

# Mapping of Global Construction Safety Research using Scientometric Approach

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## Abstract

The construction sector is one of the hazardous sectors across the world. In the Indian construction sector, on an average 38 fatal accidents happen every day. Research on construction safety and improvement of safety performance has been continuing for a few years. It explores multiple areas such as safety performance measurement, safety program, human factors, safety planning, site monitoring, etc. This study followed a three-stage literature review approach summarizing the research domain of construction safety. The science mapping approach consists of both bibliometric analysis and scientometric analysis which are carried out in this study. For the bibliometric analysis, Web of Science (WoS) database has been used while for the scientometric analysis, the Cite-Space software has been used in this study. This study identifies key areas of construction safety management by following by a qualitative discussion on research publications across the globe. It includes information and communication technology in safety management, workers' safety perception and behaviour, safety management system, hazard identification, accident causation, and risk management in safety, safety climate and safety culture. This study helped the authors to prepare the outline of construction safety manual. This paper is useful to academic community and industry practitioners to understand the trend of research in the field of construction safety. Also, the proposed directions for future work could benefit to the new researchers and industry practitioners in enhancing safety performance and improving site 'employees' health and wellbeing.

**Keywords:** Scientometric Analysis, Construction Safety, Work Zone Safety.

## 1. Introduction

Constructions sector is one of the hazardous sectors across the world. In the Indian construction sector, on an average 38 fatal accidents happen every day [1]. Similar challenges exist in other countries [2]. Research on construction safety and improvement of safety performance has been continuing for a few years. It explores multiple areas such as safety performance measurement [3], safety program [4], and human factors [5]. Recently the application of digital technology such as BIM (i.e., Building Information Modeling) has been growing in the construction sector. Researchers have commenced the use of BIM in enhancing safety planning and site monitoring [6]. The literature review encompasses all existing literature on a given subject, in the sense of what is newest on this subject. Conducting the literature review is an expedient method to gain an in-depth understanding of a research domain. However, limited studies exist which review covers these issues as mentioned above (e.g., safety program, BIM, and human factors, etc.).

One of authors of this study needs to identify the key areas of construction safety management to determine the outline of a construction safety manual which is a part of project sponsored by National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) New Delhi. Moreover, there is a boundary between the study of construction safety and road safety. Many

accidents are reported in work zones while road and bridge construction or maintenance work is in progress. This study includes construction safety with work zone safety management too.

A scientometric analysis approach has been adopted in the field of construction engineering and management [7]. It aims to address the subjectivity issue. However, these existing scientometric review-based studies were bounded to self-exploratory topics such as the most productive scholar, the most influential journal, and the most frequently searched keywords [8]. The level of details presented in these previous reviews could be enhanced [8]. This review-based study applied the science mapping approach by reviewing journal articles published in the domain of construction safety. The objectives of this report consist of (1) applying a science mapping approach to analyze the influential journals, keywords, scholars, and articles in the domain of construction and work zone safety; (2) analyzing the existing mainstream research topics in construction and work zone safety; (3) determination of key areas of construction safety management for the preparation of construction safety manual, (4) discussing the limitations or gaps of existing research in the construction safety domain; and (5) proposing the research framework guiding future

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scholarly and research work. This review-based study introduces the science mapping approach and exposes state of the art into the domain of construction and work zone safety.

## 2. Methodology

This study followed a three-stage literature review approach summarizing the research domain of construction safety. The science mapping approach consists of bibliometric analysis and scientometric analysis. Both analysis' are carried out in this study. The bibliometric analysis is carried out using Web of Science (WoS). And, scientometric analysis is carried out using Cite-Space software for this study. The detailed workflow of the review is presented in Fig. 1.

