Culture's role in M&A Performance: A Bibliometric Analysis and Systematic Literature Review

Abstract

This study performs bibliometric analysis to uncover the impact of culture on M&A outcomes from the remarkable body of knowledge in change management and human resource management literature. Our primary motivation was to synthesize and scrutinize the existing literature to discover the themes and to present the contribution of the profound academicians, journals, countries, and organizations in this domain. We have performed co-authorship analysis, co-citation analysis, keywords analysis and bibliographic coupling on 212 documents from Scopus using VOSviewer and Biblioshiny (R package). The results revealed the following themes– a) cultural distances and the success rate of M&As, b) dealing with cultural clashes, c) diverse employee emotions and resistance, d) dynamics of structural and socio-cultural integration, and e) role of knowledge transfer. This study suggests implications and future research directions.

Keywords: Mergers, M&A, Culture, Cultural, Mergers and acquisitions

1. Introduction and Rational of the Study

Mergers & Acquisitions (M&As) are common route in the business world for growth, synergy, and competitive advantage (Shimizu, 2004; Shimizu et al., 2004). Since last two decades, more than 8 lakhs deals have been signed globally with a deal value of around 58 trillion USD (IMAA, 2023). Deregulation, market liberalization, technological advancements, and globalization are few of the major reasons of the growth of cross-border M&A deals (Oliveira et al., 2003). M&As has significant favorable impact on the global economy, finances, and markets (Osuma , 2021). However, in spite of its allure, most of the M&A face significant challenges and fails to achieve the intended objectives. The causes of failure are many like clashing organizational cultures, disjointed marketing tactics, excessively optimistic financial expectations and absence of capable and devotional leaders who look after all the integration efforts and manage employee's concerns (Schuler & Jackson, 2001; Fealy & Kompare, 2003; Sagner, 2011).

Cultural differences and employee's resistance to cultural change are regularly cited as hurdles in M&As success in the extant literature. Culture management is one of a crucial component of the M&A process, especially during a cross-border transaction when two dissimilar cultures merge. Acculturation is the commonly used term for denoting the merging of diverse cultures (Rottig, 2013). Culture creation is not a random process, nor is it completely based on the personalities of leaders; rather, it is an internal response to external imperatives (Schraeder & Self, 2003). That is why several studies pointed out that underestimation of people factors and cultural unfit are amongst the primary reason of M&As failure (Faulkner et al., 2002). The causes of cultural clashes include different treatment of executives and employees of the two firms, the working habits and conflicting opinions (Badrtalei & Bates, 2007), ethnocentrism, pigeonholing, members of integrating top management teams disparaging one another (Marks & Mirvis, 2011a). During

M&As, organizational culture's true influence becomes apparent as clashes between different cultures may disrupt the entire organization (Buono et al., 1985). Cultural clash mostly occurred at the top management level due to the significant contact between adherents of opposing cultures, leading to more intense and frequent interactions between the two (Weber & Drori, 2011). Despite widespread acceptance by academics and practitioners, there are still conflicting views and research regarding how culture affects M&A success and how to manage and integrate culturally diverse organizations (Rottig et al., 2013).

There are bibliometric analyses, meta-analysis and SLRs conducted on M&As and its dimensions. Eulerich (2022) performed bibliometric analyses on M&As in general and other bibliometric analysis like by Osuma (2021) focused on synergy gains, Budhiraja et al. (2023) discussed HRM practices during M&As, Chiaramonte et al. (2023) focused on the financial industry, Kumar & Mundi (2022) analyzed the role of CEO's role in M&As, Reddy (2015) studied the case study techniques and Ferreira et al. (2014) researched top strategy and international business journals, but none of them analyzed the cultural aspects of M&A exclusively. Vrontis et al., (2012) emphasizes that "*consideration of cultural differences is essential in making the choice of the right partner for M&A and should be assessed and measured during pre-merger planning and negotiation stages"*. Rottig et al. (2013) performed an SLR on the 84 articles studying the role of both organizational and national culture on M&As, found that most empirical studies focused on the financial and accounting aspects and very few studied the human resource management aspect. Stahl & Voigt (2008) also performed meta-analysis on 46 studies, and found a negative association between culturally different merging organizations and their successful integration. There are no bibliometric analyses in cultural aspects of M&A that enables scholars to get the comprehensive overview, identify research gaps, and generation of idea for further investigations in this particular domain. Based on this understanding, the following three questions are investigated through the study:

RQ1. Who are the most distinguished contributors, sources, and nations examining the aspects of culture in M&As using bibliometric analysis?

RQ2. What are the developing themes from existing literature?

RQ3. What possible research questions should future researchers in this field consider?

Bibliometric analysis is a powerful method to study patterns and trends within scientific literature (Donthu et al., 2021). There are many benefits of using Bibliometric analysis. First, it allows researchers to gauge the impact of a particular publication or an author's work. By examining citation counts, h-index, and other indicators, it becomes easier to identify influential papers and authors within a given domain. Second, it aids in uncovering emerging research trends and topics by analyzing the citation network. This helps researchers to stay updated with the latest developments and identify potential gaps in the literature (Chen, 2017). Third, it facilitates the examination of collaborative patterns between authors, institutions, and countries to explore potential research partnerships (Glänzel & Schubert, 2005). Lastly, Researchers and institutions often utilize bibliometric methods to evaluate the impact of academic journals. Journal impact factors and other citation-based metrics provide valuable insights into a journal's influence and prestige (Bornmann & Daniel, 2008).

2. Research Methodology

The main focus of this study is to systematically review the extant literature and uncover the themes discussing the relationship between culture and M&A performance. The results of SLR are condensed in a narrative tone. For bibliometric analysis, we have used network analysis, cluster analysis, co-occurrence and bibliographic coupling. The two popular statistical software - VosViewer (version 1.6.19) and R bibliometrix package: Biblioshiny is used for bibliometric analysis. The findings examine the connections between the most powerful nations, institutions, citations, authors, and frequently used keywords. We have adapted Phoong et al. (2022) framework for Bibliometric Analysis and SLR.

3.1 Database Selection

There are various available databases which can provide data for bibliometric analysis like Scopus, Web of Science (WoS), PubMed, ACM Digital library, CiteSeer etc., but in social sciences Scopus and WoS are the two most commonly used databases by the academicians. Both of them includes high quality peer-reviewed journals across wide disciplines. We have utilized Scopus for our research as the number of publications using our keywords resulted from Scopus search (212) were more as compared to WoS (181).

3.2 Identification of Key Terms

The identification of keywords was done in two steps. In the first, the author listed down words relating to the topic ‘Culture and Mergers and Acquisition’. The list of keywords including mergers OR acquisitions OR “M&A” OR “mergers and acquisitions” OR “merger and acquisition” OR “acquisition and merger” OR “acquisitions and mergers” in combination with culture OR cultural. In the second step, the first 50 results were analyzed on the search of ‘Culture’s role in Mergers and Acquisitions’ in Google Scholar to verify the credibility of our keywords.

