Organizational Hypocrisy in Management: A Bibliometric and Thematic Analysis of Its Evolution and Trends

HIPOCRESÍA ORGANIZACIONAL EN GESTIÓN: UN ANÁLISIS BIBLIOMÉTRICO Y TEMÁTICO DE SU EVOLUCIÓN Y TENDENCIAS

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Abstract. Organizational hypocrisy has emerged as a framework for analyzing discrepancies between discourse, decisions, and practices across various types of organizations, although its empirical and conceptual systematization has been limited. This study examines the evolution, intellectual structure, and thematic trends of research on organizational hypocrisy through a bibliometric review following the PRISMA protocol, considering articles indexed in Scopus from 1990 to 2025. Scientific productivity indicators, Lotka's, Price's, and Bradford's laws, co-authorship, co-citation, and keyword co-occurrence analyses were combined using Biblioshiny, alongside a content analysis aimed at mapping thematic patterns and conceptual evolution. Results show sustained growth in publication output, high authorial concentration, and a robust conceptual core centered on organizational hypocrisy, corporate social responsibility, and paradox. The thematic map identifies basic, motor, niche, and emerging themes, revealing established lines in legitimacy, social responsibility, and organizational communication, with sublines in educational contexts and public organizations. Conceptual evolution indicates a shift from macro-institutional explanations toward relational, situated, and process-oriented approaches, incorporating micro-organizational perspectives and technological tools, where hypocrisy is understood as a functional and strategically managed mechanism. It is concluded that, although the literature has achieved theoretical and analytical maturity, integration across sublines and levels of analysis remains limited, suggesting opportunities for comparative, longitudinal, and contextually situated studies that deepen understanding of the phenomenon and its management across organizational settings.

Keywords: Organizational hypocrisy; bibliometric analysis; PRISMA; management research; content analysis; Scopus.

Resumen. La hipocresía organizacional ha surgido como un marco para analizar discrepancias entre discursos, decisiones y prácticas en distintos tipos de organizaciones, aunque su sistematización empírica y conceptual ha sido limitada. Este estudio analiza la evolución, la estructura intelectual y las tendencias temáticas de la investigación sobre hipocresía organizacional mediante una revisión bibliométrica siguiendo el protocolo PRISMA, considerando artículos indexados en Scopus entre 1990 y 2025. Se combinaron indicadores de productividad científica, leyes de Lotka, Price y Bradford, análisis de coautoría, cocitación y co-ocurrencia de palabras clave con Biblioshiny, y un análisis de contenido orientado a mapear patrones temáticos y la evolución conceptual. Los resultados muestran crecimiento sostenido de la producción, alta concentración autoral y un núcleo conceptual robusto centrado en organizational hypocrisy, corporate social responsibility y paradox. El mapa temático identifica temas básicos, motores, nicho y emergentes, revelando líneas consolidadas en legitimidad, responsabilidad social y comunicación organizacional, y sublíneas en contextos educativos y organizaciones públicas. La evolución conceptual evidencia un desplazamiento de explicaciones macro-institucionales hacia enfoques relacionales, situados y procesuales, incorporando perspectivas micro-organizacionales y herramientas tecnológicas, donde la hipocresía se entiende como mecanismo funcional y estratégicamente gestionado. Se concluye que, aunque la literatura ha alcanzado madurez teórica y analítica, persiste una integración limitada entre sublíneas y niveles de estudio, lo que sugiere oportunidades para exámenes comparativos, longitudinales y contextualmente situados que profundicen la comprensión del fenómeno y su gestión en distintos entornos organizacionales.

Palabras clave: Hipocresía organizacional; análisis bibliométrico; PRISMA; investigación en gestión; análisis de contenido; Scopus.

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizational hypocrisy has become an established analytical lens for understanding inconsistencies between organizational discourse, formal decisions, and actual practices. This construct is not interpreted as a moral deviation or opportunistic individual behavior, but as a structural condition that enables organizations to navigate conflicting institutional demands and contradictory normative expectations (Brunsson, 2002). In highly complex environments, this perspective supports external legitimacy without compromising internal flexibility.

Rooted in the tradition of new institutionalism, the concept helps explain the separation between formal structures and operational practices as a response to institutionalized norms and rationalized myths (Greenwood et al., 2011; Karplus et al., 2021; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Processes of decoupling and symbolic management clarify how organizations balance normative pressures and internal operations, while legitimacy-building sustains social acceptance and institutional authority (Bromley & Powell, 2012; Suchman, 1995). Recent studies have documented these processes across various organizational types—public,

educational, non-profit, and corporate—particularly in contexts subject to social scrutiny and accountability (Loko & Schiehll, 2025).

Over the last decade, research has highlighted the relationship between organizational hypocrisy, social responsibility, sustainability, and governance. Findings indicate that aspirational narratives and symbolic practices enable organizations to align external image with stakeholder expectations, even when internal actions remain partially or selectively decoupled (Feeney et al., 2025; Nasreen et al., 2025; Pedersen & Andersen, 2023; Sung & Lee, 2023). This recent evidence confirms that organizational hypocrisy functions as a legitimacy management mechanism, adaptable across sectors and international contexts, ranging from energy companies to universities and agro-industrial organizations.

Nevertheless, despite its theoretical robustness and the gradual expansion of the field, research on this organizational mechanism remains fragmented. Studies span multiple disciplines—management, organizational studies, business ethics, education, and public administration—with limited cumulative integration and heterogeneous conceptual usage. Some employ it as a central theoretical framework, while others treat it descriptively or metaphorically, which constrains knowledge consolidation (Ağalday, 2022; Bromley & Powell, 2012; Czarnecka et al., 2025; Hallett, 2010; Zeb et al., 2023). This heterogeneity is also reflected in methodologies, ranging from surveys and case studies to content analyses and longitudinal observations.

Previous reviews have focused on adjacent concepts such as greenwashing, decoupling, or symbolic compliance, without comprehensively mapping the evolution, intellectual structure, or thematic trends of the phenomenon. Bibliometric approaches offer valuable tools to identify patterns, theoretical cores, and emerging trajectories (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015).

