Management Research and Religion: A Citation Analysis

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Abstract Research on management with regard to religion became a growing field of interest in the last decades. Nevertheless, the impact of religion on actor's economic behavior is also an old research topic, as the writings of Max Weber (The protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism, Allen and Unwin, London, 1930) underline. The purpose of this contribution is to highlight the developments of this topic and to guide scholars to identify possible gaps. The structuring and investigation on this topic will help us to advance and better understand past research, while leading to some further reflections. We conduct a citation analysis of 215 articles and 7,968 cited references to examine the citation structure and make out the most-influential publications that have shaped research most so far. On the basis of the analysis it is to be assumed that three research streams affect progress: Best practices regarding performance issues, religion at work as well as religion, and personal ethics. Finally, the publications that each topic-clusters contains are reflected and discussed to achieve a structural overview of the state of the art of research.

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Introduction

In 1904–1905, sociologist and German economist Max Weber stated in his book " The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" the following predication:

> As far as the influence of the Puritan outlook extended, under all circumstances—and this is, of course, much more important than the mere encouragement of capital accumulation—it favoured the development of a rational bourgeois economic life; it was the most important, and above all the only consistent influence in the development of that life. It stood at the cradle of the modern economic man (Weber 1930, p. 117).

This citation tries to emphasize the role of Protestant conception in the development of capitalism. In general, Max Weber's book entirely strives to underline that religion influences significantly society's economics. This influence passes principally by the transmission of a system of implicit or explicit values that provides a frame to the economic actor, by giving sense to its actions.

Nevertheless, Cavalcanti et al. (2007) underline that the predication made by Max Weber is nothing else than a hypothesis, which remains even today controversial. Indeed, they underline the inability to quantify the effects of religion on economic performance: "We attribute the fact that Weber's thesis continues to be controversial nearly 100 years after its conception to the failure of social sciences to adequately quantify the effects of religion on the aggregate performance of economies" (Cavalcanti et al. 2007, p. 106).

Even if questioning remains not resolute, this debate heads with the interest that researchers force in economics, management, and religion. If macro-economists will be interested especially in the effects of religion on aggregated economic performance, the researcher in business administration, as for him, will lay attention perhaps directly or indirect on the question of individual performance. Implicit questions will probably be: Does the religion influence the performance of the firm? If yes, how? Etc.

The options to answer these question are doubtless numerous. Probably the frequency and diversity of researches on this topic will only be underlining the interest of research in management on this subject.

To discern the major tracks and the centers of interest, we try to generate a picture of research in management with regard to religion. By doing so, we conduct a citation analysis and concomitant an analysis of the most cited literature. More exactly, our objective is to provide an analysis of exploratory contents on interface between religion and management in scientific journals. Consequently, the following research questions result:

What is the state of the art of research in management with regard to religion?

Consequently, we will address following issues: What are the most influential publications, what are the thematic priorities within these publications and which role do they play with regard to the progress of this overlap?

By answering these questions we tend to reveal the intellectual structure of these researches. This will help scholars to clearly understand the main streams and to identify possible gaps within research.

Literature

The Western world is based widely on a Judeo-Christian conception (Calkins 2000). Indeed, this construct shapes the perception of our society regarding the relevance and correctness of certain actions by various values and bans. Also, a large number of management behaviors have their foundations in religious precepts. So, for example, the working world respects a "lord's day," a honest holding of transactions ("Thou shalt not steal") and negotiations ("Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour"), etc.

In the same perspective, some parabolas in terms of short moralizing stories[1] are put in perspective of commercial situations and underline Judeo-Christian answers to, for example, risk-taking, enterprise, individual property, wage, exchange, monetary value, and tax (Calkins 2000).

Even if religion is irrefutably a basic element of our culture, it is obscure to which levels it directly appoints economic behaviors of various actors. To examine these aspects in detail, but also to open further possible perspectives, we provide an analysis of contents of the most influential articles in the field of management with regard to religion. As a starting point, a citation analysis is conducted to identify the most influential publications. Subsequently, clusters are formed on the basis of topical congruence and finally the publications of the clusters built are analyzed and discussed.

Citation analyses are a quantitative-oriented bibliographic approach to determine the structures of scientific fields of study. Since the 1980s, this area of research that has seen increasing application and popularity in the English-language realm (Roth and Gmür 2004).