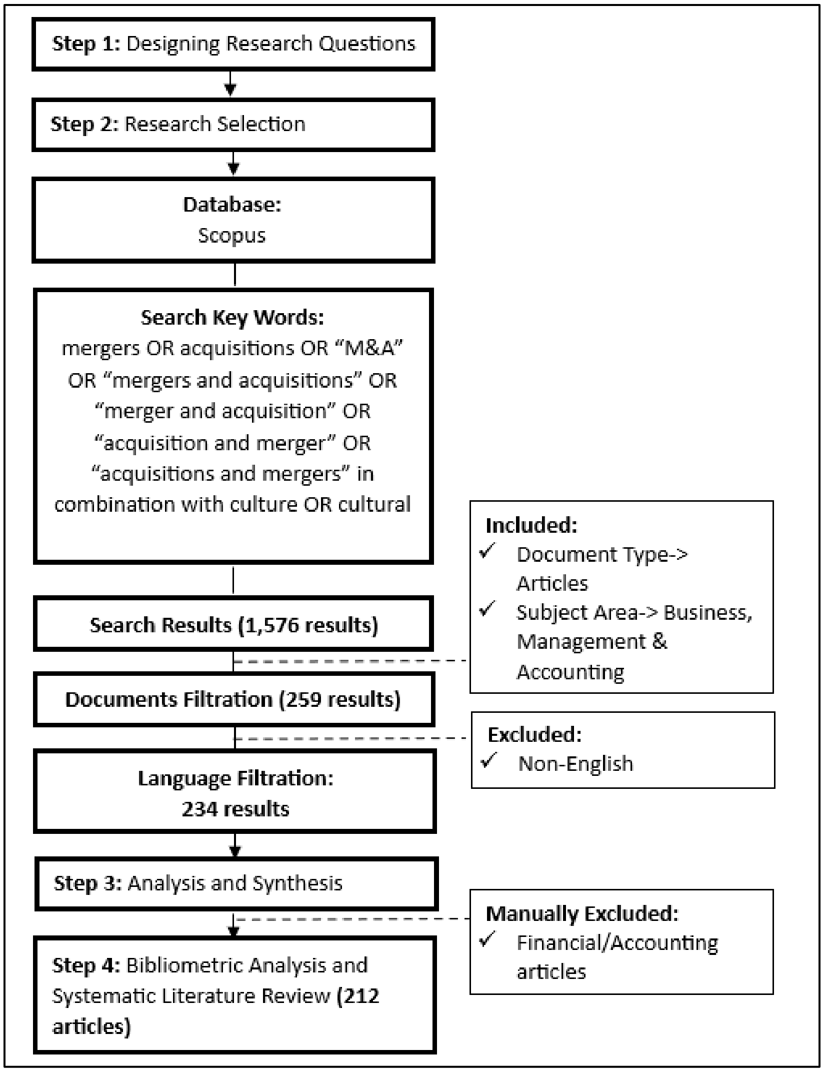
3.3 Inclusive/Exclusive Criteria

We ran the selected keywords search on Scopus on 15th June 2023, resulted in 1,576 results. To ensure congruence with our research objectives, we refined the selection criteria by including only articles and excluding reviews, conference papers, editorials, and book chapters. Moreover, we implemented a language criterion, specifically opting for papers published in English and subject area as “Business, Management & Accounting”. We didn’t opt any other exclusion/inclusion criteria and final search yielded a total of 234 articles. Subsequently, we retrieved these articles and stored them in a comma-separated (.csv) file. We then meticulously examined these articles, excluding those that solely focused on subjects related to the financial or accounting aspects without any relation with cultural in M&As. This rigorous process culminated in a final collection of 212 articles.

3.4 Software for Conducting the Analysis

This study used both VOSviewer and Biblioshiny (R package) for the analysis of the data. In the academics, both of the software is proven to complement each other in generation of robust bibliometric results (Budhiraja et al., 2023). VOSviewer and Biblioshiny helps in performing the performance analysis like most cited documents, authors, sources, countries, organizations; science mapping analysis like connections between different dimensions of the documents including citation analysis, co-authorship analysis, bibliographic coupling, etc.; and network analysis using network matrix for more elevating interpretations (Saini et al., 2022).

Figure 1: Framework used for Bibliometric Analysis and SLR (Adapted from Phoong et al., 2022)



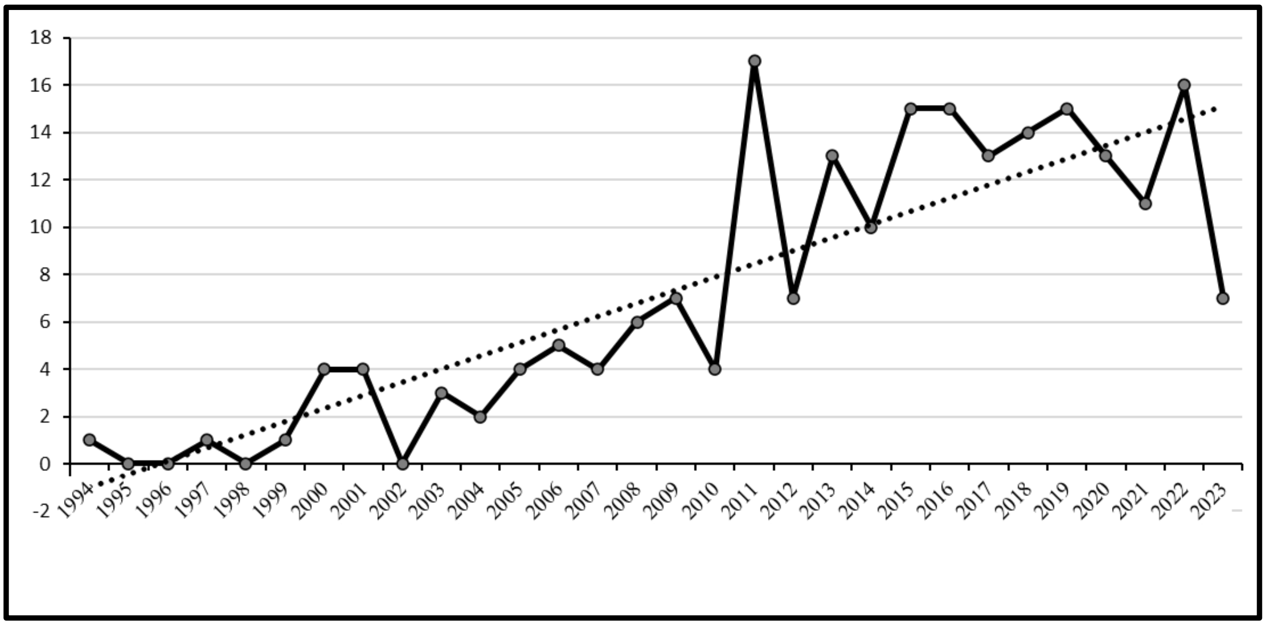
Source: Adapted from: Phoong et al., 2022

