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Technical support: jomajournal@outlook.com

İletişim
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Gazze Boulevard, No: 7, Office no: Z/33
PC: 60600, Niksar, Tokat, Türkiye.

Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa Üniversitesi
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A Perspective on Digital Agility: An In-Depth Analysis with Bibliometrics and R Programming

Osman AKARSU[a] **Zeynep ÖZER**[b]

A Perspective on Digital Agility: An In-Depth Analysis with Bibliometrics and R Programming

Abstract

Background. With the acceleration of digital transformation, organizations must adopt agile structures. Digital agility has become a central theme in management, information systems, and organizational studies. Exploring its temporal development and research trends offers valuable insight for future studies.

Aim. This study aims to reveal research trends and developments in the field by examining the studies conducted in the field of digital agility between 1984 and 2025 using bibliometric methods.

Method. Using 1009 articles from the Scopus database, data were analyzed with Biblioshiny via the Bibliometrix R package. The analysis included word trend analysis, citation analysis, Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA), and thematic mapping.

Findings. Organizations in the USA and Europe contribute the most to digital agility. In the word analysis, *organizational agility*, *digital transformation*, and *innovation* are among the most striking concepts. Thematic mapping results reveal that academic interest in this field has increased with technological developments. As a result of LDA analysis, digital agility was classified under themes such as management-related issues, digital procurement processes, transformation and technology-oriented studies, information systems and decision-making processes, and organizational flexibility.

Conclusion. The LDA analyses revealed thematic trends not present in previous studies, thereby highlighting gaps in the field and potential areas for future research.

Keywords: Digital agility, bibliometric analysis, R Biblioshiny program, Scopus database.

Dijital Çevikliğe Bir Bakış: Bibliyometri ve R Programlama ile Derinlemesine Bir Analiz

Öz

Arka plan. Dijital dönüşümün hızlanmasıyla birlikte, örgütlerin çevik yapıları benimsemesi gerekli olmuştur. Dijital çeviklik, yönetim, bilgi sistemleri ve örgütsel çalışmaların odak noktası hâline gelmiştir. Bu olgunun zamansal gelişimi ve araştırma eğilimlerinin incelenmesi, gelecek çalışmalar için bir referans sunmaktadır.

Amaç. Bu çalışma, 1984–2025 yılları arasında dijital çeviklik alanında yapılan çalışmaları bibliyometrik yöntemlerle inceleyerek, alandaki araştırma eğilimlerini ve gelişimi ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır.

Yöntem. Scopus veri tabanından alınan 1009 makale, R programlama dilindeki Bibliometrix paketinde yer alan Biblioshiny arayüzüyle analiz edilmiştir. Kelime eğilim analizi, atıf analizi, LDA (Latent Dirichlet Allocation) ve tematik haritalama yöntemleri birlikte kullanılmıştır.

Bulgular. Dijital çeviklik alanında en fazla katkıyı ABD ve Avrupa'daki kurumlar sağlamaktadır. Yapılan kelime analizinde *örgütsel çeviklik*, *dijital dönüşüm* ve *yenilik* en dikkat çeken kavramlar arasında yer almaktadır. Tematik haritalama sonuçları, teknolojik gelişmelerle birlikte bu alana olan akademik ilginin arttığını ortaya koymaktadır. LDA analizleri sonucunda dijital çeviklik, yönetimle ilişkili konular, dijital tedarik süreçleri, dönüşüm ve teknoloji odaklı çalışmalar, bilgi sistemleri ile karar verme süreçleri ve kurumsal esneklik gibi temalar çerçevesinde sınıflandırılmıştır.

Sonuç. LDA analizleri, önceki çalışmalarda yer almayan tematik eğilimleri belirleyerek alandaki boşlukları ve potansiyel araştırma alanlarını görünür kılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dijital çeviklik, bibliyometrik analiz, R Biblioshiny program, Scopus veri tabanı.

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[a] Corresponding author, Assist. Prof. Dr., Bilecik Şeyh Edebali University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Management Information Systems, Türkiye, ORCID: 0000-0002-0595-6795, e-Mail: osman.akarsu@bilecik.edu.tr
[b] Bachelor's Degree, Bilecik Şeyh Edebali University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Management Information Systems, Türkiye, ORCID: 0009-0001-9383-229X, e-Mail: zeynepozerr1675@gmail.com

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1. Introduction

The concept of digital agility is expressed as the capacity of organizations to adapt quickly and effectively to changing market conditions using digital technologies, optimize their operational processes and gain a competitive advantage (Warner & Wäger, 2019). In today's developing digital transformation processes, businesses need to adapt to digital agility in order to gain a competitive advantage. With the rapidly developing technology in the external world, people and organizations can have the ability to adapt to their environment quickly thanks to IoT, artificial intelligence and briefly SMACIT technologies (Riera & Iijima, 2017). At this point, people and institutions that adopt digital agility can produce fast and effective solutions to problems by processing rapidly generated data and obtaining meaningful outputs (Bughin et al., 2018).

Agile businesses are organizations that are future-oriented, open to innovations in their environment and have adopted a continuous learning methodology (Garvin et al., 2008). It offers advantages to organizations in many aspects, such as developing quick solutions, increasing customer satisfaction and maintaining lifetime customer value (Kumar & Reinartz, 2016). Because digital agility is a relatively new phenomenon in the literature, no detailed bibliometric analysis has been conducted on its development; existing studies have employed conventional methods. Based on this research gap in the literature, this study aims to provide insights into research trends and developments in digital agility, particularly for future studies. The purpose of this research is to analyze studies conducted in the field of digital agility between 1984 and 2025 using bibliometric methods to reveal research trends and developments in the field.

The phenomenon of digital agility has evolved within similar constructs such as strategic agility, digital transformation, and maturity. This interactive process, which influences each other, can sometimes compromise semantic clarity. Shaping strategic agility is closely linked to understanding customers. It is based on the idea that agility, as a requirement of learning and market orientation, requires specific organizational practices. Internal and external integration is necessary to ensure a cohesive and coordinated response to adapt to unpredictable changes in organizations (Braunscheidel & Suresh, 2009). As a result of this strategic renewal (Warner & Wäger, 2019) and integration, organizations can successfully achieve agility. Guo et al. (2025) aimed to reconcile these differing perspectives by dividing strategic agility into two dimensions: entrepreneurial agility and adaptive agility. They found that while strategic learning increases entrepreneurial agility, it has an inverted U-shaped effect on adaptive agility. The phenomenon of digital agility, which can be evaluated within the phenomenon of digital transformation as an umbrella concept, is seen to be discussed and modeled in the literature as the transformation of organizational trends (market and learning) into organizational practices and the emergence of agility (Braunscheidel & Suresh, 2009).

In businesses that adopt digital agility, a strong and positive communication structure emerges between employees and employers. This increases employee satisfaction and provides a healthier working environment with committed and responsible employers (Çallı & Çallı, 2021). Overcoming organizational inertia stands out as a critical element in reducing the obstacles and difficulties encountered in business processes. Thus, it is aimed for the processes to have a more dynamic, fluid, lean and human-focused structure. The points that should be used for this should be definability, fluidity, measurability, leanness, compatibility with human nature, flexibility, speed and repeatability (İleri & Soylu, 2010). Despite this importance, it is seen that a comprehensive

evaluation has not been made in the literature regarding the theoretical development of digital agility studies.

When the scientific studies on the subject are examined, it is observed that the majority of the studies are conducted using software tools such as VOSviewer and CiteSpace (Hameed et al., 2024; Stratone, 2023; Susitha et al., 2024). In this study, both Biblioshiny and LDA were used together, providing methodological richness. In addition, it was determined that the open-source Biblioshiny software integrated with the R programming language was not directly used in bibliometric studies in the field of digital agility, and this constitutes a limitation in the literature. The Bibliometrix library offers the opportunity to conduct in-depth analysis of data from a methodological perspective with the help of quantitative and visual data (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017).

This study aims to reveal the development dynamics and research trends of the subject by analyzing the academic literature focusing on digital agility between 1984-2025 with bibliometric methods. In this bibliometric study, 1009 articles obtained from the Scopus database were examined and various analyses were conducted with the Biblioshiny program in the R programming language, such as H-index, most cited publications and authors, most active countries and institutions, and number of publications by year. The study findings revealed that especially US and European-based institutions are pioneers in the field of digital agility, terms such as *organizational agility*, *digital transformation* and *innovation* are prominent. The popularity of topics related to digital agility has increased with technological developments, and digital agility is gathered under five main themes with LDA modeling. The study seeks answers to the following research questions.

RQ_1. Which authors are cited the most among the studies conducted on digital agility between 1984-2025 from the Scopus database?

RQ_2. How has the digital agility literature changed over time and what are the prominent research focuses?

RQ_3. What are the studies with high h-index in the field of digital agility and the systematic impact values of these studies?

RQ_4. Which countries have contributed the most to the field of digital agility and in which region are they concentrated?

RQ_5. What are the trending topics in the field of digital agility? Which fields of study are on the rise and in decline?

The remainder of the study is organized into five sections. In the second section, the methodology section used in the study, the data generation process and analysis steps are discussed in detail. In the third section, the literature review is conducted in a controversial manner. In the fourth section, the findings obtained are explained in a way that will answer the research questions. In the fifth and last section, the theoretical contribution of the study is discussed and suggestions for future studies are presented.

2. Methodology

The data obtained in this study were analyzed using Bibliometrix, one of the libraries of the R software, and LDA (Latent Dirichlet Allocation), one of the Topic Modeling Approaches. The bibliometric analysis conducted within the scope of the study differs from the existing literature in

terms of the method used and the use of a different source. The research data includes 1009 articles obtained from the Scopus database. The academic studies conducted between 1984-2025 on the subject of *digital agility* in the Scopus database were analyzed using the Biblioshiny program in the Bibliometrix library in the R programming language.

The main reason for choosing the Bibliometrix library is to show that important systematic findings can be obtained in a short time with the no-code approach and because of the superiority of providing researchers with different tools in bibliometric work areas. Researchers can perform data loading, various analysis and visualization quickly and effectively. All figures were designed by the authors using R and Bibliometrix; no copyrighted visuals were used.

The intertopic distance map on the left, created using multidimensional scaling, represents the distances and distributions of themes. The alpha value can be adjusted between 0 and 1 using the relevance metric; this adjustment assesses the specificity of terms to a topic by balancing them with overall word frequencies. The percentages on the map represent the weight of each topic across all texts (Sievert & Shirley, 2014). Terms in Topic 1 were listed as the most significant and important terms and included phrases such as *data, digital, work, technology, innovation*.

Based on the LDA outputs, the topics were grouped, and these groups were determined to be five to ensure a balanced and meaningful reflection of thematic diversity. This number was determined based on commonly preferred practices in the bibliometric analysis literature and the interpretability of the resulting output. These topics, shown in Table 1, were analyzed after examining the LDA results. The most dominant keywords for each topic were analyzed, and the thematic headings of the topics were labeled based on the researchers' evaluation. At this stage, the evaluation was made by taking into account the semantic relationships of the terms with each other and their compatibility within the scope of digital agility.

In the study, many bibliometric techniques such as network analysis, collaboration relationships, h-index, country and region-based productivity were used to map the digital agility literature in order to reveal the current status of the digital agility phenomenon (Waltman, van Eck & Noyons, 2010). Within the scope of this study, a research flow was presented by taking into account the stages of systematic literature review. This study was prepared based on the SPAR-4 (Scientific Procedures and Rationales) SLR (Systematic Literature Review) flowchart developed by (Paul et al., 2021), expressed in the diagram in Figure 1. It reveals the methodological process steps for systematically analyzing scientific studies on digital agility.

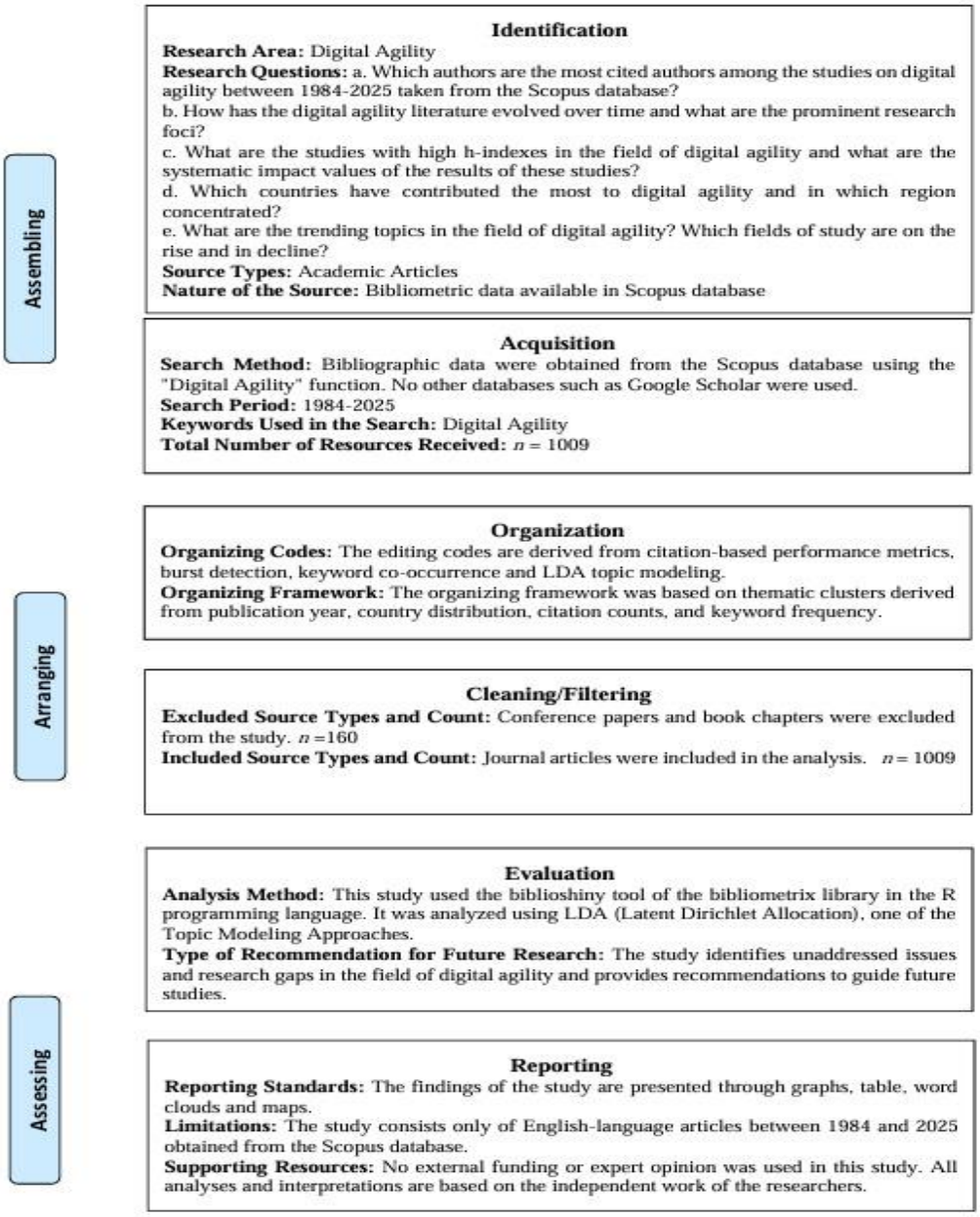
The diagram in Figure 1 depicts the research process divided into three primary stages. These are Assembling, Arranging and Assessing stages. The Assembling stage includes the organization of the knowledge that forms the basis of the study. Under the title of Identification, the research area of the study is stated as *Digital Agility* and academic articles published in the Scopus database between 1984 and 2025 are included in the review, conference proceedings and book chapters are not included.

In the Identification section, shown in Figure 1, research questions were specified regarding who the most cited authors are, trends in the literature, the impact of studies with high H-index, geographical contributions, and determining trending topics. In the Acquisition section, it was stated that the data was obtained only from the Scopus database, the time period, the keyword *Digital Agility* was used in the search process, and a total of 1009 sources were reached. In the examinations

conducted with Bibliometrix, publications with high impact in the field of digital agility were presented under the title of *Most Relevant Sources*. Within the scope of the H-index, the level of influence of researchers in the field is shown in the graph titled *Sources Local Impact by H Index*. In addition, the productivity of publications in publication platforms was evaluated thanks to the *Sources Production over Time* graph, and as a result, it was determined which journals were active and which were more in the background. The *Most Relevant Authors* graph, which analyzes the authors, identifies those who publish the most in the field of digital agility, thus identifying the names that will lead the work that researchers will do in this field. In addition, the *Authors Production over Time* graph presents the authors' annual contributions to the academy descriptively.

Figure 1

General Framework of the Research

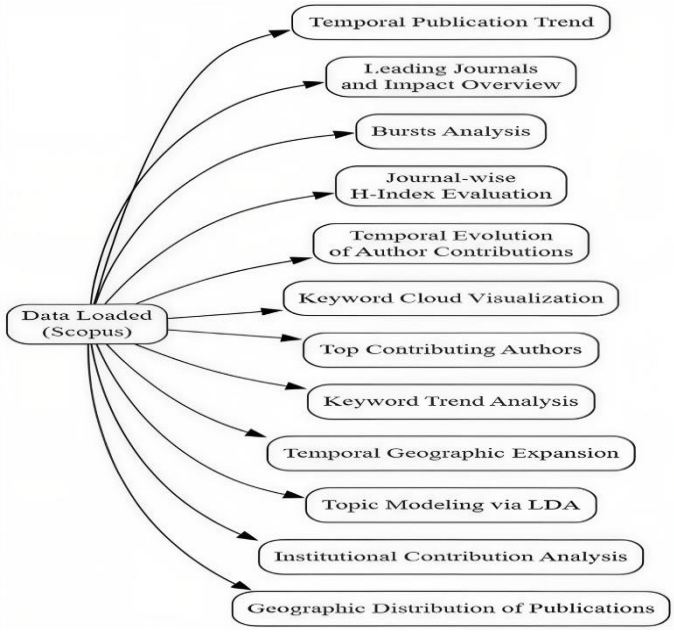


Note. Created by the authors, adapted from Paul et al. (2021)

When the concept of digital agility is examined in the context of institutions and organizations, the institutions with the most publications are listed with the *Most Relevant Affiliations* graph. In addition, the course of the publication numbers of these institutions over time is included in the *Affiliations Production over Time* graph. The Arranging section includes the processes of organizing and filtering the data. In the Organization section, an analysis organized by dividing into thematic clusters based on publication year, country distribution, citation counts and keyword frequencies is presented. This structure was created using bibliometric techniques (e.g. burst detection, co-occurrence, LDA topic modeling). In the Cleaning/Filtering section, conference proceedings and book chapters were excluded from the scope of the study and only articles published in refereed journals were included in the analysis. The last section, the Assessing stage, includes conducting analyses and presenting the results obtained. In the Evaluation section, the Biblioshiny tool, which works with the R programming language used in bibliometric analysis studies, was used. In addition, this study presents the gaps in the field of digital agility and suggestions for future research. In the reporting phase, it was stated that the findings were presented through graphs, tables, word clouds and maps, that the study was limited to English articles only and that it was conducted independently without any external financial support or expert opinion. Figure 2 presents the analysis methods used in this study.

Figure 2

Analysis Method



With this diagram, the studies on digital agility were comprehensively evaluated as part of a systematic process, and the exclusion and inclusion criteria were specified. Each section was detailed to ensure that the research process was supported and conducted with transparent and scientific foundations.

Multiple analysis tools were used in the study, and detailed information about these tools is discussed in the findings section. The tools used in the analysis were chosen to ensure that the data on digital agility obtained from the Scopus database were analyzed quickly, effectively, and regularly, and to provide researchers with a comprehensive reference in a short time regarding digital agility studies in the existing literature.

LDA (Latent Dirichlet Allocation), one of the topic modeling approaches used in the R programming language, text mining techniques (Blei, Ng & Jordan, 2003) and bibliometric analysis applications were preferred because they provide a flexible and powerful working environment. The Bibliometrix package was used because it easily analyzes and interprets complex data sets with descriptive methods. While topic modeling with LDA, R stands out as a powerful tool in processing text data and creating logical theme clusters (Grün & Hornik, 2011). At the same time, being open source, containing many different packages and being effective in terms of statistics, it allows researchers to have full control authority in data analysis processes. In addition, the quality outputs provided by packages such as ggplot allow the findings to be expressed in an understandable and interesting way (Wickham, 2016). For these reasons, R is the programming language frequently preferred in bibliometric and text mining studies (R Core Team, 2025).

