

## THE ROLE OF MANAGERIAL COMPETENCIES IN INTERORGANIZATIONAL KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER: A HYBRID LITERATURE REVIEW

Aurelia DOMARADZKA<sup>1\*</sup>, Adam SULICH<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Human Resource Management, Faculty of Business and Management, Wrocław University of Economics and Business; aurelia.domaradzka@ue.wroc.pl, ORCID: 0000-0001-8713-4471

<sup>2</sup> Department of Advanced Research in Management, Faculty of Business and Management, Wrocław University of Economics and Business; adam.sulich@ue.wroc.pl, ORCID: 0000-0001-8841-9102

\* Correspondence author

**Purpose:** This article aims to illustrate the role of managerial competencies in inter-organizational knowledge transfer.

**Design/methodology/approach:** To achieve this objective, a hybrid literature review methodology in human resources management is adopted. This research combines a traditional narrative literature review with a systematic, bibliometric analysis. The traditional review justifies scientific discourse through subjectively selected publications, while the systematic review involves repeatable, objective searches of the Scopus database, analyzed using VOSviewer software.

**Findings:** The findings highlight the critical role of managerial competencies in facilitating knowledge transfer between organizations. The evolving competencies of managerial staff within international organizations significantly influence the effectiveness of inter-organizational knowledge transfer.

**Research limitations/implications:** Future research could expand on this study by exploring other databases and using additional bibliometric tools. Limitations include the focus on the Scopus database and potential biases in publication selection.

**Practical implications:** This research offers insights for international enterprises on the importance of developing managerial competencies to enhance knowledge transfer. Organizations can leverage these findings to improve training programs and managerial practices, thereby fostering more effective knowledge sharing.

**Social implications:** Enhanced managerial competencies in knowledge transfer can lead to more efficient organizational practices, potentially benefiting society by improving corporate social responsibility and influencing public and industry policies towards better knowledge management practices.

**Originality/value:** This paper provides a novel hybrid approach to literature review, combining traditional and systematic methods, and underscores the essential role of managerial competencies in inter-organizational knowledge transfer. It is valuable for researchers, HR professionals, and international business managers.

**Keywords:** Managerial competencies; Knowledge transfer; Human capital.

**Category of the paper:** Literature review.

## 1. Introduction

Modern companies are not isolated systems; they function in inter-organizational networks and business ecosystems. In this context, there is an exchange of goods and services between them and employee turnover at all organizational levels. Thus, a new type of inter-organizational relationship is forming between them, which does not always rely on commitment and reciprocity (Sus, Organa, 2020). Moreover, knowledge and information transfer occurs between organizations. This happens because certain organizations are learning organizations, create conditions for the dissemination of knowledge, or their development relies on knowledge and information processing processes. Unfortunately, such a positive picture of business development presented in the literature is accompanied by a lack of broad and in-depth research on the role of managerial competencies in inter-organizational knowledge transfer. Research to date presents knowledge transfer processes somewhat isolated from managerial decisions and the role of managerial competencies.

The purpose of this article is to identify the role of managerial competencies in inter-organizational knowledge transfer. The realization of the research objective fills the indicated research gap. The research objective formulated in this way is accompanied by the adopted research methodology of a hybrid literature review in human resource management. This research procedure combines a classical, narrative literature review with a bibliometric, systematic review. The classical literature review involves critically substantiating scientific discourse with subjectively selected scientific publications (Hensel, 2020). The selection of sources for analysis in a critical, classical literature review is justified with regard to the assumed purpose of the work. In the adopted hybrid literature review, this is complemented by a systematic, repetitive, and objective search of the Scopus database through queries, extended by the analysis of bibliometric review results in the VOSviewer program.