3. Results

4.1 Initial Statistics

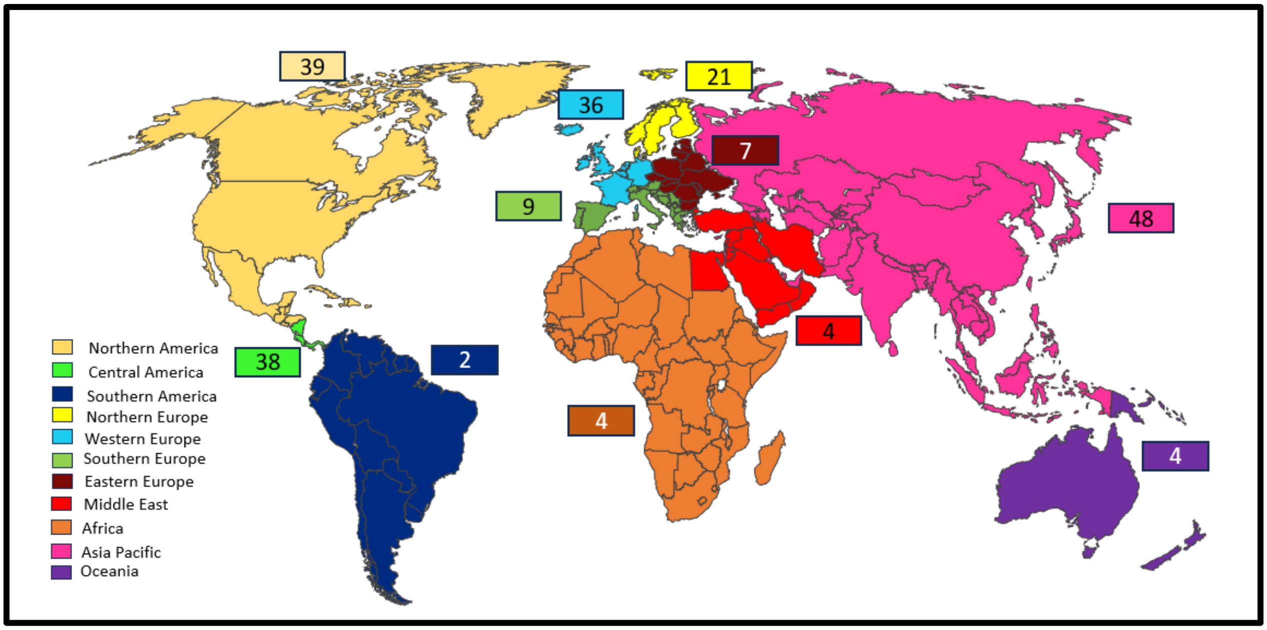
The study analyzed a total of 212 publications from Scopus, spanning from 1994 to June 2023. These publications were taken from 138 journals. As you can see in Figure 2, the number of articles published about the impact of culture on M&As has been increasing over time with a growth rate of 6.94% p.a. A total of 478 authors worldwide contributed to this area of research, where 50 are single authored documents. Literature in this field has been published in various journals with dimensions like socio-culture, national culture, cultural differences, sustainability, synergy, cross-cultural management, acculturation and M&A performance. The top 10 journals contributed 40 publications, which is almost 19% of the total publications indicating that publications are widely dispersed. The international co-authorship rate is 25.94% and co-authors per document is 2.55. The average document age is 8.63 years with 11,641 references, 564 author's keywords, and average citations per document is 29.67. Authors from American region have contributed 37% of the total publications, followed by Europe with 34%, Asia-Pacific with 23% (See Figure 3).

Figure 2: Progression of Documents



Source: Scopus (data till 15 June, 2023). Authors' computation

Figure 3: Number of Publications by Corresponding Author's region



Source: Scopus (data till 15 June, 2023). Authors' computation

4.2 Performance and Citation Analysis

Under the performance analysis, firstly we performed an author-wise analysis. The top-ten most referenced articles are listed in Table 1 and top-ten most cited authors are listed in Table 2. The most referenced article is "Do cultural differences matter in mergers and acquisitions? A tentative model and examination" by Stahl & Voigt (2008), is a meta-analysis of 46 studies. It concludes that the effect of cultural differences is dependent upon the degree of relatedness and the cultural differences between the merging organizations apart from research design and sample parameters. Tarba, S.Y. is the leading author with eight articles and 612 citations followed by Stahl, G.K. with 2 articles and 598 citations. In Table 3, author-impact analysis was performed in biblioshiny, showing h_index, g_index, m_index, total citations (TC), number of publications (NP) and publication start year (PY_Start) of the top 10 authors. Next, a journal-wise analysis was performed. Table 4 lists the top-ten most referenced journals and Table 5 lists the top-ten journal impact analysis. *Harvard Business Review* with four articles and 679 citations is the most cited journal, followed by *Organization Science* with one article and 490 citations and *British Journal* *of Management* with four articles and 399 citations. In terms of impact, *International Business Review* has the maximum h-index of nine followed by *Thunderbird International Business Review* with h-index of six and *Advances in Mergers and Acquisitions* with h-index of five. Thirdly, a nation-wise analysis is done, see top-ten most cited countries in Table 6. The USA has the highest total citations (TC) of 974 with average citation per article of 32.47 followed by the United Kingdom with TC of 912 and average citation of 50.67, and France with TC of 619 and average citation of 68.78. Fourthly, an institution-wise analysis is performed. INSEAD, France and London Business School, UK are the leading institutes with the maximum citations of 490 each with one document (refer Table 7). Lastly, we performed keyword analysis in Table 8 using VOSviewer. Apart from mergers and acquisitions and organizational/corporate culture, cross-border m&a, post-merger integration, change management, cultural distance, knowledge transfer and cultural differences are amongst the top twenty keywords.

Table 1. Top-ten most referenced articles

S. No.	Author (Year)	Title	TC	Links
1	Stahl & Voigt (2008)	Do cultural differences matter in mergers and acquisitions? A tentative model and examination	490	56
2	Hatch & Schultz (2001)	Are the strategic stars aligned for your corporate brand?	338	0
3	Bower (2001)	Not all M&As are alike--and that matters.	289	10
4	Bauer & Matzler (2014)	Antecedents of M&A success: The role of strategic complementarity, cultural fit, and degree and speed of integration	280	17
5	Chakrabarti et al. (2009)	Mars-Venus marriages: Culture and cross-border M & A	256	28
6	Teerikangas & Very (2006)	The culture-performance relationship in M&A: From yes/no to how	229	20
7	Campa & Hernando (2004)	Shareholder value creation in European M&As	169	3
8	Liu & Woywode (2013)	Light-touch integration of Chinese cross-border M&A: The influences of culture and absorptive capacity	161	13
9	Sarala et al. (2016)	A Sociocultural Perspective on Knowledge Transfer in Mergers and Acquisitions	156	10

10	Ben-Amar et al. (2013)	What Makes Better Boards? A Closer Look at Diversity and Ownership	142	0
Source: VOSviewer				

Table 2. Top-ten most cited authors

S. No.	Author	Articles	TC	TLS
1	Tarba S.Y.	8	612	225
2	Stahl G.K.	2	598	201
3	Voigt A.	1	490	170
4	Weber Y.	5	442	131
5	Sarala R.M.	5	410	152
6	Bauer F.	2	361	58
7	Matzler K.	2	361	58
8	Hatch M.I.	1	338	0
9	Schultz M.	1	338	0
10	Very P.	2	337	92
Source: VOSviewer				

Table 3. Top-ten author impact analysis

S. No.	Author	h_index	g_index	m_index	TC	NP	PY_Start
1	Tarba S.Y.	8	8	0.615	612	8	2011
2	Stahl G.K.	2	2	0.125	598	2	2008
3	Voigt A.	1	1	0.063	490	1	2008
4	Weber Y.	5	5	0.385	442	5	2011
5	Sarala R.M.	5	5	0.357	410	5	2010
6	Bauer F.	2	2	0.2	361	2	2014
7	Matzler K.	2	2	0.2	361	2	2014
8	Hatch M.I.	1	1	0.043	338	1	2001
9	Schultz M.	1	1	0.043	338	1	2001
10	Very P.	2	2	0.111	337	2	2006
Source: Biblioshiny							

Table 4. Top-ten most referenced journals

S. No.	Journal	NP	TC	TLS
1	Harvard Business Review	4	679	10
2	Organization Science	1	490	56
3	British Journal of Management	4	399	24
4	Thunderbird International Business Review	7	357	42
5	International Business Review	9	330	36
6	Strategic Management Journal	2	326	24

7	Journal of World Business	3	272	17
8	Management Decision	5	271	25
9	Journal of International Business Studies	1	256	28
10	Human Resource Management	4	206	23