### 2.1 Bibliometric search

The first step of the review was the bibliometric search in 'Web of Science (WoS)'. The keywords "construction safety", "work zone safety", "bridge", "road", and "highway" were inputs to search literature published in WoS. WoS covers many reputed and qualitative journals and more recent publications. Initially, 1,431 documents were found. These documents were further screened by including only journal articles published in English. Conference and proceeding papers were excluded from the sample because they have been released in a large quantity but with less valuable or useful information compared to journal articles. After this initial screening, a total 851 articles remained in the literature sample. As shown in Fig. 1, further refinements of the remaining 851 articles were studied of their titles, abstracts, and keywords in detail. Out of these, similar articles that did not focus on safety issues in the construction industry were removed. More, it should be noticed that the scope of this review-based study is covered human-centered safety management, which covered safety planning and site management. However, it excluded other safety issues that do not directly focus on construction employees' safety, such as structural or material safety for buildings. After the final round of screening, ultimately, a total of 382 journal articles published from 2010 to 2019 were selected as the literature sample for the follow-up scientometric analysis.

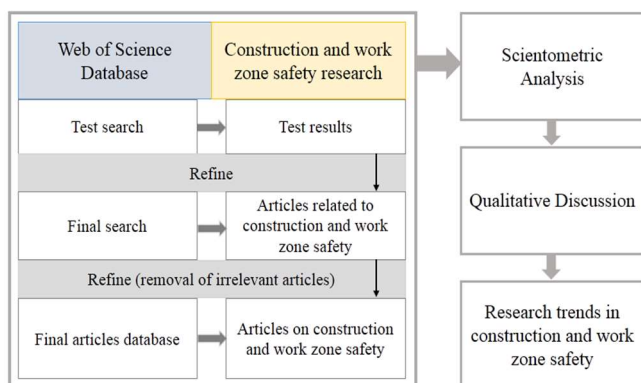


Fig. 1. Illustration of the three-step literature review process

### 2.2 Scientometric analysis

The second step of the review involved a scientometric analysis method by utilizing the text-mining tool Cite-Space [9]. More background information on scientometric analysis can be found in Hossein et al. [10]. Cite Space creates distance-based visualizations of networks where the distances among nodes show the level of closeness among them. The Cite Space is suitable for visualizing more extensive networks with special text mining features. The scientometric analysis is carried out using Cite-Space software. The obtained literature sample from the bibliometric search is transported into Cite-Space to carry out the scientometric analysis. Further, generated results related to the influences of journals, keywords, scholars, and articles in the domain of construction and work zone safety are discussed in this study.

### 2.3 Scientometric analysis

The keyword analysis and articles analysis are carried out as part of preliminary study for scientometric analysis by following citation and document analysis. It shows research trend in construction and work zone safety. Further, qualitative discussion and scientific mapping are done in-depth for key research domains. The research domains are (1) Information and communication technology in safety management, (2) Workers' safety perception and behavior, (3) Safety management system, (4) Hazard identification, accident causation, and risk management in safety, and (5) Safety climate and safety culture. The qualitative discussion of the key research domain aims to provide an in-depth evaluation of the research objectives the domain of construction and work zone safety, the current research gaps or limitations and future recommended research work.

## 3. Findings and Discussion

The 328 journal articles were firstly summarized according to their publication year. Fig. 2 displays the articles' distribution of publication years.

Fig. 2 shows that more articles have been published since 2010. Afterwards, 2010, the number of articles has been undergoing an increase every year except in 2014, 2016 and 2017. It reveals that more research work would be published in construction safety, which is an everlasting research domain in the field of construction engineering and management.

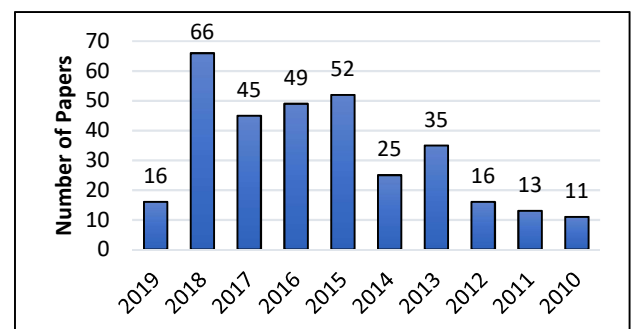


Fig. 2. Distribution of journal articles by Publication years (articles published in 2019 are up to the end of February)

