

Revisiting Organizational Socialization and Onboarding Through Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract

Purpose- This bibliometric analysis examines two central concepts in organizational behaviour research: organizational socialization and onboarding.

Design/methodology/approach- Preferred Reporting Item for systematic review and Meta-Analyses framework is used for the compilation of the paper and the RStudio and VOS Viewer application with Scopus database is used for bibliometric analysis.

Finding- Overall, the bibliometric findings indicate that organizational socialization and onboarding research has evolved from a nascent field into a rapidly expanding and mature domain, with a sharp growth in publications over the past decade. The literature is intellectually anchored in a small set of highly influential journals and scholars, primarily within vocational and organizational psychology, while also drawing from HRM, communication, and career studies. Geographically, knowledge production remains concentrated in North America and Europe, with growing contributions from Asia, highlighting both increasing internationalization and the need for broader global representation.

Originality/Value – The study represents the author’s original work and has been conducted without any conflict of interest involving any individual, group, or organization.

Keyword- Organizational socialization, Newcomer socialization, Employee socialization, Entry socialization, Employee adaptation, Newcomer Adjustment, Onboarding, Induction, Orientation training & orientation assimilation, Organizational entry

Paper type- Literature review

1. Introduction

The integration of new employees into an organization, a critical process for both individual success and organizational performance, is primarily understood through the interconnected concepts of organizational socialization and onboarding (Cheng & Zhang, 2024; Pinco et al., 2024). While often used interchangeably, these terms represent distinct yet complementary

facets of an employee's journey from an outsider to an established organizational member (Pinco et al., 2024). Organizational socialization, broadly defined, encompasses the learning process through which new employees acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and behaviors to effectively function within their new environment (Bauer & Erdoğan, 2010). This comprehensive process enables newcomers to assimilate into the organizational culture, understand their roles, and contribute meaningfully (Birkle & Seifried, 2023; Cheng & Zhang, 2024). This dynamic and continuous process involves both the actions of the organization and the new employee, ultimately influencing their long-term affiliation and commitment (Grabmair & Kovacs, 2023). In contrast, onboarding encompasses the formal and informal practices, programs, and policies deliberately developed and implemented by organizations to support and ease the adjustment of new employees (Frögéli et al., 2023). Its primary objective is to accelerate the socialization trajectory, ensuring new employees quickly acclimate to their roles, departmental nuances, and the broader organizational ethos (Bauer & Erdoğan, 2010; Manhal & Al.zubaidi, 2024). These structured interventions aim to reduce initial uncertainty, foster sense-making, and provide essential resources for successful role performance, thereby strengthening the psychological bond between newcomers and the organization (Birkle & Seifried, 2023). The distinction between these concepts, though subtle, is crucial for understanding the mechanisms through which individuals transition from external candidates to fully integrated, productive organizational insiders (Bauer & Erdoğan, 2010).

Given its growing importance in a globalized work environment, Organizational socialization and Onboarding have attracted substantial attention from HR professionals and academic researchers. To provide meaningful insights for both practitioners and scholars, this study examines research trends, key developments, and emerging future directions in this field and addresses the following research objectives.

RO1. The first objective is to examine how research on Organizational Socialization and Onboarding has evolved over the past ten years, with a focus on identifying the main themes and changes in research direction.

RO2. The second objective is to identify the most influential authors and highly cited studies, as well as the leading institutions, countries, and journals contributing to research on Organizational Socialization and Onboarding.

RO3. The third objective is to explore the key themes, emerging topics, and conceptual frameworks in the literature on Organizational Socialization and Onboarding using keyword co-occurrence and thematic mapping techniques.

The subsequent sections of this paper are structured as follows: **Section 2** provides a summary of the study's theoretical foundation, while **Section 3** outlines the research methodology in detail. **Section 4** presents the analysis and findings, followed by **Section 5**, which discusses the results. **Section 6** highlights the practical implications of the study, and the final section offers concluding remarks.

2. Theoretical Foundations of Organizational Socialization and Onboarding

Organizational socialization and onboarding are theoretically grounded in multiple foundational perspectives that explain how newcomers transition from organizational outsiders to effective insiders. Early conceptualizations define organizational socialization as the process of “learning the ropes” through which individuals acquire the knowledge, values, norms, and expected behaviors necessary for successful role performance (Schein, 1968; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Building on this view, uncertainty reduction theory posits that newcomers experience heightened ambiguity during organizational entry and actively seek information to reduce uncertainty regarding tasks, roles, and social relationships, making structured onboarding practices critical in early employment stages (Berger & Calabrese, 1975; Ashford & Black, 1996). Social learning theory further explains newcomer adjustment by emphasizing observational learning, whereby newcomers internalize organizational norms and behaviors by observing supervisors and peers (Bandura, 1977). From a relational perspective, social exchange theory suggests that supportive onboarding initiatives signal organizational investment, encouraging newcomers to reciprocate with higher commitment, engagement, and retention (Blau, 1964; Saks et al., 2007). Additionally, sensemaking theory highlights how newcomers interpret and assign meaning to early organizational experiences, with onboarding providing cognitive frameworks that help them understand their roles and organizational culture (Louis, 1980; Weick, 1995). Psychological contract theory complements this view by emphasizing that early onboarding experiences shape newcomers' perceptions of mutual obligations, influencing attitudes and turnover intentions when expectations are fulfilled or violated (Rousseau, 1995; De Vos et al., 2005). Collectively, these theoretical foundations position onboarding as a strategic mechanism that operationalizes organizational socialization by facilitating learning, reducing uncertainty,

fostering social integration, and strengthening employee–organization relationships (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative approach for evaluating scholarly communication and has become increasingly important for mapping research landscapes, identifying emerging trends, and supporting funding and policy decisions across diverse disciplines, particularly in medicine and healthcare (Hassan & Duarte, 2024). This method offers systematic insights into the structure, evolution, and impact of research fields, thereby serving as a critical tool for advancing scientific knowledge and informing strategic decision-making within academic communities (Ganti et al., 2025; Hassan & Duarte, 2024).