Citation analyses are based upon the theory that citations are an effective, reliable indication of scientific interaction between researchers and research institutions. Furthermore, it can be assumed that citations make conceptual interconnections of scientific ideas visible (Garfield 1979; Small 1978).

A citation analysis will be used in the following to help analyze the relationships between citing and cited authors and publications, as well as which cited sources are the most influential among those publications used in the analysis. This is an influence that is based on the fact that the most-cited sources provide essential findings, which are in turn influential for the scientific works of other authors (Schäffer et al. 2006).

A citation is literature mentioned in the bibliography of a publication and/or used as a source for another written work. It is an acknowledgement of a published statement's level of significance, regardless of whether the citing author is in agreement or disagreement with it (Roth and Gmür 2004; Schäffer et al. 2006; Voeth 2006).

Management studies have so far only seen limited use of these kinds of analyses. The few studies that have been conducted in the management and business realms solely concentrated their investigations on management (Acedo and Casillas 2005; Li and Tsui 2002; Nerur et al. 2008). There is no bibliometric study conducted in the field of management with a focus on religion. This kind of limitation has been anything but a motivation to further develop this topic.

Methodology

The incorporation of the most central, most relevant publications is critical if research progress is to be made (Roth and Gmür 2004). The following investigation will attempt to advance management research with regard to religion

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[1] See for example for the Judeo-Christians: Ex. 20:1–17; and for the Christians: Mt. 25:14–30; Lk. 19:12–27; Lk. 16; Lk. 12:16–31; Mt. 20:1–16; Mt. 21:12–13; Mk. 11:15–17, Mk. 12:13–17 (Calkins 2000).

aspects as it integrates every available double-blind reviewed publication published so far fulfilling the following described criteria. The original database includes articles that carry the terms "Manage*" and "Religion" in their abstacts and one of the following terms in the subject terms: Manage*, Business, Leader*, Organi*, Entrepreneur*, or Religion. The subject terms have been chosen on the basis of the Management, Spirituality, and Religion (MSR) Interest Group of the Academy of Management domain statement:

> The study of the relationship and relevance of spirituality and religion in management and organizations. Major topics include: theoretical advances or empirical evidence about the effectiveness of spiritual or religious principles and practices in management, from approaches represented in the literature including religious ethics, spirituality and work, and spiritual leadership, as well as applications of particular religions, and secular spiritualities to work, management/leadership, organization, and the business system; and evaluation studies of the effectiveness of management approaches that nurture the human spirit in private, non-public or public institutions (MSR 2000).

Moreover the definition was extended by the term Entrepreneurship. The reason for the integration of this limitation was to make sure that only management related publications are identified.

Different methods exist in citation analyses that allow the establishment and development of clusters. The method applied here is a well-known construct that has been used in similar studies (Casillas and Acedo 2007; Leonidou et al. 2010; Prévot et al. 2010; Roth and Gmür 2004). Using this procedural approach allows research fields to be presented in a clear and detailed fashion (Roth and Gmür 2004). Our citation analysis was performed using the following approach:

1. *Identification of key documents*: The original dataset is determined by publications fulfilling the criteria described in the previous section.
2. *Generation of the citation analysis*: The most-cited publications and/or authors (or teams of authors) are determined.
3. *Data set analysis*: The next step analyzes the dataset regarding attributes and consistency. Here, attributes such as amount of citations, most-cited journals, author affiliation, etc. are discussed.
4. *Citation cluster identification*: Subsequently topic clusters are identified based upon their content similarities. This is realized by assigning the most-cited publications to thematic priorities.

5. *Topic cluster retention*: The topic clusters are then searched for content similarities and interpreted. Essential criteria here are common topics and focal points found within the clusters.
6. *Topic cluster interpretation*: Finally, each cluster is analyzed. Content similarities are identified among the centrally positioned and frequently co-cited sources within the clusters. Moreover the contents are described and discussed.

Dataset

The citation analysis solely used English journal articles, found after a research in following databases: ABI Inform/ProQuest, Emerald, EBSCO, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect. A total of 215 publications were identified that fulfilled our criteria. The compilation of data encloses any publications in double-blind reviewed journals published until the end of 2011.