Addressing this gap, the present study conducts a bibliometric and content analysis of research on organizational hypocrisy in management, considering articles published between 1990 and 2025. By applying classical bibliometric indicators, network analysis, and thematic content examination, the study aims to provide a systematic overview of the field, clarifying its evolution, intellectual foundations, and future directions.

The article is structured as follows. First, the theoretical background supporting the topic is presented. Next, the methodology is described, based on the PRISMA protocol and bibliometric techniques. The subsequent section presents the results of the bibliometric and content analyses. The discussion interprets these findings, and finally, conclusions are drawn, including limitations and directions for future research.

2. THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Organizational Hypocrisy as a Theoretical Construct

Organizational hypocrisy originates in organizational theory as a structural response to the coexistence of incompatible institutional demands. From Brunsson´s (2002), classical formulation, the concept describes the systematic separation between discourse, decisions, and actions, understood as a mechanism through which organizations manage normative, political, and operational tensions without fully resolving them. In this framework, hypocrisy is not conceived as an ethical failure but as a functional resource in complex environment.

This perspective is embedded within new institutionalism, particularly in the notion of dissociation between formal structures and organizational practices (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Subsequent research expands this view by emphasizing that divergence is not a static state but a dynamic process that takes different forms depending on prevailing circumstances and institutional pressures (Bromley & Powell, 2012). Recent reviews consider decoupling and organizational hypocrisy as part of a continuum of responses to conflicting demands, rather than as exceptional manifestations (Bromley et al., 2012).

Contemporary literature has also reinforced the link between this concept and legitimacy. From an institutional perspective, legitimacy is constructed through symbolic alignment with socially accepted norms, even when such alignment does not immediately translate into consistent practices (Suchman, 1995). In environments characterized by multiple institutional logics, hypocrisy intensifies as a strategy to manage multiple audiences and divergent expectations (Feeney et al., 2025; Nasreen et al., 2025).

2.2. Empirical Development and Contexts of Application

Empirically, the dynamics between discourse and action have been studied across various contexts, though research has been concentrated in certain sectors. A significant portion of the literature has focused on public and educational organizations, where tensions between normative values, political pressures, and operational constraints are particularly pronounced (Brunsson, 2002; Hallett, 2010; Sauder & Espeland, 2009). Recent studies demonstrate how reformist, inclusive, or performance-oriented statements coexist with organizational practices that change only minimally or selectively, reproducing persistent patterns of separation between rhetoric and action (Feeney et al., 2025; Nasreen et al., 2025; Pedersen & Andersen, 2023).

Within the business sector, interest in organizational hypocrisy has intensified in studies on corporate social responsibility, sustainability, and governance. Some research indicates that aspirational and public commitments function as legitimate signaling mechanisms in high-visibility environments, even when internal practices remain partially or strategically decoupled, as observed in banks and the hospitality sector (SolatiNik et al., 2023; Zeb et al., 2023). Similarly, studies in civil society organizations highlight that prioritizing image over action can perpetuate this gap, reinforcing decoupling strategies and legitimacy

management (Mellquist & Sörbom, 2023). These findings suggest that the separation between discourse and action not only persists but consolidates in contexts characterized by increasing external demands and normative expectations.

Recent publications have also linked organizational hypocrisy to strategic communication and narrative construction processes. From this perspective, the focus shifts from mere inconsistency to analyzing how organizations produce, sustain, and adjust narratives that allow them to manage institutional tensions with internal and external audiences. For example, in educational organizations, inclusive leadership and trust in management shape perceptions of hypocrisy through strategic discursive adjustments (Ağalday, 2022). Similarly, in international and corporate organizations, communication management and transparency in sustainability reporting contribute to maintaining legitimacy, even when internal practices remain partially decoupled (Higgins et al., 2020; Kang, 2021).

2.3. Persistent Gaps and the Need for Systematization

Despite the recent expansion of the field, the literature on organizational hypocrisy exhibits persistent limitations. First, there is disciplinary fragmentation that hinders theoretical accumulation, with studies dispersed across management, organizational studies, business ethics, education, and public administration. Second, significant heterogeneity is observed in the empirical operationalization of the concept, limiting the comparability of findings. Moreover, most research is concentrated in specific contexts, with limited comparative or longitudinal evidence.

These limitations have been highlighted in recent reviews on institutionalism and decoupling, which emphasize the need to systematize the conceptual and empirical developments in the field to advance toward greater analytical integration (Bromley et al., 2012; Donthu et al., 2021). In this regard, a bibliometric approach complemented by content analysis enables the identification of structural patterns, theoretical cores, and thematic trends, providing a solid foundation to guide future research.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a systematic review approach that integrates bibliometric and content analyses, aiming to map, structure, and evaluate the scientific output on organizational hypocrisy. The methodological strategy combines the PRISMA 2020 protocol with both classical and contemporary bibliometric techniques, complemented by a qualitative examination of thematic trends. This mixed-methods approach allows for the identification of growth patterns, intellectual structures, collaboration networks, and emerging lines, providing a comprehensive view of the field's development and its main conceptual dynamics.

3.1. Search Strategy and Selection Criteria

The literature search was conducted in the Scopus database, chosen for its multidisciplinary coverage and its recognition in high-impact bibliometric reports. The search equation applied to the title, abstract, and keywords fields was as follows:

TITLE-ABS-KEY("organizational hypocrisy" OR "organisational hypocrisy") AND DOCTYPE (ar) AND PUBYEAR > 1989 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 AND LANGUAGE (English)

This strategy enabled the retrieval of documents explicitly addressing organizational hypocrisy, published as peer-reviewed articles in English between 1990 and 2025, considering both British and American spelling variants. Only peer-reviewed texts were included, with no disciplinary restrictions, while non-peer-reviewed documents, conference proceedings, book chapters, editorial reviews, and studies using the concept tangentially or metaphorically were excluded. The initial screening revealed that the earliest relevant publications appeared from 1999 onwards.