In this study, the Scopus database served as the primary source of data for the bibliometric analysis. Scopus is a multidisciplinary scientific database widely recognized for its extensive coverage of high-quality academic literature across multiple domains, including biomedicine, information systems, and the social sciences (Yıldız, 2024). Compared with other databases such as Web of Science, Scopus indexes a larger number of journals and includes several exclusive titles, making it particularly suitable for comprehensive and impactful bibliometric investigations (Çandereli & Mumcu, 2025). This broad coverage enables a more accurate identification of publication patterns, co-authorship networks, influential authors and institutions, and keyword co-occurrence structures (Pratiwi et al., 2024). Moreover, the extensive indexing of Scopus facilitates quantitative literature reviews that capture publication trends and thematic linkages among key concepts (Omar & Abdullahi, 2024). Scopus also offers built-in analytical tools that support preliminary data exploration and visualization, thereby enhancing the interpretability of complex bibliometric datasets (Dahish & Miah, 2022).

To ensure methodological rigor, transparency, and systematic reporting, this study followed the PRISMA framework throughout the study selection process (Welch et al., 2012). The PRISMA guidelines provide a well-established structure for improving the clarity, transparency, and reproducibility of systematic literature reviews and meta-analyses (Krivosheev et al., 2017). Adopting this framework enables readers to critically evaluate the methodological quality and reliability of the review findings, thereby supporting evidence-

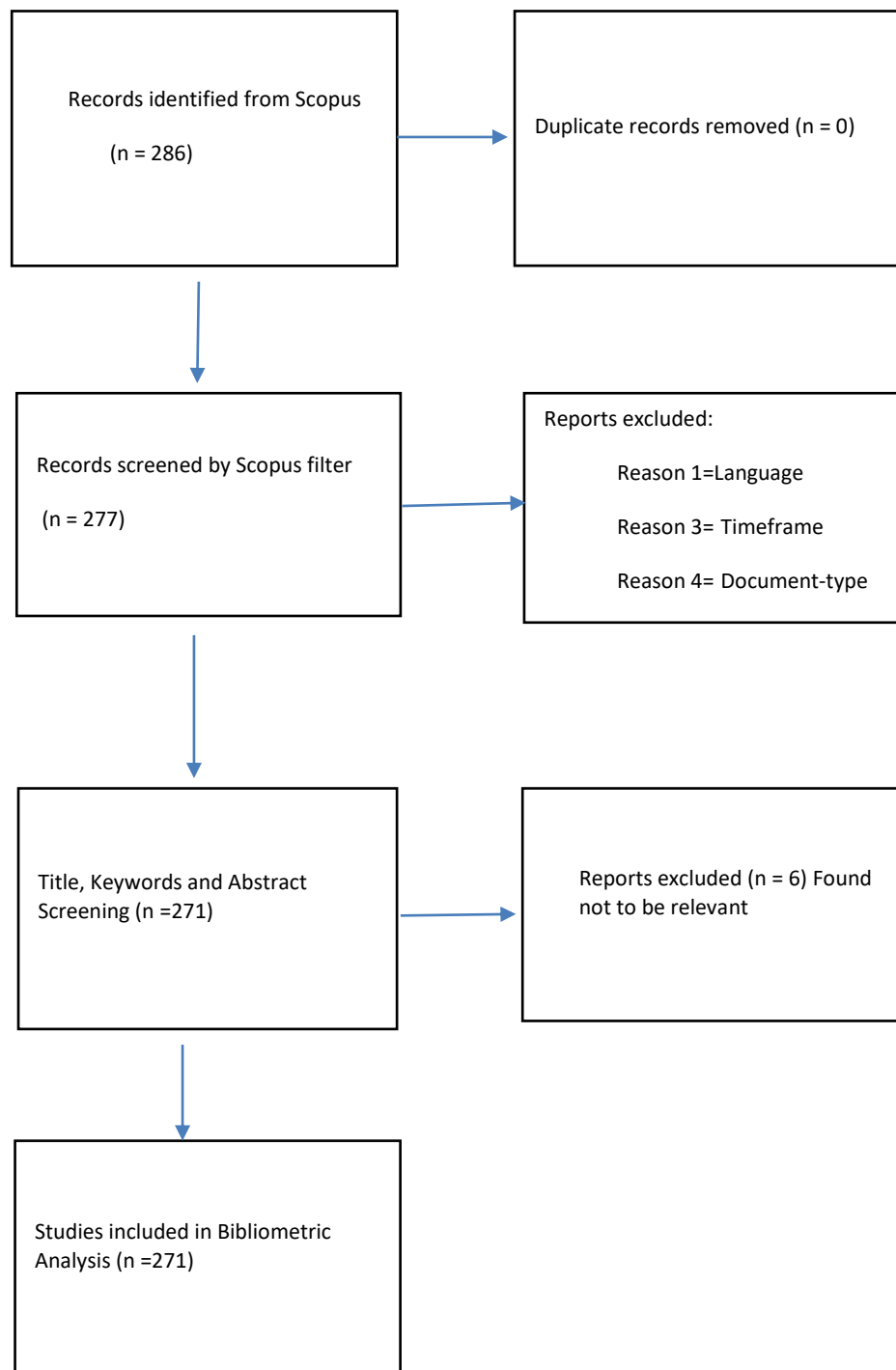
based decision-making across various research contexts (Page et al., 2021; Sarkis-Onofre et al., 2021).

and scholars began linking socialization processes to key human resource outcomes such as commitment, performance, and turnover. A marked acceleration after 2010 suggests that onboarding became recognized as a strategic organizational function, supported by advances in empirical methods and growing interest in employee engagement and talent management. The sharp rise in the early 2020s can be attributed to major disruptions in work arrangements, particularly the shift to remote and hybrid work, which intensified organizational challenges related to newcomer adjustment and integration. The apparent decline in the most recent year is likely due to publication and indexing delays rather than a true reduction in scholarly interest. Overall, the upward trend reflects the increasing complexity of work environments and the critical role of effective socialization in enhancing organizational effectiveness and employee retention.

Regarding the search strategy, a comprehensive set of keywords was employed, including ("Organizational socialization" OR "Newcomer socialization" OR "Employee socialization" OR "Entry socialization" OR "Employee adaptation" OR "Newcomer Adjustment") AND ("Onboarding" OR "Induction" OR "Orientation" OR "training & orientation" OR "assimilation" OR "Organizational entry") These terms were required to appear in the title, abstract, or keywords of the retrieved publications. In line with best practices in systematic reviews and the scope of the present study, only peer-reviewed articles published in English were included. The search covered publications related to organizational socialization and onboarding published between 1979 and 2026.

