

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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Abstract

We perform a systematic literature review on academic papers in Human Resources Management and Corporate Social Responsibility in ISI Current Contents. Based on 117 academic papers from 2001 to date, we perform content analysis in a grounded-theory methodological approach and map the field of Human Resources Management and Corporate Social Responsibility, identifying main schools of thought (invisible colleges) and main players. We see a tendency to increase publications from 2008 onwards. We identify key areas that developed in the latest years and “emerging areas”, emphasizing possible trends towards publications in this field in the incoming years. We point specialized international journals in this area (Business Ethics leads the game, at far distance).

Results benefit researchers both in Corporate Social Responsibility as well as Human Resources Management that wish to strategically focus their research in order to maximize publication and impact. They also benefit entrepreneurs/practitioners that wish to understand the expected evolution of this field from an academic perspective, so as to subsequently develop more effective policies.

Keywords: Human Resources Management, Corporate Social Responsibility, Systematic Literature Review

Introduction

The idea for this paper originated in the latest UFHRD 13th Conference, since while discussing a presentation with fellow colleagues, there was an argument about the relationship between Human Resources Management (HRM) and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). While some believe that CSR is a part of the HR function, others argue that CSR is embedded in the sustainability agenda. In view of the fact that there was no consensus, the authors decided to look at the literature for answers. Is there a well established relationship between HRM and CSR? How are these two concepts treated and viewed within the academic literature?

Issues related to corporate social responsibility (CSR) have been the subject of growing debate across an increasingly wide range of disciplines in social sciences and business and management studies (Cooke and He, 2010). However, this interest has been focused on issues such as performance (Rettab, Brik and Mellahi, 2009), strategy (McWilliams, Siegel and Wright, 2006), marketing and consumer behaviour (Sen and Bhattacharya, 2001; Real de Oliveira and Rodrigues, 2012), neglecting the importance of HRM. Employee buy-in is a key factor in ensuring engagement with CSR (Davies and Crane, 2010).

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Looking to fill this gap, we perform a systematic literature review on academic papers about HRM and CSR in ISI Current Contents, using published scientific work to look back into the past and identify tendencies to anticipate the future. We critically compare and aggregate existing contributions from scientific journals with impact factor from 2001 to 01st of July 2012 obtained from three separate searches that led us to an initial sample of 117 scientific papers.

First, we describe in the methodology chapter the relevant aspects for the systematic literature review: search protocol, search execution and filtering planning and procedures for content analysis of the relevant sample of scientific papers.

Second, we present the results obtained from the systematic literature review, including the search steps for transparency reasons, descriptive statistics on relevant sample (top authors, publication years, top journals), content analysis results and literature map with key thematic areas of study.

We end with discussion of the literature map and future research directions for academic scholars.

1. Methods

The methods adopted for achieving the research goal required searching, filtering and analyzing a large amount of publications. This is a research task to be performed in the methodological underpinning of literature reviews and conceptual model building.

In the latest decade, there have been quite a large number of academic studies focusing on meta-analyses, systematic literature reviews, structured literature reviews and so on (Briner & Denyer, 2012; Crossan & Apaydin, 2010; Denyer & Tranfield, 2009; Kofinas & Saur-Amaral, 2008; Pittaway & Cope, 2007; I. Saur-Amaral & Amaral, 2010; Walker, 2010).

Nevertheless, researchers tend to use informal and unstructured processes to review literatures and decide upon the key areas to research (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003), which necessarily leads to an incomplete process of identification of scientific school of thought and to low efficiency in the research process (Kofinas & Saur-Amaral, 2008; Irina Saur-Amaral, 2010, 2011). Systematic literature reviews are a systematic approach, with specific methodological concerns, which allow us to overcome this limitation.

In social sciences, the first adaptation of systematic literature reviews was done in 2002 and 2003 (Tranfield, et al., 2003; Tranfield & Mouchel, 2002). Tranfield and his colleagues proposed that systematic reviews should be used to develop decision-making evidence databases for managers, to overcome the typical unsystematic, informal and unconditioned process of literature review and to identify key areas to research. They suggested the methodological approach presented in Table 1.

Table 1: How to Perform a Systematic Literature Review

<i>Steps</i>	<i>Methods Concerns</i>
<p><i>Planning the review:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Why do a review?</i> • <i>Prepare review proposal</i> • <i>Develop a review protocol</i> 	<p>May require previous studies to better understand the field and identify alternative ways on how the topic has been previously addressed</p> <p>The review protocol should contain a conceptual discussion of research problem.</p> <p>Keywords and search terms should be identified.</p>
<p><i>Conducting the review:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Identify research</i> • <i>Select studies</i> • <i>Assess their quality</i> • <i>Extract data</i> • <i>Synthesize data</i> 	<p>Should be a comprehensive, unbiased search, rigorously applying the review protocol and the inclusion/exclusion criteria.</p> <p>Search should be reported in sufficient detail to ensure replicability.</p> <p>Disagreement between reviewers should be explained and consensus should be reached.</p> <p>The output of the search should be the full list of relevant results.</p>
<p><i>Reporting and dissemination:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Developing the report</i> • <i>Dissemination into practice</i> 	<p>Should be clear and effective.</p> <p>Two types of reports can be produced: descriptive analysis of all results (most relevant authors, journals etc.) and thematic analysis (emergent themes and research questions)</p>

Source: Synthesis of approach suggested by Tranfield et al. (2003)

For this study, we apply the three steps of systematic literature reviews, considering the experience of previous studies (Hjalager, 2010; Kofinas & Saur-Amaral, 2008; Kusluvan, Kusluvan, Ilhan, & Buyruk, 2010; Law, Qi, & Buhalis, 2010; Irina Saur-Amaral, 2011, 2012).

