatment and control groups of MNEs and DCs based on observable characteristics, and controlling for potential confounding variables such as company size, industry sector, number of employees, international tax competitiveness index, countries' economy classification, and geographical location, this approach facilitates a robust examination of the differential key performance indicators between the two groups. These indicators include financial metrics, market share dynamics, operational efficiency, and their impact on economic growth. The findings outline the distinct characteristics and performance outcomes of MNEs compared to DCs, revealing that MNEs often outperform their local counterparts, particularly in industries characterized by global competition and advanced technology. However, significant performance disparities exist across countries, influenced by factors such as regulatory environments, market conditions, economic policies, and their dynamics vary over time.

Keywords: Propensity Score Matching, Multinational Enterprises, Domestic Companies, Economic Performance, Competitiveness

Using Different Models to Calculate the Cost of Capital When Valuing a Small and Medium-sized Company: A Case Study

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The main objective of this study is to evaluate a small sized Portuguese private company, focusing on the calculation of the cost of capital, considering the specificities of such companies. The valuation of the company has been made based on the discounted cash flow (DCF) method. Within the DCF, a preference was given to the average cost method. Two different approaches were used to forecast free cash flows: (1) the geometric growth rate of the company's sales and (2) the projected free cash flows were obtained using a regression model based on the company's historical earnings. The forecast model use financial data from Portuguese private companies, for the period between 2017-2022. Three different models were used to calculate the cost of equity: (1) the CAPM with the modifications proposed by Damodaran; (2) the model proposed by AECA and, (3) according to Ballwieser and Wieser (2010), the Build-Up model proposed by Ibbotson. These models are alternatives to the traditional CAPM, which is less suitable for non-listed companies due to the absence of a market beta. We compared the results obtained by each model, in particular their impact on the final valuation of the company.

Keywords: Valuation, Discounted Cash Flow, Cost of Equity, Private Company, Small and Medium-Size Firm

Virtual Work Maturity and Management Patterns in Organizations: Pre, During, and Post COVID-19 Pandemic

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Virtual work as a management practice gained popularity in organizations already before the global COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Global pandemic forced even the organizations that were previously wary to implement virtual work practices as the only or the most reasonable modus operandi. Post Covid-19, since 2022 organizations are again free to choose their operating modalities – virtual or face to face, as we were all used to. Current article aims to assess and explore changes in management patterns pre, during and post COVID-19 using different models of virtual work maturity in organizations (e.g. Benitez, 2023; Carbonara et al. 2023; Ameen et al. 2023). Empirical data was collected from 2017 to 2023 and is based on 338 Estonian organizations that applied during those seven years for quality assessment of their virtual work practices organized by national virtual work agency. Pre COVID-19 period was considered to be 2017-2019, COVID-19 period 2020-2021 and post COVID-19 2022-2023. Preliminary results indicate that there have been more significant changes in some of the virtual work maturity and management categories (e.g. Task-Tech Fit, Digital Strategy, Task-Tech Characteristics) and less in others (e.g. Organizational Culture, Managerial and HRM practices, Mindset and Skills).

Keywords: Virtual Work, Virtual Work Maturity, Management, HRM

Company Valuation and Brands: Application to Football Clubs

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The football industry has undergone significant changes and there has been a great growth worldwide in recent years, which is the reason for the proliferation of studies based on the analysis of this market. Thus, the main objective of the study is the valuation of Sporting Clube de Portugal SAD, positioned in the sports club sector. To this end, and to provide a solid basis for investment decisions, the aim is to understand the real value of the club, using company valuation and brand valuation models. The first part introduces the subject of company valuation, using the commonly accepted discounted cash flow model. The average cost method was chosen. To complement this analysis, we then used Markham's multivariate model, recognised as the most appropriate model for valuing football clubs. Regarding brand valuation, the income model was used, specifically the Royalty Relief method, since the club pays royalties for the use of the brand. Subsequently, to obtain more validation in the analysis, the market model was used, with the chosen multiple being the Price of Sales ratio. The whole process is concluded with a buy/sell recommendation, supported by an analysis of the results obtained in both club valuation and brand valuation.

Keywords: Business Valuation, Brand Valuation, Football, Sporting SAD

Strategize to Excel: Mastering Agile Strategies by Design Thinking

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The combination of strategic agility and approaches like design thinking is a beneficial framework for organizations to change and maintain competitiveness over time. This framework is essential for businesses that are confronted with the difficulties of attaining feasible goals in contemporary fast-paced industries, marked by unpredictability and restricted time for response. With its human-centered, iterative approach, design thinking emerges as a crucial methodology for addressing "wicked problems"—complex, multifaceted issues that traditional methods struggle to resolve. The presentation aims to show how design thinking contributes to defining and sustaining a more agile strategic development process. The underlying study follows a grounded theory approach using data from various sources such as in-depth interviews, business literature, applied strategy frameworks, and research literature. Five pivotal shifts have been identified: the importance of future-oriented strategy, human-centered value creation, iterative and agile mechanisms, business development as a company-wide function, and the evolving role of boards of directors. The findings underscore the transformative potential of design thinking practices in enhancing agile strategic management, offering a framework for integrating design thinking into the strategic lexicon. The study concludes that organizations can achieve sustained competitiveness and adaptability by embedding design thinking practices within their strategic management processes, thus paving the way for future research and real-world applications in strategic agility.

Keywords: Design Thinking, Strategic Management, Strategic Agility, Strategy-As-Practice, Grounded Theory

The Contribution of Europol, Frontex, Eppo and Eurojust in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice

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The object and aim of the presentation is the critical presentation of the EU legal texts and especially of the main European Organizations that are activated in the area of Peace, Security and Justice (PSJ) [Schengen Area] and specifically in dealing with organized crime and terrorism in the EU (Europol, Eurojust, Frontex as well as the recent institution of the European Public Prosecutor Office-EPPO) and in particular the powers and duties assigned to them and the efficiency related to their action in the area in question. Institutional research has been carried out in the following areas: •Area of freedom, security and justice: general aspects. •Asylum policy. •Immigration policy. •Management of external borders. •Judicial cooperation in criminal cases. •Police cooperation. at EU level by evaluating EU legal texts, scientific articles and literature and drawing on data from the EU specific Agencies. International police cooperation is the most basic institution for dealing with crime on a global level. The international development of organized crime has led to new forms of cooperation, through legal texts at multilateral and bilateral level. It is a priority for all states to deal with it, as it undermines democracy and individual and social rights and freedoms. In this context, the establishment of international, European and regional institutions to combat organized cross-border crime is the only way to protect individuals and societies. Noteworthy is the interconnection that has been achieved between the MS and each of the Organizations, through the exchange of information, the formation and interconnection of operational centres with the simultaneous transfer of data to many recipients-involved, the formation of special research groups, the realization of analyses for specific risks specifically and in general and dealing holistically with critical issues that arise, collaborations with third countries, technical and operational support to them and many activities focused on police and judicial cooperation.