Source: VOSviewer

Table 5. Top-ten journal impact analysis

S. No.	Source	h_index	g_index	m_index	TC	NP	PY_Start
1	International Business Review	9	9	0.5	330	9	2006
2	Thunderbird International Business Review	6	7	0.429	357	7	2010
3	Advances in Mergers and Acquisitions	5	8	0.333	103	8	2009
4	Journal of Corporate Finance	5	5	0.556	195	5	2015
5	Journal of Organizational Change Management	5	5	0.556	82	5	2015
6	Harvard Business Review	4	4	0.167	679	4	2000
7	Human Resource Management	4	4	0.308	206	4	2011
8	Management Decision	4	5	0.167	271	5	2000
9	British Journal of Management	3	4	0.167	399	4	2006
10	International Journal of Emerging Markets	3	4	0.375	38	4	2016

Source: Biblioshiny

Table 6. Top-ten most cited nations

S. No.	Country	TC	Average Article Citations
1	USA	974	32.47
2	United Kingdom	912	50.67
3	France	619	68.78
4	Austria	424	106.00
5	Israel	356	71.20
6	Finland	298	74.50
7	Canada	148	74.00
8	Australia	127	42.33
9	India	111	12.33
10	Germany	105	17.50

Source: Biblioshiny

Table 7. Top-ten most cited institutions

S. No.	Institutions	Articles	TC	TLS
1	INSEAD, France	1	490	138

2	London Business School, UK	1	490	138
3	McIntire school of commerce, University of Virginia, US	1	338	0
4	Harvard Business School, Boston, US	1	289	21
5	Department of Strategic Management, Marketing and Tourism, University of Innsbruck, Austria	1	280	42
6	MCI Management Center Innsbruck, Austria	1	280	42
7	College of Management, Georgia Institute of Technology, US	1	256	77
8	College of Management, Georgia Institute of Technology, US	1	256	77
9	Indian School of Business, India	1	256	77
10	School of Business Administration, Loyola University Chicago, US	1	256	77

Source: VOSviewer

Table 8. Top-twenty keywords

Rank	Author's Keyword	N (TLS)	Rank	Author's Keyword	N (TLS)
1	Mergers and Acquisitions	40 (168)	**11**	Corporate culture	10 (56)
2	M&A	20 (105)	**12**	Merger	10 (54)
3	Organizational Culture	15 (58)	**13**	Merger and Acquisition	10 (40)
4	Acquisition	13 (66)	**14**	Mergers	10 (47)
5	Acquisitions	13 (64)	**15**	Change management	6 (27)
6	Cross-border M&A	13 (47)	**16**	China	6 (32)
7	Culture	13 (60)	**17**	Cultural distance	6 (24)
8	Post-merger integration	12 (57)	**18**	Knowledge transfer	6 (39)
9	Acquisitions and Mergers	11 (36)	**19**	Cross-border mergers and acquisitions	5 (16)
10	Integration	11 (51)	**20**	Cultural differences	5 (37)

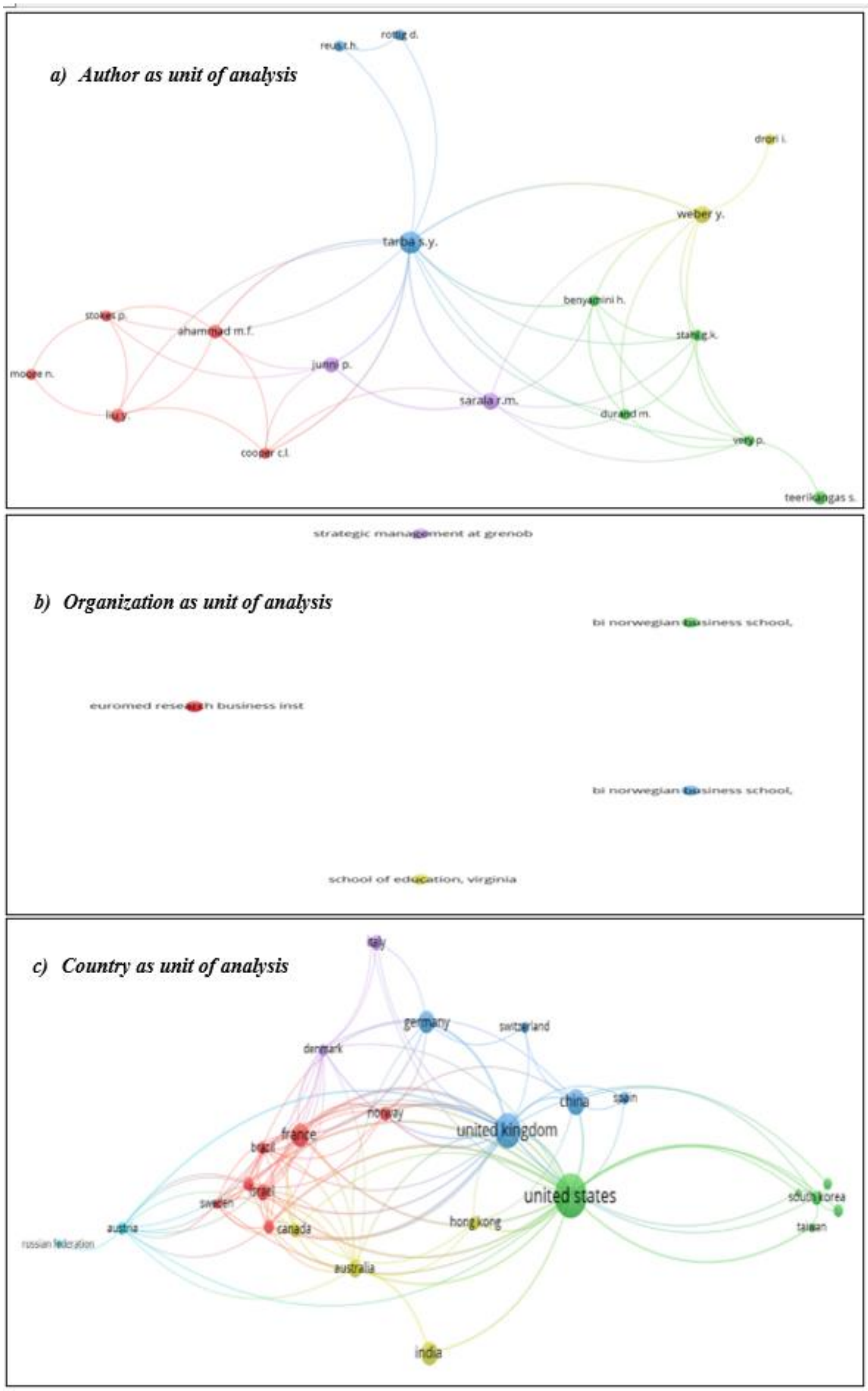
Source: VOSviewer

4.3 Science Mapping and Network Visualization

First, we used VOSviewer to perform co-authorship analysis, with authors, countries and institutions as unit of analysis. Keeping at least two articles and two citations, only 17 from 41 authors, and 27 from 29 countries were discovered to be connected. However, none of the 6 institutions were connected, depicting no collaboration amongst the institute related to our topic of study (refer Figure 4). Next, citation analysis is performed keeping minimum two articles and two citations, 36 from 41 authors, 22 from 28 sources, 28 out of 29 nations and 3 out of 6 institutions were connected with one another. We kept minimum five citations per publications to create the visualization map of the citation network. A total of 131 out of 212 articles met the threshold and of those, 90 were discovered to be related (Figure 5). Next, we created a co-citation map keeping authors with minimum 25 citations. A total of 213 authors fulfilled the requirement out of the 10,581 authors and formed five clusters (Figure 6). The proximity of authors in the visualization reflects their co-citation relationship, while lines are used to depict the strength of the connection. Subsequent, author's keyword analysis is done generating 562 keywords from the 212 publications. A density visualization map is created for keywords with co-occurrence greater than six, producing 18 keywords in the map (Figure 7).

