Theoretical Analyses

Research Trends on Workplace Criminal Behaviour: A Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract

This study presents a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of the research landscape surrounding Workplace Criminal Behaviour (WCB), examining its evolution over time. By focusing on thematic areas, research trends, and patterns of scholarly output, the study offers a systematic overview of scientific contributions in this field. A total of 767 peer-reviewed publications were retrieved from the scientific database and analyzed using bibliometric techniques. The findings indicate that scholarly interest in WCB began to gain momentum in 1989, marking a significant turning point in the field. The analysis also highlights the most prominent institutions, journals, and influential scholars contributing to the field. Keyword mapping revealed closely related areas of inquiry, including white-collar crime, workplace theft, and corporate crime, reflecting the multidimensional nature of WCB research. This study offers a valuable resource for emerging scholars, outlining key areas of focus, frequently used methodologies, high-impact publication outlets, and potential collaborators. By mapping the intellectual structure of the field, the findings contribute to shaping future research directions and fostering more targeted and impactful scholarly efforts in workplace criminal behaviour.

Keywords: Workplace criminal behaviour; Bibliometric analysis.

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Workplace criminal behaviour (WCB) has emerged as a critical concern for organizations, researchers, and policymakers alike. Defined as intentional acts that violate legal, ethical, or organizational norms within the workplace, WCB encompasses a wide range of conduct including fraud, embezzlement, theft, bribery, insider trading, and data breaches (Gottschalk, 2011; Greenberg, 2002). Such behaviours not only inflict financial and reputational damage on organizations but also erode trust, morale, and psychological safety among employees (Bennett & Robinson, 2003). The consequences can be profound—ranging from internal instability and reduced productivity to long-term legal and regulatory ramifications (Clinard & Yeager, 1980; Sutherland, 1949).

Despite increasing awareness, workplace criminal behaviour remains an underexplored area in scholarly research compared to broader themes like organizational deviance or counterproductive work behaviour (Robinson & Bennett, 1995). Existing literature often merges criminal and deviant behaviours into a single continuum, failing to adequately distinguish between legally punishable offences and socially inappropriate, yet lawful actions (Vardi & Weitz, 2004). As a result, there is a growing need for focused studies that systematically examine WCB as a distinct domain of inquiry.

Several high-profile corporate scandals in recent decades have prompted renewed interest in understanding the antecedents and consequences of workplace crimes (Dorminey et al., 2012). These cases underscore the importance of studying not only individual-level predictors (e.g., moral disengagement, personality traits) but also organizational and cultural factors (e.g., ethical climate, leadership style, regulatory oversight) that may facilitate or deter such behaviours (Kaptein, 2008; Trevino et al., 2006). There is no comprehensive bibliometric analysis conducted to map the intellectual structure, key contributors, thematic trends, and research gaps in the field of workplace criminal behaviour. Bibliometric methods

provide a systematic and quantitative approach to evaluating the evolution of a research domain, identifying prolific scholars, influential publications, collaboration networks, and emerging areas of interest (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Donthu et al., 2021).

This study aims to address this gap by offering a detailed bibliometric analysis of WCB research. By synthesizing publication trends, citation patterns, and scholarly networks, the study not only enhances understanding of the field's development but also informs future research directions. Ultimately, it seeks to support scholars and practitioners in developing more effective strategies to detect, prevent and respond to criminal behaviour within organizational settings.

Research objectives

The primary objective of this study is to conduct a comprehensive review of workplace criminal behaviour (WCB) using bibliometric analysis. To the best of our knowledge, no existing research has applied bibliometric methods to explore workplace criminal behaviour. This study represents the first bibliometric investigation in this field, examining workplace crime and related factors.

The present study analyze the central themes within WCB publications, identify the most prolific scholars and their contributions, and highlight the countries and institutions leading in this area of research. Additionally, this study uncovers emerging trends in WCB, how research on WCB has progressed over the years, focusing on the number of publications, key themes, and scientific contributions. The following defined specific research objectives (RO):

RO1: To map the bibliometric profile of the field by analyzing publication trends, the most productive journals, and the most cited papers.

RO2: To identify the most prolific authors, along with the top contributing countries and organizations.

RO3: To determine the emergent themes in WCB research.

Hence, this study presents insights into the development of WCB research, offering trend and theme analyses that aim to spark interest and guide future investigations. By tracing thematic evolution and identifying trending topics, we aim to support and encourage researchers exploring the field of workplace criminal behaviour.

Methods

Bibliometric mapping analysis serves as the foundation of this study, and researchers across diverse disciplines increasingly recognize its value (Song et al., 2019). The following section provides a detailed account of the bibliometric mapping process.

Table 1 outlines the inclusion and exclusion criteria, offering a clear understanding of the current research framework. These criteria guided the development of the study's structure and ensured the relevance and quality of the data analyzed. The initial keyword search was conducted using the term "Workplace Criminal Behaviour" in the Web of Science database, which yielded 790 documents (as of June 25, 2025). Applying the defined inclusion and exclusion criteria helped to filter out irrelevant results and focus on pertinent literature. The specific criteria used are explained in Table 1.

