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Intellectual Capital in SMEs/Construction Companies: A Systematic Literature Review

Manuscript Number: HELIYON-D-23-05777

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Abstract:

• Purpose - The present study aims to provide an overview of the topic incident on intellectual capital in SMEs in the construction industry. The identification of the different research paths, based on a systematic literature review, will allow effective knowledge of the topics under study and the definition of a research agenda for the future.

• Design/methodology/approach – This Systematic literature review considers articles collected from Web of Science (WoS) database, a total of 105 scientific articles published in various reference journals without a defined time interval, with the use of two analyses. A cocitation analysis allowing the identification of the most influential authors and references cited within the theme, and a bibliographic coupling analysis, allowing the identification of the most referenced thematic clusters.

• Findings – The systematization of the available literature through the bibliographic coupling analysis identified four clusters, namely cluster (1) Intellectual Capital and Organizational Performance, cluster (2) Knowledge Management, cluster (3) Innovation, and cluster (4) Strategic Partnerships.

• Originality - This study adds to the research area an overview of the topic, where the steps that have already been taken are analyzed, and the way forward is indicated through a future research agenda, to strengthen a poorly explored area.

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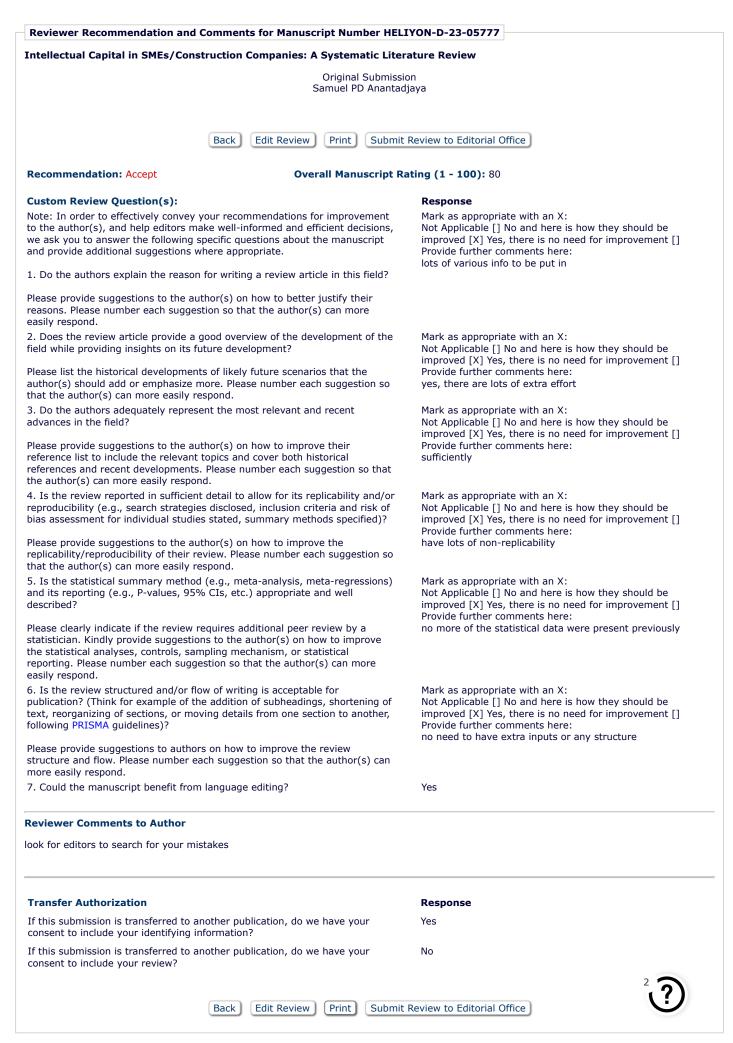
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Intellectual Capital in SMEs/Construction Companies: A Systematic Literature Review --Manuscript Draft--

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Article Type:	Review article
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Abstract:	 Purpose - The present study aims to provide an overview of the topic incident on intellectual capital in SMEs in the construction industry. The identification of the different research paths, based on a systematic literature review, will allow effective knowledge of the topics under study and the definition of a research agenda for the future. Design/methodology/approach – This Systematic literature review considers articles collected from Web of Science (WoS) database, a total of 105 scientific articles published in various reference journals without a defined time interval, with the use of two analyses. A co-citation analysis allowing the identification of the most influential authors and references cited within the theme, and a bibliographic coupling analysis, allowing the identification of the most referenced thematic clusters. Findings – The systematization of the available literature through the bibliographic coupling analysis identified four clusters, namely cluster (1) Intellectual Capital and Organizational Performance, cluster (2) Knowledge Management, cluster (3) Innovation, and cluster (4) Strategic Partnerships. Originality - This study adds to the research area an overview of the topic, where the steps that have already been taken are analyzed, and the way forward is indicated through a future research agenda, to strengthen a poorly explored area.