3.2. PRISMA Procedure

The selection process was structured following the four classic PRISMA phases: identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion. During the identification phase, the search strategy was applied in Scopus, retrieving a total of 44 articles published up to 2025. In the screening and eligibility phases, each document was carefully examined to ensure its relevance to the construct within management contexts. Studies primarily focused on psychological or clinical topics, biological or neuroscientific research, and humanities or linguistics addressing hypocrisy solely as a theoretical or rhetorical phenomenon, without connection to organizational practices, were considered out of scope.

Following a manual review of titles, abstracts, and full texts, one manuscript was excluded for addressing only value-action gaps in education, resulting in a final corpus of 43 articles, all directly focused on organizational hypocrisy in management, ensuring conceptual consistency. This procedure guarantees traceability, replicability, and conceptual rigor in the literature selection process.

3.3. Bibliometric Analysis

The bibliometric analysis was conducted using the Bibliometrix package via Biblioshiny. Performance and intellectual structure indicators were calculated, including the annual evolution of scientific production according to Price's law, the distribution of author productivity based on Lotka's law, and the dispersion of sources following Bradford's law. Additionally, co-authorship, co-citation, and keyword co-occurrence networks were examined to identify scientific communities, theoretical cores, and relationships among conceptual approaches. Maps were generated using standard normalization methods and minimum frequency thresholds, ensuring the stability and reliability of visualizations.

3.4. Content Analysis and Thematic Trends

To complement the quantitative results, a content analysis of the final corpus was performed, aimed at identifying and classifying the main thematic trends, dominant theoretical approaches, and recurring empirical areas. The procedure combined a review of keywords, abstracts, and theoretical sections with iterative thematic coding, grouping studies into coherent conceptual clusters. The integration of bibliometric and content analyses allows for a deeper interpretation of the field's evolution, moving beyond a purely descriptive approach and facilitating the identification of gaps and future research directions.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Sample Characterization

Scientific production on organizational hypocrisy in management began in 1999 and comprises 43 documents published across 39 journals, with an annual growth rate of 6.39%, reflecting the progressive expansion of academic interest in the field. The articles show a mean age of 6.19 years and an average of 52.07 citations, indicating sustained impact. Thematically, 168 author keywords and 57 Keywords Plus were identified, demonstrating broad conceptual diversity. The sample includes 90 authors, of whom 11 contributed single-authored publications, totaling 12 single-author documents, while the average number of co-authors per article is 2.26. Finally, 32.56% of the publications involve international co-authorship, confirming the collaborative and transnational nature of research in this field (Table 1).

Table 1
Sample Characterization

Dimension	Variable	Results
Scientific Production	Timespan	1999-2005
	Sources (Journals)	39
	Annual Growth Rate %	6.39
Documents	Documents	43
	Document Average Age	6.19
	Average citations per doc	52.07
	Keywords Plus (ID)	57
	Author's Keywords (DE)	168
Authors	Authors	90
	Authors of single-authored docs	11
Collaboration	Single-authored docs	12
	Co-Authors per Doc	2.26
	International co-authorships %	32.56

Note. Although the study covers the period 1990–2025, the first documents were recorded from 1999 onward. Source: Own elaboration.
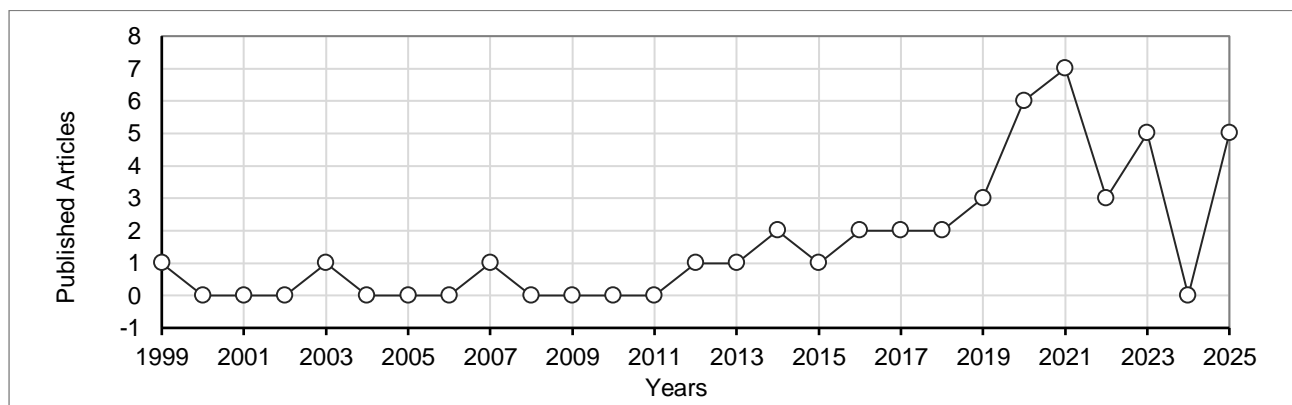
4.2. Annual Scientific Production

The analysis of annual scientific production shows sustained and progressive growth since the inception of the field (Figure 1). The series reflects a clear upward trend, consolidating organizational hypocrisy as a relevant and expanding research area within management.

During the period, the bibliographic corpus was limited and sporadic, with some years showing no publications (2008–2011) and one or two articles in the years with publications, reflecting the nascent nature of the field. From 2014 onward, a gradual increase is observed, reaching three publications in 2019, indicating growing interest and thematic consolidation. The years 2020 and 2021 represent peaks in activity, with six and seven articles, respectively, marking a period of significant expansion. Although production decreased slightly in 2022 and 2023, and no records were found for 2024, the recovery in 2025 with five contributions confirms the continuity of academic interest.

To assess the growth dynamics, linear and exponential regression models were applied, excluding years with no activity, resulting in 16 observations. In the linear model, the obtained equation was $Y = -392.75 + 0.196X$, with a coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.506$, F-statistic = 14.336, and p-value = 0.002, indicating a moderate and significant fit. The exponential regression, in turn, showed better performance, with $R^2 = 0.649$, F = 25.913, $p < .001$, and coefficient $\beta = 0.080$, suggesting that the increase in publications follows a rising trend, consistent with Price's law of growth.

