

-RESEARCH ARTICLE-

**ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY IN STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT: A
BIBLIOMETRIC MAPPING OF ITS ROLE IN FOSTERING INNOVATION**

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Abstract

Absorption capacity (AC) refers to a company's ability to identify, absorb, and utilise valuable external information for commercial purposes. It is the cornerstone of corporate innovation and sustainable competitive advantage. In an era of rapid technological transformation and knowledge-intensive competition, innovation remains crucial for long-term organisational success. Despite the rapid growth of literature on AC, uncertainties remain regarding its fundamental dimensions and interaction with strategic management practices. This study employs bibliometric analysis to investigate the evolution of AC research within the context of innovation in strategic management, through a systematic review of global trends up to 2024. Data were obtained from journals indexed in the Web of Science Core Collection, SSCI, SCI-Expanded, and Google Scholar. After applying exclusion criteria focusing on English-language articles on strategic management, 251 peer-reviewed articles (1990-2024) were selected as the final sample. Descriptive statistics, citation networks, co-citations, and co-word mapping were analysed using VOSviewer software. Key findings reveal an increase in AC publications after 2015. The peak years for this increase were 2020 (n=30) and 2023 (n=24), with most publications originating from China (n=56) and the US (n=27). Leading journals include the International Journal of Innovation Management (n=22) and the Journal of Knowledge Management (n=12). Influential authors are predominantly from the fields of business economics, engineering, and computer science, highlighting AC's role in enhancing innovation performance. Notably, Turkish contributions remain few (n=1), pointing to a critical research gap. Overall, the analysis confirms AC as a dynamic capability that supports organisational innovation by facilitating knowledge acquisition, assimilation, transformation, and utilisation. This research advances theoretical understanding by visualising thematic clusters (e.g., open innovation, knowledge management) and offers practical implications for policymakers and managers, such as promoting cross-sector collaboration and employee skill development to strengthen AC. Future studies should prioritise empirical research for Türkiye

Keywords: *Absorptive capacity (AC), Bibliometric analysis, Strategic management, Innovation, Knowledge management*

JEL Codes: 032, M10

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STRATEJİK YÖNETİMDE ÖZÜMSEME KAPASİTESİNİN İNOVASYONDAKİ ROLÜ: BİBLİYOMETRİK BİR HARİTALAMA ²

Öz

Özümseme/Soğurma kapasitesi (AC), bir şirketin ticari amaçlarla değerli dış bilgileri belirleme, özümseme ve kullanma yeteneğini ifade eder ve kurumsal inovasyonun ve sürdürülebilir rekabet avantajının temel taşıdır. Hızlı teknolojik dönüşüm ve bilgi yoğun rekabetin yaşandığı bir çağda, inovasyon uzun vadeli organizasyonel başarı için hala çok önemlidir. AC ile ilgili literatürün hızla artmasına rağmen, temel boyutları ve stratejik yönetim uygulamalarıyla etkileşimi konusunda belirsizlikler devam etmektedir. Bu çalışma, bibliyometrik analiz yöntemini kullanarak, stratejik yönetim içindeki inovasyon odağında AC araştırmalarının gelişimini 2024 yılına kadar olan dönemde küresel eğilimlerin sistematik bir incelemesi yoluyla ele almaktadır. Veriler, Web of Science Core Collection, SSCI, SCI-Expanded ve Google Scholar indeksli dergilerden elde edilmiştir. Hariç tutma kriterlerinden sonra, 251 adet hakemli makale (1990-2024) nihai örneklem olarak seçilmiştir. VOSviewer yazılımı aracılığıyla tanımlayıcı istatistikler, atıf ağları, ortak atıflar ve ortak kelime eşlemesi kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Önemli bulgular, 2015 sonrası AC yayınlarında bir artış olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Bu artışın zirve noktaları 2020 (n=30) ve 2023 (n=24) yıllarıdır ve yayınların çoğu Çin (n=56) ve ABD'den (n=27) gelmektedir. Önde gelen dergiler arasında *International Journal of Innovation Management* (n=22) ve *Journal of Knowledge Management* (n=12) bulunmaktadır. İşletme ekonomisi, mühendislik ve bilgisayar bilimleri alanlarından etkili yazarlar ağırlıkta olup, bu da AC'nin inovasyon performansını artırmadaki rolünü vurgulamaktadır. Özellikle, Türk literatür eksikliği göze çarpmaktadır (n=1), bu da kritik bir araştırma boşluğuna işaret etmektedir. Genel olarak, analiz AC'yi bilgi edinimi, asimilasyonu, dönüşümü ve kullanımını kolaylaştırarak örgütsel inovasyonu destekleyen dinamik bir yetenek olarak teyit etmektedir. Bu araştırma, tematik kümeleri (ör. açık inovasyon, bilgi yönetimi) görselleştirerek teorik anlayışı ilerletmekte ve politika yapıcılar ve yöneticiler için AC'yi güçlendirmek amacıyla sektörler arası işbirliğini ve çalışanların beceri geliştirmesini teşvik etmek gibi pratik çıkarımlar sunmaktadır. Gelecekteki çalışmalar, Türkiye için ampirik çalışmaları önceliklendirmelidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Absorptive (özümseme) kapasite, Bibliyometrik analiz, Stratejik yönetim, İnovasyon, Bilgi yönetimi

JEL Kodları: 032, M10

“Bu çalışma Araştırma ve Yayın Etiğine uygun olarak hazırlanmıştır.”

² Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet, makalenin sonunda yer almaktadır.

1. INTRODUCTION

Although the literature on AC has experienced significant growth, the definition and validation of the construct are still ambiguous and lacking (Sancho-Zamora et al., 2022). Innovative products, processes, and services are the primary means by which organisations establish competitive advantages (Lawson and Samson, 2001). Recent studies show that innovation success depends increasingly on companies' knowledge management capabilities (Fores and Camisón, 2011). AC, innovation and are closely related concepts in organisational behaviour and management, especially in how organisations learn from their environments and adapt to novel information and technologies.

Additionally, studies such as those by Lane et al. (2006) and Song et al. (2006) demonstrate that external knowledge, particularly that gained from technological advances and market changes, is complementary and should be integrated into organisational learning to enhance innovation and business performance. A company dedicated to gathering information from outside sources increases its innovation capacity because it is less likely to miss market opportunities and has a better ability to understand and anticipate customer needs, as well as discover the strengths and weaknesses of its competitors (Nieto and Quevedo, 2005).