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Intellectual Capital in SMEs/Construction Companies: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

- **Purpose** The present study aims to provide an overview of the topic incident on intellectual capital in SMEs in the construction industry. The identification of the different research paths, based on a systematic literature review, will allow effective knowledge of the topics under study and the definition of a research agenda for the future.
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- **Originality** This study adds to the research area an overview of the topic, where the steps that have already been taken are analyzed, and the way forward is indicated through a future research agenda, to strengthen a poorly explored area.

Keywords: Intellectual Capital, Organizational Performance, SME, Construction Sector, Knowledge Management, Strategic Partnerships.

1. Introduction

The strength of the relationship between intellectual capital and SMEs (Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises) enables the ability of organisations to adjust in a dynamic way, enabling internal learning (Pigola *et al.*, 2021). The authors Mehralian *et al.* (2018) report the importance of organisations in practising actions towards developing intellectual capital. This is because, it is only through this investment that there is an increase in the competitive advantage of organisations, and where organisational performance plays its key role.

Nevertheless, in the last two decades, the relationship between intellectual capital and SMEs has suffered the addition of the component organisational performance. This component has been gaining more prominence in the business area, where the synergy between the components is discussed and compared to the competitive advantage that can be achieved (Asiaei and Jusoh, 2017).

In general, the definitions of intellectual capital do not converge to only one statement that makes this concept clear. The dependence on this concept being associated with a scale force it to have different interpretations, which despite not always being the same, converge towards the benefit that organisations can derive from it. Always with the aim of improving the knowledge and skills of the set of individuals that make up an organisation, intellectual capital must necessarily be exploited (Ali *et al.*, 2021).

On the other hand, organisational performance implies SMEs' ability to effectively implement strategies that enhance the organisation itself and its results (Kengatharan, 2019). That is, organisational performance is directly linked to leadership skills which means that the ability to motivate employees and promote knowledge sharing depends on this type of strategy (Bhatti *et al.*, 2020). In this article, when organisational performance is referred to, it can be considered the ability of organisations to increase their productivity and consequently increase competitive advantage when compared to competitors.

By imposition of the existing literature, the breadth of this topic required a more comprehensive investigation where the focus of construction companies is complemented by SMEs. Thus, the following research question is posed - what are the impacts of intellectual capital on SMEs/construction firms?

In addition to this research question, this systematic literature review seeks to provide a holistic static picture of state of the art at the time of its completion and also aims to answer a set of guiding questions:

- Which are the most influential authors, and which journals have the largest number of publications?

- What are the dominant sub-themes in the knowledge under review, and what relationships are established between them?

2. Methodology

The purpose of the literature review is to create a comprehensive understanding of the subject, identify knowledge gaps, suggest new research avenues, and express plans to take on a contributing role in the field of study (Donthu et al., 2021).

Web of Science (WoS) was the database used to collect the references. This database was chosen due to its quality and scientific rigour (Zha *et al.* 2020), which is widely recognised in academia. The equation ("intellectual capital" and "organisational performance" and "SME" or "firm") was applied (Topic), and the following search yielded a database of 105 documents. In order to ensure greater homogeneity of the sample, two filters were applied, such as the limitation to articles in the fields of Business, Economics and Management, without any time restriction. This narrowing search resulted in a database of 72 documents. Next, it was performed a review using the Cadima software (www.cadima.info), resulting in the exclusion of 11 documents for not fitting the theme to be explored for the following reasons: (i) the organisational performance as an analysis element (3); (ii) the intellectual capital and the organisational performance as elements without any connection (3), and (iii) the intellectual capital as a future line of research in the organisational context (5) (see Figure 1). After this review, the final

database was analysed through the Cadima software to check for repeated documents/authors, which did not occur.

For the creation of the bibliographic constellations, as well as further analysis, the VOSviewer and Bibliometrix R software were used.