### 3.1 Journal sources

Besides the annual number of articles published, the journal sources of them were also summarized. According to the node and font sizes, Fig. 3 shows that Journal of Construction Engineering and Management (JCEM) has been the most productive journal in terms of the total number of publications, followed by Safety Science, Accident Analysis and Prevention, and Automation in Construction. The colours and connections lines indicate the interrelatedness among journals, showing journals that have cited each other's articles. For example, these journals have been actively citing each other: JCEM, Safety Science, Accident Analysis and Prevention, and International Journal of Project Management.

More quantitative measurement of the influence of journals is provided in Table 1. Journals in Table 1 are listed according to their Citation. Two journals (i.e., Journal of Construction Engineering and Management, and Safety Science) are the most influential in construction safety research in terms of total Citation. Journals including Automation in Construction, Accident Analysis and Prevention, Journal of International Project Management, Journal of Safety Research, Applied Ergonomics, Safety Science, and Journal of Civil Engineering and Management published articles in the construction safety domain actively. In contrast, other journals seem not to continue active in published articles in construction and work zone safety, such as Building and Environment, Construction Management and Economics, and Journal of Performance of Constructed Facilities.

### 3.2 Keywords analysis

Keywords show core contents of existing studies and describe research topics within a given domain [11]. Co-occurrence of keywords demonstrates the inter-closeness among them. By using “Keywords” and “Keyword plus” in Cite Space and text mining of research keywords was performed to eliminate general keywords and to combine semantically consistent keywords such as “BIM” and “Building Information Modeling,” was combined. Finally, most frequent and trending keywords were generated from the science mapping shown in Fig. 4. These keywords have been more frequently used in previous research of construction safety, including “accident”, “model”, “construction safety”, and “safety management”.

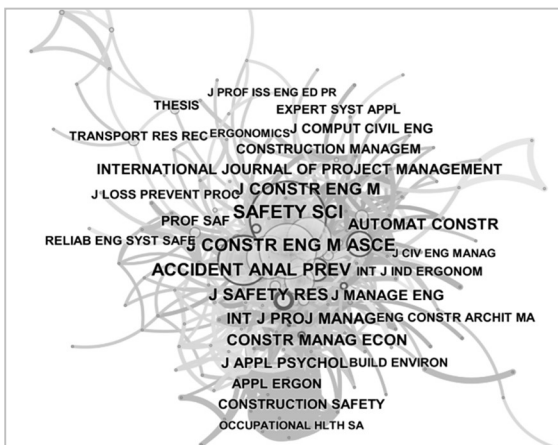


Fig. 3. Visualization of journal sources which publish construction and work zone safety

Table-1. Top 13 Journal based on their citations

| Sr. No. | Journal                                            | Times Cited |
|---------|----------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| 1.      | Journal of construction engineering and management | 344         |
| 2.      | Safety science                                     | 249         |
| 3.      | Accident analysis and prevention                   | 180         |
| 4.      | International journal of project management        | 179         |
| 5.      | Journal of safety research                         | 162         |
| 6.      | Automation in construction                         | 110         |
| 7.      | Construction management and economics              | 102         |
| 8.      | Journal of applied psychology                      | 71          |
| 9.      | Journal of management in engineering               | 68          |
| 10.     | Construction management                            | 55          |
| 11.     | Applied ergonomics                                 | 53          |
| 12.     | Journal of computation in civil engineering        | 52          |
| 13.     | Professional safety                                | 49          |