The data refinement process which involved screening, cleaning, and converting the data 767 relevant records were obtained on June 25, 2025. These records were then exported from the Web of Science platform for bibliometric analysis using Biblioshiny in CSV format, which permits to examine the scientific landscape, identify research hotspots, and conduct various other analyses.

Table 1.
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Retrieving the Dataset.

	Code	Criteria	Comments
Inclusion criteria	IC 1	TI=(workplace crime OR organizational crime OR white collar crime OR occupational crime OR employee misconduct OR theft at work OR corporate crime OR workplace deviance OR criminal behaviour at work) includes the articles only in the title.	The search criteria for the relevant dataset included 9 keywords concatenated with OR operator. The total number of relevant articles received was 790.
	IC 2	Publication Year: 1989 to 2025	The period of analysis for this study is from 1989 to 2025 (until June 25, 2025). $N = 831$
	IC 3	Language, "English"	The study examines documents published only in English. $N = 790$
	IC 4	Document Type: Research Article -558, Book chapter-2, Conference paper-26, Book review-118, Editorial materials-42, Review-26,	The search is focused on article, review article, early access, proceeding paper, and book review. $N = 772$
Exclusion criteria	EC 1	Publication stage	Only final successfully published articles have been considered for this study and the articles in the press have been excluded. $N = 767$

Data Analysis

Table 2 shows the summary extracted from Web of science on workplace criminal behaviour (WCB) research data. The WCB databases consist of 767 documents from 1989 to 2025 (June 25, 2025) published in 299 different sources. The first article in the research area was published in 1989. The dataset consists of Research Articles (n = 553), Book review (n = 118), Conference papers (n = 26), Editorial materials (n = 42), Reviews (n = 26) and Book chapters (n = 7). The collected papers have an Annual Growth Rate of 0.56%, and the Average Citations per document is 28.75. All the sources on WCB have 28,1412 references. In addition, the 712 documents on WCB have 1172 index keywords or keywords plus 1057 author-keywords. The extracted data include 355 articles written by a single author, and 1267 authors appeared in multi-authored documents. The international collaboration among authors in WCB research is 14.47%.

Table 2.

Data Synthesis Indicating Main Information About Data.

S.NO.	Description	Results
1	Timespan	1989 - 2025
2	Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	299
3	Documents	767
4	Annual Growth Rate %	0.56
5	Document Average Age	14.9
6	Average citations per doc	28.75
7	References	28,412
DOCUMENT CONTENTS		
8	Keywords Plus (ID)	1172
9	Author's Keywords (DE)	1057
AUTHORS		
10	Authors	1267
11	Authors of single-authored docs	355
AUTHORS COLLABORATION		
12	Single-authored docs	355
13	Co-Authors per Doc	2.05
14	International co-authorships %	14.47
DOCUMENT TYPES		
15	Research Article	553
16	Book Chapter	2
17	Conference Paper	26
18	Book Review	118
19	Editorial Material	42
20	Review	26

Results and Discussion

This section discusses about the findings of the present study in terms of:

1. Trends in workplace criminal behaviour research viz., scientific research papers output, distribution and their citations.

2. Prolific authors with their affiliations and collaborations

3. Application of thematic analysis to bring out the themes in workplace criminal behaviour

Research Objective

RO1: To map the bibliometric profile of the field by analyzing publication trends, the most productive journals, and the most cited papers.

Table 3.
Annual scientific production.

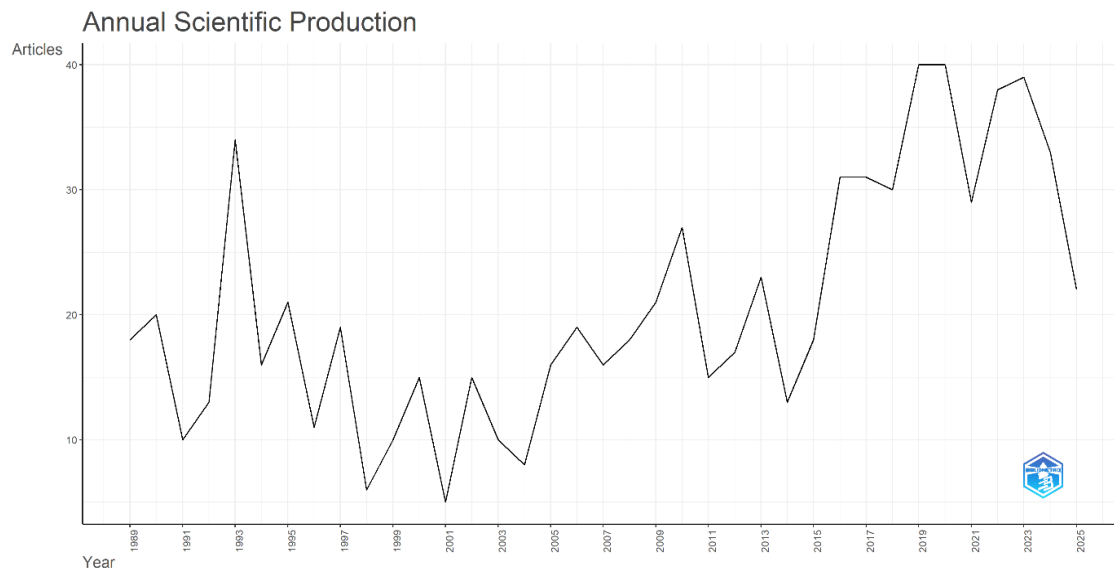| Year	Article	Year	Article	Year	Article	Year	Article
1989	18	1999	10	2009	21	2019	40
1990	20	2000	15	2010	27	2020	40
1991	10	2001	5	2011	15	2021	29
1992	13	2002	15	2012	17	2022	38
1993	34	2003	10	2013	23	2023	39
1994	16	2004	8	2014	13	2024	33
1995	21	2005	16	2015	18	2025	22
1996	11	2006	19	2016	31		
1997	19	2007	16	2017	31		
1998	6	2008	18	2018	30		

