Internal Talent Mobility and Career Development: A Bibliometric Review

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a bibliometric review of the academic literature on internal talent mobility and career development, aiming to map the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and collaborative networks within the field. Utilizing data from the Scopus database and analyzed through VOSviewer, the study identifies key trends in author influence, keyword co-occurrence, temporal distribution, and country collaboration. Findings indicate that core topics such as career development, talent management, succession planning, and leadership development form the backbone of the research landscape, while emerging themes like internal consistency, career mobility, and strategic investments signal new directions. The United States leads in scholarly output and international collaboration, with growing contributions from China, Canada, and Germany. Author co-citation analysis reveals strong theoretical foundations, vet the literature remains fragmented across disciplines. The study highlights critical gaps in equity, technology integration, and cross-cultural research, offering a foundation for future exploration. This bibliometric review contributes to the strategic advancement of theory and practice in managing internal talent and fostering sustainable career growth.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In evolving landscape workforce dynamics, the strategic deployment and movement of internal talent have become pivotal elements in organizational success. Internal talent mobility, defined as the movement employees across roles, functions, geographies within the same organization, is gaining increased attention among scholars and practitioners alike [1], [2]. As companies

face challenges in acquiring external talent due to rising recruitment costs, global skill shortages, and cultural misalignment, internal mobility emerges as a sustainable solution for fulfilling organizational needs while employee simultaneously supporting development [3], [4]. This shift reflects a broader recognition of human capital as a core competitive advantage that continuous investment and realignment.

Historically, career development was often viewed through a linear and hierarchical

lens, emphasizing upward promotion within traditional corporate ladders [5]. However, contemporary trajectories career increasingly characterized by lateral moves, skill diversification, and cross-functional experiences. These transitions, facilitated through internal talent mobility programs, serve to enhance employee engagement, learning agility, and leadership pipeline readiness [6]. In this context, organizations are reimagining career paths, not as vertical ascents but as dynamic journeys that align personal aspirations with evolving business strategies.

Technological advancements have further enabled more agile and transparent internal mobility practices. With the integration of AI-powered talent marketplaces, skills-based job matching systems, and digital learning platforms, organizations are better equipped to identify and redeploy internal talent based on realtime business demands and individual development goals [7]. These tools support a culture of self-directed career ownership, where employees actively navigate their growth within the firm while responding to emerging organizational opportunities. As a result, internal talent mobility is increasingly viewed not merely as an HR function, but as a strategic enabler of organizational resilience and agility.

At the same time, the concept of employability (defined as an individual's ability to gain and maintain employment) has evolved to include internal labor market considerations. Employees today expect career advancement, skill growth, their purposeful work as part of organizational experience [8]. Companies that fail to provide such pathways risk increased attrition and disengagement. By fostering internal mobility, organizations can signal commitment to employee development, improve retention, and promote a growthoriented culture. This emphasis on internal talent pathways aligns with broader trends in talent management, workforce planning, and organizational learning.

Given these developments, academic interest in internal talent mobility and career

development has grown substantially in the past two decades. Scholars have examined diverse aspects such as mobility patterns, barriers, outcomes enablers and employees and firms, and the role of leadership and organizational culture in fostering such practices [9], [10]. However, while a considerable body of literature exists, the field remains fragmented across disciplines including human resource management, organizational behavior, and labor economics. There is a need to consolidate and analyze this growing body of research to understand key themes, trends, and gaps that can guide future inquiry and practice.

Despite the increasing relevance of talent mobility in modern internal organizational strategy, the academic landscape surrounding this concept remains disjointed. Studies on career development and internal mobility are dispersed across various journals and theoretical perspectives, often using inconsistent terminology and divergent methodologies. As a result, it is challenging for scholars and practitioners to gain a comprehensive understanding of the intellectual structure and evolution of this field. Moreover, the lack of a consolidated bibliometric synthesis hinders the ability to identify influential works, emerging themes, or underexplored areas that warrant deeper investigation. Without a systematic review, the development of cohesive strategies for research and practice in internal talent mobility and career development remains constrained. The objective of this study is to conduct a bibliometric review of the academic literature on internal talent mobility and career development.