The article follows a standard structure. After this introduction, the background literature is presented. The classical literature review is the initial stage of the research procedure and is historical and comparative in nature, as it consists of showing similarities, differences, and correlations regarding the ideas and definitions presented (Orłowska et al., 2017). The next section details the methodology of the systematic literature review, justifying the selection of the Scopus database and explaining the research procedure schematically. The paper uses the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) methodology, which is the standard for meta-analyses and systematic reviews of the literature (Kozar, Sulich, 2023). The PRISMA methodology leads to a clear presentation and substantive definition of the research subject, and also allows for the revelation of weaknesses in conceptual categories, theoretical and methodological concepts presented in the analyzed sources. Subsequently, the results of the research procedure, supplemented with bibliometric maps created in the VOSviewer program (version 1.16.18), are presented. The research methodology

section also points out the limitations of the adopted methodology. The next section presents a discussion of the obtained results of the hybrid literature review. The discussion outlines the limitations of the conducted study and proposes modifications and corrections, and additions that will make it possible to formulate new research problems and hypotheses in the long run. The article concludes with a summary that identifies theoretical and practical implications and future research directions. The proposed layout and logic of the article are supported by the exploratory nature of the conducted study.

## 2. Literature background

In this part of the article, a classical, critical literature review is conducted to present the role of managerial competencies in inter-organizational knowledge transfer. Simultaneously, key terms defining the research perspectives addressed by scholars are presented, which were then utilized in the systematic literature review (Hensel, 2020).

International enterprises operating beyond the borders of a single country are exposed to various destabilizing factors in economic, legal, and social areas. To ensure process stability, actions aimed at international and inter-organizational knowledge transfer are undertaken. Knowledge transfer is the process of transferring knowledge between organizations as a result of interactions between them (Asmussen et al., 2013). This builds organizational anti-fragility and sustainable competitive advantage (Sołoducho-Pelc, Sulich, 2020).

However, the ever-evolving role of the human factor (Cooke et al., 2022) in organizational management necessitates continuous development of tasks and functions strictly assigned to managerial positions (Cameron et al., 2006). This development contributes to the increasing importance of managerial staff in human resource management, supporting the organization in achieving its goals, strategies, tasks, and success (Stor and Suchodolski, 2016). Key individuals within the organization significantly shape dominant adaptive behaviors throughout the organization (Barabasz, Szpringiel, 2012).

The leadership role of managers is particularly challenging in international enterprises and inter-organizational knowledge transfer processes (Edwards, Rees, 2017). In these processes, managers must demonstrate knowledge of the country's culture (Srikanth, Jomon, 2020), the market environment of the organization (Kunasz, 2009), and the mentality of employees and managerial staff (Domaradzka, 2020). Therefore, it is commonly believed that contemporary employees involved in human resource management should possess extensive knowledge and competencies (Kozar, Sulich, 2023), enabling them to act as advisors and support to the boards (Poba-Nzaou et al., 2020) and be critical in making strategic decisions impacting the global functioning of the company (Jankowska et al., 2021).

To support key processes of creating, sharing, and disseminating knowledge, managerial staff should possess appropriate competencies (Aleksandrova et al., 2023; Para, 2021), which include:

- Intercultural communication skills, allowing managers to interact effectively with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds;
- Cultural experience, sensitivity, and awareness, helping managers understand and respect diverse cultural norms;
- Industry knowledge, aiding managers in understanding the specific dynamics and challenges of different sectors;
- Adaptability and flexibility, enabling managers to adjust to various cultural contexts and work environments;
- Emotional intelligence, allowing managers to understand and manage their own and others' emotions, supporting positive relationships across cultures;
- Conflict resolution skills, helping managers address conflicts and misunderstandings constructively;
- Openness and curiosity, encouraging managers to seek knowledge and learn, promoting a global mindset;
- Technical skills, contributing to the effective execution of tasks.

