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Original Article

## Political skill in organizations: paths of an evolving concept

Habilidade política nas organizações: caminhos de um conceito em evolução

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### ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** To present a scientific mapping of the concept of Political Skill in Organizations and its measurement instrument to show how production has evolved, which themes cover this field, trends, and a global panorama of collaborations

**Methodology:** Statistical methods to delineate the structure of the scientific field and its dynamics. We used the RStudio (Bibliometrix package) and Vosviewer tools to examine metadata from two samples from the Scopus database ( $n_1=797$  and  $n_2=807$ ), covering the last 40 years of production on the subject

**Findings:** Political Skill in Organizations is a current and well-structured construct; its relationship constantly expands with several other concepts; its driving themes are job performance, power, and organizational politics. Emerging topics are stress, impression management, and leader political skill. We also highlighted the most influential authors and publications. The Political Skill Inventory measurement instrument remains widely used in different contexts. However, there need to be more collaborations in Latin America.

**Originality:** An up-to-date analysis of the paths and scope of a concept in conjunction with its measurement instrument promotes theoretical-empirical integration and provides insights and starting points for researchers interested in organizational politics.

**Keywords:** Political skill; Organizational politics; Scientific mapping; Scopus

### RESUMO

**Finalidade:** Apresentar um mapeamento científico acerca do conceito Habilidade Política nas Organizações e seu instrumento de medida, para evidenciar como a produção evoluiu, que temáticas abrangem esse campo, tendências e panorama global de colaborações.

**Metodologia:** Aplicação de um conjunto de métodos estatísticos para delinear a estrutura do campo

científico e sua dinâmica. As ferramentas RStudio (Bibliometrix package) e Vosviewer foram utilizadas para examinar metadados de duas amostras da base de dados Scopus ( $n_1=797$  e  $n_2=807$ ), abrangendo os últimos 40 anos de produção sobre a temática.

**Resultados:** Habilidade Política nas Organizações é um construto atual e bem estruturado; sua relação com diversos outros conceitos é constantemente ampliada; seus temas motores são performance no trabalho, poder e política organizacional. Os tópicos emergentes são estresse, gerenciamento de impressão e habilidade política do líder. Autores e publicações mais influentes são evidenciados no estudo. O instrumento de medida Political Skill Inventory permanece amplamente utilizado em diversos contextos, entretanto há uma carência de colaborações na América Latina.

**Originalidade :** Uma análise atualizada sobre os caminhos e a abrangência de um conceito em conjunto com seu instrumento de mensuração promove integração teórico-empírica e promove insights e pontos de partida para pesquisadores interessados em política organizacional.

**Palavras-chave:** Habilidade política; Política organizacional; Mapeamento científico; Scopus

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Work's increasingly social and ambiguous nature has heightened the emphasis on understanding and navigating organizations' social fabric (Grant et al., 2010). In this context, political skill emerges as an interpersonal attribute that allows individuals to secure resources successfully, influence others at work, and adjust their organizational roles to ensure greater effectiveness (Liu et al., 2022; Moraes & Teixeira, 2020; Ferris et al., 2012).

Although organizational politics eventually result in detrimental effects on the organization, it is considered an inexorable phenomenon to the dynamics of the work environment, capable of contributing to effective decisions (Zettler & Lang, 2013). The diversity of interests and the scarcity of resources are inherent components of the world of work. In addition to these factors, political skill is considered a necessary component to resolving such organizational clashes since it contributes to the construction of relationships and conflict resolution (Qamar et al., 2022; Moraes & Teixeira, 2020; Hochwarter, 2012).

Organizational politics emerged as a management studies research topic in the 1960s, although in an embryonic manner. Forty years ago, Pfeffer (1981) introduced the concept Political Skill in Organizations (PSO) into the business and management

literature. However, this theme only began to be systematically investigated when, starting in 1999, Gerald Ferris and his colleagues developed a research program to establish a more grounded understanding of this important concept. Since then, the number of scientific publications on the subject has grown, especially in areas related to the Applied Social Sciences. Much of this productivity is due to quantitative research using the PSI - Political Skill Inventory, developed by Ferris et al. (2005).

Given the above, this article aims to present a scientific mapping of the last 40 years of publications on PSO and its most widely used measurement instrument, the PSI. Therefore, a comprehensive review will be conducted based on bibliometric results extracted from the Scopus database to answer the following research questions: I – How has the topic evolved scientifically? II – What are the most influential publications? III – What research topics comprise this field, and what are the trends? IV – What is the global panorama of collaborations?

As a contribution resulting from the analysis, we expect to highlight new perspectives, explore possible developments and themes in evidence, and thus provide insights to researchers and those interested in the subject.

## **2 DEFINITION OF POLITICAL SKILL IN ORGANIZATIONS - PSO**

The term “political” adopted in this study differs from the definition of the means used by public politicians and their parties. Here the term refers to the political animal deduced by Aristotle: human beings need things and others, and are therefore needy and imperfect, seeking community to achieve completeness (Cassin, 1999). Thus, the PSO concept alludes to the ability to effectively understand others at work and use that understanding to motivate employees to act in ways that advance their personal or organizational goals. (Ferris et al., 2012; Harris et al., 2016). It is a skill with a comprehensive pattern of social competencies, cognitive, affective, and behavioral manifestations that directly affect work outcomes (Ferris et al., 2007). In an underlying

way, political skill relies on social astuteness, interpersonal influence, and the ability to demonstrate sincerity (Ferris et al., 2007; Munyon et al., 2015).

Pfeffer (1981) and Mintzberg (1983) are credited with appropriately developing and introducing the Political Skill construct. However, it was set aside for a few decades as academia needed to seek additional specifications and conceptualizations actively. A hiatus of empirical research on the subject occurred, a situation that began to change in 1999 with the presentation of the initial development of a political skill measurement instrument presented at the 59th annual meeting of the Academy of Management in Chicago (Ferris et al., 1999).