The connection lines in Fig. 4 show the interrelatedness between a pair of keywords. The keyword “accident” highlights accidents occur in the construction sector, and it is found with close links to model and climate and safety performance. Figure 4 seems very complicated, and interrelatedness among all keywords is not visible. It shows the complexity of the subject. To get a better understanding, it can be referred on the model in place of referring the above figure 4. Keywords in Fig. 4 can be divided into several clusters. Keywords within the same cluster generally have closer internal relationships. The font size indicates the frequency of the keyword that has been studied in the selected literature sample. These most frequently studied keywords include safety management, accident, behaviour, risk, model, and design. It is noticed that keywords listed in Table 2 follow the ranking of the occurrence of keywords in a given year. Cite-Space does not provide details of the Average Normalized Citation and Average Citation number. By ranking of keywords using Average Normalized Citation, they are likely to provide details of higher impact areas in the research community of construction safety. The Average Citation number shows the recentness of keywords being studied and published.

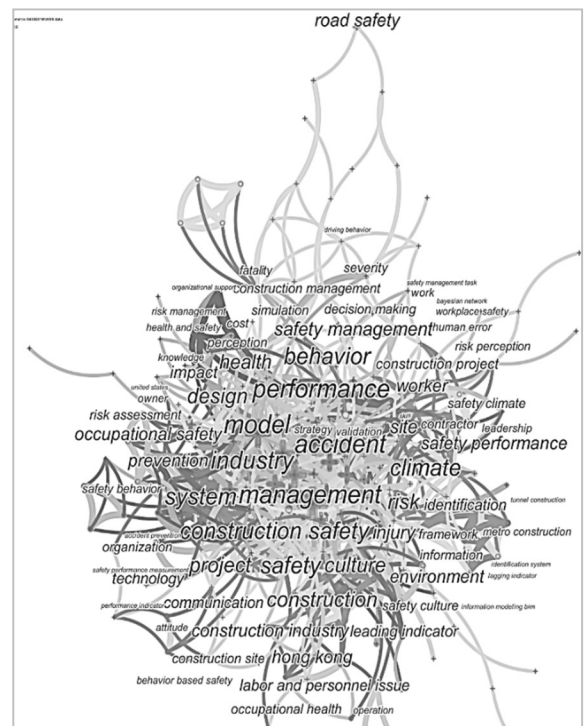


Fig. 4. Visualization of authors' keywords in literature

### 3.3 Citation and Documentation Analysis

Citation analysis was conducted using Cite-Space. In this study, a minimum number of documents and minimum citation number of a scholar were set at 5 and 30

Table-2. Top 25 keywords

| Sr. No | Keyword(s)            | Occurrence | Avg. Publication Year |
|--------|-----------------------|------------|-----------------------|
| 1.     | management            | 70         | 2012                  |
| 2.     | model                 | 69         | 2011                  |
| 3.     | accident              | 64         | 2010                  |
| 4.     | performance           | 64         | 2010                  |
| 5.     | industry              | 57         | 2010                  |
| 6.     | construction safety   | 49         | 2011                  |
| 7.     | system                | 48         | 2010                  |
| 8.     | behavior              | 46         | 2011                  |
| 9.     | climate               | 44         | 2011                  |
| 10.    | safety                | 41         | 2010                  |
| 11.    | culture               | 33         | 2011                  |
| 12.    | project               | 33         | 2010                  |
| 13.    | risk                  | 32         | 2011                  |
| 14.    | construction          | 32         | 2012                  |
| 15.    | design                | 28         | 2010                  |
| 16.    | health                | 27         | 2011                  |
| 17.    | safety management     | 22         | 2012                  |
| 18.    | injury                | 21         | 2011                  |
| 19.    | site                  | 19         | 2012                  |
| 20.    | worker                | 18         | 2013                  |
| 21.    | occupational safety   | 17         | 2013                  |
| 22.    | environment           | 17         | 2012                  |
| 23.    | construction industry | 17         | 2015                  |
| 24.    | road safety           | 16         | 2015                  |
| 25.    | Hong Kong             | 16         | 2011                  |

respectively. Top ten authors, according to the number of publications are provided in Table 3. As in Table 3, Fang, D P, although with only 12 articles in total from the literature sample, has the highest influence measured by the number of records available. In terms of Citation shown in Table 4, Hinze, J., and Choudhry, R.M., can be considered scholars with the highest contribution to the academic community of construction safety.