Figure 1. Number of Articles in the given year

Table 3 shows the annual publication of articles in the field of workplace criminal behaviour in Web of science dataset that commenced in 1989 with the work of Goff and Nason-Clark titled "The Seriousness of Crime in Fredericton, New-Brunswick - Perceptions Toward White-Collar Crime" published in Canadian Journal of Criminology. It was the first research paper published in 1989. Fig. 1 shows 0.56% growth in the scientific research papers published from 1989 to June 2025. Table 3 and Figure 1 illustrate the growing interest of the research community in workplace criminal behaviour over time. The data reveals that the field began to attract attention in 1989, with the publication of 18 articles, marking the apparent inception of academic work in this area. Interest in the topic steadily increased, as reflected by the 27 articles published in 2010 signalling a renewed scholarly focus. This upward trend became more pronounced in 2019 when the number of publications surged to 40 articles indicating an exponential rise in research activity related to workplace criminal behaviour.

Table 4.
Average Citation (AC) Per Year.

Year	AC	Year	AC	Year	AC	Year	AC
1989	0.43	1999	0.54	2009	3.03	2019	3.52
1990	0.61	2000	5.47	2010	2.32	2020	3.20
1991	0.84	2001	0.61	2011	3.23	2021	2.70
1992	0.74	2002	4.78	2012	2.65	2022	1.90
1993	0.25	2003	1.06	2013	1.75	2023	2.10
1994	0.14	2004	4.59	2014	1.00	2024	1.38
1995	0.35	2005	2.16	2015	1.86	2025	0.64
1996	2.25	2006	4.23	2016	2.07		
1997	0.11	2007	5.79	2017	2.96		
1998	0.17	2008	2.50	2018	2.17		

South-West University "Neofit Rilski"

Table 4 presents the average number of citations per year for publications in the field. This metric reflects the annual scholarly impact of each paper on the profession. The data indicates that the subject began to attract academic attention in 1989, with an average of 0.4 citations per publication. Citations peaked in 2000 reaching an average of 5.47 citations per paper. Following this peak, the average citation count declined to 2.32 by 2010 rose slightly to 3.20 in 2020 and then dropped again to 1.38 in 2024. The authors believe that the recent publications particularly from 2020 onward have not yet had sufficient time to accumulate citations. Consequently, the citation numbers for these years are expected to increase as the research continues to gain visibility and relevance.

Table 5.

Most relevant sources.

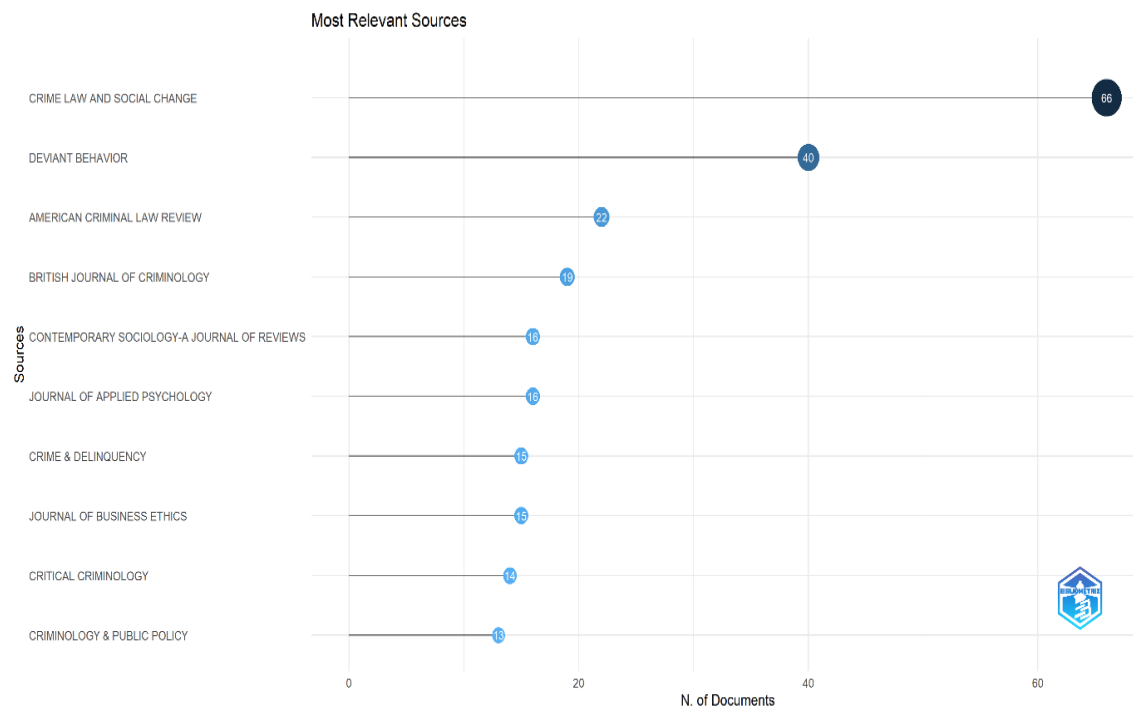| S.No	Source	Articles
1	CRIME LAW AND SOCIAL CHANGE	66
2	DEVIANT BEHAVIOR	40
3	AMERICAN CRIMINAL LAW REVIEW	22
4	BRITISH JOURNAL OF CRIMINOLOGY	19
5	CONTEMPORARY SOCIOLOGY-A JOURNAL OF REVIEWS	16
6	JOURNAL OF APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY	16
7	CRIME & DELINQUENCY	15
8	JOURNAL OF BUSINESS ETHICS	15
9	CRITICAL CRIMINOLOGY	14
10	CRIMINOLOGY & PUBLIC POLICY	13