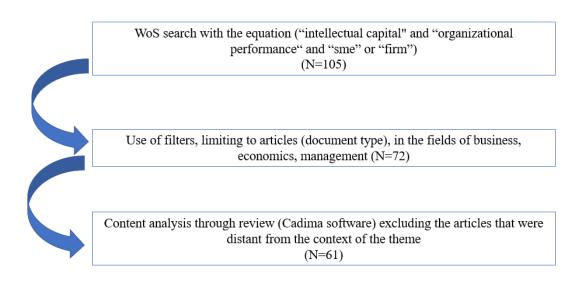


Figure 1 Article selection process for the database.

3. Characterisation of the sample

The database consists of 61 articles focusing on SME intellectual capital and organisational performance, arranged in the time interval between 1999 and 2022. The database is spread over 26 journals, 172 authors, 4138 references, and 199 keywords with an average of 38.84 citations per document.

The boom in the number of publications on the relationship between intellectual capital and organisational performance emerged in 2017, and this number has been increasing over the years, except for 2018 and 2019. The number of citations registered a more exponential behaviour (see Figure 2). The highest peak regarding publications was in 2020, with 13 articles, while the year with the highest number of citations was in 2021, with 737 citations, showing that this is a topic of current interest.

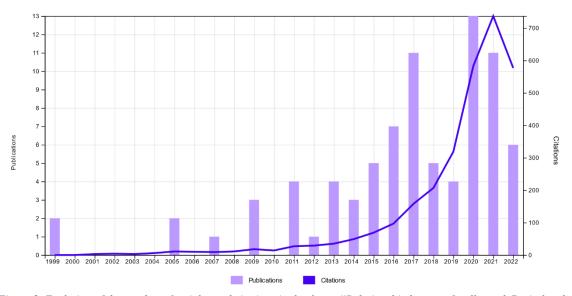
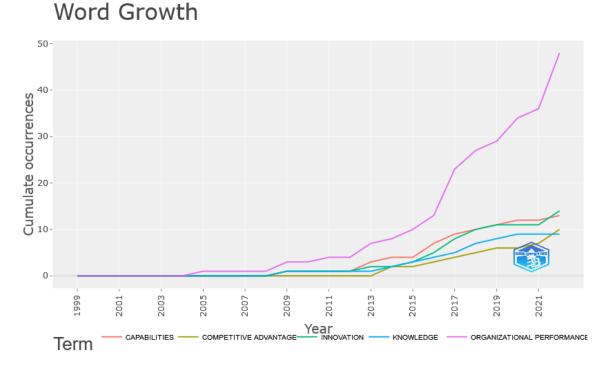


Figure 2. Evolution of the number of articles and citations in the theme "Relationship between Intellectual Capital and Organizational Performance", between 1999 and 2022. Source: Bibliometrix.

Based on the temporal space in which the bibliographic database is inserted, a graph demonstrating the dynamics and evolution of a set of Keywords on the temporal axis was prepared (see Figure 3). In this graph, it is possible to analyse all the words present since the genesis of the database. However, the words with the highest growth dynamics are "organisational performance", "innovation" and "capabilities".





Source: Bibliometrix.

The Sankey chart (see Figure 4) was elaborated with a central focus on three pillars (countries, authors, and keywords) to understand and to identify on what theme there is a greater focus on research carried out by the most influential authors within each country. It was possible to ascertain that the countries that produce scientific research on this theme are Malaysia, China, and the USA, with most of the research focused, as expected, on intellectual capital, performance, and innovation.

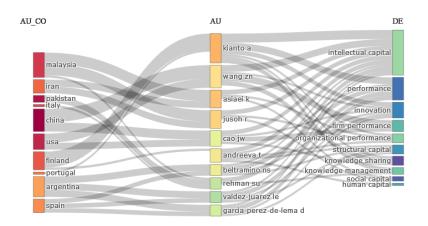


Figure 4. Sankey chart centered on three pillars: country-authors-keywords.

Source: Bibliometrix.

A co-citation analysis and a bibliographic coupling are performed on the current study. Co-citation analysis seeks to reveal both the intellectual framework of a study topic and the common theme of a particular set of bibliographic constructions (clusters) (Hjrland, 2013; Rossetto et al., 2018). It also allows identifying which authors, journals, and articles are the most influential in the area of knowledge under study (Donthu *et al.*, 2021). Bibliographic coupling analysis complements co-citation analysis and reveals a broad spectrum of topics and all their most recent developments, providing a snapshot of the current state of research. Since bibliographic linkage is more future-oriented and co-citation analysis is more past-oriented (Garfield, 2002), the complementary nature of the two enables a cross-sectional view over time, allowing for a greater understanding and the potential to define future lines of research. It is on this basic principle that the decision to adopt these two analysis techniques is based.