Table-3. Top10 authors according to number of publication

| Sr No | Author name       | Affiliation                                          | Email                          | Records |
|-------|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------|
| 1.    | D. P. Fang        | Tsinghua University, Beijing, China                  | fangdp@tsinghua.edu.cn         | 12      |
| 2.    | Helen Lingard     | RMIT University, Australia                           | helen.lingard@rmit.edu.au      | 10      |
| 3.    | H. Li             | The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong      | bshengli@polyu.edu.hk          | 9       |
| 4.    | Matthew Hallowell | University of Colorado at Boulder                    | matthew.hallowell@colorado.edu | 8       |
| 5.    | Jochen Teizer     | Georgia Institute of Technology, USA                 | teizer@gatech.edu              | 8       |
| 6.    | Patrick X.W. Zou  | University of New South Wales, Australia             | p.zou@unsw.edu.au              | 7       |
| 7.    | Albert Chan       | The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong      | albert.chan@polyu.edu.hk       | 6       |
| 8.    | L.Y. Ding         | Huazhong University of Science & Technology, China   | dingly_wuhan@yahoo.com.cn      | 6       |
| 9.    | Murat Gunduz      | Qatar University, Qatar                              | gunduzm@metu.edu.tr            | 6       |
| 10.   | X. G. Wu          | Huazhong University of Science and Technology, China | -                              | 6       |

Table-4. Top10 authors according to number of Citations

| Sr No | Author name       | Affiliation                                              | Email                          | Citation |
|-------|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------|
| 1.    | Jimmie Hinze      | University of Florida, USA                               | -                              | 83       |
| 2.    | Rafiq M. Choudhry | Al Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, Saudi Arab | choudhry03@gmail.com           | 56       |
| 3.    | Dov Zohar         | Israel Institute of Technology, Israel                   | dzohar@tx.technion.ac.il       | 56       |
| 4.    | Sherif Mohamed    | Griffith University, Australia                           | s.mohamed@mailbox.gu.edu.au    | 52       |
| 5.    | D. P. Fang        | Tsinghua University, Beijing, China                      | fangdp@tsinghua.edu.cn         | 48       |
| 6.    | C.M. Tam          | City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong                  | bctam@cityu.edu.hk             | 45       |
| 7.    | Matthew Hallowell | University of Colorado, USA                              | matthew.hallowell@colorado.edu | 44       |
| 8.    | Helen Lingard     | RMIT University, Australia                               | helen.lingard@rmit.edu.au      | 44       |
| 9.    | John A. Gambatese | Oregon State University, USA                             | john.gambatese@oregonstate.edu | 39       |
| 10.   | Dom Cooper        | Independent Researcher                                   | -                              | 38       |

### 3.4 Research Trends in Construction and Work Zone Safety

Following the bibliometric analysis and science mapping of the selected literature sample, the in-depth qualitative discussion now focuses on summarizing the main research topics within the theme of construction and work zone safety, identifying the existing research gaps as well as determining contents for construction safety manuals for construction safety.

### 3.5 Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in safety management

Information and communication technologies (ICT) have been emerging in the global construction industry. For example, keywords BIM and VR are both digital technology and are linked to each other to be applied in safety management. However, VR is more commonly applied in safety education and training, while BIM can be more widely applied in various safety management activities such as design for safety and site planning [12] [13].

BIM has displayed its role in safety management in existing studies [14] [15] such as training for workers in off-site construction by increasing workers' hazard awareness [16], visualization of scaffolding and safety facilities for accident prevention [17], and developing databases of near-miss events on-site [18]. Besides BIM, VR has shown its influence in safety training and education [19], specifically in hazard recognition and risk identification in the virtual environment [20] and improving the communication between designer and builder [21]. Multiple other digital tools or media such as sensor-based technology, 3S (GIS/GPS/RS) technology, radio frequency identification (RFID), as mentioned by Zhou et al. [22] could be integrated to assist construction safety management. For example, Cheng and Teizer [23] used real-time data collection, processing, and visualization through remote

sensing and VR to monitor site safety condition. Aguilar and Hewage [24] developed a real-time safety indicator from a centralized safety database with ICT to assist site managers' site decision making; Zou et al. [25] applied a cloud-based safety information and communication system to improve road construction safety.