Figure 2. Most Relevant Sources

Figure 2 and Table 5 highlight the most relevant publication sources identified through the bibliometric analysis. These sources serve as valuable references for researchers interested in workplace criminal behaviour, helping them target the most appropriate journals for submitting their manuscripts. Based on data extracted from the Web of Science in June 2025, the analysis identified the 10 top most pertinent journals in the field. Notably, Crime, Law and Social Change emerged as the most prominent source, with 66 publications related to workplace criminal behaviour. Other key journals—ranked by relevance and publication volume—include Deviant Behavior, American Criminal Law Review etc. These findings offer important guidance for researchers aiming to publish in well-established outlets and to stay updated with current developments in the field.

According to research, both the number of citations a publication receives and its scientific productivity serves as key indicators for assessing a publication's significance and scholarly impact (Grant et al., 2000; Waheed et al., 2018).

Table 6.

Local and global citations with authors and document title.

S.No	Document title	Author & publication year	Publication source	Local total Citation	Global Total Citation
1	Development of a measure of workplace deviance	Bennett & Robinson(2000)	Journal of Applied Psychology	127	1899
2	Organizational citizenship behavior and workplace deviance: The role of affect and cognitions	Lee & Allen(2002)	Journal of Applied Psychology	37	1373
3	Abusive supervision and workplace deviance and the moderating effects of negative reciprocity beliefs.	Mitchell & Ambrose (2007)	Journal of Applied Psychology	32	1066
4	Sanction Threats and Appeals to Morality: Testing a Rational Choice Model of Corporate Crime	Paternoster & Simpson (1996)	Law & Society Review	27	495
5	Hostility, job attitudes, and workplace deviance: Test of a multilevel model.	Judge et all (2006)	Journal of Applied Psychology	25	463
6	Loving yourself abundantly: Relationship of the narcissistic personality to self- and other perceptions of workplace deviance, leadership, and task and contextual performance.	Judge et all (2006)	Journal of Applied Psychology	22	456
7	Examining the Effects of Sleep Deprivation on Workplace Deviance: A Self-Regulatory Perspective	Christian & Ellis (2011)	Academy of Management Journal	22	421
8	Abusive supervision, intentions to quit, and employees' workplace deviance: A power/dependence analysis	Tepper et all (2009)	Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes	21	414
9	Examining the Link Between Ethical Leadership and Employee Misconduct: The Mediating Role of Ethical Climate	Mayer et all (2010)	Journal of Business Ethics	21	353
10	Workplace deviance, organizational citizenship behavior, and business unit performance: the bad apples do spoil the whole barrel	Dunlop & Lee (2004)	Journal of Organizational Behavior	20	326

Table 6 provides insights into relevant and local citations, which are integral components of bibliometric analysis. This study examines both global and local citations to assess the influence of individual publications. Global citation refers to the number of times a document has been cited across the entire Web of Science database, reflecting its broader interdisciplinary impact. In contrast, local citation indicates the number of times a document has been cited by other documents within the specific dataset under analysis. While global citations capture a publication's overall scholarly reach, local citations reveal its direct relevance within the research domain of workplace criminal behaviour**.**

Table 6 presents the ten top most cited documents in the dataset related to workplace criminal behaviour. Among these, the study by Bennett and Robinson (2000) ranks highest in both local citations (127) and global citations (1,899), demonstrating its foundational role in the field. Lee & Allen (2002), although securing a higher global citation count **(**1,373**)** and local citation (37) ranks second in this list, indicating its high influence across the disciplines, but its specific impact within the WCB literature is relatively lower than Bennett et al.'s work.

As shown in Table 6, most documents exhibit higher global citation counts than local citations**.** The authors suggest that this discrepancy stems likely from the broad interdisciplinary relevance of the research outputs, which have garnered substantial attention beyond the immediate scope of workplace criminal behaviour. This pattern further highlights the importance of distinguishing between global academic influence and domain-specific impact when evaluating the significance of scholarly contributions.