Keywords: Frontex, Europol, EPPO, Eurojust, Security

Does Board Cultural and Gender Diversity Influence Firm Performance? Panel Data Evidence from US Listed Companies

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By uncovering the nuanced effects of board diversity on key performance metrics, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the dynamics shaping modern corporate governance. Thus, this study investigates the impact of cultural and gender diversity in the boards of directors of American companies listed in the S&P 500 index. Focusing on 204 firms from the IT, industrial, and health sectors, the analysis spans from 2000 to 2023. The quantitative framework consists of fixed and random-effects linear and non-linear regression models, covering also interaction terms in order to capture the effects of the COVID-19 global health crisis. The empirical findings reveal several noteworthy insights. Firstly, the presence of a diversity policy on boards positively influences return on equity and return on assets. Secondly, gender diversity on boards is positively associated with firm performance as measured by return on equity and return on assets. On the contrary, cultural diversity exhibits a negative impact on firm performance. Moreover, non-linear models reveal the presence of a turning point at 35.78 for gender diversity. Beyond this point, its impact transitions from positive to negative while retaining statistical significance. Furthermore, models incorporating interaction variables based on the pandemic crisis reveal interesting dynamics. In models without effects, the pandemic crisis negatively influences cultural diversity, suggesting a detrimental impact. Overall, these findings highlight the complex interplay between board diversity, firm performance, and external factors such as the pandemic crisis, offering valuable insights for policymakers and managers aiming to foster inclusive corporate governance and navigate crises effectively.

Keywords: Corporate Governance, Board Gender Diversity, Board Cultural Diversity, Firm Performance, Panel Data Regression Models

Artificial Intelligence Impact On the Sustainable Entrepreneurial Process

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In the face of pressing socio-economic and environmental challenges, such as climate change, resource depletion, and social inequality, entrepreneurs are increasingly compelled to embrace innovative strategies that harmonize profitability with social and environmental stewardship. Artificial intelligence (AI) holds promise in facilitating such solutions to ensure its effective and ethical deployment in pursuit of sustainability objectives. The primary goal of this study was to ascertain whether AI influences the sustainable entrepreneurial process in a significant manner. Taking a comprehensive approach, this research framework integrates concepts from entrepreneurship, stakeholder theory, and digital technology, offering a multifaceted perspective. We employed the multiple regression analysis to examine data gathered from 40 entrepreneurs operating within the Bosnia and Herzegovina settings. The outcomes of the study unveiled that AI impacts in a positive and significant way on the sustainable entrepreneurial process and its five sub-dimensions: “idea generation, opportunity recognition, opportunity development, venture launch and positive impact”. This study enriches the literature on AI and sustainable entrepreneurship by offering empirical support for the impact of AI on sustainable entrepreneurial process, while also introducing and validating measurement tools for the sustainable entrepreneurial process. Additionally, entrepreneurs can utilize the research findings to improve business sustainability processes and product/service innovation.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, Sustainability, Artificial Intelligence, Entrepreneurial Process, Idea Generation

Customers' Perception of Hotel Safety During Covid-19

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The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted consumer behaviors in the tourism industry in Lithuania. This study investigates Lithuanian tourists' perceptions of crucial safety factors in hotels during the pandemic and how these perceptions influence their future hotel choices. A survey was conducted with 101 Lithuanian tourists who had stayed in a hotel within the last two years of the study period, and the data was analyzed using One-way ANOVA, Tukey's Honest Significant Difference (HSD), and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) methods. The findings reveal that hygiene control is the most important factor determining hotel safety for Lithuanian tourists. Hotels that prioritize and effectively communicate hygiene control measures are more likely to attract Lithuanian tourists concerned about their health and safety. The study also found that hygiene control and health communication positively influence hotel selection behavior, while travelers' age or gender does not significantly affect future hotel selection behavior. The outcomes of this study have practical implications for the hotel industry in Lithuania and beyond. Hotel managers and marketers can develop strategies to create an image of a safe hotel by investing in enhanced cleaning protocols, implementing contactless technologies, and effectively communicating these measures to potential guests. This can help hotels attract more customers and contribute to the overall recovery of the tourism industry in the post-pandemic era. In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the perceptions and preferences of Lithuanian tourists regarding hotel safety during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the importance of hygiene control and health communication in influencing hotel selection behavior.

Keywords: Hotel Selection, Covid-19, Tourism, Hospitality Management

Power in Management and Organization Studies: Theories, Applications, and Extension

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Power and control are core to the design of organizational structures, processes of organizing, and the attitudes, experiences and behavior of those being organized. The power perspective is indispensable for understanding the socio-historical development and differentiation of workplace regimes and organizational paradigms. Although at the heart of organizations and management, issues of power are often not dealt with in a direct and straightforward way. One explanation for this paradox is that the powerful are typically not interested in discourses problematizing power, but prefer to normalize and naturalize the status quo. Taking stock of and reviewing the literature on power in management and organization studies, this article contributes to a research perspective that puts power into the foreground. First, important theories and taxonomies of power in the organizational literature are summarized, including labor process theory, organizational compliance theory, bases of social power, structural and psychological power, episodic and systemic power, the three-dimensional view of power, power-over and power-to, and the four faces of power. Concluding that the 'four faces of power' offers the most comprehensive approach to date, a systematic literature review of its conceptual and empirical applications was conducted. Altogether, seven studies applying this taxonomy are identified and reviewed. Applications include integrations with organizational paradox theory, the adoption of standards, corporate language policies, organizational change, workplace deviance, a case study on employee resistance, and compliance with managerialism in academia. Subsequently, a theory-based conceptual differentiation and extension of the 'four faces of power' taxonomy is suggested. Finally, the current state of the literature, further research needs, and opportunities for scholarship on power in organizations are discussed.

Keywords: Power in Organizations, Taxonomies of Power, The Four Faces of Power, Literature Review

Business Immunization of Thai SME Hotels During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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The COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on the global tourism and hospitality industry. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the hotel sector have been particularly vulnerable due to their limited resources and lack of crisis preparedness. This study investigates the business immunization strategies adopted by Thai SME hotels during the pandemic and assesses their effectiveness in ensuring business survival and resilience. Findings from secondary data analysis revealed the drastic decline in Thailand's international tourist arrivals in 2020, severely impacting hotel revenues and occupancy rates. While the Thai government implemented financial aid for SMEs, concerns were raised about accessibility and complexity of these support measures for SME hotels. The in-depth interviews uncovered a range of strategies implemented, including cost-cutting, operational adaptations like health protocols, digital transformation efforts, human resource initiatives for retention and skill development, targeted marketing for domestic markets, and revenue management tactics. The study highlights the importance of prudent financial management, operational flexibility, digital infrastructure investment, strategic human capital development, and industry-wide collaboration for enhancing SME hotel resilience. Key implications include the need for robust crisis preparedness plans, fostering organizational agility, upskilling employees, embracing technology innovations, and strengthening public-private partnerships to provide targeted support aligning with SME needs during crises.

Keywords: Business Immunization, Thai SME Hotels, COVID-19 Pandemic

Business Cycles in Greece: A 50-year Review in Greek Economy

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In the present paper, an attempt is made to analyze the phenomenon of Business Cycles and their connection to the Greek economy. Through literature review and comparative analysis, an effort is undertaken for a deeper understanding of the events that shaped the Greek economy in its current state and their correlation with the phases of Business Cycles. The study is being divided into two chapters. The first chapter analyzes the phases of Business Cycles and examines the behavior of certain variables such as GDP, consumption, production etc. In the second part, an endeavor is undertaken to analyze the Greek economy by dividing it into two time periods and by pointing out the parameters which comply with the criteria of the phases of the Business Cycles. Extensive literature review is used, and diagrams are presented to facilitate the understanding of the subject.