These results indicate that, although the publication volume was initially irregular, the overall trend is better represented by an exponential model, reflecting the progressive consolidation of the topic and growing interest in the field.

Figure 1
Annual Scientific Production

Source: Own elaboration.

4.3. Most Relevant Sources

The analysis of sources shows a concentration of scientific production in the field of Business, Management & Accounting, with most articles published in journals such as *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Sustainability Accounting, Management and Policy Journal*, *Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal*, and *Financial Accountability and Management*. *Journal of Business Research* leads both in the number of publications (3) and cumulative citations (180), reflecting its relevance. Some journals with lower publication volume, such as *Sustainability Accounting, Management and Policy Journal* and *Comparative Education Review*, show notable citation impact, demonstrating that influence does not depend solely on quantity. The sample includes journals focused on management, corporate ethics, sustainability, education, and social sciences, allowing for an interdisciplinary approach to the study of organizational hypocrisy (Table 2).
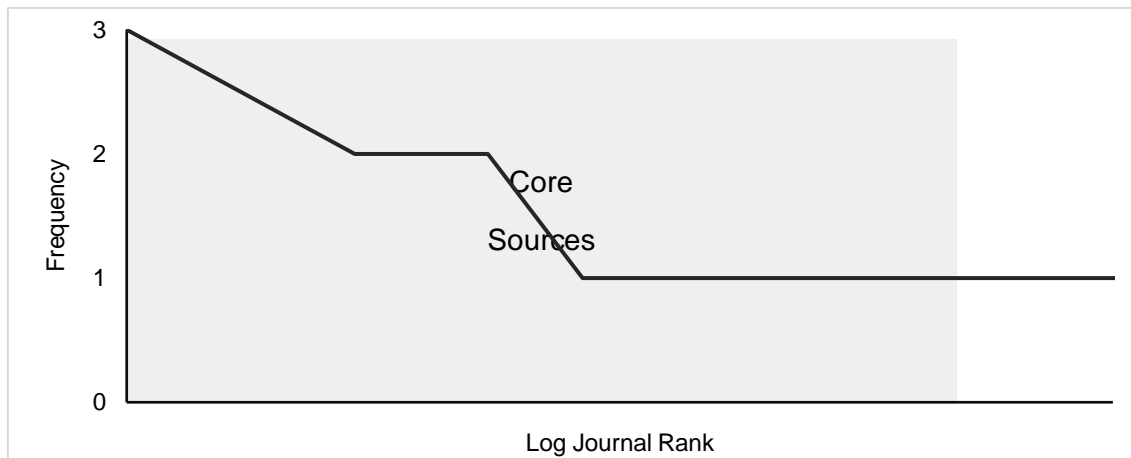
Table 2
Most Relevant Sources

Rank	Source	Total	%	TC	H	Scopus Category
1	Journal of Business Research	3	7.0	180	3	Business. Management & Accounting
2	Journal of Business Ethics	2	4.7	22	2	Business. Management & Accounting / Ethics
3	Sustainability Accounting. Management and Policy Journal	2	4.7	137	2	Business. Management & Accounting / Sustainability
4	Academia Revista Latinoamericana de Administracion	1	2.3	1	1	Business. Management & Accounting
5	Accounting. Auditing and Accountability Journal	1	2.3	29	1	Business. Management & Accounting
6	African Studies	1	2.3	6	1	Social Sciences / Area Studies
7	Business Ethics. The Environment and Responsibility	1	2.3	4	1	Business. Management & Accounting / Ethics
8	Comparative Education Review	1	2.3	59	1	Education / Social Sciences
9	Educational Management Administration and Leadership	1	2.3	6	1	Business. Management & Accounting / Education
10	Financial Accountability and Management	1	2.3	23	1	Business. Management & Accounting / Accounting & Finance

Note. TC = Total Citations; H = H-Index.
Source: Own elaboration.

The Bradford's Law analysis shows a very high fit (R² = 0.966) between the number of articles and journal ranking, evidencing the existence of a concentrated core of publications. A small group of 15 journals (Zone 1), including *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, and *Sustainability Accounting, Management and Policy Journal*, accounts for approximately 35% of the published works, highlighting their relevance in management, corporate ethics, and sustainability. Zone 2 comprises 13 journals of intermediate productivity, while 14 low-frequency journals constitute Zone 3, reflecting a wide dispersion of sources that contributes to thematic and disciplinary diversity (Figure 2).

Figure 2
Source Classification According to Bradford's Law

Source: Own elaboration.

4.4. Most Relevant Authors and Affiliations

Author productivity shows a clear concentration within a small group of researchers, a characteristic feature of a specialized field (Table 3). Gökhan Kılıçoğlu leads the corpus with four articles (9.3%), an H-index of 4, and 41 citations, followed by Derya Yilmaz Kilicoglu with three contributions and an H-index of 3. At a secondary level are Hans Erik Næss and María José Zapata Campos, both with two publications, with the latter standing out for its high relative impact, with 142 citations, suggesting that academic influence does not depend solely on publication volume.

Table 3
Most Relevant Authors

Rank	Author	Total	% of the corpus	H-index	Total Citations
1	Kiliçoğlu, Gökhan	4	9.3	4	41
2	Kilicoglu, Derya Yilmaz	3	7.0	3	31
3	Næss, Hans Erik	2	4.7	1	9

Rank	Author	Total	% of the corpus	H-index	Total Citations
4	Zapata Campos, María José	2	4.7	2	142
5	Acuti, Diletta	1	2.3	1	29
6	Andersen, Kirsti Reitan	1	2.3	1	9
7	Ağalday, Bünyamin	1	2.3	1	7

Source: Own elaboration.

From an institutional perspective, research on organizational hypocrisy exhibits a clearly internationalized geographic structure. Beijing Union University (China), Universiteit Maastricht (Netherlands), and University of Bath (United Kingdom) lead the production with four articles each, followed by Copenhagen Business School (Denmark), Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (Germany), and University of Otago (New Zealand) with three publications each. This distribution reflects stable academic hubs in Europe, East Asia, and the Asia-Pacific region, which serve as central nodes in the field's development.