Knowledge assimilation refers to the routines and processes that the company has in place to understand, analyse, and interpret knowledge extracted from external sources, while transformation is the act of developing routines with which to combine existing knowledge with newly acquired and assimilated knowledge, and knowledge exploitation refers to applying it commercially to achieve business objectives (Lane and Lubatkin, 1998).

Since the publication of the seminal work (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990), AC has received increasing interest in the management literature refers to an organisation's ability to recognise, assimilate, and apply valuable external knowledge. This concept is crucial for fostering innovation within teams and companies, as it directly influences how effectively they can incorporate new ideas, technologies, and practices into their existing processes.

AC has emerged as one of the most important constructs in organisational research in recent decades. From the past to the present, research in AC has been based on numerous justifications and theoretical sources. According to Cohen and Levinthal (1990), the ability of a firm to recognise the significance of novel, external information, assimilate it, and apply it to commercial objectives is referred to as AC. Since the seminal contribution, numerous articles have referred to AC, presenting various and often conflicting conceptualisations (Roberts et al., 2012). The concept of AC is a prominent topic of scientific inquiry (Camisón and Forés, 2010; Jansen et al., 2005). Research on the outcomes of AC still lacks comprehensive examinations of innovation and financial measures of performance, while the existing work fails to explore the interconnections between them.

Cohen and Levinthal (1990) and Zahra and George (2002) suggested a reconceptualisation of the AC construct to reduce ambiguity in empirical studies. Authors suggest a reintroduction of “recognising the value,” an alternative understanding of “transformation,” a clarification of “potential absorptive capacity,” an elaboration of the impact of socialisation mechanisms, an investigation of the role of “power relationships,” and an inclusion of feedback loops in a dynamic model of AC (Todorova and Durisin, 2007).

The significant literature addressing the AC of businesses has revealed numerous performance advantages associated with various company activities. In early work related to AC, Cohen and Levinthal established three key components: recognising the value of new information, assimilating that information, and applying it for commercial purposes. They also emphasised the value of having external knowledge and not only internally developed knowledge, thus highlighting the important role played by the AC of organisations (Sancho-Zamora et al, 2022).

Bibliometric co-citation analysis is a meta-analytical tool with analytical properties (Cote et al., 1991; Kim and McMillan, 2008; Apriliyanti and Alon, 2017). This article performs a large range of bibliometric analyses applied to a much-expanded literature base. While the literature on AC is rich and covers analyses of various organisational phenomena, few attempts have been made to delve deeper into the process linking AC's strategic management and innovation.

Most of the existing empirical research focuses on the direct impact of absorptive capacity on various dependent variables, such as performance, R&D alliances, innovation, and technology sourcing (Escribano et al., 2009). Our study differs from previous literature reviews on the AC and most literature reviews in general. First, we focus on the topic of strategic management and future research. Second, a systematic mapping is presented based on a consensus list of key articles in Türkiye and globally. Finally, findings and conclusions are interpreted.

Our research aims to develop the existing literature on the importance of innovation in strategic management. The study's objectives are to analyse relevant publications in terms of year, journal, author, citations, citing author networks, and the pattern of the common word network. The findings of the analysis will reveal the link between AC and innovation and will contribute to archiving and mapping for researchers. The remainder of the article is arranged as follows: The first section presents the conceptual framework and focuses on the theoretical work. The second section centres on the research inquiries. Results based on the Voswiever analysis method are presented in mapping form. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of the findings and a set of implications for research and practice.

1.1. Absorptive Capacity History

Cohen and Levinthal (1990) define AC as the ability to recognise the value of new information, assimilate it, and apply it to commercial objectives. According to Lane et al. (2006), AC has emerged as one of the most significant constructs in organisational research in recent decades. Based on previous studies, such as Allen (1984), held that AC is a by-product of an organisation's research and development efforts.

AC refers to a firm's ability to recognise the value of new external knowledge, assimilate it, and apply it to commercial purposes. The original definition of AC emphasises three dimensions: knowledge identification, assimilation, and exploitation to achieve a commercial end. AC's traditional work has focused on Cohen and Levinthal's (1990) definition of concepts such as research and development, patents, and problem-solving. However, different strategies are also needed. In contrast, Zahra and George (2002) define four dimensions, which coincide with the phases of AC included in their definition.

A review of the literature on AC presents theoretical and empirical theories in different fields of knowledge (García-Villaverde et al., 2021).

The concept of AC makes it possible to understand the internal and external dynamics of organisations and their learning (Spila, 2009). According to Flatten et al. (2011), the dimensions of AC enable firms to benefit from discoveries and knowledge (Cohen and Levinthal, 1994). They serve as an important, intangible resource that can enhance firm performance and can be a major competitive advantage (Teece et al., 1997). According to Zahra and George (2002), AC attains a competitive advantage primarily through innovation and strategic flexibility.

The most valuable asset of a firm is its unique knowledge, whether internal or external (Liebeskind, 1996). AC enables firms to find and recognise relevant external knowledge sources or require additional resources to transform the knowledge to be assimilated with existing knowledge stocks (Todorova and Durisin, 2007).

External knowledge inputs are the various channels firms use to produce new products/services, "such as suppliers, customers, competitors, universities, other research institutions, specialised journals, conferences, and meetings" (Escribano et al., 2009). AC has increasingly become a key driver of a firm's competitive advantage (Cockburn and Henderson, 1998).

According to Grimpe and Sofka (2009), industry firms that invest in research and development to develop AC have the potential to achieve the highest returns by directing their search behaviour towards customers. Competitor recognition may be considered a less risky strategy, but it is also associated with lower returns. It is possible to improve innovation performance by incorporating customer interaction into research and development funding.

Several empirical studies relate the effect of internal and external knowledge on innovation to AC. Internal knowledge exploration pertains to the generation of novel knowledge within the organisation, such as inventions arising from research (Smith et al., 2005). Knowledge exploration is the process of acquiring knowledge from external sources (Lane et al., 2006).

Srivastava and D'Souza (2020) it has been assert that managers who possess strategic thinking abilities enhance their ability to absorb information. According to the study, organisations that possess superior strategic thinkers are more likely to exhibit elevated levels of accountability. Strategic thinking is one such managerial skill that guides managers.

1.2. Absorptive Capacity and Innovation

AC is a relational concept that defines a firm's ability to identify, assimilate, transform, and utilise external knowledge (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990). The concept attempts to address two types of related processes: (a) knowledge interactions within firms, whose practices and dynamics are integrated into organisational routines; and (b) interactions outside firms, which enable firms to capture knowledge available in the organisational environment and integrate it into the organisation's own knowledge and innovation dynamics through various assimilation and utilisation mechanisms. From this perspective, assimilation capacity always refers to an interactive learning process oriented towards innovation (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990; Lane and Lubatkin, 1998; Zahra and George, 2002).