2. METHODS

This study adopts a bibliometric analysis approach to systematically map and evaluate the existing literature on internal talent mobility and career development. Bibliometric methods allow for the quantitative analysis of a large volume of academic publications, helping to identify patterns, trends, and influential contributions

in a specific field [11]. The analysis includes performance analysis, both measuring impact productivity and based publications, citations, and authorship and science mapping, which explores intellectual structure through co-citation, coand keyword co-occurrence authorship, networks. The bibliometric method was chosen due to its ability to provide a structured, replicable, and visual overview of the research domain.

The data for this study were collected from the Scopus database, which is widely recognized for its comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed journal articles and its compatibility with bibliometric tools. A systematic search was conducted using combinations of keywords such as "internal talent mobility," "career development," "internal labor market," "career progression," and "employee movement," covering

publications from 2000 to 2024. Only journal articles, conference proceedings, and reviews published in English were included. The search strategy was refined iteratively to ensure the inclusion of relevant studies while minimizing irrelevant results. The final dataset consisted of 378 documents, which were downloaded in .csv and .bib formats for further processing.

For analysis and visualization, this study utilized VOSviewer, a powerful bibliometric mapping tool that enables the construction of co-authorship networks, cocitation maps, and thematic clusters based on keyword co-occurrence [12]. The tool was used to generate visual maps that reveal prominent authors, influential publications, and key research themes in the field. Additionally, temporal analysis was conducted to observe the evolution of research focus over time.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Keyword Co-Occurrence Network

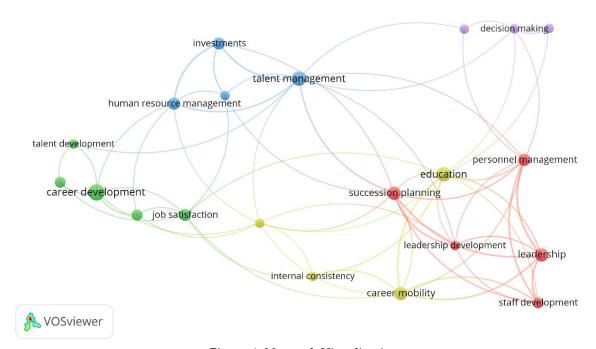


Figure 1. Network Visualization Source: Data Analysis Result, 2025

The figure depicts a co-occurrence network map of keywords associated with the research domain of internal talent mobility and career development. Each node represents a keyword from the bibliometric dataset, while the links (edges) indicate the frequency of co-occurrence between those keywords in the same documents. The color coding denotes different thematic clusters that are algorithmically generated based on the strength of these co-occurrences. The spatial proximity between keywords reflects their semantic and conceptual closeness in the literature.

The green cluster prominently "career features keywords such as development," "job satisfaction," "talent development," and connects loosely with "internal consistency" and "career mobility." This suggests a major thematic concern with employee outcomes and personal growth within organizations. Literature in this cluster likely explores how internal mobility opportunities contribute to individual career advancement, satisfaction, and the alignment of personal and organizational goals. It reflects a developmental human resource perspective focused on enriching employee experiences and trajectories.

The red cluster, anchored by terms "leadership," "staff development," "personnel management," and "leadership development," signifies a managementcentered discourse. This cluster emphasizes the strategic and operational role of leadership in talent mobility systems. The frequent linkage to "succession planning" and underscores "education" further the managerial imperatives for sustaining leadership pipelines and organizational

continuity. This area reflects organizational strategies aimed at identifying, nurturing, and mobilizing talent to meet future leadership needs.

The blue cluster, comprising "talent management," "investments," and "human resource management," highlights a strategic HR orientation. These studies focus on how organizations structure systems, allocate resources, and integrate talent-related initiatives as part of broader investment and business strategies. The emphasis "investments" suggests that internal mobility is not merely a developmental tool, but also a vehicle for maximizing returns on human capital. The interaction between this cluster and the green one reflects the tension and synergy between individual aspirations and organizational talent strategies.

A smaller but notable purple cluster centers on "decision making," which connects with "personnel management" and "succession planning." This implies an interest in the role of judgment, planning, and strategic thinking in orchestrating internal movement. These keywords point to the governance and analytics dimensions of talent mobility, how decisions are made regarding who moves where, when, and why. It may also include the role of digital systems, talent analytics, and managerial discretion in enabling effective career pathways.

