Trends in Political Professionalisation Research: Bibliometric Mapping of Published Articles in the Scopus Database

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Abstract

Political professionalisation is essential in developing more structured, efficient, and transparent political practices oriented toward the broader public interest. However, the process also faces challenges such as potential elitism and alienation of politicians from the general public. Using the Bibliometrix RStudio software, this review presents trends and patterns in political professionalisation research from 57 articles in the Scopus database, published between March 1997 and April 2024. There is a significant upward research trend, with 5.27% annual publication growth on the issue. The authors found four primary research streams in the study of political professionalisation, each integrating distinct thematic categories: (1) the nature of political professionalisation focuses on the fundamental characteristics of political professionalisation, including its core substance and the evolving profile of career politicians; (2) political professionalisation strategies and capacity examines the mechanisms through which professionalisation occurs, covering the legislative role, political communication and campaigns, and the institutionalisation of political parties; (3) the adoption and diffusion of political professionalisation highlights shifts in politician recruitment patterns and the impact of country size on professionalisation processes; (4) the implementation and impact of political professionalisation assess the consequences of these transformations, providing insights into their broader political implications. Several areas still require further investigation based on the 56 questions identified. By filling these gaps, future research will provide a more holistic view of political professionalisation in an increasingly complex and changing political context and enhance the effectiveness and inclusiveness of political systems worldwide.

Keywords:

bibliometrix; politics; professionalisation; Scopus; streams

Introduction

Political professionalisation has played a growing role in global political developments. The term designates the process of political practice that is more steadily organized, structured, and conducted to high professional standards, often emulating principles in other professions such as law or finance. It involves several crucial aspects, which include increasing politicians' skills, knowledge, and qualifications to deeply understand public policy, economics, law, and other areas relevant to their duties, and equipping them with adequate communication skills, analytical abilities, and leadership capacity.

Political professionalisation also covers forming more complex and orderly organisational structures around political parties, bureaucracy, and other political institutions (Bischoff & Christiansen, 2017; Kovarek & Oross, 2024; Poguntke et al., 2016), which include more organised funding, more efficient resource management, and more advanced management practices in running political campaigns and managing government. Political professionalisation also

involves applying ethics and high standards to guide politicians' behaviour (Neesham, 2016; Noordegraaf, 2015). It encompasses decision-making transparency, public accountability, and a commitment to act in the interests of society, not just the interests of individuals or particular groups.

Political professionalisation can be translated through three components: processes, standards, and definite goals, which commonly define the scope of professionalisation in other fields (Cooper & Robson, 2006). As a process, political professionalisation encompasses steps to improve the quality and effectiveness of political practice. It could cover structured political education, campaign management training, communication skills development, and efforts to strengthen integrity and ethics. With an organised process, politicians can continue to develop skills and knowledge, update practices according to the latest developments in politics, and strengthen the quality of services they provide to society.

Another critical component is standards, which reflect a set of guidelines established by professional bodies or relevant authorities to determine the quality of political service and the qualifications of individuals engaged in political practice. The standard covers political competence (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and ethics), expertise in various political fields and advocacy, and the dedication to serve society with integrity and justice (Menzel, 2015). Meanwhile, definite goals set clear and measurable targets to achieve (Jung, 2011). These goals include increasing specific political competence, public participation in the political process, and transparency and accountability in government, or achieving particular political goals related to society's interests.

Political professionalisation plays a vital role in norm transfer. Increasing the awareness and skills of individuals involved in politics, both as leaders and voters, helps spread best practices and democratic values

(Della Porta, 2005). It also encourages more responsible and educated political participation and strengthens an inclusive political system. However, political professionalisation raises questions and challenges. Some concern is that increasing professionalisation could lead to political elitism, where only people with specific dominant educational backgrounds and experiences succeed in politics. It may reduce representation from various social groups and exacerbate political inequality (Paneque, 2022). Political professionalisation could also trigger alienation between politicians and society, where politicians become growingly separated from the daily lives of ordinary people and merely focus on their political elite circle.

Over the last few decades, the increasing quantity of scientific studies on political professionalisation reflects its complexity and relevance in the contemporary political context. In our opinion, this is based on two primary triggers that drive interest in the phenomenon: first, the factors influencing political professionalisation and their impact on political dynamics at both local and national levels; second, the role of this understanding in shaping political direction and the policies produced by political institutions and actors. Professionalisation influences politics and stimulates legitimacy and public trust in political institutions.

The current literature still needs to provide a more holistic picture of how the concept has been studied in political contexts, especially its conceptual developments, prominent themes, and dominant streams. No studies specifically evaluate research on political professionalisation over a certain period to provide a full view of its current state. Analysing retrospective publications offers an extensive space to expand knowledge about political professionalisation and how it is understood in political literature. This article contributes by employing a bibliometric approach, which allows a synthesis of previously published documents on political professionalisation.

This review aims to provide a more holistic view of scholarly advancements in the study of political professionalisation. It focuses on the evolution of foremost themes, theoretical frameworks, and research streams. The questions as the focus of the discussion are: (1) How has the trend of scientific publications developed over the last few decades? (2) What are the dominant theoretical frameworks employed in studies of political professionalisation, and how do they contribute to understanding the dynamics of professionalisation across different contexts? (3) Which stream is more prevalent in the political professionalisation literature? (4) What are the key antecedents driving the professionalisation of politics? (5) What future research directions can we identify from prior studies on political professionalisation?

Methods

To conduct this review, the authors selected the Scopus database as the primary source due to its reputation as a leading repository of scientific publications across multiple disciplines (Adilansyah et al., 2024; Firmansyah & Hidayat, 2024; Hidayat, 2024a, 2024b; Rifai et al., 2024). The search focuses on the publications from March 1997 to April 2024. The search strategy began with identifying the most relevant keywords to political professionalisation. Keywords such as "political professionalism," "political professionalisation," "professionalisation of politics," "political career," "political elite," "political expertise," and other variations were used in the search. The keyword combination was designed to ensure the most relevant results to the topic, resulting in 692 pieces of literature.

After limiting the search to only English literature, the number was reduced to 591. By focusing the search on the social sciences domain, 466 pieces of literature remained. The authors excluded 33 books, 82 book chapters,

five editorial notes, and one erratum, leaving 345 pieces of literature more specific to the research focus. After identifying literature that met the inclusion criteria, a full-text check was conducted on each piece. The step involves a thorough content assessment to ensure its relevance to the research objectives.

Based on the results of full-text checking, the authors identified 57 articles most pertinent to the research topic of political professionalisation. These documents were selected because they contribute significantly to understanding political professionalisation issues and meet established inclusion criteria. Thus, this method involves a series of systematic steps from database selection to full-text checking to ensure that the authors obtain the most relevant and high-quality literature for a bibliometric review of political professionalisation.

This article uses bibliometrics as it allows for the quantitative evaluation of research trends, academic collaborations, and inter-conceptual relationships in the literature under review. As a technical tool, Bibliometrix RStudio was used to process and visualize bibliometric data, including citation analysis, keyword mapping, and identifying the most influential authors and sources. Using the Bibliometrix RStudio software, the authors analysed these selected papers to reveal research trends, patterns, and connections. This software enables conducting an in-depth overview, including analysing time trends, author productivity, and the interrelationship between ideas (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). The authors then identified critical ideas, keyword relationships, thematic categories and evolution, prominent theories, and foremost streams to supply a comprehensive overview of research progress and trends while identifying knowledge gaps requiring further investigation.

Nonetheless, several limitations that affect the results and conclusions must be acknowledged. Firstly, reliance on the Scopus

database may exclude pertinent articles from other sources that are significant to this analysis. Secondly, limitations in the keywords may result in several pivotal works not being included, thus affecting the study's comprehensiveness. Thirdly, the approach that focuses more on quantitatively measuring trends, potentially overlooking significant qualitative developments in the discourse of political professionalisation. These limitations need to be acknowledged as they affect the representation and completeness of findings related to the dynamics of professional politics.

Results
Primary Information About the Dataset

Table 1 presents a data compilation from March 1997 to April 2024, allowing the authors to view patterns and trends in the literature over two decades. The primary data come from 57 articles from 40 journals, with an annual growth rate of publications of 5.27%, reflecting increasing interest from the scientific community. The average age of the documents was 7.75 years, indicating that most of the analysed literature is relatively new, confirming the relevance and progress of the topic. The average of citations per document was 21.98, denoting essential influence in the scientific community. The total number of references cited is 2627, signifying a solid knowledge base of previous works and relevant theories.

The documents contain 52 additional and 211 author keywords, providing detailed insights into various aspects of political professionalisation. 85 authors contributed, demonstrating broad interest and diverse research approaches. 28 authors worked independently on 31 publications, while most documents involved collaboration between authors. An average of 1.7 authors collaborated on each document, indicating the significance of collaboration in the research. Moreover, 15.79% of documents involve international collaboration, reflecting a global aspect in

political professionalisation research that presents an all-embracing comprehension of various national and global contexts.