However, AC to use knowledge for innovation requires different competencies. In the first case, these are learning capacities that enable the development and reinforcement of new knowledge (assimilation); in the second case, they are problem-solving competencies that enable the generation of creative solutions to new or unforeseen problems (application). These competencies are processes that require different forms of learning, both within and outside the organisation (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990; Zahra and George, 2002). To shape their innovation strategies, companies need to absorb new information from the environment and use it internally (Kranz et al., 2016).

Past research has linked AC to organisational competitive advantage (Cohen and Levinthal, 1989, 1990; Prahalad and Hamel, 1990), innovative performance (Flatten et al., 2011; Henderson and Clark, 1990; Levinson and Asahi, 1995) and flexibility (Sterman, 2001). A strong AC enables firms to attain exceptional innovation performance, capitalise on first-mover advantages, respond swiftly to customer needs, and avoid "lock-out effects" as well as "competency traps" (Hamel, 1991; Zahra and George, 2002). Tang et al (2020) found that explorative or exploitative learning can both lead to high radical innovation.

Müller and Bulliga's (2021) study, carried out on a sample of 221 German companies, showed that companies that acquire, assimilate, transform, and exploit external knowledge are better prepared to develop innovation strategies and apply new business models.

Additionally, businesses should develop connections and collaborations with universities and other public sector scientists to gain an advantage (Zucker et al., 2002). AC is closely linked to inputs from the innovation process and a firm's capacity for innovation, making it challenging to assess their influence on innovation performance. For instance, researchers and developers may be unaware of the existence of specialised journals that provide a substantial amount of publicly accessible knowledge (Escribano et al., 2009).

AC is a good source of sustainable competitive advantage over time (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990; Dyer and Singh, 1998; del Carmen Haro-Domínguez et al., 2007), but it is not an exception to the measurement problem that is intangible. AC relates to innovation.

At the heart of AC lies qualified personnel with the ability to evaluate, assimilate, transform, and utilise knowledge. This is called critical mass. Knowledge-based innovations represent the capacity to learn and produce. Although knowledge resides in the people who make up a company, AC is more than the sum of individual talents; it depends on communication structures and internal information flows, i.e., knowledge management (Castro et al, 2009).

Here, the importance of the relationship between AC and innovation is revealed from a strategic management perspective. Cruz-Ros et al. (2021) argue that the dimensions of absorptive capacity have positive effects on innovation processes. They also underline the importance of knowledge assimilation and transformation in creating a competitive advantage.

Similarly, innovation entails the degree of modifications in the business model, the novelty of market segments, and the significance of customer value. AC has been linked to numerous organisational factors, such as the intensity of effort, prior knowledge, organisational forms, and combinative capabilities. For example, studies have found that companies with higher levels of AC tend to be more proactive in scanning their environment for new knowledge and are more effective at integrating and applying that knowledge to develop new products and services (Scuotto et al., 2016).

Xie et al. (2018) concluded that the dimensions of absorptive capacity are positively related to innovation performance, transformation, and exploration, and improve the knowledge acquisition and assimilation effect. Similarly, Fiol (1996) argues that the potential of organisations to produce innovative outcomes depends on the prior knowledge they AC.

On the other hand, through empathising with external customers, employees become “twins to their customers” (Leonard-Barton, 1995), which facilitates the comprehension of customer requirements. Research on the significance of need knowledge within organisations emphasises that prior need knowledge facilitates the acquisition of novel external need information by employees (Homburg et al., 2009). For innovation, AC advocates customer and employee assimilation. AC is known as an innovative work of literature, “firms' ability to protect their novel intellectual property” (Leiponen and Byrna, 2009; Reitzig and Puranam, 2009).

The literature analysed above demonstrates that AC strengthens innovation and is indispensable for radical innovation and open innovation. Our study aims to provide rich biometric data by adding innovation and strategic management to AC, which will enrich the existing literature. The ability of the company to acquire, assimilate, and profitably utilise new knowledge to enhance its innovation performance appears to be a crucial determinant of AC. According to Daghighi (2004), firms must enhance their acquisition, assimilation, transformation, and utilisation of knowledge to generate organisational innovations.

2. METHODOLOGY

Following the guidance of Tranfield et al. (2003), this study conducted a bibliometric analysis of research published in SSCI, SCI-Expanded, and scholar-indexed educational journals as of September 2024. Also, 251 articles constituted the sample of the study and the data set in question was downloaded in Plain Text, a format suitable for running in the package program. VOSviewer was developed as a scientific mapping analysis software tool by Nees Jan van Eck and Ludo Waltman from Leiden University in the Netherlands (Şimşir, 2021). In this study, VOSviewer was preferred because it works in harmony with the data set and is easy to download and use.

2.1. Bibliometric Analysis Methods

Although bibliometric methods are not new (Kessler, 1963; Small, 1973), the use of bibliometric analysis is growing rapidly. Bibliographic methods allow researchers to base their findings on aggregated bibliographic data produced by other scientists who express their opinions through citation, collaboration, and writing. Table 1 provides an overview of the search terms employed and the number of documents discovered.

Three fundamental criteria were employed to select the studies to be included in the analysis. These criteria include:

- (1) The publication should emphasise strategic management.
- (2) The citation should be in the research category of the article (article + abstract + early access + book)
- (3) The publication ought to be in the English language.

These techniques are year analysis, journal analysis, country analysis, citation analysis, co-author analysis, co-citation analysis, and co-word analysis, etc. The workflow suggested by Zupic and Čater (2015) in Figure 1 was followed.