From then on, Ferris and colleagues established a research program on the subject at Florida State University, resulting in a one-dimensional scale to measure the political skill of leaders (Ahearn, 2004) and in the following year, the instrument Political Skill Inventory was developed and validated with a multidimensional, broader, and generalist perspective, which is why it has become the most used measure to date (Ferris et al., 2005). The measure has 18 items distributed in four dimensions: Interpersonal Influence, Social Astuteness, Networking Ability, and Genuine Sincerity. Examples of items: “It is easy for me to develop a good rapport with most people”; “When communicating with others, I try to be genuine in what I say and do” and “I am good at building relationships with influential people at work”.

### **3 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES**

#### **3.1 The option for the Scopus database**

ScScopus is among the largest curated abstracts and citation databases, with extensive global and regional coverage of scientific journals, conference proceedings, and books, ensuring that only the highest quality data is indexed through rigorous content selection and reassessment by an independent content selection and Advisory Board. In addition, extensive quality assurance processes continuously monitor

and improve all data elements in Scopus (Baas et al., 2020). As a result, the content constantly expands and enriches, whose titles, even if already indexed, are reevaluated to exclude journals of low quality or those that must comply with good practices and the integrity of science.

More than 3500 academic and government organizations and hundreds of funding and evaluation bodies use Scopus. Its data refer to 105 countries, 40 languages, and large renowned publishers such as Elsevier, Springer, Taylor & Francis, and Sage Publications. As research becomes increasingly global, interdisciplinary, and collaborative, using Scopus allows for covering essential publications from around the world in bibliometric surveys.

### **3.2 Research design**

Data were collected from the Scopus database on February 11, 2023, concerning the following topics: title, abstract, and keywords. In order to achieve the objectives of the article, we selected two datasets according to the protocols below.

a) Overview and evolution of the concept (sample 1): since it is a construct, the term “Political Skill” must be entered together because this is how the organizational literature uses them; it also avoids a large number of situations in which the context and area of study do not present a link between the descriptors, since “political” often refers to public or party politics, and “skill” is a term that recurs to a myriad of areas diverse from the scope proposed in this study. To exemplify, a search with the English terms “Political” and “Skill” separately results in 11.257 works dating from the year 1945 and covering areas such as chemistry, medicine, education, and political science in publications ranging from astronomy to engineering and immunology. The selection of the portfolio of sample 1 used searches with the descriptor “Political Skill” in the singular and plural in English, Portuguese, and Spanish. The dataset was systematically revised to remove documents in which the term “political” referred to public policy. The final result is a set of 797 publications.

b) Overview of PSI studies (sample 2): for this portfolio, we first looked for the article that introduces the PSI measurement instrument, “Development and validation of the political skill inventory” (Ferris et al., 2005). From this result, all 807 citations to this study were selected and exported for analysis.

The data with the parameters previously outlined for the study portfolio were collected from the Scopus database and processed in Vosviewer version 1.6.19 (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010) and RStudio’s Bibliometrix package version 4.1 (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). In the analyses, we treated the following information: annual growth of publications on the subject; main sources; thematic map; main keywords related to the topic (co-occurrence); principal authors; coauthorship network, prominent publications of the most fruitful author; major recent publications.

## **4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

### **4.1 Overview of the PSO construct (sample 1)**

The first sample of the research comprises 797 publications, most concentrated in 637 articles (80%), and the others distributed in 66 books chapter (8%), 43 reviews (5%), 32 conference papers (4%), and 19 books (2%). The results come from 139 different sources, covering the main areas classified in Scopus as Business, Management and Accounting, Social Sciences, and Psychology. We decided to exclude retractions of articles, errata, and notes for not presenting complete content. Table 1 shows the five sources with the most publications on the subject. They have a high impact factor, considering the CiteScore and JCR metrics – both of great relevance and use.