Table 1.
Primary Information About the Dataset

Description	Results
Timespan	March 1997–April 2024
Sources (journals)	40
Documents	57
Annual Growth Rate %	5.27
Document Average Age	7.75
Average citations per doc	21.98
References	2627
Keywords Plus (ID)	52
Author's Keywords (DE)	211
Authors	85
Authors of single-authored docs	28
Single-authored docs	31
Co-Authors per Doc	1.7
International co-authorships %	15.79

Source: Biblioshiny using RStudio

Annual Scientific Production

Annual scholarly production in political professionalisation research, as depicted in Figure 1, shows a dynamic pattern over the past 27 years, with fluctuations reflecting a variety of factors, including increasing academic interest, changes in global political trends, and the availability of research resources. The number of publications has gone through three main phases: an initial period of stagnation (1997-2006), a period of gradual growth (2007-2016), and a period of rapid expansion (2017-2024).

Initial Stagnation Period (1997-2006): Scientific production was still very limited, with only a few publications and a period of no research at all (2003-2006). Political professionalisation was still a new field of study, with limited analytical methods and a research focus more on political structure than professionalisation. However, some early studies such as Saalfeld (1997) and Kimura (1998) provided a basis for future research.

Gradual Growth Period (2007-2016): The number of publications began to increase albeit

inconsistently. Academic interest in political professionalisation was growing, driven by the study of legislatures and political careers (Squire, 2007; Borchert & Stolz, 2011) as well as the digitisation of political communication (Larsson, 2015). However, some years saw no publications, suggesting that political professionalisation was still not a major focus in political science.

Rapid Expansion Period (2017-2024): Scientific production surged, with peaks in 2017 and 2022 (eight publications each). This trend was driven by increased attention to populism, the crisis of political trust, and the role of digital platforms in politics. Studies such as Carreras (2017) and Boswell et al. (2020) reflect the increasingly complex relationship of professionalisation with global political dynamics.

Looking at the overall trend of scholarly production from 1997 to 2024, it is clear that the professionalisation of politics has evolved from a subject that attracted only a handful of academics to a more established and dynamic field of research. The sharp increase after 2017 indicates that the issue of professionalisation in politics has gained wider recognition as an important aspect of political science studies. While the trend in scholarly production has been fairly stable in recent years, many areas still could be further explored. One of the key challenges is understanding the impact of political professionalisation on voter turnout and how digital technologies are increasingly shaping professionalisation in political communication and election campaigns. In addition, with the development of data analysis methods, future research could use big data and machine learning-based approaches to map trends in political professionalisation in greater depth. Studies comparing political professionalisation in
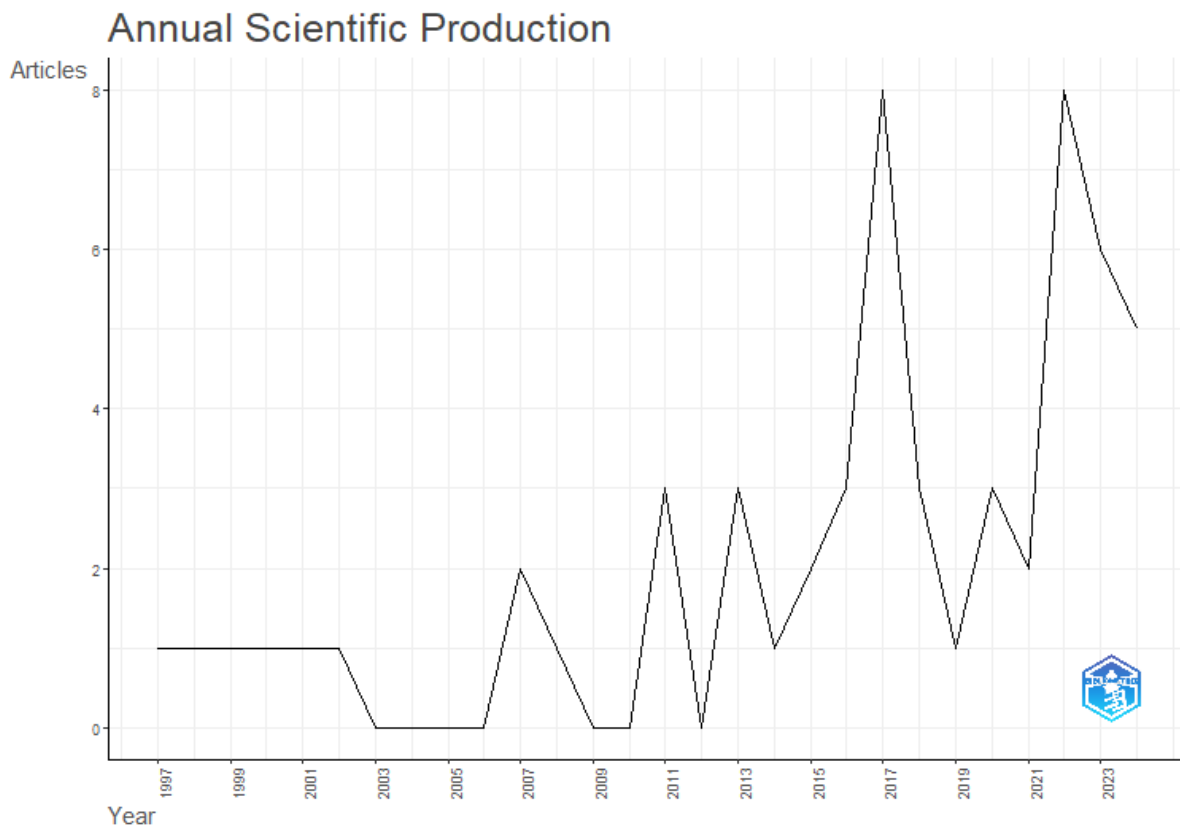

Figure 1. Annual Scientific Production (1997–2024)
Source: Biblioshiny using RStudio

developed and developing countries could also be an important focus of future research.

Most Influential Authors

In the study of political professionalisation, several academics play a central role in enriching academic discourse, both through the number of publications they produce and their impact on subsequent research. From the data provided in Table 2, it can be seen that a key indicator in assessing an author's contribution is not only the number of published articles, but also the fractionalised weight that reflects the extent to which they play a role in each publication.

Table 2.
Most Influential Authors (1997–2024)

Authors	Articles	Fractionalised weight
Jack Corbett	4	2.33333333
Klaus Stolz	3	2
Jens Borchert	2	1.5
Paul Cairney	2	0.83333333
Vesa Koskimaa	2	1.5
Andreu Paneque	2	2
Peverill Squire	2	2
Marija Taflaga	2	0.83333333
Wijayantha Ukwatta	2	2
Nyarwi Ahmad	1	1

Source: Biblioshiny using RStudio

One of the dominating names in this field is Jack Corbett, who is listed as the author with the highest number of publications, namely four articles with a fractionalised weight of 2.33. His consistency in developing the study of political professionalisation is evident from the scope of topics he examines, ranging from the analysis of political elites to the relationship between professionalisation and political communication. Corbett is not only productive in writing, but also has a major contribution to building theoretical and methodological foundations for political professionalisation research. Apart from Corbett, several other academics also have a high number of publications, such as Klaus

Stolz who published three articles with a fractionalised weight of 2, as well as Jens Borchert, Andreu Paneque, Peverill Squire, and Wijayantha Ukwatta, with each having two articles with the full fractionalised weight of 2. These last four authors have contributed to enriching the academic discussion with their diverse approaches, ranging from political career studies, and the influence of the political system on professionalisation, to the dynamics of political communication in an increasingly digitised world.

However, productivity in the number of articles is not always directly proportional to the contribution level of the articles. There are some academics who, despite having fewer publications, their fractionalised weights remain high, suggesting that their role in each article is significant. Andreu Paneque, Peverill Squire, and Wijayantha Ukwatta, for example, have two articles each, but with a full fractionalised weight of 2. This suggests that they act as key contributors to their research, rather than simply being part of a large team writing collectively. Their work is often the main reference in studies of legislative professionalisation, party structure, and the relationship between country size and the level of professionalisation of politicians. In contrast, authors such as Paul Cairney and Marija Taflaga, despite having two articles, have a lower fractionalised weight (0.83), indicating that their research is more collaborative with many other co-authors.

Some academics only have one article, but with a full fractionalised weight (1.0), indicating that their contribution to the research is considerable. Some of them are Manuel Alcántara-Sáez, Jernej Amon Prodnik, Cristina Archetti, and Tatiana Majchierkiewicz. Despite the smaller number of articles they produce, their research often serves as a reference point for further studies in political professionalisation.

The dynamics of collaboration in the study of political professionalisation also

show interesting patterns. Some scholars work collectively, while others conduct more independent research. Jack Corbett and Klaus Stolz, for example, often collaborate with other scholars, as reflected in their lower fractionalised weights relative to their total number of publications. In contrast, authors such as Andreu Paneque and Peverill Squire have higher fractionalised weights, indicating that their contribution to each publication is greater individually than those who collaborate more frequently. This indicates that the professionalisation of politics is evolving both as a field based on collaboration and as one that allows for more independent and in-depth research.