Firstly, we build the review protocol, based on keywords previously used by other authors. We rigorously perform the search according with the review protocol and we record all the steps and justify decisions, ensuring transparency and replicability of the study. We extract records to Endnote X4, where we perform the preliminary relevance analysis and selection and we export relevant records to xml and then import into NVivo 9. Descriptive data for generic and thematic statistical analysis is drawn from the classification sheet in NVivo 9. RefViz software is used to understand the sample and create the starting point for content analysis in NVivo, using as orientation framework the keywords and the previous knowledge on the concept, yet drawing on categories building in a grounded-theory approach (Charmaz, 2006). We use queries to explore and test results, and we extract information via reports and specific matrix-coding queries, to support categories with specific number of references and citations.

The literature map is built upon the data obtained from content analysis and the explanatory descriptions of key themes and topics are supported by citations and references obtained from NVivo and RefViz analysis.

2. Search Steps and Filtering Procedures

The search was performed on July 1st, 2012, in three different moments (Search 1, Search 2, and Search 3 which were afterwards combined with an OR operator).

Search 1 had as search equation “corporate social responsibility AND human resources management” IN Topic. The search was done using the Social & Behavioural Sciences (SBS) database of ISI Current Contents, with a timespan filter of publication date between 2001 and 2012 (date of search). The search was refined by: document type = (Article or Review) AND Subject Areas = (Business Economics). Lemmatization was on. We obtained 51 results.

Search 2 had as search equation “csr AND hrm” IN Topic. The search was done using the Social & Behavioural Sciences (SBS) database of ISI Current Contents, with a timespan filter of publication date between 2001 and 2012 (date of search). The search was refined by: document type = (Article or Review) AND Subject Areas = (Business Economics). Lemmatization was on. We obtained 8 results.

Search 3 had as search equation “social responsibility AND human resources management” IN Topic. The search was done using the Social & Behavioural Sciences (SBS) database of ISI Current Contents, with a timespan filter of publication date between 2001 and 2012 (date of search). The search was refined by: document type = (Article or Review) AND Subject Areas = (Business Economics). Lemmatization was on. We obtained 115 results.

We combined the three searches using Search History functionality in ISI Current Contents, so as to ensure there were no duplicates records in the final sample. Search 1 OR Search 2 OR Search 3 gave us a starting sample of 117 articles, which was our working sample, exported to Endnote X4.

From Endnote, we created the Subject Bibliography with abstracts, organized by publication years. All three researchers performed separately the relevance analysis, reading all abstracts and putting aside those that were not related with human resources management or corporate social responsibility, according to our initial research goal.

A joint working session between the three researchers allowed us to compare results and all abstracts were analyzed again, differences between individual results were analyzed, compared and consensus reached. After the relevance analysis was concluded, our working sample was reduced to 49 relevant articles.

These articles were exported to a .xml file and next imported into NVivo where we performed the content analysis procedures and generated the data used for descriptive statistics.

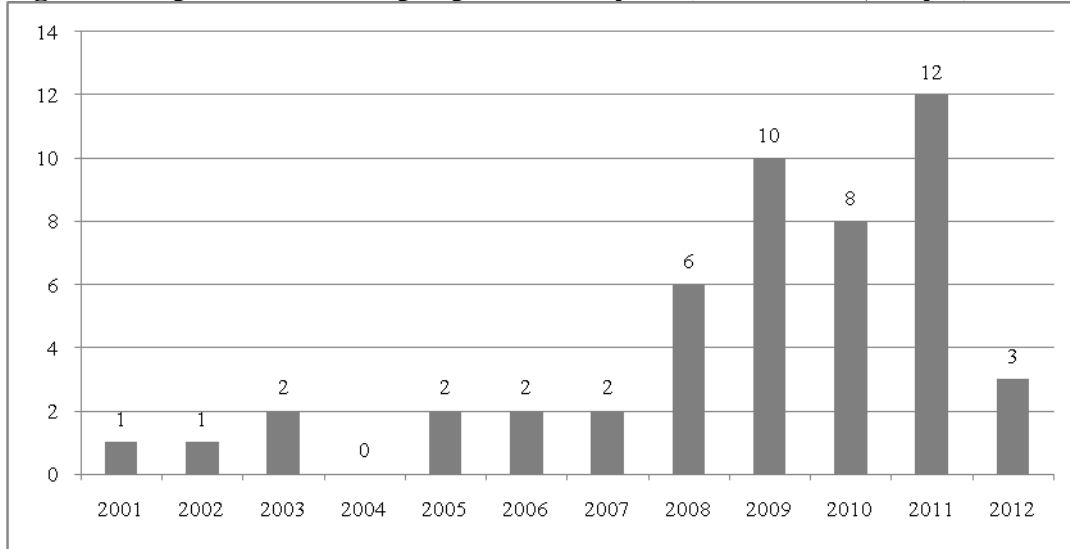
3. Results of Systematic Literature Review