We identified the top eight journals in which these articles were published (Fig. 1). Beside this top eight ranking, any other journals show less than three publications. On the basis of the Social Sciences Citation Index the prominence, reputation, and quality of the journals in which the analyzed sources were published indicate the high level of scientific importance.

Figure 2 shows the increasing amount of interest the research field of management and religion has seen over the years. The diagonal line highlights the growing interest in the field's findings and developments.

Twenty-three of the 215 publications analyzed did not utilize any reference as scientific base. These include the introductions to edited volumes, reflections, indications, as well as quantitative and qualitative studies, and investigations.
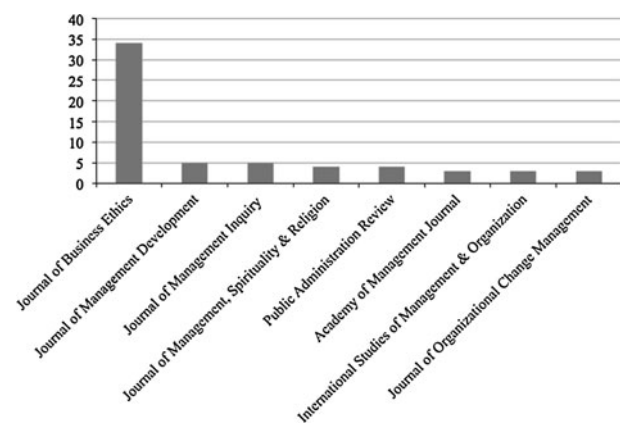

Fig. 1 Publishing journals of contributions in original dataset (n = 215)
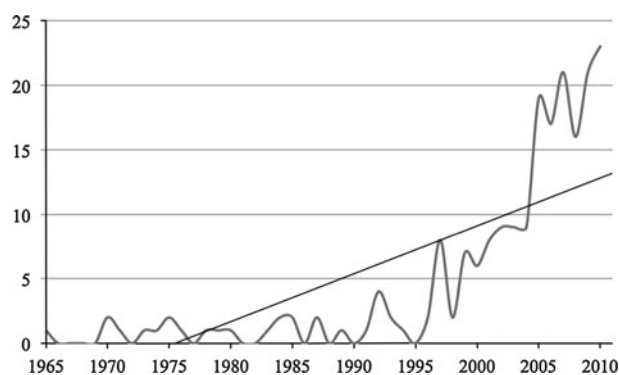
Fig. 2 Number of publications in original dataset ($n = 215$)

Citation Analysis

Descriptive Data

The first part of our analysis is mainly descriptive. It contains the characteristics of the cited references as the type of publication, the journals in which the cited references are published most, the most frequently cited references and their historical background.

It was our aim to identify the most cited publications within our original dataset to create a basis for cluster development. The original dataset ($n = 215$) referred to 7,968 publications. The amount of citations in these publications ranges from 0 to 149.

The sources used were mainly journal articles (46.7%). Along with these, 36.0% were monographs; 9.8% edited volumes; 76.0% working papers, conference papers, or conference proceedings; while 1.5% were miscellaneous sources such as dissertations or reports. The results can be seen in Fig. 3.

As anticipated, the research fields of management and business have a strong influence on the field of management and religion. This point is illustrated in Fig. 4, where a majority of well-established management and business journals is seen among the most-cited journals.
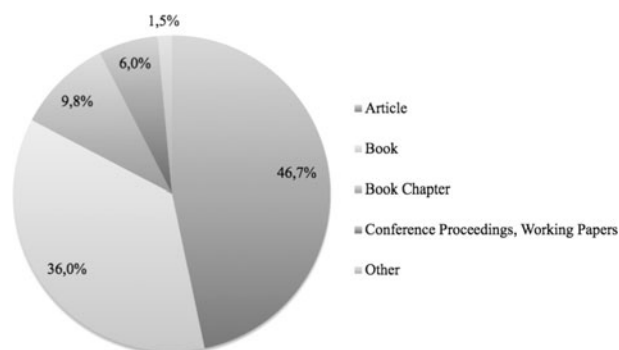
For reasons of space and clarity as well as for concentrating on the most influential publications, a source had to have been cited at least fourteen times to be regarded as most influential on the field of management and religion (for similar approaches see e.g., Leonidou et al. 2010; Prévot et al. 2010; Roth and Gmür 2004; Schäffer et al. 2006; Voeth 2006). While Roth and Gmür (2004) and Schäffer et al. (2006) set a minimum citation score for publications to be exposed, Leonidou et al. (2010) sets a top 25, Prévot et al. (2010) and Schäffer et al. (2006) a top 20 and Voeth (2006) a top 10 of the most cited publications.