The authorship pattern aligns with Lotka's Law, showing high dispersion at the productive base (Figure 3). Single contributions account for 95.6% of authorships, while authors with two or more publications represent a marginal proportion of the total. This pattern confirms that the field's development relies on a small core of recurrent authors, accompanied by a broad but mostly occasional participation.

Figure 3
Author Productivity According to Lotka's Law

Source: Own elaboration.

4.5. Analysis of Cited Documents

The review of the most cited publications, considering both citation volume and normalized impact, reveals a clear differentiation between foundational works and recent contributions with high academic resonance (Table 4).

Articles such as Boiral (2007), Vaara (2003) and Christensen et al. (2013) accumulate a high number of total citations and have established the central conceptual frameworks of the field, maintaining impact consistent with the standards of their period (NCV = 1.00). Concurrently, more recent contributions—particularly Higgins et al. (2020), along with studies published between 2016 and 2019—show normalized impact values above the average (NCV > 1), indicating rapid incorporation and growing relevance in the literature. This pattern reflects a field structured around established theoretical references while remaining dynamic, with sustained renewal in areas such as sustainability, legitimacy, and social responsibility.

Table 4
Most Cited *Publications*

N°	Article Title	Authorship	Year	TC	TCA	ICN
1	Corporate greening through ISO 14001: A rational myth?	Boiral, O.	2007	560	29.47	1.00
2	CSR as aspirational talk	Christensen, L.T.; Morsing, M.; Thyssen, O.	2013	450	34.62	1.00
3	Post-acquisition integration as sensemaking: Glimpses of ambiguity, confusion, hypocrisy, and politicization	Vaara, E.	2003	302	13.13	1.00
4	On managing hypocrisy: The transparency of sustainability reports	Higgins, C.; Tang, S.; Stubbs, W.	2020	113	18.83	2.95
5	Public-private collaboration in the tourism sector: Balancing legitimacy and effectiveness in local tourism partnerships. The Spanish case	Zapata Campos, M.J.; Hall, C.M.	2012	101	7.21	1.00
6	Behind camouflaging: traditional and innovative theoretical perspectives in social and environmental accounting research	Michelon, G.; Pilonato, S.; Ricceri, F.; Roberts, R.W.	2016	83	8.30	1.58
7	The world bank and private provision of schooling: A look through the lens of sociological theories of organizational hypocrisy	Mundy, K.; Menashy, F.	2014	59	4.92	1.18
8	CSR as hypocrisy avoidance: a conceptual framework	Jauernig, J.; Valentinov, V.	2019	54	7.71	1.42

N°	Article Title	Authorship	Year	TC	TCA	ICN
9	Social capital and integrated reporting: Losing legitimacy when reporting talk is not supported by actions	Casonato, F.; Farneti, F.; Dumay, J.	2019	48	6.86	1.26
10	Talking into (non)existence: Denying or constituting paradoxes of Corporate Social Responsibility	Hoffmann, J.	2018	45	5.63	1.32

Note. TC = Total Citations; TCA = Total Citations per Year; NCV = Normalized Citation Impact.
Source: Own elaboration.

4.6. Scientific Production by Country and Patterns of Scientific Collaboration

The country-level distribution shows a clear European predominance in research on organizational hypocrisy (Table 5). The United Kingdom leads production (11.6%), with a majority of domestic publications (SCP = 4) and limited international contribution (MCP = 1). Sweden combines domestic and collaborative contributions (MCP = 25%), while Turkey and Germany exhibit an exclusively national structure. Norway stands out for a higher proportion of international collaboration (33.3%). Outside Europe, Australia displays a fully internationalized pattern (MCP = 100%), and China shows a balance between domestic and international publications (50%). Overall, these results reveal a dominant European base, complemented by countries whose visibility largely depends on transnational collaboration networks.

Table 5
Scientific Production by Country and Collaboration Patterns (above 1)

N°	Country	Articles	% of Total	SCP	MCP	% MCP
1	United Kingdom	5.0	11.6	4	1	20.0
2	Sweden	4.0	9.3	3	1	25.0
3	Turkey	4.0	9.3	4	0	0.0
4	Germany	3.0	7.0	3	0	0.0
5	Norway	3.0	7.0	2	1	33.3
6	Australia	2.0	4.7	0	2	100.0
7	China	2.0	4.7	1	1	50.0
8	Denmark	2.0	4.7	2	0	0.0