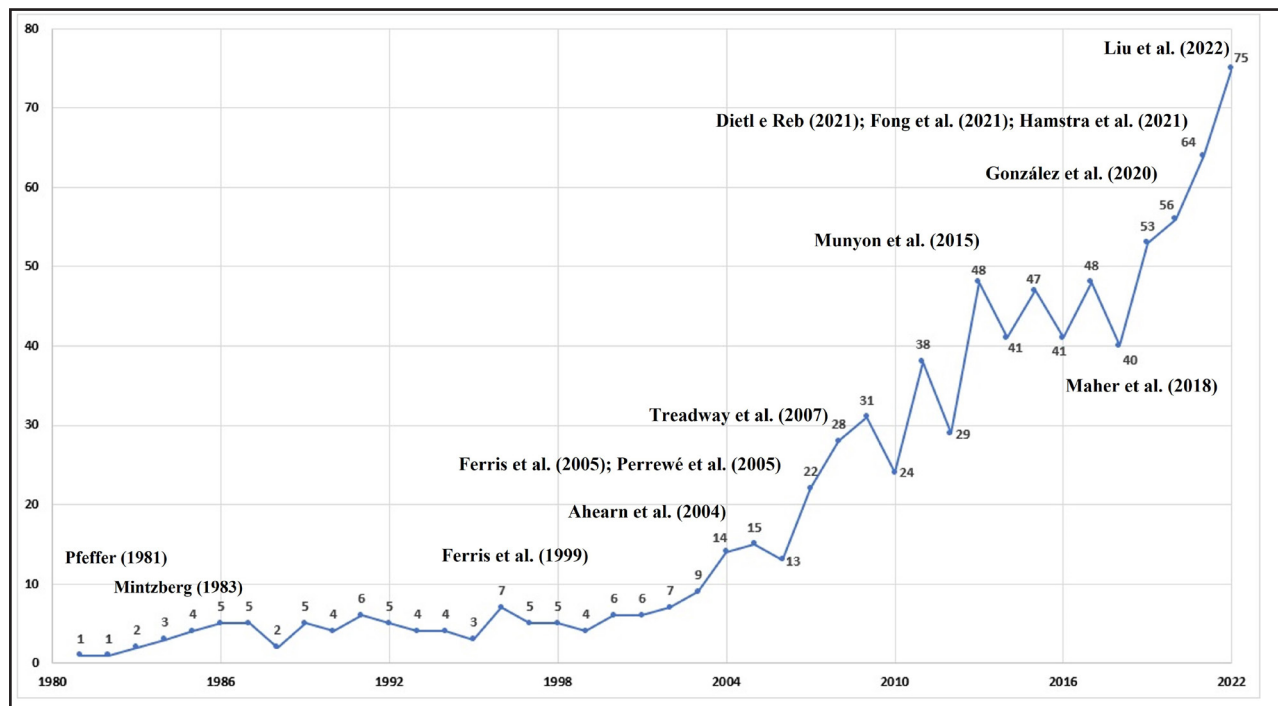
Table 1 – Main sources

| Source                                           | Publisher         | Number of publications | CiteScore | JCR  |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-----------|------|
| Journal of Vocational Behavior                   | Elsevier          | 15                     | 8.4       | 6.0  |
| Frontiers in Psychology                          | Frontiers Media   | 15                     | 4.0       | 4.2  |
| Journal of Management                            | Sage Publications | 14                     | 21.4      | 11.8 |
| Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies | Sage Publications | 12                     | 4.8       | 3.9  |
| Career Development International                 | Emerald Group     | 12                     | 4.2       | 4.0  |
| Journal of Organizational Behavior               | John Wiley & Sons | 10                     | 11.8      | 8.2  |
| Journal of Managerial Psychology                 | Emerald Group     | 9                      | 3.8       | 4.3  |

Source: Elaborated by the authors with data from Scopus

As for the annual growth of publications on the subject, the results range from seminal studies to the current production and cover a period from 1958 to 2022, as shown in Figure 1, in which we also pointed out some of the references discussed in this article.

Figure 1 – Annual evolution of the number of publications



Source: Elaborated by the authors with data from Scopus

In the initial years, the role of political skill is approached mainly under the prism of the ability to articulate in the pursuit of objectives, as, for example, in the construction of an electric power distribution system (McDonald, 1958) or the participation of students in the public governance of educational institutions (Chesler, 1973). However, in this period, the concept still did not have a typical organizational characterization, which was gradually built in the 1980s and 1990s (e.g., Pfeffer, 1981; Mintzberg, 1983; Young, 1989; Berguer, 1991; Russell & Eby, 1993), evolving to more robust definitions with more empirical approaches such as that of Ferris et al. (1999).

Until 2001, the annual average of publications was three articles per year. However, the theme showed significant growth in the following years, especially between 2004 and 2005, when the first instruments to measure PSO appeared (Ahearn et al., 2004; Ferris et al., 2005). Since then, research permeated typical organizational issues, meta-analyses, and psychometric validations and evolved into new themes such as narcissism, silencing, and mentoring (Treadway et al., 2007; Munyon et al., 2015; González et al., 2020; Hamstra et al., 2021; Liu et al., 2022). In the last five years, there has been a constant increase in the number of works linked to Political Skills, reaching an annual average of 56 publications per year. Table 2 groups the result of the initial years and production groupings every five years.

**Table 2** - Average number of publications per period

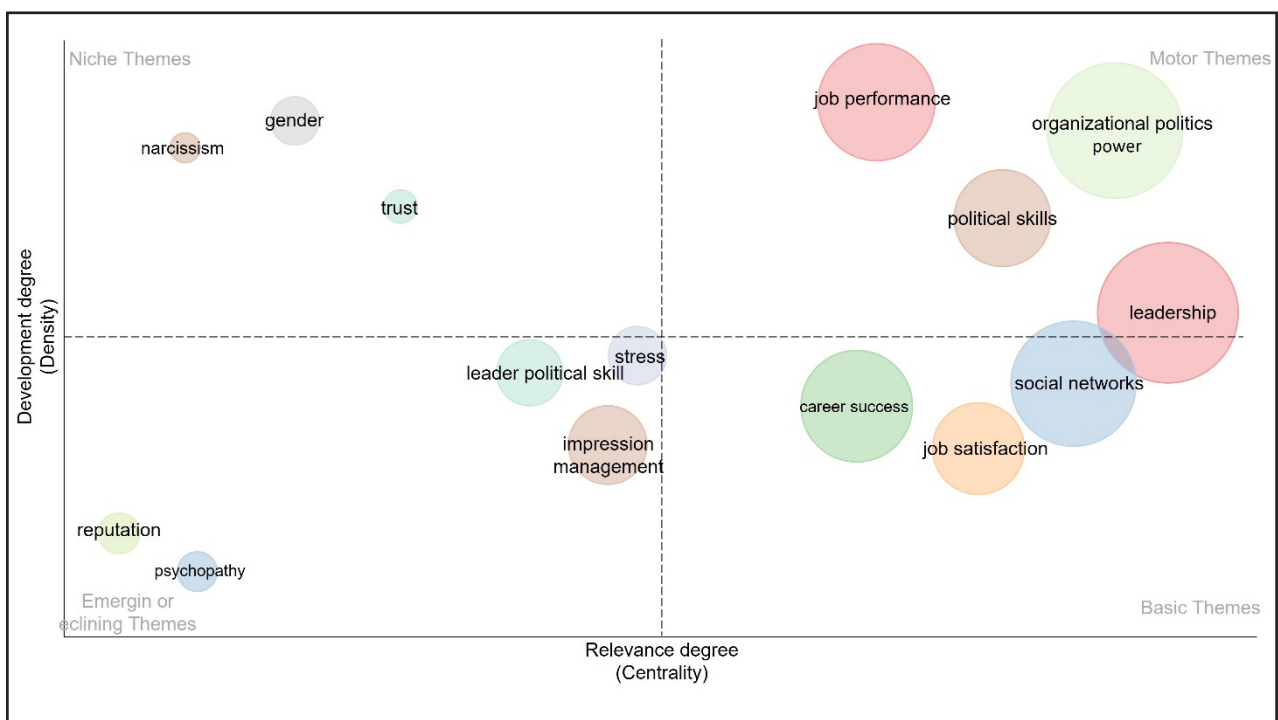
| <b>Period</b> | <b>Number of publications</b> | <b>Average publications/year</b> |
|---------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1958 - 2001   | 104                           | 3                                |
| 2002 - 2006   | 58                            | 12                               |
| 2007 - 2011   | 143                           | 29                               |
| 2012 - 2016   | 206                           | 41                               |
| 2017 - 2022   | 336                           | 56                               |

Source: Elaborated by the authors with data from Scopus

To provide an overview of the leading research interests involving PSO, we

searched among the 1502 keywords in the database for the 250 most used with at least 15 occurrences to build a thematic map (Figure 2). Two dimensions delimit the structure and classification of research topic groupings: centrality and density. The first defines the importance of a theme in developing the theoretical field, and the second refers to the internal cohesion of the words composing a theme (Cobo, López-Herrera, Herrera-Viedma & Herrera, 2011).