Our source-citation limitation leads us to a list of the 20 most cited publications as illustrated in Table 1. They were published between 1934 and 2004.

Finally, we observed the historical background of the cited references and calculated the percental leverage of the 20 most cited references compared to the remaining references published in the same year based on citation numbers. Moreover, in years in which there is more than one of the most influential publications published, solely the one with the largest impact is depicted. As more recent publications are more frequent it is hardly surprising that younger publications take a less dominate role as older publications, how it is the case considering Weber (1930) for instance.

Cluster Formation

The second part of our analysis tries to identify some patterns. In fact, this part of our work is based on the identification of heterogeneous clusters containing homogenous elements. This work was done according the following principle: after reading the documents, we tried to identify some major occurrences between the treated topics. We also identified the type and nature of publication: book/article; empirical/conceptual. We then attempted to identify the most cited criterions to be able to create a little number of
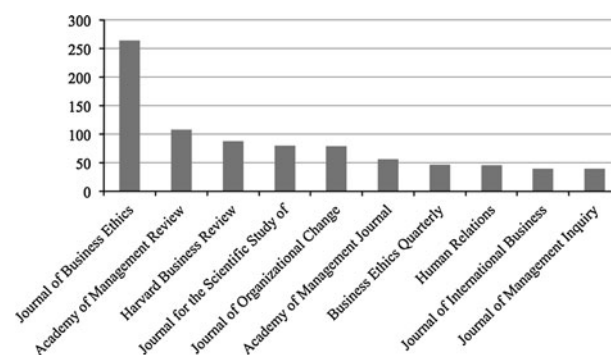

Fig. 3 Types of sources—cited publications ($n = 7,968$)

Fig. 4 Journal citations—number and sources in cited publications ($n = 7,968$)

Table 1 The most influential publications on the field of management and religion

| Author	Year	Title	Number of citations
Mitroff, Denton	1999	A spiritual audit of corporate America: a hard look at spirituality, religion, and values in the workplace	28
Weber	1930	The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism	26
Giacalone, Jurkiewicz	2003	Right from Wrong: The Influence of Spirituality on Perceptions of Unethical Business Activities	17
Weaver, Agle	2002	Religiosity As an Influence on Ethical Behavior in Organizations: A Theoretical Model and Research Agenda	14
Cash, Gray	2000	A framework for accommodating religion and spirituality in the workplace	11
Ashmos, Duchon	2000	Spirituality at work: a conceptualization and measure	10
Hofstede	1980	Cultures Consequences: International Differences in Work-related Values	10
Senge	1990	The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization	9
Gunther	2001	God and business: the surprising quest for spiritual renewal in the American workplace	9
Hofstede	1991	Cultures and Organizations-Software of the Mind	8
Kennedy, Lawton	1998	Religiousness and Business Ethics	8
Chappell	1993	The Soul of a Business: Managing for Profit and the Common Good	8
Trevino	1986	Ethical decision making in organizations: a person-situation interaction model	8
Burns	1978	Leadership	8
Fry	2003	Toward a theory of spiritual leadership	8
Cavanagh	1999	Spirituality for Managers: Context and Critique	8
Calkins	2000	Recovering Religions Prophetic Voice for Business Ethics	7
Laabs	1995	Balancing spirituality and work	7
Nash	1994	Believers in Business	7
Delbecq	2000	Spirituality for Business Leadership: Reporting on a Pilot Course for MBAs and CEOs	7

clusters. Also, we tried to equilibrate as far as possible the cluster size.

In the following the created topic clusters are depicted (Fig. 5), described and discussed (Fig. 6).