The extracted data were analyzed using RStudio and VOSviewer, focusing on key bibliometric indicators such as publication output, contributing countries, influential authors, keyword co-occurrences, and citation patterns. The study selection process is illustrated in Figure 1. After applying all inclusion and exclusion criteria, a final dataset of 271 publications was obtained, upon which the bibliometric analysis was conducted.

Identification of studies via databases and registers



Source(s): Author's own work

Figure 1. PRISMA framework 2020

4. Analysis and results

4.1 publishing trend

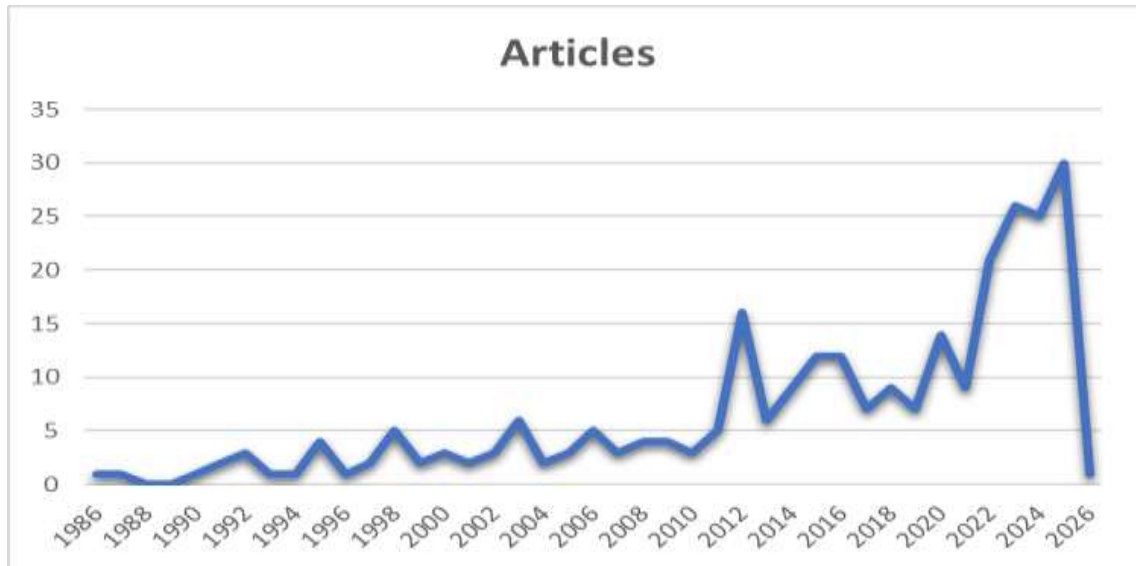


Figure 2. Number of articles

The trend indicates a clear and sustained increase in research on organizational socialization and onboarding from the late 1980s to the mid-2020s. Early research output was relatively low, reflecting a period when socialization was primarily treated as a conceptual issue and organizations were more stable, with long-term employment relationships reducing the perceived need for structured onboarding. From the early 2000s onward, publications increased gradually as workforce mobility rose and scholars began linking socialization processes to key human resource outcomes such as commitment, performance, and turnover. A marked acceleration after 2010 suggests that onboarding became recognized as a strategic organizational function, supported by advances in empirical methods and growing interest in employee engagement and talent management. The sharp rise in the early 2020s can be attributed to major disruptions in work arrangements, particularly the shift to remote and hybrid work, which intensified organizational challenges related to newcomer adjustment and integration. The apparent decline in the most recent year is likely due to publication and indexing delays rather than a true reduction in scholarly interest. Overall, the upward trend reflects the increasing complexity of work environments and the critical role of effective socialization in enhancing organizational effectiveness and employee retention.

4.2 Major authors

Authors	Total citations
SAKS ALAN M	998
WANBERG CONNIE R	569
KAMMEYER-MUELLER JOHN DANIEL	542
ERDOGAN BERRIN	408
CURTNER-SMITH MATTHEW D	405
ANDERSON NEIL R	404
KLEIN HOWARD J	361
COOPER-THOMAS HELENA D	354
ASHFORTH BLAKE E	344
GRUMAN JAMIE A	257
ELLIS ALLISON M	250

Table 1. Major authors as per maximum total citations

Research on organizational and occupational socialization consistently demonstrates that entry and transition into professional roles is a complex, ongoing process shaped by the interaction of individual agency, institutional structures, and environmental conditions (Ashforth, Saks, & Lee, 1998; Bauer & Erdogan, 2012). Within Physical Education Teacher Education (PETE), faculty members and coaches rarely deliver singular pedagogical orientations; instead, they enact hybrid forms of practice that combine behavioristic, traditional/craft, critical-inquiry, and personalistic approaches, often constrained by unfavorable working conditions that limit their ability to implement ideal programs (Baek & Curtner-Smith, 2025; Barnes & Curtner-Smith, 2024). In response to these constraints, faculty and coaches adopt strategic coping mechanisms such as strategic compliance or strategic redefinition, attempting either to work within or reshape institutional expectations while maintaining professional values (Brunsdon & Curtner-Smith, 2023; Dennis et al., 2024).

Beyond PETE, organizational socialization research highlights that successful onboarding depends on both institutionalized socialization tactics and individual psychological resources. Structured, collective, and formal socialization practices are associated with greater role

clarity, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Saks, Uggerslev, & Fassina, 2007; Ashforth et al., 1998), and are commonly conceptualized through the Five C's framework—compliance, clarity, connection, confidence, and culture (Ellis & Bauer, 2017). Expanding this view, Socialization Resources Theory emphasizes that newcomer adjustment depends on organizations providing critical resources across stages of entry to support task mastery and work group integration (Saks & Gruman, 2012; Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003). Central to these resources are social agents—particularly supervisors and mentors—whose support is most effective when motivated by genuine concern rather than self-interest, reinforcing newcomer identity and reducing intentions to quit (Klein, Fan, & Preacher, 2006; Rubenstein et al., 2020).

At the individual level, proactive personality, self-efficacy, and learning orientation function as key psychological resources that help newcomers cope with entry stressors such as role ambiguity, unmet expectations, and reality shock (Saks & Ashforth, 2000; Gruman & Saks, 2011). However, relational processes are not uniformly beneficial; while social connections generally facilitate adjustment, excessive peer interaction early in organizational entry may impede role clarity, reflecting an inverted U-shaped relationship between social ties and adjustment (Zhou et al., 2022). Moreover, contemporary work contexts introduce additional challenges, including remote work and the “dark side” of socialization, where mistreatment from external stakeholders can trigger rumination and undermine engagement and adjustment (Wang et al., 2024; Bauer et al., 2025). When viewed through the Job Demands–Resources framework, newcomers are more likely to remain engaged when organizational demands are framed as challenges rather than hindrances and when adequate socialization resources are available (Ellis et al., 2015; Saks & Gruman, 2018).