Keywords: Business Cycles, Accounting, Economy, GDP

Exploring the Impact of Environmental Factors on Performance: Empirical Evidence for FTSE100 Companies

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The purpose of this article is to investigate if certain environmental factors affect performance, with a focus on asset and equity profitability. The issue being addressed is extensively topical given the current circumstances surrounding environmental concerns and sustainability. Studies that analyze how environmental factors such as pollutant emissions or natural resource use are essential for understanding the long-term impact of economic activities on the environment and society, providing valuable information for developing more sustainable and environmentally responsible practices, but also helps to increase the company's performance and image. A sample of companies from the United Kingdom belonging to the FTSE100 stock index is used across a 10-year period, from 2015 to 2024. The quantitative framework incorporates a variety of variables, including performance, indebtedness, liquidity, resource usage factors, and variables related to emissions. The econometric methodology uses the ordinary least squares method to investigate existing interactions, implementing regression models without effects and models with fixed and random effects. Environmental factors have a significant influence on ROA and ROE, according to estimates from several multiple regression models. Thus, total CO₂ emissions, NO_x emissions, and expenditures for environmental protection are statistically significant and negatively impact ROA and ROE, while the total renewable energy has a positive influence.

Keywords: Return on Assets, Return on Equity, Environment, Emissions

Systematic Literature Review of Artificial Intelligence on Management: A Bibliometric Analysis Using VOS Viewer

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Management is a major field of business that catches the highest citations reflecting its importance. Artificial intelligence (AI) from the field of computer science draws similar attention. The purpose of this research is to investigate the potential impact of AI on Management domain using visualization of similarities (VOSviewer) bibliometric analysis with the intention of exploring current and future research trends of AI on management settings. Relevance of this study is to provide a reliable connection between publication components. Interactions of AI on the field of Management poses potential research opportunities for management, computer science and other multi disciplines. Our methodology includes systemic literature review of AI and Management using VOSviewer data mining technique. English-language publications are retrieved from four main respectful electronic research database and their related VOS clusters are refined from 4505 matches to 393 publications between the years 2017 and 2023 by using the tree mapping method. We have found that AI has become prominent research on management field for the last decade. In recent years, Big Data, Machine Learning and Decision-Making keywords were significantly used in an increasing trend in publications. Also, USA, India and UK are top-three notable contributors to AI research on Management.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Bibliometric Analysis, Decision Making, Management, VOS Viewer

Cryptocurrency Adaptation to the Latest World Political Scene and Tax Treatment Update in Greek Economy

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Cryptocurrencies are closely monitored by governments around the world because they have become very popular and valuable. The financial landscape has undergone a significant transformation due to digital finance, a combination of technology and traditional financial services. Increased adoption of cryptocurrencies could positively impact the financial system and digital payment systems, enhancing financial inclusion and modernizing financial infrastructure. This study is an updated approach to how cryptocurrencies are viewed in relation to geopolitical risk and economic uncertainty particularly in the BRIC countries. The alliance has evolved into a geopolitical coalition, aiming to promote an agenda different from the Western-dominated G7. The BRICS countries are discussing the creation of a BRICS currency, which will be a reference currency based on a basket consisting of robles, rupiahs, renminbi and rands. This would allow many economies to communicate economically with a unifying language. The present study also analyzes the recent tax treatment of cryptocurrencies in Greece.

Keywords: Cryptocurrencies, Accounting, Taxation, Economy, Greek Legislation

The Impact of Emerging Technologies on Digital Transformation in Small and Medium Enterprises within the RMV Region

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In the rapidly developing landscape of digital transformation, small and medium companies in North Macedonia are facing the challenges and opportunities created by new technologies. This study explores the multifaceted impact of these technologies on the digital transformation journey of SMEs in RNM. Using a qualitative research approach, data were collected through surveys from a diverse range of small and medium companies across different sectors. The results of the research show that companies in North Macedonia have considered the benefits of digital marketing and digital communication, and a modest statistical increase is observed in the relevant tools such as: web communication, digital sales of products/services (e-commerce), sponsored advertising and other forms of digital marketing, but in addition to the positive trend of digital transformation of companies, we are still at the beginning of adaptation and it is expected that more and more small companies will progress in the digitalization process. This study underscores the importance of continued support and investment in digital infrastructure and education to facilitate the ongoing digital transformation of SMEs in North Macedonia. By addressing the current challenges and harnessing the opportunities presented by emerging technologies, these companies can achieve sustainable growth and contribute to the broader digital economy in the region.

Keywords: Emerging Technologies, Digital Transformation, SMEs, Digital Marketing, E-commerce

Comparative Analysis of Sustainability Communication Strategies of Thai and Global Brand Restaurants on Social Media and Websites

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In recent years, sustainability has become a crucial concern in the food industry, with restaurants playing a significant role in promoting sustainable practices. Consumers increasingly demand transparency and responsibility, pushing restaurants to adopt and effectively communicate their sustainability efforts. This research investigates the sustainability communication strategies of Thai and global brand restaurants on social media and official websites. The purpose of this study is to compare how Thai and global brand restaurants communicate their sustainability practices. Using a content analysis approach, the study analyzed posts from Facebook, Instagram, and websites of the Thai restaurant brand "S&P Syndicate" and the global restaurant brand "Minor Food." The coding sheet was designed based on four theories: the Triple Bottom Line, Integrated Marketing Communication, the Elaboration Likelihood Model, and Narrative. Qualitative measures were used to evaluate sustainability communication. The study identifies and analyzes recurring content themes related to sustainability and the tone of the messages. The findings reveal that the content themes of S&P Syndicate emphasize environmental sustainability through eco-friendly product designs, recycling programs, and community inclusion. Minor Food focuses more on people development by integrating comprehensive educational partnerships, training programs, and community empowerment initiatives. Minor Food has a broader global communication and impact compared to S&P Syndicate's local focus. The message tone of S&P Syndicate presents community engagement activities in a formal and traditional public relations style, while Minor Food encourages a wider range of stakeholders and aligns with the global agenda in a professional image, demonstrating a passion for sustainable achievement.

Keywords: Thai Restaurants, Global Brand Restaurants, Social Media, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

International Defense Cooperation Agreements - New Opportunity or Threat to A State Sovereignty

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The paper aims to analyze the DCA between Slovak Republic and the USA from the point of view of state sovereignty. These kinds of agreements are nothing new in the world. Different states approach them in different variants and combinations. But the approach of the USA is hegemonic. Agreements with the US are concluded for the benefit of the US and in the interest of the US. Based on the analysis of Brandon J. Kinne, this paper analyses and compares bilateral defense cooperation agreements between the USA and the Slovak Republic. I proceed from the assumption that it is a purely vassal treaty, which makes Slovakia a second, European Puerto Rico, subordinated to the USA in the military, but also in the legislative area.

The assumption that the agreement with the USA is a vassal agreement rather than an agreement between two equal partners is confirmed. The treaty significantly limits the sovereignty of the Slovak Republic, which contradicts Article 1, paragraph 1 of the Constitution, which states that "The Slovak Republic is a sovereign, democratic and legal state." And therefore, in this case, the Slovak authorities should follow Article 2, paragraph 2 of the Constitution which states: "State authorities can act only based on the constitution, within its limits and to the extent and in the manner established by law." This means that the relevant ministry should not have negotiated such an agreement because it contradicts the constitution, and vice versa, to negotiate an unconstitutional agreement should have no mandate. Based on this agreement Slovak Republic lost its sovereignty in several ways. This agreement significantly affects and disrupts the sovereignty of the Slovak Republic. In our opinion, this agreement is significantly asymmetric, and favorable to the interests and needs of the stronger party. So this is an example of a vassal agreement that favors one party over another, limiting the sovereignty of one party without compensation.