In addition to the descriptive statistics resulting from this search process, the results from the use of the software analyses of data are also presented.

a. Descriptive Statistics

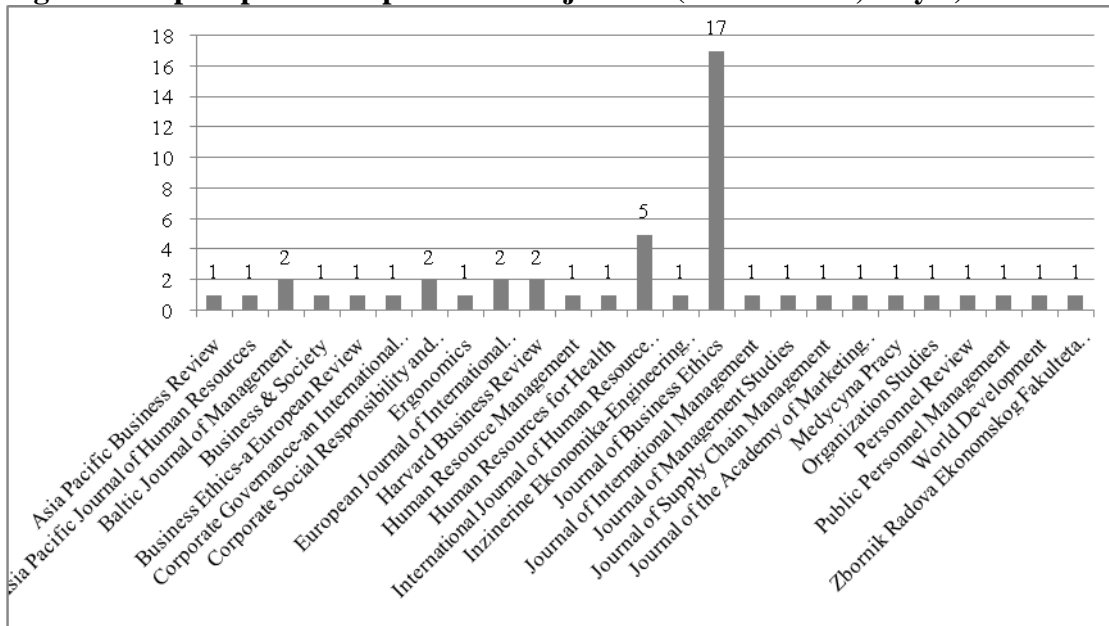
Regarding paper distribution per year (see Figure 1), there has been an ascendant tendency from 2001 to 2011. In 2012, with half of the year gone, the tendency seems to maintain. Also, it is important to note that, from 2008 until 2012, the papers published represent 80%. This is a clear indicator of the emergence of this field.

Figure 1: Paper distribution per publication year (2001 to 2012, July 1)



Regarding scientific journals that were most representative in terms of number of publications in the late years (see Figure 2), there is one dominant journal, Journal of Business Ethics, which concentrates about 35% of papers of our sample, followed far away by the International Journal of Human Resource Management. Other occurrences are barely significant.

Figure 2: Papers published per scientific journal (2001 to 2012, July 1)



The analysis of top authors shows that there is no specific author recognized in this field, in impact factor journals. There are only four authors with two papers each. The remaining authors only have one paper each.

We believe that this clearly represents an emerging field, given that we can identify a clear trend of increasing popularity among scholars, since the number of published papers in journals with impact factor in the last 11 years has grown considerably. The journal that most

contributed to this trend is the Journal of Business Ethics. Finally, there is not a set of top reference authors. This may be explained by the emerging nature of the subject.