As the study of political professionalisation continues to evolve, scholars who have made major contributions to the field are crucial both in generating new theories and in enriching research methods. Going forward, collaboration between authors can be a major factor in driving innovation and deepening understanding of how political professionalisation continues to evolve in various global contexts.

Most Relevant Sources

In academic research, journals play a crucial role in shaping scientific discourse and guiding the development of a field of study. In the study of political professionalisation, several journals consistently publish influential research, whether in legislative aspects, political parties, political communication, or leadership professionalisation. Based on the number of articles published, we can identify some journals that are the most relevant sources in this study, with Regional and Federal Studies being the most dominant (Figure 2).

Journals that are central to the study of political professionalisation: Regional and Federal Studies emerged as the journal with the most publications in political professionalisation studies, with six articles. The journal focused on political dynamics in multi-level systems, including how political professionalisation develops at the national, regional, and local levels. Publications in this journal often address the career paths of politicians, professionalisation in federal systems, and the relationship between legislative professionalisation and political decentralisation. Other journals with the same number of publications include the Journal of Legislative Studies, Journal of Political Marketing, Party Politics, and State Politics and Policy Quarterly, with three articles each.

Journals with a Specific but Influential Focus: In addition to the five journals above, several other journals that, despite having fewer publications, have made important contributions to shaping the discourse of political professionalisation. Journals such as Government and Opposition, Legislative Studies Quarterly, Local Government Studies, and Political Studies Review each published two articles.

Journals with a Single Publication but Significant Value: In addition to journals that publish multiple articles, many others have only a single publication but still make important contributions to the study of political professionalisation. These journals cover a wide range of disciplines related to political professionalisation, such as political communication, public policy, and comparative political science. The journals that fall into this category are Political Communication, European Journal of Political Research, Social Science Computer Review, International Journal of Press/Politics, Cambridge Review of International Affairs, and British Politics.

Based on the publication patterns found in these journals, it can be concluded that political professionalisation is a multidisciplinary field of study, covering aspects of the legislature, political parties, political communication, and public policy. Publication trends in more specialised journals such as Regional and Federal Studies or Journal of Legislative Studies show that political professionalisation is still widely studied in a structural and institutional
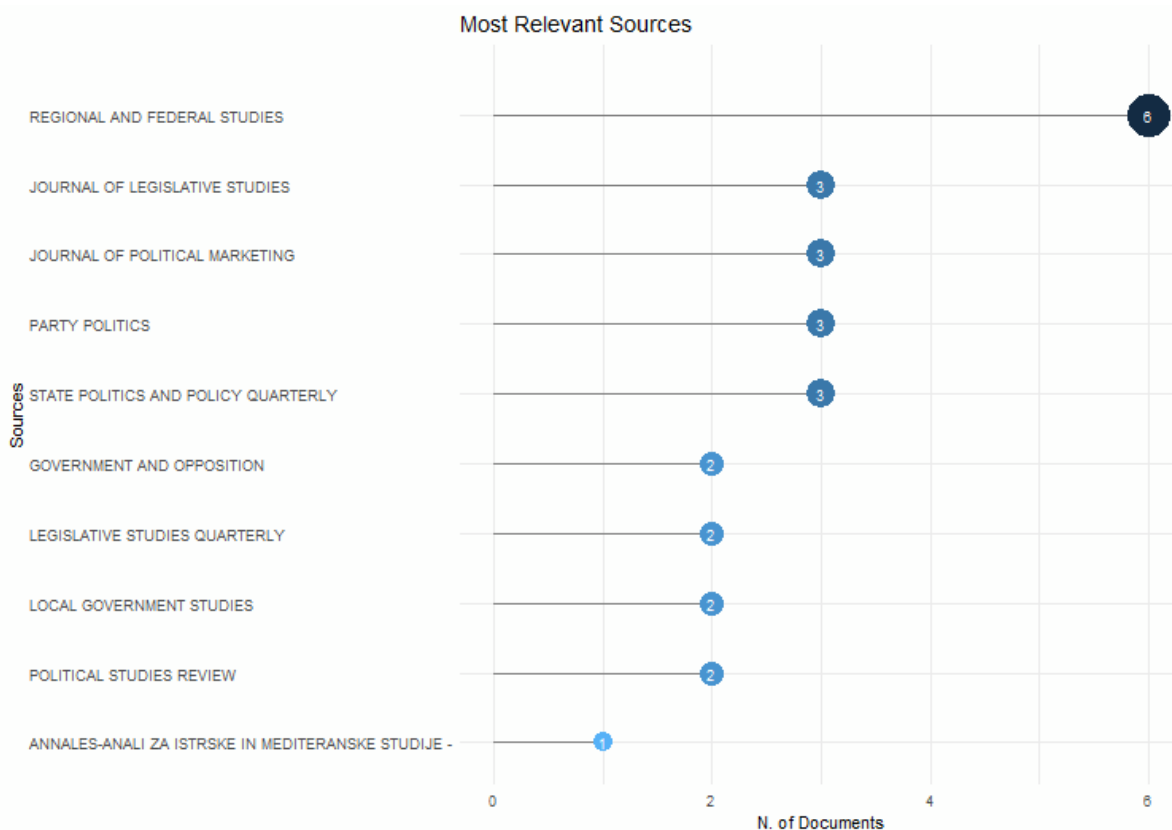
Figure 2. Most Relevant Sources (1997–2024)
Source: Biblioshiny using RStudio

context. However, the increasing number of publications in the Journal of Political Marketing and Political Communication also indicates that the dimensions of political communication and political marketing are increasingly becoming integral aspects of political professionalisation in the digital age. For future research, these relevant journals can serve as primary references for further studies. More comparative studies across countries, as well as deeper analysis of the relationship between political professionalisation and digital transformation in political communication, could be promising research areas.

Most Globally Cited Documents

The number of citations a publication receives is a key indicator in assessing its impact on the development of science. Frequently cited studies often become the main reference in further research, both conceptually and methodologically. In the study of political professionalisation, several publications have become major reference points, particularly in the fields of legislative professionalisation, political communication, and party dynamics (Figure 3).

One of the most influential publications in this study is Squire's (2007) article in State Politics and Policy Quarterly, which has accumulated 420 citations at an average of 22.1 citations per year. This article was instrumental in developing the measurement of legislative professionalisation through the Squire Index, a widely used analytical tool to assess the level of parliamentary professionalism in various US states. With a Normalized TC of 1.95, the study demonstrates that despite being published more than a decade ago, its influence remains relevant compared to more recent publications.

In addition to Squire's, Maestas' (2000) article in Legislative Studies Quarterly also had

a major impact with 118 citations. This study offers deep insights into how parliamentary professionalisation affects individual political ambitions, highlighting the dynamics between the political system and politicians' careers. Bowen's (2014) article in State Politics and Policy Quarterly also shows a significant impact with 102 citations, further discussing the measurement of legislative professionalism. Meanwhile, Mancini's (1999) study in Political Communication, which examines the role of communication in political professionalisation, has collected 97 citations, asserting that political professionalisation is not only related to legislative institutions but also to how communication shapes the political process. Borchert (2011) in Regional and Federal Studies, with 90 citations, contributes significantly to understanding how multi-level systems affect political career paths.

However, the impact of a study can not only be measured by its total number of citations but also by its citation rate per year, which illustrates how a study remains relevant in the context of time. One recent article with very rapid citation growth is Gaber's (2022) publication in the International Journal of Press/Politics, which has gained 32 citations in the last two years with eight citations per year. This shows that despite being newly published, the article's popularity is growing rapidly and could become a major reference in the future. Bowen's (2014) study also has a fairly high 8.5 citations per year, while Borchert's (2011) reaches 6. Larsson's (2015) article in the Journal of Information Technology and Politics, which discusses how social media is used in the professionalisation of political communication, has 5.18 citations per year, indicating that research on the digitisation of political communication is gaining traction.

Furthermore, some of the studies in this list show how political professionalisation has become a cross-disciplinary topic, not only in traditional political science but also in media studies, sociology, and public policy. Carreras (2017) in the European Journal of Political Research, for example, examines the relationship between political professionalisation and the emergence of new politicians in democracies, while Karlsen (2017) in West European Politics examines the impact of professionalisation on the internal dynamics of political parties. On the other hand, Göbel (2018) in Social Science Computer Review explores how digital strategies affect political campaigns, asserting that political professionalisation does not only occur within parliaments or parties but also in digital media and communication technologies.

While some studies have been frequently cited, some others have not, although they show great potential in the future. One of them is Ahmad's article (2024) in the Journal of Political Marketing, which currently has six citations with three citations per year. With a focus on the professionalisation of political campaigns in developing countries, this article could become a major reference in future studies. Several other articles, such as Di Capua (2022) in Regional and Federal Studies and Leitner (2023) in the European Journal of Social Work, also show promising citation growth patterns although currently still in the early stages of academic acceptance.

On the other hand, some publications have not been much cited, such as Paneque (2024) in Government and Opposition and Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė (2023) in the Journal of Political Marketing. Although these articles have not received widespread attention, they may become more relevant in the future, especially if research trends shift in a direction that supports their findings.