Those authors whose names are not enclosed by a circle represent those publications that were used as a starting point for the analysis. Not all 215 articles are shown since not all of them were ultimately connected with the most-cited sources. The arrows coming from these sources indicate their respective citations. Publications enclosed with a circle are the respective citations. The size of the circle with which an author respectively a pair of authors is

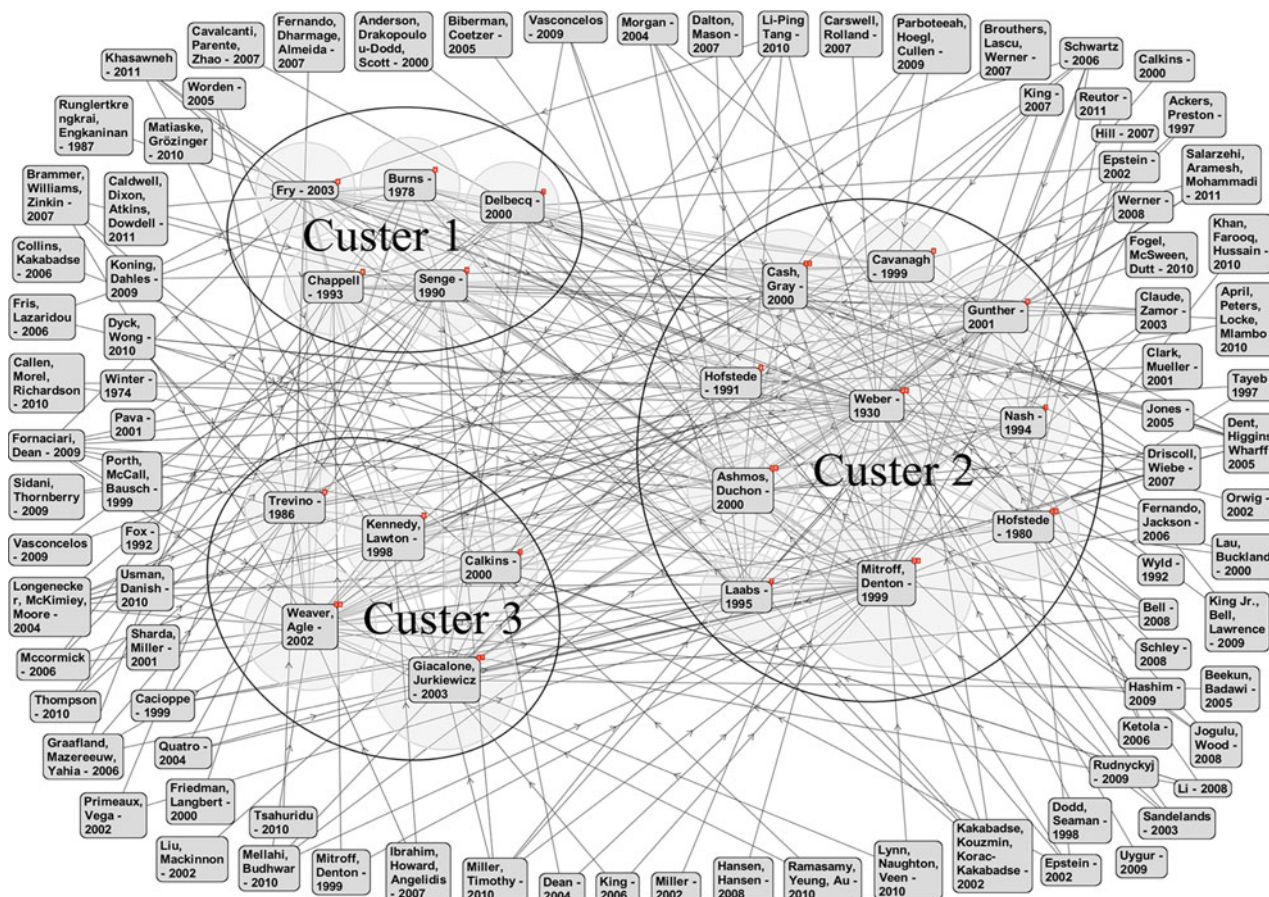**Fig. 5** Historical background of the cited publications (*n* = 7,968)
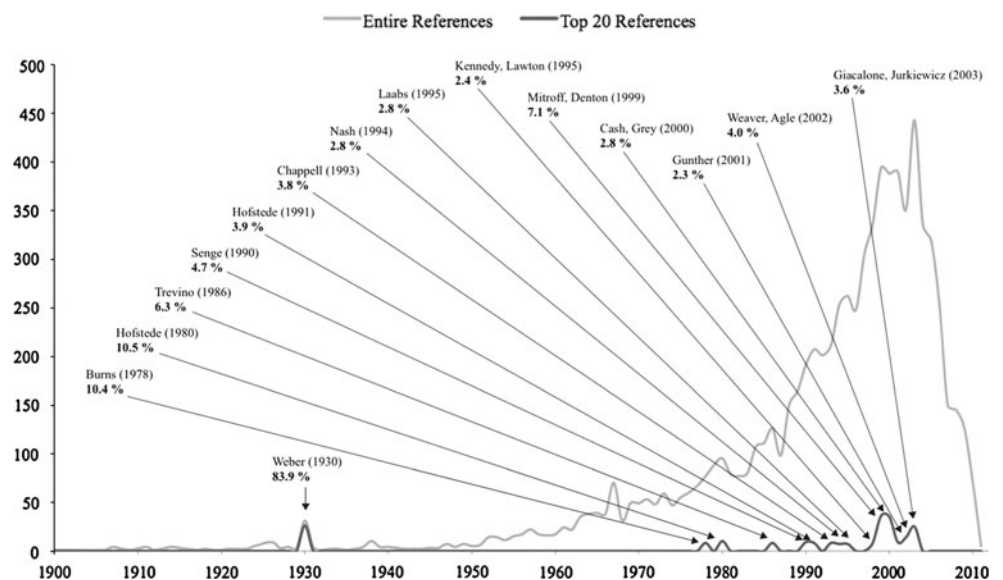
Fig. 6 Citation network and topic clusters

