

Defining talent in management science: Does it really matter?

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Talent management has a long scientific trajectory of interest both in organizational and academic dimensions. Over the years, the talent concept has evolved, becoming a managerial phenomenon implemented to different sectors, yet, there is a debate in the context of defining talent, with no agreement as to the semantic concept. Moreover, many publications do not even make any effort to define the talent which, however, does not prevent them from proving the existence of various relations between talent management and other economic phenomena – and this does not merely apply to the academia. Both scholars and practitioners face unfettered freedom in the formulation of what elements constitute the term of talent and its meaning, creating the subject literature, some of which vague and biased, and an extensive analysis of contemporary contribution is lacking. As a consequence, ‘talent’ has become whatever the researcher or practitioner established it to be, creating a path towards scientific chaos. To address this gap, the author proposed an SLR and bibliometrics study of 235 articles published in 71, IF-ranked management journals, from January 1966 to July 2021. There are three objectives of this paper: to analyse definitions of talent aiming at their clarity and unambiguity, to identify trends, and to estimate the future research directions in this area. Finally, as the first attempt of this kind in the domain of science to determine whether there is a need for defining talent to achieve the research goals. As such, this is a new perspective on the existing state of knowledge and it meets the aim and scope of *Argumenta Oeconomica*.

Keywords: competency, effectiveness, performance, personality, talent

JEL Classification: M12, M21, M51

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1. Introduction

According to Balewski and Janowski (2011), one is right in emphasising that over various eras in history, the notion of ‘talent’ had different meanings. Therefore, to increase the research utility according to the talent area, it is necessary to investigate

this term's origins, following periods and mutual relations between talent and time, and to establish the relations between the word and the subject. The notion originates from the Greek language, where it was referred to as the largest unit of weight, volume and equilibrium: *τάλαντον* (cf. Kopaliński, 1999) and it was commonly used by traders in the Greek *pólis*, a major ancient trading centre of that era. Furthermore, talent functioned as a weight and pecuniary unit in Assyria and Babylonia (the Babylonian talent numbered 3600 shekels) and Palestine (3000 shekels) (Kopaliński, 1999). In the period from the 5th to the 4th cent. BCE, the most popular talents included the Attic (Herodian) one and the Egeic one (Winniczuk, 1976). Each of them was divided into 60 mines and 100 drachms. The talent, as a unit of weight, existed beyond ancient states-cities in the Peloponnesian Peninsula and it became widespread in the use of money as an equivalent for other goods which satisfied human needs (Aristotle, 1982). The eclipse of the Ancient Greek state saw the use of talent as the greatest nominal value means of payment (Stabryła, 1988).

Concurrently with the flourishing Greek colonialism, talent as an ore-related unit of weight was introduced in the Corinthian colonies in Sicily. Thereby, both the Latin 'talentum' and Greek '*τάλαντον*' refer to specific weight, volume and value-related aspects of ore (Kumaniecki, 1984). Unlike in Hellada, in antique *Orbis Romanus*, talent would include not 60 but 120 minor units, known as *litrae*, and 1440 ounces (Hoad, 1996). This was a great amount of money at that time: 3.5 drachmas was the normal week's wage, and 50 minas (less than one talent) were considered as sufficient to buy a very large house (Howatson, 2011).

At the turn of classical antiquity and of the Middle Ages, the notion of talent, even if rarely referred to a coin being the equivalent of 240 denari (Brückner, 1939), would be equated with the denotation included in St. Matthew's Gospel (the New Testament). It would be predominantly interpreted contrary to the author's semantics (Kopaliński, 1999). The talent was comprehended as a description of a trait: the synonym of abilities: "This is a similar situation as with one man who, before beginning a journey, asked his servants and gave his property to them. One of them was given five talents, the second one – two, the third got one talent (according to their abilities) (...) You should have invested my money with bankers, and at my coming, I should have received what was my own with interest (...)" (Matthew 25:15,27 Authors' translation)⁴. The same trend in the interpretation of a talent can be found in Old English (used until 1149), where 'talente' originated from the Latin word 'talentum' (Knowles, 2005). Referring to Howatson (2011), before the proper coinage was introduced, Greek units of money carried the same name as units of weight since the weights of precious metals (mostly silver, occasionally gold) were used to represent the sum of money (Howatson, 2011; Knowles, 2005). This is how, ultimately, a 'talent' became a coin. Thus, talents were attainable for the rich only.