This study, which examines the evolution of digital agility in the literature, also adopted the Topic Modeling approach (TMA) in terms of methodological diversity. Topic modeling approaches, including machine learning and statistical methods, have been developed to determine conceptual trends in texts (Blei, 2009). These methods offer effective tools in the field of natural language processing (NLP) in revealing latent themes in large text collections by analyzing not only at the word level but also at the level of deeper conceptual structures. The four basic topic modeling techniques widely used in the literature include LDA (Latent Dirichlet Allocation), LSA (Latent Semantic Analysis), NMF (Non-negative Matrix Factorization), and BERTopic (Egger & Yu, 2022). In this study, only the LDA (Latent Dirichlet Allocation) method was used, considering its prevalence in other bibliometric analyzes.

3. Literature

In recent years, businesses that want to gain a competitive advantage in the digitalized world with developing technology trends need to be agile in both their corporate applications and information infrastructures. In order to gain a competitive advantage with their corporate applications, businesses need to prioritize value creation (Amit & Han, 2017), developing dynamic managerial capabilities (Adner & Helfat, 2003), having organizational duality, and design and revise their strategies according to the conditions of the era (Antonizzi & Smuts, 2020). In addition, they need to prioritize corporate applications aimed at preventing digital resistance to change (Akarsu & Parmaksız, 2024). On the digital side of the phenomenon, they need to increase their digital platform capacities and have their employees adopt agility and lean applications. Agility has been addressed in different ways in the literature. Hameed et al. (2024) aimed to reveal the effect of management information systems on organizational agility with a bibliometric analysis. The study touched on how these two concepts affect each other and what role they play in the digital agility processes of companies. In another study, Atienza-Barba et al. (2024) examined the effects of artificial intelligence technologies on agility in detail. It was suggested that artificial intelligence technologies accelerate organizational decision-making processes, but there are various deficiencies in the applicability of these technologies.

The concept of agility is not only associated with technology, but also emphasized that it is related to behavioral units and structural change within the organization (Salmela et al., 2022). Grover (2022) states that companies that adapt to digital agility use four basic components of digital agility and thus classifies the factors that will affect the adoption of digital agility by companies. These

components are defined as modular design and packaged capabilities, development of a two-way digital culture, platform use and synchronicity with data. Duvivier and Gupta (2023) emphasized that in order for the concept of digital agility to be adopted and developed within the organization, digital technologies should be adopted in strategic goals and these technologies should be made compatible with the processes and included in autonomous processes.

In addition, Chouki et al. (2021) have addressed the integrated nature of design thinking and agility in digital production. This study examined how and in what ways design-oriented thinking and the concept of agility mutually affect each other. In another study, Vendraminelli et al. (2023) addressed the potential contributions of design-oriented thinking to digital transformation processes. The strategic importance of data virtualization for increasing digital agility was examined by (Earley, 2016). The study emphasized the importance of digital agility in preventing obstacles such as data security, management, and quality of data virtualization. This will help companies adapt to the changing and evolving data landscape by supporting digital agility processes. Ghezzi and Cavallo (2020) addressed agile business model innovation in the context of digital entrepreneurship and examined this process within the framework of lean startup approaches.

The study conducted by Ciampi et al. (2021) stated that the relationship between digital agility and digitalization affects each other bidirectionally. Here, attention is drawn to the complexity of the relationship and they emphasize that being agile in the technology adaptation processes of companies is critical to the success of the company. In his study titled Agile Transformation Management, Franklin (2021) presented a practical agile change management framework to increase success in the planning and implementation of change processes.

There are also bibliometric analyses on digital agility in the literature. However, it is observed that these studies are mostly addressed on specific topics, mostly on the axis of digital transformation and from a contextually limited perspective. Susitha et al. (2024) examined supply chain competitiveness through agility and digital technologies and addressed this issue with a bibliometric analysis method. Sahid et al. (2023) comprehensively examined the agility literature in the FinTech field and conducted a bibliometric analysis revealing the development and trends in this field. Tomomitsu and Moraes (2021) examined the relationship between information technologies and organizational agility from a historical perspective and revealed the evolution of scientific production in this field with a bibliometric analysis method. Ragazou et al. (2022) focused on the themes of strategic ambidexterity, agility and open innovation in SMEs in their study and analyzed the research trends around these concepts with a bibliometric approach. Gouda and Tiwari (2022) mapped the talent agility literature, analyzed the development trajectory in the field, and presented a suggested agenda for future research. Atienza-Barba et al. (2024) addressed the interaction between AI and organizational agility, assessed the scientific production in the field, and discussed future research trends.

De Diego and Almodóvar (2022) examined the research trends on strategic agility over the last 25 years with a bibliometric approach and comprehensively presented the conceptual development, prominent themes, and trends of the field. Sahoo and Chaubey (2024) examined the historical development of organizational agility research and analyzed the main conceptual transformations, methodological approaches, and prominent research foci in the literature from a retrospective perspective.

AlNuaimi et al. (2022) addressed the relational structure between leadership, agility, and digital strategy in the effective management of digital transformation, analyzing how these three elements complement each other and guide digital transformation processes. Troise et al. (2022) examined the critical role of agility for SMEs to successfully exist in the environment of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA) in the era of digital transformation, and revealed how agility functions as a strategic competence in such environments. Li et al. (2021) revealed that organizational awareness of digital transformation is a decisive prerequisite for the development of information processing competence and that this competence plays a fundamental role in achieving agility in the market.

It is seen that the literature mostly addresses the phenomenon of digital agility together with basic and related concepts such as digital leadership (Akarsu & Parmaksız, 2025), digital transformation (Burchardt & Maisch, 2019; Gong & Ribiere, 2025; Ly, 2024), and digital strategy (Rawashdeh et al., 2024). Previous studies in the literature generally used well-known tools such as VOSviewer and CiteSpace in the analysis phase, but to the best of the author's knowledge, no studies were found using the relatively new approach, Topic Model Approach, and R software for bibliometric analysis.

4. Findings

This section, which includes the study results, includes analyses performed using the Bibliometrix library in R Programming and LDA outputs. The graph in Figure 3 was created using the Bursts detection algorithm and shows the intensity on the subject under study within a certain period by determining the sudden increases that occur within a certain period (Kleinberg, 2003).

The graph shows the Bursts Detection between 1995-2025 depending on the normalized citation numbers. The significant increase in studies conducted in the field of digital agility, especially in 2020, has been associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic process has affected many disciplines as well as the digital field and has increased the need for access to information (Else, 2020).

The graphic in Figure 4 shows the journals that stand out in the field of digital agility in descending order. Sustainability journal has included studies that examine the impact of environmental problems on sustainability within the scope of digital agility. In this context, the main reason why Sustainability journal comes to the fore is to show how digital technology studies are adopted more effectively and in line with strategic goals within the framework of sustainability goals.

The Technological Forecasting and Social Change journal is known to examine the impact of the concept of digital agility on the management of digital transformation with current technology, and to include articles on sustainability and digitalization (Martin, 1995). The IEEE Access journal highlights the impact of the concept of digital agility on technological studies and research in the field of engineering. The reason why this journal stands out may be that it has fast publication processes and open access, includes works on digital evolution, advanced data analytics and smart structures, and mostly publishes studies from engineering sciences. Figure 5 explains how the most published academic journals have developed over the years in terms of their publications on digital agility.

Figure 3

Bursts Analysis

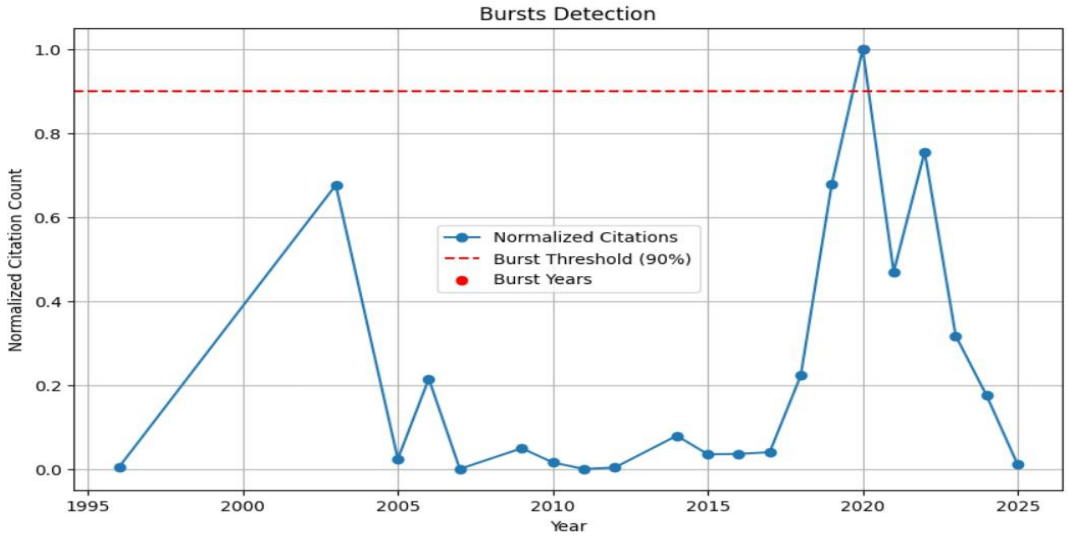
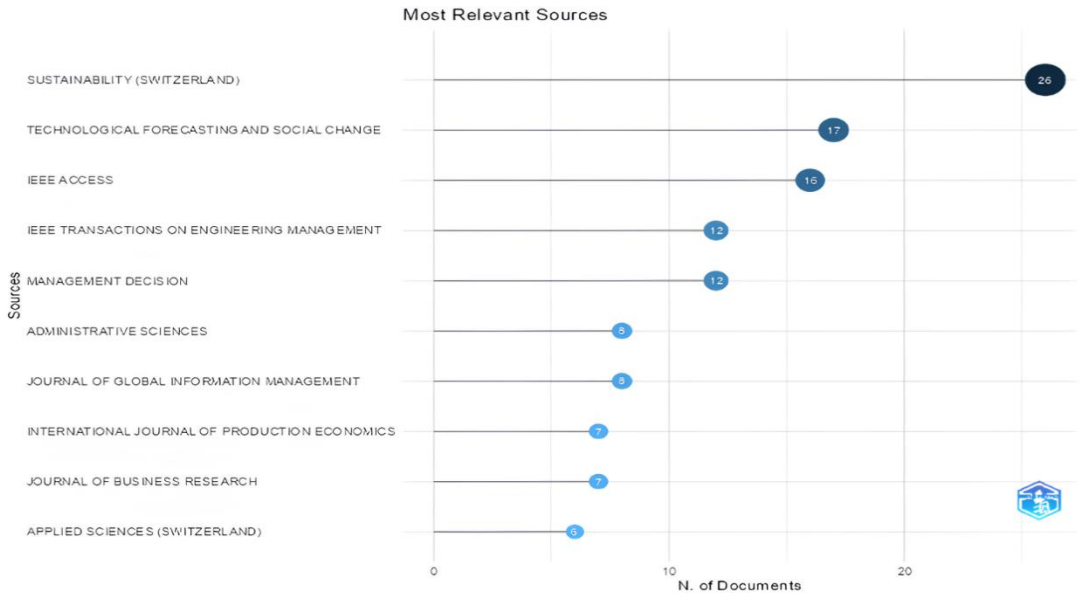


Figure 4

Digital Agility Journals



As a result of the analysis in Figure 6, the local impacts of researchers working in the field of digital agility are compared and presented according to the H-index values. The H-index is a method used to measure the productivity and impact of a researcher in the scientific field (Hirsch, 2005). The researchers with the highest impact degree are *Liy*, *Chen X*, *Kraus S*, *Kumar A*, *Lil*, *Mihardjo LWW*, and *Sasmoko*. These names have signed the most cited studies in the field.

Figure 5

Temporal Coverage of Digital Agility Journals

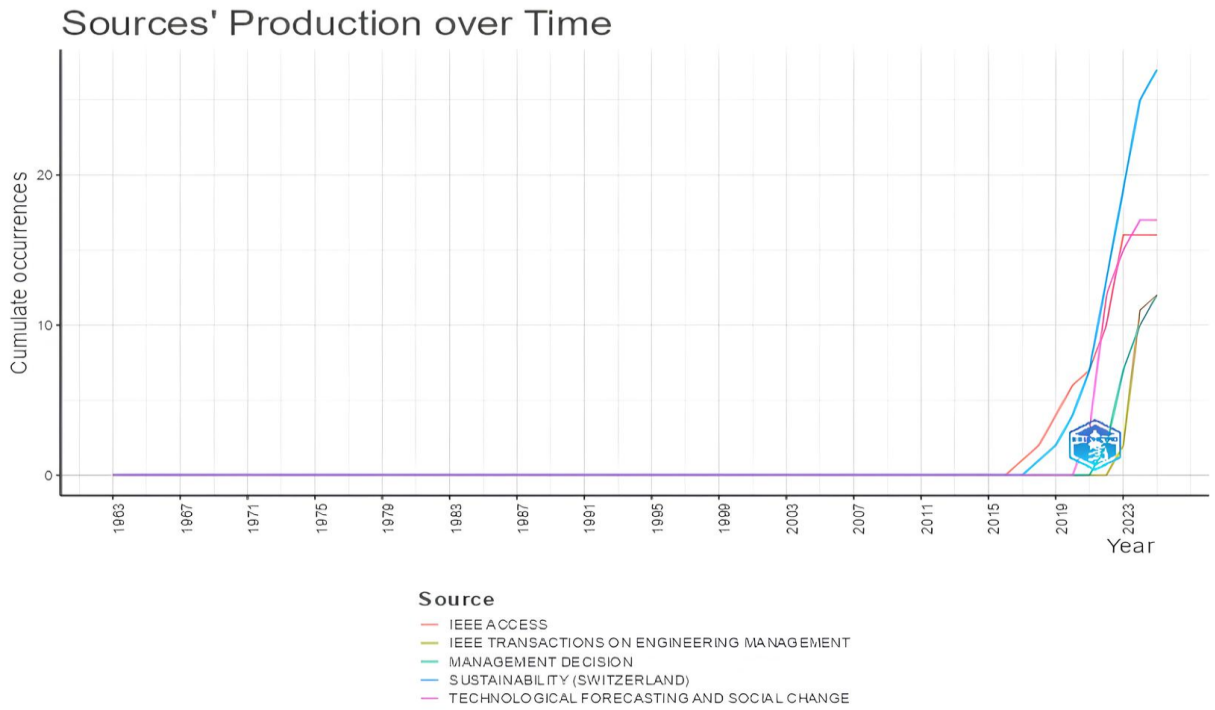


Figure 6

H-Indexes

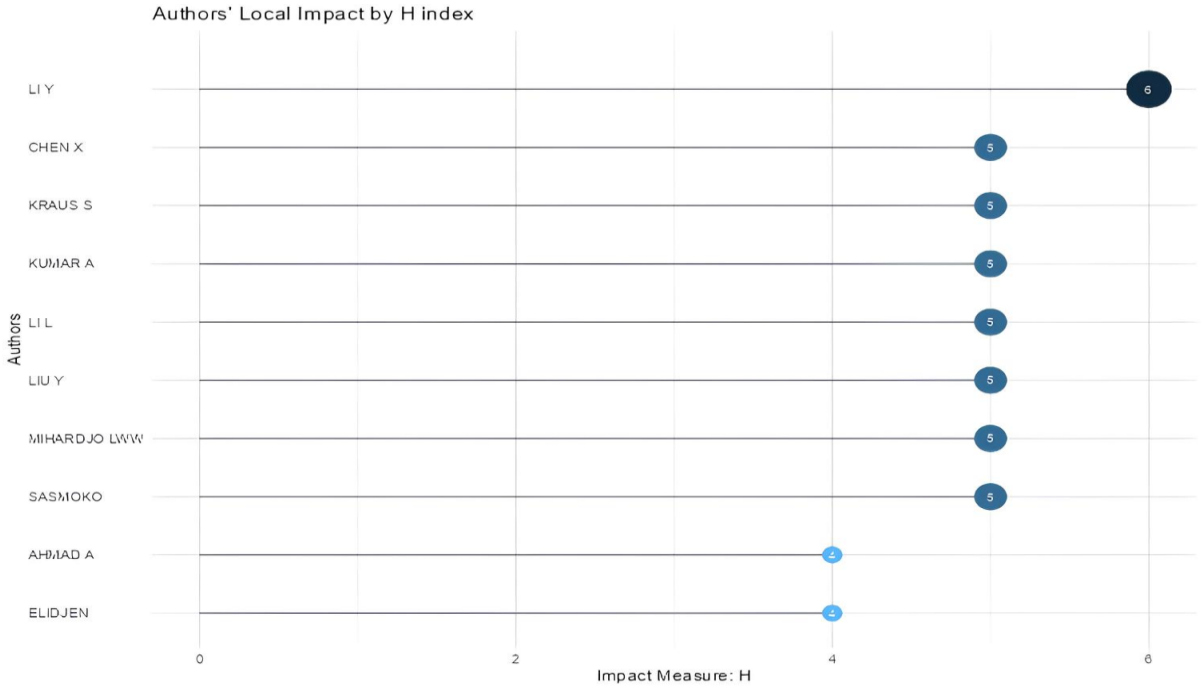
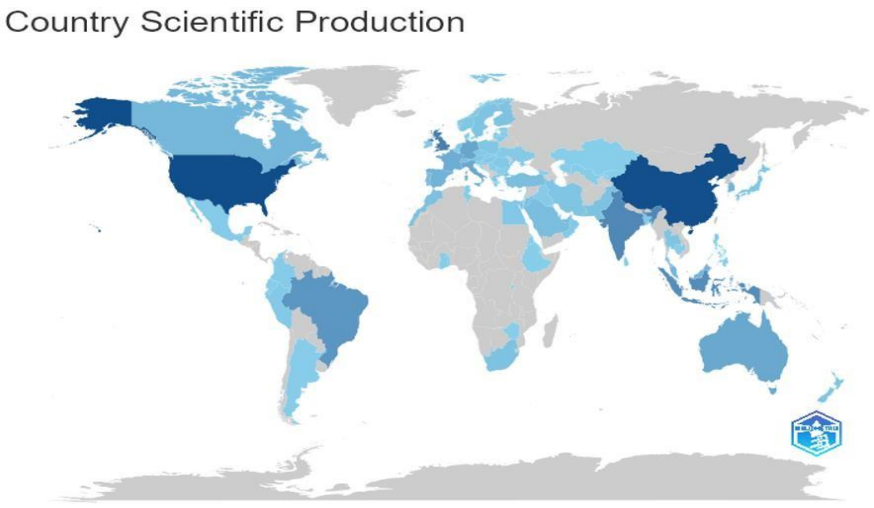


Figure 7

Geographical Coverage



When the map in Figure 7 is examined, the countries and regions where the most studies have been conducted in the field of digital agility are shown. Here, it is observed that countries such as North America, Western Europe and China have conducted more studies in the field of digital agility. This situation is also consistent with other research findings (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016). In this direction, China's being at the forefront may have played a role in having a large database such as Scopus. At the same time, it has been determined that countries in the Asia-Pacific region have also recently conducted studies on this subject, which is consistent with research findings showing that the research capacity of the field of digital agility has expanded (Wagner & Leydesdorff, 2005).

When the trends of these countries over time are examined in Figure 8, countries such as China, India and the USA are seen. It is observed that China accelerated its work in the field of digital agility in 2010 and after. At the same time, we can say that Indonesia, one of the developing countries, increased its work after 2018. At this point, it can be said that the scope of digital agility is gradually expanding and gaining a global character.

Figure 9 shows the trending topics in studies on digital agility over the years and how often these topics are mentioned. For example, the fact that subtopics such as *agribusiness, Pakistan, literacy, supply chains, leadership, supply chain agility, digital transformation, decision making, Covid-19, agility* and *digital technologies* are represented with larger bubbles in recent years, especially in 2020 and after, indicates that these topics are frequently included in 1009 articles. In addition, the fact that the term *Covid-19* is prominently included in 2020 and after shows that the pandemic and its effects are considered as an important research area in the articles. It is thought that the reason why the term Pakistan is included in the trending topics may be due to the high research intensity on this subject in that country. The chart highlights the research areas that have attracted attention in articles, particularly in terms such as *digital transformation, Covid-19, agility,* and *digital technologies* as of 2010.