RO2: To identify the most prolific authors, along with the top contributing countries and organizations.
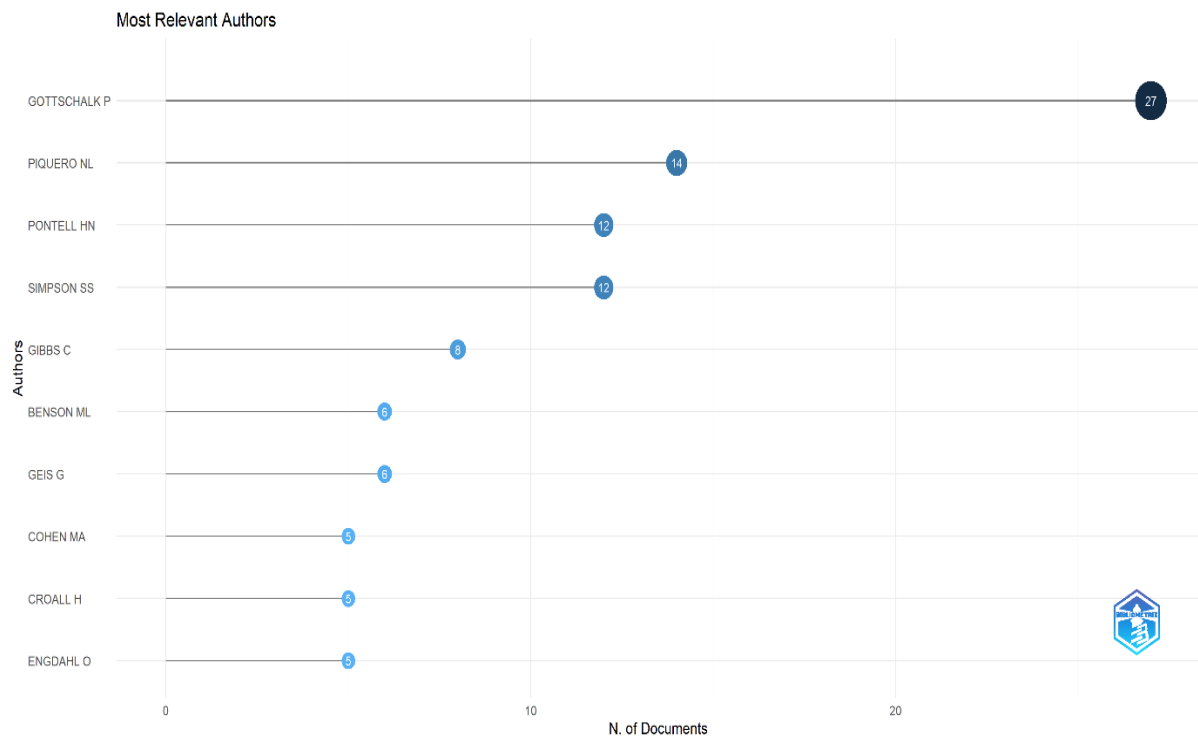
Figure 3. Most Relevant Author

Figure 3 illustrates the productivity of authors over time. Each line represents an author's timeline, while the size of the bubbles corresponds to the number of documents published by that author in a given year. Among the contributors, Gottschalk's work stands out as both significant and influential, making a substantial impact on the field. His consistent contributions provide valuable insights for researchers seeking to understand the phenomenon of workplace criminal behaviour.
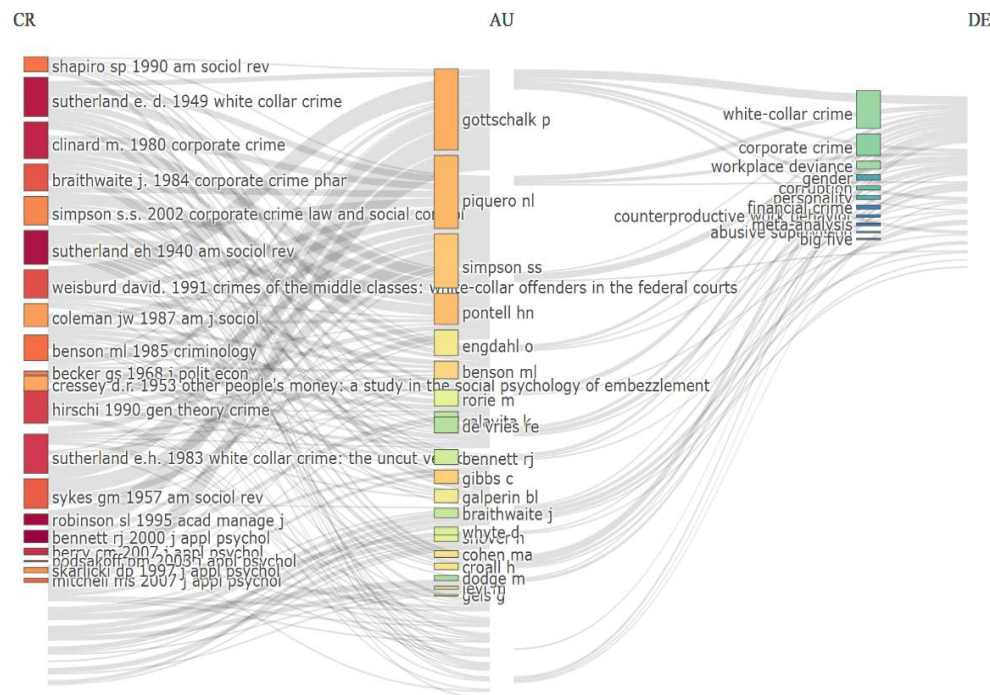
Figure 4. Three-field plot (Sankey diagram)