Note. SCP (Single Country Publications) = Publications produced exclusively by authors from the same country; MCP (Multiple Country Publications) = Publications with international collaboration; % MCP = Percentage of publications with international collaboration relative to the country's total publications.
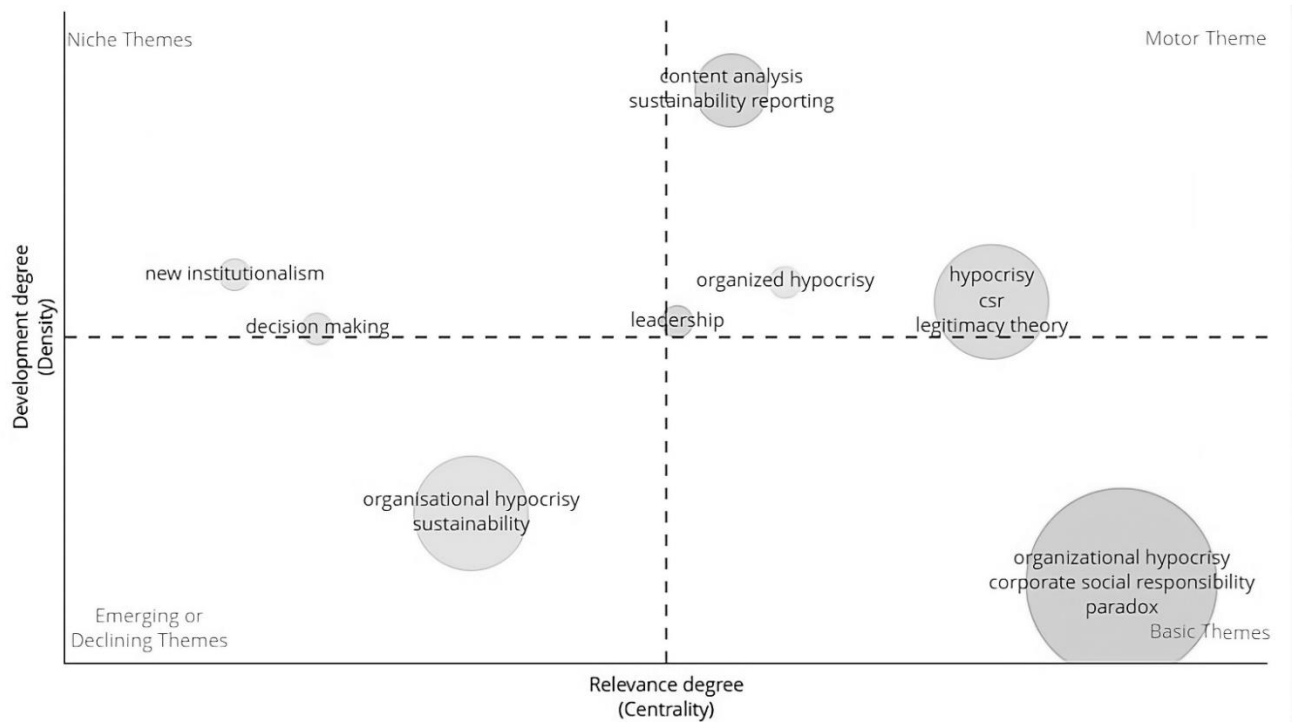Source: Own elaboration.

4.7. Co-Occurrence Network Analysis and Thematic Map

The conceptual analysis, based on occurrence frequency and semantic centrality metrics, reveals a clearly defined and highly cohesive thematic structure. The literature is organized around a well-defined theoretical core, comprising *organizational hypocrisy*, *corporate social responsibility*, and *paradox*, which frames the debate on persistent tensions between discourse, organizational practices, and normative alignment. This closed, triangular configuration reflects a field with high theoretical coherence and a stable analytical orientation within management and organizational responsibility research.

The thematic map (Figure 4) confirms this structure by clearly distinguishing four conceptual quadrants. In the basic themes quadrant (high centrality, low density), the transversal core of the field is concentrated, serving as a shared foundation for the various research lines. Surrounding this core is the motor themes quadrant (high centrality, high density), which includes *organizational hypocrisy*, *leadership*, as well as the clusters *content analysis–sustainability reporting* and *hypocrisy–CSR–legitimacy theory*. These themes display greater internal development and play a driving role, extending the conceptual core toward empirical and explanatory applications related to legitimation mechanisms and symbolic accountability.

The niche themes quadrant (high density, low centrality) groups *new institutionalism* and *decision making*, which exhibit a high degree of theoretical specialization, although with limited integration into the broader field. Finally, the emerging or reconfiguring themes quadrant (low centrality, low density) includes *organizational hypocrisy* and *sustainability*, suggesting lines still under development whose future positioning will depend on their ability to connect with the dominant conceptual core.

Figure 4
Thematic Map

Note. The thematic map is organized according to centrality (horizontal axis) and density (vertical axis). Centrality indicates the degree to which a theme is connected to the conceptual structure of the field, while density reflects its level of internal development. The upper-right quadrant identifies motor themes; the lower-right quadrant, basic themes; the upper-left quadrant, niche themes; and the lower-left quadrant, emerging or reconfiguring themes.
Source: Own elaboration.

This thematic configuration describes an analytically concentrated field, with a robust theoretical axis and complementary lines that expand its scope without fragmenting conceptual coherence.

4.8. Thematic Structure and Conceptual Development

Content analysis reveals that the literature on organizational hypocrisy is structured around a stable conceptual core, yet with differentiated evolutionary trajectories showing a progressive shift from macro-institutional formulations toward more relational, situated, and processual approaches. This pattern does not respond to a mere accumulation of basic themes, but to a gradual reconfiguration of the object of study, where hypocrisy is no longer understood solely as a discrepancy between discourse and action but as a functional, contingent, and strategically managed organizational mechanism.

In an initial stage, represented by foundational works and theoretical reviews (Boiral, 2007; Christensen et al., 2013; Hoffmann, 2018; Michelon et al., 2016), this functional gap is conceptualized primarily through new institutionalism, decoupling, and legitimacy management. In this block, the emphasis is placed on structural divergence among "talk, decisions, and actions," understood as an adaptive response to conflicting institutional pressures. Hypocrisy here appears as a systemic phenomenon, widely present in domains such as sustainability, social accounting, auditing, and public policy, with a strong normative and critical bias.

From 2020 onward, a conceptual inflection is identified. While retaining its institutional anchoring, the literature begins to disaggregate hypocrisy into specific practices, devices, and processes, incorporating in-depth qualitative methodologies (fsQCA, longitudinal case studies, discourse analysis) and defined organizational settings. Research in supply chains, business schools, sports organizations, and public entities (Glover & Touboulic, 2020; Knill et al., 2020; Snelson-Powell et al., 2020) shows that hypocrisy responds not only to external pressures but also to internal capacity constraints, conflicts across organizational levels, and tensions between symbolic accountability and operational action. Conceptually, the field shifts from highlighting inconsistencies to evaluating the conditions that make organizational hypocrisy possible.

Simultaneously, a robust line emerges focusing on micro-organizational perceptions and consequences, particularly in education, leadership, and labor relations (Kılıçoğlu, 2017; Yaghi & Yaghi, 2021; Zeb et al., 2023). These studies introduce variables such as trust, ethical leadership, job embeddedness, and integrity, showing that hypocrisy does not produce uniformly negative effects. Under certain cultural and situational configurations, it may even coexist with functional outcomes, challenging prevailing normative readings and complicating theoretical debate.