4. Co-citation analysis

Based on the number of publications, the three most relevant sources are the Journal of Intellectual Capital, with 18 publications, the Journal of Knowledge Management with 6 and Management Decision with 5 publications (see Figure 5).

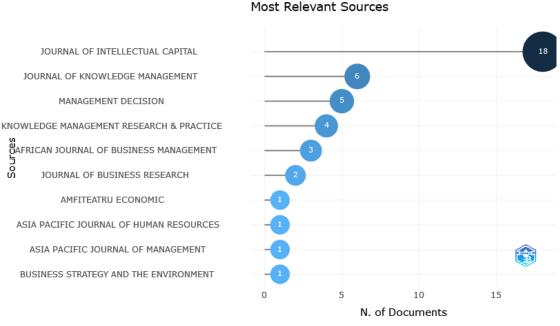


Figure 5. Most Relevant Sources. Source: Bibliometrix.

Regarding the source of co-citation analysis, with a restriction to the minimum number of 20 source citations, a total of 42 sources distributed by 3 clusters were found (see Figure 6). The influence of the sources remains unchanged since the sources presented in Figure 5 maintain their prominent role. Cluster 1 (in red) has as a most influential source, precisely the Journal of Intellectual Capital with 586 citations, 41 connections with a total strength of 19190. In cluster 2 (in green) the Journal of Knowledge Management is the most influential source with 142 citations, 41 connections with a total strength of 7163. Regarding cluster 3 (blue), it is the source with the least influence of the 3 clusters, Management Decision, with 117 citations, 41 connections and a total strength of 8187.

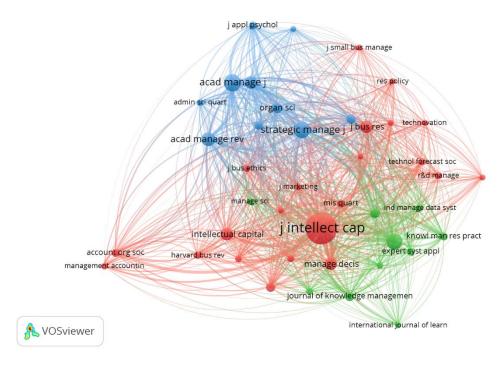


Figure 6. Co-citation analysis of cited sources. Source: VOSviewer.

Performing an author co-citation analysis allows for identifying the most influential authors in the area of knowledge under study. To this end, an author co-citation analysis was carried out based on the database of 3151 authors, limited to a minimum of 10 citations, reducing the spectrum of the sample to 65 authors. The constellation shown in Figure 7 comprises three clusters with the most cited authors. In cluster 1 (in red) the most cited author is Wang with 26 citations. Regarding cluster 2 (in green), Bontis Hair Jr. stands out with 89 and 37 citations, respectively. Finally, in cluster 3 (in blue) the dominant author is Kaplan, with 32 citations.

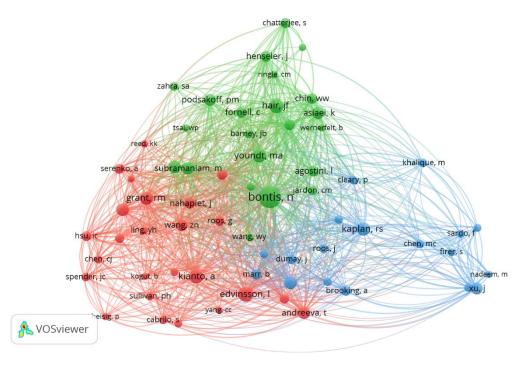


Figure 7. Co-citation analysis of cited authors. Source: VOSviewer.

In the bibliographic reference co-citation analysis, the database is composed of 4128 articles applying the limitation of a minimum of 6 citations per document, resulting in 92 documents. From this final output, resulted the cloud visible in Figure 8, giving rise to 4 clusters.