There are multiple common hazards on construction sites, such as fall, struck by, and caught-in-between. More ICT-based platforms, prototypes, or user interfaces could be extended to incorporate these main hazards on-site. A step forward of the existing research in applying BIM for safety hazard identification could be to create a prototype that automatically updates hazard assessment the as-planned BIM as the project progresses. Hazard assessment is the occurrence, severity, and risk level according to the existing safety database. More importantly, the established ICT-based prototype or frameworks [26] could be further tested with more real-world cases, including its user-friendliness, users' readiness, acceptance, and easiness for safety communication. From the technical perspective, the interoperability among multiple ICT tools (e.g., BIM and wireless sensing) are to be allowed for information exchange during real-time data collection, and processing needs to be further studied.

ICT could assist design for safety in pre-construction stages. As the construction project progresses, there could be updated in BIM model by incorporating workers' latest activities through site data collected by wireless sensing technologies. Therefore, safety managers are kept updated with workers' physical status and work progress. Safety managers can also be informed of potential hazards that might hold workers at risk as workers' tasks change or the project progresses. More future work can be performed in bridging the manager's monitoring of workers' safety and workers' self-awareness of safety hazards through ICT tools. Besides the technological innovation, the readiness of workers and management personnel to adopt newly developed ICT platforms should also be considered.

### *3.6 Workers' Safety Perception and Behavior*

Workers health and safety on construction sites have been largely focused when applying ICTs. For example, Yi and Wang [27] used a mixed-integer linear programming approach to optimize workers' site work schedule under hot outdoor weather condition. Workers' are exposed to unpleasant weather (e.g., hot temperature), which has caught the attention of multiple researchers [28] [29]. Park et al. [30] developed and evaluated a proximity detection and alert system using Bluetooth sensing technology. It aims to protect the health and safety of pavement workers. Many studies have explored workers' demographic or subgroup features, such as minority or immigration workers [31], workers from different experience levels [28], and workers from different building trades [32]. The causes of workers' variation in their safety perception, attitudes, behavior, and performance have been linked to dimensions within safety climate such as safety awareness and co-workers attitudes [33], safety program, company size [34], and management methods [35]. The causal connection analysis conducted by Winge et al. [36] showed that supervision strongly affected workers' safety actions.

Various groups and subgroups of labour are working simultaneously in a construction project. Subgroup factors of workers (e.g., age and site experience level) could cause different safety perceptions [28], further leading to varied safety behavior [37], and ultimately safety performance [38]. Besides these internal influence factors, there have been limited studies of how the external conditions of job sites (e.g., lighting, temperature, spatial crowdedness) affect workers' safety perception, behavior, and performance. Workers' safety perceptions towards site hazards and risks could be further linked to their safety cognition pattern. There have been limited studies linking their cognition patterns (e.g., safety knowledge-based, prior scenario-based, and basic assumption-based) into safety perceptions. Furthermore, the cognition psychology or cognitive model, although having been studied in other industries or fields such as traffic [39] [40] have not been sufficiently applied in construction safety, especially in workers' safety perception or behavior [41].

### *3.7 Safety management system*

A significant correlation exists between management commitment and safety performance [42]. An effective safety program incorporating the management commitment as well as training and education could ultimately lead to improved safety performance [43]. Participation in safety management should not be limited to contractors, but other stakeholders such as the owner, consultants, vendors, and subcontractors [44]. Researchers have been working on developing a safety management plan that a typical contractor can adopt [45]. Key factors within the safety management programs have been studied to explore their inter-relationships. For instance, Bavafa et al. [46] found that safety commitment and responsibilities, subcontractors and personnel's selection, safety supervisor and professionals, plan for safety, and employee involvement were key critical factors to have an improved safety program.