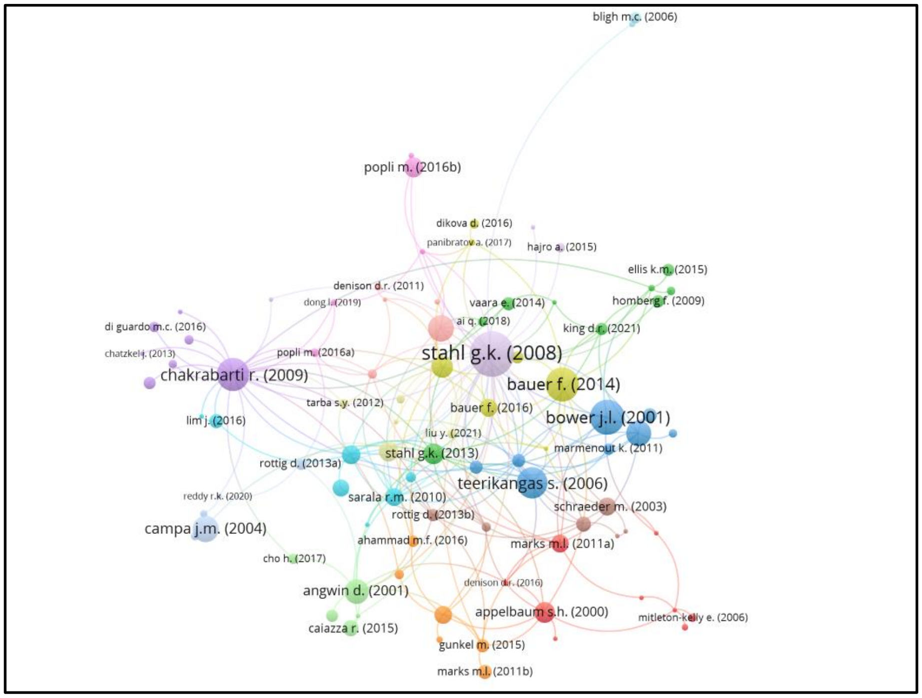
Using the biblioshiny, three analyses were performed- thematic, treemap, and word frequency, on the basis of the author's keywords. Since the study revolves around "mergers and acquisitions", we clubbed words like "merger", "acquisition", "mergers", "mergers and acquisitions", "M&A", "acquisitions and mergers" and similar words in to one label- Mergers and Acquisitions. This helped in yielding far more promising and accurate results. TreeMap analysis was run to understand the top 15 keywords (Figure 8). Mergers and Acquisitions as expected emerged as the leading keyword with 52% occurrence, followed by organizational culture (6%) and cross-border M&A (5%). A graph of word frequency over time was prepared to understand the cumulative growth of the keywords used by the authors (Figure 9). In the last 5 years, all the ten keywords have showed an increasing trend with the maximum growth rate in cultural distance (85%), followed by organizational culture (79%) and mergers and acquisitions (75%). Change management and knowledge transfer keyword was first used in 2011 while Cultural distance is first used in 2017. Last, we created thematic map on 30 author's keywords with a minimum of five words per 1,000 and three labels (Figure 10) to determine the themes in a bi-dimensional matrix. X-axis (Centrality) refers to "the level of inter-cluster interactions," revealing the role of a single word in the development of a certain theme while y-axis (density) shows "the extent to which the words in a specific cluster are connected and thus a theme develops" (Forliano et al., 2021). A total of 12 clusters was generated on the map. The cluster in niche themes (high density and low centrality) are innovation and national culture suggesting that these themes are fully developed ones but currently unable to influence other themes. The cluster in basic themes (high centrality and low density) are mergers and acquisitions, organizational culture and post-merger integration implying that the concept is not developed fully and has research gaps in spite of its influence to other themes.