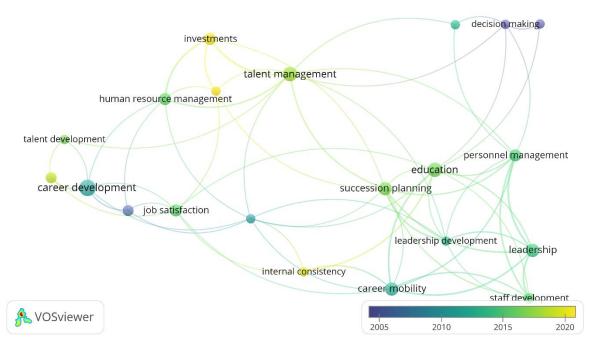


Figure 2. Overlay Visualization Source: Data Analysis Result, 2025

Figure 2 illustrates the evolution of keyword usage in the field of internal talent mobility and career development from 2005 to 2020. Each keyword node is colored according to its average publication year, with the gradient ranging from blue (older, around 2005) to yellow (more recent, around 2020). The visual clearly demonstrates foundational topics such as "job satisfaction," "decision making," and "human resource management" appeared earlier in literature (indicated in darker blue and green), serving as the building blocks of early research career and personnel management.

More recent studies, as highlighted in yellow-green to bright yellow nodes, show a shift toward strategic and future-oriented constructs. Terms like "talent management," "investments," and "internal consistency" have become more central and frequent in literature from the mid-2010s onward. This trend reflects the growing interest in aligning

internal mobility with broader organizational performance strategies, where companies actively invest in developing internal capabilities and optimizing workforce agility. The integration of financial and strategic terminology suggests a more holistic, valuebased approach to internal career management.

Additionally, the keywords "career mobility," "succession planning," "leadership development," and "education" appear as consistent thematic bridges across the timeline, positioned centrally and linked to multiple nodes. These keywords function as conceptual connectors between traditional HR functions and modern talent strategies. The increasing prominence of "career development" and "staff development" in recent years also indicates a heightened focus employee-centric frameworks, mobility internal serves not only organizational needs but also individual learning and growth.

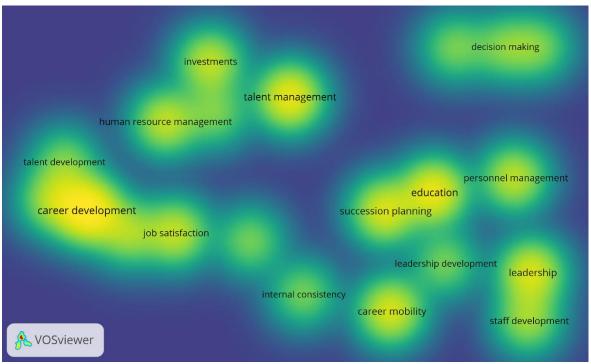


Figure 3. Density Visualization *Source: Data Analysis*, 2025

Figure 3 provides insights into the concentration and intensity of research activity across keywords in the field of talent mobility and development. Keywords that appear in bright yellow areas-such as "career development," "talent management," "education," "succession planning"-indicate high frequency and co-occurrence, suggesting that these are central and heavily discussed themes in the literature. The prominence of "career development" and "talent management" highlights their status as foundational constructs, reflecting both employee-centric and organizational strategy perspectives within the domain.

Meanwhile, terms located in green or darker zones, such as "internal consistency," "career mobility," "decision making," and "staff development," represent areas of relatively lower density, implying emerging or less-explored topics. These may offer opportunities for future research, particularly as organizations increasingly adopt agile workforce models and skills-based talent practices. The spatial distribution of dense keyword clusters, particularly the intersections between career growth, talent planning, and organizational leadership.

3.2 Co-Authorship Network





Figure 4. Author Collaboration Visualization Source: Data Analysis, 2025

Figure 4 illustrates the intellectual structure of the research field by identifying clusters of authors who are frequently cited together. On the left side of the map, we observe a dense cluster featuring influential scholars such as Arthur M.B., Deci E.L., and Van der Heijden B.I.J.M., who are central to foundational research in career development, motivation theory, and employability. These authors form the conceptual base of the field.

In contrast, the right side of the map contains a more dispersed and emerging set of contributors like Yuen M., Zhu H., and Reardon R.C., suggesting newer or more specialized areas of research, possibly with regional or application-specific focus. The central positioning of Bentler P.M. and Collins D. implies that their works act as intellectual bridges, linking foundational theories with evolving empirical studies.