In the 13th and 14th centuries, talent was seen either as the will of an individual to do something, or a natural ability. For example, in Old French, talent was perceived

as will or desire. This approach underlines the behavioural aspect of talent, which is extremely important in today's organizational environment.

According to Hoad (1996) and Knowles (2005), in the 15th and 16th centuries talent was understood as a person's mental ability or capabilities, divinely entrusted to them for their personal use and improvement. This notion of talent was based on Christian interpretations of the Parable of the Talents, which underline the innate nature of talent and, as a consequence, an individual's duty to use and improve their special abilities given by God: "talent is a gift that must be cultivated, not left to languish" (Michaels et al., 2001). Taking these statements into consideration, the parable contributed to exclusive interpretations (an inborn gift or natural aptitude) of the notion of talent (Gagné, 2000). The exact opinion in the context of defining talent was commonly accepted in the 17th and 18th centuries, yet without referring to divinity (Knowles, 2005).

In the 19th century, talent was embodied in an individual (Tansley, 2011) as one of his/her characteristics, however several new notions emerged. For example, since the 1930s, an expression 'talent scout' has been used to describe a person searching for a new talent (Cresswell, 2009). This approach is seen particularly in contemporary sport and music. The author, in the 1940s, indicated another term of talent among British servicemen, which was commonly described as 'local talent', namely attractive people from a certain area (Cresswell, 2009). In 2021, this is still in use. Although thousands of articles appeared on talent management to date, the notion of talent has not been seriously taken into consideration in the academic literature (Reilly, 2008), most likely due to a lack of clear definition/s (Lewis and Heckman, 2006). It appears that the world of talent-oriented management science faces unfettered freedom in terms of defining the notion of talent, and the topic became very popular (in 2021, a Google "talent" search showed over 790 hundred million hits).

2. Theoretical background

The problem of precise defining and conceptualising is not new and lies at the heart of all social science endeavour (Podsakoff and MacKenzie, 2016). It is impossible to implement work without using concepts, or even to proceed with a topic without labelling. Definitions and concepts are integral to every argument in addressing the most basic question of management science research, namely what is the subject of discussion (Gerring, 2012). Thereby, sociologists accepted the significance of pinpoint definitions; discourse in relation to this issue dates back to Mill (1882), and scholarly interest in this area has been continuing ever since (Gerring, 2012; Podsakoff et al., 2013). However, there has been a constant issue of inadequate conceptual notions in organizational, behavioural and social sciences. For example, Locke (2012) claimed that "a major factor retarding progress in our

field – and almost in every intellectual field today – has been the use of sloppy, careless, or subjective definitions”. Similar conceptualisations may be found in the studies by Podsakoff et al. (2013) as well as in other research. Furthermore, a number of researchers noted that this issue was becoming even more serious. Molloy and Ployhart (2012) established that merely 14% out of 93 studies covering the period from 2006 to 2009 aimed at testing the resource-based theory of a company (RBT) satisfied adequate prerequisites for a resource to be accepted as part of intangible assets, while merely 46% of those elaborations that analysed conceptual notions in RBT literature attempted to distinguish the focal construct from related ones. This problem was validated by Suddaby (2010), who argued that one of the predominant motives for not accepting manuscripts at AMR was that reviewers observed that the submissions failed to exhibit “construct clarity”. Two years later, Locke (2012) took a more pessimistic approach, and confirmed, while referring to 30 years of his experience as a reviewer of journal articles, that ca. 90% of submissions exhibit problems of conceptual clarity.

A reflection of the aforementioned impasse can also be found in the literature on human resource management, both in Poland (Borkowska, 2005; Tabor, 2011; Ingram, 2016; Poczowski, 2016) and abroad (Lewis and Heckman, 2006; Gallardo-Gallardo, 2015; Cascio and Boudreau, 2016). This interest is of a dual nature: theoretical and practical. Indeed, in the literature there is a growing number of publications on the role of talent in human capital management. In practice, on the other hand, there is a constantly growing number of companies developing and implementing competence or talented individuals’ management systems (Skuzza et al., 2013, pp. 453-470). Employers recognise that engaged employees with the skills expected in the organization and a high level of motivation play a key role in the development and achievement of competitive advantage, which in turn stimulates organizations to achieve higher levels of creativity and efficiency in human resource management systems. The scientific research to date on the issue in question does not provide the expected support or solutions in the area of talent management (Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen, 2016, pp. 31-56). There is still a lack of solid theoretical foundations, ones that would set precise directions and scope for future scientific efforts, and the discourses to date have been focused on defining talent (who or what talent is), without any empirical verification or evaluation of effects on the talent management system (Gallardo-Gallardo, 2015).