Figure 8

Geographical Coverage Depending on Time

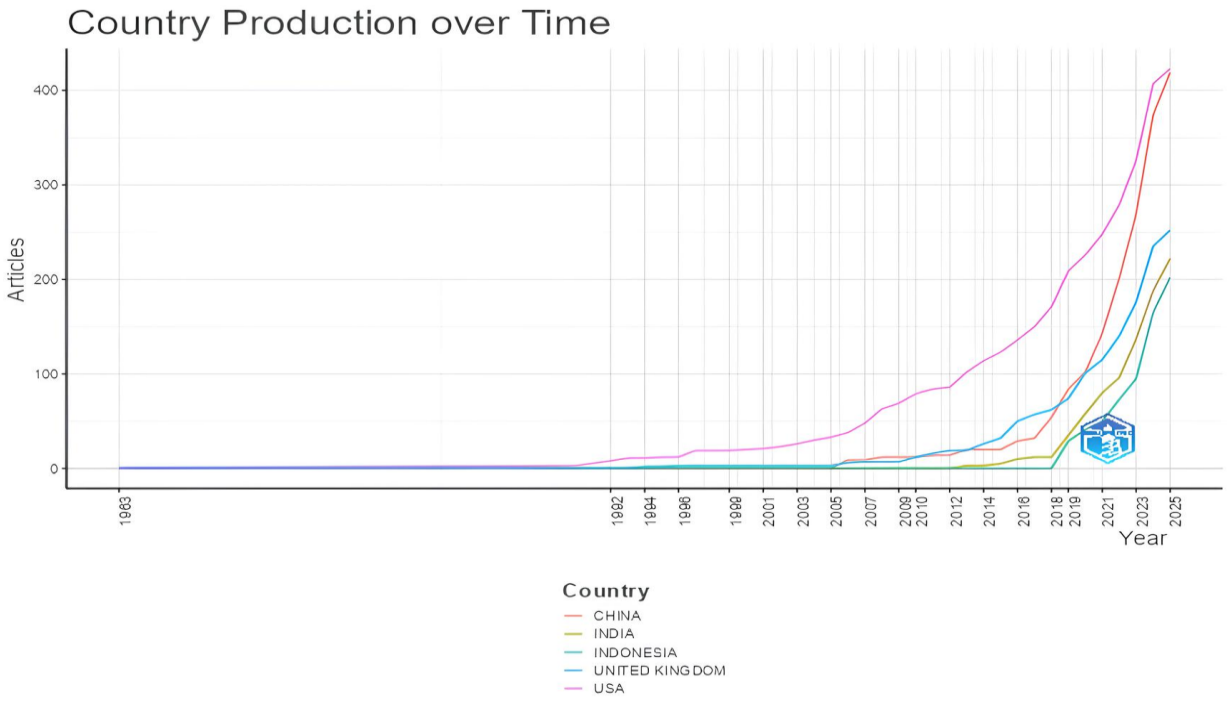
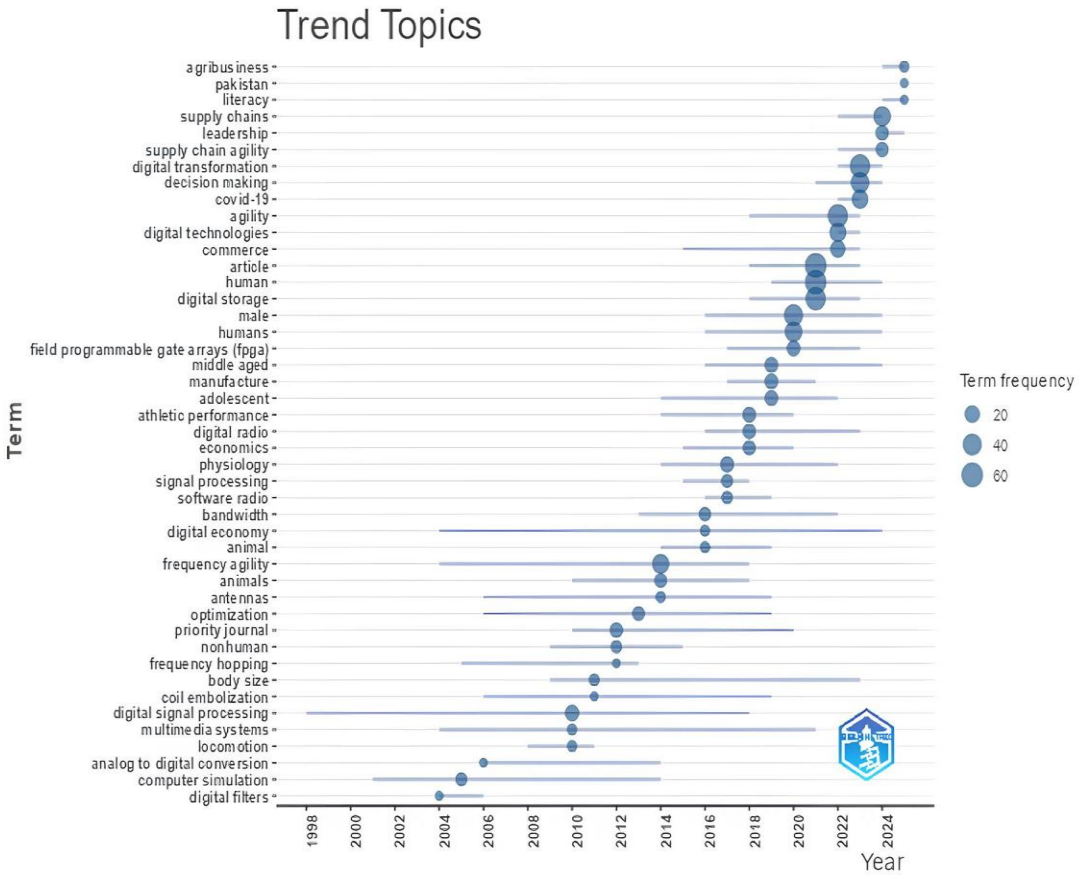


Figure 9

Trend Topics Analysis



The wide range of terms in the analysis is related to the fact that the articles included in the study have themes taken from different disciplines and research areas. This situation can contribute to potential remarkable interdisciplinary areas for future researchers. At the same time, the most frequently discussed important research areas in the articles (Heimerl et al., 2014) are presented as a word cloud in Figure 10 as they are addressed in their studies. The prominence of terms such as *digital transformation, human/humans, agility, decision making* and *digital technologies* shows that these terms are centrally positioned in the context of the articles included in the study and that the phenomenon is mostly addressed in the axis of digital transformation. Other terms represent subheadings of these main topics, related contexts or special research themes. Figure 10 presents the key research trends in a concise and accessible format.

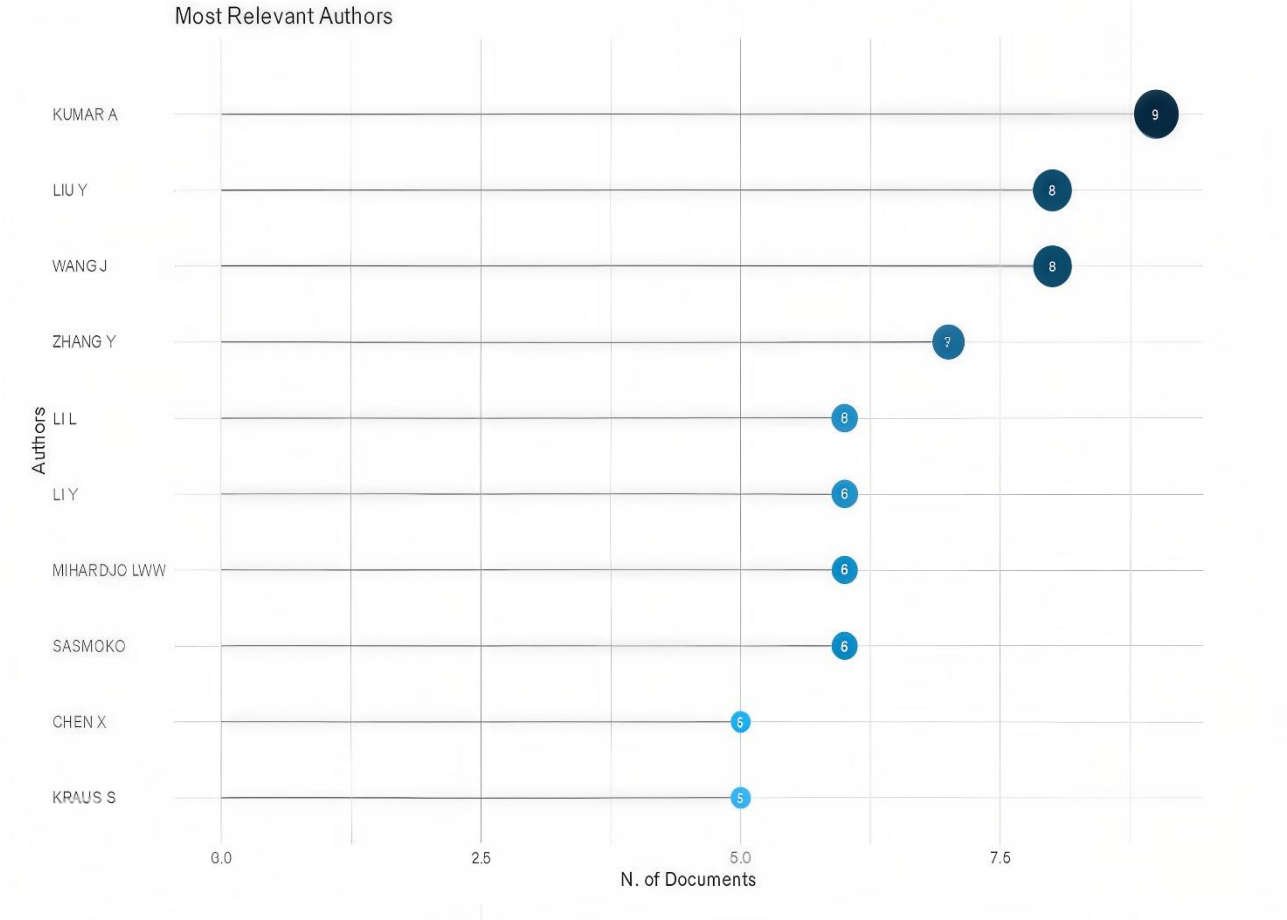
Figure 10

Word Cloud

The most influential authors in the field of digital agility are given in Figure 11. When the graph is examined, authors such as *Kumar, Luly, Wang J* and *Zhang Y* have conducted studies in this field, and the inclusion of Chinese authors in the list shows that there has been intense interest in the field of digital agility in recent years (Zupic & Čater, 2015) with support from the literature. Sohag et al. (2021) also supported the findings in their study, examining the impact of information digitalization on the agility of local institutions in ASEAN countries and providing evidence on the role of digitalization in institutional adaptation and flexibility processes. The inclusion of Western researchers such as Sascha Kraus in the graph shows the global impact of the topic of digital agility and the author's handling of digital-related phenomena (Mishra et al., 2016).

Figure 11

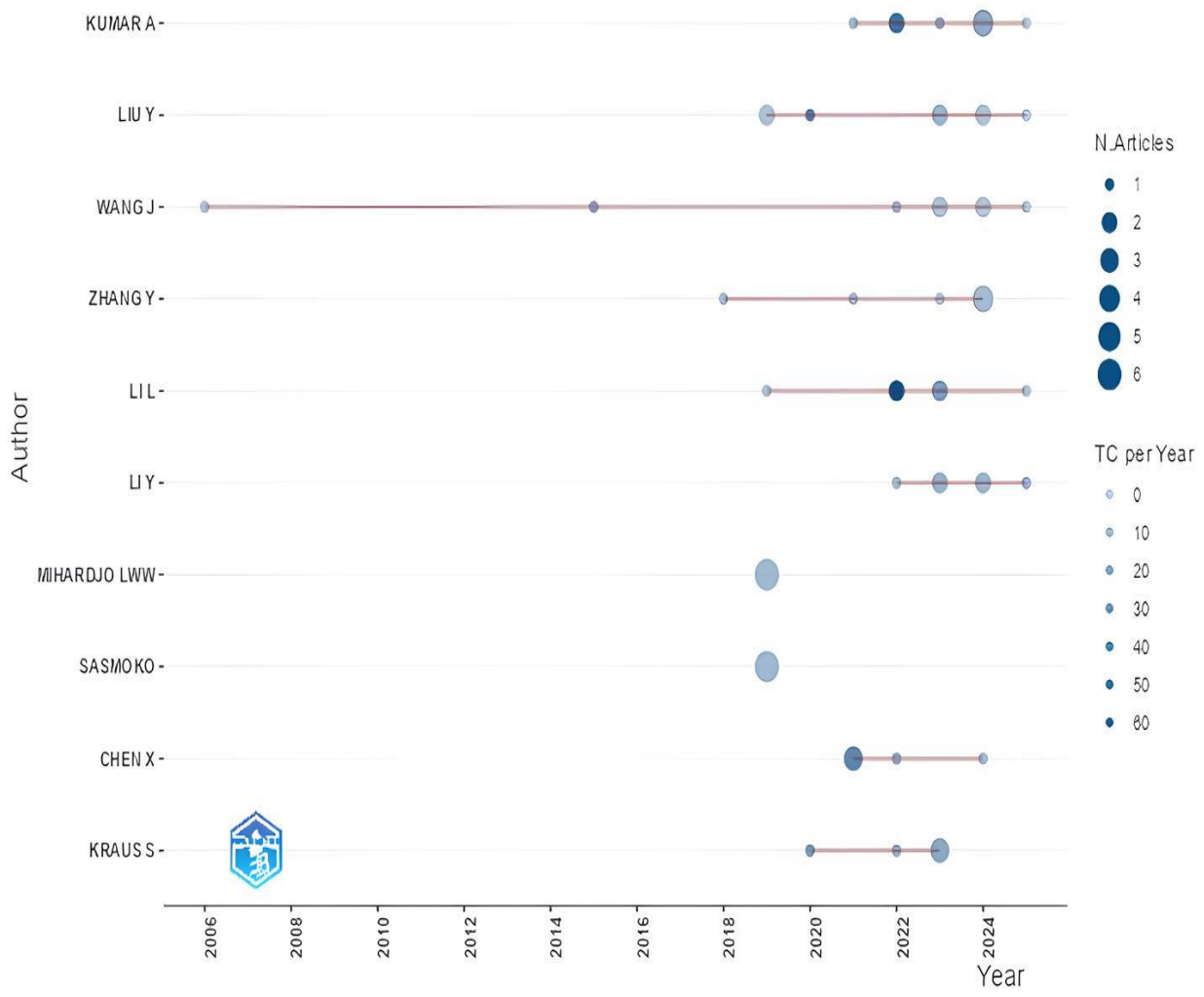
The 10 Most Influential Researchers on Digital Agility



In the graph in Figure 12, when the authors who have conducted academic studies in the field of digital agility are examined in time, we see that these studies have shown a significant increase. It is observed that the number of citations has increased after 2010. The periods in which this increase occurred are related to the period when the concept of digital agility was included in the academic literature and became the focus (Sambamurthy et al., 2003). The increase in studies in the field of digital agility as of 2010 has been significantly affected by the spread of smart mobile devices and technologies in particular. Smartphones, tablets and other mobile technologies have enabled businesses and individuals to act more quickly, flexibly and interactively in digital environments. The use of these technologies has increased the speed of access to information, digitalized business processes and accelerated digital transformation, thus highlighting the need for businesses to be agile. Digital infrastructure supported by mobile technologies has paved the way for the development of agile business models that can quickly adapt to changing market conditions and has increased interest in digital agility in the academic field (Sharma et al., 2024).

Figure 12

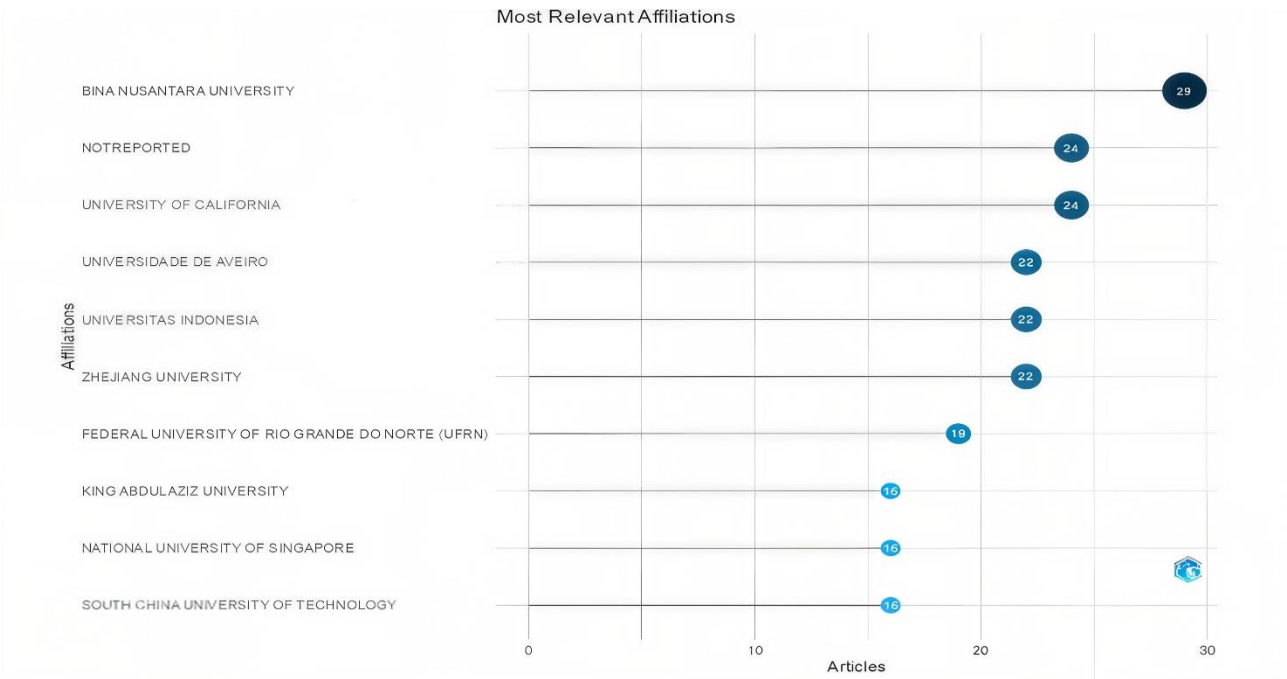
Temporal Trend of Authors' Research



When the graph in Figure 13 is examined, the top ten institutions that have contributed the most to the field of digital agility are listed. At the top of the list, Bina Nusantara University from Indonesia has contributed the most to the field of digital agility with 29 publications. The fact that the institutions in the graph are located in different continents shows the impact of the concept of digital agility on institutions globally. The institutions in the graph represent the first examples of the concept of digital agility in the literature and have played an important role in the acceleration of this concept and reaching a leading position in the field with the developing and transforming technology over time.

Figure 13

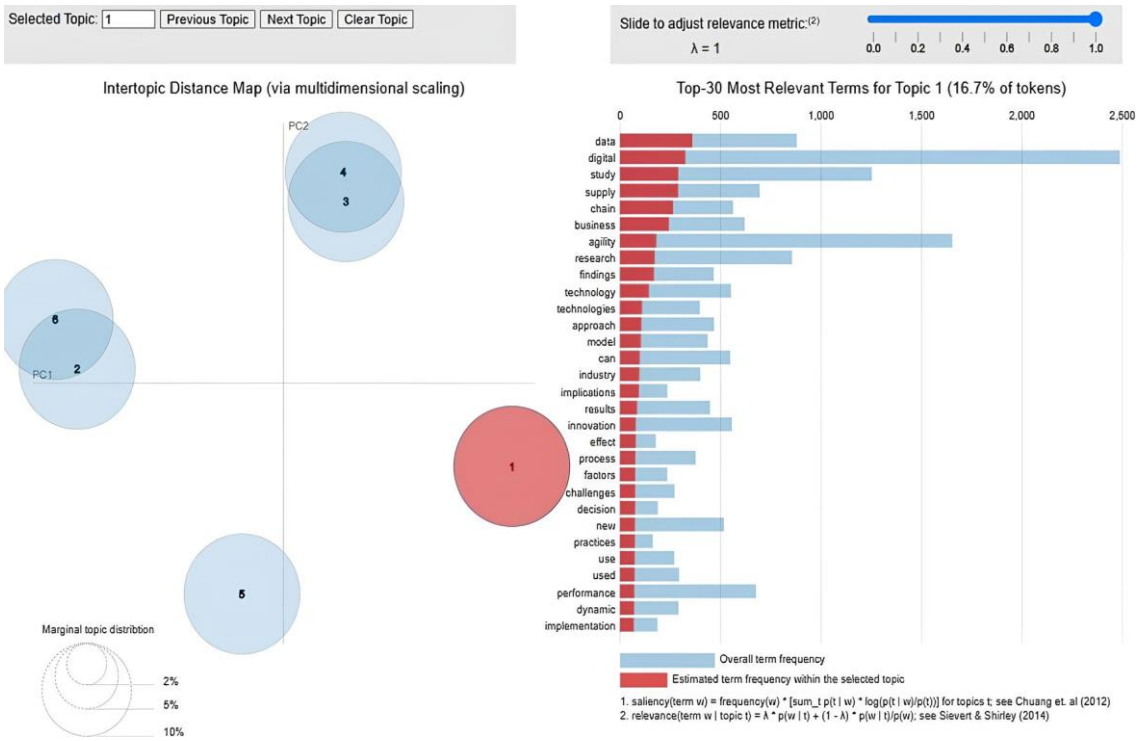
Institution-Based Evaluation of Digital Agility Studies



Finally, the topic clusters and subheadings created to make sense of the trends and subheadings in the scientific literature based on the summaries of the articles included in the research using LDA analysis via the R programming language are presented in Figure 14 (Griffiths & Steyvers, 2004).