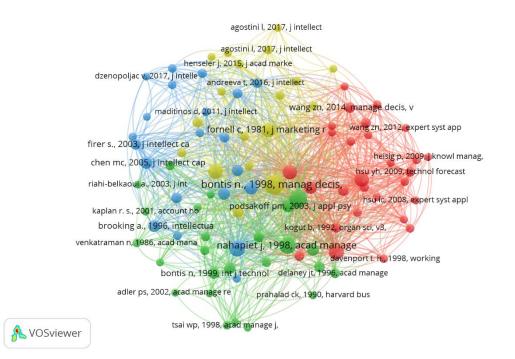


Figure 8. Co-citation analysis of cited references. Source: VOSviewer.

5. Bibliographic coupling analysis

To ascertain the main research themes on the relationship between intellectual capital and organisational performance in SMEs, bibliographic coupling was performed. It can be concluded that a minimum number of citations per article should not be defined since the entire database is quite recent. Finally, with a total of 61 articles selected, the number of minimum articles per cluster was limited to 10, resulting in an output of 4 clusters.

From the analysis of the 61 articles, separated by 4 clusters, resulted the cluster network exposed in detail in Figure 9. The composition of each cluster represents a different approach to the theme under study – cluster (1) Intellectual Capital and Organizational Performance, cluster (2) Knowledge Management, cluster (3) Innovation, and cluster (4) Strategic Partnerships.

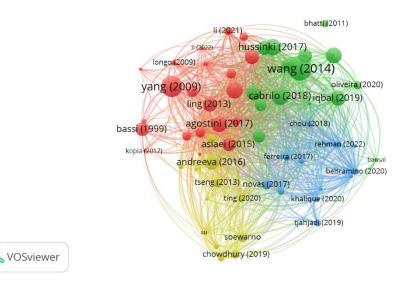


Figure 9. Bibliographic coupling analysis. Source: VOSviewer.

Cluster 1 | Intellectual Capital and Organizational Performance (N=21)

Bassi *et al.* (1999) clarify the importance of organisations correctly assessing the importance of intellectual capital in organisational performance. The correct planning and investment in these components ease the achievement of competitive advantage. The problem lies in the organisations that, besides not knowing what provides them with the advance and growth, they do not understand how and where to invest in order for this can happen. As such, and to solve this chronic problem in organisations, the authors Carriere and Barrette (2009) stress the importance for organisations to define, in a clear way, what their medium-long term intentions are. In other words, stipulating the investment in training, development and career progression of their employees will allow them to bring unquantifiable added value to the organisation. However, there is another fundamental premise: the choice of the right candidates. For this reason, it is crucial that there is also greater investment in this area. The consistency of these investments will allow the promotion of important organisational messages, such as vision, mission, and values, which will trigger the promotion of organisational culture (Carriere *et al.*, 2009).

Organisational culture is presented as the foundation that provides the development of the relationship between intellectual capital and organisational performance in SMEs (Asiaei and Jusoh, 2015). This phenomenon also enables the development of some constructs of intellectual capital, such as structural capital and relational capital. That is, the relationship between intellectual capital and organisational performance is not only one-way but two-way. The authors reinforce the importance of leadership in this relationship since good leadership motivates and eases knowledge sharing. Bhatti *et al.* (2020) corroborates this idea and add human capital as a fundamental construct for leveraging organisational performance. According to Li *et al.* (2021) and Nagwan (2021), with the correct use of human capital in conjunction with the emotional capabilities of organisations, it is possible to continue improving SMEs' performance. Thus, for this resource to have a more significant impact on organisations, it is necessary to create investment mechanisms that allow its development (Chen et al., 2020).

The development of intellectual capital also facilitates the mediation of the relationship between knowledge management and organisational performance (Daud and Yusoff, 2011). Knowledge management is characterised as one of the key elements that help SMEs improve their performance. Another way to justify this result is to consider what Ling (2013) highlights in his research. Thus, Agostini *et al.* (2017) present two ways to achieve this goal. Intellectual capital is present in all organisations. However, we can either consider it and invest in it or not. This is where organisations are divided into two sets. The first set is where intellectual capital is not invested in and ends up being underutilised. The second one is where investment and maintenance of intellectual capital are considered, which boosts organisational performance. This also benefits from the improvement in the internal organisation of SMEs, which has a direct relationship with their performance but is not directly linked to their economic success (Jardon and Martos, 2014).