Additionally, academic projects in this area are seen as insufficient in terms of providing institutions with vision and direction for their implementation (Collings et al., 2011, pp. 453-462; Al Ariss et al., 2014, pp. 173-179; Cappelli and Keller, 2014, pp. 305-331): talent management has been the subject of criticism due to its strictly theoretical dimension without any practical evidence to test the hypotheses posed in the literature (Skuzza et al., 2013). Despite scholarly efforts over the past ten years (Thunnissen et al., 2013, pp. 1744-1761), with particularly high dynamics since

2014 (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013, pp. 290-300), no consensus has emerged in the area of definitions or the theoretical framework and scope of talent management.

In light of the above, the aim of this study was to establish whether there exist any precise conceptual definitions of talent: ones that are indispensable to scholarly progress and that offer a substantive collection of measures that organizational practitioners and academics may adopt; to identify future talent research related opportunities and threats. In view of this, the purpose of this article was to indicate whether there are any clear conceptual definitions of talent, those essential for scientific progress and which provide a concrete set of steps that organizational practitioners and academics can follow; to identify the future opportunities and threats for the world of science, referring to talent related research. This is a multifaceted undertaking, at the same time of a great importance; to the best of the author's knowledge, there are no papers that have addressed these issues notwithstanding the longevity of this question.

While considering this comprehensive assessment of the recent talent-oriented management literature, deficiencies in knowledge from the perspective of theoretical applications, research guidelines and the content of talent studies are all identified herein. It is the author's postulate that contrary to previous studies claiming that talent management (acquiring, retention) constitutes an inherent factor of an organizational competitive advantage, the focus on the talent concept follows a road to distraction. Lastly, the aforementioned deficiencies established in an analysis of the contemporary talent management literature demonstrate that there are grounds for an elaboration on those notions that are vital for future studies. Three research questions (RQs) emerged as a result of this, offering guidelines to this review:

- (RQ1) Is there a universal definition accepted by scholars – participants of management IF-ranked journals?
- (RQ2) What (if any) are, in the context of talent defining, the trends presented in articles published in the abovementioned journals?
- (RQ3) Is there a need for defining talent in the area of management science?

The paper is organized as follows: a systematic literature review is followed by an examination of the data collated (in response to RQ1 and RQ2) and an identification of research deficiencies. After that, guidelines are provided for future studies in the field of talent (RQ3) based on a critical analysis of the findings. The conclusions are presented in the final section.

3. Research methodology

Systematic literature reviews coupled with bibliometric analyses are vital to researchers to pose research questions that result in building knowledge capacity (Herrera-Franco et al., 2020). These involve the use of explicit algorithms to enable a literature analysis using transparent and repeatable processes in aid of an investi-