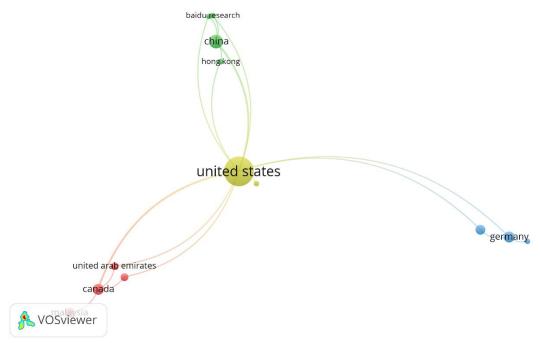


Figure 5. Country Collaboration Visualization Source: Data Analysis, 2025

Figure 5 illustrates the geographical distribution and international research linkages in the field of internal talent mobility and career development. The United States stands out as the central and most influential hub, demonstrating strong co-authorship ties with countries like China, Canada, Germany, and the United Arab Emirates. The thickness of the connecting lines indicates the intensity

of these collaborations, with particularly notable ties to China (including Baidu Research and Hong Kong) and Canada, suggesting active bilateral academic exchange. Germany appears as a moderately connected node, while Malaysia is visible but minimally linked, implying a more peripheral role.

3.3 Citation Analysis

Table 1. Top Cited Research

Citations	Authors and year	Title
127	[13]	Career anchors of managers with global careers
81	[14]	Rationale and models for career advancement sponsorship in academic medicine: The time is here; The time is now
69	[15]	Clinicians' experiences of becoming a clinical manager: A qualitative study
55	[16]	A hierarchical career-path-aware neural network for job mobility prediction
53	[17]	Data envelopment analysis model for the appraisal and relative performance evaluation of nurses at an intensive care unit
49	[18]	Creative migration: A Western Australian case study of creative artists
44	[19]	Development of a short-form measure of science and technology self-efficacy using rasch analysis
39	[20]	Keep the expert! Occupational expertise, perceived employability and job search: A study across age groups

Citations	Authors and year	Title
38	[10]	How gender and career concepts impact Global Talent
		Management
38	[21]	Talent development, work habits, and career exploration of
		Chinese middle-school adolescents: Development of the career
		and talent development self-efficacy scale

Source: Scopus, 2025

Discussion

This bibliometric review aimed to uncover the intellectual, thematic, geographic landscape of research on internal talent mobility and career development. Through the analysis of keyword cooccurrence, temporal trends, author cocitations, and international collaborations, this study reveals both the structural foundations and emergent trajectories in the field. The findings point to an evolving body of knowledge that is transitioning from traditional career development paradigms toward strategic, technology-enabled talent systems integrated with organizational performance goals.

The keyword co-occurrence network reflects a multidimensional perspective on internal mobility and career development. Keywords such as career development, talent management, job satisfaction, education, succession planning, and leadership development form the core of the literature. These terms are not only thematically prominent but are also highly interconnected, signifying a strong overlap employee-centered between development and organization-centered planning. This illustrates that the field has developed into a hybrid discipline, drawing upon human resource management (HRM), organizational behavior, leadership studies, and learning and development.

Notably, the presence of keywords like career mobility, internal consistency, and investments indicates a shift in focus toward internal markets and organizational agility. Studies have begun to explore how internal movement contributes long-term to workforce planning, talent retention, and financial outcomes. Internal talent mobility is no longer seen as a reactive HR practice but as proactive strategic tool that fosters alignment between organizational

capabilities and employee aspirations. This supports the findings of [22]–[24], who argue that internal mobility creates flexible talent pipelines and strengthens employer-employee psychological contracts.

The temporal analysis of keyword trends further reveals how the field has evolved. Earlier research (pre-2010) primarily concentrated on traditional constructs such as job satisfaction, decision making, and human resource management. These topics laid the groundwork by exploring employee motivation, performance appraisal, structured career progression. However, in the last decade, attention has shifted toward such keywords as talent management, succession planning, and career mobility. The rise of these terms reflects growing interest in enterprise-wide talent optimization, digital HR platforms, and the democratization of career paths across functions and geographies.

The increasing visibility of education and leadership development in recent years suggests a deeper organizational commitment to learning as a means of enhancing internal mobility. Organizations are embedding learning and development (L&D) programs into their talent strategies to promote internal career growth. This trend aligns with the emerging concept the of "learning organization," where knowledge transfer, cross-functional collaboration, and leadership pipelines are supported by intentional mobility mechanisms [25]. The evolution of keywords over time demonstrates how theory and practice have responded to rapid changes workplace, the including digital transformation, globalization, and shifting employee expectations.