Keywords: Security, Defense Cooperation, Sovereignty, USA, Slovakia

The Role of Memes in the Communication Process

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They are in serious trouble if memes cannot be explained within the communication process. Memes should be found within communication by necessity. While the above statement holds, it would be presumptuous to expect a full clarification of memes and memetics by examining communication alone. Communication is merely a part of the intricate memetic phenomenology. Only when the memetic ontology is developed can phenomenology reveal its full complexity. What we expect to achieve with this paper is to get a first glance at how memes appear. Can we explain communication without memes? Most certainly. Can we better explain communication with the help of memes? That is the central question of this paper. The paper develops memes as conceived by Richard Dawkins in his cardinal book *Selfish Genes* (1976) and later by Daniel Dennett in *Consciousness Explained* (1991), Susan Blackmore in *The Meme Machine* (2000), and David Haig in *From Darwin to Derrida* (2020). It fills the gap concerning communication processes like news, meaning (Shannon, 1948), animal language, reading, listening, writing, being silent, lateral thinking, teaching, and media. The paper differentiates so-called internet memes (artifacts) from memes as cultural replicators conceived by the authors. It also fills the gap that the developed theory of memetics has not touched so far.

Keywords: Strategic Meme, Material Meme, Memetic Field, News, Information, Language

Knowledge, Attitude, and Practices Towards Internet Safety and Security Among Generation Z in Malaysia

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The Malaysian government's commitment to enhancing internet safety and security is evidenced by its significant budget allocation of one billion Ringgit, exemplified through initiatives like Klik Dengan Bijak (Click Wisely). This research delves into the influence of government social media communication on public engagement focusing on Gen Z in Malaysia, utilizing established frameworks such as the Knowledge, Attitude, and Practice (KAP) model and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT). The study aims to evaluate the impact of government branding efforts on cybercrime awareness and behavior within this demographic. This study employing a quantitative approach and gathering survey data from 385 Malaysian Generation Z individuals. Data were collected by using survey form which distributed to selected Gen Z from all states in Malaysia including Federal Territory. Despite the substantial investment in government branding initiatives, the research findings present a surprising revelation. Contrary to expectations, the analysis indicates that government branding has minimal discernible impact on the knowledge and behaviors of Generation Z concerning cybersecurity. This unexpected outcome suggests a potential gap or misalignment between the messaging conveyed through government social media channels and the receptiveness or efficacy of such messaging among the target audience. The study's results offer valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders involved in cybersecurity awareness campaigns. By identifying areas where current strategies may fall short in effectively engaging Generation Z, the research contributes to the refinement and optimization of future government communication efforts aimed at promoting cybersecurity awareness and fostering responsible online behavior among the Malaysian populace.

Keywords: Cybersecurity, Generation Z, Internet Security, Cybercrime, Malaysia

The Relationship of Intercultural Barriers towards Trust Level among Beneficiaries in Malaysia

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This study aims to examine the complex attributes of intercultural barriers and their influence on the trust that recipients in Malaysia experience. This study recognises the wide range of cultural variety in Malaysia and aims to comprehend how cultural variations, communication difficulties, and varying ethnic backgrounds influence the formation and growth of trust among different groups of recipients. A quantitative approach is utilised to collect data through the administration of surveys involving 180 respondents. The study adopts a multicultural perspective to explore the many characteristics of Malaysian culture and aims to reveal intricate insights into the elements that impact trust. The research is expected to yield practical solutions that aim to improve the trust levels of beneficiaries, in addition to its theoretical contributions. The objective of this research is to enhance the efficiency and sustainability of development initiatives in Malaysia by comprehending and surmounting intercultural barriers. The objective is to cultivate more robust collaborative alliances and attain favourable outcomes for society. The findings of this research will hold significant value for policymakers, practitioners, and academics engaged in community advocacy and intercultural communication. These discoveries have the potential to greatly impact the strategies utilised to foster trust in diverse and multicultural environments.

Keywords: Intercultural barriers, Trust, Beneficiaries in Malaysia

Examples of Good and Bad Practices of Industrial Enterprises in Slovakia in Overcoming the Crisis Situation due to the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Unpredictable changes in the business environment highlight the necessity for enterprises to transition to agile management and business models. The period of the COVID-19 pandemic and the aftermath of restrictive anti-epidemic measures have shown that the ability to be prepared to implement change, to respond to environmental changes in a timely and effective manner, which means being agile, is becoming an essential prerequisite for both survival and success. For this reason, we conducted research aimed at finding out how Slovak manufacturing enterprises coped with the changes caused by the pandemic COVID 19. The aim of the paper is to highlight examples of good and bad practices of industrial enterprises in the conditions of the Slovak Republic in overcoming the crisis pandemic situation through the analysis of case studies. The method of semi-structured interviews with owners and top managers of representative manufacturing enterprises of individual industries was used in compiling the case studies. The findings from the interviews were compared and linked to secondary data from the finstat.sk database of financial statements regarding the development of financial indicators before and during the pandemic. Based on the comparison of reactions, implemented changes and taken measures in enterprises with the change in financial indicators, we identified cases of good and bad practice. The results show that companies that took advantage of the newly emerging demand for new health goods and reoriented their production, as well as companies that digitized and optimized processes, reached significantly better results in sales, profits and profitability than in the pre-pandemic period. Conversely, businesses that have sought only to cut costs by temporarily closing operations or reducing staff without optimization measures and innovation, have seen their financial situation worsen, run into losses and increased indebtedness.

Keywords: Coronacrisis, Enterprise Agility; Manufacturing Enterprises; Case Studies

Cultural Threads in Urban Fabric: Pekalongan's Model of Integrative Development for Batik Heritage

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This study explores the intersection of urban development and cultural heritage preservation within the city of Pekalongan, Indonesia, renowned for its rich Batik tradition. Amidst rapid urbanization, Pekalongan faces the dual challenge of modernizing its infrastructure while maintaining its cultural identity. This paper analyzes integrative development strategies that incorporate Batik heritage preservation into urban planning. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, data was collected through interviews with local Batik artisans, urban planners, and community surveys. Results indicate that sustainable urban development in Pekalongan can be achieved by incorporating traditional Batik elements into building designs and communal spaces, thus supporting the local economy, and enhancing cultural tourism. The study proposes a model of development that emphasizes cultural sustainability, offering a framework that can be applied to similar heritage cities globally. This model highlights the potential of cultural industries to influence urban planning positively, suggesting that the preservation of cultural heritage can coexist with modern urban development. The implications of these findings extend beyond Pekalongan, serving as a blueprint for other cities with similar cultural assets.

Keywords: Urban Development, Cultural Heritage, Batik Industry, Sustainable Planning, Heritage Preservation

Facilitating Pre-Service ESOL Teachers' Understanding of Language Proficiency Pedagogy

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The purpose of this study was to document and appreciate the relevancy of a course unit on second language proficiency on pre-service ESOL teachers' emerging understanding of the theory and practice of developing English learners' linguistic competencies in their current/future instruction. The study took place in the fall semester of 2023; participants were undergraduate elementary-education teacher candidates enrolled in a TESOL methodology course offered at a postsecondary institution in the southeastern United States. The multi-day course unit was comprised of four subunits, one per language domain (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). Two weeks were allotted per domain, with each subunit consisting of a series of readings on fundamental principles and theories concerning the domain along with an exploration of various activities to promote the development of students' expertise and abilities in the domain in the classroom. At the conclusion of the unit, participants completed a mixed-methods questionnaire containing Likert-scale items and open-ended questions designed to collect information regarding their perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of the course unit and their suggestions for improving the unit moving forward. The quantitative data were analyzed via descriptive statistics, and the qualitative data were studied using thematic analysis. Preliminary findings from the study suggest that, while the course unit did contribute positively to teacher candidates' awareness and understanding of the theory and practice of furthering multilingual learners' linguistic proficiencies in English, participants also indicated that some of the readings were a bit too advanced and theoretical for them and that they would have preferred to see additional examples of specific language tasks and activities to be used in the classroom. This research addresses an important gap in the current literature in that few studies have investigated the development of pre-service ESOL teachers' understanding of language proficiency.