From the analysis of the most cited publications in political professionalisation studies, it can be concluded that legislative professionalisation remains the main dominating theme, as seen in classic studies such as Squire (2007) and Maestas (2000). However, research trends are beginning to

shift towards political communication and campaign digitalisation, as reflected in the high citations of articles by Larsson (2015) and Göbel (2018). In addition, recent articles show a rapid growth in citations, especially those focusing on social media and modern political strategies, as seen in the studies of Gaber (2022) and Ahmad (2024). Although some publications have low citation counts, many have strong potential for growth, particularly in the context of developing countries and comparative political studies.

Looking ahead, political professionalisation will likely be increasingly shaped by technology and media, with digital political communication playing a greater role in shaping politicians' images and strategies. The field of professionalisation studies will also become more complex and dynamic as variations in political systems across countries give rise to new perspectives.

Thematic Evolution and Categories

The thematic evolution of political professionalisation research can be analysed based on the pattern of occurrence of the most frequently used keywords in different studies. From a total of 211 identified keywords, this analysis focuses on the ten keywords with the highest frequency, which reflect the dominant themes and major trends in the academic literature. Observing changes in keyword usage over time, as shown in Figure 4, provides insight into how the research focus is evolving; for example, moving away from structural issues such as political parties and legislative professionalisation towards greater attention to individual political careers, political representation, and professionalisation strategies in modern democracies.

The use of key terms in political professionalisation studies has also changed significantly over time. The frequency of
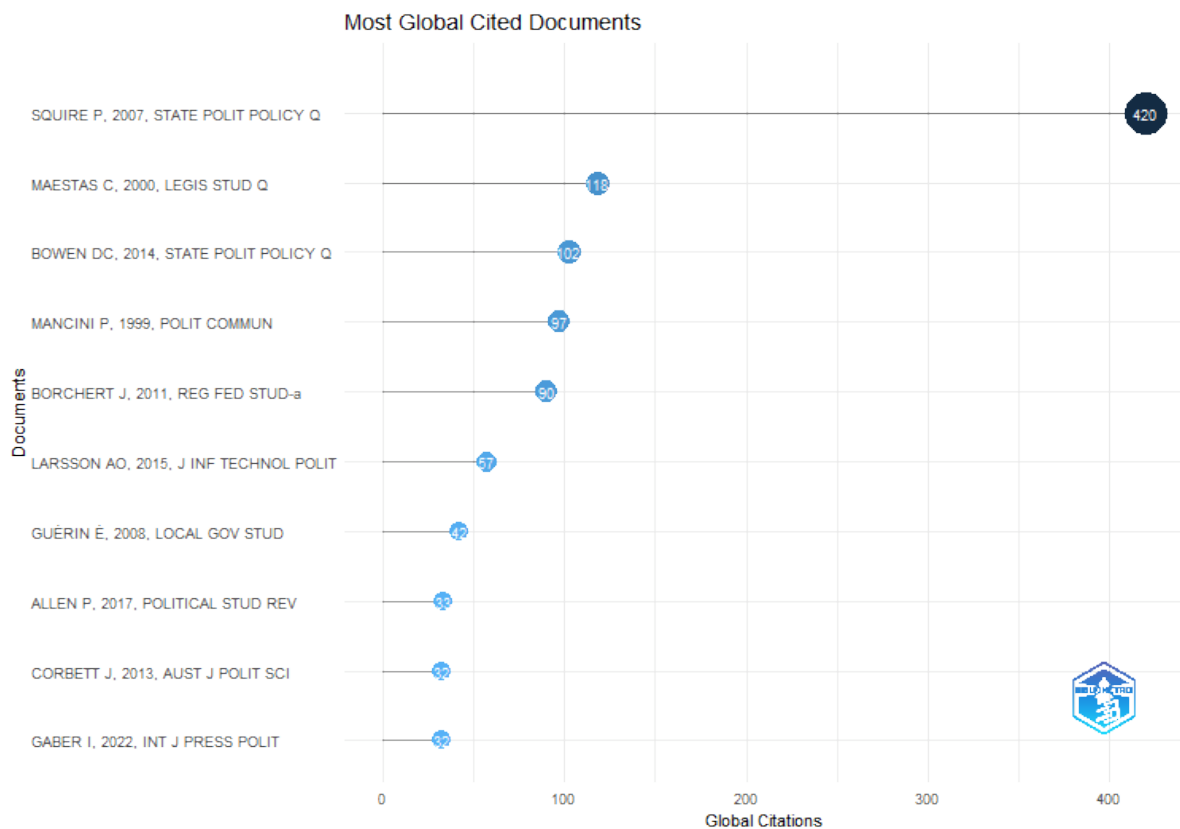
Figure 3. Most Global Cited Documents (1997–2024)
Source: Biblioshiny using RStudio

occurrence of words such as professionalisation, political careers, political parties, and legislative professionalism increases, which reflects the shift in research focus and the emergence of new themes in this study. In the early period, between 1999 and 2010, research in the field of political professionalisation was still very limited in its scope of topics. The most dominant term during this period was political parties, which appeared consistently every year. This shows that in the early stages, professionalisation was more often studied in the context of the internal dynamics of political parties, including how parties influence candidate selection and the structure of political organisations. Meanwhile, the term professionalisation only began to be used in 2002 and continued to appear in the literature until the next decade, while the term professionalization (with American spelling) only gained attention in 2011. This difference reflects not only the geographical aspects of academic terminology but also how the concept of political professionalisation has evolved in different scholarly traditions.

Beginning in 2011, the variety of keywords in this research expanded significantly, marking a transition from studies originally focused on party structures to broader explorations of political career dynamics. Terms such as political careers and political professionalisation began to emerge, reflecting increased academic interest in the professionalisation pathways of individuals within the political system. The study no longer simply addresses how parties shape politicians, but also how individuals construct their political careers in an increasingly competitive and structured system. The term politicians first appeared in the literature in 2013, indicating an increased interest in how individual politicians undergo a process of professionalisation, whether in campaign strategy, political communication, or their relationship with voters. Despite the diversification of research themes, during this period the main focus remained on institutional aspects, with many studies still addressing professionalisation in the context of legislatures and political party structures.

In the years following 2017, research on the professionalisation of politics expanded, with a growing variety of keywords. The term professionalisation saw a notable increase in usage, rising from five occurrences in 2017 to nine in 2024. Similarly, the term political careers increased from three occurrences in 2017 to six in 2024, reflecting the growing academic interest in politicians' career paths and how professionalisation shapes contemporary political dynamics. Academic attention has expanded beyond individual political careers to include political elites and politicians, increasingly examined in relation to power structures and the distribution of influence across different political systems. Meanwhile, studies on legislative professionalism began to receive greater attention in 2023, with the frequency increasing from one to three in a year. This suggests that although the focus of research has shifted towards the study of individuals, the issue of professionalisation in parliament remains an important part of academic discourse.

In addition to the increasing frequency of existing terms, recent research trends also show the emergence of new themes that have become relevant in the study of political professionalisation. The term representation only appeared in 2023 and continued to increase in 2024, indicating that more research highlights how political professionalisation affects the relationship between representatives and their constituents. In the context of modern democracies, political professionalisation is not only concerned with how politicians build their careers but also how they represent the public interest more effectively. In addition, comparative politics, which first appeared in 2013 and prevailed until 2024, shows a shift in approach in this research. Studies that

previously focused more on individual or case-specific analysis are now increasingly moving towards a comparative approach, comparing how political professionalisation occurs in different countries and political systems.

The changing frequency of keywords reflects the growing scope of political professionalisation studies, which now cover a wider range of aspects than in previous decades. Initially, research was mostly concerned with the role of parties in professionalising politicians, but it has since evolved towards individuals' career paths and their roles in parliament. In recent years, research has begun to link political professionalisation with issues of representation, public trust, and how the use of technology and social media has shaped more professional political strategies. With the proliferation of data-driven analysis and quantitative methods in political science, the study of political professionalisation has

the potential to evolve into an increasingly rich, multidimensional and relevant field for understanding contemporary political dynamics.

The above thematic evolution reflects political professionalisation as a dynamic and adaptable field. The shifting focus from foundational topics to emerging challenges demonstrates the field's responsiveness to the changing political landscape. Its thematic progression mirrors the real-world evolution of political practices, where professionalisation has become increasingly specialised and contextualised. This evolution highlights the need for ongoing research to address unanswered questions and explore how professionalisation interacts with broader political, social, and technological trends.