Figure 2 – Thematic Map of PSO field



Source: Prepared by the authors with the Bibliometrix package

The upper left quadrant encompasses very specialized and peripheral subjects to the theme. Thus, issues related to “gender”, “narcissism”, and “trust” are investigated in isolation in this scientific field. Finally, the lower left quadrant presents declining or emerging themes (Cobo et al., 2011). The low centrality and density of “reputation”, and “psychopathy” indicates that fewer researchers address these issues. On the other hand, “stress”, “leader political skill” and “impression management” are objects of emerging studies in the area. Table 3 brings the scope of subjects in this last cluster.

Table 3 - Emerging themes in the PSO field

| Theme                  | Scope                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Authors                                                                                                                                               |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Leader political skill | It is opening new avenues considering the importance of political skill in the face of phenomena such as Machiavellianism and narcissism. The interaction of the concept with organizational commitment and its impact on career success are other examples of the aspects under development.                                                                                     | (Treadway, Seitz, Xu, Hochwarter, Ferris, & Buckley, 2021; Genau, Blickle, Schütte, & Meurs, 2021; Chen, Jiang, & Wu, 2021; Chang, Tang, Cheng, 2022) |
| Stress                 | The emerging role of PSO in the assessment of stressors and coping mechanisms brings a broader perspective to studies on challenges and obstacles in the work environment.                                                                                                                                                                                                        | (Haq, Zainab, Jan, Anwar, & Sharif, 2021; Clarke & Higgs, 2020; Summers, Munyon, Brouer, Pahng, & Ferris, 2020)                                       |
| Impression management  | Individuals care about the images others have of them, as impression management processes allow individuals to adapt to social norms, avoid blame or gain credit, maintain or improve their self-concept, and strategically exercise social power and influence. Impression management strategies and political skills are the tools used together by employees in organizations. | (Chen & Gao, 2020; Kim, LePine, & Chun, 2020; Maher, Gallagher, Rossi, Ferris, & Perrewé, 2018; Tedeschi, 2013)                                       |

Source: Elaborated by the author with data from Scopus

The themes in the upper right quadrant are well-developed and essential for structuring a field of research. They are known as the motor themes of the specialty, as they have strong centrality and high density. In addition, the presence of themes in this quadrant implies that they are externally related to concepts applicable to other closely related themes. Table 4 brings the scope of these themes and authors with relevant contributions to such knowledge.

Table 4 – Motor Themes in the PSO field

| Theme                   | Scope                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Authors                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Job Performance         | The presence or absence of factors that influence employee performance is a recurring research problem in PSO approaches, especially in terms of personality traits and skill development.                                                                                  | (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007; Smith & Webster, 2017; Blickle, Meurs, Zettler, Solga, & Ferris, 2008; Wihler, Blickle, Ewen, & Mützel, 2022)           |
| Organizational Politics | Politics in organizations permeates relationships and is interpreted as a result of the perception that individuals have of their work environment. Because of this characteristic, it is considered both dysfunctional and beneficial to the development of company goals. | (Munyon, Summers, Thompson, & Ferris, 2015; Brouer, Harris, & Kacmar, 2011; Meisler, 2022; Atinc, Darrat, Fuller, & Parker, 2010; Kaur & Kank, 2022) |
| Power                   | Power is considered a crucial factor for organizational actors. It is related to greater security, better financial rewards, and the ability to influence others more easily and perform work more effectively.                                                             | (Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Shaughnessy, Treadway, Breland, & Perrewé, 2017; O'Reilly & Pfeffer, 2021; Genau et al., 2022)                              |
| Leadership              | The need to assume intermediation roles and transit through different organizational locus makes leadership issues strongly related to political skill.                                                                                                                     | (Gardner, Fischer, & Hunt, 2009; Hall, Blass, Ferris, & Massengale, 2004; Dietl, & Reb, 2021; Genau, Blickle, Schütte, & Meurs, 2021)                |

Source: Elaborated by the authors

Finally, in the Basic Themes cluster, located in the lower right quadrant of figure 2, there are the basic and transversal themes for that field (Cobo et al., 2011), detailed in table 5: career success, job satisfaction, and social networks.