Figure 4 presents a three-field plot, commonly known as a Sankey diagram, which illustrates visually the interconnections between cited references, contributing authors, and the keywords frequently used in Workplace Criminal Behaviour (WCB) research. The diagram is structured into three columns: the left column represents the cited references, the central column identifies the contributing authors, and the right column displays the most prevalent keywords associated with their research. This visualization facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the intellectual structure of the field by mapping the relationships across these three dimensions.

The Sankey diagram also reflects the findings of the bibliometric analysis conducted on the most productive authors in the WCB domain between 1989 and June 2025. Among these, Gottschalk emerges as the most prolific contributor, with 27 publications, followed by Piquero, who has predominantly worked on workplace deviance (Piquero & Moffitt, 2014) and workplace violence (Piquero et al., 2013) authored 14 documents. This representation

underscores the dominant figures and thematic concentrations within the field, offering valuable insights into the scholarly landscape of workplace criminal behaviour.
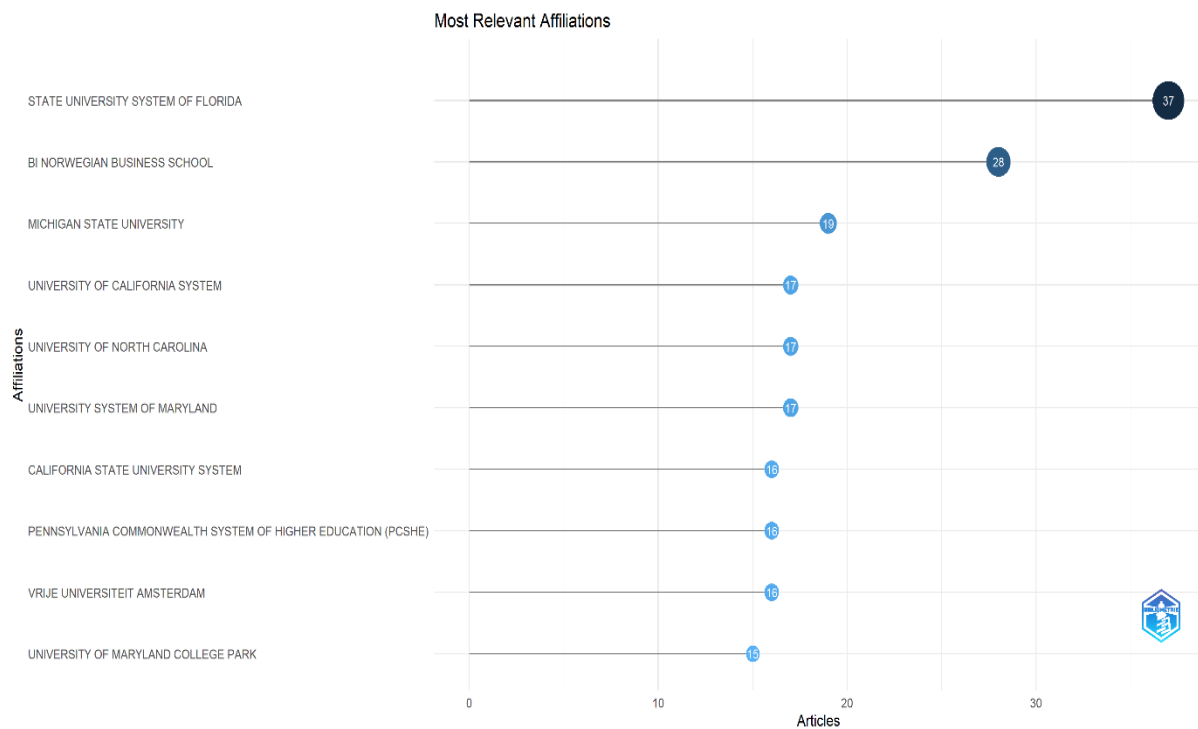

Figure 5. Most relevant affiliations.

Figure 5 presents the most relevant affiliations, highlighting patterns of co-authorship and institutional collaboration. The analysis identifies the top 10 institutions that have made the most significant contributions to research on workplace criminal behaviour. The State University System of Florida leads with 37 publications, followed by BI Norwegian Business School with 28 documents, and Michigan State University with 19 publications. These institutions demonstrate strong research output and collaborative activity in this field. In most cases, the keywords defined by authors in these publications effectively capture the core content and thematic focus of the articles.

Table 7.