Keywords: Educator preparation, ESOL, Language, Proficiency, Teacher education

Lean Six Sigma Implementation and Sustainability: An investigation into Moroccan manufacturing firms

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The purpose of this paper is to explore the implementation level of Lean Six Sigma (LSS) within manufacturing companies in Morocco. It examines the LSS tools used by these industries and their impact on sustainable performance. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 20 participants from industrial companies and analyzed using NVivo 10 software to conduct the thematic analysis. The results indicated that both Lean and Six Sigma approaches are used, however, Lean tools are predominant. The most used LSS tools include 5S, VSM, Ishikawa, standardized work, DMAIC, Kanban, and visual management. Interviewees perceived that effective implementation of LSS tools positively influences sustainable performance, with particular improvements noted in the economic pillar. Nevertheless, the limitations of this study are the potential for biased responses due to the subjective nature of interviews and the lack of generalizability of findings beyond the specific context of Moroccan manufacturing companies. This study offers practical guidance to manufacturing companies in Morocco, helping them to select appropriate Lean Six Sigma tools, prioritize improvement initiatives, cultivate a culture of continuous improvement, benchmark against industry standards and, ultimately, improve sustainable performance results. Most studies dedicated to investigating the impact of LSS on sustainability has been conducted in developed countries. Therefore, the originality of this work is in trying to explore those concepts in a developing country like Morocco.

Keywords: Lean, Six Sigma, LSS, Sustainability

The Impact of the 2024 Elections in the Indo-Pacific and the United States on Islamic World Dynamics in International Relations

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This research aims to explore the anticipated effects of the 2024 elections in the Indo-Pacific region and the United States (U.S.) on the dynamics of the Islamic world within international relations. The research methodology involves a quantitative analysis of electoral trends and their correlation with foreign policy decisions in the Indo-Pacific and the U.S. Additionally, qualitative case studies are conducted to examine specific instances where electoral changes have influenced the role of Islamic countries in international relations. Case studies from the Indo-Pacific region may include Indonesia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The theoretical framework draws on constructivist perspectives to analyze how identity, including religious identity, shapes states' behavior in the international arena. Realist perspectives are also employed to assess power dynamics and strategic interests in diplomatic relations with Islamic nations. Indonesia, Pakistan, and Bangladesh's electoral outcomes have historically influenced regional stability and diplomatic relations. For instance, Indonesia's election has led to shifts in foreign policy, impacting relations with neighboring states and global powers. Similarly, changes in government following elections in the U.S. have influenced approaches to regional security and economic cooperation. In the U.S., the outcome of presidential elections can significantly influence engagement with the Islamic world, especially in conflicts in the Middle East and counterterrorism efforts. The policies and strategies adopted by the new administration can influence U.S.-Muslim relations and global perceptions. This research provides valuable insights into the evolving role of the Islamic world in international relations and the impact of electoral politics on global diplomacy. It contributes to a deeper understanding of the intricate connections between electoral politics, religious identity, and global diplomacy in the current geopolitical landscape.

Keywords: 2024 Elections, Indonesia, Indo-Pacific, United States, Islamic World Dynamics, International Relations

The Impact of the NRRP on the Energy Sector in the Territories

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The National Recovery and Resilience Plan provides specific attention to the energy transition and sustainable mobility (M2C2, Mission 2, component C2) which includes specific submissions that concern the green transition for energy sustainability. Mission 7 Repower (M7) was recently introduced, which directly affects energy. At a territorial level, information by local project code relating to each NRRP sub-mission is available on the Italy government platform, data that provides the starting point for calculating NRRP funding for each municipality. The objective of this work is to provide an estimate of the impact of the NRRP contributions on the energy sector (in particular for the M2 component) by estimating a coefficient for each Italian region using the territorial information of the local project code at municipal level. The analysis is based on econometric methods and allows the estimation of parameters aimed at evaluating the impact of the NRRP on territorial economies in terms of energy sustainability in order to provide useful information to the decisions of national and territorial policy makers to better direct efforts to support for the NRRP.

Keywords: NRRP; Energy, Sustainability, Impact, Territorial

Can China Become the New Germany? A Comparison in the Context of Energy Geopolitics

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This study compares China and Germany in the context of energy geopolitics and examines whether China can become the new Germany in terms of energy strategies. Germany and China were chosen because both countries are important actors in global energy politics and exhibit significant differences and similarities in their energy strategies. Germany is dependent on natural gas supplies from Russia and has suffered from energy insecurity. In contrast, China is diversifying its energy sources and sourcing energy from the Middle East, Africa and Latin America, thus reducing its dependence. Germany has been a pioneer in the energy transition by investing heavily in renewable energy. China is also a world leader by investing heavily in solar and wind energy and aims to reduce its dependence on fossil fuels. While Germany coordinates with its partners in the European Union on energy security, China uses energy policies to increase its geopolitical influence in the Asia-Pacific region. Its claims over energy resources in the South China Sea and energy projects in Central Asia are part of this strategy. In conclusion, this study discusses China's potential to become the new Germany in terms of energy geopolitics by assessing the similarities and differences of China's energy policies with those of Germany. In this study, the energy strategies of China and Germany will be subjected to a comparative analysis within the framework of energy geopolitics. The selection of these two nations stems from their significant roles in global energy politics and the notable differences and similarities in their energy strategies. It has been evaluated that China has the potential to take Germany's place in energy geopolitics. China's diversified energy supply strategy, investments in renewable energy, and efforts to increase its geopolitical influence position it comparably to Germany in energy geopolitics. These findings are important for understanding the potential impacts of China's future energy policies and geopolitical strategies on global energy dynamics. China's potential to take Germany's place in energy geopolitics could significantly alter global energy dynamics, influence prices, enhance China's geopolitical influence, and impact environmental and regional stability.

Keywords: Geopolitics, Energy, China, Germany, Comparative Politics

Synergizing Academic Achievement with Communicative Competence and Technology Adoption

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In the context of 21st-century education, the integration of technology and the development of communicative competence are pivotal for enhancing academic achievement among university students. This research investigates the relationship between communicative competencies, technology adoption, and academic achievement, with a focus on the mediating role of student motivation in Malaysian higher education. The study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these factors interact to influence learning outcomes in a rapidly evolving educational landscape. Employing a quantitative data collection method through survey questionnaire covering the IV, MV and DV, insights into the academic achievement are obtained. This design allows for a comprehensive examination of the relationship between the variables. The findings indicate that both technology adoption and communicative competence significantly impact academic achievement, but their effects are magnified when coupled with high levels of student motivation. The data reveals that students who effectively utilize digital tools and platforms tend to perform better academically, provided they also possess strong communicative skills that facilitate effective interaction and knowledge exchange. The implications of this research are manifold, suggesting that educational institutions should prioritize the integration of digital literacy programs and communicative competence training into their curricula. By doing so, they can enhance student engagement, motivation, and ultimately, academic achievement. This study contributes valuable insights into the design of effective educational strategies that align with the demands of the digital age, offering a roadmap for policymakers and educators aiming to cultivate a future-ready student body equipped with essential 21st-century skills.