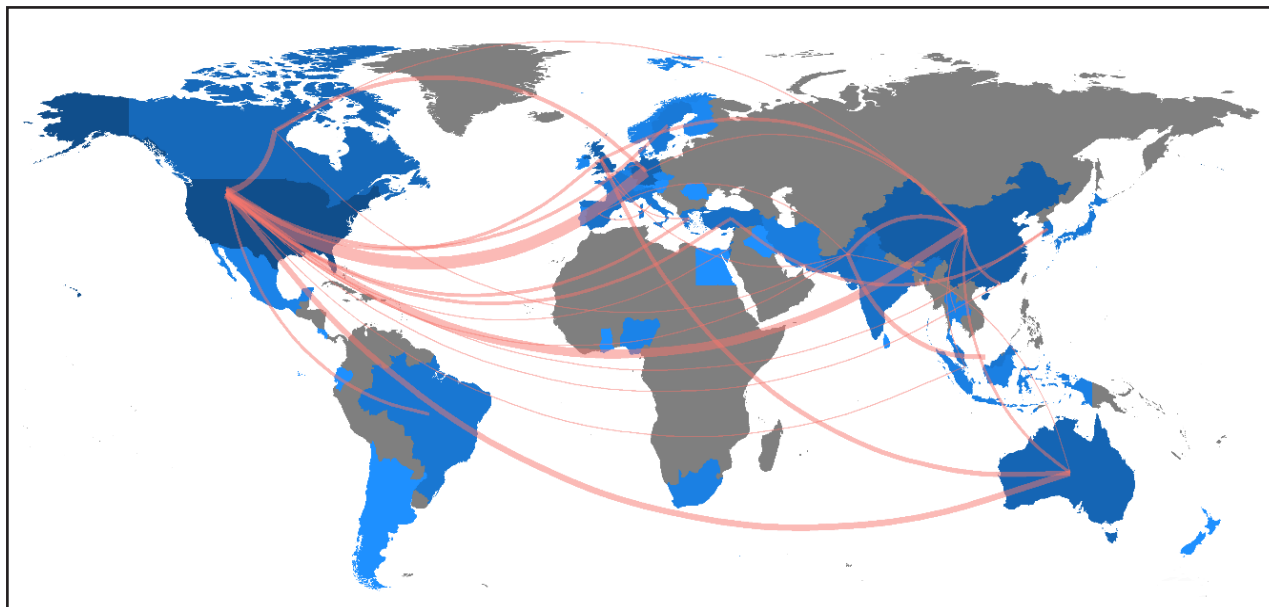
Table 5 – Basic themes in PSO field

| Theme            | Scope                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Authors                                                                                               |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Career success   | Highlights that Political skills significantly correlated with career success. However, there are gaps regarding these differences across cultures, sectors of the economy, hierarchical levels, and groups. Research moves towards guiding the practice of business management and individuals to improve their political skills in a targeted way in order to promote their career success.                              | (Chen, Jiang, & Wu, 2021; Blickle, Oerder, & Summers, 2010; Lee, Yun, & Kim, 2019; Kaur & Kang, 2022) |
| Job satisfaction | Organizational politics recurrently provoke significant emotional reactions, which have immediate effects on the level of satisfaction experienced at work. Consequently, job satisfaction represents the most frequently studied attitudinal outcome concerning political perceptions. Even so, the research field has spaces to fill when considering the PSO and its relation to new constructs linked to satisfaction. | (Wang & McChamp, 2019; Li & Ma, 2019; Gallagher & Laird, 2008; Atshan et al., 2022)                   |
| Social networks  | Political skill directly influences the way employees build and use social networking in the performance of their activities. This relationship, in addition to being an important source of resources and information, also creates a social identity that encourages a strong sense of belonging and cohesion among individuals in the organization.                                                                     | (Wei, Chiang, & Wu, 2012; Fang, Chi, Chen, & Baron, 2015; Munyon et al., 2021; Jiang et al., 2022)    |

Source: Elaborated by the authors

The filter shows publications distributed in 53 countries. The United States, China, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Australia have the most collaborations. Figure 3 illustrates the world panorama: red lines indicate the production of articles in international partnerships, and the thickness represents the intensity of publications in partnership. In the database used, no collaborations in South America were identified, except Brazil, in which bibliometrix reports three partnerships (Perrewé et al., 2004; Perrewé et al., 2005; Maher et al., 2018), all with the United States, which highlights a significant gap regarding internationalization via cross-cultural approaches.

Figure 3 – Map of researcher/country collaboration



Source: Prepared by the author with the Bibliometrix package

About the most fruitful authors, the sample includes the work of 165 researchers, highlighting Gerald R. Ferris, with 10% of the publications indicated in the search, affiliated with the Florida State University and author of the main measure of political skill to date, the PSI (Ferris et al., 2005). Table 6 presents the ten most prolific authors considering the number of publications within the search criteria and the h-index of each researcher. As for affiliations, there is a predominance of the USA and German institutions.

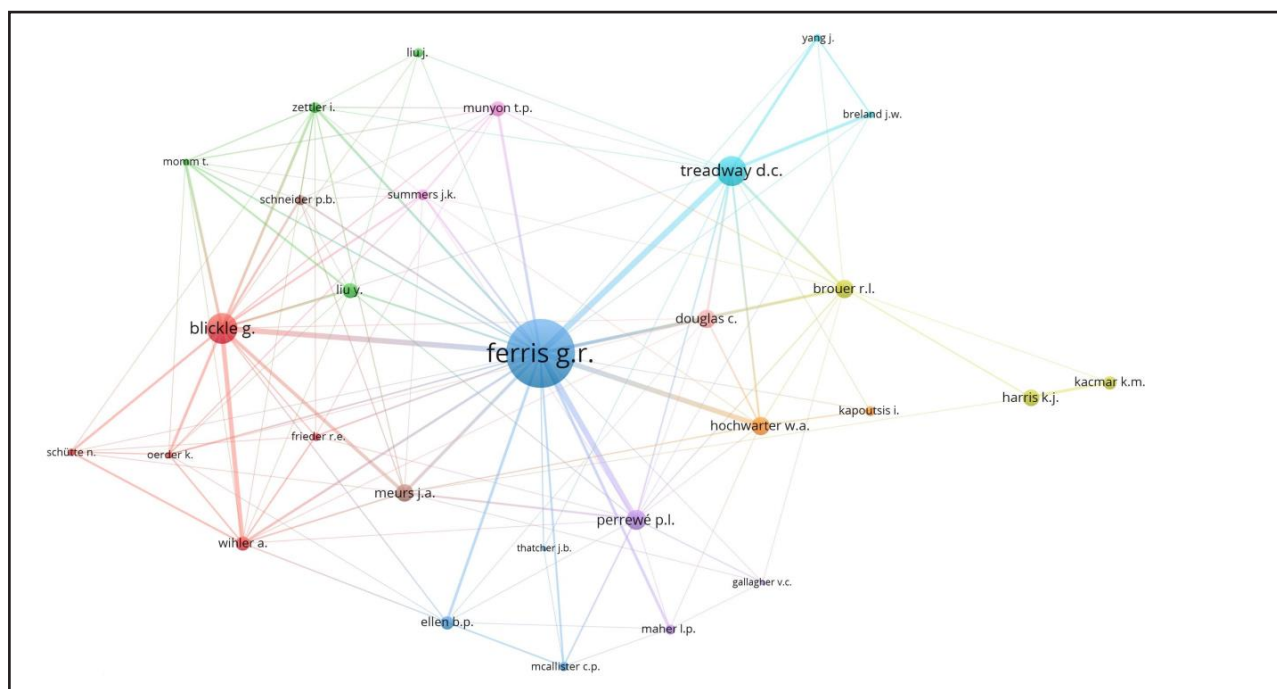
A well-articulated coauthorship network among the researchers in the sample indicates the importance of networking for the evolution of studies on the concept. Ferris, Blickle, Treadway, Perrewé, and Hochwarter stand out regarding productivity in the subject and terms of networking. Figure 4 brings the links between the main authors. Larger circles and names, as well as more prominent colors, indicate stronger and recurring connections.