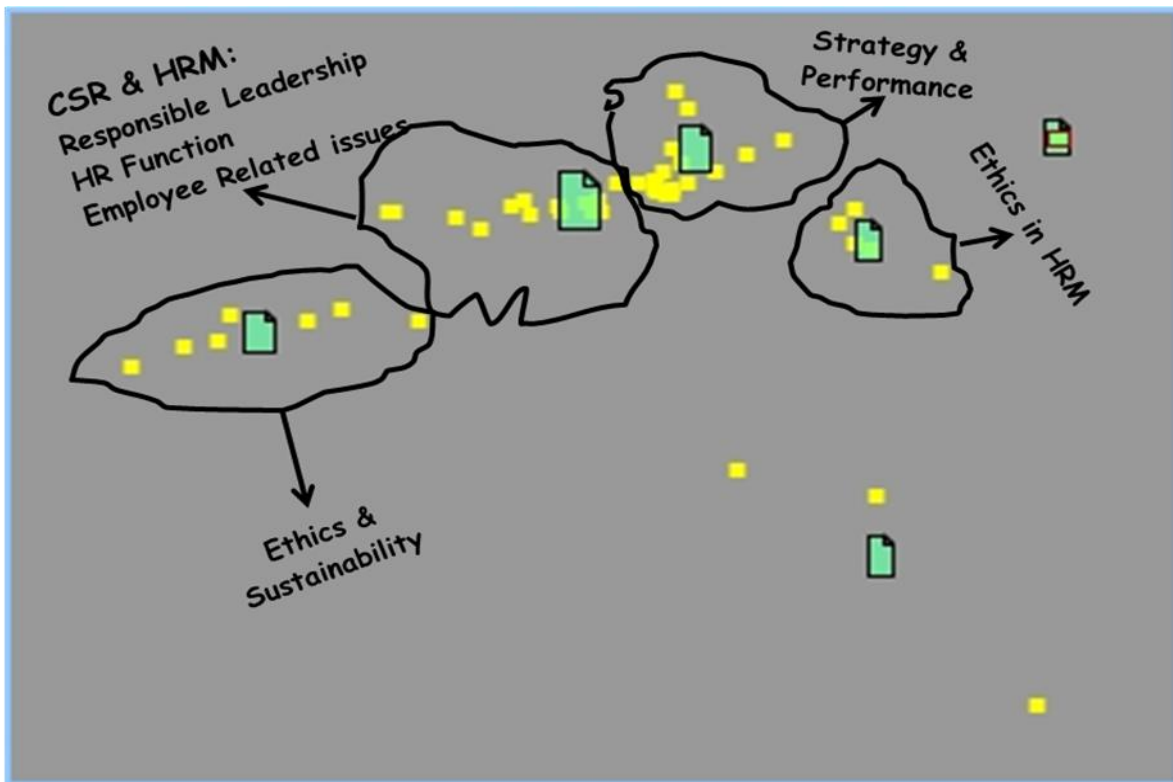
b. Exploratory Galaxies: Results from Data-Mining in Refviz

RefViz defines groups using word count and semantic distance and the researcher uses major topics and minor topics, together with stop words and thesaurus to ensure quality of the data mining process (Agrawal, 2009).

Based on calculations of number of words and semantic distance (applied to abstracts, titles and keywords), as well as the personalized thesaurus available for the analyzed sample, RefViz software draws maps of literature that can be used to comprehend the invisible colleges, or to identify trends and gaps based on contrasting different time intervals.

Figure 3 presents the literature map drawn with RefViz 2.0 for the relevant sample characterized in the previous section. Considering that a key issue in defining the final map is the elimination of outliers in the first outputs, the literature map we presented was obtained after three reiterations, when no outlier could be identified, i.e. is a robust output.

Figure 3: Exploratory literature map drawn with RefViz



Looking at Figure 3, it is possible to identify six clusters of references. For the purpose of this analysis we decided to discard two groups: one that only includes one reference (top right corner) and the other because the three references included are very dispersed, revealing little consistency among them.

The most representative grouping in the sample, with 23 papers, shows a diversity of subjects that need a more in depth analysis. Due to its broad nature it was named **CSR & HRM**. The

sub-areas within this group were identified as Employee Related Issues (e.g. Wojtaszczyk, P., 2008; Davies, et al. 2010; Malik, F. et al. 2010), Responsible Leadership (e.g. Gond, J. et al. 2011; Doh, J. et al. 2011), and HR Function (e.g. Deniz-Deniz, M. 2003; Shen, J. 2011, Buciuniene, I. and R. Kazlauskaite, 2012).

The second most representative grouping is **Strategy & Performance**, with a total of 9 papers (e.g. Ramachandran, V., 2011).

The remaining groupings are linked to **Ethics and Sustainability** (e.g. Hemphill, T. and Lillevik, W. 2011) and **Ethics in HRM** (e.g. Young, S. and Thyil, V., 2009) with a significantly lower number of papers in each grouping.

c. Content Analysis: Results

Two of the authors analyzed independently the abstracts and keywords of the relevant sample. The third author compared the two node structures in NVivo and built the final model presented in this section, using as orientation the groupings identified in RefViz.

First, we looked at the major group identified with RefViz mapping, which is a general group relating CSR and HRM. Within this group it is possible to identify three main sub-groups: “employee related issues”, “responsible leadership” and “HR function”. The first of these sub-groups, “employee related issues” is presented in Figure 5. Employee involvement is the most cited item with 23%, followed by workplace citizenship (13%). It is worth mentioning that work-life balance and employee wellbeing are also subjects studied within the relation of HRM and CSR, each reporting 10% of citations in this group.

The next group within “CSR & HRM” is “responsible leadership”. This is a small sub-group, with only four categories, and although all of them are somewhat related with the concept of responsible leadership, the most cited category is “leadership”.