The density visualization confirms the concentration of research around several core clusters. High-density zones around

career development, talent management, and succession planning signify mature and wellestablished research areas. These nodes attract substantial scholarly attention and are frequently cited, indicating that they form the intellectual backbone of the field. In contrast, peripheral keywords like internal consistency and career mobility reflect newer and lessexplored areas that may offer fertile ground for future research. For instance, while career development has been widely addressed, its with internal consistency—a intersection concept tied to strategic alignment and talent decisions-remains fairness in underdeveloped.

The author co-citation analysis offers insights into the intellectual structure of the field. Influential authors such as Arthur M.B., Van der Heijden B.I.J.M., and Deci E.L. are foundational figures who introduced seminal ideas around protean careers, employability, and self-determination theory. These theories have profoundly shaped our understanding of how individuals navigate internal career paths and how organizations should facilitate employee growth. Meanwhile, centrally positioned scholars like Bentler P.M. and Collins D. appear to serve as conceptual bridges, connecting classic psychological and sociological perspectives with newer, more applied frameworks.

Interestingly, emerging authors such as Yuen M., Zhu H., and Reardon R.C. occupy the periphery of the citation network but may represent new research directions or regional approaches, particularly in Asian or crosscultural contexts. This suggests that the field is expanding in scope and may benefit from greater integration of diverse epistemological and methodological traditions. The dominance of established Anglo-American scholars could also reflect publication and citation biases, which future bibliometric studies might aim to correct through multilingual and regional analysis.

The country collaboration network highlights the dominance of the United States as the central hub of academic production and international collaboration in this field. The U.S. maintains strong ties with China, Canada, Germany, and the UAE, signaling

both historical research leadership and contemporary global engagement. Collaborations with *China*, especially through institutions such as *Baidu Research* and universities in *Hong Kong*, suggest a growing interest in talent mobility within rapidly modernizing labor markets. This aligns with global trends where Asian economies are increasingly focusing on knowledge-intensive growth and internal talent development to support innovation and competitiveness.

However, the absence or marginal presence of countries in Southeast Asia, Latin America, and Africa in the collaboration network may indicate geographical disparities in research participation and visibility. This creates a knowledge gap and highlights the need for more inclusive and regionally contextualized research on internal talent mobility. Given that labor market dynamics, career expectations, organizational structures vary widely across cultural and economic settings, incorporating voices from underrepresented regions could enrich the theoretical and practical dimensions of the field.

In terms of research gaps and future directions, several avenues emerge. First, while succession planning and leadership development are well explored, there is limited integration with emerging HR technologies such as AI-powered talent marketplaces, internal gig platforms, and predictive analytics for internal mobility. These technologies are reshaping how organizations manage and forecast talent flows, and further empirical studies are needed to evaluate their impact on career development outcomes. Second, the literature would benefit from a more robust exploration of equity, inclusion, and access within internal mobility systems. Who gets access to mobility opportunities, and why, is a question that remains insufficiently addressed. Third, longitudinal and cross-cultural studies are required to assess how internal career paths evolve over time, particularly in the context of hybrid work, remote teams, and global mobility restrictions. Fourth, there is room to better connect micro-level employee experiences with macro-level organizational strategies. Bridging individual-level constructs (e.g., career agency, perceived organizational support) with firm-level outcomes (e.g., retention, innovation capacity) could advance a more holistic understanding of how internal talent systems operate.

4. CONCLUSION

This bibliometric review provides a comprehensive overview of the scholarly landscape surrounding internal talent mobility and career development. The findings reveal that research in this domain is both well-established and evolving, with core themes centered on career development, talent management, leadership development,

and succession planning. Over time, the field shifted from traditional HRM perspectives to more strategic, technologydriven, and employee-centric approaches. Influential authors and institutions have shaped foundational theories, while recent contributions highlight emerging topics and regional diversification. Despite its growth, the field still exhibits notable research gaps, particularly in terms of technological integration, inclusivity, and global representation. This study not only maps the intellectual structure of the field but also identifies critical pathways for future inquiry, positioning internal talent mobility as a key of organizational agility sustainable career progression in the modern workforce.

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