Table 6 – Number of publications by author (top 10)

| Author           | h-index <sup>1</sup> | Affiliation                     | Number of publications | %   |
|------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------|-----|
| Ferris, G.R.     | 76                   | Florida State University (USA)  | 78                     | 10% |
| Blickle, G.      | 24                   | Universität Bonn (Germany)      | 33                     | 4%  |
| Treadway, D.C.   | 32                   | University of Mississippi (USA) | 29                     | 4%  |
| Perrewé, P.L.    | 46                   | Florida State University (USA)  | 21                     | 3%  |
| Hochwarter, W.A. | 49                   | Florida State University (USA)  | 17                     | 2%  |
| Brouer, R.L.     | 19                   | Florida State University (USA)  | 15                     | 2%  |
| Meurs, J.A.      | 17                   | University of Mississippi (USA) | 14                     | 2%  |
| Harris, K.J.     | 35                   | Indiana University (USA)        | 14                     | 2%  |
| Wihler, A.       | 14                   | Universität Bonn (Germany)      | 12                     | 2%  |
| Summers, J.K.    | 16                   | Iowa State University (USA)     | 10                     | 1%  |

Source: Elaborated by the authors

Figure 4 – Visualization of the coauthorship network (sample 1)



Source: Scopus database. Prepared by the author with Vosviewer software

<sup>1</sup> The h-index is a proposal to quantify the productivity and impact of scientists based on their most cited articles. In short, the h-index represents the number of articles with citations greater than or equal to this number.

Paying attention to the publications in which the most prolific author, Gerald R. Ferris, we can highlight that the study that presents the development of PSI is the most cited. The other contributions bring evidence of the importance of the construct PSO as an intrinsic factor to the organizational reality, with relationships and predictive effects in several other behaviors related to the work environment. Table 7 presents the ten most cited works among the 78 mentioned in this author's consultation and summarizes the findings within the theme of this bibliometry.

**Table 7 – Gerald R. Ferris's most cited publications (authorship and co-authorship)**

to be continued...

| <b>Article</b>                                                                                                                                                   | <b>Citations</b> | <b>Research Synthesis</b>                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Authors</b>         |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Development and validation of the political skill inventory                                                                                                      | 836              | Conceptualizes PSO and develops the multidimensional measuring instrument Political Skills Inventory (PSI).                                                                                   | Ferris et al. (2005)   |
| Political skill in organizations                                                                                                                                 | 650              | Characterizes the construct Political Skill in organizational studies and expands its theoretical framework.                                                                                  | Ferris et al. (2007)   |
| Leader political skill and team performance                                                                                                                      | 332              | Investigates the impact and role of Political Skill of organizational leaders and their effects on teams; creates a specific one-dimensional instrument to measure the concept among leaders. | Ahearn et al. (2004)   |
| Neutralizing job stressors: Political skill as an antidote to the dysfunctional consequences of role conflict                                                    | 261              | Points out the moderating feature of PSO in reducing negative effects in role conflict tensions.                                                                                              | Perrewé et al. (2004)  |
| Comparing the validity of multiple social effectiveness constructs in the prediction of managerial job performance                                               | 207              | Points to PSO as an important predictor of administrative performance                                                                                                                         | Semadar et al. (2006)  |
| The moderating role of subordinate political skill on supervisors' impressions of subordinate ingratiation and ratings of subordinate interpersonal facilitation | 210              | It brings evidence that subordinates with high Political Skill are less prone to ingratiating behavior or feelings of manipulation.                                                           | Treadway et al. (2007) |

**Table 7** – Gerald R. Ferris’s most cited publications (authorship and co-authorship)

| conclusion...                                                                                                      |           |                                                                                                                                                           |                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Article                                                                                                            | Citations | Research Synthesis                                                                                                                                        | Authors                |
| Leader political skill and employee reactions                                                                      | 173       | Presents empirical results about the effect of organizational leaders' political skill on employee reaction.                                              | Treadway et al. (2004) |
| Political will, political skill, and political behavior                                                            | 162       | Relates Political Skill, Political Will, and Political Behaviors at work and their effects on intrinsic motivation and need for achievement.              | Treadway et al. (2005) |
| Political Skill and Work Outcomes: A Theoretical Extension, Meta-Analytic Investigation, and Agenda for the Future | 191       | Meta-analytic study. Points out the positive relationships of PSO with factors such as self-efficacy, job satisfaction, commitment, and job productivity. | Munyon et al. (2015)   |
| Social networks within sales organizations: Their development and importance for salesperson performance           | 182       | Explores the role of political skill in the development of intra-organizational relationships and the performance of salespeople.                         | Bolander et al. (2015) |