To provide a clearer picture of its academic route, the thematic evolution of political professionalisation research can be detailed
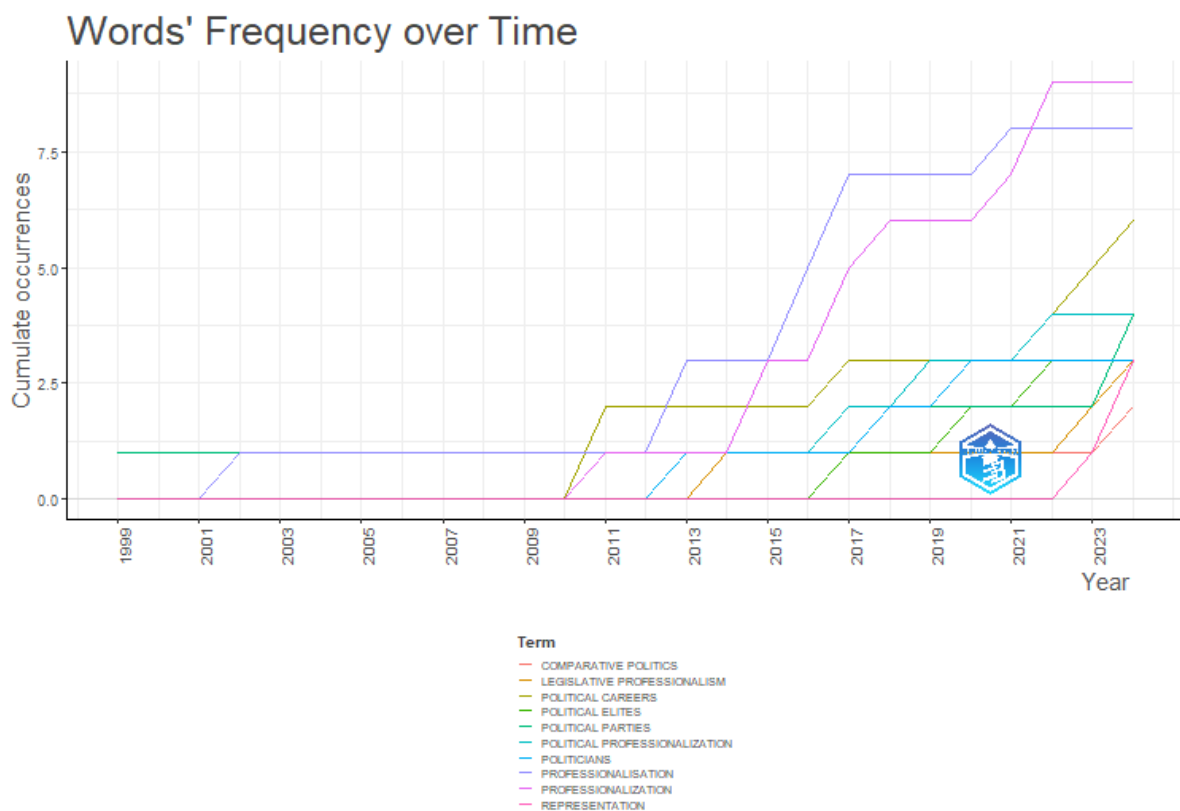
Figure 4. Thematic Evolution Based on the 10 Most Frequent Keywords (1997–2024)
Source: Biblioshiny using RStudio

into eight distinct themes, as presented in Table 3. Each category represents a unique strand of research, reflecting both the continuity and the diversification of scholarly interest. These themes capture the progression of ideas and highlight the interplay of historical and emerging issues that define its dynamic field. The categorisation was done manually by the authors, which enabled the focus and findings to be grouped based on the substantive aspects of each article, not just the statistical patterns generated by the Bibliometrix RStudio software, so that conceptual shifts that may have been missed in the keyword-based analysis could be mapped more accurately.

The first thematic category, the professionalisation of legislative roles, is a research area that examines various aspects of professionalism in the context of legislative institutions. It underscores the transformation of parliamentarians' roles, responsibilities, and characteristics and the impact of professionalisation on public policy and the political process. Fundamental studies include those by Saalfeld (1997) on the professionalisation of the role of parliament in Germany, Maestas (2000) on the policy response of professional legislative institutions, Beckman (2007) on political professionalisation in the Swedish cabinet, and Squire (2007), which introduced the Squire Index to measure legislative professionalism.

The second thematic category, the substance of political professionalisation, incorporates research on professionalism's essence or core characteristics in political contexts. It involves exploring various aspects underlying political professionalism and its impact on political dynamics and decision-making processes. Representative studies are Mancini (1999) on new concepts in political professionalism, Ukwatta (2017a) on global comparative studies, Fawcett and Corbett (2018) on disparities between public expectations and compensation of political leaders, and Christensen (2022) on democracy promotion and expertise politics in the post-truth era.

Table 3.
Thematic Categories of Prior Studies (1997–2024)

Theme	Representative Study
Professionalisation of the Legislative Role (12 Articles)	Saalfeld (1997), Maestas (2000), Beckman (2007), Squire (2007), Guérin & Kerrouche (2008), Bowen and Greene (2014), Snagovsky et al. (2023), Turner-Zwinkels et al. (2022), Butcher (2023), Rocca et al. (2023), Boldrini (2024), Squire (2024)
The Substance of Political Professionalisation (4 Articles)	Mancini (1999), Ukwatta (2017a), Fawcett and Corbett (2018), Christensen (2022)
Career Politician Profile (12 Articles)	Stolz, (2011), Borchert (2011), Borchert & Stolz (2011), Corbett & Wood (2013), Corbett (2013), Ryšavý (2016), Cairney et al. (2016), Alcántara-Sáez (2017), Carreras (2017), Navarro and Sanz (2018), Dowding and Taflaga (2020), Di Capua et al. (2022)
Changes in Politician Recruitment Patterns (6 Articles)	Kimura (1998), Verhelst et al. (2013), Ukwatta (2017b), Astudillo and Martínez-Cantó (2019), Boswell et al. (2020), Leitner and Stolz (2023)
Professionalisation of Political Parties (3 Articles)	Thompson and Pearson (2021), Aula and Koskimaa (2023), Koskimaa (2023)
Professionalisation of Political Communication and Campaigns (12 Articles)	Espíndola (2002), Larsson (2015), Hájek et al. (2015), Prodnik (2016), Archetti (2017), Göbel and Munzert (2018), Ostrá (2021), Nath and Ray (2022), Gaber and Fisher (2022), Mykkänen et al. (2022), Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė (2023), Ahmad (2024)
Consequences of Political Professionalisation (5 Articles)	Stolz (2001), Gaxie (2017), Allen and Cairney (2017), Majchierkiewicz (2020), Paneque (2022)
Miscellaneous Insights (3 Articles)	Karlsen and Saglie (2017), Phadnis and Khandelwal (2022), Paneque (2024)

Source: Authors' elaborations

The third thematic category, profiles of career politicians, discusses the profiles and characteristics of career politicians and the development of their political careers in the context of various political systems and different political environments. Critical studies include Stolz (2011) on political careers in Spain and the UK, Borchert and Stolz (2011) on political careers in Germany, Corbett and Wood (2013) on political elites in the Solomon Islands, and Di Capua et al. (2022) on the transformation of political career patterns in Switzerland.

The fourth thematic category, changes in politician recruitment patterns, discusses the evolution of politician recruitment patterns and their implications for political dynamics and public policy. Notable studies include Kimura (1998) on leadership recruitment in the Philippines, Verhelst et al. (2013) on the professionalisation of recruitment in Belgium, Ukwatta (2017b) on recruitment criteria, and Boswell et al. (2020) on the role of academics in politics.

The fifth thematic category, professionalisation of political parties, reviews professionalisation in the context of political parties, including internal changes in party structure and strategy and their impact on political dynamics. Studies on this theme include Thompson and Pearson (2021) on the professionalisation of Green Parties in the UK, Aula and Koskimaa (2023) on policy-making expertise, and Koskimaa (2023) on the professionalisation of political party organizations.

The sixth thematic category, professionalisation of political communications and campaigns, discusses professionalisation in political communications and campaign strategies, which are becoming essential in the digital era and global interconnection. Prominent studies include Espíndola (2002) on political campaigns in Latin America, Larsson (2015) on the online practices of EU parliamentarians, and Gaber and Fisher (2022) on strategic lying in the context of Brexit.

The seventh thematic category, consequences of political professionalisation, explores the impacts of political professionalisation on changes in political structures, the creation of political elites, and democratic dynamics. Fundamental studies pervade Stolz (2001) on the relationship between the political class and regional institutional development, Gaxie (2017) on the relationship between democracy and political elites, and Paneque (2022) on the social closure of political elites.

The eighth thematic category, miscellaneous insights, covers studies not directly concerned with the primary aspects of political professionalisation but offer additional pivotal insights. Representative studies include Karlsen and Saglie (2017) on the role positioning of political party employees, Phadnis and Khandelwal (2022) on the increase in the number of political consultants in India, and Paneque (2024) on the influence of country size on the professionalism of politicians. Although not directly related to significant aspects of political professionalisation, studies in the "miscellaneous" category supply essential insights into the political dynamics that affect and influence political professionalism factors. These concerns include the role of party employees, the increase in political consultants, and the effect of country size on the professionalism of politicians.

These thematic categories have played a key role in shaping the academic discourse on political professionalisation. Early studies laid the groundwork by establishing conceptual frameworks and foundational themes, such as professional political parties and career pathways. These foundational works provided a baseline for subsequent research to explore more nuanced aspects of professionalisation, such as its role in non-Western democracies and its intersection with digital technologies.