Finally, the sub-group “HR function” has several topics under study. However, “socially responsible HRM” with 20% of citations and “talent management” with the same percentage, represent the most cited subjects under study in this sub-group.

Figure 4: Employee related issues: areas under study

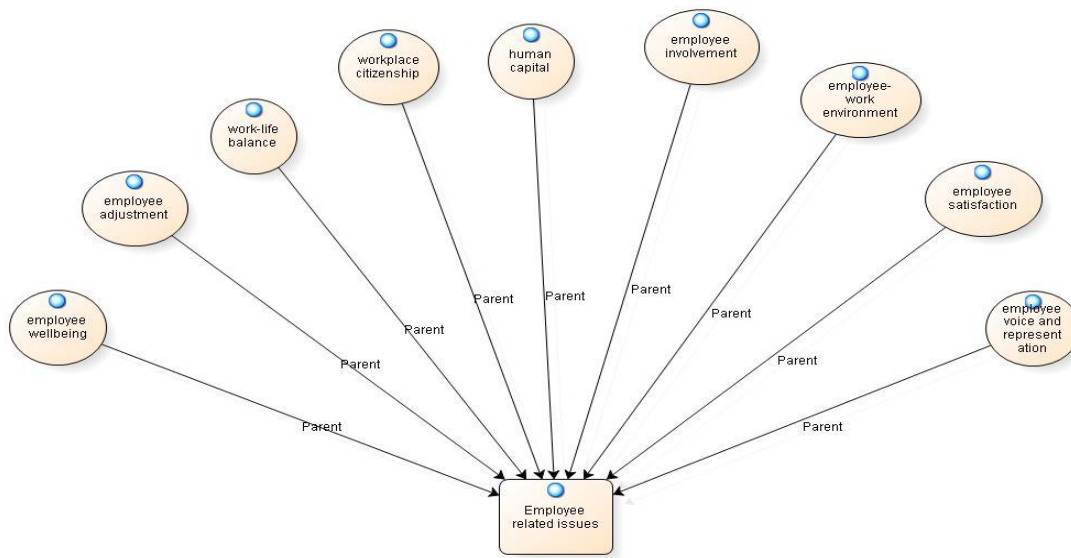


Figure 5: Responsible leadership: areas under study

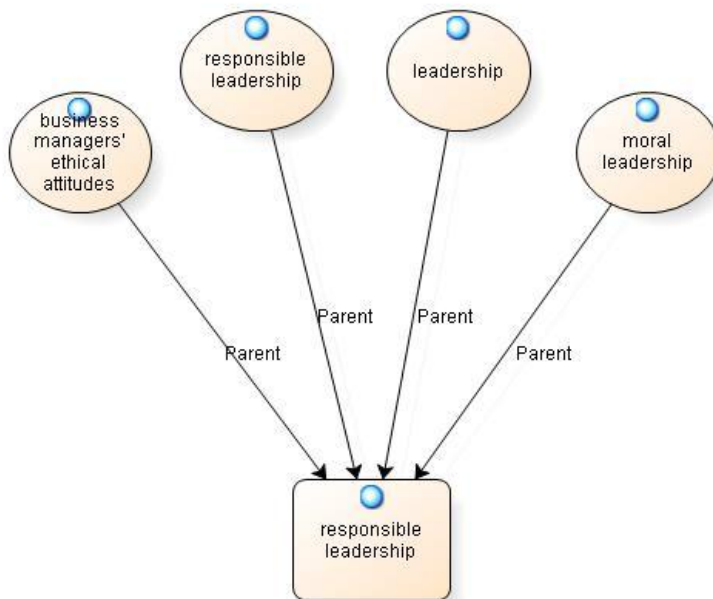
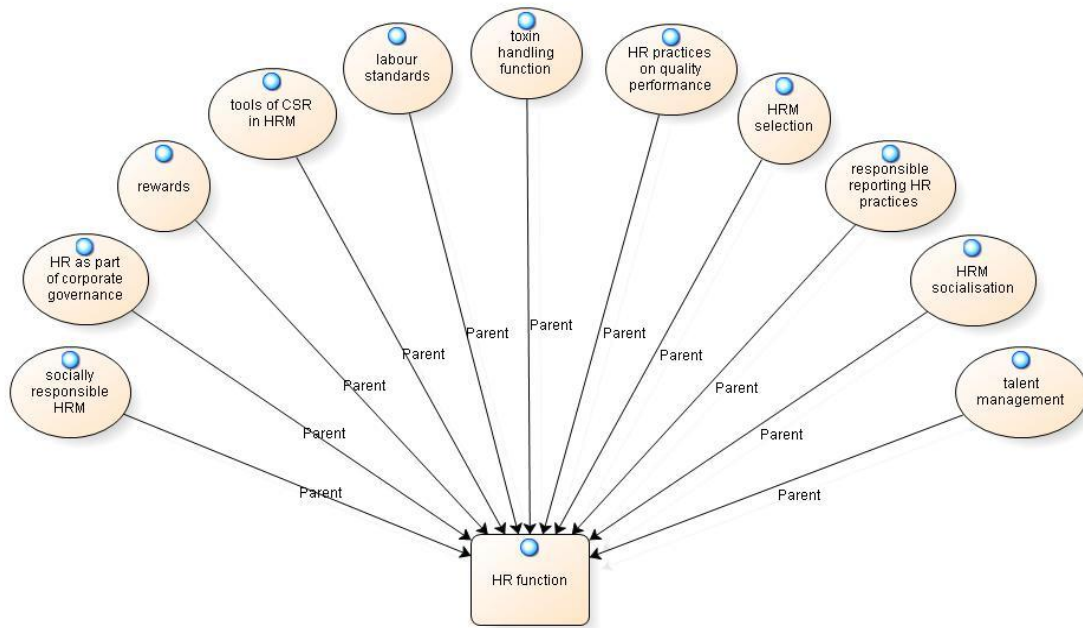
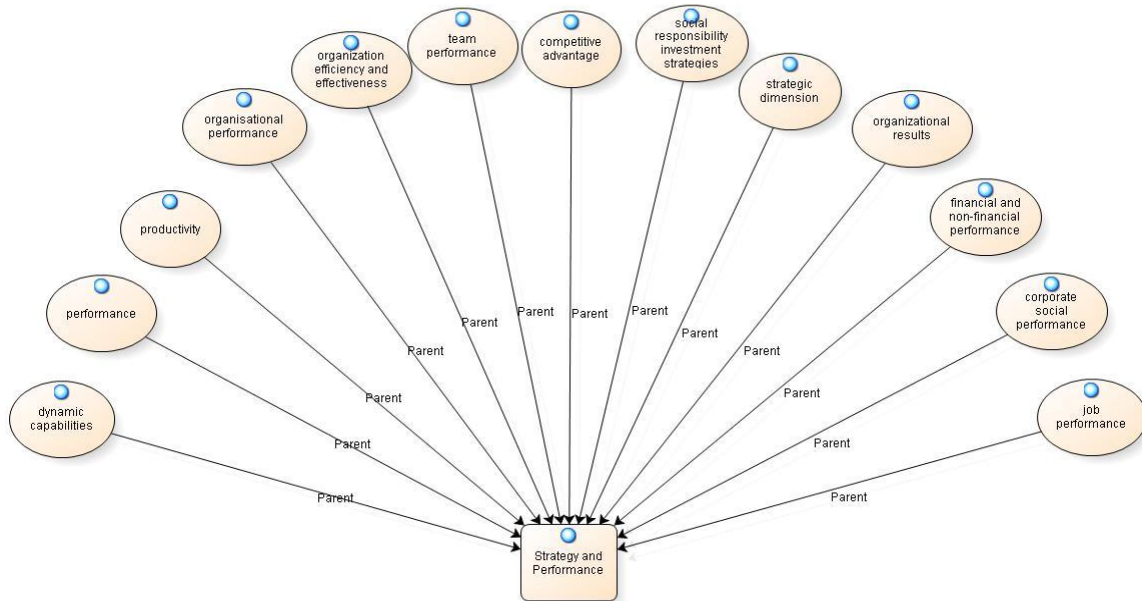


Figure 6: HR function: Areas under study