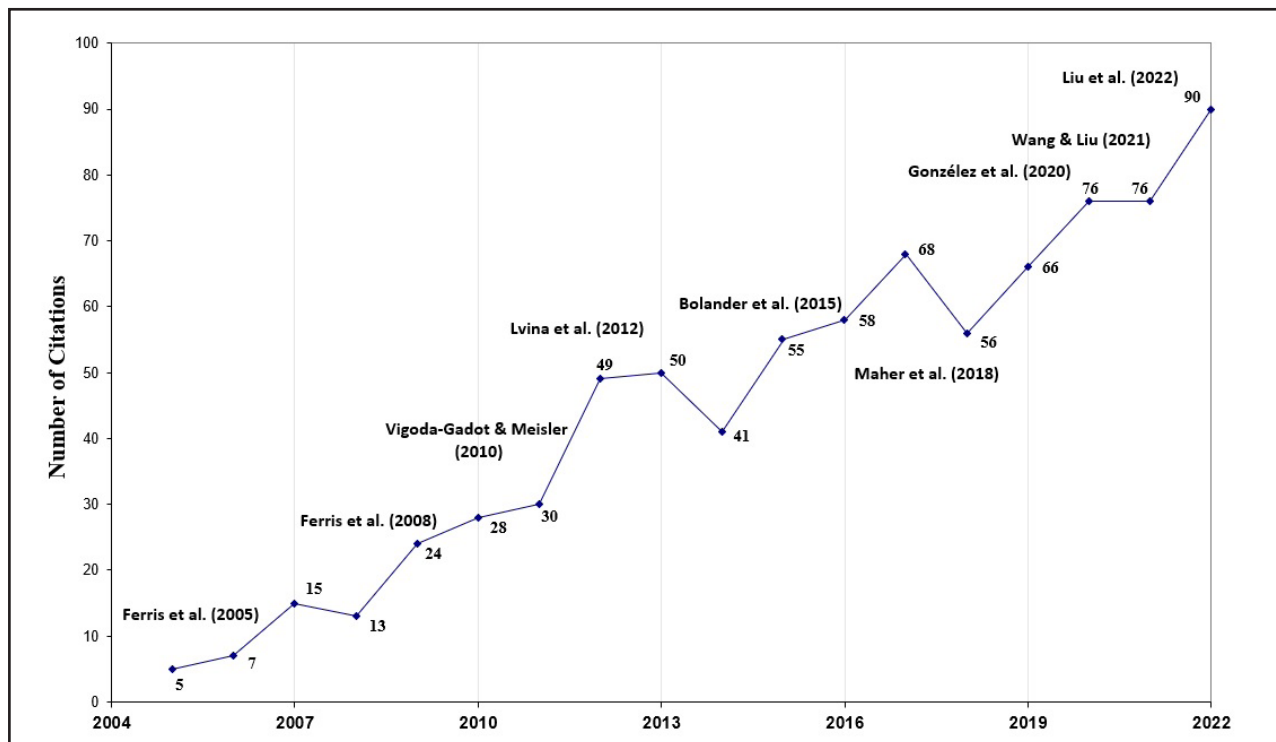
Source: Scopus database

Table 7 and figure 4 allow us to position Gerald R. Ferris as one of the main references on the subject because he has: seminal conceptualization studies, a vast coauthorship network, and constant productivity in different contexts

## 4.2 Political Skill Inventory (PSI) Overview - sample 2

Organizational studies recurrently use quantitative strategies to investigate the relationships between concepts and problems typical of this area of knowledge. The emergence of the PSI has enormously contributed to the increase in research on the role of political skills in the work environment. The publication “Development and validation of the political skill inventory” (Ferris et al., 2005) with the development of a tool to measure PSO has been referenced 807 times since 2005 (Figure 5), with an average of 45 citations per year, and is currently the most widely used political skill measurement instrument in the world. This second sample comprises 704 articles (87%), 69 books chapter (9%), 19 conference papers (2%), and 15 books (2%).

Figure 5 – Evolution of citations to the Political Skill Inventory



Source: Elaborated by the authors

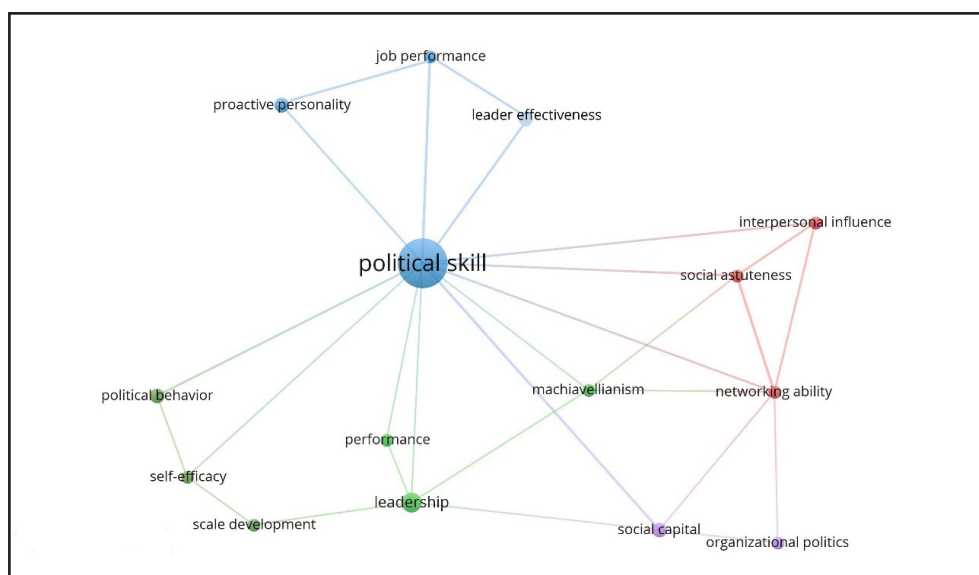
Subsequent empirical studies have supported the construct validity and criterion-related validity of the PSI (Ferris et al., 2008) as well as its cross-cultural generalizability involving Germany, Russia, Turkey, China, the United States, and Spain (Blickle et al., 2011; Lvina et al., 2012; Shi & Chen, 2012; González et al., 2020). A reduced version of the PSI with eight items was created by Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler (2010) and used in studies with civil servants in Israel and designers in China (Wang & Liu, 2021). We also identified a 12-items adapted version by Bolander et al. (2015), later applied in a more significant number of contexts. Unfortunately, in those versions, the occurrence of psychometric validation of the instrument was not evident.

We investigated a specific clipping of the empirical production with the PSI in Latin America from a systematic search to identify the place of collection of samples in the documents of the dataset. In Portuguese, we identified three studies with the classic PSO approach. The first two investigated the concept in the context of a stress-related program in three large oil companies (Perrewé et al., 2004; Perrewé et al., 2005) but still

using the initial scale of Ferris et al. (1999). The most recent one addresses the PSO's predictive role in impression management and uses a sample of human resources professionals (Maher et al., 2018). In the latter case, the measurement instrument was the PSI (Ferris et al., 2005). In the three articles, the questionnaires underwent translation/back-translation processes, but there is no indication of psychometric validation. Finally, in Spanish, it was possible to identify only one investigation among young entrepreneurs in Mexico (López-Lemus, 2019). In this case, we found a scale validated with Confirmatory Factor Analysis.