Managerial competencies impact the operations of international enterprises (Latukha, Panibratov, 2015). The success of modern international managers is conditioned by their own qualifications and competencies, which contribute to the recognition of these qualifications (Bebel et al., 2020). The challenge for managerial staff is to develop competencies that support an integrative and collaborative work environment (Aleksandrova, 2023; Srikanth, Jomon, 2020). In such conditions, human resource management contributes to innovation (Masárová et al., 2023) and enterprise development (Przysada-Sukiennik, 2022) by expanding the organization's knowledge base and stimulating knowledge creation (Kłeczek, 2018). Additionally, it is believed that knowledge is shared among geographically dispersed units and organizations (López-Sáez et al., 2021) and across cultural and national boundaries. Therefore, the process of inter-organizational knowledge transfer is gaining importance, though it is time-consuming (Nilsson, Rickne, 2012). Knowledge transfer in international enterprises is motivated by the desire to utilize existing resources and capabilities in new locations or to acquire valuable knowledge available there, both of which depend on successful knowledge transfer (Edwards, Rees, 2017).

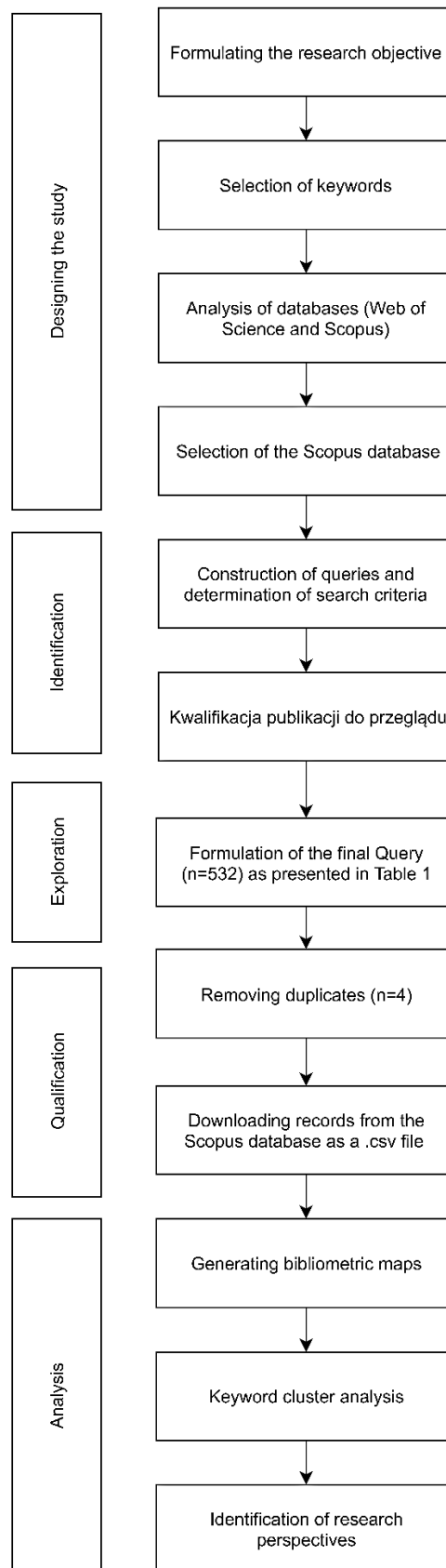
Based on the analysis of existing studies and empirical research on the topic of managerial competencies in relation to specific outcomes achieved by enterprises, it can be observed that they primarily relate to studies of international organizations entering the Polish market or foreign enterprises (Kaleta et al., 2018; Stor, Haromszeki, 2021). The relationship between managerial competencies and knowledge transfer in Polish enterprises with foreign units has been insufficiently studied (Stor, 2023). This issue seems particularly interesting due to the growing interest in knowledge transfer, knowledge sharing, and knowledge exchange.

### 3. Materials and Methods

In this part of the article, the adopted method of a systematic review of literature indexed in the Scopus scientific database is described. A systematic literature review is a commonly used method for integrating scientific evidence, employing explicit and detailed methods for identifying, selecting, critically assessing, and analyzing relevant documented data qualified for review (Orłowska et al., 2017). Such a literature review, focusing on the systematic and repeatable search methods, has an integrative nature, often combined with mapping in bibliometric programs. In this article, the VOSviewer program (version 1.16.18) was used. Identifying the most frequently occurring keywords in the area of competencies and knowledge transfer will help indicate the role and research areas previously studied.