More recently, the field has incorporated approaches integrating technology, strategic communication, and computational processing, expanding the empirical reach of the concept. Studies on digital disclosure, social media, climate framing, and longitudinal report evaluation (Feeney et al., 2025; Sun et al., 2023) demonstrate that hypocrisy is actively managed through narrative, emotional, and symbolic devices targeted at different audiences. In this phase, hypocrisy is redefined as an organizational capacity for segmentation and framing rather than as a simple coherence failure.
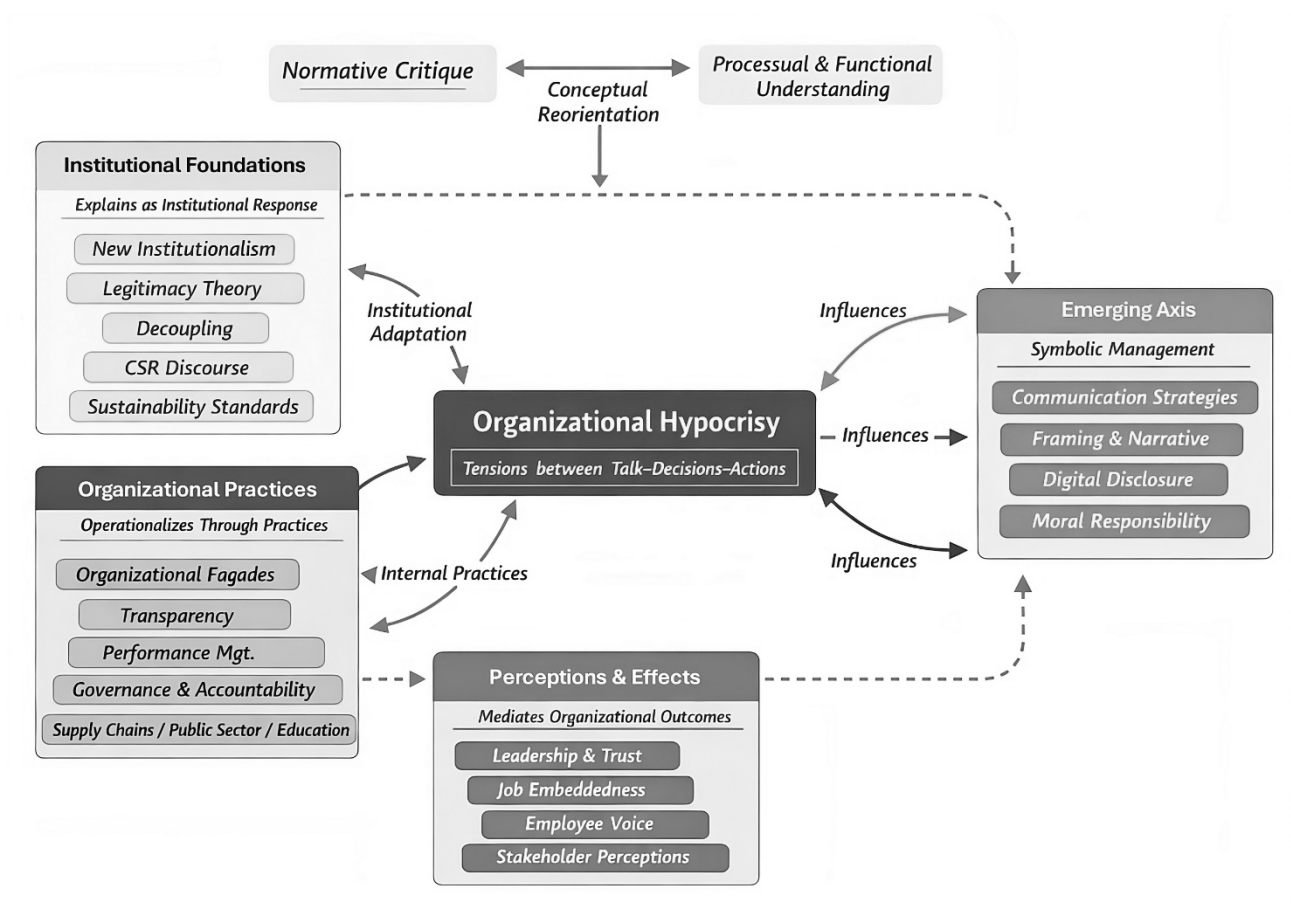
Across the literature, a persistent tension is identified between two conceptual orientations: on one hand, hypocrisy as a problem to be corrected through greater transparency, integrity, and discursive alignment; on the other, hypocrisy as an organizational resource that allows sustaining aspirational commitments, managing paradoxes, and navigating complex institutional environments. This duality remains unresolved, yet it structures the field and explains its thematic coherence despite empirical diversity.

Evolutionarily, the literature progresses from general and normative explanations toward more situated, relational, and dynamic models, incorporating actors, temporality, and specific

contexts. However, a methodological gap persists in the integrated articulation across macro, meso, and micro levels, as well as in comparative longitudinal observation that would distinguish between transient, structural, and strategically sustained hypocrisy. This gap delineates a clear agenda for the theoretical development of the field.

Figure 5 presents a conceptual synthesis of the field, organized around organizational hypocrisy as the central axis of the literature. From this core, distinct thematic domains are articulated to explain the phenomenon from complementary perspectives: institutional frameworks providing theoretical and explanatory foundations; organizational practices associated with social responsibility and sustainability; effects and perceptions related to leadership, decision-making, and legitimacy; and an emerging axis related to symbolic and communicational management. Connections among these elements reflect influence and feedback relationships, evidencing a coherent, interrelated thematic structure in the process of consolidation.

Figure 5

Thematic Structure and Conceptual Evolution of Organizational Hypocrisy

Source: Own elaboration.