As the field matured, thematic categories began to diversify, reflecting the increasing complexity of political systems and the growing influence of external factors like globalisation and technological advancements. For instance, the emergence of "professionalisation of political communication and campaigns" theme underscores the transformative impact of mediatisation and digital tools on political strategies. This theme has reshaped the field by introducing interdisciplinary approaches from communication studies, data science, and sociology.

A growing emphasis on the consequences of professionalisation has also shaped the directions of studies in the field. Themes such as elitism, exclusivity, and the erosion of grassroots engagement have prompted critical inquiries into the societal impacts of professionalisation. These inquiries challenge the earlier optimistic assumptions about professionalisation as a driver of efficiency and competence, instead highlighting its potential to deepen inequalities and alienate voters. This critical turn has expanded the field's scope, pushing scholars to examine the ethical and democratic implications of professionalized political systems.

Research Streams in Prior Studies

Prior studies on political professionalisation, while diverse in their thematic foci, can be effectively grouped into four overarching research streams: the nature of political professionalisation, strategy and capacity for political professionalisation, the adoption and spread of political professionalisation, and the implementation and impact of political professionalisation. These streams, as visualised in Figure 5, provide a cohesive framework for understanding how the eight thematic categories contribute to the broader intellectual trajectory of the field. The study presents a structured and interconnected view of political professionalisation by integrating the thematic categories into these streams. This framework clarifies connections between key areas of inquiry, highlights the field's broad scope, and provides a foundation for future research.

The distinction between thematic categories and research streams is critical for a structured understanding of political professionalisation. While research streams represent the encyclopaedic intellectual trajectories that guide the development of the field over time, thematic categories are more focused on clusters of inquiry that emerge within these routes. Differentiating between the two provides analytical clarity, ensuring that the diverse dimensions of political professionalisation are examined in depth without losing sight of the overarching patterns that connect them.

Research streams are characterised by their continuity and expansiveness, encapsulating long-term scholarly focus areas that evolve as the field matures. These streams form the foundation for understanding the field's intellectual development and highlight dominant interests in political professionalisation. In contrast, thematic categories represent more concentrated inquiry areas delineated by specific research questions, methodological approaches, or conceptual frameworks.

The relationship between research streams and thematic categories is synergistic. Research streams provide the contextual and historical backdrop against which thematic categories emerge and evolve. Thematic categories refine and enrich research streams by filling gaps and introducing new perspectives. Differentiating these dimensions also helps clarify the academic contributions of the field. Research streams offer a panoramic view of the enduring questions and debates that define political professionalisation, while thematic categories facilitate targeted analysis of its mechanisms, implications, and variations

Figure 5. Research Streams (1997–2024)

Source: Authors' elaborations

across contexts. This dual framework ensures coherence in the analysis and enhances the ability to trace the interplay between continuity and innovation in the field.

This article captures the breadth and depth of political professionalisation research by distinguishing between research streams and thematic categories. The approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of the field while maintaining analytical precision, ultimately strengthening the understanding of how political professionalisation shapes and is shaped by the evolving political landscape.

The Nature of Political Professionalisation: This research stream is concerned with understanding the essence and characteristics of political professionalisation. It explores how political professionalisation is defined, whether it involves increasing skills and qualifications, limiting time spent on a political career, or setting professional ethics and standards (Alcántara-Sáez, 2017). Understanding these basic concepts is essential for establishing a basis for measuring and evaluating political professionalisation. The most relevant themes to this stream are the substance of political professionalisation and the profile of career politicians.

Political Professionalisation Strategies and Capacity: This research stream focuses on the strategies and capacities used to achieve political professionalisation. It explores how politicians and political institutions enhance their professionalism, which strategies are most effective, and how political professionalism can be measured effectively. The strategies include political education, educational institutions that provide unique training for aspiring politicians, or mentoring and coaching programs (Aula & Koskimaa, 2023). In addition, the capacity of political institutions, such as public bureaucracies or political parties, also plays a vital role in encouraging professionalism among their members. The themes covered in this stream are the professionalisation of the legislative role, the professionalisation of political communication and campaigns, and the professionalisation of political parties.

Adoption and Diffusion of Political Professionalisation: This research stream studies how political professionalisation is adopted and spread across various political contexts. It involves understanding the factors that influence the adoption of political professionalism by different political actors,

including political parties, political leaders, and civil society. It also analyses how political professionalism can spread between political contexts. That involves researching the factors that influence the decisions of politicians, political parties, or other political institutions in adopting practices and policies that enhance professionalism (Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė, 2023). Additionally, studies on the diffusion of political professionalisation can provide insight into how these practices spread among different countries or regions. The themes explored within this stream include changes in politician recruitment patterns and one specific issue from the above "miscellaneous insights" category, i.e., how country size influences the adoption of political professionalisation.

Implementation and Impact of Political Professionalisation: This research stream examines how policies and practices based on political professionalisation are implemented and their impact in a broader political context. It includes research on the effectiveness of policies or initiatives aimed at increasing political professionalism, their implications for political stability, the quality of democracy, political participation, and public policy in general. It involves evaluating the effectiveness of various professionalisation initiatives and their impact on political performance, public policy, and public trust in political institutions (Katz & Mair, 2018). Empirical studies of how political professionalisation influences political decision processes, political representation, and government responsiveness can provide valuable insights into the benefits and challenges of promoting professionalism in politics. This stream encompasses the "consequences of political professionalisation" thematic category.

Table 4 below summarises the eight thematic categories into the most appropriate research streams to facilitate further analysis of political professionalisation.

Table 4.
Integration of Thematic Categories into Research Streams

Research Streams	Thematic Categories
The Nature of Political Professionalisation	◎ The substance of political professionalisation
	◎ The profile of career politicians
Political Professionalisation Strategies and Capacity	◎ The professionalisation of the legislative role
	◎ The professionalisation of political communication and campaigns
	◎ The professionalisation of political parties
Adoption and Diffusion of Political Professionalisation	◎ Changes in politician recruitment patterns
	◎ The context of country size as one specific issue from the "miscellaneous insights" category
Implementation and Impact of Political Professionalisation	Consequences of Political Professionalisation

Source: Authors' elaborations

Prominent Theories Utilised to Explore Political Professionalisation

Political professionalisation has become a topic of study that continues to develop, with diverse theoretical bases to understand how the phenomenon is formed and transformed in various political contexts. Several key theories offer a comprehensive framework for examining its dynamics. Classical approaches provide a foundation for understanding politics as a profession, while modern theories incorporate the effects of globalisation, mediatisation, and digitalisation on the political landscape.

The professionalisation of politics, as explained through Weber's theory of authority, highlights the balance between rational-legal authority and political skills (Weber, 2016, 2019). While legitimate power in modern states relies on bureaucratic efficiency and rational procedures (Langer, 2022; Valbruzzi, 2024), Weber warned that excessive rationalisation could lead to dehumanising bureaucratisation, distancing the state from the people. Preventing this requires a thorough understanding

of politics as a vocation, where politicians must combine administrative and technical expertise with charisma and coalition-building skills. Beyond carrying out bureaucratic procedures, they must balance conviction with responsibility in decision-making (Boswell et al., 2020) and demonstrate reliability (Mancini, 1999; Stolz, 2001). Thus, professionalisation aligns rational-legal authority with political acumen, ensuring administrative effectiveness, inspiring public trust, and maintaining close relationships with society.

Robert K. Merton's role-set theory is an essential analytical tool for understanding political professionalisation. This theory explains how a politician, especially a member of parliament, faces various expectations from different actors, such as political parties, constituents, and interest groups. Saalfeld's (1997) study uses the theory to show that political professionalisation includes strategies for managing role conflicts, such as limiting public scrutiny of certain activities or using hierarchical party coordination to ease conflict pressures. In this case, professionalisation relates to technical expertise and the ability to navigate complex social demands.

Modernisation theory also plays a critical role in exploring political professionalisation, especially in developing countries. Kimura's (1998) research shows how social and economic changes in the Philippines, such as urbanisation and economic diversification, encourage the emergence of professional politicians from non-elite backgrounds. Social mobilisation in urban areas creates opportunities for individuals to enter politics, though Kimura notes that political professionalisation in the Philippines remains underdeveloped. In any case, modernisation theory produces insight into how social transformation creates new dynamics in political leadership recruitment.

In political communication, Jürgen Habermas's theory of the rationalisation of communication and mediatisation

theory provide insights into how modern communication technology is reshaping politics. Habermas argues that the rationalisation of persuasion in political communication can reduce citizen participation because political messages focus more on persuasion strategies than value or ideological debates (Mancini, 1999). Meanwhile, mediatisation explains how modern media has become central to shaping political communication strategies, where media consultants and spin doctors play a key role in constructing political narratives (Phadnis & Khandelwal, 2022; Snagovsky et al., 2023). This perspective reflects a shift from ideology-based politics to communication technology-based politics (Ahmad, 2024; Archetti, 2017; Christensen, 2022; Espíndola, 2002; Göbel & Munzert, 2018; Hájek et al., 2015; Larsson, 2015; Mykkänen et al., 2022; Nath & Ray, 2022; Ostrá, 2021; Prodnik, 2016; Ukwatta, 2017a; Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė, 2023).