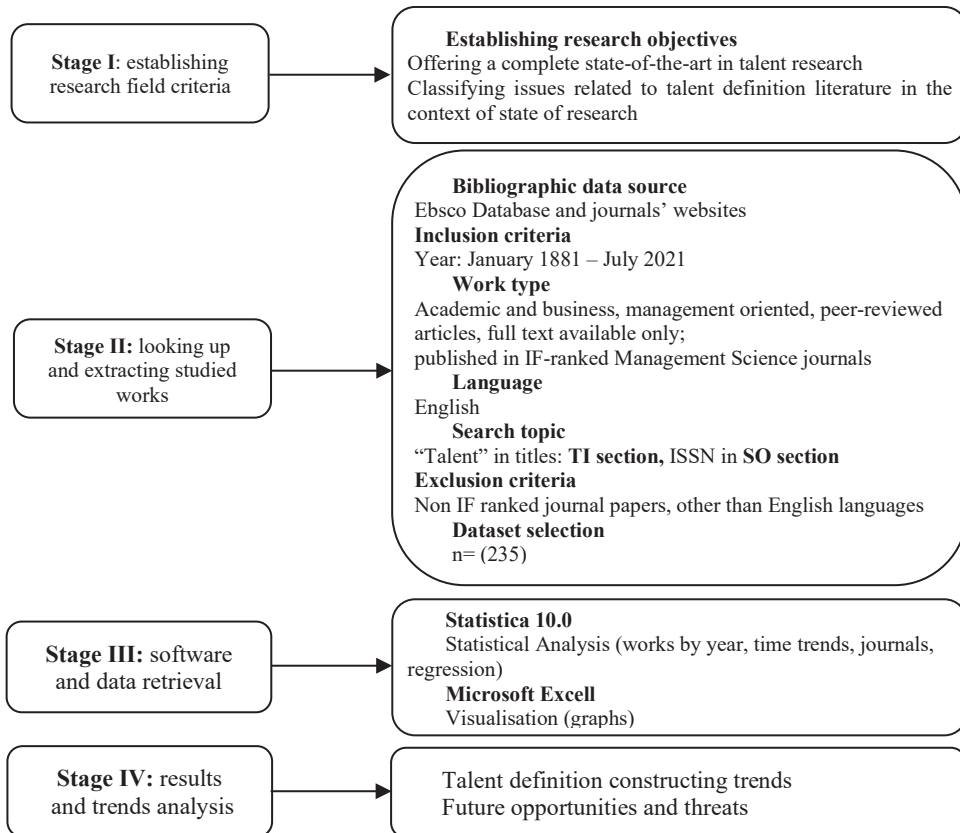


Fig. 1. The developed study method

Source: authors' own study based on Herrera-Franco et al. (2020).

gation of specific areas of knowledge (Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2015). The bibliometric approach involves formalities and rigours similar to those mentioned above and which ensure the top quality of information used (Keatley-Herring et al., 2016). These procedures are superior when compared to long-established unstructured reviews. Furthermore, they offer grounds for non-subjective identification, selection and appraisal of articles, thus a synthesis is produced to determine the depth of knowledge in a given area to diminish bias errors, and improve the efficiency of the review process. The validity of these methods is confirmed through a replication of precise measures, and the relevant literature is synthesised. Last but not the least, a systematic literature review is seen as a versatile approach applied by scholars in studies published in top scientific journals, as stated by Danese et al. (2018). Apart from this, in order to satisfy the criteria of the 'fit for purpose' protocol, bibliometrics was employed, as well (Herrera-Franco et al., 2020). This procedure included four stages that are elaborated on below, see Figure 1.

3.1. Stage I: Determination of research field criteria

The first measure covered the object and the delineation of the boundaries of the RQ related review. This was an extraordinary challenge as this is a broad area and the coherence of the concept has been ambiguous over time, the result being semantic imprecision and heterogeneous concepts. In view of the above, papers were taken into account that made references to management-based definitions of talent including identification and implementation. This was designated to indicate peer-reviewed articles in IF-ranked management journals. Regardless of the fact that the aforementioned criteria were determined in this manner, there are grounds to claim that they may offer the most complete insight into talent in terms of academic studies.

3.2. Stage II: Review and selection of studies

The source or database needs to be identified while preserving the highest quality and accuracy both for SLR and bibliometric analyses. Therefore, research was conducted that covered all the databases in Ebsco and each journal home website separately concerning their top-quality criteria, a broad spectrum of information required and relevance.

The data covered by the study were extracted from papers covering the time interval from 1965 to 2021. The list of 226 impact factor journals in management sciences was indexed based on Sheikh (2020). The second step was to indicate the scientific papers compared to ones including the term ‘talent’ in the title (section TI: talent, results: 9016). It was solely English papers that were taken into account, this being the prevalent language in academic writing (Cisneros et al., 2018; results: 8116). Next, articles were selected with ISSN (IS section) for each journal separately. To avoid potential errors, apart from Ebsco searching, every journal website was verified implementing the abovementioned criteria if access was possible. During the selection process, it was the author’s objective to refrain from any one-sided (i.e. either purely positive or negative) and biased perception of talent; 235 papers fulfilled these criteria.

3.3. Stage III: Software and data procurement

The data covered by the study were validated considering the subject matter and input to the research objective. Once the selection had been performed, the said data underwent encoding (in a binary format) and exporting to a format acceptable by Statistica 10.0 for the purpose of statistical investigation. The second measure consisted in Excel data exporting for graph displays.