5. DISCUSSION

The results of the bibliometric and thematic analyses allow interpreting the evolution of research on organizational hypocrisy as an intellectually coherent field, albeit still fragmented in disciplinary and empirical terms. In line with Brunsson´s (2002) classical formulation, the identified conceptual structure confirms that the construct continues to be primarily understood as a structural mechanism for managing institutional tensions, rather than as an ethical deviation or isolated opportunistic behavior. The persistent centrality of corporate social responsibility and the notion of paradox reinforces this reading, positioning the phenomenon at the intersection of normative demands, social expectations, and organizational constraint.

The triangular configuration observed in the co-occurrence network reflects a stable articulation among organizational hypocrisy, corporate social responsibility, and paradox, suggesting that the field has converged toward a relatively well-defined theoretical core. This finding aligns directly with new institutionalism, particularly the decoupling between formal structures and organizational practices proposed by Meyer and Rowan (1977) and later developed by Bromley and Powell (2012). From this perspective, the discourse–action gap appears less as an anomaly and more as a recurrent response to the plurality of institutional logics characterizing contemporary organizations (Feeney et al., 2025; Pedersen & Andersen, 2023).

The examination of the thematic map deepens this interpretation, showing that the field's conceptual core is concentrated in highly central but less internally dense basic themes. The clustering of *organizational hypocrisy*, *corporate social responsibility*, and *paradox* in this area indicates that these concepts function as a shared foundation articulating diverse debates, though empirical and theoretical developments remain heterogeneous. This configuration is consistent with the observation that many studies use organizational hypocrisy as a general interpretive lens without necessarily advancing toward integrated or comparable explanatory models (Bromley et al., 2012; Hallett, 2010).

The presence of motor themes linked to leadership, content analysis, sustainability reporting, and legitimacy theory indicates a strengthening of empirical evidence associated with this framework. These findings illustrate how organizations produce and manage aspirational promises, compliance narratives, and symbolic practices in high-visibility contexts, revealing mechanisms of adaptation to institutional tensions and the expectations of multiple stakeholders (Mellquist & Sörbom, 2023; SolatiNik et al., 2023; Zeb et al., 2023). The internal density of these nodes reflects active and methodologically consolidated research lines, particularly in organizational communication and corporate governance.

Niche themes, such as new institutionalism and decision-making, reveal more specialized theoretical developments with limited integration into the central debate. Their position suggests deep analytical contributions, although with restricted circulation within the broader field. This pattern reinforces the idea of persistent fragmentation, previously noted in the

literature, where conceptual advances do not always interact or translate into systematic theoretical accumulation (Donthu et al., 2021).

The emergence of themes related to sustainability and organizational hypocrisy indicates opportunities for future research agendas. Although less central, their proximity to the dominant conceptual core suggests growing integration potential, especially in contexts with strict environmental regulations and high ethical expectations. Recent studies demonstrate how the divergence between rhetoric and action manifests strategically in companies facing legitimacy crises (Nasreen et al., 2025), UK universities committed to sustainability(Czarnecka et al., 2025), and organizations where symbolic and substantive actions combine with ethical leadership (Nawaz et al., 2025).

Overall, the findings support the central premise outlined in the introduction: while research on organizational hypocrisy has a solid theoretical foundation, it still lacks a systematization integrating empirical and conceptual developments. The bibliometric work conducted provides structural evidence that identifies both convergence points and dispersion areas within the field. These results indicate that the topic is consolidating as a theoretical construct, although further comparative and longitudinal studies are necessary to articulate macro, meso, and micro levels, particularly in international settings and across diverse sectors.

It is important to note certain limitations that should be considered when interpreting these results. First, the review relies exclusively on articles indexed in Scopus, which may have excluded relevant contributions published in other repositories or academic books traditionally influential in organizational theory. Second, although the bibliometric and thematic evaluation allows identifying structural patterns and general trends, it does not capture the conceptual nuances or interpretive differences present in specific qualitative proposals. Finally, the temporal scope up to 2025 implies that very recent developments may not be fully reflected in the analyzed networks.

ased on the findings, several directions for future research emerge. First, it is necessary to advance toward comparative and longitudinal assessments to examine how this discourse–action gap evolves over time and under different institutional regimes. Second, greater conceptual integration is needed among approaches from management, organizational communication, and institutional studies to reduce field fragmentation. Third, subsequent studies could deepen the empirical operationalization of the theoretical construct, developing more consistent indicators to facilitate cross-study comparisons. Finally, the link between organizational hypocrisy, sustainability, and emerging regulation constitutes a particularly promising research agenda, given the growing pressure for discursive coherence and accountability in contemporary organizations.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The systematic analysis of the literature allows several conclusions that provide conceptual clarity and theoretical directions regarding organizational hypocrisy. First, it is confirmed that this dissociation constitutes a structural and functional mechanism through which organizations manage contradictory institutional demands and divergent expectations. Its persistence is not solely explained by individual ethical deviations but by the need to balance external legitimacy and internal flexibility in complex and dynamic contexts.

Second, the results reveal that the literature has established a shared theoretical core centered on the interrelation between organizational hypocrisy, corporate social responsibility, and paradox. This core functions as a conceptual anchor, connecting research across different sectors and methodologies, and provides a robust framework for future explorations on organizational communication, leadership, and governance.

Third, the identified thematic dispersion indicates that, although subfields with high empirical density have developed, the field remains characterized by disciplinary fragmentation and methodological heterogeneity. This suggests that theoretical consolidation still requires integrative efforts, particularly to articulate findings from quantitative, qualitative, and conceptual review studies.

Fourth, the accumulated evidence indicates that this strategic dissociation not only persists but intensifies in contexts of increasing social and regulatory scrutiny. The emergence of themes related to sustainability, education, and crisis management demonstrates that hypocrisy can operate strategically, modulating the perception of internal and external actors, with its effects dependent on both the institutional framework and organizations' capacity to manage narratives and expectations.

These conclusions underscore that organizational hypocrisy constitutes a central analytical construct for understanding the tension between discourse and action in contemporary organizations, providing a bridge between institutional theory, legitimacy literature, and organizational practices. At the same time, they highlight the need to consolidate conceptual and methodological criteria to develop a more integrated, comparative, and cumulative body of knowledge.

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