Figure 14

Topic Modeling with LDA



The map created using multidimensional scaling with the intertopic distance map on the left side represents the distances and distribution of the themes to each other. The alpha value can be adjusted between 0 and 1 with the relevance metric adjuster, this adjustment evaluates the level of specificity of the terms to the topic by balancing them with the general word frequencies. The percentages on the map show the weight of each topic in all texts (Sievert & Shirley, 2014). The terms in Topic 1 are listed as the most decisive and important terms and include expressions such as *data, digital, study, technology, innovation*. As a result of the LDA outputs obtained, the topics were clustered and thematic headings were created. These headings shown in Table 1 revealed the scope of the digital agility topic in the literature and the tendencies of the researchers in the specified years.

Table 1

Classification of Digital Agility Themes

Topic	Thematic Meaning
Agility, organizational agility, strategic agility, digital agility, dynamic capabilities, leadership, performance	Digital Agility and Management
Supply chain agility, supply chain management, supply chain resilience, resilience, covid-19, supply chains	Digital Supply Chain
Digital transformation, digitalization, digitization, digital technologies, industry 4.0, innovation	Digital Transformation and Technology
Decision making, information technology, artificial intelligence, data analytics, knowledge management	Information Systems and Decision
Resilience, dynamic capabilities, strategic agility, small and medium-sized enterprise, covid-19	Institutional Resilience and Flexibility

Note. Created by the authors

5. Discussion and Conclusions

In the light of this study, the findings obtained from the examinations conducted by finding answers to all research questions and the areas supported and differentiated in the existing literature were discussed controversially. The most fundamental contribution of this study to the field is that it reveals the development course of digital agility studies and reveals the prominent topics by differentiating from the studies handled in different contexts and with known methods. By providing the opportunity to look at the field of digital agility from a broad perspective, the general status of the current literature was determined and the literature was advanced by contributing to the understanding of this newly developing concept for researchers.

First, various analyzes were made with the R Programming Bibliometrix library used in the study and these were given within the conceptual flow in the study. Bursts Analysis revealed the journals in which important studies in the field of digital agility were published and the temporal trends of these journals. It reveals that the change in 2010 and 2020 occurred due to the worldwide use of SMACIT technologies and the COVID-19 pandemic, respectively. The study findings are consistent with the current literature findings (Ragazou et al., 2022; Sahoo & Chaubey, 2024). As a result of the burst analysis, it is shown on the graph that the concept of digital agility does not follow a stable increase or decrease but has a wavy structure. Here, the increases in the years 2000-2005 and 2020 show that digital agility was noticed in the literature, interest in agile change management increased (Franklin, 2021), and digital agility research continues to increase, especially including the artificial intelligence perspective (Atienza-Barba et al., 2024; Sahoo & Chaubey, 2024).

It is observed that these studies were published intensively in the Sustainability journal and that the journal included research in the field of digital agility in 2015 and after (Rawashdeh et al., 2024). These studies are concentrated in developed countries such as North America, Western Europe and China, but the fact that there are also studies in developing countries such as Indonesia (Yusuf et al., 2022) and India (Muduli & Choudhury, 2024) shows that the digital agility construct has gained academic interest globally. The fact that Pakistan is among the most frequently used word trends also supports the finding from the literature that the digital agility phenomenon has been studied intensively in Asian countries (Sohag et al., 2021).

When the concept of digital agility is examined on an institutional basis, the institution that has done the most work is Bina Nusantara University. The fact that this university is in Indonesia supports our research findings. The H-index, its positioning by country and region, how this positioning changes over time, the frequency analysis of the most used trend words in digital agility and their representation in the cloud structure, which authors contributed to digital agility and how their impact levels developed over time, which institutions and organizations focused on the newly developing concept of digital agility in their studies, are compatible with the general findings of the literature due to being a bibliometric study (de Diego and Almodóvar, 2022; Gouda & Tiwari, 2022; Sahid et al., 2023).

Strong dynamic managerial capabilities (Ellström et al., 2021; Harris & Helfat, 2013; Helfat & Martin, 2015) significantly enhance both strategic agility and digital readiness. Next-generation capabilities, particularly digital leadership (Akarsu & Parmaksız, 2025; Faiz et al., 2024), are prominent in the literature as accelerators of strategic agility and digital readiness (Alnuaimi et al., 2022). The digital supply chain, a relatively emerging phenomenon among the study's findings, is only just emerging in the literature. Digital agility refers to the capacity of businesses to adapt to rapidly changing socio-technical and environmental conditions and act proactively (Fayoumi & Loucopoulos, 2016), while digital supply chain innovation and collaboration are considered both an enabler and a consequence of this agility (Nishat Faisal et al., 2006).

Within the framework of the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Dynamic Capabilities Theory, supply chain capabilities developed through digital agility provide businesses with flexible, agile, and adaptive systems that deliver strategic value (Wang & Zhang, 2025). Accordingly, modeling approaches and methodologies used for redesigning digital supply chains not only enable data analysis, information flow, and operational awareness, but also enable these systems to respond quickly to environmental and societal developments (Tsolakis et al., 2023). Consequently, digital agility stands out not only as a competitive advantage but also as a critical capability that strengthens organizational resilience and business continuity in uncertain environments. The study findings reflect a general trend in the literature in this regard.

However, the findings of subject clustering under subheadings with LDA are at the forefront of the research's contributions to the field. This study has revealed thematic trends that were not found in previous studies by examining the studies on digital agility with the LDA model. In this context, the findings of the study shed light on the areas and themes that the field focuses on. The discovery of areas that are less studied on digital agility in scientific studies and also draw attention to the framework of current trends within this subject provide a general overview of new research areas. The managerial and theoretical expansions of the research findings are discussed with reference to

the findings.

5.1. Theoretical Contributions

This study provides important theoretical contributions to the digital agility literature in terms of both content and methodology. The subject of digital agility, which is mainly addressed through survey-based research and theoretical frameworks in the literature, has been examined in this study with numerical and systematic methods such as bibliometric analysis and LDA topic modeling. In this respect, it not only describes the trends in the literature but also reveals the development dynamics of digital agility through thematic clusters. In particular, the themes identified with LDA, such as *digital supply chain*, *institutional resilience*, *decision systems* and *technology-driven transformation*, have enabled the systematic classification of the topics covered in a scattered manner in the literature. This has contributed both to the understanding of the concept of digital agility in a broader context and to the determination of themes that can be focused on in future studies. In addition, the rise of SMACIT technologies, the effects of COVID-19 and the impact of historical and regional contexts on the literature through geographical distributions (e.g. the increase in Asian countries) have been supported with concrete data. Thus, the study provides an in-depth theoretical framework for the evolutionary course of the literature by conducting conceptual mapping and trend analysis in the field of digital agility.

5.2. Managerial Contributions

The findings of the study also provide important insights in terms of managerial practices. It has been shown that digital agility is not limited to technological adaptation, but also includes human and process dimensions such as workforce agility, readiness for change, and organizational resilience. It has been observed that, especially in institutions that have adopted digital agility, a positive and productive communication structure is formed between employees and employers, and this provides flexibility and efficiency in business processes. In addition, the study results provide concrete evidence for decision makers on how digital agility can serve as a tool for strategic goals such as gaining competitive advantage, simplifying processes, and rapid adaptation. The sub-discussions determined with LDA can serve as a roadmap for managers on which themes should be highlighted in their organizational structures. For example, headings such as *information systems and decision* or *institutional resilience and flexibility* can provide managerial guidance to academics and strategists on which areas should be prioritized in strategic planning. In addition, the finding that digital agility practices strengthen institutional capacity and act as a balancing element in global competition, especially for businesses operating in developing countries, should be taken into account in managerial policy development.

5.3. Limitations of the Study and Recommendations for Future Studies

As with every academic study, this study has some limitations. The most fundamental limitation can be considered as the exclusion of Web of Science (WoS) articles in particular. The reason for excluding Web of Science and other databases from the scope is that a single database is preferred in order to ensure data integrity and simplify the analysis process. This approach should be understandable in terms of providing in-depth meanings in a holistic manner by working on a specific database. In future studies, databases in the field of digital agility can be expanded even further, researchers can create more comprehensive analyses using WoS and other data sets and present examinations from a broad perspective. The study's limitations and recommendations for

future studies are grouped under three structured categories to enhance clarity and academic utility. These subheadings are thematic expansions, methodological directions and contextual applications.

Thematic expansions of the concept can enrich the theoretical and practical implications of future research. Researchers can combine the concepts of digital twin and digital agility to focus on providing real-time data flow in the business world and optimization and efficiency in business processes with agile methods. In this direction, studies can be conducted on integrating digital agility with digital twin and examining their use and creating proactive models. Conceptual synergies may also be explored in future research. In addition, considering the concepts of digitalization and digital agility together will play an important role in gaining speed and flexibility in business processes, as well as in gaining competitive advantage for businesses that have adopted these concepts. In this context, using digital agility and digitalization together can be beneficial in establishing strategic goals and accelerating the digitalization process of businesses. In particular, the findings of the study on subject clustering under subheadings with LDA can be guiding for future studies.

In terms of methodology, future studies can address the limitations of the current research design by adopting diverse analytical approaches. Only bibliometric and numerical analysis methods were used in this study. However, for deeper insights into how the concept of digital agility is understood, implemented and experienced at an organizational level, qualitative approaches such as case studies, in-depth interviews or the Delphi technique can be used. With these methods, the perceptions and experiences of managers, employees or policy makers regarding the concept of digital agility can be revealed more concretely. Additionally, the inclusion of advanced analytical tools can enhance the depth of bibliometric studies. In addition; analysis tools such as PyBibx, Gephi and NetworkX, as well as bibliometric and network analyses, can be included in new studies. Collaborations and literature trends in the field of digital agility can be presented clearly. Finally, emerging AI-driven NLP techniques can be utilized to follow rapid developments in the field. In the field of artificial intelligence, where the literature evolves very quickly, automatic classification, summarization and trend estimation approaches supported by large language models such as BERT and GPT can be used instead of classical scanning methods. In this way, the research field can be followed more efficiently and up-to-date. The study findings can guide researchers for subsequent studies.

Future research can also benefit from expanding the contextual scope of digital agility studies. In future studies, postgraduate theses written on digital agility can be examined through ProQuest and national thesis databases, and the differences in method and content between theses and articles can be compared. Similar studies can help identify gaps in the existing literature and look at the field from a holistic perspective. Expanding sectoral and disciplinary comparisons can provide valuable insights.

Future studies can focus on the representation of digital agility in different sectors such as health, education, finance, manufacturing or public. Similarly, the content and methodological differences of digital agility studies in different disciplines such as business, engineering, information systems and public administration can be revealed through comparative analyses. This study was limited to academic articles. However, gray literature sources such as government reports, policy documents, and sector reports published by consulting companies can also provide important information in the context of digital agility. Integrating such documents into bibliometric analyses will make the practical aspect of the literature more visible.

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A Content Analysis of Graduate Theses on Agility in Business Administration[a]

Ülkü TUTAR[b] **Musa Said DÖVEN**[c]

A Content Analysis of Graduate Theses on Agility in Business Administration

Abstract

Background: Agility is a widely discussed concept in national and international literature. Nevertheless, bibliometric and content-based analyses of how it is conceptualized and operationalized in graduate theses in Türkiye are limited.

Aim: The aim of this research is to determine how the concepts of *Agility, Strategic Agility,* and *Organizational Agility* are reflected in graduate theses in the Department of Business Administration between 2004 and 2025.

Method: To fulfill the aim of the study, content analysis, as a qualitative research method, was applied. A total of 43 graduate theses on agility, organizational agility, and strategic agility were identified in Department of Business Administration, Türkiye between 2004 and 2025.

Findings: Analyzed studies were conducted at 25 different universities, and a significant increase in academic interest in the concept of agility was observed, particularly after 2015. Quantitative methods and SPSS-based analyses were predominantly preferred in theses. The studies were conducted in various sectors, including manufacturing, services, healthcare, defense, and IT; the samples consisted primarily of employees and managers. Key concepts frequently included leadership, innovation, digitalization, and competitive advantage.

Conclusion: The findings demonstrate that the concept of agility has evolved from being solely an academic area of discussion into a management paradigm supported by applied research across various sectors. The results demonstrate that agility-themed graduate theses have become a focus of academic interest in Türkiye and that the concept of agility has been addressed across various sectors, particularly since 2015, providing a strategic perspective on organizational transformation processes.

Keywords: Agility, strategic agility, organizational agility, graduate theses, content analysis.

İşletme Alanında Çeviklik Konulu Lisansüstü Tezlerin İçerik Analizi

Öz

Arka plan: Çeviklik ulusal ve uluslararası literatürde yaygın olarak tartışılan bir kavramdır. Buna rağmen Türkiye'deki lisansüstü tezlerde nasıl kavramsallaştırıldığı ve işlevselleştirildiğine dair bibliyometrik ve içerik tabanlı analizler sınırlıdır.

Amaç: Bu araştırma ile amaçlanan; *Çeviklik*, *Stratejik Çeviklik* ve *Örgütsel Çeviklik* kavramlarının 2004-2025 yılları arasında İşletme Anabilim Dalı'nda hazırlanan lisansüstü tezlere nasıl yansıdığını tespit etmektir.

Yöntem: Çalışmanın amacını gerçekleştirmek için nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden içerik analizi uygulanmıştır. 2004-2025 döneminde Türkiye'de İşletme Anabilim Dalı kapsamında çeviklik, örgütsel çeviklik ve stratejik çeviklik üzerine toplam 43 lisansüstü tez tespit edilmiştir.

Bulgular: Analiz edilen çalışmalar 25 farklı üniversitede yürütülmüştür. Özellikle 2015 sonrası dönemde çeviklik kavramına akademik ilginin belirgin şekilde arttığı görülmüştür. Tezlerde ağırlıklı olarak nicel yöntemler ve SPSS temelli analizler tercih edilmiştir. Araştırmalar üretim, hizmet, sağlık, savunma ve bilişim gibi çeşitli sektörlerde yürütülmüş; örneklemler çoğunlukla çalışan ve yöneticilerden oluşmuştur. Anahtar kavramlar arasında liderlik, yenilikçilik, dijitalleşme ve rekabet avantajı sıklıkla yer almıştır.

Sonuç: Bulgular, çeviklik kavramının yalnızca akademik bir tartışma alanı olmaktan çıkıp, farklı sektörlerde uygulamalı araştırmalarla desteklenen bir yönetim paradigmasına dönüştüğünü göstermektedir. Araştırmanın sonucu çeviklik temalı lisansüstü tezlerin Türkiye'de akademik ilgi odağı haline geldiğini ve özellikle 2015 sonrası dönemde çeviklik kavramının farklı sektörlerde ele alınması, örgütsel dönüşüm süreçlerine stratejik bir perspektif kazandırdığını göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çeviklik, stratejik çeviklik, örgütsel çeviklik, lisansüstü tezler, içerik analizi.

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[b] Lecturer/PhD Student, Sivas Cumhuriyet University, Zara Ahmet Çuhadaroğlu Vocational School, Department of Finance, Banking and Insurance, Türkiye, ORCID: 0009-0008-1079-0399, e-Mail: ulkututar@cumhuriyet.edu.tr

[c] Corresponding Author, Assoc. Prof. Dr., Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Business Administration, Türkiye, ORCID: 0000-0001-7499-8430, e-Mail: said.doven@gop.edu.tr

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1. Introduction

Organizational agility, which refers to an organization's ability to adapt swiftly and effectively to changing conditions, encompasses entering new markets, developing products and services, or transforming business models. Strategic agility, on the other hand, emphasizes the ability to rapidly align the entire strategic framework of a business with a dynamic business environment to gain a competitive advantage. Factors such as technological advancements, evolving customer expectations, and unpredictable market fluctuations have rendered the ability to adapt swiftly to market conditions a fundamental necessity (Doz & Kosonen, 2008).

In this context, organizational agility is defined as the capacity of an organization to keep its internal processes, structures, and culture flexible in order to adapt to continuously changing external conditions (Worley & Lawler, 2010). Strategic agility, conversely, refers to an organization's capability not only to adapt to current changes but also to proactively adjust its strategic direction by anticipating future opportunities and threats (Tallon & Pinsonneault, 2011). In recent years, the concepts of organizational and strategic agility key dynamics of modern business have attracted significant attention from academic researchers.

This study aims to analyze postgraduate theses published in the National Thesis Center of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) in Türkiye in the fields of organizational agility and strategic agility within the discipline of business administration. Using content analysis, a qualitative research technique, the study examines metrics such as the number of theses by year, affiliated universities, research methods and techniques used, sample groups, regions, sectors, and keywords.

The *Business Administration* section of the YÖK National Thesis Center (YÖKTEZ) database was filtered, and the keywords *Agility*, *Strategic Agility*, and *Organizational Agility* were used individually and together. Inclusion criteria included theses being written in the Business Administration department, the concept of agility being considered as a key variable, and access to the full text of the thesis. Theses that only indirectly addressed the concept of agility (e.g., as a sub-concept) and theses written in a department other than the Business Administration Department were excluded. Based on these criteria, a total of 43 theses, dated between 2004 and 2025, were included in the analysis.

This study systematically reveals how the concept of agility is positioned in graduate theses in Türkiye, the methods used to examine it, and the sectors in which it is applied. Furthermore, the analyses conducted in this study highlight academic trends and gaps in agility research in graduate theses. In this respect, it is believed that this study will both contribute to the national literature and serve as a guiding resource for future research.

2. The Concept and Definition of Agility

In an increasingly uncertain business environment, organizations must detect, understand, and adapt to changes in all external factors that may influence their product-market domain in order to survive and thrive (Irk & Döven, 2018). This adaptive capacity is defined by the concept of *agility* (Candan et al., 2017). Agility, which combines the ability to think quickly and act promptly with rational decision-making (Dahmardeh & Banihashemi, 2010), refers to the rapid adaptation of unpredictable market changes into business operations (Kettunen, 2009). It encompasses the convergence of concepts such as adaptability, responsiveness, speed, and flexibility (Ertaş, 2022).

Agility is considered a dynamic capability defined as "an organization's ability to innovate, adapt to change, and create changes that are favorable to customers but unfavorable to competitors" (Teece et al., 2016, p. 18). It also includes the formation of multi-firm alliances or virtual organizations for the rapid launch of new products to market (Sharpe et al., 1999).

As market conditions continuously fluctuate and occasionally pose threats, these dynamics necessitate rapid strategic responses. According to Goldman et al. (1995), agility is primarily associated with an organization's ability to cope with unexpected changes, survive unprecedented threats arising from the business environment, and turn changes into opportunities.

Gunasekaran (2001) asserts that today's global mobility and change have driven companies to closely monitor consumer demands and quickly respond by producing right here, right now, and personalized products. Therefore, companies are required to embrace an agile structure.

The concept of agility and agile manufacturing was first introduced in the report 21st Century Manufacturing Strategy, developed in 1991 by the Iacocca Institute at Lehigh University (Kasap & Peker, 2009). This report marked a radical shift in manufacturing strategy, going beyond traditional approaches like mass production and lean manufacturing, and laid the groundwork for a new business model to sustain competitive advantage (Zhang & Sharifi, 2000). Since then, agility and agile manufacturing have been embraced as models that impact all business operations—from environmental adaptation to changes in operational practices and the development of capabilities (Akkaya & Tabak, 2018).

Agility, which emerged in the manufacturing industry, has also become widespread in the software industry with the method known as Scrum. In 2001, a leading group of engineers published the Agile Manifesto, based on interdisciplinary approaches to improving software development. The *Agile Manifesto* defined the philosophy of this approach by emphasizing individuals and interactions over processes and tools, product over comprehensive documentation, customer collaboration over contract negotiations, and responsiveness to change over adherence to a plan. This manifesto advocates a flexible, customer-centric approach to value, responding quickly to change, rather than comprehensive plans and lengthy processes. Thanks to these values, agility has become a fundamental philosophy that enables businesses to survive and thrive in environments characterized by uncertainty and rapid change (Cohn, 2006; Malla, 2025).

Agile methodologies, along with approaches like Scrum and Kanban, have transformed the way software development teams work. This approach provides faster delivery times for projects in the software industry and better adaptability to changing requirements, while maintaining and improving software quality (Malla, 2025).

Sharifi and Zhang (1999) developed a model to implement agile manufacturing. To validate this model and apply the methodology, they conducted a survey of 1,000 companies from three manufacturing sectors and followed up with case studies involving 12 firms (Zhang & Sharifi, 2000). In this model, agility is composed of three main components: Agility Drivers, Agility Capabilities, and Agility Enablers.