3.4. Stage IV: Study of outcomes and trends

The study of the data was three-dimensional as per the RQs: the first one aimed to establish a prevalent and versatile definition of talent as accepted by the academics - participants of IF ranked management research journals. The second one was related to what trends were presented in articles published in the analysed journals in

the context of talent defining, The last one indicated future opportunities and threats on the path leading to the formulation of the definition of talent. All of these measures focused on obtaining the highest exactitude and soundness (Danese et al., 2018; Herrera-Franco et al., 2020).

4. Research results

The objective of this section was to address RQs and to serve as a theoretical framework aimed at organizing contemporary TM research problems on the basis of selected, management oriented IF literature. To realise this goal, as suggested in the methodology, sections were established that referred to specific issues. The first focused on testing whether there is any generally accepted TM definition in the world of science on the highest academic level, confirmed by IF-ranked journals participation (RQ1). The second aimed at a verification of what (if any) are, taking into consideration the aspect of TM defining, the trends presented in IF papers reviewed (RQ2). The last one (RQ3) was an attempt to answer, based on the research result, whether there is a need for talent defining both in the area of management science and organizational practice.

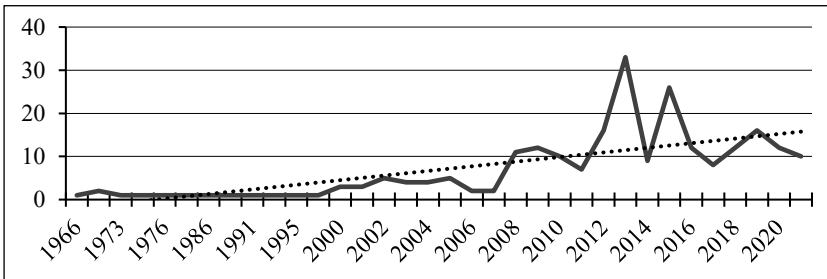


Fig. 2. The number of TMC-devoted IF articles – timeline

Source: authors’ own research.

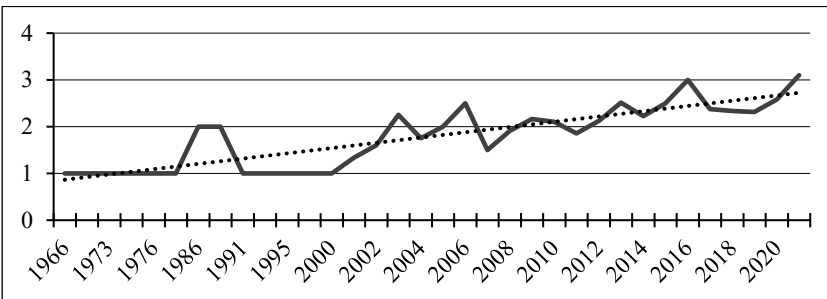


Fig. 3. The average number of authors – timeline

Source: authors’ own research.

The number of TM-devoted IF articles is characterized with an increasing trend from 1966 (see Figure 2), with an average per annum increase of 0.308869. The same tendency, however, ten times weaker (annual growth rate of 0.033759), is indicated in the average annual number of the authors of the examined papers (see Figure 3).

However, the indicated correlation is polarised: in the context of domestic papers it is positive, for international ones – negative (Figure 4).

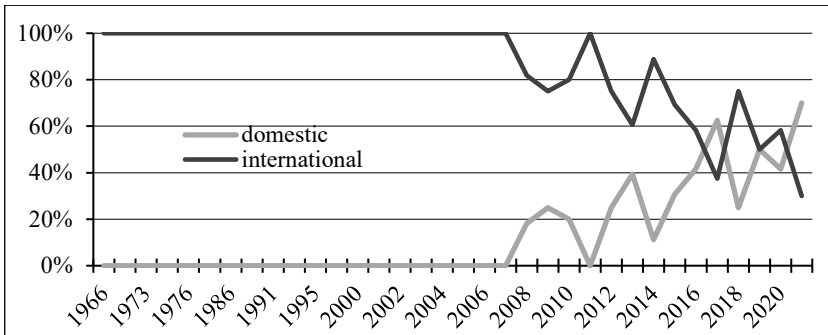
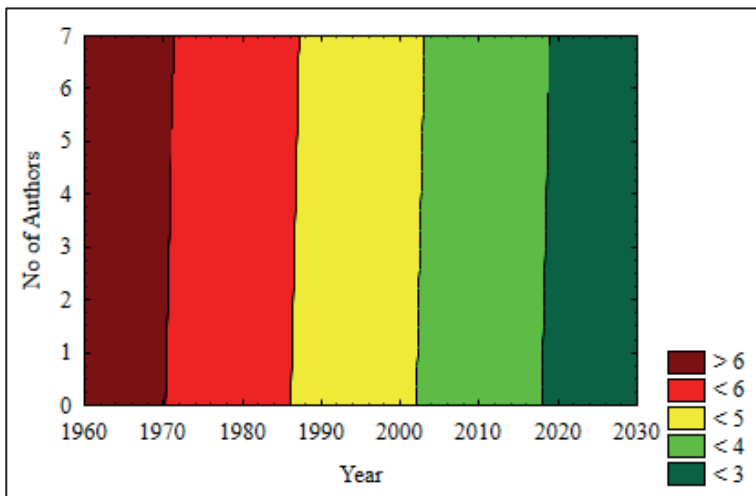