Figure 4: Co-authorship analysis using network visualization



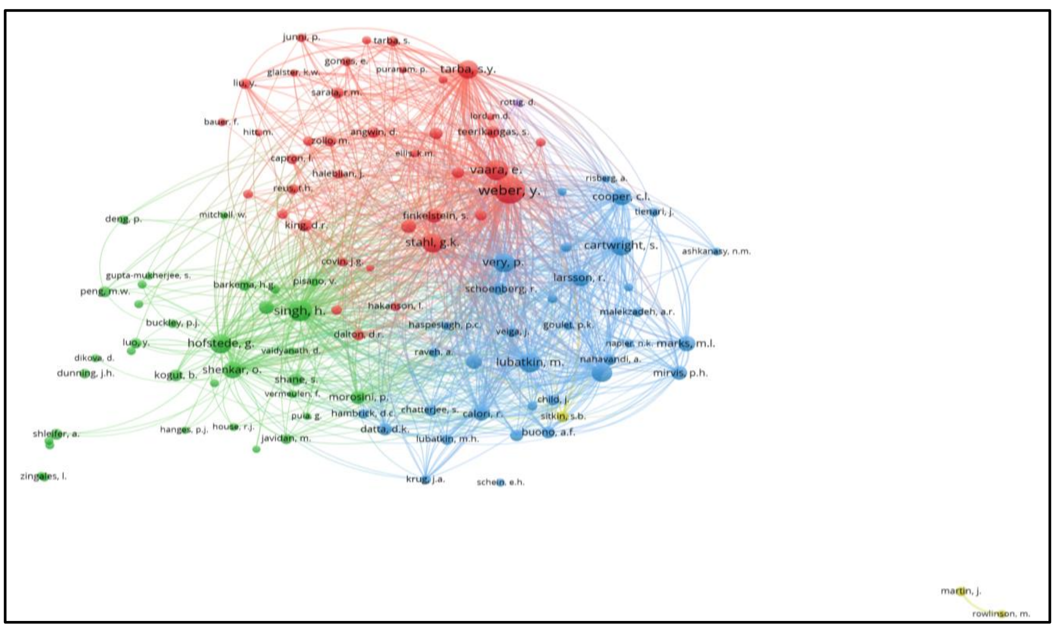
Source: VOSviewer

Figure 5: Citations analysis using network visualization



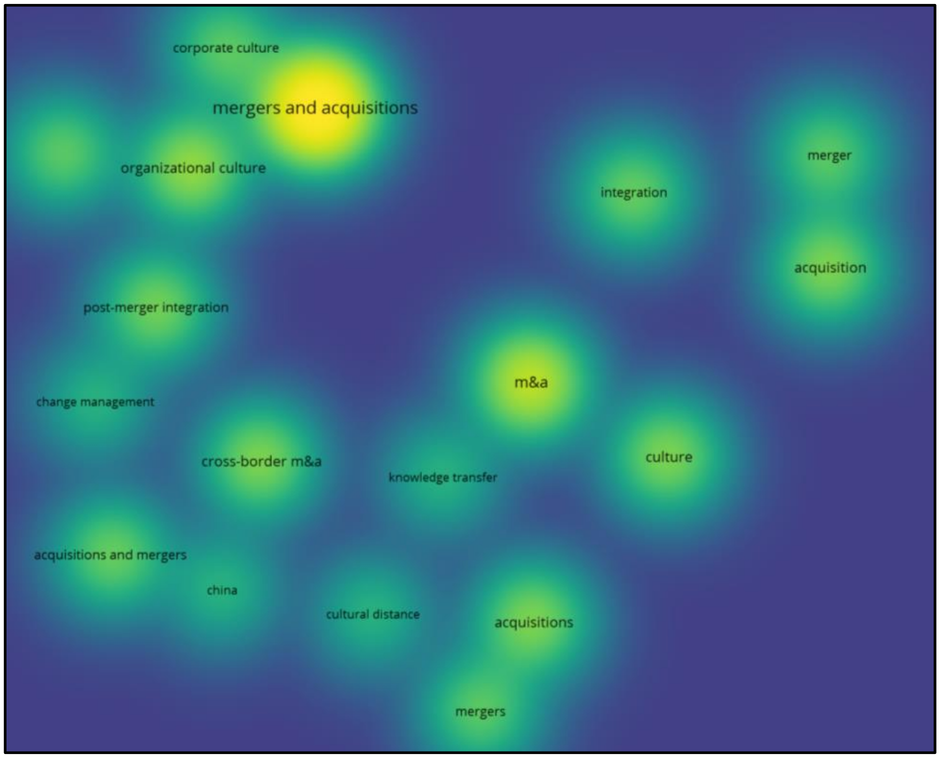
Source: VOSviewer

Figure 6: Co-citation link on the basis of authors



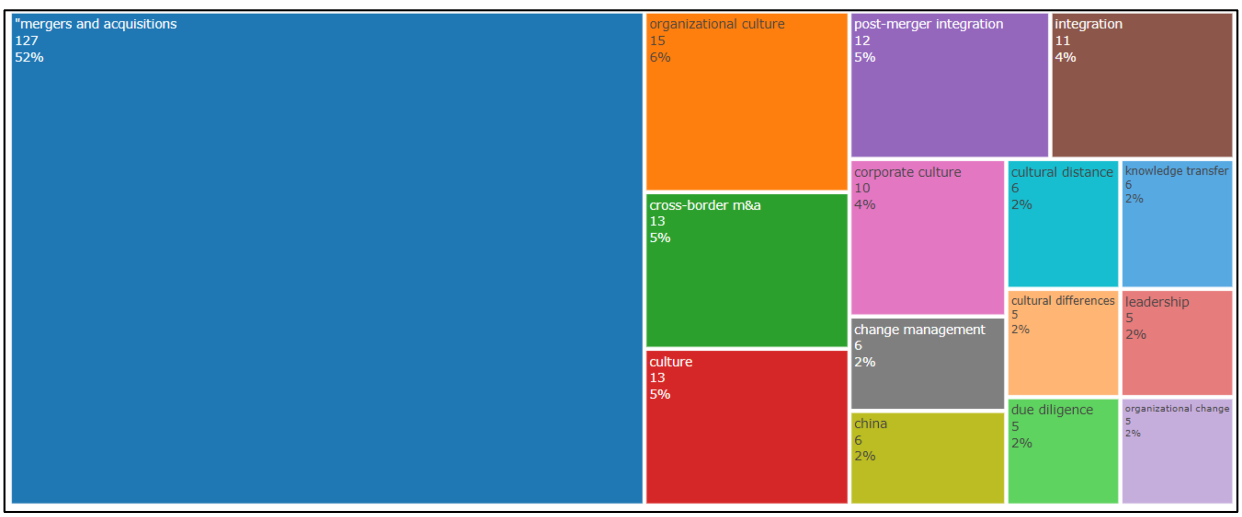
Source: VOSviewer

Figure 7: Density visualization map



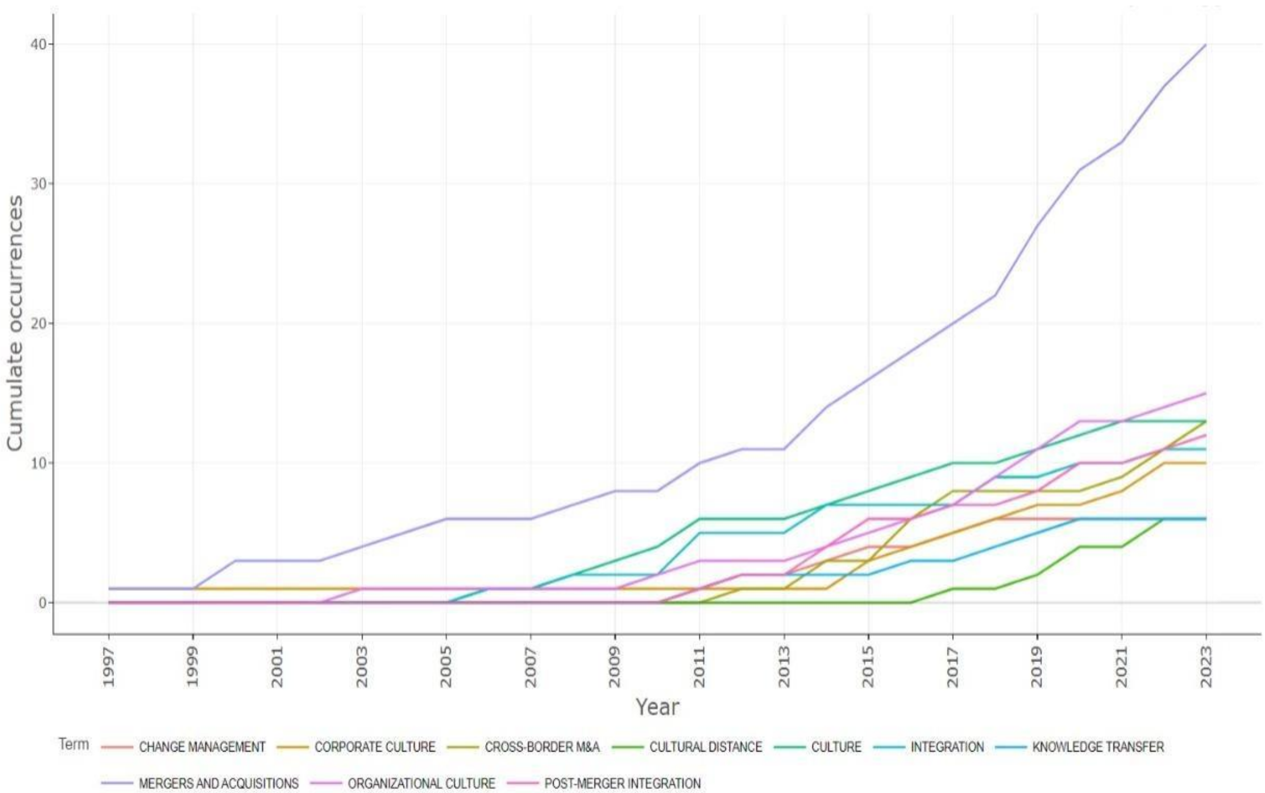
Source: VOSviewer

Figure 8: Treemap



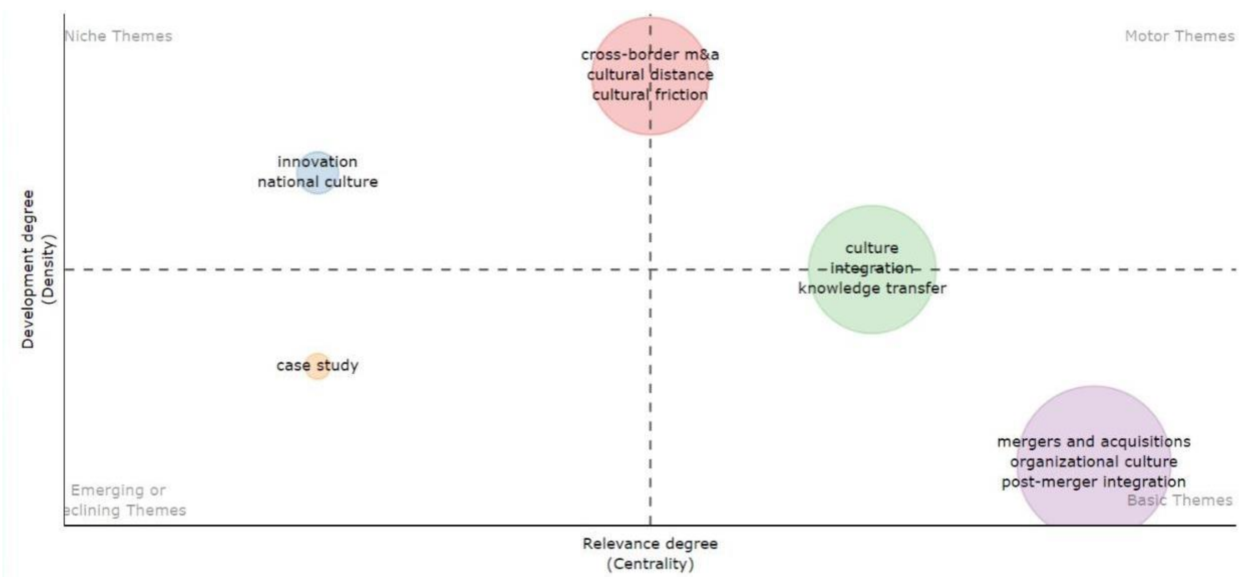
Source: Biblioshiny

Figure 9: Word-growth Map



Source: Biblioshiny

Figure 10: Thematic Map Analysis

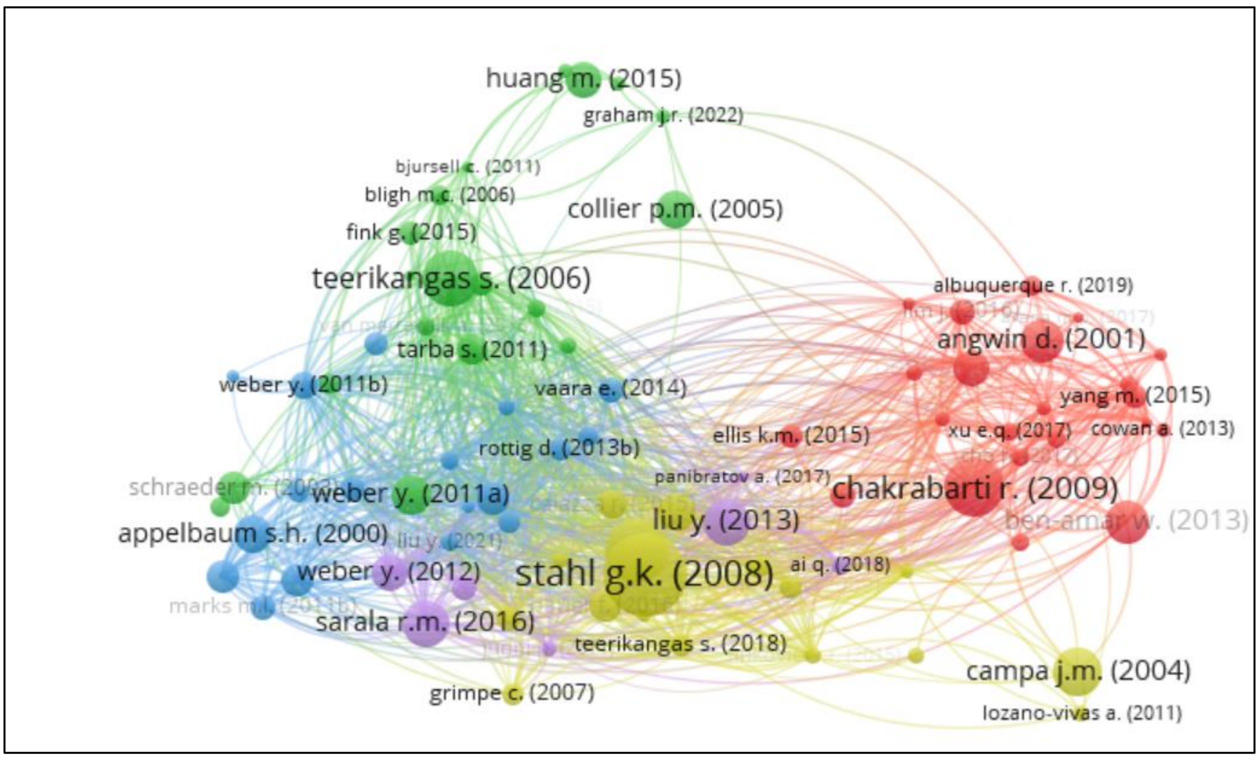


Source: Biblioshiny

4.4 Thematic Cluster Identification

The bibliographic coupling option can be used in VOSviewer to club authors, documents, sources, organizations, and countries into meaningful clusters (Van Eck & Waltman, 2017). We have created the clusters of documents using the fractional counting method. This can help in exploring the patterns of themes emerging from the dataset in a systematic manner. The minimum citations were set at ten, resulting in 95 articles; however, only 84 were found to have connections. These documents were grouped into five clusters (Figure 10). Though, after careful reading of the documents, it was found that two documents were better suited for a different cluster than the ones allocated by the software. The results of these 83 documents were condensed in a narrative tone. s

Figure 10: Bibliographic coupling network visualization



Source: VOSviewer

4.1.1: Cultural distances and the success rate of M&As

Understanding and management of cultural distance between the merging organizations is one of the crucial steps for the effective integration during M&As (Popli & Kumar, 2016; Popli et al., 2016). Cultural distances involve dis-similarity in values, beliefs, norms, and practices that exist between different merging organizations. Cultural distance is that important factor that bidders considers this distance in determining the premium prices in cross-border M&A deal (Lim et al., 2016). Cultural distance between two nations negatively impacts the chances as well as the intensity of the cross-border deals (Di Guardo et al., 2016). On the other side, cultural distance is not treated as a negative connotation, and instead impose that many organizations