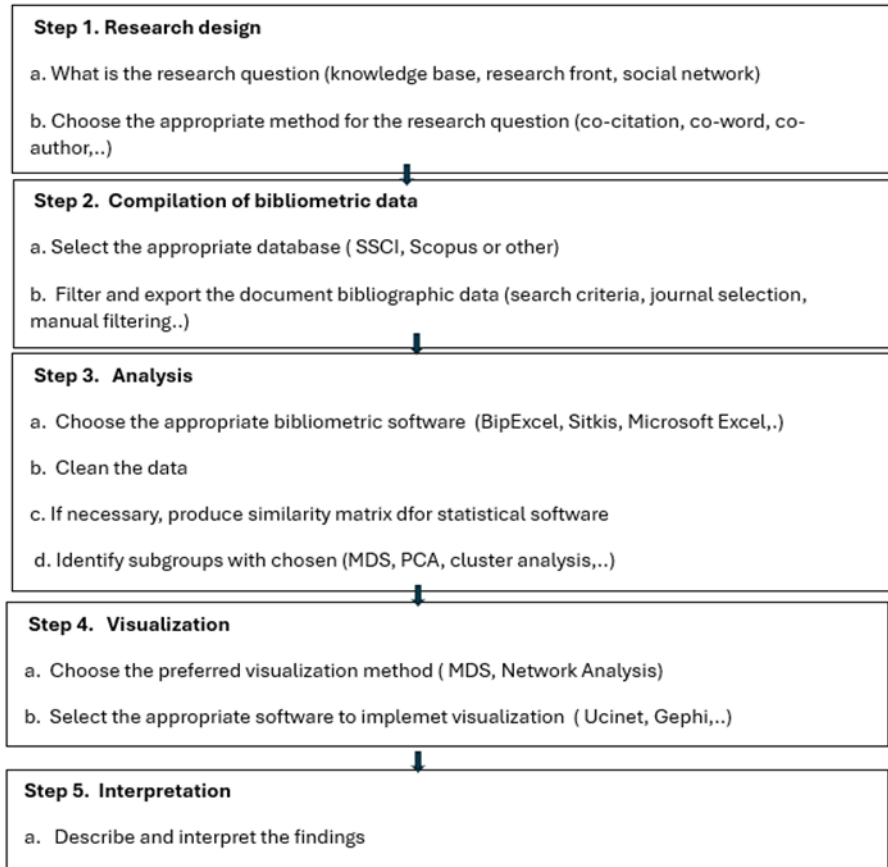


Figure 1. Workflow for Conducting Science Mapping with Bibliometric Methods.

Source:(Zupic and Cater, 2015).

3. RESULTS

This is a bibliometric study on “absorptive capacity and innovation.” This research topic was first seen on Google Scholar. Since the research sample is the Web of Science core database, the sample and database have been narrowed down with addition and subtraction techniques.

Scholar “absorptive capacity”: 261.000

The data set was filtered from the words “title”, “English”, “article”, “Web of Science” and “Absorptive Capacity” and “Business Economics”, and “Business Management” = 251

The distribution of 251 articles in the WOS database, published between 1990 and 2024, by authors, is shown in the table below. The table shows authors who have at least 1 article on the subject. The data set was filtered from the words "English", "article", "Web of Science Core" and "Business Economics".

3.1. Year Analysis

According to Table 1 regarding the number of articles, the fact that 2020, 2021 and 2023 are among the years with the most studies, respectively, shows that the AC topic has attracted the attention of researchers, especially in recent years. Looking at the publications every year, it can be said that the AC literature, which started in 1990, increased as a single number until 2014, while this number increased to 30 in 2020 and started to decrease with an average of 23 until 2024.

Table 1. Distribution of AC-Related Publications By Year

	Publication Years	Count
1	2024	18
2	2023	24
3	2022	23
4	2021	21
5	2020	30
6	2019	19
7	2018	20
8	2017	17
9	2016	15
10	2015	12
11	2014	10
12	2013	9
13	2012	8
14	2011	7
15	2010	3
16	2009	5
17	2008	3
18	2007	4
19	2006	1
20	2001	1
21	1990	1

Source: Authors' work from WOS

3.2 Country Analysis

There are a total of 21 countries where articles related to AC have been published. Since articles with joint authors are shown separately in each author's own country, the total number of articles is higher than 251. The country with the most publications is the People's Republic of China, with 56 articles; it is seen that there is just 1 article from Türkiye among the institutions in the table (Table 2). According to these findings, it is possible to say that AC literature in Türkiye has very few studies.

Table 2: Distribution of AC-Related Publications by Country

Countries/Regions		Count	Countries/Regions		Count
1	PEOPLE'S R CHINA	56	26	IRAN	4
2	USA	27	27	SCOTLAND	4
3	ENGLAND	26	28	CANADA	3
4	SPAIN	26	29	MALAYSIA	3
5	AUSTRALIA	19	30	NEW ZEALAND	3
6	GERMANY	16	31	PAKISTAN	3
7	ITALY	13	32	U ARAB EMIRATES	3
8	BRAZIL	12	33	IRELAND	2
9	FRANCE	11	34	JAPAN	2
10	SWEDEN	11	35	MEXICO	2
11	FINLAND	9	36	MOROCCO	2
12	INDIA	9	37	SAUDI ARABIA	2
13	SOUTH KOREA	9	38	SLOVENIA	2
14	PORTUGAL	8	39	BRUNEI	1
15	TAIWAN	8	40	ECUADOR	1
16	NORWAY	7	41	EGYPT	1
17	SWITZERLAND	7	42	IRAQ	1
18	AUSTRIA	6	43	JORDAN	1
19	BELGIUM	6	44	KENYA	1
20	COLOMBIA	6	45	MALTA	1
21	INDONESIA	6	46	OMAN	1
22	NETHERLANDS	6	47	PERU	1
23	RUSSIA	6	48	POLAND	1
24	GHANA	5	49	TÜRKİYE	1
25	DENMARK	4	50	VIETNAM	1

Source: Authors' work from WOS

3.3. Publications Analysis

The distribution of 251 articles in the WOS core database published between 1990-2024, according to the journals they were published in, is given in the table below. The table shows the journals in which at least 2 articles on the subject were published (Table 3).

According to the distribution of articles in the journals they were published, it is seen that most studies were published in the International Journal of Innovation Management (22). The journal in question is followed by: the Journal of Knowledge Management (12), Technology Analysis Strategic Management (11), Technovation (10), and IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management (9), respectively.

