

# Mapping Thriving at Work Research: An Integrative Systematic Review

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## ABSTRACT

Thriving at work has become an increasingly important topic in organizational behavior and human resource management due to its role in promoting employee wellbeing, learning, and sustainable performance. This study aims to systematically review the development of thriving at work research across sectors and countries by identifying its dominant theoretical foundations, key antecedents, outcomes, and emerging research trends. A Systematic Literature Review approach was employed following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta Analyses guidelines. Fifty peer reviewed articles published between 2020 and 2025 were selected and analyzed. The findings reveal that thriving at work is primarily influenced by supportive leadership, job resources, organizational support, and psychological capital. Furthermore, thriving contributes positively to employee performance, innovation, work engagement, well-being, and career sustainability. The review also indicates that existing studies are dominated by quantitative and cross-sectional designs, with limited attention to longitudinal, cross cultural, and digital workplace contexts. This study contributes by providing an integrated understanding of thriving at work and highlighting future research directions in contemporary and technology driven work environments.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Thriving at work has become an increasingly important topic in organizational behavior and human resource management research, particularly in response to rapid changes in contemporary workplaces. The concept refers to a positive psychological state in which employees experience both vitality and learning, enabling them to grow, adapt, and perform effectively in their work environment. In the post pandemic era, issues

such as mental health challenges, job pressure, hybrid work, digital transformation, and work family dynamics have intensified the need to understand how employees can continue to develop and remain productive in complex organizational settings [1], [2]

Recent studies show that thriving at work is strongly related to employee wellbeing, innovation, work engagement, job performance, and career sustainability. Research has examined this construct across

various contexts, including nursing education in Australia, hotel employees in Taiwan, telecommunication workers in China, female employees in China, and healthcare professionals in Europe and the Middle East [3] [4] [5] [6]. These studies indicate that thriving is not only shaped by individual psychological resources but also by leadership, human resource management practices, organizational support, technology, and cultural context.

Despite the growing body of research, the literature on thriving at work remains fragmented. Previous studies and reviews have mainly focused on specific theoretical perspectives, sectors, or mechanisms, such as human resource management systems, leadership, innovative behavior, and work family resources [1], [4], [7]. However, limited attention has been given to integrating findings across countries, sectors, methodological designs, and emerging workplace issues such as hybrid work, digital technology, artificial intelligence, and family supportive organizational practices. This fragmentation makes it difficult to develop a comprehensive understanding of how thriving at work is formed and how it contributes to sustainable employee and organizational outcomes.

To address this gap, this study conducts a systematic literature review of recent studies on thriving at work published between 2020 and 2025. The review aims to synthesize existing evidence, identify dominant theories, map research contexts and methods, and examine key antecedents, mechanisms, and outcomes of thriving at work. By integrating fragmented findings, this study offers a more holistic framework for understanding thriving as a dynamic mechanism that links individual resources, organizational practices, and contemporary work conditions.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrative focus on thriving at work across sectors and countries, with specific attention to emerging issues in modern workplaces. Unlike prior reviews that focus mainly on a single theoretical or sectoral perspective, this study combines psychological,

organizational, technological, and contextual dimensions into a broader synthesis. The findings are expected to contribute to theory development in human resource management and organizational behavior while providing practical insights for organizations seeking to foster employee well-being, adaptability, and sustainable performance.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The growing interest in thriving at work reflects increasing concerns about employee wellbeing, sustainable performance, and organizational adaptability in contemporary workplaces. Recent studies have expanded the understanding of thriving by examining its antecedents, mechanisms, and outcomes across different sectors and countries. To provide a comprehensive overview, this literature review discusses the theoretical foundations, research evolution, and emerging trends of thriving at work based on studies published between 2020 and 2025.