In order to verify the current state of academic productions related to the development of the PSI, we analyzed the keywords of publications that cite the instrument in 2021 and 2022. As a result, it is possible to identify new co-occurrences, such as mindfulness (Dietl & Reb, 2021) and adaptive performance (Kranefeld & Blickle, 2022), signaling the investigation of new concepts regarding PSO. The graphical analysis of the co-occurrences (figure 6) had keywords with at least two occurrences as selection criteria.

Figure 6 – Graphical analysis of the co-occurrence of the keywords in the 2021-2022 publications



Source: Prepared by the author with Vosviewer software

The co-occurrences present clusters centered on classic issues from organizational literature, such as job performance, proactivity (Twemlow et al., 2022), and leadership (Rose et al., 2022). In addition, the use of PSI also appears in new approaches to social capital (Zhao et al., 2022), self-efficacy (Jawahar & Mohammed, 2022), and Machiavellianism (Genau et al., 2021). Finally, terms linked to the core of the Political Skill concept, such as networking and interpersonal influence, remain among the most identified keywords (Qamar et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022).

The most recent uses of PSI appear in journals with good metrics linked to Organizational Psychology or Human Resource Development. The contexts studied span Europe, the United States, and Asia. The research subjects are from different areas, such as nurses, employees of technical areas, and public service, but there is a relative predominance in studies with leaders. Table 8 brings recent publications with PSI applications in 2021 and 2022 in high-impact journals with at least two citations.

Table 8 – Recent publications with PSI application

| to be continued... |                                                              |                                                        |                            |           |      |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|------|
| Context            | Research subjects                                            | Journal                                                | Reference                  | Citescore | JCR  |
| Germany            | Workers of diversified activities                            | Knowledge Management Research and Practice             | Kranefeld & Blickle (2022) | 2,7       | 1,9  |
| Pakistan           | Employees in the IT and education services sector            | Knowledge Management Research and Practice             | Ain et al. (2022)          | 4,3       | 8,7  |
| United States      | Salesperson full-time employed in business-to-business sales | Journal of Business Research                           | Good & Schwepker Jr (2022) | 11,2      | 11,0 |
| China              | Employees in a state-owned enterprise                        | The International Journal of Human Resource Management | Kwan et al. (2022)         | 7,8       | 6,0  |
| New Zealand        | Public Sector Managers                                       | Review of Public Personnel Administration              | Plimmer et al. (2022)      | 5,8       | 4,1  |

Table 8 – Recent publications with PSI application

| Context        | Research subjects                               | Journal                                               | Reference             | conclusion |     |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|------------|-----|
|                |                                                 |                                                       |                       | Citescore  | JCR |
| United States  | Employees in leadership roles                   | Human Relations                                       | Dietl and Reb (2021)  | 7,1        | 7,1 |
| China          | Nurses                                          | Human Relations                                       | Sun et al. (2021)     | 7,1        | 7,1 |
| Netherlands    | Supervisors and subordinates                    | Applied Psychology                                    | Fong et al. (2021)    | 5.3        | 3,2 |
| Western Europe | Managers and employees                          | Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology | Hamstra et al. (2021) | 5,1        | 4,6 |
| China          | Employees in technical and administrative areas | Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology | Wu et al. (2021)      | 5,1        | 4,6 |

Source: Scopus database

## 5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The objective of the present article was to present an overview of the publications on Political skill and its most widely used measurement instrument, the PSI. We used the Scopus database for its accomplishment, from which we collected two samples for bibliometric analysis. The classification of main sources is Administration and Accounting, Social Sciences, and Psychology.

The study showed that the PSO has reports of interaction with essential workplace factors such as career, personality, and situational characteristics. Performance at work, power, organizational politics, and leadership are its main driving themes. The basic and crosscutting themes in this field are career success, job satisfaction, and social networks. In addition to its association with fundamental themes, it is also

possible to verify connections with current themes such as mindfulness, narcissism, and emotional intelligence. Finally, the results show that impression management, stress, and leader political skill are emerging themes in investigations related to PSO, whose presence in organizational studies a cross-cultural character has consolidated by authors who deal with behavior, ability, social interaction at work, and effectiveness.

The various co-occurrences identified in the keyword analysis suggest that the construct presents itself as a promising topic in Organizational Behavior scientific research. The concept presents a solid network of prolific researchers, strengthening its theoretical framework and highlighting its relevance. Among the data analyzed, it was impossible to identify collaborative networks in South America, except for three occurrences in Brazil. We identified the author Gerald R. Ferris as the most prolific on the subject - his works are a valuable reference, both with seminal studies conceptualizing and developing the measurement instrument and with recent research in different contexts.

The broad international use of the PSI stands out, continuously proving its construct validity and the possibility of application in different scenarios, with a predominance in situations involving leadership, relationship with subordinates, and career. It was possible to identify that the use of the measurement instrument in the Latin American context is extremely scarce in publications indexed in Scopus, which provides an opportunity for new studies involving the adaptation and validation of this tool.

Limitations of this study: the option for a single database and the absence of analysis on possible variations of the PSI, such as the reduced versions of Vigoda-Gadot and Meisler (2010) and Bolander et al. (2015). Future studies may broaden the view on the construct by including other sources, cross-cultural adaptations, and psychometric validations for settings not yet achieved. Nevertheless, we expect that the results presented here provide insights and a starting point for researchers interested in organizational politics, thereby fostering new investigations about this concept intrinsic to the daily life of organizations in contexts as yet little explored, such as Latin America.

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| 1. Definition of research problem                                      | √          | √          |            |
| 2. Development of hypotheses or research questions (empirical studies) | √          | √          |            |
| 3. Development of theoretical propositions (theoretical work)          | √          | √          |            |
| 4. Theoretical foundation / Literature review                          | √          |            | √          |
| 5. Definition of methodological procedures                             | √          |            | √          |
| 6. Data collection                                                     | √          |            |            |
| 7. Statistical analysis                                                | √          |            |            |
| 8. Analysis and interpretation of data                                 | √          |            | √          |
| 9. Critical revision of the manuscript                                 | √          | √          | √          |
| 10. Manuscript writing                                                 | √          |            |            |

### Conflict of Interest

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