Keywords: Academic Achievement, Communicative Competence, Technology Adoption

Exploring Media Narratives and National Identity through Corpus Linguistics: A Case Study of Moroccan Media Coverage of the Alhawz Earthquake

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Television, newspapers, magazines, and other print or electronic media contribute to developing and preserving national and cultural identity by providing a platform for various voices, enabling different communities to share their narratives, traditions, and values. Media nurtures a sense of belonging and fosters a more unified and inclusive society by promoting cultural events and showcasing unity, harmony, and group spirit among citizens during crises. Media narratives can shape the nation's perception, including national identity and political, social, and international relations narratives. However, the current paper focuses mainly on crisis narratives, another type of media narrative that can affect the perception of a nation. Those narratives focus mainly on events threatening a nation's stability, security, or well-being. Crisis narratives include natural disasters, economic slumps, and public health emergencies. Therefore, the current study attempts to analyse the Moroccan media narratives on the Alhawz earthquake utilizing a comprehensive analysis of 17 articles published between 10 September and 26 September 2023. The analysis is conducted within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis and corpus linguistics to reveal how media narratives foster a sense of unity and nationalistic sentiments among citizens during the Alhawz earthquake. The findings indicate that Moroccan media narratives on the earthquake could shape how the public perceives the nation's ability to handle a crisis, the effectiveness of its leadership, and the resilience of its people, who were able to show a sense of unity and national pride during that natural disaster.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), Corpus Linguistics, Earthquake, Morocco

Unlocking Potential: How Knowledge Sharing Drives Employee Performance

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This study explores the impact of two knowledge-sharing subprocesses – socialization (tacit knowledge exchange) and exchange (explicit knowledge transfer) – on employee learning, adaptability, and job satisfaction within the Bangladeshi banking industry. Drawing on existing literature, the study positions knowledge sharing as a key driver of employee outcomes. Socialization, through informal interactions, lays the groundwork for understanding explicit knowledge transferred through exchange methods like training programs. Employee learning involves acquiring job-related knowledge and skills (Cheung, 2011). Adaptability allows employees to adjust to change, enhancing organizational agility. Job satisfaction reflects employee fulfillment and pleasure in their work. A questionnaire survey administered to employees in Bangladeshi financial services firms will gather data. The Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach will assess the proposed relationships between knowledge sharing subprocesses and employee outcomes. This research anticipates a positive relationship between knowledge sharing subprocesses (socialization and exchange) and employee outcomes (learning, adaptability, and job satisfaction). The findings aim to highlight the importance of knowledge sharing in fostering employee satisfaction and organizational effectiveness. The research contribution lies in its focus on the specific effects of socialization and exchange on employee outcomes within the Bangladeshi banking context. These findings hold theoretical and practical implications for knowledge management research and practice.

Keywords: Knowledge Sharing, Employee Learning, Adaptability, Job Satisfaction

An Evaluation of Digital Literacy Skills Among First-Year Students at A Higher Education Institution in South Africa

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This study evaluates the digital literacy skills of first-year students at an institution of higher learning in South Africa and investigates differences by demographic backgrounds. Using a quantitative research methodology and adopting a positivism paradigm, we analyze the relationship between the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) dimensions and digital literacy, as well as explore factors influencing perceived digital literacy skills. Data was collected from 366 learners, revealing varying digital literacy levels among students and significant differences based on gender, age, location, home internet connection, and tenure of being a computer user. The study also identifies a positive relationship between TAM dimensions and digital literacy. The conclusions drawn underscore the importance of tailored interventions to enhance digital literacy among first-year students. Implications for educational institutions include the need for targeted programs and resources to bridge the digital skills gap among incoming students.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, First-Year Students, Technology Acceptance Model, Demographic Backgrounds, Quantitative Research

Responsible Active Participation of International Trade Actors to Make Human Rights Effective

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In today's globalized world, we constantly face the challenges that result from digitalization, which intervene in the existence of all social actors, such as governments, organizations, companies and people, in the context of international trade, we highlight the first as those who must create, develop and monitor the conditions in which economic activity develops under rules and circumstances that allow other actors to obtain the maximum possible benefit, in all aspects, and this is how, companies, whether individual or collective, carry out their productive and commercial activities aimed at satisfying the needs of societies, and the people identified in their role as consumers, are the main recipients of the commercial mechanism that is implemented so that they obtain what they "need to live".

A weakness of the globalization system has been the lack of values, which disrupts people's human rights, in favor of consumption on "more favorable" terms for people, such as the paradigm that international trade exchanges promote lower prices, which allows consumers to access products that under other circumstances they would not be able to.

The above has also become more acute with the consolidation of the digital era, a legacy that has led to new questions being raised regarding forms of consumption and their effects on people's lives and the planet itself. The pandemic revealed a fragile society - malnourished in all physical and mental aspects - which also inherited digitalization as a way of life, and under which the entire ecological system - even the electromagnetic field of the planet - is affected, resulting in climate change itself. The new society requires new products and services that promote and respect the human rights of consumers, therefore, companies are a fundamental piece in its construction, and this requires that legal orders should be transformed and improved, so that they provide and define the principles that serve to create a strong and motivated society that can face all the challenges that are to come, and whose objective is to form a life in balance with the interior and exterior of the planet. In this context, what would be the most effective way to address these challenges and needs that have been reconceptualized in the post-pandemic environment, consolidating the protection of human rights in the legal-economic context of international trade? The answers to these questions have their origin in the promotion of the active and responsible participation of each of the actors in international trade, which will help each country ensure that its productive sectors - goods or services - function under the principle of effective Human Rights, based on the identification of the viable legal institutions that constitute the multilateral international legal-economic order that will allow to reach such objective.

Keywords: Globalization, Legal-Economic Order, International Trade Actors, Human Rights Effectiveness

Supporting Facets of Teamwork and Leadership Skills of Business Students

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Today's learners are tomorrow's team members and leaders in successful organizations. In the changing environment, the human character is developing and adapting to the new paradigms, thus the teachers' role is fundamental in developing character strengths of students ready for the 21st century demands.

This study investigates the degree to which students' leadership and teamwork capabilities are predicted by curiosity, authenticity, perseverance, perspective, love of learning, social intelligence, self-regulation, courage, enthusiasm, and open-mindedness.

The research instrument was defined using an existing open-science inventory from the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP), the Revised Values in Action Character Strength Scales (IPIP-VIA-R). The survey was disseminated among the students of Faculty of Business and the respondents completed the questionnaire online. The sample included 355 full-time bachelor's and master's students.

Findings indicate that whereas leadership and teamwork are strongly correlated, they are differently influenced by the analyzed variables. Curiosity, authenticity, enthusiasm, and love of learning emphasize more the teamwork skill. Meanwhile, leadership ability is more underlined by perseverance, perspective, social intelligence, open-mindedness, courage, and self-regulation. Love of learning and self-regulation had the lowest link with leadership and teamwork ability of students. Among the determinant variables, curiosity had the highest score. As it is considered part of intrinsic motivation, it has great potential to enhance students' love of learning, and further leading skills. Self-regulation is a critical skill for leaders and for team members in every organization. Therefore, students' character strengths, especially, love of learning and self-regulation capacities require more attention from responsible parties to fulfil the labor market needs.

Keywords: Leadership; Teamwork; Students; Character Strength

Understanding Business Registration Trends and Capital Dynamics in Southern Thailand: Insights and Implications

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This study aims to analyze trends and patterns in business registration in Southern Thailand and identify the factors influencing these trends. Statistical data on business registration and registered capital from 2008 to 2023 collected by the Bank of Thailand is utilized, with forecasting conducted using the Holt-Winter's method. Findings suggest that business registration trends in Southern Thailand from 2024 to 2027 are influenced by various factors, leading to fluctuations in both the number of registered businesses and registered capital. Peaks in registrations and capital suggest increased entrepreneurial activity and economic confidence, while declines may be due to external economic conditions or seasonal variations. Despite monthly variability, registered capital consistently increases over time, with forecasted values indicating a continued upward trajectory, albeit with some uncertainty. This data provides valuable insights for policymakers and entrepreneurs to understand and anticipate trends in registered capital within the region, reflecting a positive trend in business investment and economic activity. However, significant monthly variability underscores the influence of economic conditions, market dynamics, and regulatory changes on investment decisions.