The second major group is “strategy and performance” with 9 of the 49 papers. The interest by the “strategic dimension” of the relation between HRM and CSR is the most popular topic of research, with 34% of citations. However, the focus on the “organisational performance” is also a topic that is calling the attention of researchers (26% of citations in this group). Competitive advantage (8%), social responsible investment strategies (4%), and team performance (4%) follow by a large distance the two most popular topics.

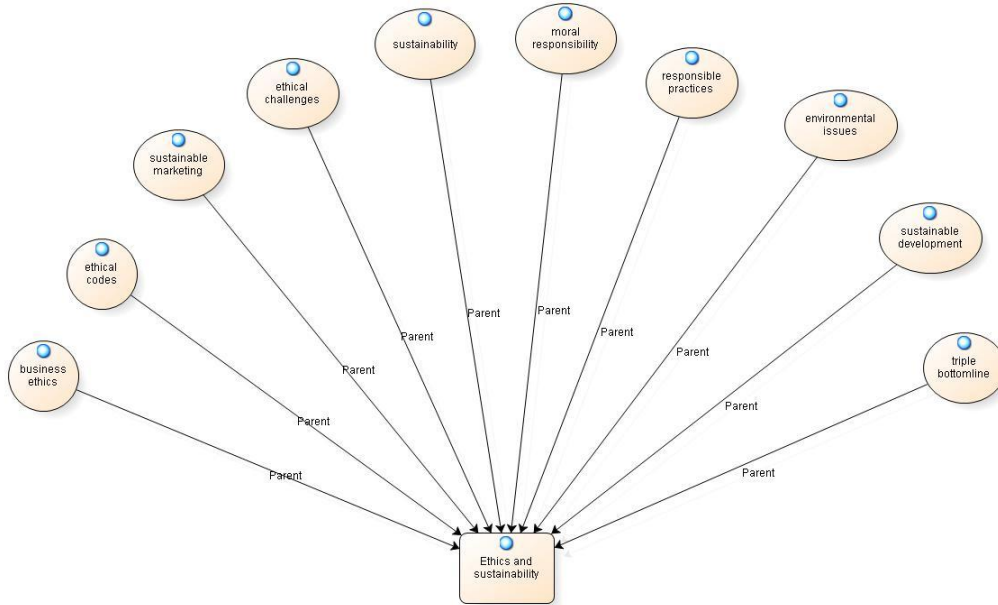
Figure 7: Strategy and performance: areas under study