Agility drivers refer to how the business operates and represent the firm's strategic agility; Agility Capabilities relate to the organization's internal dynamic competencies, i.e., organizational agility; and Agility Enablers refer to the utilization of tools such as technology, innovation, human capital,

and organizational design to support agility (Akkaya & Tabak, 2018). Zhang and Sharifi (2000) emphasized that agility enablers should be fully integrated with information systems and technological support. They also noted that the implementation of this integration must be tailored to the specific structure of the organization.

In the model by Zhang and Sharifi (2000), Agility drivers stem from changes and pressures in the external environment that compel organizations to explore new strategies to sustain their existence and competitive edge, closely related to strategic agility. These drivers vary by company and context, resulting in diverse impacts and implications. Agility Capabilities represent the core competencies organizations need to respond positively to change and exploit opportunities—essentially linked to organizational agility.

Agility Enablers, on the other hand, encompass tools to integrate organizational capabilities, such as digitalization, human resources, and innovation. The gap between the required level of agility and the organization's current agility forms the basis for subsequent decision-making processes. Given different organizational structures, companies are subject to varying levels of pressure from environmental change and thus require customized combinations of tools and practices to address these challenges (Zhang & Sharifi, 2000).

3. The Concept and Definition of Organizational Agility

Introduced into the literature in the 1990s, the concept of agility has been defined as an organization’s ability to adapt to changes and rapidly respond to customer needs, desires, and expectations (Yıldırım, 2022). In the 2000s, this definition was expanded to encompass the organization’s ability to manage problems and anticipate changing and evolving conditions (Bakan et al., 2017). Accordingly, agility refers to an organization’s capacity to sustain itself and gain a competitive advantage amid uncertainties in both its internal and external environments (Harraf et al., 2015).

Organizational agility is also described as an organization’s ability to reconfigure its strategies and policies, restructure existing resources, and respond rapidly to stakeholders and target audiences in accordance with external environmental changes (Ganguly et al., 2009). Environmental changes encompass shifts in consumer behavior and attitudes, supplier and competitor activities, stakeholder dynamics, legal frameworks, and economic market conditions (Overby et al., 2006). Faced with ongoing uncertainty and challenges in their environments, organizations are increasingly prioritizing agility, innovation, organizational capabilities, quality, speed, and flexibility (Sucu, 2020). Moreover, due to the intense competition emerging from rapidly changing market structures, agility is perceived as a key solution by many organizations (Singh et al., 2013). As a result, agility has come to be regarded as a critical means for organizations to adapt to shifting environmental conditions (Nafei, 2016).

The concept of organizational agility is not only limited to the ability to respond quickly and customer-focused, but also includes the capacity to provide sustainability and competitive advantage in the face of uncertainty. In this context, agility is considered not only a reaction mechanism but also a fundamental component of a proactive management approach.

According to various definitions in the literature, organizational agility can be described as an organization's ability and capacity to quickly adapt to change and seize opportunities that arise from

those changes in order to meet customer expectations and demands (Akkaya & Tabak, 2018; Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2016; Ravichandran, 2018). It also refers to an organization's ability to effectively utilize internal and external resources to perceive economic opportunities and threats and respond accordingly (Kanten et al., 2017).

İnanır (2020) provides a broader definition of organizational agility as: Organizational agility is the capability to remain sensitive to external changes, gain a competitive advantage through new technologies, adopt governance principles such as collaboration, communication and transparency, foster a lean and flexible organizational culture, center the customer within operations, meet customer demands rapidly and ensure employee morale, motivation, merit and loyalty.

These definitions demonstrate that agility is not merely a mechanism that responds to external changes, but also a strategic capacity that transforms internal processes, embraces governance principles such as collaboration and transparency, and fosters a lean and flexible organizational culture. In addition, the association of a customer-centric approach with human factors such as employee commitment, motivation and merit shows that the concept also overlaps with the human-oriented management approach (Irk & Bıyık, 2024; İnanır, 2020).

Wendler (2014) defines organizational agility as an organization's ability to produce customer-oriented products in dynamic and highly competitive environments by reconfiguring its resources and combining proactiveness, flexibility, innovation, quality, and profitability to gain a competitive superiority. Similarly, Moreno (2017), in an article published on the Digital Forbes Platform, describes organizational agility as an organization's capacity to perceive market changes as opportunities, continuously develop new strategies accordingly, revise existing strategies based on emerging conditions, empower employees to make critical decisions, and respond quickly and flexibly.

Agility reveals a holistic management approach that is not limited to top management strategies but also includes internal organizational participation and employee decision-making abilities. İmamoğlu et al. (2021), in alignment with Moreno (2017), define organizational agility as the ability to formulate strategies based on environmental conditions, empower employees to make key decisions in complex projects, respond swiftly and flexibly to uncertainty, and transform unexpected changes into opportunities for transformation.

The core components of organizational agility are the ability to perceive and respond quickly to changing conditions (Overby et al., 2006). Perception involves the organization's capacity to detect, monitor, anticipate, and interpret change, and identify opportunities and threats. High perceptual capabilities are essential for adapting to change and maintaining organizational viability (İmamoğlu et al., 2021). Responding to environmental change, in turn, refers to reacting with the right actions at the right time (Seo & La Paz, 2008). Furthermore, organizational agility enhances a firm's competitiveness (Zitkiene & Deksnys, 2018), making it an increasingly critical capability in today's business landscape. The dominant view in the literature on agility is that it is an indispensable management paradigm for organizations to survive in the global and digital age of uncertainty.

The dimensions of organizational agility were introduced into the literature by Sharifi and Zhang (1999, 2001). According to their widely accepted model, organizational agility consists of competencies that enable a company to respond positively to changes and benefit from sectoral shifts.

The dimensions of organizational agility are defined as responsiveness, speed, flexibility, and competency (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999, p. 17).

Özeroğlu and Koçyiğit (2020) fundamentally associate responsiveness with strategic agility, emphasizing organizations' ability to recognize and capitalize on opportunities early. This competency encompasses not only reactive but also proactive behaviors. “Responsiveness”, refers to an organization’s ability to perceive changes and react quickly and effectively to take advantage of them (Özeroğlu & Koçyiğit, 2020, p. 16). “Speed”, denotes the organization’s capability to produce goods efficiently in less time and to deliver current or new products to the market promptly. It reflects the speed of operational processes in bringing products to market (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999, p. 18).

This dimension is particularly critical in industries where time provides a competitive advantage. Gürbüz and Hatunoğlu (2022) associate the speed dimension with "adaptiveness" and "radicalness," emphasizing that agile organizations can quickly implement radical innovations. There is a strong relationship between the responsiveness dimension of organizational agility and the speed dimension. Furthermore, the organization's possession of appropriate technology influences this dimension of agility (Akkaya & Tabak, 2018, p. 189).

“Flexibility”, is the organization’s ability to adapt accurately and timely to updated customer demands, technological developments, and emerging conditions by utilizing available resources. Organizational flexibility is also influenced by the capacity of employees to handle diverse tasks, the organizational structure, and product variety (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999, p. 18). Sharifi and Zhang (1999) relate flexibility to product variety, job rotation, and organizational structure.

“Competency”**,** the fourth dimension, refers to the organization's ability to reconfigure its capabilities and resources to meet evolving needs in its environment. An organization’s technological infrastructure, vision, product/service quality, strategy, and change management form the core elements of its major competencies (Akkaya & Tabak, 2018, p. 188; Sharifi & Zhang, 1999, p. 17). Akkaya and Tabak (2018) define competence as the main element that ensures the sustainability of agile behavior by associating it with organizational learning and knowledge management.

4. The Concept and Definition of Strategic Agility

The term *strategic agility* was first introduced into the literature by Roth (1996), who defined it as an organizational capability. According to Roth, this capability entails identifying the right product needed in the market and delivering it at the right place, at the right time, and with appropriate pricing.

Weber and Tarba (2014) describe strategic agility as the capability of organizations to restructure their strategies in a way that is sensitive and adaptable to environmental change, enabling them to adjust to shifting conditions, develop innovative solutions, and create value. They identify two fundamental dimensions of strategic agility. The first is leadership, which interprets the direction of change and implements the most appropriate strategy using the right resources; the second is organizational design, which facilitates the implementation of strategic actions.

Doz and Kosonen (2008), who emphasize the importance of strategic agility in helping organizations become agile, categorize the concept into three dimensions: strategic sensitivity, leadership unity, and resource fluidity. Taşgit et al. (2023), in their study, examine strategic agility through the dimensions of strong information flow and rapid structural adaptation.

Hemmati et al. (2016) conceptualize strategic agility as a dynamic capability grounded in the resource-based view, which enables a firm to gain a competitive advantage by utilizing unique, valuable, rare, and inimitable resources. They identify the processes that constitute strategic agility as follows: vision clarity, selection of strategic objectives, delegation of responsibilities, recognition of appropriate talent, and action orientation.

Tikkanen (2014) defines firms that adopt strategic agility as those that continuously restructure themselves in response to internal and external environmental changes and remain constantly ready to seize emerging opportunities. According to him, such firms can secure competitive advantages in rapidly changing market conditions and thereby overcome potential economic crises while maintaining their market positions.

Strategic agility provides short-term competitive advantages and facilitates the long-term sustainability of firms by enabling them to respond to changes either reactively or proactively and to continuously renew their business models through innovative solutions (Sampath & Krishnamoorthy, 2017)

Strategic agility requires the interplay of different dimensions for an organization to adapt quickly and effectively to changing conditions. For example, a strong and clear flow of information is essential for timely recognition of environmental changes; the faster and more accurately this information is conveyed, the greater the development of strategic sensitivity.

Leadership translates this sensitivity into strategic vision, clarifies objectives, and accelerates decision-making processes, facilitating action. A flexible organizational structure enables rapid structural changes while also enabling the reuse and efficient use of resources. This allows the organization to remain resilient and agile, especially during times of crisis. Finally, strategically directing resources fosters an action-oriented approach, enabling timely response to opportunities.

According to Shin et al. (2015), strategic agility represents a firm's strategic intent to achieve agile operations. In their study, they modeled strategic agility as a managerial factor composed of core capabilities such as technological capability, collaborative innovation, organizational learning, and internal alignment. Their goal was to identify the fundamental elements of strategic agility in Korean manufacturing practices and, through this effort, they developed a Strategic Agility Scale.

The scale's dimensions and research questions were constructed through extensive interviews with Korean business professionals and a comprehensive review of the literature, establishing logical and theoretical connections. As a result of their research, Shin et al. (2015) asserted that strategic agility consists of four latent factors: technological capability, collaborative innovation, organizational learning, and internal alignment. They also concluded that strategic agility serves as a driving force for operational processes and has a positive effect on firm performance (e.g., customer retention and financial outcomes).

Technological Capability is the first sub-dimension of strategic agility. In the context of manufacturing firms, it refers to the firm's ability to meet customer expectations and demands at an operational level. To achieve agility, firms must remain open to new technologies in terms of time, cost, and efficiency. Technology accelerates the transition to change in both products and processes, enabling the replacement of outdated methods with new ones. Advanced manufacturing systems and information technologies are essential for agile production (Narasimhan et al., 2006; Shin et al.,

2015). The logical connection between agility and technological capability also serves as a platform for agility, enhancing overall firm performance (Shin et al., 2015).

Collaborative Innovation is the second sub-dimension of strategic agility. Inman et al. (2011) highlight the importance of collaborative innovation in achieving agility, emphasizing that flexibility in process configuration is essential for responding to varying customer needs without requiring large capital investments. It encompasses all necessary activities involved in designing and developing a product. According to Hoek et al. (2001), these activities require personalized product and process design and close, transparent communication between the firm and its customers. Through collaborative innovation, firms can differentiate themselves and gain a competitive advantage. Mishra and Shah (2009) found that collaborative innovation shortens production cycles in the development of new products and services, reduces time and costs associated with non-value-adding processes, boosts firm revenues, and positively influences performance.

Organizational Learning the third sub-dimension of strategic agility, refers to the firm's capability to generate, adapt, and disseminate knowledge while integrating internal and external factors. Organizational learning enhances task performance and strengthens experience-based organizational effectiveness. Knowledge-intensive organizations are constantly evolving, creative, multidimensional, and highly effective in problem-solving. Therefore, organizational learning is considered a core dimension of strategic agility (Shin et al., 2015). Organizational learning enables firms to acquire deeper understanding of the behaviors of customers, competitors, and market regulators, allowing them to accurately interpret market trends and respond effectively (Uğurlu et al., 2019).

Internal Alignment the fourth dimension of strategic agility, refers to the degree of consistency and collective effort among a firm's structure, goals, strategies, needs, and employees. It targets a strategically unified and ideal organizational state dominated by cohesive leadership. High levels of agreement and coherence among functional units regarding strategic matters are essential. Organizational alignment enhances a firm's ability to understand its environment and respond promptly, while also fostering strategic consensus internally. It is particularly critical for firms operating in highly uncertain sectors, as it can positively impact performance (Shin et al., 2015; Uğurlu et al., 2019).

5. Research Methodology

The purpose of this study is to examine postgraduate theses published in Türkiye between 2004 and 2025 on the subject of *agility* within the discipline of Business Administration, as archived in the National Thesis Center database, and to identify trends in this field. The research is conducted using a qualitative research approach—specifically, the content analysis method. Content analysis is a research technique that entails a systematic and in-depth examination of various qualitative data (such as written, visual, or audio materials). The goal of this analysis is to identify meanings, themes, and patterns within the collected data in order to make sense of social reality.

Originally developed in the 1980s for analyzing content in mass communication, content analysis later became an accepted methodology in psychology and social sciences. It can be applied in both qualitative and quantitative studies. As a methodological and systematic objective technique, content analysis aims to identify, classify, and interpret fundamental components within texts or discourses. It involves analyzing the presence of predefined categories or codes within a given text or visual

(Robert & Bouillaget, 1997). Content analysis can also be described as the process of quantifying and digitizing what people write and say (Alanka, 2024).

According to Alanka (2024), content analysis is a set of methodological tools and techniques designed to derive meanings from concepts, texts, and verbal or written materials based on predefined criteria, operating as an objective, systematic, and deductive reading tool that investigates social reality. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2008) emphasize that this method allows for similar data to be grouped, organized, and interpreted around specific concepts and themes, thereby facilitating a more detailed examination of collected data and the identification of key concepts, categories, and themes.

Several prior studies have conducted content analysis of postgraduate theses archived in the National Thesis Center. For example: Kırkıl and Boran (2025) analyzed theses on *Digital Librarianship*, Öztürk and Parlar (2022) studied *Family Education in Türkiye*, Gültekin and Turhan (2021) focused on *Happiness*, Yılmazel (2019) conducted a bibliometric analysis of theses on *Big Data*.

In Türkiye, the concept of agility has increasingly been explored over the past decade within the contexts of institutional dynamics, strategic management, and human resources. Examining postgraduate theses using content analysis thus provides valuable insights into the structural trends in the literature.

For instance, Demirel and Güler (2022) analyzed 39 postgraduate theses published between 2008 and 2021, revealing both the theoretical foundations and methodological and sectoral diversity of organizational agility research. They found that quantitative techniques were the most frequently used research methods, while interest in mixed methods remained limited indicating that methodological diversity in the field is still developing. Similarly, Güler (2023) used both visual mapping and content analysis to examine theses and articles on agility, uncovering networks of academic interaction. Through keyword co-occurrence and co-citation analysis, it was observed that the theses clustered thematically. This method was found to be effective for visualizing conceptual proximity among studies. The majority of the theses were found to focus primarily on strategic agility and organizational flexibility.

Likewise, Dal and Çelik (2025) examined the distribution of postgraduate theses by year and reported a sharp increase in agility-focused studies after 2020. This trend suggests that agility has gained prominence in organizational transformation efforts in the post-pandemic period. Additionally, most of the analyzed theses focused on the public sector, while private sector dynamics appeared to be underrepresented—indicating an institutional imbalance in the literature.

Finally, İpçioğlu and Koca (2024) conducted a bibliometric evaluation of postgraduate theses, analyzing author productivity and institutional distribution. Their study identified universities with high thesis output and highlighted influential authors in the field. These findings contribute significantly to understanding the academic clustering of agility research.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate that postgraduate research on agility in Türkiye is expanding in both conceptual depth and methodological variety. However, the limited use of qualitative data analysis and sectoral comparisons indicates ongoing gaps in the literature. These gaps may be addressed in the future through meta-synthesis and cross-sectional studies.

In the present study, postgraduate theses in the field of Business Administration were reviewed through the National Thesis Center database to determine how the concepts of *Agility, Organizational Agility,* and *Strategic Agility* have been addressed. The scanning was based on the titles and contents of the theses published between 2004 and 2025. A total of 43 postgraduate theses were identified: 21 doctoral dissertations and 22 master's theses focusing on the aforementioned concepts.

6. Research Questions

To analyze postgraduate theses written between 2004 and 2025 on the subjects of *Agility, Organizational Agility,* and *Strategic Agility,* the following research questions are addressed:

RQ_1. How many theses include the variables *Agility, Organizational Agility,* and *Strategic Agility*? Among these, how many are master's theses and how many are doctoral dissertations? How many of these theses are written in English and how many in Turkish?

RQ_2. What is the distribution of the theses by year?

RQ_3. Which universities have produced theses containing the variables *Agility, Organizational Agility,* and *Strategic Agility* within the field of Business Administration?

RQ_4. What research methods (including software used for analysis) and techniques were employed in these theses? What are the characteristics of their sample groups?

RQ_5. In which sectors and regions were the research studies conducted?

RQ_6. Which agility-related concept (agility, organizational agility, and strategic agility) is most frequently used in these theses?

RQ_7. How frequently are the keywords listed in Table 9 used in the theses?

7. Findings

In Türkiye, a total of 43 theses on *Agility, Organizational Agility,* and *Strategic Agility* are archived in the YÖKTEZ National Thesis Center database. The findings derived from the analysis of these 43 postgraduate theses, based on the research questions outlined above, are presented Table 1.

Table 1

General Evaluation of the Number of Postgraduate Theses on Agility, Organizational Agility and Strategic Agility (2004-2025)

Thesis	English	Turkish	Number
Master's	3	19	22
Doctorate	2	19	21
Total	4	39	43

According to Table 1, between 2004 and 2025, a total of 43 postgraduate theses were identified in the field of Business Administration, covering the concepts of *Agility, Organizational Agility,* and *Strategic Agility*. Based on the search in the National Thesis Center database, it was found that there are 22 master's theses (3 in English and 19 in Turkish) and 21 doctoral dissertations (2 in English and 19 in Turkish). The number of theses (2004–June 2025) is given in Table 2.

Table 2

Number of Theses by Year

Time Range of Theses Written by Year	Master's	Doctorate
2025 - June	1	-
2020 - 2025	17	20
2015 - 2020	3	1
2010 - 2015	-	-
2005 - 2010	-	-
2004	1	-
Total	22	21

Table 2 presents the number of theses written in five-year intervals between 2004 and June 2025. After a single master's thesis on agility in 2004, no theses were published between 2005 and 2015. Between 2015 and 2020, three master's theses and one doctoral dissertation were published. The number of studies significantly increased between 2020 and 2025, with 17 master's theses and 20 doctoral dissertations. As of June 2025, an additional master's thesis was recorded. The university ranking of theses on agility variables is given in Table 3.

Table 3

University Ranking of Theses Containing Agility, Organizational Agility and Strategic Agility Variables

University Rankings of Theses Written in the Field of Agility Between 2004 and 2025	Number	Master's	Doctorate
Istanbul Sebahattin Zaim University	4	3	1
Selçuk University	3	-	3
Istanbul Okan University	3	2	1
Istanbul Arel University	3	1	2
Istanbul University	3	1	2
Istanbul Gelişim University	3	3	-
Bahçeşehir University	3	3	-
Karabük University	3	-	3
Marmara University	2	2	-
Altınbaş University	1	1	-
Istanbul Aydın University	1	1	-
Pamukkale University	1	-	1
Yıldız Teknik University	1	-	1
Gebze Teknik University	1	1	-
Erzurum Teknik University	1	1	-
Kocaeli University	1	-	1
Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University	1	-	1
Aksaray University	1	-	1
Istanbul Ticaret University	1	-	1
Izmir Demokrasi University	1	1	-
Beykent University	1	-	1
Doğuş University	1	-	1
Karadeniz Teknik University	1	1	-
Yaşar University	1	-	1
Dokuz Eylül University	1	1	-
Total	43	22	21

A total of 43 theses written between 2004 and 2025 were analyzed to identify the universities that have produced research on agility. As indicated in Table 4, the university with the highest number of theses is Istanbul Sebahattin Zaim University, with a total of 4 theses (3 master's and 1 doctoral). Selçuk University, Istanbul Okan University, Istanbul Arel University, Istanbul University, Istanbul Gelişim University, Bahçeşehir University, and Karabük University each produced 3 theses, while

Marmara University published 2. Other universities contributed 1 thesis each. The research methods and software used in the theses are given in Table 4.