The conducted research consisted of five stages, detailed in Figure 1. The first stage of the research procedure was the formulation of the research objective, which aligns with the purpose of the article: identifying the role of managerial competencies in inter-organizational knowledge transfer. The next step in the research procedure was the selection of keywords relevant to the literature review's research theme. Subsequently, the limitations of the bibliometric, systematic literature review were assessed, the chosen database for exploration was selected, and further research steps were determined. The decision was made to study publications gathered in the Scopus database because it is a recognized scientific database characterized by the scientific rigor of indexed works and international reach (Baas et al., 2020). The next stage of the research involved multidirectional searching of the database using varied keywords related to managerial competencies and knowledge transfer, in English. This way, the query syntax was analyzed and its final form, presented in Table 1, was established.

Table 1 presents the search criteria for literary data in the Scopus database, which include the following keywords formulated in English: “competencies” and “knowledge transfer”. Due to different spelling variants in English, the authors decided to use an operator in the keyword “competencies” to account for these differences. According to the PRISMA procedure, presented in Figure 1, documents indexed in the Scopus bibliometric database that were excluded from the study included: publications from the year 2024, retracted publications, errata, editorial notes, and undefined works. By selecting various options in the sidebar of the Scopus database, the scientific fields assigned to the publications were chosen: “decision sciences”, “economics and finance”, “social sciences”, and “business management”. In this way, the query to the Scopus database was constructed (Table 1), which identified 538 publications meeting the inclusion and exclusion criteria.



**Figure 1.** Stages of the conducted research according to the PRISMA scheme.

Source: Authors own elaboration.

**Table 1.***Initial results of Scopus exploration*

| Query syntax used in Scopus database exploration   | No. of Publications |
|--|---------------------|
| ( TITLE-ABS-KEY ( "competenc*" ) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ( "knowledge transfer" ) ) AND ( EXCLUDE ( PUBYEAR , 2024 ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "SOCI" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "BUSI" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "DECI" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "ECON" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "ar" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "cp" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "ch" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "bk" ) ) | 538                 |

Source: Authors' elaboration.

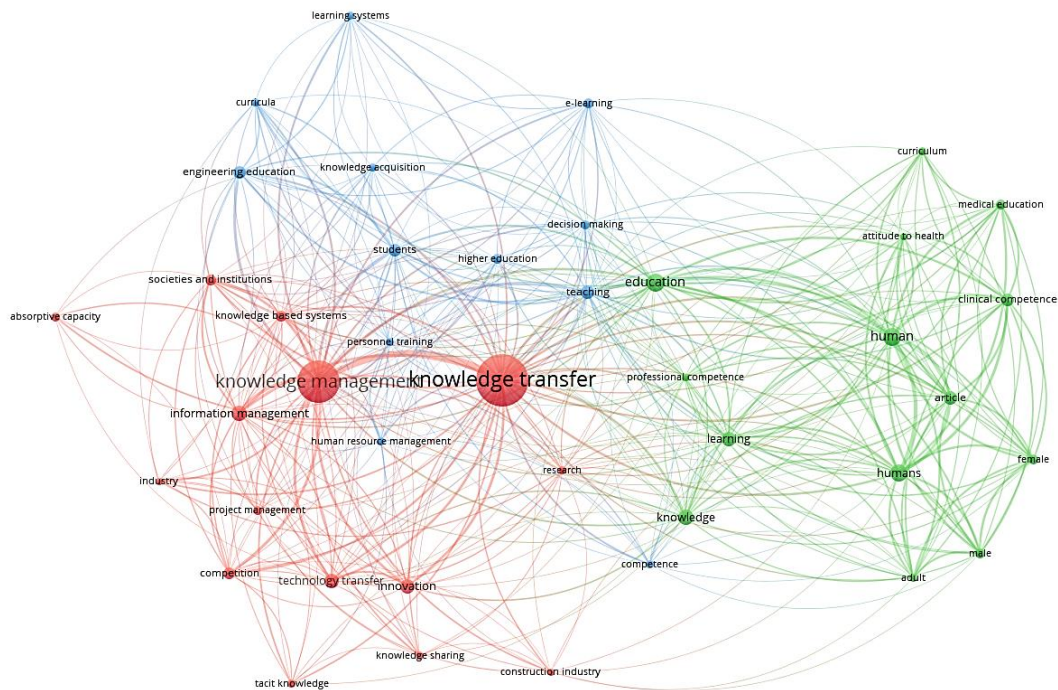
According to the procedure presented in Figure 1, the next step involved the removal of four duplicate records from the Scopus database. The identified literature corpus thus comprised a collection of articles, conference papers, books, and book chapters published between 1988 and 2023. Subsequently, 534 publications were downloaded from the database as a .csv file for further analysis using VOSviewer.