For specialized and culturally embedded roles—such as immigrant employees, physical education teachers, and coaches—prior acculturation experiences and cultural intelligence significantly shape how roles are interpreted and whether individuals adopt custodial or innovative orientations to practice (Malik, Cooper-Thomas, & Zikic, 2014; Curtner-Smith, Hastie, & Kinchin, 2008). Ultimately, organizational socialization is best understood as a sense-making process in which newcomers' psychological contracts evolve over time, gradually aligning individual expectations with insider norms and institutional realities (Thomas & Anderson, 1998; Bauer & Erdogan, 2012).

This study is informed by an integrated set of theories that explain occupational and organizational socialization as a dynamic, resource-driven, and context-sensitive process. Central to this framework is Occupational Socialization Theory (Curtner-Smith et al., 2008; Barnes & Curtner-Smith, 2023, 2024; Baek & Curtner-Smith, 2024, 2025), which emphasizes how prior experiences, professional preparation, and workplace contexts shape individuals' beliefs, practices, and identities over time. Complementary organizational socialization models (Saks et al., 2007; Cooper-Thomas et al., 2020) and Socialization Resources Theory (Saks & Gruman, 2012, 2018; Bauer et al., 2025) highlight the role of institutional support, learning opportunities, and interpersonal resources in facilitating effective adjustment. Cognitive and motivational perspectives, including Uncertainty Reduction Theory (Klein et al., 2015; Bauer et al., 2025), Conservation of Resources theory (Wang et al., 2024; Chen et al., 2025), and Self-Determination Theory (Ashforth et al., 1998), further explain how individuals actively manage ambiguity, conserve resources, and sustain motivation during socialization. Collectively, these perspectives conceptualize socialization as an ongoing process through which individuals interpret, negotiate, and enact professional roles within organizational settings.

4.3 Major articles

The citation distribution identifies Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992) as the primary foundational authority within this scholarly domain, with its 600 citations signaling its role as the definitive framework for newcomer information acquisition. The high citation frequency of Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg (2003) and Saks et al. (2007) further establishes a core literature base focused on integrative socialization models and meta-analytic validations of onboarding tactics. Conversely, the more moderate citation counts for authors such as Klein and Weaver (2000) and Ellis et al. (2015) represent specialized or contemporary empirical contributions that refine these broader theories. Collectively, these figures illustrate a research hierarchy where a few seminal works provide the theoretical bedrock, supported by a diverse array of focused studies that examine the nuances of organizational entry and integration.

Table 2. Major articles on Organizational Socialization and Onboarding

References	No. of citation	Title	Contribution of the article towards Organizational Socialization and Onboarding
Ostroff and Kozlowski (1992)	600	Organizational socialization as a learning process The role of information acquisition	The results indicate that supervisors, coworkers, and task/role mastery were the most important sources of information, significantly supporting newcomers' knowledge development and successful organizational socialization over time.
Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg (2003)	465	Unwrapping the organizational entry process: Disentangling multiple antecedents and their pathways to adjustment	The results show that pre-entrance knowledge, proactive personality, and organizational, supervisor, and coworker socialization independently predict proximal adjustment, which in turn partially mediates effects on commitment, withdrawal, and turnover.
Saks, Uggerslev, and Fassina (2007)	400	Socialization tactics and newcomer adjustment: A meta-analytic review and test of a model	The meta-analysis shows that institutionalized socialization tactics—especially serial and investiture tactics—significantly improve newcomer adjustment by reducing role stress and turnover intentions while enhancing fit, satisfaction, commitment, and performance, with

			stronger effects for recent graduates and cross-sectional studies.
Kelley (1992)	374	Developing customer orientation among service employees	The results indicate that organizational socialization positively influences service climate perceptions, motivation, and organizational commitment, which in turn enhance employees' customer orientation.
Curtner-Smith, Hastie, and Kinchin (2008)	263	Influence of occupational socialization on beginning teachers' interpretation and delivery of sport education	The results show that beginning teachers implemented the Sport Education model in varied forms, largely shaped by their acculturation, professional socialization, and organizational socialization experiences.
Klein and Weaver (2000)	220	The effectiveness of an organizational-level orientation training program in the socialization of new hires	The results indicate that orientation training significantly enhances newcomers' socialization (especially goals/values, history, and people), leading to higher affective commitment fully mediated by socialization content.
Cooper-Thomas and Anderson (2006)	201	Organizational socialization: A new theoretical model and recommendations for future research and HRM practices in organizations	The study proposes a novel, success-focused organizational socialization model identifying five success indicators and their testable links with learning domains and learning sources, offering a clear framework for

			research and practice.
Thomas and Anderson (1998)	183	Changes in newcomers' psychological contracts during organizational socialization: A study of recruits entering the British Army	The results show that newcomers' psychological contract expectations significantly increased and shifted toward insider norms over time, driven by learning during organizational socialization.
Stohl (1986)	181	The role of memorable messages in the process of organizational socialization.	All members recalled a memorable message that communicated expected behaviours and played a key role in socializing individuals into the organizational culture.
Ellis et al. (2015)	155	Navigating uncharted waters: Newcomer socialization through the lens of stress theory	This review integrates stress and socialization research by examining newcomer socialization through work stress models, highlighting factors shaping newcomer stress, resource development, and their implications for adjustment, engagement, and future research.