Table 4

Research Methods and Software Used for Analysis in Theses

Programs Used for Analysis	Number	Research Methods of Theses	Number
Spss	18	Quantitative	38
Spss- Amos	12	Qualitative	3
Spss- Smart Pls	3	Qualitative-Qualitative (Mixed)	2
Amos	3		
Spss- Process Macro	1		
Spss- Process Macro- Amos	1		
Situation Analysis (Qualitative)	2		
Interview (Qualitative)	1		
TOPSIS (Qualitative-Quantitative)	1		
Situation-Survey Analysis (Qualitative-Quantitative/Spss – Amos – Process Macro)	1		
Total	43		43

Table 4 presents an evaluation of the research methods and software tools employed in the 43 postgraduate theses written between 2004 and 2025 on the topic of agility. The data is organized in order of frequency of usage: A total of 38 theses used quantitative methods (mainly through surveys and statistical analysis), 3 theses employed qualitative methods (including case study and interview techniques), 2 theses applied mixed methods (both qualitative and quantitative).

As for software usage: SPSS was used in 23 theses, SPSS with AMOS in 12 theses, SPSS with SmartPLS in 3 theses, AMOS alone in 3 theses, SPSS with Process Macro in 1 thesis, And 1 thesis applied a combination of SPSS, Process Macro, and AMOS for a mixed-method approach. The sample profiles in the theses are given in Table 5.

Table 5

Sample Profiles in the Theses

Sample Profile	Number
Employee	22
Manager	13
Manager + Employee (Mixed)	7
Expert Auditors	1
Total	43

Table 5 analyzes the sample profiles used in the 43 postgraduate theses; 22 theses based their research on employees within institutions, companies, or sectors, 13 theses focused on managers as the sample group, 7 theses included both managers and employees (mixed), Only 1 thesis was based on a sample group of expert auditors. The sectors and regions of research in the theses are given in Table 6.

Table 6

Sectors and Regions of Research in the Theses

Sectors Conducted in the Research	Number	Regions	Number
Manufacturing Sector - SMEs and Large Enterprises	13	Türkiye-Wide	18
Universities (Private and Public Educational Institutions)	6	Istanbul	9
Manufacturing and Service Sector (Mixed)	5	Province-Region	9
Healthcare Facilities (Hospitals)	3	International	5
Aviation Facilities	3	Türkiye-International	1
Telecommunications- InformationTechnology - Electronics Facilities	3	TR ISO 500	1
Banking Facilities	2		
Technoparks	2		
Energy and Petroleum Facilities	2		
Defense Industry Manufacturing Facilities	1		
Municipalities	1		
Charitable Institutions	1		
Auditing Facilities	1		
Total	43		43

Table 6 provides insights into the sectors where the research was conducted: 13 theses focused on the manufacturing sector, including SMEs and large enterprises, 6 theses were conducted in universities (public and private educational institutions), 5 theses studied combined manufacturing and service sectors, 3 theses involved healthcare institutions (hospitals), 3 theses examined aviation enterprises, 3 theses focused on telecommunications, IT, and electronics firms, 2 theses were in the banking sector, 2 theses studied technoparks, 2 theses analyzed energy and petroleum companies, The remaining theses covered defense industry manufacturing, municipalities, charitable organizations, and audit firms, with 1 thesis each.

And also provides insights into geographical regions where the research was conducted: 18 theses were conducted on a national scale (Türkiye), 9 theses focused specifically on Istanbul, 9 theses were conducted in various other cities or regions, 5 theses were carried out abroad, 1 thesis included comparative research between Türkiye and a foreign country, 1 thesis focused on companies listed in the ISO 500 Türkiye ranking. The most frequently studied agility variables in postgraduate theses are given in Table 7.

Table 7

Most Frequently Studied Agility Variables in Postgraduate Theses (Agility, Organizational Agility, Strategic Agility)

The Concept of Agility	Number
Organizational Agility	33
Strategic Agility	7
Agility	3
Total	43

Table 7 shows that among the 43 postgraduate theses: 33 theses focused on Organizational Agility, 7 theses adDoctorateessed Strategic Agility, 3 theses examined the general concept of Agility without specific categorization. This indicates that *Organizational Agility* is the most frequently researched concept among the three. The most commonly used keywords in postgraduate theses involving agility are given in Table 8.

Table 8

Most Commonly Used Keywords in Postgraduate Theses Involving Agility

Keywords	Number
Leadership (Leadership Styles - Digital Leader - Strategic Leader - Visionary Leader - Servant Leader - Transformational Leader)	12
Innovation (Innovative HRM - Innovative Work Behaviors - Innovative Organizational Climate) - Innovation - Innovation Performance	6
Competitive Advantage - Strategic Goals - Strategic Awareness - Strategy Development - Strategic Skills	6
Digitalization - Digital Transformation - Smart Technologies - Technological Change	5
Employee Motivation	2

Based on the keyword frequency across the theses: 12 theses included terms related to Leadership, such as: Leadership Styles, Digital Leadership, Strategic Leadership, Visionary Leadership, Servant Leadership, Transformational Leadership; 6 theses emphasized Innovation and related terms, including: Innovative Human Resource Management, Innovative Work Behaviors, Innovative Organizational Climate, Innovation, Innovation Performance; 6 theses focused on Strategic Concepts, such as: Competitive Advantage, Strategic Goals, Strategic Awareness, Strategy Development, Strategic Competence; 5 theses referenced Digital Transformation, including: Digitalization, Smart Technologies, Technological Change; 2 theses included Employee Motivation as a keyword. These findings suggest that agility-related concepts are frequently studied in conjunction with topics such as leadership, innovation, strategy, and digital transformation.

8. Conclusion

Environmental factors such as uncertainty, volatility, and complexity in today's business world directly influence strategic decision-making processes. Within this context, agility is defined as the capability of businesses to respond rapidly and effectively to external changes, leverage emerging opportunities, and maintain sustainable competitive advantage. While organizational agility focuses on restructuring internal dynamics to serve this purpose, strategic agility emphasizes the capacity to transform environmental uncertainty into long-term opportunities.

The concept of agility is applied across multiple sectors including manufacturing, services, healthcare, aviation, information technology, energy, public administration, and defense. Particularly in the context of digital transformation and crisis environments, the significance of agility has increased substantially.

Agility has emerged as a rapidly growing topic in postgraduate research, examined in depth across various sectors in both strategic and organizational contexts. It has been especially studied in relation to leadership, organizational transformation, strategic flexibility, and competitive advantage. The rising interest in agility has been largely fueled by digitalization, dynamic market conditions, and global crises. A total of 86% (n = 37) of the theses on agility were published between 2015 and 2025, indicating a sharp increase in academic interest over the past decade.

According to the content findings, it was determined that studies conducted after 2020 have increased rapidly. This trend indicates that the concept of agility has become more prominent and gained a wider place in the academic field due to the organizational transformation process of businesses following the pandemic.

The significant increase in agility research over the last five years (2020-2025) may be due to the potential challenges brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic and its relationship to the rapid changes in the business world. This may have increased the number of academic agility-related studies.

The Covid-19 pandemic forced many companies to transition to a remote working model. Traditional, hierarchical business processes were not well-suited to remote management. At this point, agile methodologies came to the fore. Agile structures, which operate in short cycles, receive frequent feedback, are flexible, and can adapt quickly to change, have enabled the workforce to work more efficiently remotely. This new working order may have created an important research area for academics and students to delve deeper into agility.

Covid-19 accelerated digital transformation processes in many sectors. Physical stores turned to e-commerce, services migrated to digital platforms, and companies were forced to rapidly adapt to new technologies to survive. Agility was among the factors underlying this transformation. Digital transformation required more than just using technology; it also required changing business practices, organizational culture, and decision-making processes. Therefore, agile transformation processes in businesses may have become a rich topic for academic studies.

Furthermore, the pandemic brought significant uncertainty to the business world. Supply chains were disrupted, customer demands constantly shifted, and market conditions became unpredictable. To succeed in this uncertain environment, businesses had to adapt quickly to change rather than sticking to plans. Agility was seen as one of the most effective ways to achieve this adaptation. Agility is no longer a concept unique to the software industry; it has become central to the survival and growth strategies of organizations across all sectors. This may have increased academic interest in agility, leading to increased research and dissertations on this topic at universities.

The distribution of analyzed theses is balanced: 21 doctoral dissertations and 22 master's theses**.** These 43 theses were authored at 25 different universities in Türkiye. Istanbul Sebahattin Zaim University stands out with 4 theses (3 master's, 1 doctoral), followed by several universities contributing 3 theses each.

The data show that the majority of agility-focused theses were written between 2015 and 2025**,** with a notable concentration in the last five years. This further supports the increasing relevance of agility in academic and managerial discourse.

Regarding sectors, 13 theses were conducted in the manufacturing sector, followed by studies in education, healthcare, aviation, telecommunications, banking, technoparks, energy, defense, and public institutions. In terms of regions, most studies covered the national scale, with others conducted in Istanbul, various other regions, or even internationally.

In terms of sample profiles: 22 theses collected data from employees, 13 from managers**,** 7 from both**,** 1 from expert auditors**.** Most studies employed quantitative methods (n = 38), particularly through surveys using SPSS and AMOS**.** Qualitative methods (n = 3) and mixed-method designs (n = 2) were used less frequently.

Organizational Agility was the most studied variable, with Sharifi and Zhang's (1999) scale being the most widely used measurement tool. *Strategic Agility* was studied in 7 theses, each using different measurement approaches. Three doctoral theses agility more broadly and used custom-developed

scales. The most common keywords found in these theses were: *Leadership***,** *Innovation***,** *Competitive Strategy***,** *Digital Transformation* and *Employee Motivation***.**

To summarize the findings, a total of 43 graduate theses on agility, organizational agility, and strategic agility were identified within the Department of Business Administration in Türkiye between 2004 and 2025.

These studies were conducted at 25 different universities; academic interest in the concept of agility has increased significantly, particularly since 2015. Quantitative methods and SPSS-based analyses were predominantly used in these theses.

The most preferred research methods in theses and dissertations are quantitative techniques. In contrast, interest in mixed methods has been limited. This suggests that methodological diversity is still evolving. In the Department of Business Administration, agility-themed theses appear to be improving in both conceptual depth and methodological diversity. However, the limited availability of qualitative data analyses and sectoral comparisons points to gaps in the literature that still need to be filled.

The studies were conducted in various sectors, including manufacturing, services, healthcare, defense, and IT, and the samples consisted primarily of employees and managers. Key concepts frequently included leadership, innovation, digitalization, and competitive advantage.

These results suggest that agility has evolved from a conceptual discussion into a practical management paradigm supported by empirical research across sectors. In the literature, agility is commonly analyzed through dimensions such as sensing agility, decision making agility, and acting agility all of which are emphasized for their direct impact on firm performance.

The contribution of Turkish postgraduate research to the agility literature has created a solid foundation for both theoretical advancement and practical implementation. The findings of this study confirm that agility has become a central topic of academic interest in Türkiye. Particularly since 2015, it has been explored across various sectors with a strategic lens on organizational transformation.

In conclusion, agility's role in achieving sustainable competitive advantage is well-supported by both the literature and thesis analyses. The insights generated here are expected to inform future research, and further encourage the adoption of agility as an interdisciplinary management approach.

This study has several limitations. First, the scales, hypotheses, and research results used in the theses were not included in the analysis. This limited a more in-depth assessment of the operational definitions and implications of the concept of agility. Furthermore, only theses included in the YÖKTEZ database were examined; international theses databases were not included in the study. Likewise, publications such as articles, papers, books or book chapters were not included in the study.

The following recommendations for future research are offered: a comparative analysis of the scales used in theses to examine how agility dimensions are measured; thematic classification of thesis results to assess the relationship between agility and outcomes such as business performance and competitive advantage; comparative analysis with global trends using international thesis databases (e.g., ProQuest, EBSCO); and meta-analyses based on previous research findings.

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The Mediating Role of Emotional Labor in the Relationship between Perceptions of Organizational Politics and Job Dissatisfaction[a]

İlknur ÜNER[b] **Ufuk BAŞAR[c]**

The Mediating Role of Emotional Labor in the Relationship between Perceptions of Organizational Politics and Job Dissatisfaction

Abstract

Background. While previous research has explored the negative impacts of perceptions of organizational politics on several job attitudes, the emotional mechanisms underlying this relationship remain insufficiently understood. Therefore, there is a need to clarify the role of phenomena such as emotional labor, which explain the emotional expressions of employees, in this process.

Aim. This study examined the mediating role of emotional labor in the relationship between employees' perceptions of organizational politics and job dissatisfaction.

Method. To achieve this purpose, a cross-sectional digital survey was conducted among 387 employees from 26 different sectors in Istanbul, Türkiye. The data were analyzed through linear regression tests.

Findings. Organizational politics were positively associated with job dissatisfaction and surface acting. Surface acting significantly mediated the relationship between organizational politics and job dissatisfaction. Unlike expectations, deep acting showed a weak positive correlation with job dissatisfaction, while naturally felt emotions are not significantly related to job dissatisfaction.

Conclusion. Surface acting significantly contributed to the explanation of the undesired effects of organizational politics on employees. Participants reported that they displayed fake behaviors as a reaction to the political behaviors of other employees. This, in turn, helped them better cope with the political behaviors that were displayed in the workplace. Accordingly, in order to promote and enhance employee job satisfaction, political behaviors exhibited in the workplace should be minimized.

Keywords: Emotional labor, perceptions of organizational politics, job dissatisfaction.

Örgütsel Politika Algısı ve İş Tatminsizliği Arasındaki İlişkide Duygusal Emeğin Aracı Rolü

Öz

Arka plan. Geçmişte yapılan araştırmalar örgütsel politika algısının birçok iş tutumu üzerindeki olumsuz etkisini araştırmış olsa da bu ilişkinin altında yatan duygusal işleyiş yeterince anlaşılmamıştır. Bundan dolayı duygusal emek gibi çalışanların duygusal dışa vurumlarını açıklayan olguların bu süreçteki rolünün aydınlatılmasına ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır.

Amaç. Bu araştırmanın amacı, çalışanların örgütsel politika algısı ile iş tatminsizliği arasındaki ilişkide duygusal emeğin aracılık rolünü incelemektir.

Yöntem. Bu amaçla, İstanbul'da 26 farklı sektörden 387 çalışan üzerinde kesitsel bir araştırma yapılmıştır. Veri dijital anket tekniği ile toplanmış ve doğrusal regresyon testleri ile analiz edilmiştir.

Bulgular. Örgütsel politika iş tatminsizliğiyle ve yüzeysel rol yapmayla pozitif ilişkilidir. Yüzeysel rol yapma, örgütsel politika algısı ile iş tatminsizliği arasındaki ilişkiye anlamlı bir şekilde aracılık etmektedir. Beklenenin aksine, derinden rol yapma ile iş tatminsizliği arasında zayıf, pozitif bir ilişki olduğu, doğal duygularla iş tatminsizliği arasında anlamlı bir ilişkinin olmadığı görülmüştür.

Sonuç. Yüzeysel rol yapma, örgütsel politikanın çalışanlar üzerindeki yıkıcı etkisinin açıklanmasına katkı sağlamaktadır. Katılımcılar, diğer çalışanların politik davranışlarına tepki olarak sahte davranışlar sergilediklerini bildirdiler. Bu, onların iş yerinde sergilenen politik davranışlarla daha iyi başa çıkmalarına yardımcı olmaktadır. Buna göre, çalışanların iş tatminini artırmak etmek için iş yerinde sergilenen politik davranışlar en aza indirilmelidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Duygusal emek, örgütsel politika algısı, iş tatminsizliği.

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[b] M.Sc., Istanbul Ticaret University, Institute of Graduate Studies, Department of Business Administration, Türkiye, ORCID: 0009-0007-4509-920X, e-Mail: i.uner@istanbulticaret.edu.tr

[c] Corresponding author, Assoc. Prof. Dr., Istanbul Ticaret University, Faculty of Business Administration, Department of Business Administration, Türkiye, ORCID: 0000-0003-0008-5131, e-Mail: ubasar@ticaret.edu.tr

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1. Introduction

This study aims to provide an analysis of how emotional labor mediates the relationship between employees' perceptions of organizational politics (POP) and job dissatisfaction. The primary variables explored are organizational politics perceptions, job dissatisfaction, and emotional labor, which encompass the elements of surface acting, deep acting, and naturally felt emotions (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Diefendorff et al., 2005).

There is a need to conduct this research, as organizational politics may negatively impact the work environment, job satisfaction, and employee retention. According to previous studies, it has been repeatedly demonstrated that POP is also linked to unfavorable outcomes, including reduced organizational commitment, heightened stress levels, and job dissatisfaction (Bedi & Schat, 2013; Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Miller et al., 2008). Although the impact of political behavior on job attitudes has been identified in some studies (Harris et al., 2007; Vigoda, 2000), there is a lack of research on emotional labor as a mediator mechanism (Gabriel et al., 2023; Hochwarter et al., 2020).

By filling this gap, the study provides insight into how the emotional regulation of employees (surface acting, deep acting, and naturally felt emotions) mediates the relationship between POP and job dissatisfaction (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015). Learning these dynamics enables organizations to develop more effective policies that help mitigate the negative impact of politics on employees within the organization (Cheung & Tang, 2009; Humphrey et al., 2015).

Previous studies have demonstrated that POP leads to high levels of stress, declines in job satisfaction, and reduced organizational commitment (Judge et al., 2017; Kacmar & Ferris, 1991; Parker et al., 1995). Nevertheless, very little is known about how employees can emotionally cope with workplace politics. The current study will contribute to the existing literature by focusing on answering the research question: Can emotional labor strategies explain the adverse effects of POP, such as job dissatisfaction? Consequently, a theoretical framework was developed to understand the most important constructs and their interactions, leading to the formulation of hypotheses. This is followed by the data analysis and presentation of the findings. Ultimately, contributions were discussed, and recommendations were shared for future research and practice.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Employees' Perceptions of Organizational Politics

Individuals or groups engage in certain behaviors to achieve specific objectives by exploiting power resources to the detriment of others or even organizational goals (Ferris et al., 2002). These behaviors are political behaviors. Organizational politics encompasses forming power coalitions, managing organizational impressions, making strategic choices, and utilizing both formal and informal organizational ties to gain self or group benefits further (Elbanna, 2016). As much as political activities are inherent in organizations, how employees perceive these behaviors influences several key factors, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, health, and performance (Vigoda, 2000). Knowledge of these perceptions is crucial because they influence how employees perceive their work environment and respond to other forms of workplace politics.

Ferris and Kacmar (1992) introduced the concept of POP as a perspective for explaining how employees experience organizational politics. Their research highlighted that these employees do not merely observe political strategies; they also assess such behaviors based on their perceptions and

beliefs regarding whether they are self-serving or not within their organization. According to Ferris and Kacmar (1992), these perceptions of politics exhibit a robust positive correlation with the amount of harm inflicted on the organization and its employees. This framework served as the basis for many subsequent examinations of how employees experience and address organizational politics.

The formulation of the POP framework was based on advanced knowledge concerning political activity in organizations, which had been previously documented by Farrell and Petersen (1982). They described various forms of political behavior in organizations and pointed out that political behavior is not always negative; it can be positive or negative depending on employees' attitudes. They stressed that organizational politics are pretty evident within the workplace, and personal perceptions, anticipations, and organizational ethos precondition workers' responses to these political actions. This early work laid the groundwork for subsequent research on how employees form perceptions of these political actions and their impact on attitudes.

The development of POP continued; eventually, theoretical developments shifted toward investigating the sequential effects of such perceptions on employee outcomes. The original form of POP was developed by Ferris et al. (2002) to encompass other negative impacts on employee outcomes, including job satisfaction, stress, and turnover intentions. The authors claimed that one's political behaviors at the workplace make others feel that the authority manipulated the decision-making process, thus denying them trust in management and cultivating cynicism. As you will have noticed, these perceptions can lead to poor employee morale and productivity.

Miller et al. (2008) compared the effects of POP on job satisfaction, stress levels, and turnover intentions. Their results supported the idea that political behaviors are perceived negatively by employees. They would have several adverse effects on the employee and the organization. They also proposed that some personal characteristics, including political astuteness, stress hardiness, and the psychological profile of the employees, can mediate POP. For instance, politically aware individuals may perceive such political behaviors as less negative, while those who are politically unaware may feel the negative impacts more acutely.