Fig. 4. The involvement of authors: domestic and international – timeline

Source: authors’ own research.

Although the number of authors did not change significantly, the IF of a journal in which a TM publication was placed, decreased (see Figure 5).



$$IF = 130.034 - 0.063x + 0.0095y$$

Fig. 5. The number of authors vs. IF – timeline

Source: authors’ own research.

The content analysis of IF talent-oriented articles indicated three main dimensions of defining talent (see Figure 6):

- perceived lack of the necessity of defining or insignificance to address [L],
- implementing terms previously implemented by other authors [M],
- attempts to establish one's own definition [N].

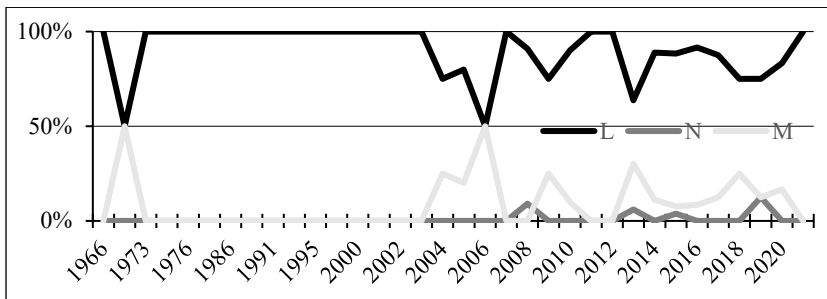


Fig. 6. Approaches to talent defining – timeline

Source: authors' own research.

According to the research results, in 84.7% of the articles reviewed, the authors did not consider it necessary to implement the talent definition to achieve their research goals, 2.6% undertook this effort and 12.7% referred to their predecessors.

Addressing RQ2 further, an in-depth analysis indicates three main trends in academic talent perception:

- talent as a competency – understood as a construct of internal (knowledge, skills) and external (attitude) powers embodied in human individuals (Rakowska & Sitko-Lutek, 2000; Janowski, 2013). As regards the research conducted, in 33.89% of the articles reviewed, the authors implemented the talent definition perceived as a competency; according to the regression formula, the trend will increase in future publications on this subject (see Figure 7);
- talent as a personality (a trait) – perceived according to Costa McCrae as a stable set of characteristics determining human's behaviour in one's social environment (McCrae and Costa, 2021). Based on the research results, in 7.53% articles, this tendency was dominant, and particularly significant is the growth over time (see Figure 8);
- performance-based approach to talent (Gagné, 2000) as an activity which characterises top performers (upper 10%). In the study results, two trends occurred in this context: direct reference to performance (I) supported in 18.41% of papers, and indirect one (II), at 7.11% (see Figure 9), the first (I) variant has a tendency to grow in the line of time, while a reverse trend is indicated taking into consideration the second one (II).

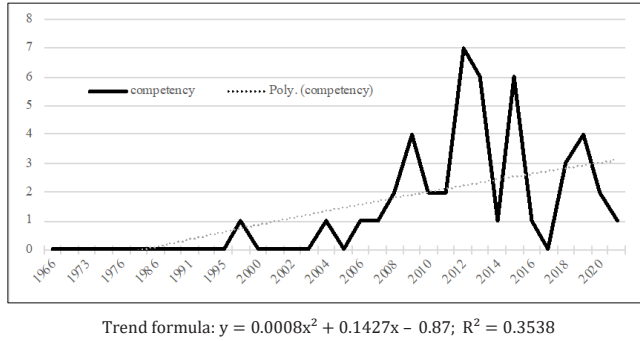


Fig. 7. Talent as a competency – timeline

Source: authors' own research.