4.4 Author Countries and Collaboration Patterns

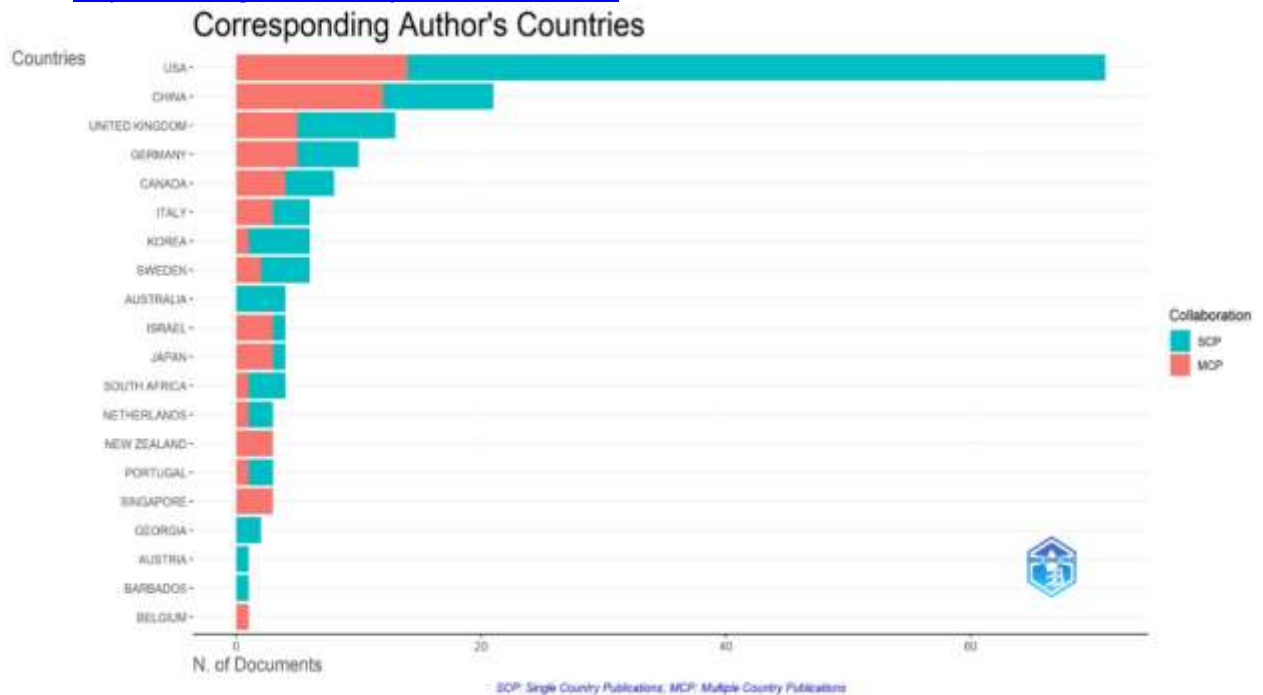


Figure 3. Major Countries publishing in the field

The distribution of corresponding authors' countries shows a strong concentration of publications in a few nations, with the United States leading by a wide margin, largely through single-country publications. China and the United Kingdom follow at a considerably lower level, displaying a mix of domestic and internationally collaborative work. Several European countries, along with Canada and Australia, contribute moderately and demonstrate a greater reliance on multi-country publications, indicating active international collaboration. Although contributions from other regions are limited in volume, the presence of collaborative publications suggests their growing integration into global research networks. Overall, the findings highlight a research landscape dominated by a small number of countries, complemented by increasing cross-national scholarly collaboration.

4.5 Major journals

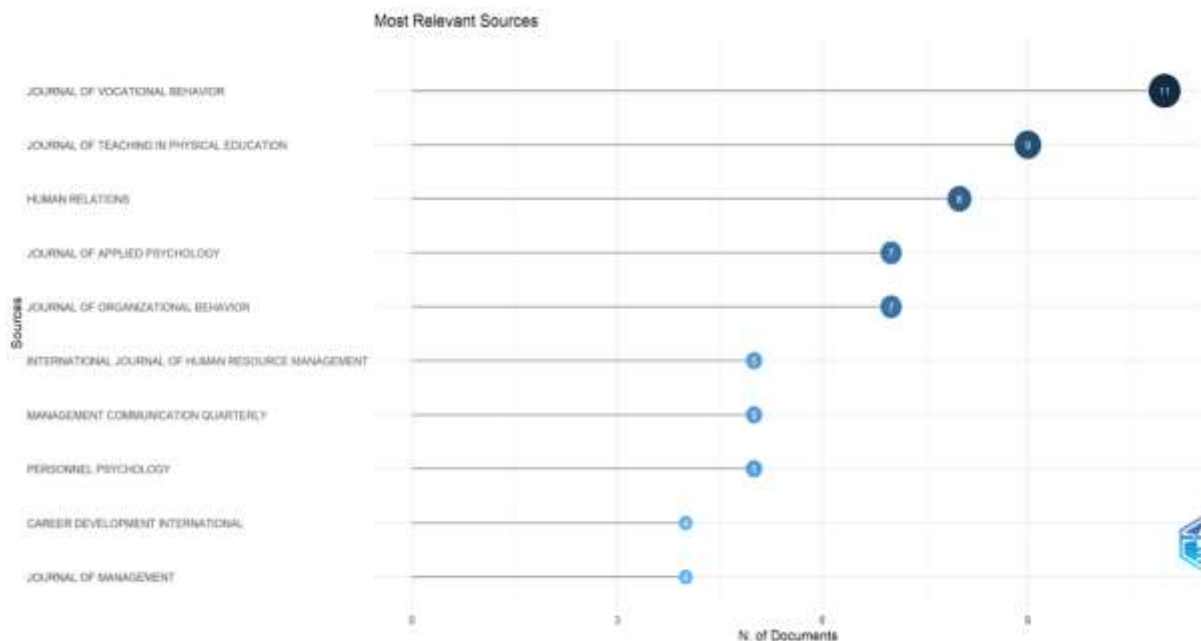


Figure 4. Major journal publishing in the field

The figure shows that research in this field is concentrated in a small number of high-impact journals. The Journal of Vocational Behavior is the leading source (11 documents), followed by the Journal of Teaching in Physical Education (9) and Human Relations (8). Core organizational and psychological journals, including the Journal of Applied Psychology and the Journal of Organizational Behavior (7 each), also make substantial contributions. Other reputable outlets, such as the International Journal of Human Resource Management, Personnel Psychology, and Management Communication Quarterly, show moderate representation. Overall, the pattern indicates a mature literature dominated by established journals in vocational psychology, organizational behavior, and human resource management.

The journals publishing research in this field are predominantly characterized by quantitative empirical studies, with comparatively fewer qualitative, mixed-methods, and conceptual contributions, indicating a strong preference for statistically driven research designs within these outlets.