surrounded indicates the amount of citations it contains. Finally, the three clusters determined are depicted in the Table 2.

Cluster 1 contains articles that are largely normative in their approach. They are mainly based on a management level and try to explain how to better perform. In this perspective, Chappell (1993) explains how to manage every shareholder's well-being and maintain performance. Fry (2003) tries to underline how spiritual leadership could lead to a better performance. Finally, Senge (1990) exposes a better organization-type, while Burns (1978) describes different types of leadership, and Delbecq (2000) presents his ideas about teaching spirituality.

The articles in cluster 2 expose either a definition, an analysis and/or a discussion of the influence of religion on management. Some of the articles in this cluster foster specially on the increase of spirituality at work. They discuss this rising phenomenon in the occidental economic sphere (Cavanagh 1999; Laabs 1995; Nash 1994; Cash and Gray 2000; Gunther 2001). Mitroff and Denton (1999) and Ashmos and Duchon (2000) propose a reflection on the conceptualization of spirituality at work, while Hofstede (1980, 1991) focuses on cultural differences, their reasons

and their consequences on enterprise's behavior. A special place aside holds here Max Weber's book on "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" (1930). In his book, Weber explains how religion may influence economic development of a nation.

Cluster 3 develops reflections on the influence of religion on personal ethics. In this perspective, Weaver and Agle (2002), and Kennedy and Lawton (1998) analyze the influence of religion on ethical behavior and Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003) the perception of non ethical actions. Trevino (1986) tries to find the patterns of ethical conducts in situational and individual variables whereas Calkins (2000) explains how business ethical research neglects its religious basis, that should however be considered.

Discussion

In this research, we showed that publications on the interface of religion and management have significantly increased in the last three decades, but particularly from the mid-90s on. This may be due to a comeback or densification of religious interest groups, or/and also to a more or less generalized

Table 2 Cluster configuration

Author(s)	Type of publication	Nature of publication—Tendency
Cluster 1: best practice		
Burns—1978	Monograph	Conceptual
Chappell—1993	Monograph	Conceptual
Delbecq—2000	Journal Article	Conceptual
Fry—2003	Journal Article	Conceptual
Senge—1990	Monograph	Conceptual
Cluster 2: religion at work		
Ashmos, Duchon—2000	Journal Article	Empirical/conceptual
Cash, Gray—2000	Journal Article	Conceptual
Cavanagh—1999	Journal Article	Conceptual
Gunther—2001	Journal Article	Conceptual
Hofstede—1980	Monograph	Conceptual
Hofstede—1991	Monograph	Conceptual
Laabs—1995	Journal Article	Conceptual
Mitroff, Denton—1999	Monograph	Conceptual
Nash—1994	Monograph	Conceptual
Weber—1930	Monograph	Conceptual
Cluster 3: religion and ethics		
Calkins—2000	Journal Article	Conceptual
Giacalone, Jurkiewicz—2003	Journal Article	Empirical
Kennedy, Lawton—1998	Journal Article	Conceptual
Trevino—1986	Journal Article	Empirical
Weaver, Agle—2002	Journal Article	Conceptual

alternative research for individual spirituality. This last idea may be underlined by the fact, that part of the analyzed articles do mention spirituality as an alternative and less dogmatic way to structure individual questionings.