Therefore, it is safer to say that good organisational planning benefits the achievement of better performance through the right use of intellectual capital (Asiaei and Jusoh, 2017) and allows to make strides towards organisational sustainability (Kopia *et al.*, 2017). Other authors, such as Han and Li (2015) reinforce the importance of intellectual capital by emphasising that organisational performance depends on the ability of organisations to make correct and timely decisions through their perception of opportunities and threats they face. Only in this way is it possible, in an efficient way, to improve SMEs productivity, an element directly related to the performance of organisations (Kengatharan, 2019).

Cluster 2 | Knowledge Management (N=15)

The productivity of an organisation, besides being dependent on the productive capacity of the employees, is linked to the performance of the intellectual capital that, in turn, eases organisational performance (Ahangar, 2011). In this way, it becomes essential that SMEs become increasingly aware of the strategic asset, that is, knowledge management (Bhatti *et al.*, 2011). Some organisations' underlying problem is the inability to apply knowledge management policies appropriate to their contexts and environments. Authors like Mehralian *et al.* (2018) reiterate the importance of developing and investing in intellectual capital and knowledge management concepts from the very beginning of organisations' lives and throughout their time in business. Only in this way is it possible to positively impact organisational environments thus improving the outlook for future generations of professionals (Pigola *et al.*, 2021).

For knowledge management to play a key role in the relationship between intellectual capital and organisational performance in SMEs, they must strategically plan their social decisions (Brown and Kietzmann, 2018). That is, the increasing preponderance of SMEs in the social environment forces them to respond to these issues seriously, as the advantages they can enjoy are pending their social action. Strategic knowledge management directly affects the components of the intellectual capital of the relational capital, the structural capital (Heisig *et al.*, 2016; Cabilo and Dahms, 2018) and knowledge sharing (Oliveira *et al.*, 2020) stand out.

Knowledge management emerges as a mediator of the relationship between intellectual capital and organisational performance, where it starts to register a positive variation, improving all operational dynamics of SMEs (Hussinki *et al.*, 2017) due to the ability of employees to share knowledge (Wang *et al.*, 2015; Wang *et al.*, 2016). Knowledge management can reproduce positive effects on organisational performance due to its direct and indirect interactions with intellectual capital (Iqbal *et al.*, 2018). Later, the authors Bansal *et al.* (2022) went further and strengthened the theory by presenting more objective findings. They concluded that when high levels of intellectual capital and knowledge management exist in each organisation, it tends to perform well above its competitors.

However, Kianto *et al.* (2013) warn against conducting an analysis too direct. The author recalls that, despite the positive mediation of knowledge management in the relationship between intellectual capital and organisational performance, the latter is dependent on good intellectual capital management policies. That is, if SMEs, as mentioned above, do not invest in the management of intellectual capital and do not adapt their policies, the possibility of positively affecting their performance is drastically reduced (Wang *et al.*, 2016).

Cluster 3 | Innovation (N=13)

A good organisational structure allows the creation of better conditions for the performance of SMEs. The articulation of intellectual capital with knowledge management allows for improving organisational performance through the impact of innovation (Beltramino *et al.*, 2022). Although process innovation is directly affected by an organisation's communication style, it allows for the improvement of intangible components of organisations, such as culture and organisational capital (Tjahjadi at al., 2019). Depending on the technology embedded in an organisation, the level of employee engagement can vary, facilitating the consumer experience (Chou *et al.*, 2018). Customer acquisition is a fundamental step in the life of organisations. In essence, their performance depends on consumer behaviour and the ease with which they accept and interact with innovations, in this case, technological innovations, implemented by organisations.

Thereby, if we consider that organisations plan and seek to improve their organisational performance, the investment in technology-based innovations represent a strong link to the basic constructs of intellectual capital (Novas *et al.*, 2017). The strategy of each organisation is intrinsic to each one of them. However, the constructs of intellectual capital and strategic partnerships are mainly responsible for improving performance (Ferreira and Franco, 2017). That is, the correct investment in innovation and the use of resources, such as intellectual capital and strategic partnerships, will enhance SMEs' resources and dynamics, eliminating some gaps and clearly improving their performance (Khalique *et al.*, 2020).

More recently, authors like Asiaei *et al.* (2015) and Beltramino *et al.* (2022) have demonstrated the importance of investing in innovation and the impact of this action on some of the components of intellectual capital. Human capital and structural capital are

the two constructs most affected by investment in innovation; it is possible to associate this investment with a more sustainable environmental performance (Chatterjee *et al.*, 2022). In other words, for SMEs to reap the maximum benefits associated with green resources, it is necessary to synchronise adequate organisational control with intellectual capital valences (Rehman *et al.*, 2022b). Thus, it is possible to state that organisational performance and competitive advantage are directly affected by innovation and the repercussions it has on intellectual capital and knowledge management (Rehman *et al.*, 2022a).