The green cluster focuses on individual adjustment, proactivity, and performance outcomes. Key themes include *adjustment, employee engagement, job satisfaction, job performance, proactive behavior, proactive personality, and leader–member exchange*. This stream highlights the role of individual agency and relational mechanisms in shaping effective socialization outcomes. The prominence of *social networks, supervisor support, and work engagement* underscores the importance of interpersonal ties in facilitating social integration and role performance. The frequent use of *quantitative designs and mediation analyses* indicates a strong emphasis on theory testing and explanatory modeling within this cluster.

The blue cluster reflects a professional and healthcare-oriented stream of organizational socialization research. Dominant keywords such as *healthcare personnel, nurses, physicians, medical education, internship and residency, and orientation* point to a concentration on clinical and educational settings. This cluster primarily addresses issues of *attitudes, perceptions, and psychological adaptation* during early career transitions in high-demand professional environments. The recurring presence of demographic descriptors (e.g., *female, male, adult, human*) suggests the influence of applied and biomedical research traditions in shaping this body of literature.

The yellow cluster represents a psychological and career-development perspective on workplace socialization. Central themes include *career development, job embeddedness, psychological contract, uncertainty, self-concept, locus of control, and psychological well-being*. This cluster highlights the cognitive and emotional mechanisms by which employees make sense of organizational experiences and navigate career-related transitions. The presence of longitudinal research underscores a temporal perspective, viewing socialization as an evolving process that develops over time rather than a single, discrete onboarding episode.

The lavender cluster highlights research linking organizational socialization with well-being, adaptability, and turnover, particularly in service and care-oriented professions. Keywords such as *adaptability, nurses, nursing staff, turnover, turnover rate, well-being, and questionnaire-based studies* reflect an applied orientation toward understanding how socialization experiences influence employee health, stress, and retention. This cluster underscores the growing concern with sustainable employment and workforce stability, especially in emotionally demanding work contexts.

The sky-blue cluster captures a career orientation and commitment-focused stream. It is characterized by concepts such as *affective commitment*, *organizational commitment*, *mentoring*, *induction*, *protean career orientation*, and *employee turnover*. This cluster connects socialization processes with long-term career outcomes, highlighting how early organizational experiences shape commitment, mobility, and employability. The presence of geographical markets such as *Eurasia* and *Taiwan* indicates increasing attention to cross-cultural and international perspectives in organizational socialization research.

In addition to these major clusters, the analysis also identifies several smaller and peripheral clusters that contribute important contextual and methodological depth to the field. These include themes related to education and training domains (e.g., physical education, sport pedagogy, teaching orientation), methodological approaches (e.g., qualitative research, interviews, surveys, questionnaires), and contextual or demographic descriptors (e.g., gender, employment conditions, workplace settings). Although these clusters are less central in terms of network density, their connections with the core socialization themes suggest a supportive and integrative role, reflecting the interdisciplinary expansion of the literature across sectors, methods, and populations.

Overall, the cluster structure demonstrates that organizational socialization functions as a central, unifying construct linking organizational practices, individual adjustment, professional identity formation, well-being, and career development. The strong interconnections among clusters indicate a conceptual shift toward viewing socialization as a continuous, multi-level, and context-sensitive process, rather than a discrete onboarding phase, with significant implications for individuals, organizations, and broader societal outcomes.

4.7 Recent research trends

Table 3 serves as a valuable resource for aspiring researchers by highlighting the most prominent and actively explored themes in organizational socialization and onboarding. It reflects contemporary developments in the field by presenting topics derived from Scopus-indexed publications published during 2025–2026.

Recent research portrays organizational socialization and onboarding as ongoing, adaptive processes influenced by the interplay of individual attributes, organizational practices, and changing work contexts. Studies consistently demonstrate that newcomer adaptability,

proactivity, career orientation, and psychological resources, together with supportive leadership, mentoring, inclusive HR practices, and social support, play a central role in shaping adjustment, engagement, well-being, and retention. Evidence from diverse sectors and work arrangements, including remote and hybrid settings, further shows that socialization outcomes evolve over time and are sensitive to contextual demands such as technological change, diversity, and work–life transitions. Overall, contemporary research underscores organizational socialization as a multi-level and reciprocal process with important implications for sustainable employment and organizational effectiveness.

Table 3. Recent publication trend in the field

Citations	Finding
Permzadian & Mishra (2026)	This study examines how individual adaptability (I-ADAPT) influences newcomer socialization and subsequent work outcomes. The findings show that different I-ADAPT dimensions uniquely predict adjustment—learning adaptability improves role clarity, uncertainty adaptability enhances task mastery, and cultural adaptability supports social acceptance—which in turn affect distal outcomes such as job satisfaction, turnover intention, and work withdrawal, highlighting I-ADAPT as a key factor for effective onboarding.
Galema et al. (2025)	This study aimed to explore residents’ individual and organizational strategies during the transition to residency. The results show that adaptation was shaped by residents’ personal coping strategies and organizational socialization practices, with varying effectiveness depending on individual needs for structure or autonomy.
Bauer et al. (2025)	This paper aims to re-examine organizational socialization in light of contemporary and emerging work trends. The findings highlight that technological change, remote work, mental health challenges, and an aging workforce are reshaping onboarding, emphasizing newcomer adaptability and social connection as critical factors for effective organizational socialization in modern work contexts.
Baek and	This study examined the influence of secondary organizational socialization

Curtner-Smith (2025)	on mid-career faculty members' provision of physical education teacher education (PETE). The findings reveal that faculty delivered hybrid forms of PETE shaped by organizational cultures and working conditions, with unfavorable environments constraining intended practices and leading faculty to strategically adapt or comply.
Fukuma (2025)	This study aimed to identify workplace adaptation challenges faced by employees with disabilities during their early careers in Japanese special-purpose subsidiaries. The findings reveal that both organizational socialization and disability-specific challenges hinder adaptation and well-being, underscoring the need for structured onboarding, mentoring, and individualized support to enhance retention and sustainable employment.
Nahum-Shani et al. (2025)	This study examined whether key drivers of alcohol misuse change as young adults progress from early to late stages of employee onboarding. The findings show that role overload and injunctive peer drinking norms consistently predicted alcohol misuse, while the stress–distress pathway weakened over time, indicating that risk factors for alcohol misuse evolve dynamically during career entry.
Islam, Ajmal, and Islam (2025)	This study investigated how social capital resources (SCRs), proactive personality, and perceived organizational support (POS) influence work engagement during organizational socialization. Findings show that effective socialization tactics increase engagement, with SCRs playing a key role, and proactive personality and POS strengthening this effect, emphasizing the value of relational, supportive, and proactive onboarding practices.
Yu, Ren, and Singh (2025)	This study examined how perceived dissimilarity and organizational diversity climate influence newcomers' proactive relationship-building with supervisors and their organizational embeddedness. Findings show that while perceived dissimilarity poses challenges, a supportive diversity climate enables proactive engagement, which strengthens newcomers' sense of belonging and integration, highlighting the importance of inclusive environments for effective onboarding.