In VOSviewer (version 1.16.18), the standard procedure (full counting method) was employed to create maps of keyword co-occurrences (all keywords). In the subsequent dialog window, the minimum number of keyword co-occurrences was set to 10. Based on this criterion, out of 3085 keywords, 41 met the condition. For each of the 41 keywords (treated as network nodes), VOSviewer calculated the number of links and the total strength of the co-occurrence links. In the next dialog window of the bibliometric program, all keywords were displayed. At this stage, no keywords were excluded, and different grammatical forms of the same word were not merged. This set of keywords was also downloaded as a .txt file and presented in the article as Table 2. Using additional tabs in VOSviewer, a map of keyword co-occurrences was generated.

The following limitations of the applied research procedure, directly stemming from the nature of a systematic literature review, should be noted. Firstly, the query presented in Table 1 used keywords reflecting the thematic scope of this article. Therefore, a limitation is access to the Scopus database, which requires a paid subscription to utilize all its offered functions. Additionally, formulating the query necessitates knowledge of applicable logical operators to refine the search (Table 1). Moreover, using the Scopus database requires proficiency in English, as most works in this database are authored in this language. It should also be noted that, due to cultural context, many interesting scientific works concerning the role of managerial competencies in inter-organizational knowledge transfer may be prepared in less commonly used languages. A significant limitation of the study was the restriction of the publication search area to fields such as Business, Management and Accounting, Economics, Econometrics and Finance, and Decision Science, which contain collections of publications indexed by journals in the Scopus database.

## 4. Results

As a result of the described research procedure, a bibliometric map was generated based on the query to the Scopus database (Table 1). The bibliometric map, using nodes and edges of the keyword network, presents three clusters of keywords (Figure 2), whose arrangement is significant. Not only the central or peripheral position but also the size of the network nodes reflect the importance of the presented keywords.



**Figure 1.** Bibliometric map of co-occurring keywords.

Source: Authors' own elaboration using VOSviewer.

The keywords identified in Figure 2, which are presented as large nodes, are knowledge transfer and the related knowledge management. All keywords identified in Figure 2 are presented in Table 2, which also indicates the numerical characteristics of their co-occurrence.

The keywords identified in the first cluster, marked in red, are closely related to several key research and practical areas, especially in the context of knowledge management and industrial innovation. On the other hand, the keywords grouped in the green cluster indicate topics related to education and competencies in the field of medicine or health. The third cluster, blue, contains keywords mainly related to education, training, and development in academic and professional contexts, with a particular emphasis on engineering and human resource management.