### 2.1 *Contemporary Theoretical Foundations of Thriving at Work*

Recent literature conceptualizes thriving at work as a positive psychological state characterized by the simultaneous experience of vitality and learning, enabling employees to maintain energy while continuously developing their competencies [1]. Contemporary studies increasingly explain thriving through the perspectives of Conservation of Resources Theory, Self Determination Theory, and the Job Demands Resources framework, emphasizing the role of organizational and personal resources in promoting employee growth and well-being [5], [8]. These perspectives suggest that thriving emerges

when employees have access to supportive leadership, psychological safety, autonomy, developmental opportunities, and adequate work resources. Consequently, thriving is viewed as a strategic mechanism that connects organizational practices with sustainable employee performance and wellbeing.

### **2.2 Recent Developments in Thriving at Work Research**

Research conducted between 2020 and 2025 demonstrates that thriving at work has become a central construct in organizational behavior and human resource management. Recent studies have identified several key antecedents, including supportive leadership, family supportive supervisory behavior, organizational support, psychological capital, and developmental human resource management practices ([1], [9], [10]). Empirical evidence consistently indicates that thriving positively influences work engagement, innovative behavior, service performance, employee well-being, and career sustainability [4], [8]. Furthermore, thriving frequently serves as a mediating mechanism through which organizational resources and leadership practices affect employee outcomes, highlighting its importance in explaining workplace effectiveness.

### **2.3 Emerging Trends and Future Directions**

The most recent studies reveal several emerging trends in thriving at work research. One important trend is the increasing attention to digital

transformation and hybrid work environments. Information and Communication Technology resources, digital self-efficacy, and technology supported work practices have been found to reduce burnout and enhance thriving among employees [2]. Another trend involves the examination of contemporary leadership approaches, including servant leadership, paradoxical leadership, and family supportive leadership, which promote thriving through psychological safety and employee development [10], [11]. In addition, scholars have increasingly integrated thriving research with positive psychology, work family studies, healthcare management, and leadership research, reflecting a growing interdisciplinary perspective. Despite these advances, the literature remains dominated by cross-sectional quantitative studies, indicating the need for more longitudinal, qualitative, mixed-method, and cross-cultural research to better understand how thriving develops and evolves in diverse organizational contexts.

## **3. METHODS**

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review approach to examine recent scholarly developments on thriving at work. The subject of this study was peer-reviewed journal articles, while the object of analysis was the concept of thriving at work, including its antecedents, mechanisms, outcomes, theoretical foundations, and methodological trends. The review focused on articles published between 2020 and 2025 to ensure that the analysis reflected the most recent developments in post-pandemic, digital, and hybrid work contexts.

The study used Scopus as the main database because it provides broad coverage of reputable peer reviewed journals and applies rigorous indexing standards. The Watase database was also used as a complementary tool to support article screening and thematic mapping. The keyword used in the search process was thriving at work. The sampling method was purposive sampling based on predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Articles were included if they were published between 2020 and 2025, indexed in reputable journals, relevant to thriving at work, and provided sufficient information on research context, theory, method, or findings. Articles were excluded if they were irrelevant, inaccessible, outside the selected publication period, or did not meet journal quality criteria.

Data collection followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta Analyses protocol commonly used in recent systematic review studies to improve transparency and replicability. The selection process consisted of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion. The initial search identified 250 articles. After removing articles that did not meet temporal, relevance, and journal quality criteria, 185 articles proceeded to screening. Of these, 63 articles were assessed for eligibility, and 13 articles were excluded because they did not meet the inclusion criteria. Finally, 50 articles were included in the final review.

The research instrument was a structured extraction sheet used to record article identity, year of publication, journal tier, country, sector, research design, data collection method, analysis technique, theory, variables, findings, limitations, and future research directions. Data analysis was conducted through descriptive analysis and thematic analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to map publication trends, journal classification, country distribution, research design, software, and analytical techniques. Thematic analysis was used to synthesize key themes related to antecedents, mechanisms, outcomes, theoretical perspectives, and emerging issues in thriving at work.

Visualization and bibliometric support were conducted using spreadsheet tools and VOSviewer, while thematic classification was supported by Watase.

#### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The review of 50 selected articles reveals a substantial increase in scholarly interest in thriving at work between 2020 and 2025, indicating its growing importance within organizational behavior and human resource management research. The literature is predominantly published in high quality journals, with most studies appearing in Q1 ranked outlets, reflecting the theoretical and practical significance of the topic. Geographically, research is concentrated in Asia, particularly China, followed by contributions from Australia, Europe, and other emerging economies. This distribution highlights the increasing relevance of thriving in both developed and developing countries facing workplace transformation and rising employee wellbeing concerns.

The findings consistently demonstrate that thriving at work is influenced by a combination of individual, organizational, and contextual factors. Leadership behaviors, organizational support, psychological capital, work engagement, and job resources emerge as the most frequently examined antecedents. Across studies, leadership approaches such as servant leadership, transformational leadership, and family supportive leadership contribute to thriving by fostering psychological safety, autonomy, and employee development. These findings support the Socially Embedded Model of Thriving, which emphasizes the importance of supportive social environments in facilitating learning and vitality.

From a theoretical perspective, the literature is largely grounded in Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the Job Demands Resources (JDR) Model, and the Socially Embedded Model of Thriving. These frameworks collectively explain how employees utilize personal and

organizational resources to maintain vitality and continuous learning. However, the review also suggests that existing theories require further refinement to capture emerging workplace realities, including digital transformation, hybrid work arrangements, and evolving work family dynamics.

The review further indicates that thriving at work generates significant positive outcomes, including enhanced job performance, innovative behavior, work engagement, employee wellbeing, and career sustainability. Evidence from healthcare, hospitality, education, and technology sectors demonstrates that thriving functions as a critical psychological mechanism linking organizational resources with employee effectiveness. These findings reinforce previous research suggesting that thriving extends beyond employee well-being and serves as a strategic resource that contributes to organizational resilience and long-term performance.

Methodologically, the literature is dominated by quantitative studies employing survey methods and advanced statistical techniques such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS SEM). While these approaches provide robust empirical evidence, they also reveal important limitations, including reliance on cross-sectional designs, self-reported measures, and geographically concentrated samples. Consequently, qualitative, mixed method, longitudinal, and cross cultural studies remain underrepresented, limiting a deeper understanding of how thriving develops and evolves across different organizational and cultural contexts.

Overall, the synthesis suggests that thriving at work has evolved into a multidimensional construct shaped by psychological resources, leadership processes, organizational practices, and contemporary work conditions. The increasing influence of digital technologies, hybrid work environments, and employee well-being initiatives indicates that future research should adopt more integrative

theoretical frameworks and diverse methodological approaches. Such efforts would strengthen understanding of thriving as a sustainable mechanism for enhancing both employee wellbeing and organizational performance in rapidly changing work environments.

#### **4.1 Practical Implications**

The findings highlight the importance of creating work environments that simultaneously support employee learning and vitality. Organizations should invest in supportive leadership development, psychological safety, employee well-being programs, and flexible work practices to foster thriving. Furthermore, leveraging digital technologies and human resource management practices that enhance autonomy, competence, and social connectedness can help organizations strengthen employee resilience, engagement, and sustainable performance in increasingly complex and dynamic workplaces.