Top 25 Most Cited Countries in Field of Workplace Criminal Behaviour

S.No	Country	Total Citation	Percentage
1	USA	380	49.479
2	ENGLAND	75	9.766
3	CHINA	54	7.031
4	CANADA	50	6.510
5	AUSTRALIA	34	4.427
6	NORWAY	29	3.776
7	NETHERLANDS	25	3.255
8	SWEDEN	18	2.344
9	PAKISTAN	16	2.083
10	GERMANY	15	1.953
11	ISRAEL	12	1.563
12	TAIWAN	12	1.563
13	SPAIN	11	1.432
14	INDIA	10	1.302
15	WALES	9	1.172
16	FRANCE	8	1.042
17	SCOTLAND	8	1.042
18	SOUTH KOREA	8	1.042
19	MALAYSIA	7	0.911
20	NEW ZEALAND	7	0.911
21	ITALY	5	0.651
22	BELGIUM	4	0.521
23	FINLAND	4	0.521
24	SINGAPORE	4	0.521
25	U ARAB EMIRATES	4	0.521

Country-wise citation analysis (Table 7) indicates that the United States of America leads global research output on WCB, with 380 citations**,** followed by England (75) and China (54). Europe, Sweden, Norway, Belgium, Italy, and England shows strong engagement in the field. From Asia, China and India have emerged as important contributors, reflecting a growing geographical diversification in WCB research.

RO3: To determine the emergent themes in WCB research.

Figure 6: Word Cloud- Keywords.

Analyzing keywords from published papers serves as a pivotal method for identifying popular topics and emerging trends within a specific research domain. In this study, author-defined keywords were examined to gain insight into thematic patterns and conceptual developments in the field of workplace criminal behaviour (WCB)**.** The analysis considers keywords as indicators of core issues and evolving interests in the scholarly discourse.

The word cloud in Figure 6 visualizes the most frequently used keywords across 767 publications related to WCB, retrieved from the Web of Science database. The study considered the articles published from 1989 to 2025, during which research interest has grown significantly. The word cloud in Fig. 6 displays the most frequently used keywords in the papers on WCB in those 36 years. Between 1989 and 2025, the interest in white collar crime, workplace theft, corporate crime has been growing and will continue to be researched in the near future. To understand more about the field, the study also looked at the keywords co-occurrence network (KCN) trends in workplace criminal behaviour.
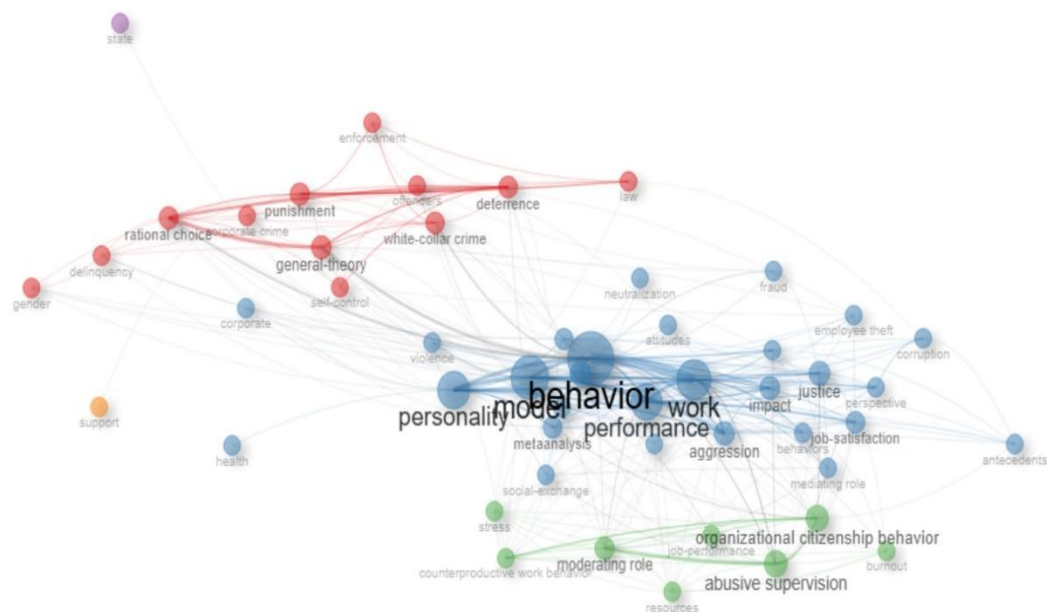
Figure 7. Keyword Co-Occurrence Network (KCN)