<p>Godager and Riforgiate (2025)</p>	<p>This study examined how employees navigate work/life boundary-setting during resocialization after parental leave in the U.S. Findings show that employees managed tensions through paradoxical strategies—vacillating, integrating, or balancing—between professional norms and parent identity, highlighting how communication during resocialization can reduce organizational tensions and support effective reintegration.</p>
<p>Myers et al. (2025)</p>	<p>This study aimed to examine the short- and long-term effects of remote socialization on newcomers’ organizational assimilation. The findings show that while task competence was largely unaffected, remote entry significantly weakened involvement, acculturation, and organizational identification, contributing to psychological contract breaches and higher turnover, especially among early-career employees.</p>
<p>Dai et al. (2025)</p>	<p>This study examined the impact of inclusive human resource management practices on proactive organizational socialization among younger employees. The findings indicate that inclusive HRMP positively enhance psychological safety and perceptions of an inclusive climate, which in turn promote proactive socialization, with protean career orientation strengthening these relationships.</p>
<p>Soares et al. (2025)</p>	<p>This study investigated whether person–environment fit serves as a mediating mechanism in the relationship between proactive personality and job satisfaction during organizational socialization. The results indicate that proactive personality is positively associated with job satisfaction, and this link is specifically mediated by needs–supplies person–job fit.</p>
<p>Karlsson et al. (2025)</p>	<p>This study examined whether working remotely affects new professionals’ learning and adjustment during organizational socialization. The findings show no significant differences between on-site, hybrid, and remote workers, indicating that remote work does not hinder socialization and may even enhance task mastery over time.</p>

Brennan et al. (2025)	This study examined the organizational socialization of primary school teachers with physical education (PE) specialism. The findings reveal that despite strong PE expertise, most teachers assimilated into existing school cultures that limited the use of their specialist skills, with outsourcing of PE and novice teacher identities constraining their professional contribution.
Didion et al. (2025)	This study aimed to conceptualize organizational socialization and onboarding as key mechanisms for developing and retaining intellectual capital. The findings propose that effective socialization enhances human, relational, and organizational capital by supporting newcomer learning, reducing turnover, and codifying knowledge, thereby improving organizational performance and sustainability.
Wang et al. (2025)	This study examined how newcomers' promotion-focused job crafting affects organizational socialization. The findings indicate that coworker exchange mediates this relationship, and prosocial motivation strengthens it, highlighting the role of job crafting in supporting socialization through interpersonal interactions.
Pires et al. (2025)	This study examined how newcomers' core self-evaluations influence job satisfaction during organizational socialization, with proactive socialization behaviors as mediators. Findings show that core self-evaluations positively predict job satisfaction, mediated by proactive behaviors such as positive framing and general socializing, highlighting the importance of newcomer proactivity in early organizational adjustment.
Bauer et al. (2025)	This study provided an updated meta-analytic review of organizational socialization, examining how antecedents, proximal adjustment, and distal outcomes are interrelated. Findings highlight the critical roles of proactive personality, proactive newcomer behaviors, social acceptance, and perceived fit in promoting adjustment, well-being, and key organizational outcomes, while also identifying cultural context as a moderating factor.

<p>Lee et al. (2025)</p>	<p>This research analysed the link between regulatory focus and career adaptability among new hospitality employees, with organizational socialization as a mediator. Findings indicate that regulatory focus positively influences both career adaptability and socialization, and organizational socialization mediates this relationship, highlighting its role in successful onboarding and employee adjustment.</p>
<p>Junça Silva et al. (2025)</p>	<p>This study examined how organizational socialization influences newcomers' work engagement and well-being, focusing on relational mechanisms. Findings show that perceived organizational support and on-the-job embeddedness mediate the effects of socialization tactics on engagement, which in turn enhances well-being, highlighting the importance of structured onboarding practices.</p>
<p>LaGree and Olsen (2025)</p>	<p>This study examined organizational entry as a critical phase for communicating culture through leadership empowerment behaviors to support and retain young women. The findings show that leadership empowerment and socialization processes jointly facilitate cultural understanding, work meaningfulness, and early career development, strengthening newcomers' long-term organizational attachment.</p>
<p>Paik and Gilmore (2025)</p>	<p>This study examined how newcomers experience and navigate remote onboarding, focusing on access to socialization resources and membership ambiguity. Findings show that although remote newcomers achieved job proficiency, limited insider support led to persistent membership ambiguity, prompting greater proactive behaviors to secure resources and affirm organizational membership.</p>
<p>Wu et al. (2025)</p>	<p>This study developed a conceptual model examining how team inclusive leadership shapes newcomers' social adjustment, innovation, and career adaptability through person–team fit. The model proposes that inclusive leadership fosters both supplementary and complementary fit, enabling newcomers to achieve adjustment and innovation simultaneously, with individual identity orientation and team diversity shaping these effects.</p>

Fröhlich et al. (2025)	This study explored the progression of newcomers' workplace happiness over time and its association with servant leadership and innovative performance. The results indicate that stronger initial servant leadership fosters more stable patterns of happiness, which are subsequently linked to higher levels of innovative performance during the first year of organizational entry.
Zhao et al. (2025)	This study examines how newcomers' promotion and prevention focus influence work proactivity during onboarding through job embeddedness. The results indicate that promotion focus enhances job embeddedness and subsequently increases work proactivity, whereas prevention focus undermines job embeddedness and reduces work proactivity; moreover, supervisor developmental feedback intensifies the negative indirect effect of prevention focus on work proactivity.
Kim (2025)	This study investigates whether protean career orientation moderates the relationship between institutionalized organizational socialization tactics and newcomers' intention to quit over time. Using time-lagged data collected at three and six months after entry, the findings show that institutionalized socialization initially reduces intention to quit, but this effect diminishes over time for newcomers with high protean career orientation, indicating that the retention benefits of institutionalized socialization may be temporary for highly self-directed individuals.
Chen et al. (2025)	This study explores when newcomer general socializing benefits engagement. The findings show that general socializing enhances emotional engagement under low serial tactics and low task interdependence but reduces cognitive engagement under high serial tactics, indicating that its effects depend on the onboarding context.