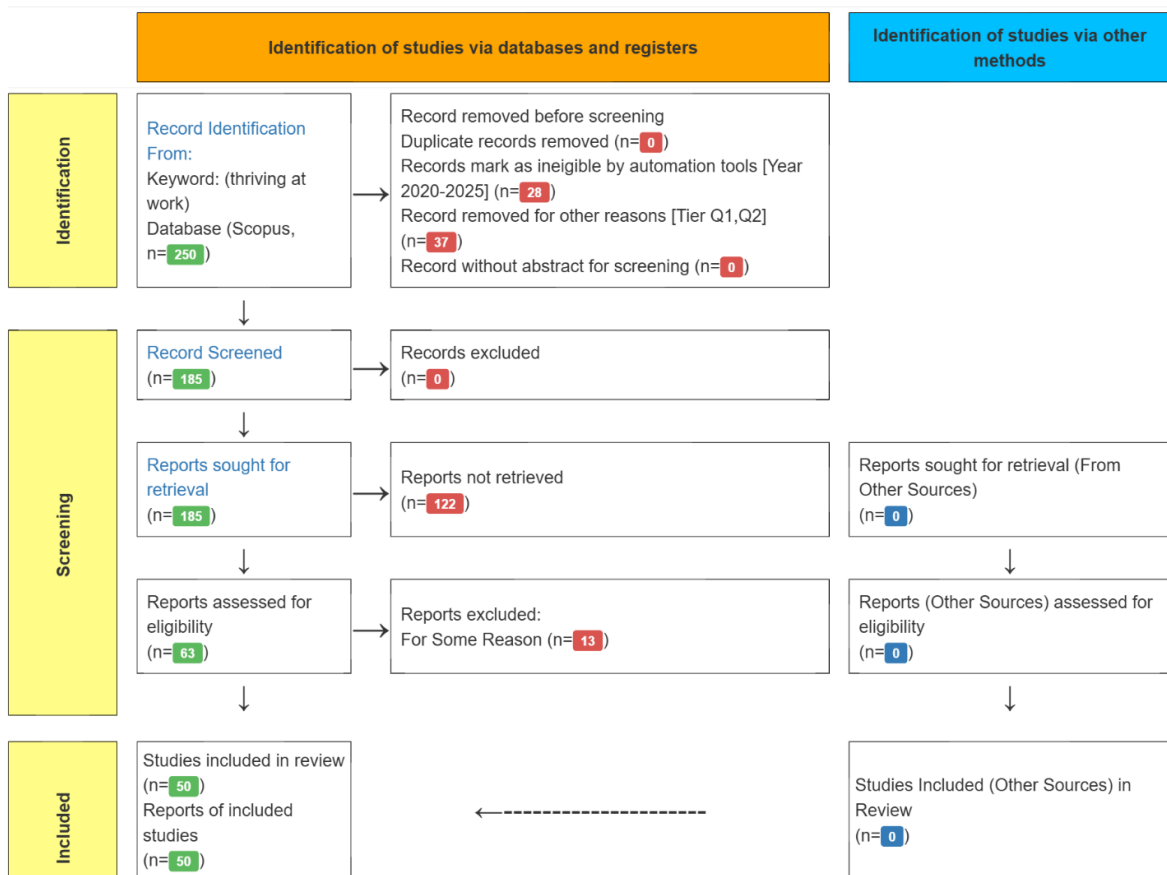


Figure. 1 PRISMA Flow Diagram

### Yearly Article

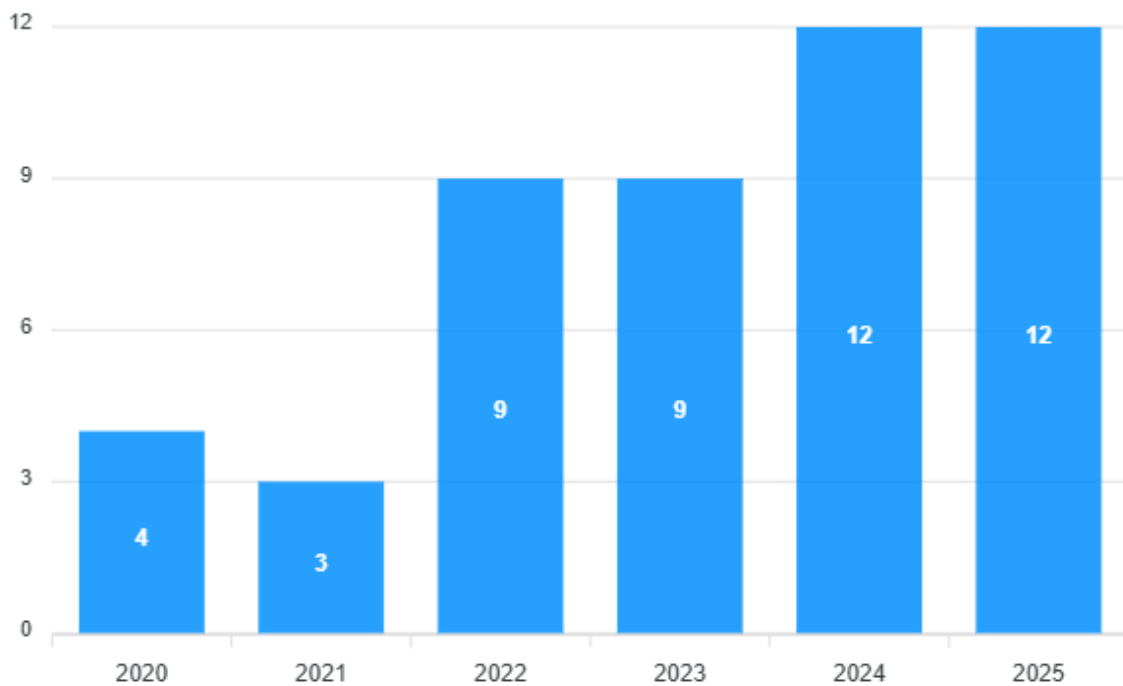


Figure. 2 Yearly Article

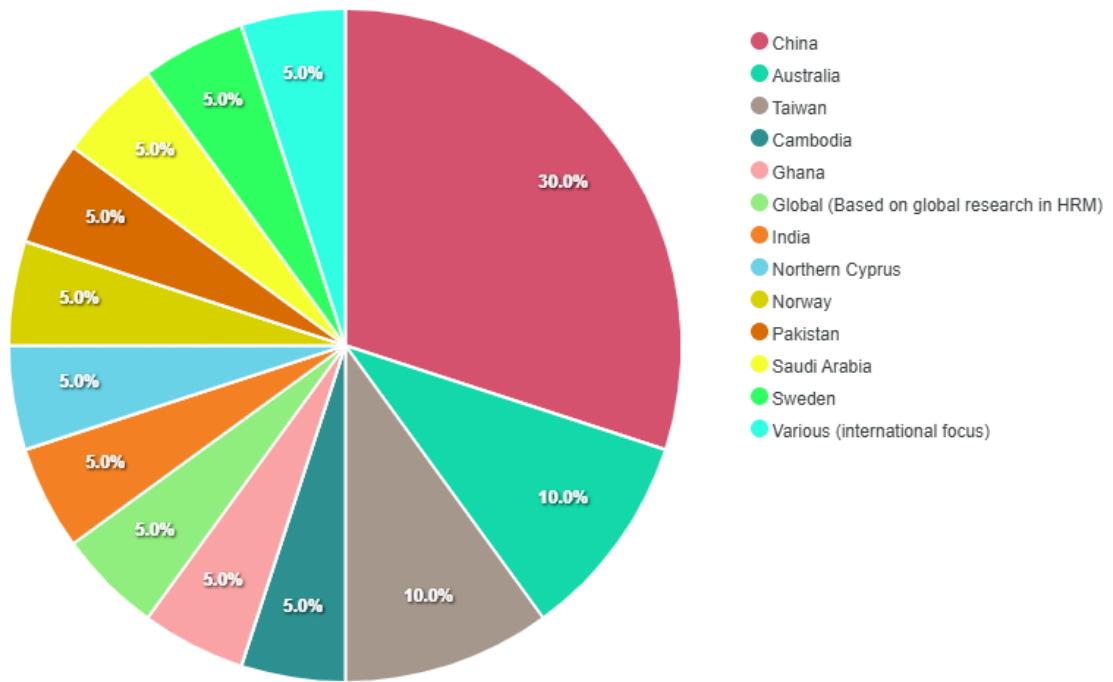


Figure. 3 Country Classification

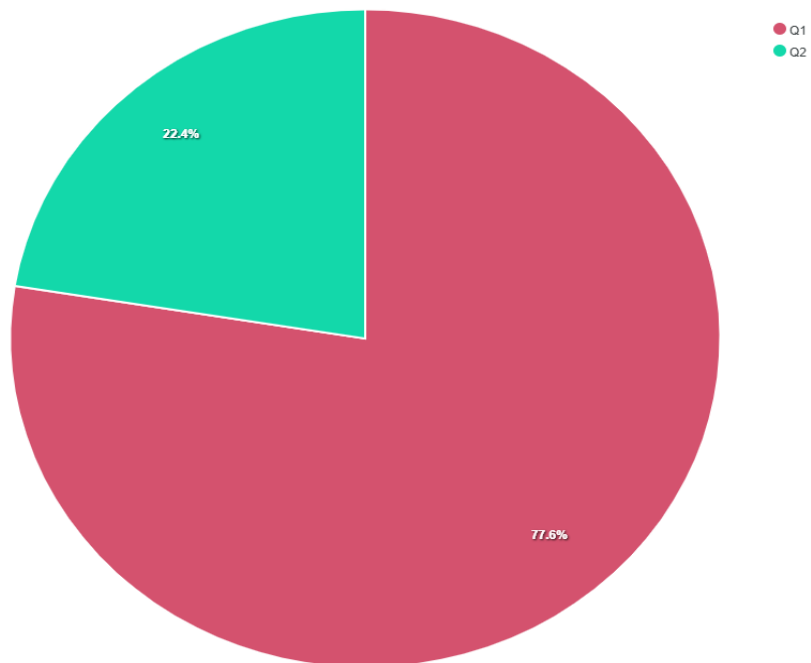


Figure. 4 Tier Journal Classification

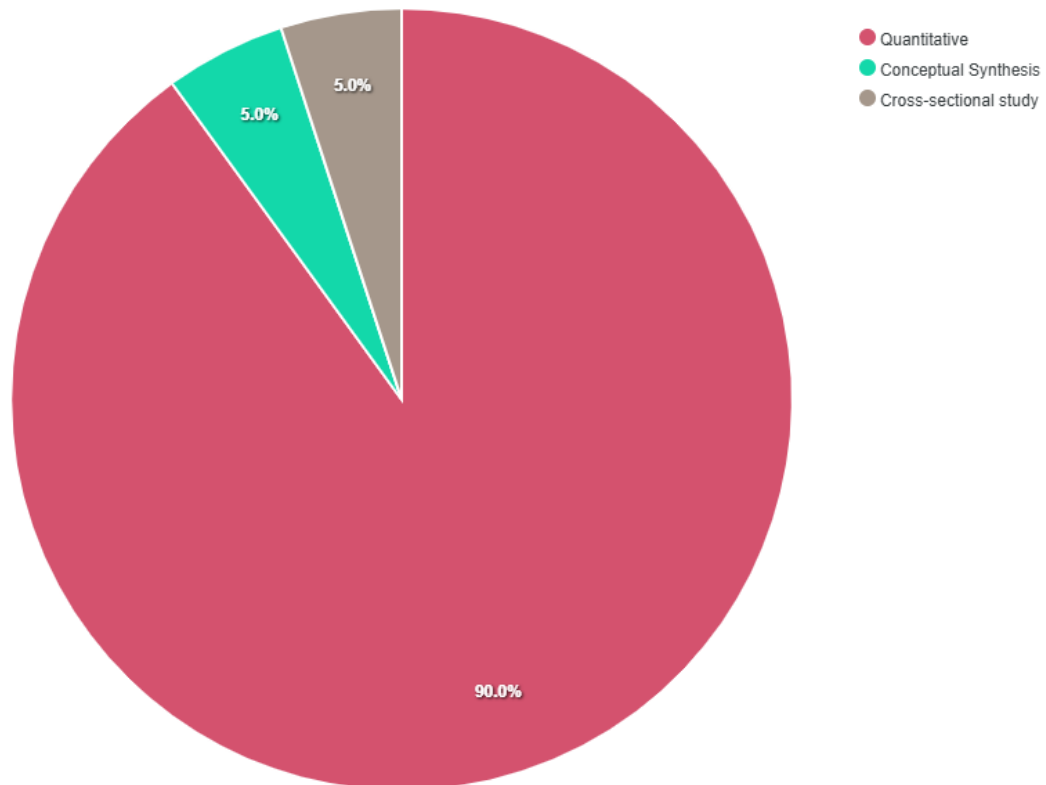


Figure. 5 Research Design Classification

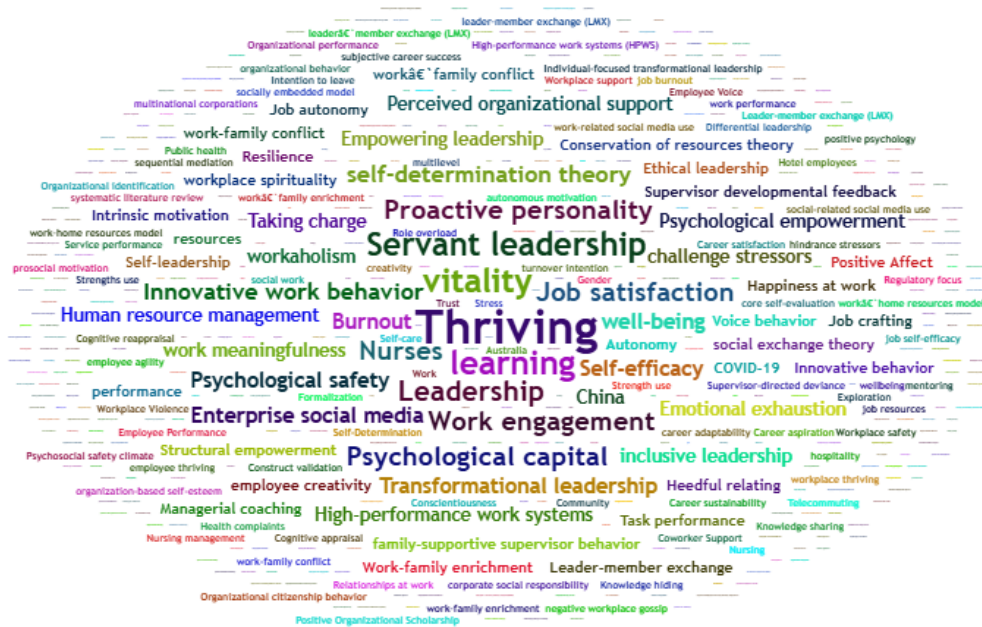


Figure. 6 Keyword Co-occurrence

## 5. CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review aimed to map the evolution of thriving at work research across sectors and countries by identifying dominant theoretical perspectives, research contexts, methodological approaches, and emerging