Table 3: Distribution of AC-Related Publications by Type

Publication Titles	Count	Publication Titles	Count
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INNOVATION MANAGEMENT	22	INFORMATION MANAGEMENT JOURNAL OF EAST EUROPEAN MANAGEMENT STUDIES	3
JOURNAL OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT	12		3

TECHNOLOGY ANALYSIS STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT	11	JOURNAL OF MANUFACTURING TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT JOURNAL OF PRODUCT	3
TECHNOVATION	10	INNOVATION MANAGEMENT	3
IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON ENGINEERING MANAGEMENT	9	JOURNAL OF SMALL BUSINESS MANAGEMENT	3
JOURNAL OF TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER	9	ASIA PACIFIC JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT	2
MANAGEMENT DECISION	9	BENCHMARKING AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL	2
EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF INNOVATION MANAGEMENT	8	CHINESE MANAGEMENT STUDIES	2
BUSINESS PROCESS MANAGEMENT	6	EUROPEAN JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT	2
JOURNAL BUSINESS STRATEGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT	6	INDUSTRY AND INNOVATION INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ENTREPRENEURIAL BEHAVIOR	2
INDUSTRIAL MARKETING MANAGEMENT	6	RESEARCH	2
EUROPEAN MANAGEMENT JOURNAL	5	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INNOVATION AND LEARNING	2
JOURNAL OF ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT	5	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT	2
KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT RESEARCH PRACTICE	5	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT	2
R D MANAGEMENT	5	INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF OPERATIONS PRODUCTION	2
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF TECHNOLOGY MANAGEMENT	4	MANAGEMENT	2
JOURNAL OF INNOVATION KNOWLEDGE	4	JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION	2
RESEARCH POLICY	4	QUALITY ACCESS TO SUCCESS	2
CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION MANAGEMENT	3	SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY	2
		STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT JOURNAL	2
EUROPEAN MANAGEMENT REVIEW	3		

Source: Authors' work from WOS

3.4. Area Analysis

Articles related to AC are distributed in 15 fields. The first 5 fields that are studied the most on the subject are; Management (251), Business (88), engineering research (39), Engineering Industrial (39), Information Science Library Science (24), Operations Research Management Science (15), Multidisciplinary Sciences (11), Environmental Studies (8), Economics (6), Engineering Multidisciplinary (4), Computer Science Information Systems (3), Engineering Manufacturing (3), Computer Science Interdisciplinary Applications (1), Hospitality Leisure Sport Tourism (1), Industrial Relations Labor (1), Psychology Applied (1). Since some studies are included in more than one field, the total number is more than 251 (Table 4).

Table 4. Distribution of AC-Related Publications by Field

	Web of Science Categories	Count
1	MANAGEMENT	251
2	BUSINESS	88

3	ENGINEERING INDUSTRIAL	39
4	INFORMATION SCIENCE LIBRARY SCIENCE	24
5	OPERATIONS RESEARCH MANAGEMENT SCIENCE	15
6	MULTIDISCIPLINARY SCIENCES	11
7	ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES	8
8	ECONOMICS	6
9	ENGINEERING MULTIDISCIPLINARY	4
10	COMPUTER SCIENCE INFORMATION SYSTEMS	3
11	ENGINEERING MANUFACTURING	3
12	COMPUTER SCIENCE INTERDISCIPLINARY APPLICATIONS	1
13	HOSPITALITY LEISURE SPORT TOURISM	1
14	INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS LABOR	1
15	PSYCHOLOGY APPLIED	1

Source: Authors' work from WOS

3.5. Citation Analysis

In the citation analysis, studies of authors with at least one citation and at least one study out of 251 studies were included in the scope of the research. This type of analysis was applied by including studies with at least one citation out of 251 studies (documents), and studies that met the condition were selected and their connections to each other were visually presented in the citation network map in Figure 2-3

Figure 2 shows the context of the citation authors. The colours category shows the network relationships of the authors.

Figure 3 shows a co-citation analysis. Only authors with at least two citations are included in this list. Every circle signifies an article. The size of the circle reflects the number of citations. The lines indicate the articles that are co-cited within the same article. The co-citation analysis is founded on the count of the number of items that one document or author appears jointly cited (Cohen, 1990).

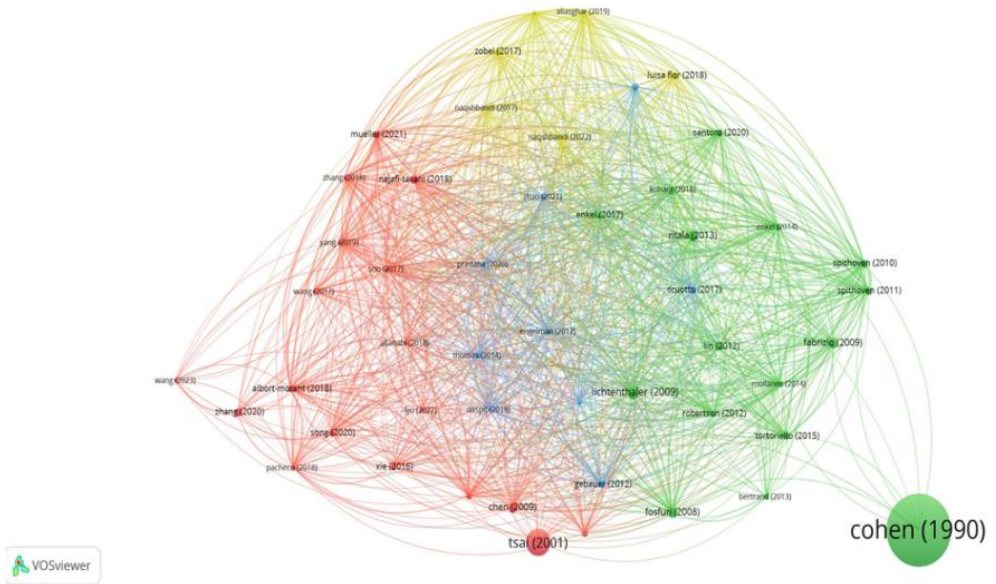


Figure 2: Network Map in Context of Citation Author's I
Source: Authors' work from WOSviewer

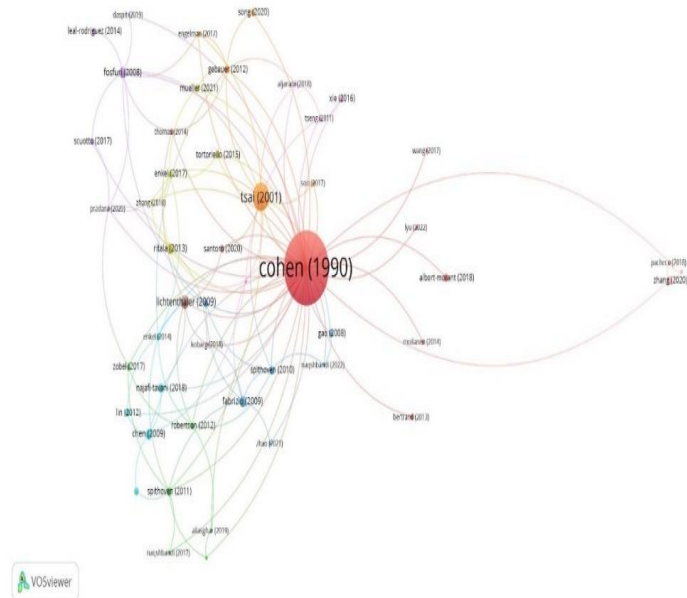


Figure 3: Network Map in Context of Citation Author's II
Source: Authors' work from WOSviewer

3.6. Co-Word Analysis

As a result of the keyword analysis mapping, the VosViewer algorithm calculates the total strength of the links established with other keywords for each of the 4 keywords (absorptive capacity, innovation, knowledge management, open innovation) and visualises the keywords with the highest total link strength. The network relationship of these words shows us the relationship between AC and innovation.