Keywords: Business Registration Trends, Implications, Insights, Registered capital, Southern Thailand

Fintech Firms Dividend Payout Policy: Evidence from Covid-19

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The breakthrough of the Covid-19 pandemic has not only caused significant disruption across numerous industries globally, but also marked a surge in digital transformation within the financial sector through the adoption of FinTech. The pandemic was exceptional for the FinTech sector as it developed and accelerated the adoption of FinTech firms. This study examines the impact of Covid-19 on FinTech firms' dividend policy by applying logistic regression models. The sample includes 171 FinTech firms listed in The STOXX Global FinTech Index over the time period (2014–2021). The findings reveal that FinTech firms tend to increase or maintain their dividend payments rather than omit them during Covid-19 to convey positive signals to the market.

Keywords: Dividend Policy, Fintech Firms; Covid-19

Problems and Prospects of Journalism Education in Ethiopia

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Although started late among Eastern African countries, journalism undergraduate programmes are mushrooming in Ethiopia, especially in second generation universities. The undergraduate journalism education in Ethiopian universities offers many challenges equally for both the teachers and students. In spite of the growth in the numbers of institutions and graduates, the journalism programmes have been facing multiple challenges in Ethiopia. The main objectives of this study are to systematically explore the significant problems and prospects of journalism education from the didactic-pedagogic perspective. These objectives are achieved through 20 interviews: 15 students and 5 teachers. The collected data is interpreted and analysed through thematic coding. The findings reveal nine serious didactic-pedagogic problems to be addressed by the Ethiopian journalism higher education institutions, such as deficient curriculum, dearth of course-material, theory-focused classes, ill-equipped journalism labs, English language incompetence, low-slung research skills, pedagogical lags, poor university-industry linkage, and lack of institutional commitments in the Ethiopian journalism education system. Eventually, reflections and prospects are forwarded to improve the quality of journalism education in Ethiopian universities.

Keywords: Ethiopia; Journalism; Journalism Education; Journalism Studies; Journalism Curriculum; Journalism Course-Materials; Journalism Classrooms

The Interplay Between Sociocultural Values, Behavior and Well-Being: Salient Traits of Social Intelligence

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Nowadays, students are compelled to navigate an intricate social dynamic, exhibiting a profound capacity for empathetic understanding and adapting swiftly to diverse situational demands. Their socio-cultural ethos is deeply rooted in a tapestry of cultural norms, traditions, and belief systems, shaping their interactions and worldviews.

Virtues and character strengths are positively associated with approach coping strategies among university students, facilitating personal growth and adaptation to challenging situations. This study explores key factors and salient traits of social intelligence among university students within a socio-cultural context. Human values, viewed as inner beliefs and ultimate goals, play a crucial role in shaping behavior and attitudes. Social intelligence, linked to life satisfaction and professional performance, encompasses traits such as perspective, enthusiasm, leadership, and playfulness. A representative sample of 355 faculty students, including undergraduates and master's students, participated in this research. Data analysis using SPSS revealed statistically significant correlations between character traits and social intelligence.

Moreover, the study emphasizes the importance of social intelligence in navigating complex social interactions and achieving success in society. Developing social intelligence can enhance interpersonal relationships and contribute to individual and collective well-being in university settings.

In conclusion, this research underscores the significance of social intelligence, personality traits, and values in fostering positive behavior. By understanding and cultivating these traits, individuals can better adapt to their environment and promote harmonious relationships within a society.

Keywords: Socio-Cultural Context, Human Values, Social Intelligence, University Students

Audiovisual Tools in Teaching/Learning French Language Lexicon in Primary Education Albanian. A Case Study

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In today's digital age, foreign language teachers in Albanian primary schools, particularly those teaching French, face significant methodological challenges. These challenges are primarily related to the effective use of technological and audiovisual tools in the teaching and learning process. Two main issues are the teachers' familiarity with and use of contemporary technological and audiovisual tools and materials during the instructional process, and their awareness of the significant impact these tools have on the effective acquisition and use of the French language by primary school students.

This study aims to emphasize the role and importance of audiovisual tools in teaching and learning French vocabulary among 9-10-year-olds, and in developing their linguistic and pragmatic skills in this language.

The methodology employed is both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative methods measure the children's vocabulary before and after using audiovisual tools and materials, compared to traditional methods, to examine the extent of vocabulary enrichment. The qualitative method considers the lexical and semantic enrichment and the practical ability to use words and expressions in concrete and new discursive contexts.

Technological tools can simplify the understanding of complex concepts and expressions in French and enhance students' long-term memory by creating a more engaging learning environment. These challenges are further complicated by factors such as Albania's multilingual reality, labor market demands, and a predominant focus on English and German, which have somewhat diminished interest in French.

This study aims to address these issues and contribute to the improvement of French language education in Albanian primary schools, ensuring that students acquire the necessary skills to thrive in a multilingual and multicultural world.

Keywords: Audiovisual Technological Tools; Methodological Approach; Primary Education; Teaching/Learning; French Language Vocabulary

The Relationship Between Self-Esteem and Academic Achievement Among Female Students at Almaty Management University

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This study examines the relationship between self-esteem and academic achievement among female students at Almaty Management University (AlmaU). Given the significant role self-esteem plays in educational outcomes, this research aims to address the gap in literature regarding Kazakh students. Utilizing a quantitative approach, data was gathered from 30 sophomore female students using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and their Grade Point Averages (GPAs). The results reveal a moderate negative correlation between self-esteem and academic performance, suggesting that higher self-esteem does not necessarily translate to better academic results within this cohort. This finding contradicts the prevalent notion that high self-esteem universally enhances academic achievement, indicating that the dynamics may differ in the context of Kazakhstani higher education. The study underscores the complexity of the self-esteem-academic performance relationship and calls for further investigation with larger sample sizes and additional variables such as emotional intelligence, family background, and peer influence to comprehensively understand their interplay in academic success.

Keywords: Self-Esteem, Academic Performance, Female Students, University

Review of Methods for Economic Efficiency of Transport Infrastructure Projects: From the Perspective of a Risk Factor

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The article presents a critical review of methods for the economic efficiency of transport infrastructure projects in world practice from the perspective of taking into account the risk factor. The purpose is to reveal the content of the financial assessment of the effectiveness of infrastructure projects, to consider the key aspects and problems of Project assessment Methodologies existing in Russia and abroad. The object is the projects of planning the territory of linear transport infrastructure facilities. The subject is methods of financial assessment of the effectiveness and risks of transport infrastructure projects.

The main assessment methods and their structure, and indicators used to evaluate territorial planning projects for linear facilities in the regions of Russia are presented and analyzed, using Moscow as an example. The problems in forming the structure of project income, as well as in discounting financial flows, are presented. The key positive effects assessed in the EU countries, UK, USA, China, and countries of the Organization of Islamic States are outlined. The basic principles of existing methods and methods of project analysis are described. The main methods for assessing the influence of project stakeholders on the final result and their expectations when assessing it are presented. The main difficulties and problems faced by financiers and other stakeholders when assessing transport infrastructure construction projects are noted, highlighting the shortcomings and contradictions of existing methods.