<p>Shi et al. (2025)</p>	<p>This study examines how inclusive leadership fosters newcomers' proactive behaviors through proactive motivation mechanisms. Drawing on the proactive motivation model, the findings show that inclusive leadership indirectly enhances newcomer proactivity via state promotion focus and positive affect (but not control beliefs), with these effects being stronger for newcomers low in power distance orientation; additionally, control beliefs influence proactive behavior indirectly through positive affect.</p>
<p>Elyashiv et al. (2025)</p>	<p>This study explores how organizational socialization processes foster retention among second-year teachers by examining their reception in the first year and integration in the second year. The findings show that a supportive reception enhances effective integration—reflected in higher work engagement, lower burnout, and greater interest in leadership—which in turn strengthens teachers' intentions to remain in the profession.</p>
<p>Eyal et al. (2025)</p>	<p>This study examines how different mentor profiles influence the socialization and retention of novice school principals. The findings show that balanced mentors—who combine organizational guidance with attention to mentees' personal needs—most effectively enhance person–organization fit, autonomy, and motivation, whereas mentors emphasizing only organizational conformity or only individual needs are less effective in supporting principals' persistence and success.</p>
<p>Russo et al. (2025)</p>	<p>This study examines how newcomers' work–nonwork role preferences influence their social integration. The findings show that newcomers signaling high commitment to both work and nonwork roles are perceived as warmer and more capable of integrating socially, especially in family-supportive organizations, highlighting the role of individual and organizational factors in facilitating newcomer integration.</p>

5. Discussion

This bibliometric analysis offers a broad yet nuanced picture of how research on organizational socialization and onboarding has developed, consolidated, and expanded over time. The findings suggest that what began as a relatively fragmented and conceptually driven area of inquiry has gradually evolved into a mature, interdisciplinary, and steadily growing field. The consistent rise in publications—especially from the early 2010s onward—signals a growing awareness among scholars that socialization and onboarding are not merely administrative entry activities, but strategic processes that shape how individuals experience work and how organizations sustain their human capital. This evolution mirrors wider transformations in the world of work, including increased workforce mobility, boundaryless career paths, and the normalization of remote and hybrid employment arrangements.

The strong concentration of highly cited foundational studies—most notably those by Ostroff and Kozlowski, Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg, and Saks and colleagues—reveals a shared theoretical grounding around learning, information acquisition, and institutionalized socialization tactics. These works continue to serve as intellectual anchors for the field, providing stable reference points against which newer research has been developed. At the same time, the diversification of themes identified through keyword co-occurrence analysis reflects a gradual broadening of scholarly attention. Contemporary studies increasingly move beyond traditional indicators such as role clarity and job satisfaction, instead engaging with questions of proactivity, adaptability, psychological well-being, and career development. In doing so, the literature increasingly portrays socialization not as a discrete entry phase, but as a lived, ongoing process embedded within employees' broader work and life experiences.

The thematic structure of the literature further underscores the inherently multi-level nature of organizational socialization. Organizational practices—such as onboarding design, HRM systems, and leadership behaviors—are consistently examined alongside individual attributes including proactive personality, adaptability, and regulatory focus. This convergence highlights the reciprocal relationship between what organizations provide and how newcomers actively interpret, respond to, and shape their early work experiences. Emerging attention to inclusive leadership, diversity climate, and psychological safety reinforces this interactionist perspective, suggesting that effective socialization depends less on standardized programs and more on the quality of the social and relational context in which newcomers are embedded. Notably, the increasing emphasis on well-being, stress, and

sustainability reflects a meaningful normative shift in the field, away from a narrow performance lens toward a more human-centered understanding of newcomer adjustment.

Despite this conceptual and empirical maturity, the field remains unevenly distributed in terms of geographic representation. Research continues to be dominated by contributions from North America and Europe, with more limited representation from emerging economies and non-Western contexts. Although recent growth from Asia and other regions is encouraging, this imbalance constrains the contextual sensitivity and global applicability of prevailing theories. Addressing this gap will require greater engagement with cross-cultural and comparative research designs. In addition, the strong preference for quantitative methods, as reflected in publication patterns across leading journals, points to opportunities for greater methodological diversity. Qualitative and mixed-methods approaches, in particular, are well positioned to capture the sensemaking, emotional, and relational dimensions of socialization that are difficult to fully represent through statistical models alone.

6. Practical implications

Academic implications.

This study consolidates organizational socialization and onboarding as a mature yet evolving research domain and highlights the need for greater theoretical integration, methodological diversity, and cross-cultural inquiry.

Practical implications.

The findings suggest that onboarding should be treated as an ongoing relational process rather than a one-time orientation activity. Managers and mentors play a critical role in shaping adjustment through everyday support and inclusion, while flexible and inclusive onboarding practices can enhance engagement, well-being, and retention.

Societal implications.

Beyond organizational outcomes, effective socialization supports individual well-being, equitable workforce integration, and sustainable employment. Human-centered onboarding practices can reduce exclusion during critical career transitions and contribute to broader social inclusion and workforce stability.

7. Conclusion

This bibliometric analysis demonstrates that research on organizational socialization and onboarding has evolved into a mature and interdisciplinary field, with increasing attention to relational, psychological, and contextual dimensions of newcomer adjustment. The findings indicate a clear shift from viewing onboarding as a discrete entry activity to understanding it as a continuous and dynamic process shaped by organizational practices as well as individual agency. By systematically mapping key contributors, dominant themes, and emerging research trends, this study provides a structured foundation for future scholarship and underscores the growing importance of human-centred and context-sensitive approaches to supporting newcomers in contemporary work environments.

At the same time, the findings should be interpreted in light of certain data-related limitations. The analysis is based exclusively on the Scopus database, which, despite its broad coverage and rigorous indexing standards, does not capture all relevant scholarly work in this domain. Consequently, influential studies indexed in other databases such as PsycINFO, or regional repositories may be underrepresented. Additionally, the restriction to peer-reviewed journal articles published in English, while enhancing consistency and methodological rigor, introduces language and publication bias. As a result, contextually rich contributions from non-English-speaking regions and emerging economies may not be fully reflected, and the observed geographic concentration of the literature may partly stem from these selection criteria rather than actual imbalances in global research activity.

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