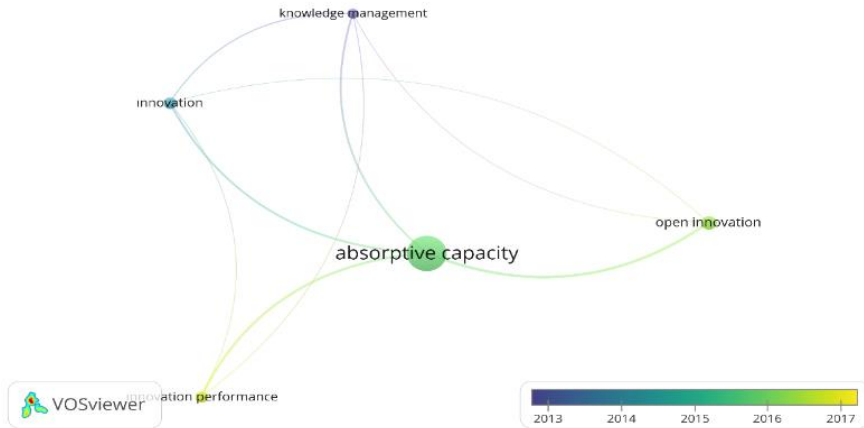


Figure 4: Co-Word Analysis – Network Map in Context of Author Keywords

Source: Authors' work from WOSviewer

3.7. Evaluation of Most Cited Articles

The bibliometric analysis revealed several key findings:

Growth of AC Research: The research on AC has experienced significant growth over time, focusing on its application in firms' innovation processes and knowledge management.

Diverse Research Approaches: The research on AC employs diverse methodologies, including empirical and theoretical approaches.

Focus on Firms and Innovation: Most of the research focuses on AC's impact on firms' innovation performance and competitive advantage.

Knowledge Management Connection: AC is closely linked to knowledge management processes, highlighting the importance of effective knowledge acquisition, assimilation, and utilisation for innovation.

Numerous studies have explored the relationship between AC and innovation. Some key findings include (Gebauer et al., 2012):

AC plays a critical role in several strategic management areas: **Innovation Strategy:** Firms with strong AC are better equipped to identify and capitalise on emerging technologies and market trends. They can develop innovative products and

services that meet customer needs and create a competitive advantage. AC is essential for effective knowledge management practices. Firms can leverage their collective knowledge to drive innovation by fostering a culture of learning and sharing. AC can help firms form successful strategic alliances. By understanding and assimilating knowledge from partners, firms can create synergies and achieve mutual benefits. AC is a key driver of organisational learning. By continuously acquiring and applying new knowledge, firms can adapt to changing circumstances and improve their performance. Of the many factors highlighted in the literature as determinants of successful innovation, AC is known to be critical (Najafi-Tavani et al., 2016; Zahra and George, 2002).

4. DISCUSSION

Based on an examination of theoretical and empirical literature, this article aims to advance the study and understanding of organisational absorptive capacity in terms of strategic management and innovation. This research, designed as a bibliometric study to examine publications in the literature examining the relationship between AC and innovation in terms of different parameters, has yielded various findings. The data and findings obtained during the research process are considered to be important for the development of literature, especially for Türkiye, which is considered to be less studied.

Our findings enrich the theoretical innovation on the relationships between AC and innovations. Formulating policies that aim at stimulating firms' AC. This paper makes a unique contribution to our understanding of the strategy and innovation dimension of the AC literature by systematically clustering papers and posing new research questions. AC is a valuable asset for organisations seeking to innovate and thrive in today's competitive landscape. By investing in the four key dimensions of AC, firms can enhance their ability to acquire, assimilate, transform, and exploit new knowledge, leading to increased innovation and improved performance.

Companies must learn to exchange information not only with their direct customers and suppliers, but across their entire organisation and value creation network in order to derive tangible benefits from technological innovations (Müller et al, 2021).

Although the AC literature has developed greatly since 1990 with Cohen, its relationship with innovation is not as much as expected in the Web of Science. However, it has continued to increase in the last 15 years. In today's intensely competitive environment, organisations value AC coming from their external environment in terms of innovation.

In this respect, the findings that the importance attributed to AC increases innovation can also be evaluated together with the increase in the number of studies conducted in the field. In addition, the study from Türkiye must be limited to 1 among the numerous studies conducted.

In addition, the fact that management and business economics are among the main research areas in which publications on AC and innovation are included can be interpreted as the parallel development of the mentioned phenomenon both in practice and in academia. According to the citation reports of the articles in the database, the most cited study among the 251 articles included in the study belongs to Cohen and Levinthal (1990) with 17,928 citations.

Firms that invest in research activities that generate more AC will experience a superior search experience in terms of search speed and the importance of creative results (Fabrizio, 2009). Future research should develop more quantitative measures to test our findings through quantitative data. Scuotto et al. (2017), AC positively affects the innovation performance of SMEs. According to Cohen and Levinthal (1990), AC allows organisations to acquire, share, and integrate external knowledge internally, leading to the creation of innovative ideas. This process fosters the development of new technological knowledge driven by user-focused innovation. Future studies can deepen this analysis by collecting more precise measurements of AC.

Zahra and George (2002) conceptualised the dimensions of AC and, following Jansen et al.'s (2005) operationalisation, they joined the literature on potential AC and realised AC, which involves the transformation and use of acquired knowledge.

Formulating policies aimed at promoting the AC of firms (*e.g. facilitating the mobility of scientists, encouraging links between manufacturers, suppliers, customers and research organisations, and improving the technological skills of employees*) can be an effective way of creating an interconnected channel for the transfer, dissemination, and application of external knowledge (Kostopoulos et al., 2011).