intend to merge with culturally diverse organization (Boateng et al., 2017). The success of M&A increases in the long run if the countries of the seller and acquirer company are culturally distant (Chakrabarti et al., 2009). Cross-cultural interactions can lead to potential benefits in terms of knowledge transfer and learning (Boateng et al., 2017). According to Popli et al. (2016), an organization's cultural experience reserve, derived from earlier M&A experience, is a critical firm-specific capacity that may mitigate the effects of cultural differences between acquiring and target nations. Thus, cultural experience and time spent in a specific culture might lessen cultural distance and predict increased odds of cross-border M&A transaction completion (Popli & Kumar, 2016).

4.4.2: Dealing with cultural clashes

Cultural clashes are the natural outcome of the differences between the cultures of the merging organizations. The good understanding of the prospective effects of the cultural differences on the performance of M&A is essential for success in a global business environment (Teerikangas & Very, 2006). The important part lies in embracing these differences and channeling them for the benefit of the merged organization (Bligh, 2006). Socio-cultural integration mechanisms such as interpersonal connections, trust, and shared identity mediates the complicated interaction between national and organizational culture variations and M&A outcomes (Hajro, 2014). Organizations with robust cultures of trust adopt M&A strategies that safeguard or strengthen the value of their cultural foundations (Bargeron et al., 2015). It is very important to address cultural differences and choosing the right integration approach in international M&A to reduce conflicts, turnover, and achieve successful integration (Weber et al., 2011). Coexisting subcultures in an acquired firm have a significant effect on long-term cultural integration in M&A, emphasizing need for understanding dynamic cultural constructions and revitalization strategies (Van Marrewijk, 2016). Successful cultural leadership in a post-merger organization involves employees' commitment, recognition of cultural differences, symbolic actions, team building, employee input, managing loss and renewal, setting realistic expectations, and emphasizing everyday behaviors and routines (Bligh, 2006).