Cluster 4 | Strategic Partnerships (N=12)

Considering an approach that began to gain momentum in the early 10s XXI century (Yitmen, 2015), strategic partnerships come to the forefront where the scrutiny of this construct has been gaining increasing importance. According to Andreeva and Garanina (2016), organisational performance tends to suffer a more significant impact when there is a greater bet on intellectual capital, mainly structural and relational capital. It is this bet that will allow the creation of better opportunities for the development of bilateral relationships (Ge and Xu, 2020). The ability to unite the human capital of two or more organisations for the sake of organisational efficiency turns out to be scarce (Chowdhury *et al.*, 2019). That is, some SMEs still need to internalise how much better their organisational performance could be if they worked together with several organisations (Chowdhury *et al.*, 2019).

The better the access to information, the greater the ability of SMEs to achieve better organisational performance through intellectual capital investment and strategic partnerships (Gravili *et al.*, 2020). Although investment in intellectual capital points to the various constructs, structural and relational capital will stand out the most (Ozer *et al.*, 2015). Thus, the possibility of leveraging strategic partnerships becomes a reality with grounds to happen; that is, the relationship between intellectual capital and organisational performance in SMEs exists, and both constructs influence each other (Soewarno and Tjahjadi, 2020).

However, strategic partnerships should emerge as moderators of this relationship, developing organisations both structurally and economically, as well as creating a greater competitive advantage that will allow for greater longevity and growth of SMEs (Tseng *et al.*, 2013; Ting *et al.*, 2020). By using strategic partnerships as a moderator of the relationship between intellectual capital and organisational performance, it is possible to leverage both constructs and improve organisations' results in the medium to long term (Xu and Li, 2019; Xu *et al.*, 2022).

Framework - Intellectual Capital and Organizational Performance in the construction sector

Considering the clusters identified through the bibliographic coupling of the 61 articles, Figure 10 shows the proposed framework for the theme "Intellectual Capital and Organizational Performance in SMEs/Construction Companies". In general, the relationship between intellectual capital and organisational performance has positive aspects for organisations. The correct investment in intellectual capital always enhances organisational performance, which can benefit from the correct knowledge management that requires applying policies that allow development. In this way, knowledge management can mediate the relationship between intellectual capital and organisational performance. On the other hand, strategic partnerships emerge as a differentiating

element where their ability to moderate the relationship described above allows for improving organisational performance and creating a greater competitive advantage.

These two processes of mediation and moderation can be analysed independently, that is, the model represented in Figure 10 can be divided into two distinct models. The first model, where knowledge management mediates the relationship between intellectual capital and organisational performance and the second one, where strategic partnerships moderate this same relationship. However, it should be noted that in both models, innovation is a constant that influences the relationship described. This obtains greater benefit if the two models merge into one, as it is presented in Figure 10.

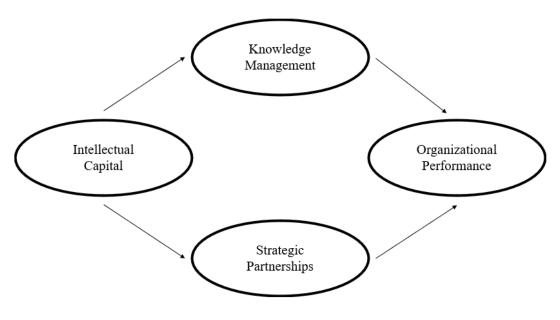


Figure 10. General Framework.

Future Lines of Research

Based on the clusters ascertained and previously analysed, it is possible to identify gaps in the different lines of research and present several research questions. With the intent of leveraging scientific knowledge and contributing to advancing the different ramifications inherent to the basilar theme of intellectual capital and organisational performance in SMEs, the gaps identified and the research questions proposed are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Future Lines of Research.