trends. The findings indicate that thriving at work has evolved into a multidimensional construct that is strongly associated with employee vitality, learning, psychological well-being, work engagement, leadership, and organizational support. The literature is primarily grounded in Conservation of Resources Theory, Self-Determination Theory, and the Socially Embedded Model of Thriving, highlighting the importance of both personal and organizational resources in fostering employee growth. Research has been concentrated in Asian countries, particularly China, and in sectors such as healthcare and hospitality, while quantitative survey-based studies using SEM and PLS-SEM dominate the methodological landscape. The review further reveals that thriving at work contributes positively to employee performance, innovation, well-being, and organizational sustainability. However, important gaps remain regarding cross-cultural comparisons, underrepresented sectors, digital work environments, and the integration of emerging technologies. Overall, the review demonstrates that thriving at work remains a highly relevant concept for understanding how organizations can simultaneously enhance employee well-being

and organizational effectiveness in an increasingly dynamic and complex workplace environment.

Future research should expand the geographical and sectoral scope of thriving at work studies by including underrepresented regions, industries, and workforce groups. Researchers are encouraged to adopt longitudinal, qualitative, and mixed-method approaches to gain a deeper understanding of how thriving develops over time and across different cultural contexts. Furthermore, future studies should explore the role of emerging factors such as artificial intelligence, digital transformation, hybrid work arrangements, and multigenerational workforce dynamics in shaping thriving at work. From a practical perspective, organizations should strengthen leadership development, psychological safety, employee well-being initiatives, and supportive human resource management practices to create work environments that foster sustainable employee growth and organizational performance.

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