The third group is “ethics and sustainability”, which is dominated by the research topic “business ethics”, with 43% of citations. This score is probably related with the most

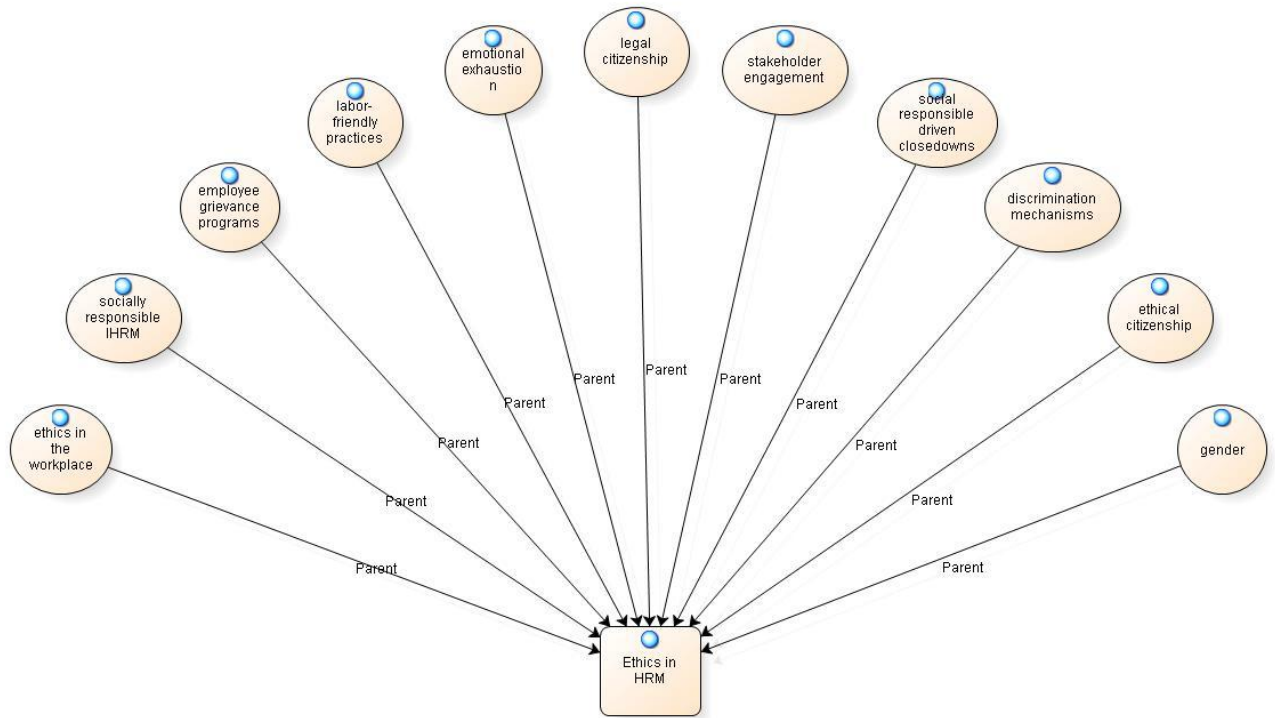
referenced journal: Journal of Business Ethics. Nevertheless, the topic “sustainability” also represents 21%, followed by “environmental issues”, with 13%.