The transformation of political campaigns into a highly structured and technology-based domain has also become a focus in the study of political professionalisation. David Farrell's capital-intensive campaign theory explains how political campaigns have shifted from a manual, labour-based approach to a technology-based, technocratic, and modern technique-based approach. Modern campaigns rely on sophisticated communication tools such as digital political advertising and social media to reach more specific voter groups. This change reflects how professionalisation has created a need for technical skills that were previously irrelevant in political campaigns (Mancini, 1999). As explained in Squire's legislative professionalism theory, political professionalisation also has a legislative dimension. This theory evaluates professionalisation in legislative institutions by using specific indices, such as the Squire Index, to measure the level of professionalisation and its impact on legislative effectiveness (Bowen & Greene, 2014; Cooper & Rimes, 2024;

Squire, 2007, 2017, 2024; Squire & Butcher, 2021). These studies suggest that legislative professionalisation often creates more career-oriented political actors, with a considerable focus on specialisation in parliamentary roles.

However, despite this wealth of theories, there are theoretical gaps. Many classical theories, such as those of Weber and Panebianco, do not fully account for the role of digital technologies and social media that are now central to modern politics. These theories also tend to ignore gender, race, and identity-based barriers that can affect one's access to political professionalisation. Therefore, integrating new perspectives, such as digital political economy theory and hybrid media theory, is needed to capture the contemporary dynamics of political professionalisation.

The overall theories used in these 57 articles offer a robust framework for understanding political professionalisation from multiple dimensions. Classical theories provide a solid historical foundation, while modern theories provide a more contextual perspective on technological developments and globalization. By integrating these approaches, the study of political professionalisation can furnish a more comprehensive understanding of how professionalisation affects political structures, citizen participation, and the relationship between political actors and society.

Discussion
Why Is Political Professionalisation Essential to Explore?

The process of political professionalisation is not just a routine transformation in political operations but a fundamental evolution in how politicians and political parties interact with society and the political system. Why is it necessary to explore political professionalisation in greater depth? The answer lies in its significant impact on various aspects of political life and social welfare.

First of all, political professionalisation directly increases individual competence in political positions. With focused education, extensive experience, and specialised training, well-prepared politicians can better navigate and manage complex public policies (Alcántara-Sáez, 2017). They can make informed decisions and consider the impact on society. Furthermore, the values of integrity and ethics emphasised in political professionalisation reduce the possibility of corruption and increase public trust in political institutions.

Second, professionalisation allows politicians and political parties to operate more efficiently and transparently (Aula & Koskimaa, 2023; Koskimaa, 2023). With a formal organisational structure and strict internal policies, political decisions can be taken based on professional criteria. These aspects increase resource management and policy implementation efficiency and help build public trust in the political process.

Information and communication technology development is the third factor that drives the need for political professionalisation. Technology changes have altered how politicians communicate with voters and influence political campaign strategies (Ahmad, 2024; Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė, 2023). With professionalisation, politicians can adopt sophisticated and organised communication strategies to reach voters more effectively. It is crucial to consider the preferences of voters who increasingly prioritise transparency, credibility, and responsiveness from their political leaders.

Finally, in a competitive political context, professionalisation presents significant strategic advantages for politicians and political parties (Katz & Mair, 2018). With a more structured and professional approach, they can design and implement excellent political strategies to secure voter support and win elections. It increases their chances of political success and contributes positively to political dynamics that are healthier and more responsive to society's needs.

Overall, political professionalisation is about improving the quality of individuals and political institutions and ensuring that the political process can respond to the challenges of an increasingly complex and dynamic era. Deepening political professionalisation can help establish a stronger foundation for an informed, inclusive, and actively engaged society.

Antecedents of Political Professionalisation

As shown in Figure 6, political professionalisation, both at the individual, political party, and political communication levels, is influenced by several complex antecedents, namely social, economic, political, and technological factors, which interact to form profound patterns. The interconnectedness of antecedents in political professionalisation highlights a dynamic and multifaceted process where individual, organisational, and campaign factors interact to shape the evolving nature of professional political practices. These relationships are neither linear nor isolated; instead, they represent a web of influences that respond to and reinforce one another in a continuous feedback loop.

It is driven by education, experience, and personal motivation at the individual level. Individuals with a strong educational background in political science, law, or related fields are more likely to pursue and sustain a career in politics (Alcántara-Sáez, 2017). In addition, previous political experience, whether as an activist, civil servant, or elected official, can also affect a person's decision to choose a political career path. Personal motivations such as ambition to gain power, influence, or public interest can also drive individuals to choose a more professional political career path (Borchert, 2011; Maestas, 2000).

At the political party level, it is influenced by internal factors in the form of party organisational structure, internal policies, and political culture, as well as external factors,

namely the high intensity of interaction with the government. Political parties with a more formal and organised organisational structure encourage more professionalism among their members. Developing internal policies, such as a candidate selection system based on professional criteria and decision-making transparency, can strengthen professionalism within political parties. Additionally, a party's political culture that supports professionalism, integrity, and accountability plays an additional significant role in fueling political professionalisation among its members (Aula & Koskimaa, 2023; Koskimaa, 2023).

Political parties must also be able to manage their organisations well. It includes managing resources, such as funds and personnel, and setting up an efficient organisational structure. Politicians and political parties with solid managerial capabilities can more effectively plan and implement their political strategies and mobilise support for their goals. Political parties and politicians should promote transparency and accountability by ensuring public access to information, openly explaining decisions, and taking responsibility for their actions. Transparency and accountability build trust between voters and political leaders and ensure that political decisions are related to the interests of society.

Another driver of political party professionalisation is their interaction with the government, which demands expertise in specific fields (Katz & Mair, 2018). Politicians and political parties who wish to interact effectively with the government must have a high level of understanding of particular policy areas. It comprises knowledge of economics, law, health, education, and other areas that are the focus of government policy. By having expertise in specific areas, effective organisational management, and a commitment to transparency and accountability, political parties and politicians can improve their ability to mingle effectively with the government.

They can produce policies that are better and more responsive to society's needs and strengthen the integrity and legitimacy of the political system.

On the political communication or political campaign side, professionalisation is driven by developments in information and communication technology (ICT), changes in voter preferences, and the pressure of political competition. Advances in ICT, including the Internet, social media, and data analysis, have altered the way political campaigns are conducted, encouraging the adoption of more professional practices in communication strategies and voter targeting (Ahmad, 2024; Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė, 2023). Changing voter preferences, such as increased demands for transparency, credibility, and engagement, also drive more professional and organised campaign practices. Meanwhile, intense pressure from political competitors also forces them to enhance professionalism in their political campaigns to win voter support.

Overall, the antecedents that trigger political professionalisation include interrelated individual, political party, and political communication factors. The influences of education, experience, motivation, party

organisational structure, internal policies, political culture, information technology, changing voter preferences, and the pressures of political competition work together to shape the patterns of contemporary political professionalisation practices.

Future Research Directions

To identify future research directions, the authors adopted steps from Bahoo (2020), Bahoo, Alon, and Paltrinieri (2020), Bahoo, Alon, and Floreani (2021), and Pradana et al. (2022). The first step was to review the 25 most cited articles to identify emerging trends and understand relationships between studies. The second step was to review all influential articles and trends over the past seven years (2017-2024) to ensure the research reflects the latest developments in political professionalisation. The third step was to review the rest of the sample articles to avoid ultimate citation bias, ensuring that lesser-known but pertinent studies were also considered. The final step is to turn the potential research agenda into specific questions, filtered to exclude those already researched by other researchers, helping to identify unfilled gaps and areas that require further research.
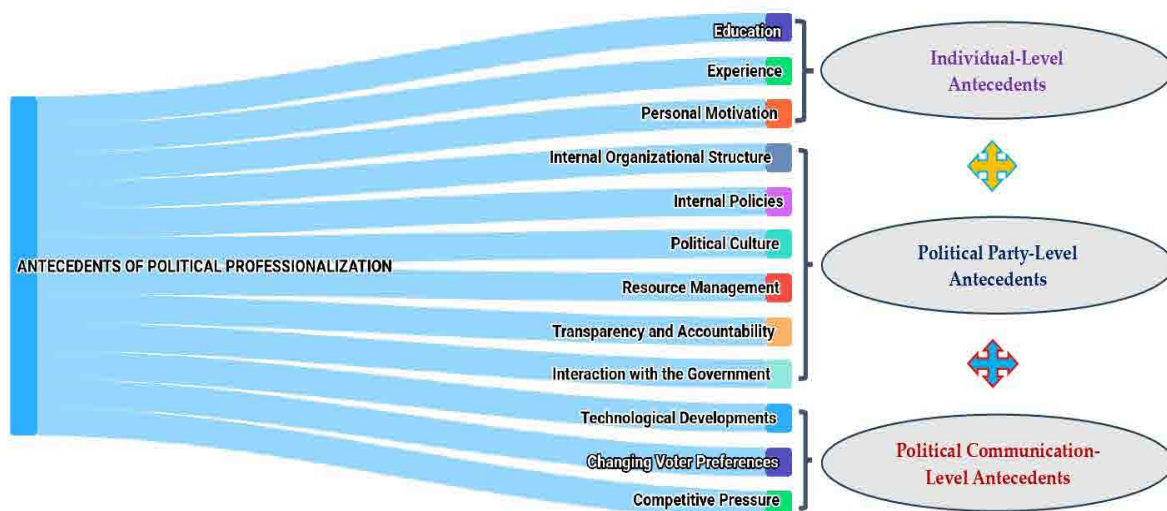
Figure 6. The Interconnectedness of Antecedents in Political Professionalisation
Source: Authors' elaborations