Cluster Gap Research Question

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	Cluster 1 Intellectual Capital and Organizational Performance	 The study of intellectual capital dimensions and how these affect organisational performance. To understand whether intellectual capital has the same influence on organisational performance if it plays a mediating or moderating role. What are the impacts and indirect advantages for SMEs that benefits of the relationship between intellectual capital and organisational performance?
12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22	Cluster 2 Knowledge Management	 The promotion of organisational performance through different combinations between intellectual capital and knowledge management. Incorporating strategic models to improve knowledge sharing. How does knowledge management interfere with behaviour in the organisational sphere?
23 24 25 26 27 28	Cluster 3 Innovation	 Understand how increased investment in innovation can promote changes within organisations and their decision-making. How can innovation influence the decisions to be made in SMEs?
29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39	Cluster 4 Strategic Partnerships	 Study the hypothesis that strategic partnerships play a role other than moderating the relationship between intellectual capital and organisational performance. Analysis of partnerships based on cultural contexts. What will be the impacts and advantages of making different strategic partnerships?

Conclusions

The need for SMEs to view the future with a more critical eye has revealed the need to change investment strategies and policies. Still needs to be considered, within SMEs (mainly family-owned ones), intellectual capital stands out as the key to easing organisations' growth and maturity (Chen *et al.*, 2020). In this sense, intellectual capital and organisational performance appear related to one construct forcing the other to grow, improving the environment for employees, customers, and the economy (Li *et al.*, 2021).

Research on the topic under review in this article is recent, with research reaching a peak in 2020. The considerable increase in research on the topic from the beginning of the century to the present day is due to the need for organisations to compete and leverage their progress through the strategic application of investments and policies (Han and Li, 2014).

As far as could be ascertained, no systematic literature review was identified that addressed the topic. Thus, this study contributes to a holistic view of the relationship between intellectual capital and organisational performance in SMEs. An identification

of the sub-themes present in the research area is also defined, allowing the identification of some gaps in the state of the art and, thereby, suggesting possible lines of research.

The bibliometric analysis allowed the identification of sets of constructs with strong links between them. The bibliographic coupling allowed the identification of 4 clusters – cluster (1) Intellectual Capital and Organizational Performance, cluster (2) Knowledge Management, cluster (3) Innovation, and cluster (4) Strategic Partnerships, allowing to answer the question "What are the dominant sub-themes in the knowledge area under analysis?"

The co-citation analysis allowed to ascertain the most cited/influential authors -Wang *et al.* (2014), Yang and Lin (2014), Cabrilo and Dahms (2018), Hussinki *et al.* (2017), Han and Li (2015) – and the journals with the largest number of publications on the theme under analysis – Journal of Intellectual Capital, the Journal of Knowledge Management and Management Decision, in descending order. This research allowed answering the following questions "Which are the most influential authors?" and "Which journals have the most publications?"

To answer the research question of the study conducted, "what are the impacts of intellectual capital on SMEs/construction firms?" the bibliometric analysis allowed to ascertain the impacts of intellectual capital on SMEs but did not make a clear statement about construction firms due to the lack of literature. In this way, it was verified that when there is a coherent line of investment in intellectual capital, its constructs are strengthened and, in turn, through a two-way relationship, allow for a better organisational performance that, in the opposite direction, stimulates the development of intellectual capital. Nevertheless, knowledge management and strategic partnerships play a key role in this relationship. This role can be played individually or jointly, as shown in the model present in the "Framework" chapter. In other words, through the mediation of the relationship between intellectual capital and organisational performance, knowledge management can enhance the performance and productivity of SMEs while strategic partnerships facilitate, through the moderation of the same relationship, the leverage of both constructs. Regarding innovation, although playing a key role in the advancement and growth of organisations, it does not play a pivotal role in improving organisational performance. In short, if an organisation is not aware of the ability of these constructs to work together, it may be undervaluing and underutilising all its competencies, while an organisation that understands how to put all these strengths to work together achieves better results through improved performance.

Like any research, this RSL (Systematic Review of the Literature) is not immune to limitations in its process. The fact that it only uses one database (Web of Science) restricts the search spectrum, and also that documents of relevance and interest have not been considered. The different filters that were used to narrow and focus the research have a double face in the sense that they provide a focus within the theme but inhibit the holistic view of the theme. Finally, there is a lack of studies applied to various economic areas, including the area of construction especially in the Portuguese context, which forced us to broaden our field of investigation to SMEs.

As for future lines of research, some studies are suggested in order to understand (i) what are the adjacent advantages of the relationship between intellectual capital and organisational performance in SMEs/construction companies; (ii) what is the weight of knowledge management in the organisational atmosphere, as well as in its performance; (iii) how innovation can influence the decision making of organisations; and (iv) to analyse the impact of strategic partnerships in the performance of SMEs.

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