This view may also be fostered by the existence of cluster 2, mainly focused on the relation between religion and work. In fact, as employees pass a big part of their time in their enterprises, it is not wondering that they feel to integrate their questionings.

Furthermore, cluster 2 seems to reflect an "old" query about the influence of religion on work-behavior, as Max Weber's book on the impact of Protestantism on economic development is integrated here. This question seems still unanswered, as some empirical studies try to find variables to measure this influence on a macroeconomic point of view. Our assumption concurs with the findings of Cavalcanti et al. (2007), which we already mentioned in the introduction.

Cluster 1 may signal the need of managers to find answers for their performance issues. The references cited here propose several tools or "best ways" to do. But research on this issue is one of the bases of business administration. Accordingly, we may consider that these researches only reflect a particular way of investigating the diverse solutions to increase productivity.

Cluster 3 examines the relation between ethics and religion. The existence of a relationship between these two topics is fostered by the predominance of the Journal of Business Ethics, in both, the citation analysis and the original dataset. Also, most articles in this cluster signal an existing positive relation between ethics and religion, but insist on some moderating variables. This positive relation may be understood by a high degree of overlap between these both areas. And as Calkins (2000) underlines, ethics have some religious basis.

Finally, it also seems interesting, that most of the references are mainly conceptual (17 references) and not of empirical nature (only 3 references). This may be related to the fact that religion seems to be more philosophical as a subject, then analytical. The nature of the topic, thus, leads to a more discursive approach. Nevertheless, if the old questions of cluster 2 (the influence of religion on economic performance) want to be answered, further research has to be undertaken, even if Cavalcanti et al. (2007) or Dodd and Seaman (1998) already did a great effort in their quantitative analysis of Weber's thesis. Also, the question on the influence of religion on enterprise performance or actor's behavior is still not clearly proved, as researches remain contradictory or highly limited (see for example: Hamid et al. 1993; Hansen and Hansen 2008; Hill 2007; Li

2008; Ramasamy et al. 2010; Van Wensveen Siker et al. 1991).

Regarding the limitations it is to note that we aim to picture a representative overview of the landscape of existing publications. Nevertheless, perfection can only be intended but hardly achieved. Indeed, the subjectivity of the researcher on the choice of data and on the interpretation of results is certainly one of the biggest biases of our analysis. Furthermore, the discussion and reflection of the top 20 most cited references restrict our results. However, as we aimed to make out the most influential publications therefore it seems to be legitimate. Finally, the assignment of clusters is based on a subjective interpretation. We are aware that other scholars would eventually sort the identified top 20 articles differently.

Conclusion

With this study, we aimed to answer the following research question: What is the state of the art of research in management with regard to religion? To answer respectively solve our research question, we made out the current state of research on management with regard to religion by conducting a citation and content analysis of the most-influential publications that have been cited of a selected advance base that represents an overview of published insights so far.

After identifying a top 20 ranking, headed by Mitroff and Denton (1999), Weber (1930) and Giacalone and Jurkiewicz (2003), we showed that the literature published on this topic is built upon three thematic streams: best practices, religion at work as well as religion and ethics.

While the publications in cluster 1 concentrate on leadership and performance issues, cluster 2 takes a deeper look into issues that rise regarding spiritual and cultural aspects at the workplace. Finally, cluster 3 addresses the influence of religion on ethical behavior of individuals. Summarizing, the three clusters address society, organizational, as well as individual perspectives. They underline the main recent research issues on management and religion. Finally, the discussion and reflection of the publications in every cluster opens several perspectives for further research and makes out insufficiently explored coherences, as for instance the influence of religion on enterprise performance or actor's behavior.

The scope of this subject and the rising interest of researches outline a promising future to this topic. The authors hope that the presented results will help to develop further researches on management with regard to religion.

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