**Table 2.**  
*Co-occurring keywords identified on the bibliometric map*

| Keyword                    | Cluster | No. of links | Total link strength | No. of co-occurrences |
|----------------------------|---------|--------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| absorptive capacity        | 1       | 8            | 20                  | 14                    |
| competition                |         | 22           | 82                  | 22                    |
| construction industry      |         | 15           | 28                  | 10                    |
| industry                   |         | 13           | 39                  | 10                    |
| information management     |         | 26           | 128                 | 34                    |
| innovation                 |         | 19           | 76                  | 29                    |
| knowledge based systems    |         | 25           | 71                  | 18                    |
| knowledge management       |         | 32           | 458                 | 170                   |
| knowledge sharing          |         | 15           | 29                  | 11                    |
| knowledge transfer         |         | 40           | 453                 | 240                   |
| project management         |         | 17           | 34                  | 13                    |
| research                   |         | 24           | 59                  | 12                    |
| societies and institutions |         | 24           | 82                  | 18                    |
| tacit knowledge            |         | 11           | 29                  | 11                    |
| technology transfer        |         | 19           | 83                  | 29                    |
| adult                      | 2       | 19           | 100                 | 12                    |
| article                    |         | 21           | 170                 | 27                    |
| attitude to health         |         | 18           | 71                  | 10                    |
| clinical competence        |         | 19           | 156                 | 24                    |
| curriculum                 |         | 16           | 54                  | 11                    |
| education                  |         | 36           | 222                 | 41                    |
| female                     |         | 17           | 119                 | 15                    |
| human                      |         | 22           | 244                 | 42                    |
| humans                     |         | 21           | 232                 | 39                    |
| knowledge                  |         | 28           | 106                 | 31                    |
| learning                   |         | 25           | 121                 | 29                    |
| male                       |         | 18           | 125                 | 16                    |
| medical education          |         | 18           | 90                  | 15                    |
| professional competence    |         | 27           | 67                  | 10                    |
| competence                 |         | 3            | 18                  | 33                    |
| curricula                  | 16      |              | 50                  | 11                    |
| decision making            | 26      |              | 53                  | 14                    |
| e-learning                 | 21      |              | 46                  | 15                    |
| engineering education      | 18      |              | 88                  | 24                    |
| higher education           | 19      |              | 38                  | 15                    |
| human resource management  | 18      |              | 41                  | 12                    |
| knowledge acquisition      | 19      |              | 38                  | 11                    |
| learning systems           | 15      |              | 37                  | 11                    |
| personnel training         | 22      |              | 50                  | 11                    |
| students                   | 24      |              | 103                 | 23                    |
| teaching                   | 33      |              | 129                 | 26                    |

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

The red cluster focuses on knowledge management in a business and industrial context, with a strong emphasis on "knowledge management" and "knowledge transfer", indicating that these areas have a high number of connections and are frequently discussed or studied in scientific publications.

The second cluster is concentrated on education and clinical competencies, with the greatest emphasis on "education", "human", and "humans". These topics are important in the context of research and discussions on medical education and health.

The third cluster pertains to training and competencies in a broader educational context, especially concerning vocational training and engineering education. These research directions are significant in academic studies and literature.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusions

The results of the hybrid literature review method indicate a paradigm shift: from perceiving employees solely as human resources to recognizing them as human capital, and from traditional management to competency management. Developing the skills necessary to be an effective manager in global enterprises has become a subject of detailed research and theories that can serve as a foundation for future analyses and practical applications. This article analyzes how managerial competencies affect knowledge transfer between organizations using a hybrid literature review that integrates narrative and systematic approaches. The study emphasizes the crucial role of managers in the knowledge exchange process in international organizational contexts and suggests that evolving managerial competencies are an essential part of this process.

Theoretically, these results suggest the need for an integrated approach to competency management that considers both personal predispositions and the specific requirements of a given organizational culture. Practically, they highlight the urgent need to develop training and educational programs focused on the intercultural aspect of managerial competencies and methods for their assessment and development. Future research should focus on determining how best to integrate and utilize cultural diversity and technical knowledge to enhance innovation and competitiveness in international enterprises. The findings also underscore the importance of intercultural communication skills, flexibility, and technical knowledge for managers to effectively support knowledge-sharing processes and innovation in global companies. There is a need for further research and development of theories regarding managerial competencies to increase the efficiency of international enterprises.

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