4.4.3: Diverse employee emotions and resistance

Employee emotions have a direct relationship with their resistance to organizational change. The likelihood of resistance and sabotage will rise if they don't feel important, which will cause them to withdraw (Appelbaum et al., 2000). When the acquiring organization’s culture takes precedence over the acquired organization’s culture, it triggers conflicts among employees in the merged organization (Sarala, 2010). Dysfunctional deal outcomes are worsened by peer discussions about them and further shaped by the evolution of employee reactions (Marmenout, 2010). Leaders must view resistance as a natural psychological response and address the problem psychologically to reduce resistance to change (Dorling, 2017). Employees must feel that the organization values them and their contributions. To successfully implement change, managers must match the organizational vision and change initiatives with the values of their workforce (Chung et al., 2014).

Effective communication styles by managers and employees' emotional responses are strongly connected, as regular and open communication creates a sense of security (Sinkovics et al., 2011). Moreover, the key factor in determining the emotions of the workforce is effective managerial support. As per Gunkel et al. (2015), the employees who are more prone to negative emotions during the M&A integration process can be effectively dealt through managerial assistance, to lessen their likely resistance and intention to leave. Managers' tendency to attribute shortcomings to "cultural differences" hinders the analysis of merger performance (Vesa & Vaara, 2014). In addition, national culture affects interpersonal dynamics, while occupational culture facilitates integration, and organizational culture, including employee emotions, plays a dynamic role (Viegas-Pires, 2013). To ensure successful mergers, organizations must prioritize culture and employee emotions alongside financial and strategic factors using a bottom-up approach (Weber & Drori, 2011).

Theme 4: Dynamics of Structural and Sociocultural integration

The success of M&As continues to depend on cultural integration between the merging companies (Verma & Bhattacharyya, 2019). The process perspective has evolved over the years to be used in a variety of sectors and acquisition types, and it has also been further broken down into many integration kinds, such as task, sociocultural, and structural integration (Teerikangas & Thanos, 2018). The role of the socio-cultural and task integration process determines the success of the M&A performance (Stahl & Voigt, 2008). However, as per Teerikangas & Laamanen (2014), priority should be given to structural integration before cultural integration, and structural integration should be done with consideration for the acquired company's present culture. The contingency and process streams of M&A research offer a greater understanding of the socio-cultural integration process, rather than standalone (Sinkovics et al., 2015). M&A success is determined by strategic complementarity, cultural fit, and the degree of integration, where strategic complementarity is considered as a broader term which includes management complementarity, technological complementarity, market complementarity and/or product complementarity (Bauer & Matzler, 2014).

4.4.5 Role of Knowledge transfer

Knowledge transfers in M&As has attracted much attention from the scholars in the recent past for its positive impact on M&A performance (Junni & Sarala, 2011; Lakshman, 2011; Sarala & Junni, 2014; Ai & Tan, 2017). Cultural differences at both organizational as well national level creates problems in the knowledge transfer process. Knowledge transfer in M&As is influenced by sociocultural interfirm links, but challenges arise due to the transitional, hybrid organizational framework, which poses sociocultural barriers to the transfer of tacit and socially complex information (Sarala & Junni, 2014). Merging companies are more negligent in transferring the tacit knowledge as it is intuitive knowledge and rooted in practice, norms and values, and also requires the same intellect person to possess it (Ai & Tan, 2017). Organizational cultural integration and merging partner attractiveness has a significant impact on the knowledge transfer (Junni & Sarala, 2011). Trust is another predictor for efficient knowledge transfer (Lakshman, 2011). Moreover, one party's effective sharing of tacit information is predicated on the other party's anticipation of reciprocal benefit. Knowledge-based view (KBV) of organizations recommends that knowledge transfer helps in resolving the conflicts during M&A and organizations can look for best HR practices which can help in creating capabilities and knowledge transfers for M&A success (Weber & Drori, 2011).

4. Future Research Agenda

a) *Culture studies in M&A:* The vast extant literature focuses primarily on organizational culture and national culture, ignoring the other levels of cultures which might impact the M&A performance like intra-societal cultures, industry cultures, professional cultures, intra-organizational cultures (Rottig, 2013). National and organization cultures are also being studied in isolation; future studies must focus on studying their simultaneous effect on the success rates of M&As.

b) *Culture and Employee emotions during M&A*: There is a dearth of literature examining the relationship between cultural distance and the emotions of employees and how can the HR practices can effectively manage it (Gunkel et al., 2015). HR practices like communication, training, and justice can mitigate the impact of cultural issues on employee emotions.

c) *Culture and Post-merger identification:* National culture have received less attention as compared to organizational culture in social identification theory in M&As setting (Stahl & Voigt, 2008; Ismail & Umar Baki, 2017). Authors believe that if the countries of merging organization have a historical conflict, it can have a significant bearing on the employees' identification with the new merged organization.

d) *Culture and Learning organizations (LO):* The M&A outcomes of LO have been researched less in literature; however, recent studies suggest that in the case of M&A, the organization with greater experience and a learning orientation can extract better value as compared to those who don't (Cuypers et al., 2017). Organization's cultural experience reserve from earlier M&A experience mitigate the influence of cultural differences between the merging organizations (Popli and Kumar, 2016; Popli et al., 2016).

e) *Culture and HR practices:* There is no framework which maps the best HR practices to the cultural constructs like cultural fit, cultural distance, cultural clash/conflict/shock, cultural difference, cultural compatibility and multicultivation in M&A studies (Rottig, 2013). According to (Weber & Drori, 2011), there isn't a single best practice for handling conflict situations while improving M&A success. However, there is a need to have a framework of HR practices to effectively manage the cultural constructs.

5. Theoretical and Managerial Implications

Our research has two theoretical implications. For beginners', the findings of bibliometric analyses would assist in comprehending the breadth of previous work in this topic. As a result, they may employ future study ideas to further the research. Second, the paper lists notable authors, organizations, and nations that may assist researchers from developing countries in exploring the possibility of co-authoring future studies. As shown in figure 2, most of the studies are from western countries, stressing upon the need to explore more in context of developing nations. In terms of managerial implications, the study suggests that practitioners such as managers and change agents may use our findings to better grasp the broad scope and necessity of managing cultural factors during M&A. They should predict the prospective cultural differences that may impact all aspects of the business, including general day-to-day practices, and determine precisely how these differences will be managed in the best possible manner. These practitioners may utilize the findings of key research mentioned in the most referenced publications to design decisions and trade-offs that may resolve substantial barriers to M&A integration.

6. Conclusion

Understanding culture is important in M&As since it helps in evaluating the degree of compatibility between the two organizations (Stahl & Voight, 2004). Any differences in cultures, if not effectively managed may endanger international cooperative relations in general and negotiation outcomes in particular. Such differences often result in inadequate communication, misperception, and misunderstandings, leading to business failures in cross-cultural environments (Weber & Drori, 2011). This study gives a comprehensive overview of previous research on the topic, as well as potential research goals that might influence future academics.