Furthermore, DuBrin (2009) studied workplace political behavior and its organizational functions. He defined political behavior as an irreversible process within organizations. However, how employees interpret this behavior and their attitude toward it can vary significantly. He pointed out that some employees consider it a standard practice to engage in political activities, while others view it as a form of political manipulation. These distinctive perceptions again underscore the significance of POP, as they influence employees' relationships with the politics within their organizations. Kumar & Ghadially (1998) provided one of the best descriptions of the impact of POP through their Cumulative Index of Political Perception, which assessed the level of POP influencing overall employee satisfaction with their jobs and their organizations. Vigoda (2000) focused on the effects of political perceptions on a range of attitudinal outcomes, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and psychological well-being. She believes that employees' perceived organizational politics signify frustration, anxiety, and mistrust, which imputes inferiority to employees. Such emotional responses can affect learning by being associated with low levels of participation, a lack of commitment to the organization, and physical and mental exhaustion. In a way, her research highlighted the need to understand how attitudes towards politics within an organization can influence the improvement or deterioration of the work environment, and are open to meeting the need for a

healthy work environment. Subsequent research has also extended the development of POP. Hochwarter et al. (2020) addressed the history, current status, and future research agendas. They pointed out that although the current literature describes the various detrimental impacts of POP on employees, there is still limited knowledge on how organizations can manage political behavior in the workplace by enhancing communication, leadership practices, and organization policies. They also noted that the effect of POP is contingent on the organization's environment, personal characteristics, and societal factors, including economic and cultural factors. Therefore, the POP is a vital component of organizational experience or process that is likely to influence the attitudes and behaviors of people in organizations. POP has offered a wealth of knowledge on how employees perceive political behavior and how, in turn, these perceptions affect job satisfaction, commitment, and organizational well-being. Scholars such as Farrell and Petersen (1982), Miller et al. (2008), DuBrin (2009), and Vigoda (2000) have contributed to the ongoing literature by highlighting the need for organizations to understand the organizational consequences of POP. It is reasonable to assume that future investigations, as suggested by Hochwarter et al. (2020), will focus on methods for minimizing the detrimental effects of POP and fostering an equitable and favorable organizational climate.

2.2. Job Dissatisfaction

Also known as job dissatisfaction, employees' negative feelings or attitudes toward their jobs are often caused by unmet expectations, needs, or desires (Judge et al., 2017). This can be recognized in several ways, including lower motivation, lower morale, poor performance, and a higher risk of turnover. A classic example of job dissatisfaction is the misalignment between what an employee thinks they should receive from their job (fair compensation, recognition, and growth opportunities) and what they receive (Parker et al., 1995).

The concept of job dissatisfaction has been extensively studied over the past few decades, dating back to early work in organizational psychology. In the 1950s and 1960s, researchers began to recognize that negative constraints and employee attitudes could have a significant impact on organizational outcomes, including performance, turnover, and productivity. Herzberg et al. (1959) developed one of the earliest models of job dissatisfaction, known as the Two Factor Theory, which posits that distinct factors determine satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Herzberg states that the presence of motivating factors, including achievement, recognition, and the nature of the work, contributes to job satisfaction. However, the absence of hygiene factors, including salary, working conditions, and company policies, contributes to job dissatisfaction. Herzberg emphasized that dissatisfaction arises when hygiene factors are insufficient, even if they exist (Yousaf, 2019). Locke (1976) expanded on Herzberg's work, extending the understanding of job dissatisfaction to discrepancies between employees' expectations and the reality of their job environment. According to Locke's (1976) Value Perception Theory, job dissatisfaction occurs when employees perceive a lack of value in the outcomes related to their work. For instance, dissatisfaction typically arises when employees desire recognition but do not feel they receive it enough. This theory generates the subjective nature of this dissatisfaction and the role played by personal hovering and beliefs (Van der Schyff et al., 2018). According to Spector (1997), job dissatisfaction occurs when there is a lack of fairness, poor leadership, and unfulfilled personal needs. His model helped identify key job dimensions. Dimensions that contribute to perceived dissatisfaction, such as pay, promotion opportunities, and supervisor relationships, influence dissatisfaction.

According to the social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), employees perceive their relationship with their organization as an exchange. A fair return on the investments of effort and skills is what we expect employees to invest as well. Employees who perceive that their work does not give them a fair return become dissatisfied. Additionally, the equity theory (Adams, 1965) is based on the assumption that the ratio of effort to outcome determines fairness and whether we perceive our work effort as fair compared to that of others. If employees make more effort for the same or less return than their colleagues, they are likely to be dissatisfied (Polk, 2022). Moreover, the affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) posits that job dissatisfaction stems from the emotions associated with workplace events. Workplace experiences, such as how employees interact with one another or with leadership, shape an employee's overall feelings (i.e., satisfaction or dissatisfaction). For instance, a negative experience with an overseer can lead to feelings of sadness, even in other significant aspects of the job (Weiss et al., 1999). Job characteristics theory (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) also explains that job satisfaction is determined by how the job is designed. High-skill variety, task significance, autonomy, and feedback are associated with higher job satisfaction in jobs that offer these elements. Low-skill variety, low task significance, low autonomy, and low feedback are associated with job dissatisfaction. This theory emphasizes that the desire to prevent dissatisfaction and increase employee motivation hinges upon the practice of job design (Oldham & Hackman, 2005).

2.3. Perceptions of Organizational Politics and Job Dissatisfaction

Organizational politics occur at work when individuals or groups utilize their power and influence to achieve their own or the group's objectives, often at the expense of others or the organization's goals (Ferris et al., 2002). How employees see organizational politics (POP) significantly impacts their feelings and results at work. Often, employees believe that unfair decision-making is linked to company politics. People feel unfairly treated when they think that raises, prizes, or recognitions are given based on favors or personal connections rather than ability (Harris et al., 2007). Equity Theory (Adams, 1965) supports this finding by suggesting that employees determine if something is fair by comparing the effort, skills, and time they invest with the rewards they receive, such as pay, praise, and promotions. If employees believe that some individuals receive preferential treatment due to their political connections, they will feel neglected and cheated. For instance, if an employee notices a less qualified coworker receiving a raise due to their friendship with management, it can raise suspicions of bias, directly lowering their happiness. This imbalance between effort and reward leads to feelings of anger, detachment, and dissatisfaction with one's job (Parker et al., 1995). According to studies by Ferris et al. (2002) and Vigoda (2000), feeling wrong in politically charged settings can lead to feelings of exploitation and devaluation, which in turn can exacerbate one's unhappiness.

Trust is a crucial component of a good workplace, but how people perceive corporate politics can undermine it. People working for a company may perceive political actions as dishonest or self-serving, which can lead to doubts about their leaders and coworkers. According to Ferris and Kacmar (1992), this lack of trust makes employees feel helpless, unsafe, and unwilling to do their jobs entirely. Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) provides a framework for understanding this event. According to the idea, employees expect their company to treat them fairly and equally. Employees who perceive that choices are made based on politics rather than talent often feel that this unspoken social bond has been broken. This perceived loss of faith makes employees angry and cynical because they believe their work and talents are not valued (DuBrin, 2009). Parker et al. (1995) found that mistrust based on perceived politics can lead to psychological insecurity, where employees worry about their job

security and fear being punished for not agreeing with political players. This loss of safety makes people very unhappy and less interested in their work.

Many worries and mental tiredness are linked to how people see group politics. Dealing with political situations often requires considerable mental energy from employees, who must maintain appearances and relationships. This can lead to burnout. Vigoda (2000) showed that POP often leads to anger, worry, and mistrust, all of which are bad for employees' mental health and make them unhappy at work. It is also important to consider mental work in this connection. Hochschild (1983) and Grandey and Gabriel (2015) found that employees exposed to political behavior often engage in *surface acting*, which involves faking their feelings to conform to company standards. This causes emotional conflict. This mismatch between how you feel inside and how you present yourself externally exacerbates stress and dissatisfaction. When employees are under prolonged mental stress, they may feel tired, less motivated, and less likely to feel they have accomplished anything, which further diminishes their job satisfaction.

Perceived organizational politics hurt corporate dedication by creating an environment of unfairness and favoritism. When employees believe that political maneuvering, rather than skill, determines job advancement, they lose faith in the company's fairness. This disappointment leads to a decrease in commitment to the organization's goals and a decline in confidence (Bedi & Schat, 2013). People who work in highly charged settings often experience low moods because they believe their efforts are not appreciated or acknowledged. Miller et al. (2008) suggest that employees who experience significant political involvement at work are more likely to become frustrated and lose interest in their jobs. They lose motivation to do their jobs, which makes them less productive and increases the likelihood of them quitting. Additionally, a culture of favoritism makes people less likely to collaborate and trust one another, instead fostering competition and hostility (Hochwarter et al., 2020). The Social Exchange Theory emphasizes this relationship. Employees who believe their relationship with the company is unfair or lacks equal respect are less likely to be loyal or put in extra effort. Employees are unhappy because they feel disconnected from the organization's goals and are often ignored by leadership due to this lack of reciprocity.

Increasingly, studies are supporting the link between POP and job dissatisfaction. Ferris et al. (2002) said that employees who are aware of politics are less satisfied with their jobs because they feel they are being used and manipulated. Miller et al. (2008) conducted a meta-analysis that revealed a strong association between high levels of POP and negative job attitudes, including unhappiness, stress, and reduced company commitment. Similarly, Vigoda (2000) noted that people's perceptions of politics can make the workplace toxic, leading to distrust, reduced teamwork, and increased plans to leave. The study reveals that these ideas not only harm people's health but also hinder the success of organizations by reducing employee engagement and efficiency.

Understanding how POP affects job dissatisfaction makes it even more crucial for companies to address political behavior before it escalates. To mitigate the perception of bias, leaders should foster open decision-making processes and equitable employee compensation practices. A more welcoming and supportive workplace can also be created by teaching managers how to identify and address the effects of company politics. Politics can negatively impact job satisfaction, but improving communication, promoting fairness, and investing in leadership development can help mitigate these effects. According to Hochwarter et al. (2020), companies that value fairness and openness are more

likely to retain loyal employees and maintain a positive work environment. Based on this rationale, the following hypothesis is developed.

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between employees' perceptions of organizational politics and job dissatisfaction.

2.4. Emotional Labor

Emotional labor refers to the use of employees to regulate their emotions in order to meet the required emotional standards of the workplace (Hochschild, 1983). This definition involves displaying specific feelings within the system while not experiencing these emotions (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015). The term originated in the work of pioneering sociologist Arlie Hochschild, as presented in her book The Managed Heart (1983). Hochschild (1983) examined how certain forms of work increasingly placed emotional demands on employees, particularly in situations involving direct contact with clients or customers. In service sector organizations, particularly in tasks involving emotional labor, employees must consistently display positive emotions toward customers (Nguyen & Stinglhamber, 2020).

Hochschild's (1983) original conceptualization of emotional labor distinguishes between two types of emotional labor: surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting refers to pretending to feel something an employee does not, whereas deep acting refers to attempting to experience emotions your position requires you to do (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015; Hochschild, 1983). The most damaging side effect of surface acting is emotional dissonance, a mismatch between the emotional state the employee is in and the emotional pitch they need to present to others. Frequent misalignment between actual and mimicked feelings can result in burnout or job dissatisfaction (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015; Henne & Locke, 1985; Hochschild, 1983). Primarily, emotional labor emerged in response to the increasing demand for customer service roles. Hochschild (1983) noted that employees in service organizations, such as airlines and hospitality, are expected to regulate their emotions perfectly. These industries began to require employees to perform tasks while maintaining a professional demeanor and ensuring customer satisfaction. It represented a turning point in building a view of work's psychological and emotional demands that had never been considered before.

Hochschild (1983) laid the groundwork for the study of emotional labor, and the concept has continued to evolve in subsequent research. Grandey and Gabriel (2015) further refine their argument by highlighting the importance of emotional regulation to employee performance and well-being. Building on Hochschild's (1983) framework, Grandey (2000) expanded the discussion regarding the difference between surface acting and deep acting to the well-being of employees. She found that deep acting, or playing emotions that you are trying to feel out, produces fewer psychological side effects than surface acting — playing emotionally inappropriate emotions.

Building on Hochschild (1983), emotional labor has been further studied in terms of the psychological costs associated with surface acting, as well as emotional dissonance. When employees feel obligated to act in a way that contradicts their genuine feelings, dissonance can cause stress and burnout. In high-contact service roles, where daily emotional regulation is required, managerial work on emotional demands and the emotional outcomes of a job can have implications for both emotional exhaustion and job dissatisfaction, as noted by Grandey and Gabriel (2015) and Gabriel et al. (2023). However, emotional labor does not always produce negative consequences. For example, Humphrey et al. (2015) noted that emotional labor can be beneficial for employees if they successfully regulate

their emotions while delivering high-quality service to a customer. Having the ability to manage one's emotions and the social and emotional skills necessary to navigate emotionally charged situations, not only for the firm's sake but also for themselves, is correlated with higher job satisfaction and lower burnout. Employees with greater competence are more effectively able to manage their emotions, which in turn reduces their likelihood of experiencing negative consequences, such as job dissatisfaction or stress (Gabriel et al., 2023). According to Rousseau (1997), technical skills and emotional competencies are equally important in organizations today. She emphasizes that organizations must recognize their responsibility in supporting employees in managing emotional labor healthily and productively.

It is evident, especially in service-oriented industries, that emotional labor is a complex and important part of work life. Hochschild (1983) initially laid the foundation for understanding how emotional regulation is central to employee performance and well-being. Building on this, as Grandey and Gabriel (2015) and Humphrey et al. (2015) have demonstrated, recent research on emotional regulation has expanded the concept and shown how it affects job satisfaction, burnout, and overall employee health. With the rise of the need for emotional labor in organizational settings, organizations must invest adequate support and resources in the employees who are expected to perform this type of labor.

The dimensions of emotional labor have evolved as the conceptual construction of the notion has developed. First, surface acting and deep acting were defined as the first two dimensions of emotional labor. Hochschild (1983) was the first to propose these two dimensions. Later, research developed this framework, introducing a third dimension: naturally felt emotions (Brook et al., 2013). According to Hochschild (1983), surface acting is faking emotions. This is emotional labor in its most basic form, where employees display emotions they do not feel, but force their faces to show appropriate expressions, their voices take on the appropriate tone, and their bodies convey the appropriate language. Surfacing acting can create an emotional mission, where employees do not genuinely feel the emotions they are supposed to exhibit (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015). Deep acting would mean employees consciously trying to experience the emotions the job required. Deep acting is distinct from surface acting, where employees must perform cognitive and emotional work to align their inner emotions with the outer emotions they are expected to display (Brook et al., 2013). Deep acting is less destructive than surface acting because acting deeply reduces emotional dissonance (feeling one way and arguing and pretending to feel another way) that might otherwise plague employees, compelling them to feel the necessary emotions rather than just appearing to do so.

Hochschild's analysis of the first two dimensions was important, but the development of the concept of emotional labor has progressed over time, taking on several tasks stimulated by other scholars. The theory also underwent significant development, recognizing a third dimension: naturally felt emotions. Grandey and Gabriel (2015) introduced a third dimension of emotional labor by incorporating the role of authentic, naturally occurring emotions in the workplace. Naturally felt emotions differ from surface and deep-acting emotions because employees have spontaneous and genuine feelings during work interactions without needing regulation or modification. These feelings flare up from the employee's time on the job, not felt and created to serve organizational goals. By incorporating this third dimension, they highlight the importance of emotional authenticity in the workplace and how this component enhances the emotional labor framework, facilitating an

understanding of how employees manage their emotions in response to organizational pressures (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015).

2.5. Mediating Role of Emotional Labor

Emotional labor, particularly surface acting, plays a crucial role in how employees manage their emotions at work to meet the company's needs (Hochschild, 1983). Surface acting refers to the practice of altering your emotional expression without altering your internal feelings, which can lead to emotional conflict and mental strain (Grandey, 2003). Perceptions of organizational politics refer to the views that employees hold about actions taken to benefit themselves at work, such as bias, influence, and secret plans (Ferris et al., 1992). A lot of POP makes the workplace a place where people feel like they have to control their emotional behavior, often hiding their anger or unhappiness to keep their job and professional relationships safe (Chang et al., 2009). Organizational politics can make the workplace more stressful and unclear (Vigoda-Gadot, 2007), so employees may use acting on the surface as a means to deal with politically charged situations while still adhering to the rules for how to behave at work (Kaplan et al., 2014). This means that employees in political settings are more apt to take public action, which supports the first link in the mediation model.

Surface acting helps people meet the standards of their employers, but it is taxing on the mind and often leads to stress, mental fatigue, and reduced job satisfaction (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011). Emotional conflict arises when somebody conceals their genuine feelings and presents false ones. This wears down your mental and emotional resources over time (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002). Studies show that employees who engage in much surface acting are less happy and less satisfied with their jobs because their genuine feelings do not align with what they are expected to show (Judge et al., 2020; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013). Thus, the second link in the mediation model is established: surface behavior leads to people being less satisfied with their jobs.

The mediation model suggests that employees who perceive a high level of politics at work are more likely to engage in surface acting to maintain harmonious relationships with others. However, relying too heavily on surface acting for too long can lead to emotional exhaustion and a decline in job satisfaction. This aligns with an earlier study that found highly demanding workplaces exacerbate the adverse effects of workplace politics on job views (Zhang & Bednall, 2016). Based on this reasoning, hypothesis 2 is developed.

Hypothesis 2: Surface acting significantly mediates the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and job dissatisfaction, where perceptions of organizational politics are positively related to surface acting and surface acting is positively related to job dissatisfaction.

Emotional labor involves managing your emotions to meet the demands of your workplace. Deep acting is a proactive method in which employees change their feelings, rather than just altering their appearance (Grandey, 2003; Hochschild, 1983). The idea behind this study is that deep acting serves as a bridge between how people perceive organizational politics (POP) and their level of job dissatisfaction. In particular, employees who believe there is much politics at work may resort to deep acting to cope with the problematic atmosphere. Nevertheless, unlike surface acting, which leaves people feeling emotionally drained and unhappy, deep acting helps individuals feel more in touch with their emotions, making them less susceptible to workplace politics and more satisfied with their jobs (Humphrey et al., 2015).

When employees believe that exchanges at work are based on self-interest, bias, and influence rather than fairness and equality, this phenomenon is referred to as organizational politics (Ferris et al., 1989). Employees often use emotional control techniques in highly political workplaces to maintain professional relationships and unity (Chang et al., 2009). Surface acting is a way of dealing with emotions, while deep acting is a way of coping through actions. People use it to match their feelings with how they should act (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002). Researchers have found that employees in highly charged work environments may use deep acting to maintain good relationships, reduce tension, and protect their professional standing (Liu et al., 2022). So, we can expect a positive connection between POP and deep acting.

Because it allows people to experience genuine emotions, deep acting is associated with reduced emotional fatigue and improved well-being compared to surface acting (Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011). People who engage in deep acting are less likely to be unhappy with their jobs because they do not experience emotional discord, which is the stress that occurs when outward emotions do not align with inner feelings (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013). Deep acting helps build authentic relationships at work, making people more engaged in their jobs and increasing their job satisfaction (Gabriel et al., 2015). Employees can give their jobs meaning and satisfaction by changing their mindset, balancing the destructive effects of workplace politics (Zhang & Bednall, 2016). As a result, deep acting is associated with greater happiness at work.

Overall, this mediation model suggests that employees who perceive a high level of politics at work may employ deep acting to maintain relationships and reduce stress. Deep acting helps employees cope with the undesired effects of workplace politics by fostering emotional honesty and job satisfaction. This aligns with research that found deep acting can help people handle challenging work situations (Lee & Chelladurai, 2018). Based on this reasoning, hypothesis 3 is developed.

Hypothesis 3: Deep acting significantly mediates the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and job dissatisfaction, where perceptions of organizational politics are positively related to deep acting and deep acting is negatively related to job dissatisfaction.

Emotional labor theories suggest that employees regulate their emotions to meet the demands of the workplace. However, not all methods of controlling emotions lead to stress or unhappiness. Unlike surface and deep acting, naturally felt emotions occur when employees experience and express feelings that align with the company's goals, without consciously trying to control those (Diefendorff et al., 2005). The idea behind this study is that feelings play a role in the link between job unhappiness and how people see organizational politics (POP). In particular, employees who perceive a high level of politics at work may struggle to maintain a sense of well-being, which can lead to job dissatisfaction and overall health issues.

People who perceive organizational politics (POP) believe the workplace is characterized by favoritism, self-serving behavior, and covert agendas (Ferris et al., 1989). Such places make people feel doubtful and suspicious, which makes it difficult for employees to experience genuine happiness (Rosen et al., 2009). When employees perceive politics as prevalent at work, they may feel controlled or ignored, which can hinder their ability to experience excitement, sincerity, or job-related pride (Chang et al., 2009). Instead, they might become emotionally distant or uninterested because political workplaces can cause people to feel stressed, suspicious, and fearful of losing their jobs (Vigoda-

Gadot & Kapun, 2005). As a result, it is likely that POP and the feelings usually felt will have a negative connection.