In addition to the word cloud, a keyword co-occurrence network (KCN) was generated and is presented in Figure 7**.** This analysis highlights the interrelationships among keywords, revealing conceptual linkages and knowledge clusters within the field. Unlike the word cloud shown in figure 6, which shows only common keywords, the KCN analysis uncovers deeper patterns of association between terms. Most of the keywords began showing a steep trend from 1989 onwards. These findings confirm that interest in workplace criminal behaviour is rising steadily and is likely to continue growing in future research efforts.
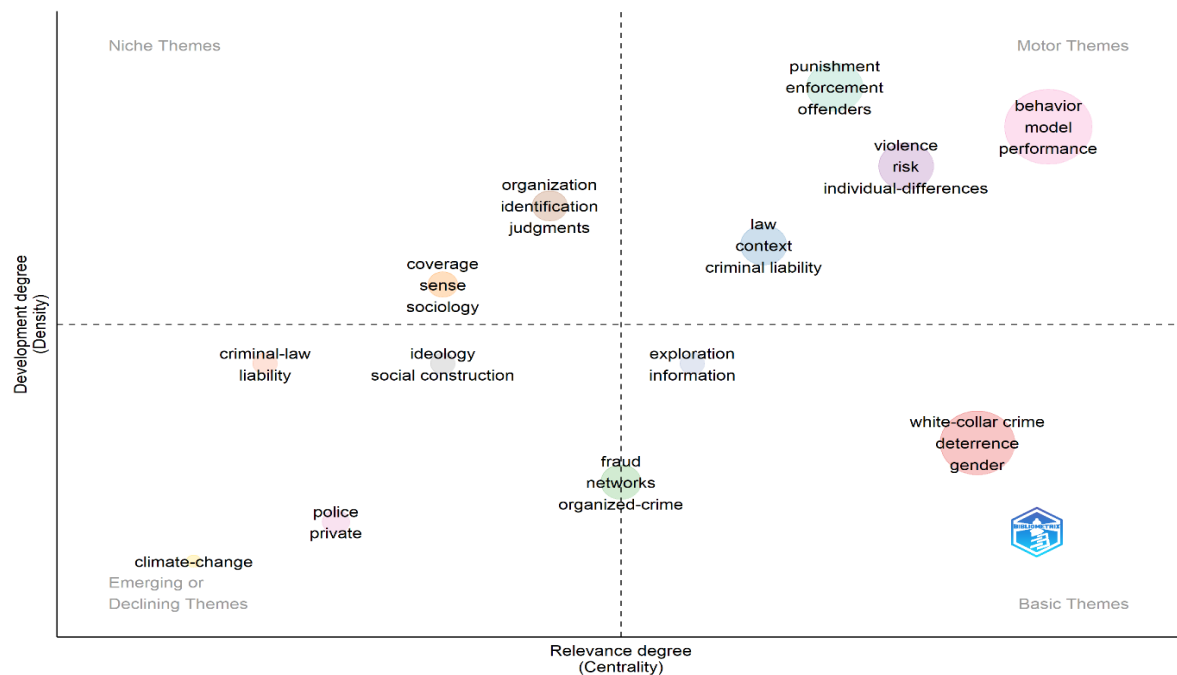
Figure 8. Thematic map

To further explore the structure of research themes, a thematic map was generated based on author keywords. This map helps visualize both established and emerging themes within the WCB literature. The analysis employs two key dimensions—centrality and density—to classify themes. The vertical axis represents density, while the horizontal axis represents centrality. Centrality measures the degree of interaction between themes (i.e., their importance within the field), while density reflects the internal cohesion or maturity of a theme (Esfahani et al., 2019). These two properties quantify the growth and importance of specific topics.

Conclusion

Although the concept of workplace criminal behaviour has been examined for over three decades, the existing body of literature has not at arrived at a comprehensive synthesis that could guide practitioners and policymakers. Hence, this study seeks to address this gap by employing bibliometric analysis to systematically evaluate 36 years of scholarly publications in this domain. A total of 767 documents were retrieved from the Web of Science database, with the earliest identified publication dating back to 1989, marking the inception of formal academic interest in the topic. The analysis reveals that journals such as "Crime, Law and Social Change" and "Deviant Behavior" have served as prominent publication venues, offering important insights for scholars seeking appropriate platforms for disseminating their work. The contributions of Gottschalk emerged as noteworthy, both in terms of publication

volume and citation impact, underscoring his central role in shaping the discourse on workplace criminal behaviour. The United States has made the most substantial contributions, both quantitatively and qualitatively, with the State University System of Florida recognized as a leading institutional contributor.

In addition, the results also indicate a marked increase in scholarly interest and output in recent years, reflecting the growing relevance and complexity of workplace criminal behaviour in contemporary organizational contexts. Furthermore, the study identifies key thematic areas and keyword trends that encapsulate the multifaceted nature of this field. These findings offer a valuable foundation for future research and have significant implications for academic inquiry, policy development, and organizational practice.

Limitations and Future Research

This study is not without limitations. The analysis relies solely on data from the Web of Science database; therefore, the authors do not claim that the findings represent an exhaustive list of publications in the field. While Web of Science is widely recognized for its comprehensive coverage of high-quality, peer-reviewed literature and is considered sufficient for bibliometric studies (Airyalat et al., 2019), the exclusion of other databases such as Scopus**,** PubMed**,** and others may have limited the breadth of the dataset.

 All the vital databases, like PubMed and Scopus could be included in order to incorporate the work that has not been covered under Web of science data from multiple sources in future research would undoubtedly enhance the depth of the findings. Further, assimilating to conclude the study, the bibliometric analysis provides insights into the research done, and suggests a future plan of action for the researchers who wish to research the area of workplace criminal behaviour. This paper lays out the indicators of future research in workplace criminal behaviour and offers a quick overview for the researchers interested in exploring, collaborating, and seeking guidance.

Conflict of Interest
The authors have declared no competing interests**.**

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