Managers ought to concentrate their efforts on enhancing their organisation's knowledge assimilation efforts. According to Moilanen et al. (2014), AC serves not only as a means of processing external data but also as a conduit for knowledge transfer within a company, which can prove to be efficacious in facilitating innovation. Particularly, enterprises can collaborate with diverse partners, such as universities, research institutes, governments, customers, and suppliers, to acquire additional external information and expertise. Since the assimilation of incoming knowledge into AC is largely dependent on employees' knowledge and skills, firms should strengthen their employee training systems to enhance AC capabilities (Xie et al., 2018).

The results of biometric analysis indicate that AC is a dynamic capability that affects other organisational capabilities within the company. AC is a dynamic capability that is related to creating and using knowledge to improve a firm's competitive advantage by strategically adapting resources to changing market conditions (Zahra and George 2002).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, absorptive capacity (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990) has been cited more than 57.322 times in the management literature (Google Scholar accessed 07.10.2025). The authors discovered that in the strategic/innovation and there is still much to contribute. Although the relevant literature has already demonstrated the impact of knowledge AC on companies' innovation capacity, our research can also help organisations understand and clarify the most appropriate way to manage knowledge to improve their innovation levels. Also, managerial cognition, in particular, leads to successful AC development (Cosaert et al, 2018).

This study focused on innovation to capture absorptive capacity processes in strategic management. This article was motivated by the need to develop an academic understanding of how innovation acts through AC processes. The findings suggested that orientations that translate AC processes into organisational outcomes are effective. AC was found to facilitate organisations' competitive advantage gained through external knowledge acquisition. Additionally, indirect effects supported the theoretical logic that organisational learning capabilities can create sustainable competitive advantage by realising potential (Lane et al., 2006; Xie et al., 2018).

AC is the ability of an organisation to recognise, assimilate, and apply external knowledge. It consists of four main processes. This process produces new technological knowledge based on user-oriented innovation. Both AC and innovation capacities are integral to organisational success, especially in dynamic and competitive markets. Organisations that foster both capacities position themselves to learn continuously, adapt quickly, and innovate effectively. High absorptive capacity contributes to innovation capacity by enabling organisations to integrate external knowledge into their innovation processes. Most research on AC assumes that prior relevant knowledge in an organisation determines the effectiveness of the firm's AC (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990).

Organisations with high AC can continuously adapt and innovate by leveraging external information and technologies. This capacity is crucial in rapidly changing environments where organisations must stay competitive. Knowledge is a strategic resource. The knowledge economy, knowledge society, globalisation of markets, and external conditions force companies to be willing to innovate to gain a competitive advantage. Therefore, companies should adopt dynamic capabilities such as AC. Doing so allows a firm to grow its knowledge AC. This knowledge is acquired, assimilated, and applied from outside (Ávila, 2022).

Firstly, it is clear that if a company wants to develop its innovation capacity, it must develop its capacity to acquire, assimilate, and transform external knowledge. To do this, it must embrace human capital as a fundamental element of increasing innovation through knowledge assimilation. Companies that focus on human capital will therefore capture innovation through AC.

Secondly, when organisations increase their learning capacity, the impact that the acquisition of external knowledge has on business innovation increases, so companies

must have flexible internal structures and continuous learning systems that allow them to integrate this new knowledge into the existing business structure, thus creating up-to-date and available knowledge that can be used by the entire organisation (Sancho-Zamora et al, 2022).

Finally, the authors believe that this study contributed to a better definition of the potential areas for future investigation, providing directions for those researchers who are interested in the application of the AC construct in the innovation fields. Future research is needed to better understand how the construct helps explain the intrinsically interrelated link between innovation. It is clear from this research that the firm needs to improve its capacity to acquire, assimilate, and transform external knowledge if it wants to improve its capacity to innovate. To do so, it must adapt its human capital as a key element to increase innovation through knowledge assimilation.

Future research is needed to explore AC in innovation. The impact of AC on innovation and the effective recognition of external knowledge sources helps organisations stay current on industry trends, scientific developments, and emerging technologies. This awareness can lead to innovative applications or products. Once new knowledge is identified, the ability to integrate it into existing frameworks is essential. Organisations with high AC can change their processes or structures to accommodate and exploit this new knowledge. Organisations can develop new product lines, improve processes, or enhance services based on the knowledge they absorb. Effective use of this knowledge is critical to innovation. Companies that can successfully use new ideas tend to gain a competitive advantage. Enhanced AC often leads to the development of innovative offerings that meet customer needs. Organisations can streamline operations or adopt best practices that boost efficiency. By continuously innovating, organisations maintain relevance and responsiveness in a fast-changing market.

STRATEJİK YÖNETİMDE ÖZÜMSEME KAPASİTESİNİN İNOVASYONDAKİ ROLÜ: BİBLİYOMETRİK BİR HARİTALAMA

1. GİRİŞ

Özümseme kapasitesi (AC) kavramı, bilgi özümseme ve kullanma sürecinden kaynaklanan etkileşimli öğrenmenin dinamiklerini anlamamızı sağlar. AC, şirketlerin iç ve dış unsurları arasındaki etkileşim süreçlerini, inovasyon yeteneklerinin geliştirilmesi için ele almaktadır (Cohen ve Levinthal, 1990; Lane ve Lubatkin, 1998; Zahra ve George, 2002). Bu anlamda AC, bir firmanın dış çevresinden bilgi edinme, dönüştürme ve kullanma becerisini ifade eder. Bu beceri, kuruluşların günümüzün hızla değişen iş ortamında rekabetçi kalabilmeleri için hayati önem taşımaktadır. AC ve inovasyon, özellikle kuruluşların çevrelerinden nasıl öğrendikleri ve yeni bilgi ve teknolojilere nasıl uyum sağladıkları söz konusu olduğunda, örgütsel davranış ve yönetimle yakından ilişkili kavramlardır. Bu kavram, ekipler ve şirketler içinde

inovasyonu teşvik etmek için önemlidir çünkü yeni fikirleri, teknolojileri ve uygulamaları mevcut süreçlerine ne kadar etkili bir şekilde dâhil edebileceklerini doğrudan etkiler.

Cohen ve Levinthal, AC yapısını sosyal bilimler alanına katmışlardır. AC, son yıllarda örgütsel araştırmalardaki en önemli yapılardan biri olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Geçmişten bugüne, AC'deki araştırmalar çok sayıda gerekçeye ve teorik kaynağa dayanmaktadır. Cohen ve Levinthal'a (1990) göre, bir firmanın yeni, dışsal bilgilerin önemini fark etme, bunları özümseme ve ticari hedeflere uygulama becerisine AC denir. AC kavramı bu anlamda yönetimde bilimsel araştırmaların önemli konusudur (Camisón ve Forés, 2010; Jansen vd., 2005). AC'nin sonuçları üzerine yapılan araştırmalarda hala inovasyon ve finansal performans ölçümlerinin kapsamlı incelemeleri eksiktir ve mevcut çalışmalar bunlar arasındaki bağlantıları keşfetmede yetersiz olmaktadır (Lane et al., 2006).