Keywords: Project, Risk, Transport Infrastructure, Financial Performance Assessment, Discount Rate, Multi-Criteria Analysis

Tele-Law: Bridging the Legal Access Gap for Marginalized Communities in Rural India Using ICT

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The Tele-Law scheme in India leverages Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to provide legal assistance to marginalized communities through Community Service Centers (CSCs). This paper evaluates the Tele-Law scheme's current implementation process and impact, focusing on how ICT has enhanced access to justice, particularly in rural and marginalized communities. We describe the implementation of the Tele-Law scheme in India, followed by an analysis of available data on the scheme focusing on metrics related to access to justice, types of cases filed by the vulnerable sections, and the resolution of these cases. The study uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative data to assess the impact of ICT on the judicial system's effectiveness and the impact of CSCs. Our findings highlight significant improvements in legal access for rural populations. The study identified a few challenges in the Tele-Law implementation scheme, such as digital literacy, infrastructure gaps, and systemic barriers. We recommend reengineering the current implementation process and suggest strategies to improve the scheme's reach and efficiency by adding additional tools to integrate ICT into the Tele-Law program. This will enhance the reach of Tele-Law, improve service quality, and ensure a sustainable long-term impact on the legal empowerment of marginalized populations in India.

Keywords: Information & Communication Technology (ICT), Tele-Law, legal assistance, Community Service Centers (CSCs)

International Academic Mobility. A Study About the Assessment of Two Social Competencies: Leadership and Resilience

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Social and management competencies are fundamental in relation to personal, professional, institutional/organizational and macro-national development, according to literature and empirical research developed with different populations, spaces and times. The objective of this qualitative study was to observe what importance is assigned by university doctors, that is, those who achieved the highest level of education, to two of these social competencies: Resilience and Leadership. The population was made up of PhDs from Argentina and other countries who participated in internationalization programs in France. The hypothesis is that the highest level of education achieved, added to the immersion in another culture after having undergone a national process of selection before the mobility academic programme, could result in a greater valuation of the so-called social and management competencies. The assessment of Resilience and Leadership was observed through different techniques, specially the hierarchical evocations technique. The findings show: a) Resilience is almost not mentioned despite the fact that the Emotional-Relational dimension enters the core of the representations of PhDs about the fundamental competencies to be developed by universities and companies in the field of hard and soft sciences; b) the same happens with Leadership. These results reveal the gap or distance between the University with respect to the needs of the scientific and productive system.

Keywords: Academic mobility; resiliency; leadership; social competencies; PhDs

The Impact of Environmental Responsibility on the Performance of SMEs in North Macedonia

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Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) play an important role in the global economy due to their contribution to economic growth, innovation, and job creation. Claims to work and operate in a wider market must meet a set of rules and principles that are defined for the benefit of society, starting from the environment that surrounds us. The research is focused on the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises through social responsibility in protecting the environment. The topic elaborates on the performance of SMEs under the influence of ethical components and social responsibility, the benefits that the company can have during the application of the rules, their commitment to the external environment, the application of international standards in relation to performance, the approach to the concept the green of management as well as the benefits are achieved in terms of micro and macro.

The conceptual model of the study presents the connection of performance in relation to responsibility towards the environment. The econometric model that was used to test the hypotheses and the discussion of the findings were carried out based the approaches of the Linear regression model where the dependent variables are ROA and ROE in relation to the independent variables of environmental responsibility

From the results, we can see how companies are oriented towards environmental protection, how companies invest in improving technological processes and how green management directly affects the performance of companies. The implication of the study is to raise the performance for the implementation of environmental protection rules as a key factor of the countries that intend to be members of the European Union.

Keywords: Responsiveness to Environments, Small and Medium-Sized Business SMEs, Business Performance

Price Momentum, Rational Agents, and Market Efficiency

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This study analyzes the effectiveness of the price momentum (P/M) strategy, as proposed by Jegadeesh and Titman (1993), within the Nepal Stock Exchange (NEPSE). The research aims to determine whether P/M strategies can consistently outperform the market by constructing quarterly portfolios of the top nine P/M stocks from various sectors and comparing their performance against a buy-and-hold strategy over different holding periods. Using quarterly rebalancing to reflect market dynamics, the study analyzed 329 portfolios from July 17, 2011, to April 13, 2022. The findings reveal significant profitability in P/M strategy portfolios, with excess returns ranging from 4.2% to 25.9% across different holding periods, and an average excess return of 15.6% above the market benchmark. Notably, portfolios with six-month holding periods demonstrated the highest excess returns. However, positive excess returns diminish with longer holding periods, suggesting a potential reversal after approximately six months. The study further assesses the pricing efficiency of NEPSE by evaluating P/M strategy portfolios using Sharpe and Treynor ratios. The consistent outperformance of P/M portfolios challenges the Efficient Market Hypothesis, indicating a delay in the integration of public information into stock prices. This research underscores the relevance of P/M strategies in portfolio construction and concludes that NEPSE operates inefficiently in its weak form, recognizing the predictive power of past prices in anticipating future trends. The study provides valuable insights for investors and contributes to the ongoing discourse on the efficacy of P/M strategies in emerging markets..

Keywords: Excess Returns, Price Momentum, Portfolio Performance, Stock Price Behaviour

The Effect of Educational Interventions on the Level of Critical Thinking Skills of Seniors: Case Study

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The study presents the findings of a research project designed to enhance the critical thinking abilities of older adults (aged 65 and above). The project encompassed two main areas of investigation: the assessment of the current level of critical thinking and information assessment skills among older adults and the subsequent implementation of educational programs to enhance their literacy in this area. The study reflects on theoretical knowledge in the field of senior education and the acquisition of critical thinking competences, as well as increasing the level of media, information and digital literacy. It considers the issue in the context of lifelong learning and practice in the European area. The research part of the study focuses on the interpretation of the findings of the pilot research into the level of critical thinking of seniors and also on the presentation of the results of the implemented education of seniors involved in the research. The research is a case study that aims to investigate the level of critical thinking abilities in a selected population group through quantitative research methods. The study's contribution lies in the creation of an educational concept for seniors that primarily increases critical thinking abilities while simultaneously improving the quality of life of seniors in the digital society and reducing the generation gap or social exclusion.

Keywords: Case Study, Critical Thinking, Education, Media Literacy, Seniors

A Mixed Method Study Exploring University Faculty's Perceptions of How Lean Management Impacts Organizational Excellence: Oman Case

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This study investigates how Lean Management impacts organisational excellence (OE) from the perspectives of university faculty at the Military Technological College (MTC) in the Northeastern part of the Sultanate of Oman. In addition to revealing how Lean Management is perceived, the study reports on the correlation between Lean Management and organisational excellence. The study is based on the assumption that Lean Management enhances organisational excellence. A pragmatic philosophy serves as the foundation for the study's research design. A mixed-method case study approach involving a survey administered to male and female university faculty members was used for data collection. The survey includes open-ended questions highlighting viable quotes that validate quantitative results. Descriptive statistics and correlation analysis are used to analyse the quantitative component of the data. Thematic analysis is used to identify the frequency occurrence of words and phrases that reflect how Lean Management impacts organisational excellence (OE). The findings suggest that Lean Management enhances organisational excellence. However, the sample is taken from one case study in a limited geographical area in Oman, which may jeopardise the generalizability of the findings; the study opens a new horizon of research to validate the results in similar locations. The study provides insights via quantitative findings, and participants voiced their opinions on how Lean Management impacts organisational excellence (OE) in Oman. It highlights the importance of Lean Management in advancing OE in the Omani HEIs. The insights gained from this study are helpful for HEI policymakers in Oman. It gives them an understanding of the value of Lean Management for effective OE.

Keywords: Organisational Excellence, Lean Management

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