Table 5.
Future Research Directions

Theme	Paper	Research Questions
Consequences of Political Professionalisation	Stolz (2001)	1. Which type of regional politician is determined by political "the role of leadership," cultural, and economic factors?
Professionalisation of the Legislative Role	Beckman (2007)	2. What personal qualities (skills and background) are required for a successful government minister?
	Bowen & Greene (2014)	3. How do variations in components across states and over time influence professionalism in politics?
		4. What are the multidimensional components that contribute to professionalism in politics, and what is the impact of each component?
		5. What is the specific impact of the separate components of professionalism on various aspects of the political system?
	Rocca et al. (2023)	6. How can the influence of legislative professionalism at the state level on state politics or policy be explained in more depth, given that research in the area is mainly observational?
		7. How can future research overcome the limitations in making definitive statements about the causal influence of legislative professionalism when measured as an index or when the primary dimensions of professionalism are considered separately?
	Boldrini (2024)	8. How can the classification of the characteristics of MPs elected abroad be improved to elevate understanding of them and for descriptive and interpretive purposes?
		9. How can the classification help identify specific types of parliamentarians who, based on their characteristics, tend to have longer careers and obtain a higher percentage of the vote?
		10. How can the theoretical framework be developed and applied in various contexts, especially in countries with parliamentarians directly elected by immigrant communities, including its relatively simple analytical value and ease of replication, facilitating its broad applicability in various institutional settings?
Professionalisation of Political Communication and Campaigns	Larsson (2015)	11. How can appropriate measurements of permanent campaigns in a rational online context be developed?
		12. What are effective online permanent campaign practices, and how are they implemented?
		13. How can digital media serve as a "magic potion" to usher previously disengaged citizens into a more active role?
		14. To what extent can the effects of digital media on active community participation be validated through empirical research?
		15. How does the content of messages sent via Twitter, such as @replies and retweets, influence parliamentarians' communication and interactions?
		16. What influence does the content of tweets have on the behavior and engagement of parliamentarians on Twitter?
		17. How do parliamentarians' activities on various online and offline platforms, other than Twitter, affect engagement and communication with constituents?
		18. What are the implications of using these platforms for parliamentarians' political communications strategies?
		19. What new measures need to be developed better to understand Twitter use in the context of political campaigns? How can these measures reveal the dynamics of interaction and engagement between politicians and their constituents?
		20. How does the shift from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 affect politicians' campaign strategies?
	Göbel & Munzert (2018)	21. Are ordinary users and MPs adding neutral information?
		22. Would they instead push their political point of view or reframe content to their advantage?

Theme	Paper	Research Questions
	Ostrá (2021)	23. How can causal mechanisms linking the causes and outcomes of professionalisation in political contexts be validated and modified through future comparative studies?
		24. How can the results of comparative studies contribute to a deeper understanding of professionalisation in political contexts?
	Mykkänen et al. (2022)	25. How did the unusual nature of the 2019 EP elections in Sweden, as a "first order" election, influence national political dynamics and political parties' campaign strategies?
		26. How can improved and updated operationalization enable a systematic study of party strategy that pays more attention to new items to measure various campaign strategies more precisely, including visualization aspects such as using personal images, photos, and videos on platforms such as YouTube and Instagram?
		27. Given the need for more extensive datasets to support these analyses, how can emotional campaign messages and features be examined more closely in future studies?
	Unikaitė-Jakuntavičienė (2023)	28. How can the development trend of professionalisation of election campaigns be studied in depth in various contexts, including the Lithuanian context, to enable better communication?
		29. How can future studies on the professionalisation of campaigns in Lithuania be conducted through interviews before each new election and other additional data collection methods?
		30. How can a combination of interviews with politicians and campaign consultants, surveys of party members, and detailed analysis of campaign spending provide in-depth insights?
		31. How can an analysis of party campaign communications and campaign materials broaden the understanding of the professionalisation of election campaigns in Lithuania?
Career Politician Profile	Ryšavý (2016)	32. How do differences between countries in the availability of full-time positions and the accessibility or strength of incumbent positions affect political dynamics and representation?
	Alcántara-Sáez (2017)	33. How has the meaning of political capital changed across eras, and how does the configuration of particular contexts affect the function of structural characteristics in forming political capital?
	Carreras (2017)	34. What are the causal mechanisms linking presidentialism to the emergence of political newcomers?
		35. How does the institutionalization of the party system affect the emergence of newcomers to politics?
		36. How does the age of democracy play a role in the emergence of political newcomers?
		37. How does corruption affect the emergence of newcomers to politics?
		38. How does economic performance influence the emergence of newcomers to politics?
		39. How do these factors interact in different contexts to influence the emergence of political newcomers?
	Navarro & Sanz (2018)	40. What are the preferences regarding the future political career of Spanish Mayors regarding their political professionalisation?
		41. How do normative aspects and supply-demand factors influence the political recruitment process at the local level?
		42. How did political trajectories that began at the local level develop into other political arenas in multilevel governance in Spain?
	Di Capua et al. (2022)	43. How does political professionalisation influence the propensity to combine political mandates strategically?
		44. How do dual office restrictions affect the strategy of combining political mandates?
		45. Do political careers tend to reach political positions simultaneously or sequentially, and how does professionalisation influence this pattern?
		46. What are the practical implications of the relationship between political professionalisation, restrictions on dual office, and strategies for combining political mandates for political policy and practice?

Theme	Paper	Research Questions
The substance of Political Professionalisation	Ukwatta (2017a)	47. What are the supporting factors that facilitate the implementation of professional political practice?
		48. What are the primary obstacles to implementing professional political practice nationally and internationally?
Professionalisation of Political Parties	Aula & Koskimaa (2023)	49. How can future studies build on these initial findings and explore different configurations of expertise within political parties across different political systems using case studies and strategy comparisons?
Miscellaneous Insights	Karlsen & Saglie (2017)	50. What are the primary differences in political attitudes between party employees and other party levels?
		51. How do these differences in political attitudes affect the internal dynamics of political parties?
		52. What are these differences in political attitudes' implications for party strategy and policy?
	Phadnis & Khandelwal (2022)	53. How does the perspective of clients (political decision-makers) towards political consultants influence the recruitment and implementation of election campaigns?
		54. What are the implications of the client perspective for political consulting practice more broadly?
		55. How do the age and maturity of democracies affect the demand and need for political consultants?
		56. Are there differences in the types of services or approaches political consultants offer in countries with democracies of different maturity levels?

Source: Authors' elaborations

This systematic process resulted in 56 future research questions from the 19 articles in Table 5. By following these steps, authors identified future directions that were relevant, innovative, and potentially impactful to their field of study. These steps help ensure that research not only keeps up with the latest developments but also fills existing knowledge gaps and pushes the boundaries of comprehension in the professionalisation of politics.

Conclusion

Political professionalisation is essential in building more structured, efficient, and transparent political practices that serve the public interest. By implementing high standards and clear goals, professionalisation will increase the competence and integrity of politicians and strengthen social trust in the political system. This process also includes establishing complex organisational structures around political parties and institutions, organised funding, and efficient management of resources. Political professionalisation has twofold implications; on the one hand,

increasing the competence and integrity of political actors contributes to more effective governance, but on the other hand, it risks creating elitism and alienating politicians from the general public. Balancing these outcomes requires ongoing evaluation and adaptation of professionalisation practices to remain inclusive and responsive to community needs.

A bibliometric review of 57 articles published between March 1997 and April 2024 confirms a significant upward trend in research on political professionalisation, with an annual publication growth of 5.27%. Previous studies provide an in-depth understanding of modern political change and the interaction of politics with society and political systems, referring to the eight thematic categories identified. Findings from these categories highlight the transformation of legislative roles, the substance of political professionalisation, the profile of career politicians, changes in politicians' recruitment patterns, the professionalisation of political parties, the professionalisation of political communications and campaigns, the consequences of political professionalisation,

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and other related aspects. This analysis offers a comprehensive picture of the progress of the study of political professionalisation over time and a strong foundation for comprehending contemporary political dynamics. The review also emphasises the significance of ongoing research on political professionalisation while highlighting its breadth and relevance.

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