Bu araştırma stratejik yönetimde inovasyonun önemine ilişkin mevcut literatürü AC ile geliştirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaçla çalışmanın araştırma hedefleri, ilgili yayınları yıl, dergi, yazar, atıflar, atıf yapan yazar ağları ve ortak kelime ağının örüntüsü açısından analiz etmektir. Analizin bulguları AC ile inovasyon arasındaki bağlantıyı ortaya çıkarmakta ve araştırmacılar için arşivlemeye ve boşlukları doldurmaya katkıda bulunmaktadır.

Makalenin ilk bölümü kavramsal çerçeveyi sunmakta ve teorik çalışmaya odaklanmaktadır. İkinci bölümde ilgili veri tabanlarından elde edilen bulgular derinlemesine analize tabi tutulmakta, son bölümde ise elde edilen bulgulardan araştırma ve uygulama için teorik ve pratik çıkarımlar sunulmaktadır.

2. YÖNTEM

Tranfield vd., (2003) rehberliğinde bu çalışmada, Eylül 2024 itibarıyla SSCI, SCI-Expanded ve akademik indeksli dergilerde yayınlanan araştırmaların bibliyometrik analizi gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmada, 251 makale çalışmanın örneklemine oluşturmuş ve söz konusu veri seti paket programda çalıştırılmaya uygun bir format olan Plain Text olarak indirilmiştir. Bu çalışmada VOSviewer, veri setiyle uyumlu çalışması ve kullanımının kolay olması nedeniyle tercih edilmiştir. WOS veritabanında 1990 ile 2024 yılları arasında yayınlanan 251 makalenin dağılımı filtrelenerek oluşturulmuştur.

3. BULGULAR

Literatürel analizde en çok çalışmanın 2020, 2021 ve 2023 yıllarında bulunması, AC konusunun özellikle son yıllarda araştırmacıların ilgisini çektiğini göstermektedir. AC ile ilgili makaleler 21 ülkede ağırlıklı bulunmaktadır. Makalelerin yayınlandığı dergilerdeki dağılımına göre en çok çalışmanın International Journal of Innovation Management” (22) dergisinde olduğu görülmektedir. AC ile ilgili makaleler 15 alana dağılmıştır. Konu ile ilgili en çok çalışılan ilk 5 alan ise; Yönetim (251), İşletme (88),

Mühendislik araştırması (39), Mühendislik Endüstrisi (39) ve Bilgisayar Bilimleri Bilgi Sistemleri (3) olarak belirlenmiştir. Anahtar kelime analizi eşlemesi sonucunda VosViewer algoritması, 4 anahtar kelimenin her biri için (emici kapasite, inovasyon, bilgi yönetimi, açık inovasyon) diğer anahtar kelimelerle kurulan bağlantıların toplam gücünü hesaplamaktadır ve en yüksek toplam bağlantı gücüne sahip anahtar kelimeler görselleştirilmiştir. Bu kelimelerin ağ ilişkisi bize AC ile inovasyon arasındaki ilişkiyi de ortaya çıkarmaktadır.

4. TARTIŞMA

Araştırma sürecinde elde edilen veriler ve bulguların, özellikle daha az çalışıldığı düşünülen Türkiye için literatürün geliştirilmesi açısından önemlidir. Makale bulguları AC ve inovasyon arasındaki ilişkilere dair teorik yeniliği zenginleştirmektedir. Bu çalışma, makaleleri sistematik olarak kümeleyerek ve yeni araştırma soruları ortaya koyarak AC literatürünün strateji ve yenilik boyutunda anlayışımıza katkı sağlamaktadır. AC, günümüzün rekabetçi ortamında inovasyon yapmayı ve gelişmeyi amaçlayan organizasyonlar için değerli bir varlıktır. Firmalar AC'nin dört temel boyutuna yatırım yaparak yeni bilgi edinme, özümseme, dönüştürme ve kullanma yeteneklerini geliştirebilir ve bu da artan yeniliğe ve gelişmiş performansa yol açabilir. Ayrıca bulgular bize beşeri sermayenin AC ve inovasyon ilişkisinde baş rol oynadığını göstermekte ve firmaların inovasyonu yakalamak için beşeri sermayeye yatırım yapmalarını ortaya koymaktadır (Castro et al, 2009.)

SONUÇ

Biyometrik analiz sonuçları, AC'nin şirket içindeki diğer organizasyonel yetenekleri etkileyen dinamik bir yetenek olduğunu göstermektedir. AC literatürü 1990'dan beri Cohen ile büyük ölçüde gelişmiş olsa da, Web of Science'da beklendiği kadar inovasyonla ilişkisi yoktur. Ancak bu durum son 15 yılda artmaya başlamıştır. Günümüzün yoğun rekabet ortamında, kuruluşlar inovasyon açısından dış çevrelerinden gelen AC'ye değer vermelidirler. Beşeri sermayenin bu anlamda örgütsel inovasyonda kritik rolü her geçen gün artmaya devam edecektir.

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KATKI ORANI / CONTRIBUTION RATE	AÇIKLAMA / EXPLANATION	KATKIDA BULUNANLAR / CONTRIBUTORS
Fikir veya Kavram / <i>Idea or Notion</i>	Araştırma hipotezini veya fikirini oluşturmak / <i>Form the research hypothesis or idea</i>	Asiye YÜKSEL
Tasarım / <i>Design</i>	Yöntemi, ölçeği ve deseni tasarlamak / <i>Designing method, scale and pattern</i>	Asiye YÜKSEL
Veri Toplama ve İşleme / <i>Data Collecting and Processing</i>	Verileri toplamak, düzenlenmek ve raporlamak / <i>Collecting, organizing and reporting data</i>	Asiye YÜKSEL
Tartışma ve Yorum / <i>Discussion and Interpretation</i>	Bulguların değerlendirilmesinde ve sonuçlandırılmasında sorumluluk almak / <i>Taking responsibility in evaluating and finalizing the findings</i>	Asiye YÜKSEL
Literatür Taraması / <i>Literature Review</i>	Çalışma için gerekli literatürü taramak / <i>Review the literature required for the study</i>	Asiye YÜKSEL