Similarly, a total of 16 critical factors influencing the success of a construction safety program was identified and tested by Aksorn and Hadikusumo [47]. Similar studies investigating critical factors for effective implementation of a safety management system can be found in Pereira et al. [48] and Yiu et al. [49]. The subcontracting nature of the construction industry indicates that an effective safety program should gain the joint-effort among multiple organizations to maintain consistent safety compliance, which could be evaluated based on behavior-based safety rules [35]. The conflicting objective between site productivity and safety, as indicated by Sandberg and Albrechtsen [50] needs to be handled correctly in the safety reporting process, which should be part of an effective management program.

### *3.8 Hazard Identification, Accident causation, and Risk Management in Safety*

Hazard identification, accident investigation, and risk assessment have been long-standing research topics within construction safety management. Pereira et al. [48] found that the highest-priority accident precursors are workers' failure to identify hazards and negligence of hazards. Earlier studies have been focusing on proper protective equipment

[51], accident types, and physical barrier elements [52], causes of accidents or incidents [53], safety training [54], and effective management program [55]. More recent studies have been emphasizing on ICT (e.g., BIM) as the digital approach in mitigating safety risks. Safety should be considered in the design stage when hazards can be identified in the ontology-based semantic modeling [56].

### 3.9 Safety Climate and Safety Culture

Multiple studies have been focusing on developing, testing, and evaluating the framework of safety climate or safety culture [57] [58], as well as linking them to safety performance measurement [59]. Key indicators within the safety climate [59] [60] is being kept updated and validated using statistical methods such as SEM [61]. Commonly defined elements within safety climate include but are not limited to management commitment [62], co-workers caring and communication [63], and safety behavior [64]. High attention within safety climate has been paid on workers, such as worker behavior [65], safety compliance [66], and perceptions [67].

Numerous studies [68] [69] show that the safety climate forms a core part of safety culture. Safety culture studies have been much focusing on the organization level [70], not just within contractors [71] but also other stakeholders [2]. Modeling safety culture can be found in various existing studies [72] [73]. Much work has addressed the relationships among safety climate, safety culture, and safety performance. For instance, Teo and Feng [74] found that safety climate impacted safety culture in terms of psychological, situational/environmental, and behavioral aspects, and the assessment of safety climate could forecast safety culture, which could further influence safety performance [75].

However, most existing studies [4] [76] on safety climate and safety culture have been set on the context of a specific country, with limited extending the framework for cross-country validation or international comparison. Nevertheless, it is an essential issue of implementing safety practices in international construction projects [77] and sharing the safety experience crossing countries. Patel and Jha [78] developed an ANN-based model to predict the safety climate in the Indian construction sector. However, it needs to focus on particular types of projects.

## 4. Conclusions

This paper represents the results of a scientometric analysis of ongoing research on safety in construction. Further mapping of the different research areas is done using a scientific mapping approach providing brief details about studies conducted and future scope of study in respective research areas. These proposed directions for future work could benefit to the academic community and industry practitioners in enhancing safety performance and improving site employees' health and wellbeing. The methodology of the study, the scientometric analysis, was carried out using 382 journal articles indexed by the WoS published from 2010 to 2019. This overall review explored by this study confirms that research in construction safety has a lot of scope in the future. And, it is an application in the industry that can help in improving the safety of the construction site. However, it should be pointed out that the

current review is limited to the selected literature sample published in WoS, and only English journal articles were included. More, used data was collected almost one year ago. Recently many new publications would be added in the WoS databases, which are not part of this study. It might have potentially excluded some latest software and studies published in other languages or other types of documents such as trade magazines. However, outcomes of this study are very helpful to authors to determine the contents for construction safety manual which is a scope of the project sponsored by NHAI New Delhi.

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## Disclosures

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