People who naturally experience emotions at work tend to be happier and more satisfied when their emotions align with their jobs, without outside interference (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). When employees are genuinely excited about their jobs, they feel less emotionally drained and are more engaged, which increases overall job satisfaction (Humphrey et al., 2015). On the other hand, when political pressures cause people to conceal their genuine feelings, they may feel detached, demotivated, and dissatisfied with their jobs (Liu et al., 2022). Gabriel et al. (2015) found that employees who can show their true feelings at work feel more empowered and connected to their jobs, which leads to lower job unhappiness. Accordingly, naturally occurring feelings are naturally linked to happiness at work.

This mediation model suggests that employer company politics can hinder employees' sense of well-being at work. In turn, hiding feelings that naturally arise makes people less satisfied with their jobs. Studies have shown that emotionally honest Employees Are more involved and committed, but political work settings can make people less honest (Zhang & Bednall, 2016).

Perceptions of organizational politics significantly impact how employees perceive their jobs and their overall job satisfaction. When employees perceive their workplace as highly political, they often feel stressed, distrusted, and frustrated, which can make it more difficult for them to express their emotions. When favoritism, self-serving behaviors, and skewed decision-making prevail at work due to politics, it can be challenging for employees to feel positive about their jobs and coworkers. Instead of being naturally excited or involved, they may become emotionally detached or devise ways to protect themselves from the political nature of the workplace. This hiding or distorting of emotions generally leads to people being less satisfied with their jobs.

Emotions that are naturally felt are those that arise spontaneously and align with a person's internal state, unaffected by external influences. Surface and deep acting require employees to conceal or manage their emotions to meet the company's needs. On the other hand, naturally felt emotions do not need any effort to be controlled (Liu et al., 2022). People are more likely to feel respected, mentally involved, and happy with their jobs when they work in a society that supports authenticity. However, if the workplace is highly political, employees may feel compelled to hide or modify their views to conform to the prevailing political climate. This mismatch between their feelings and the reality of their work situation can lead to emotional exhaustion and dissatisfaction (Bello & Başar, 2025; Zhang & Bednall, 2016).

It is essential to understand how naturally occurring feelings contribute to the connection between POP and job dissatisfaction in order to comprehend how workplace politics impact the health and well-being of workers. When employees feel that many politics are at play, they may find it harder to express their true feelings, which can lead to them being less satisfied with their jobs. Deep acting is when people attempt to align their genuine feelings with what they need to say. On the other hand, quickly felt emotions can help people feel fulfilled and authentic at work (Zhang & Bednall, 2016).

Employees who can show their feelings easily are happier, more committed, and healthier at work. On the other hand, individuals who feel compelled to suppress their feelings due to political pressures may experience stress and a loss of interest at work. In highly political settings, people often conceal their genuine feelings, which erodes trust and confidence and ultimately leads to dissatisfaction

(Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013). If employees think that decisions are being made unfairly or that they are being favored, they will likely feel removed from their work, which will make them angry and cynical toward the company. This lack of emotional honesty worsens job unhappiness and the harmful effects of office politics.

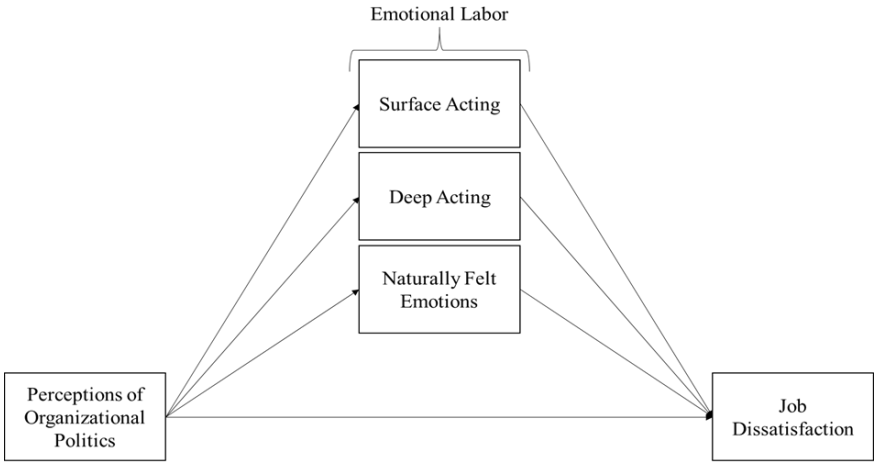
Given the importance of naturally occurring feelings as a buffer, businesses should strive to create a workplace that fosters honesty, fairness, and trust. To help employees feel more comfortable sharing their true feelings, leaders should foster open conversations, minimize bias, and promote ethical behavior. When employees can express their natural feelings without worrying about what others will think, they are more likely to feel emotionally connected to their work, which makes them happier with their jobs. On the other hand, hiding your natural feelings in a politically charged setting only exacerbates the situation, highlighting the importance of navigating corporate politics to enhance overall workplace well-being. Based on this reasoning, hypothesis 4 is developed.

Hypothesis 4: Naturally felt emotions significantly mediate the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and job dissatisfaction, where perceptions of organizational politics are negatively related to naturally felt emotions, and naturally felt emotions are negatively related to job dissatisfaction.

The research model based on the hypotheses is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Research Model



3. Method

3.1. Research Design and Participants

This research employed a cross-sectional design. The data were collected through online questionnaires from 387 employees working in 26 organizations operating in Istanbul Province, Türkiye. The companies' sectors are listed in Table 1. Of the participants, 291 (75.2%) were females, 96 (24.8%) were males, 229 (59.2%) were single, 132 (34.1%) were married, 15 (3.9%) were divorced, and 11 (2.8%) did not report their marital status, 41 (10.6%) had a high school degree, 76 (19.6%) had an associate degree, 190 (49.1%) had a bachelor's degree, 68 (17.6%) had a master's degree, 12 (3.1%) had a doctorate, 100 (25.8%) were between 18-24 years old, 174 (45%) were between 25-34 years old, 79 (20.4%) were between 35-44 years old, 32 (8.3%) were between 45-54 years old, 2 (0.5%) were between 55-64 years old, 291 (75.2%) had a regular (i.e., permanent) job,

96 (24.8%) had an irregular (i.e., temporary) job, 88 (22.7%) had work experience less than a year, 130 (33.6%) had work experience between 1-5 years, 87 (22.5%) had work experience between 5-10 years, and 82 (21.2%) had work experience more than 11 years.

Table 1

Companies' Sectors

Sector	*n*	Percent (%)
Justice and Security	16	4.1
Woodworking, Paper, and Paper Products	2	0.5
Information Technologies	8	2.1
Glass, Cement, and Soil	3	0.8
Environment	4	1
Education	60	15.5
Electrical and Electronics	1	0.3
Energy	2	0.5
Finance	25	6.5
Food	9	2.3
Construction	12	3.1
Business and Management	6	1.6
Chemical, Petroleum, Rubber, and Plastic	3	0.8
Culture, Art, and Design	10	2.6
Mining	1	0.3
Machinery	6	1.6
Media, Communication, and Publishing	6	1.6
Automotive	6	1.6
Health and Social Services	61	15.8
Sports and Recreation	6	1.6
Agriculture, Hunting, and Fishing	1	0.3
Textiles, Apparel, Leather	79	20.4
Commerce (Sales and Marketing)	33	8.5
Social and Personal Services	10	2.6
Tourism, Accommodation, Food and Beverage Services	10	2.6
Transportation, Logistics, and Communication	7	1.8
Total	387	100

3.2 Data Collection Instruments

Hochwarter et al.'s (2003) six-item and unidimensional scale was used to measure participants' perceptions of organizational politics. Akdoğan and Demirtaş (2014) adapted the scale to the Turkish context. Items were scored from 1 = *completely disagree* to 7 = *completely agree.*

Smith et al.'s (1985) four-item and unidimensional scale was used to measure participants' job dissatisfaction. Gürbüz et al. (2010) adapted the scale to the Turkish context. Items were scored from 1 = *completely disagree* to 7 = *completely agree.*

Diefendorff et al.'s (2005) thirteen-item and three-dimensional scale was used to measure participants' emotional labor. Basım and Beğenirbaş (2012) adapted the scale to the Turkish context. Items were scored from 1 = *never* to 7 = *always*. The first six items on the scale measured surface acting, the following four measured deep acting, and the remaining three measured naturally felt emotions.

3.2.1. Reliability and Validity Tests

Cronbach's Alpha (α) coefficients were calculated to test the scales' internal consistency (i.e., reliability). Scores are presented in Table 5. A measurement model analysis was performed to test the validity of the scales. Accordingly, a factor analysis was done on the items of the scales. The results are presented in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

Table 2

Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	7.095	30.847	30.847	7.095	30.847	30.847	4.543	19.752	19.752
2	3.989	17.344	48.191	3.989	17.344	48.191	4.292	18.661	38.413
3	2.96	12.872	61.063	2.96	12.872	61.063	3.13	13.61	52.023
4	2.093	9.099	70.161	2.093	9.099	70.161	2.913	12.664	64.688
5	1.233	5.36	75.521	1.233	5.36	75.521	2.492	10.834	75.521
6	0.609	2.646	78.168						
7	0.488	2.124	80.291						
8	0.447	1.944	82.235						
9	0.415	1.806	84.041						
10	0.388	1.688	85.73						
11	0.373	1.623	87.353						
12	0.349	1.519	88.872						
13	0.324	1.41	90.281						
14	0.319	1.387	91.668						
15	0.307	1.337	93.005						
16	0.267	1.159	94.164						
17	0.242	1.054	95.219						
18	0.217	0.944	96.162						
19	0.204	0.886	97.049						
20	0.196	0.853	97.901						
21	0.174	0.758	98.659						
22	0.163	0.71	99.369						
23	0.145	0.631	100						

Table 2 shows that there are five factors with an Eigenvalue greater than one. These five factors explain 75.521% of the variance. As shown in Table 3, the initial component matrix produces mixed results. Some items are grouped in more than one factor. For example, the first and second factors have many shared items. It is not clear how items are grouped. Hence, a rotated component matrix is produced to differentiate items better.

Table 3

Component Matrix

Items	Components				
	1	2	3	4	5
sa5	.783				
sa4	.774				
sa6	.737				
sa2	.729				
sa1	.719				
sa3	.709				
jds2	.616			.551	
da2	.573	.514			
da1	.561	.506			
da4	.552	.494			
op4	.515	-.640			
op3	.492	-.606			
op2	.458	-.604			
op6	.540	-.584			
op1	.414	-.557			
op5	.524	-.531			
da3	.512	.520			
nfe3			.710		
nfe2			.695		
nfe1			.686		
jds3	.465			.649	
jds1	.519			.615	
jds4	.500			.564	

Note. sa: surface acting, da: deep acting, nfe: naturally felt emotions, jds: job dissatisfaction, op: perceptions of organizational politics

Table 4 shows the rotated component matrix. Upon examination, it is evident that items on each scale are appropriately grouped. This proves the construct validity of the scales.

Table 4

Rotated Component Matrix

Items	Components				
	1	2	3	4	5
sa2	0.854				
sa5	0.837				
sa1	0.819				
sa4	0.816				
sa6	0.814				
sa3	0.801				
op4		0.882			
op3		0.87			
op2		0.837			
op6		0.837			
op5		0.783			
op1		0.754			
da2			0.852		
da3			0.843		
da1			0.822		
da4			0.811		
jds3				0.838	
jds2				0.827	
jds4				0.806	
jds1				0.805	
nfe2					0.904
nfe1					0.881
nfe3					0.85

Note. sa: surface acting, da: deep acting, nfe: naturally felt emotions, jds: jo dissatisfaction, op: perceptions of organizational politics

3.3. Data Collection Procedure

Before commencing data collection, ethics committee approval was obtained from the Istanbul Ticaret University Research Ethics Committee on December 30, 2024. The approval number is E-65836846-044-341665.

Following this, data collection began by contacting the managers responsible within the organization. Organizations were identified based on their willingness to participate and their relevance to the study's focus. Managers and HR representatives were contacted via email and formal meetings, where they were informed about the research objectives, confidentiality measures, and ethical considerations. Once approvals were granted, organizations facilitated the recruitment of participants. Employees were invited to participate through email notifications and internal communication channels. To ensure balanced representation across different departments and job roles, HR managers assisted in distributing invitations. Participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, minimizing potential bias in responses. A structured online questionnaire was used to collect data, ensuring ease of access and consistency in responses. The survey link was shared via email, company portals, and employee groups, allowing participants to complete the questionnaire at their convenience. To maximize response rates, reminders were sent periodically.

4. Findings

Hypotheses are tested through linear regression analysis. Nevertheless, before this, correlation coefficients between variables were calculated to determine whether relations existed in the expected

directions. Table 5 shows correlation coefficients. According to the results, naturally felt emotions are only related to deep acting positively ($r = .31$, $p < .01$). However, it is not related to other variables, which is contrary to expectations. Another exception is the positive relationship between deep acting and job dissatisfaction ($r = .12$, $p < .05$), which was expected to be negative. Besides, as expected, there are significant relationships between other variables, which provide a basis for hypothesis tests.

Table 5

Correlations and Descriptives

	Cronbach's α	*M*	*SD*	OP	JDS	SA	DA	NFE
OP	0.91	4.61	1.71	1				
JDS	0.87	3.27	1.76	0.32**	1			
SA	0.93	3.47	1.80	0.22**	0.39**	1		
DA	0.91	3.81	1.77	0.10*	0.12*	0.48**	1	
NFE	0.88	4.62	1.66	-0.02	-0.01	-0.06	0.31**	1

Note. M: Mean, SD: Standard Deviation, OP: Organizational Politics Perceptions, JDS: Job Dissatisfaction, SA: Surface Acting, DA: Deep Acting, NFE: Naturally Felt Emotions
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

Although correlation coefficients tell something about the existence and direction of the relationship between variables, they do not provide causality. For this reason, linear regression analysis was performed in the next stage through SPSS Hayes Process Macro V4.1, Model number 4. Since there is no significant relationship between naturally felt emotions, organizational politics perceptions, and job dissatisfaction, naturally felt emotions are excluded from the regression analysis. Tables 6 and 7 show the regression analysis results.

Table 6

Regression Analysis Results

	SA			DA			JDS		
	β	*F*	R^2	*β*	*F*	R^2	*β*	*F*	R^2
OP	0.24***	21.08***	0.05	0.10*	4.20*	0.01	0.25***		
SA							0.36***	35.14***	0.21
DA							-0.08		

Note. OP: Organizational Politics Perceptions, SA: Surface Acting, DA: Deep Acting, JDS: Job Dissatisfaction
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

Results in Table 6 indicate that perceptions of organizational politics have a significant and positive impact on job dissatisfaction ($\beta = .25$, $p < .001$). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is supported. In addition, perceptions of organizational politics have a positive impact on surface acting ($\beta = .24$, $p < .001$). At the same time, surface acting has a positive impact on job dissatisfaction ($\beta = .36$, $p < .001$), indicating a mediating role of surface acting between perceptions of organizational politics and job dissatisfaction. However, although perceptions of organizational politics have a positive impact on deep acting ($\beta = .10$, $p < .05$), deep acting does not significantly impact job dissatisfaction ($\beta = -.08$, $p > .05$). Therefore, deep acting does not mediate between perceptions of organizational politics and job dissatisfaction. Since naturally felt emotions do not have significant relationships with perceptions of organizational politics and job dissatisfaction, it is not possible to discuss the mediating role of naturally felt emotions between perceptions of organizational politics and job dissatisfaction. The direct, indirect, and total effect sizes of perceptions of organizational politics on job dissatisfaction, presented in Table 7, provide information about the significance of mediation.

Table 7

Direct, Indirect, and Total Effects

Effects	Path	*B*	*LLCI*	*ULCI*
Direct Effect	OP->JDS	0.2548	0.1606	0.3489
Indirect Effect	OP->SA->JDS	0.0878	0.0415	0.1440
	OP->DA->JDS	-0.0086	-0.0272	0.0039
Total Effect	OP->SA->JDS OP->DA->JDS	0.3339	0.2362	0.4316

Note. OP: Perceptions of Organizational Politics, JDS: Job Dissatisfaction, SA: Surface Acting, DA: Deep Acting, LLCI: Lower Level Confidence Interval, ULCI: Upper Level Confidence Interval

Considering the results in Table 7, an indirect effect must be statistically significant to indicate full mediation. When indirect and direct effect scores are significant simultaneously, this indicates partial mediation. Lower-level confidence interval (LLCI) and upper-level confidence interval (ULCI) scores help interpret the significance of the relationships. When there is "0" between LLCI and ULCI, it indicates an insignificant effect. However, in the opposite case, it indicates a significant effect (Hayes, 2022). Here, on the OP->JDS path, there is no "0" between LLCI and ULCI; therefore, the direct effect of OP on JDS is significant. Additionally, on the OP->SA->JDS path, there is no "0" between LLCI and ULCI. Therefore, the indirect effect of OP on JDS through SA is significant. Because perceptions of organizational politics positively and simultaneously affect surface acting and job dissatisfaction, and surface acting also positively impacts job dissatisfaction, there is a partial mediating role of surface acting in the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and job dissatisfaction. Accordingly, hypothesis 2 is supported. Because the OP->DA->JDS path is not significant, deep acting does not mediate the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and job dissatisfaction. Accordingly, hypothesis 3 is not supported. Since naturally felt emotions are not significantly related to perceptions of organizational politics and job dissatisfaction, there is no mediating role in the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and job dissatisfaction. Accordingly, hypothesis 4 is also not supported.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

This study builds on earlier research investigating the adverse effects of organizational politics on job dissatisfaction while introducing emotional labor as a mediator. Prior studies (Ferris et al., 2002; Vigoda, 2000) established that perceptions of organizational politics (POP) strongly correlate with employee stress, reduced job satisfaction, and increased turnover intentions. Our findings confirm this relationship, as POP was positively linked to job dissatisfaction.

A key distinction in this study is the examination of the mediating role of emotional labor. While previous research (Grandey & Gabriel, 2015; Hochschild, 1983) emphasized the psychological burden of emotional labor, our study provides an empirical demonstration of how different emotional labor strategies—surface acting, deep acting, and naturally felt emotions—modify the effect of POP on job dissatisfaction. Specifically, we found that surface acting significantly mediated the relationship, intensifying job dissatisfaction, whereas deep acting and naturally felt emotions did not mediate the relationship as expected. This contrasts with earlier studies suggesting deep acting could buffer against workplace stress (Humphrey et al., 2015). The lack of mediation for deep-seated emotions and naturally felt emotions suggests that, in politically charged environments, emotional regulation may not always mitigate dissatisfaction, indicating a complex dynamic between workplace politics and emotional adaptation.

For business professionals and human resources management practitioners, these findings highlight the importance of managing organizational politics to reduce employee dissatisfaction. Accordingly, organizations should minimize political behaviors by fostering transparent decision-making and merit-based rewards. Employees perceive fairness when promotions and recognition are based on competence rather than political influence. Employees must be trained in emotional regulation techniques that reduce reliance on surface acting, thereby preventing emotional exhaustion and dissatisfaction. Workplaces must be enhanced in terms of trust and communication by encouraging naturally felt emotions and fostering a more authentic and psychologically safe work culture. The psychological costs of emotional labor must be recognized and supported with mechanisms, such as employee wellness programs, to help employees manage stress effectively.

However, while this study contributes valuable insights, several limitations should be acknowledged. Our research relied on self-reported data collected at a single point in time, which limited the ability to draw causal conclusions. A longitudinal approach and the use of qualitative data would have provided a deeper understanding of how perceptions of organizational politics and emotional labor evolve and result in job dissatisfaction. The study encompassed organizations across twenty-seven industries, but there can be differences across sectors in terms of the display of political behaviors and their perceptions. Future studies can emphasize industry-specific analyses to obtain more specific results and to make more thorough inferences. The study was conducted in Türkiye. So, the results cannot explain conditions in other contexts because workplace politics may function differently across cultures. Therefore, future research in diverse cultural settings can help generalize the findings. Although previously developed, valid, and reliable scales were used, measuring naturally felt emotions remains a complex task. Future research can refine more precise assessment tools for emotional authenticity in the workplace.

Accordingly, in the future, longitudinal research designs can be employed to investigate how perceptions of organizational politics and emotional labor evolve over time and whether interventions can mitigate job dissatisfaction. Industry-specific examinations can be conducted to identify how politics and emotional labor vary across sectors like healthcare, finance, and manufacturing. Additionally, the roles of other factors in the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and job dissatisfaction can be investigated. For example, employees' individual features, such as their personality, can play a significant role as a moderator, or the organizational culture and leadership style can impact this relationship. Especially, emerging phenomena, such as the use of artificial intelligence in the workplace, can impact the way employees display political behaviors and are satisfied with their jobs. Therefore, the impact of such phenomena can be investigated in the future. Besides, cross-cultural studies can be conducted to examine how perceptions of politics intersect cultural norms, particularly in eastern versus western workplaces. Moreover, alternative emotional labor strategies, such as emotion regulation training, can be used to determine whether employees can develop resilience against workplace politics.

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