Figure 8: Ethics and sustainability: Areas under study



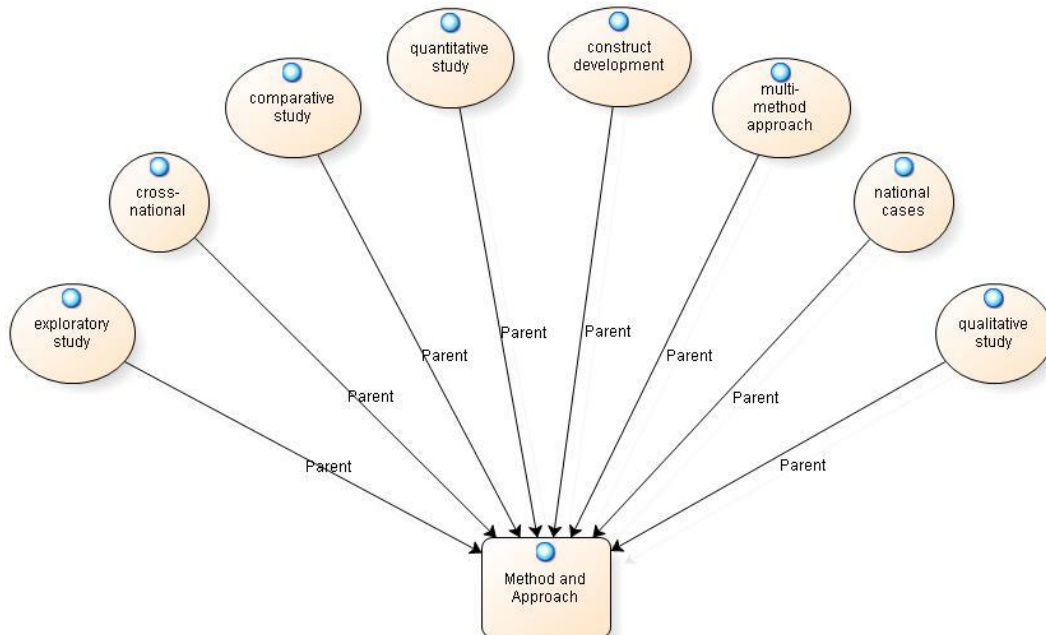
Finally, the last group worth to analyse is “HR function” related research. This group has very dispersed topics of research. However, for its novelty, it is worth to mention some topics such as “social responsible driven closedowns” (Hanson and Wigbad, 2006), which reports on a study about the empirical evidence of productivity increase during the process of organisational closedowns. Also, “emotional exhaustion” (Kulik et al, 2009) that the so called toxin handlers (organisational members who help their colleagues manage negative emotions in the workplace) may suffer.

Figure 9: Ethics in HRM: Areas under study



Another group emerged from the content analysis of the nodes' structures, which was named as "method and approach" and refers to the strategy used by researchers to approach the subjects under study in terms of methodological choices.

Figure 10: Methods and approach



The most popular approach to the subject is "qualitative study" with 35% of references, which may be due to the lack of research in this area and the subsequent lack of theoretical support. To a lesser extent, the quantitative studies, with 24% of citations within this group, are also

used. Finally, research developed explicitly using “national cases” is a common methodological approach, with 24% of citations.

Discussion and Final Considerations

As we used two different software and methodological approaches to analyze the sample, we find it relevant to observe that the exploratory galaxies from RefViz and the maps in NVivo do have a similar coherence in the results, which allowed us to triangulate and turn our results more robust.

However, the systematic literature review as a method has the inherent limitation that it depends on the quality of the search, and the quality of the search depends on prior experience in doing systematic literature reviews in the topic under study and also on planning.

While the latest has been achieved, the first was tentatively achieved by the contribution of one of the authors, with prior experience and publications in areas linked to CSR, the contribution of another author, with prior experience and publications in areas linked to HRM and finally, the contribution of third author with has experience and publications of systematic literature reviews in social sciences, more linked to the business area. However, none of the authors had previous experience in relating CSR and HRM, which naturally limits the results.

One of the initial findings was the confrontation with the small amount of papers that resulted from the queries. A total of 49 papers in a time span of about 10 years (which means an average of about 5 papers per year) clearly shows little scientific production. If we take into consideration that 80% of the papers were produced in the second half of the time span, we believe it demonstrates that this is an unexplored area but with a growing trend.

From the literature map obtained with Refviz, we were able, using the grounded theory approach, to identify 4 main subject areas of research, namely, CSR and HRM, Strategy and Performance, Ethics and Sustainability and Ethics in HRM.

The most relevant area was CSR and HRM. In order to address this subject area, we considered that it would be more manageable to create three subareas. The subareas that emerged from the review of the abstracts were employee related issues, HR function and responsible leadership. The first of these subareas is the most relevant one and addresses issues such as employee involvement and workplace citizenship, but also work-life balance and employee wellbeing.

Within the strategy and performance subject area, the most popular topics of research are the strategic dimension and organizational performance. Business ethics is the dominant research topic in the group of ethics and sustainability. Finally, the HR function subject area presented very dispersed topics of research.

We believe that these subject areas could be the initial stage of development of future invisible colleges. Our research illustrated **there are clear gaps in the scientific literature** from 2001 to 01st of July, 2012, that can be explored by researchers wishing to deliver innovative research. We argue however that a more strategic approach over research in this field should be sought, either by incorporating it as key goal in international public funded project or by applying integrated study perspectives over key aspects of CSR and HRM.

Due to its nature, the implications of this study are mainly related with future research in this subject, rather than implications for management. A theoretical implication is the need for include other search keywords in future systematic literature reviews in order to comprise more key issues for human resources management, such as employee involvement or organizational development. Another implication for future empirical studies that emerged from the findings is the need to explore the linkage between the CSR strategic nature and the role of HRM as facilitators of employee involvement in strategic deployment.

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Appendix 1 – List of papers included in the relevant sample (ordered alphabetically)

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