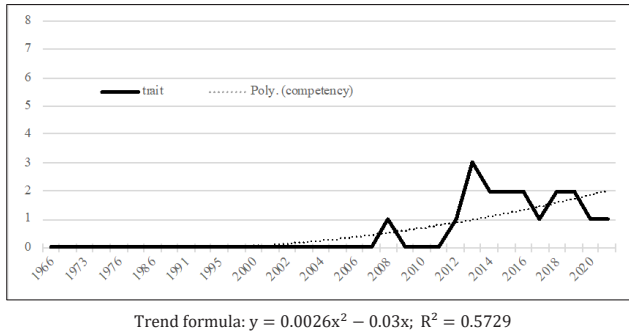


Fig. 8. Talent as a personality trait – timeline

Source: authors' own research.

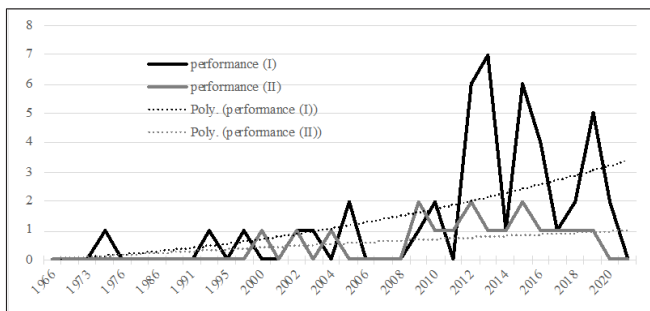


Fig. 9. Talent as a performance – timeline

Source: authors' own research.

Table 1
Multiple correlation of defining talent approaches

	Trait (t)	Competency (c)	Performance (PI)	Performance (PII)
Trait (t)	1			
Competency (c)	0.6530	1		
Performance (PI)	0.7600	0.8312	1	
Performance (PII)	0.4778	0.7386	0.6241	1

Source: authors' own research.

Referring to RQ3, a multiple correlation was calculated (Table 1); r_{CPI} and r_{PII} fall within $0.7 \leq r_{xy} < 0.9$ and are very high and positive. As the PII trend (Figure 7) is decreasing, focusing on the direct performance (PI) justifies perceiving the term of talent in this dimension, since both the competency and personality trait are very strong dependent variables of performance (PI).

Conclusions

The findings from the literature suggest that the concept of talent, or talent management, is narrowed to the research area under analysis, which confirms the previous results of studies undertaken by Beechler and Woodward (2009, pp. 273-285), Garrow and Hirsh (2008, pp. 389-402), McDonnell et al., (2011, pp. 174-193), Ready and Conger (2007, pp. 68-77), Whelan et al., (2010, pp. 486-504), and the few attempts to define this process (Gallardo-Gallardo and Dries, 2012; Gallardo-Gallardo and Thunnissen, 2016, pp. 31-56; Moczydlowska, 2012, pp. 432-438; Tansley, 2011, pp. 266-274; Ingram, 2014, pp. 164-165; Pauli and Poczowski, 2019) highlighted the scale of the complexity of the problem that both theorists and practitioners around the world are trying to unravel (Boudreau and Ramstad, 2015, pp. 129-136; Ashton and Morton, 2005, pp. 28-31; Gruman and Saks, 2010, pp. 123-136; Höglund, 2012, pp. 126-142).

As of 2022, there has been no agreement in the context of talent notion understanding used since 1966. Although the number of papers talent in the IF- ranked journals is growing (Figure 2), as well as the number of authors (Figure 3), with a decreasing importance in articles published by international teams (Figures 4, 5), in 2021, when focusing on RQ1, it is still impossible to distinguish a commonly acknowledged and indiscussed definition of talent based solely on the results from this research concerning the talent-related literature. This statement finds its reflection in the previously published papers by Al Ariss (2014), Cascio and Boudreau (2016). In only 2.6% of the papers reviewed, did the authors make an effort to create a definition of talent (Figure 6). As a consequence, there is no legitimacy to confirm RQ1. In the

context of RQ2, according to the research results, three approaches representing the abundance of management and economic concepts involved in the perception of talent can be distinguished:

- talent as a competency, implemented in 33.89% of articles in the study, (cf. Figure 7): introduced by Boyatzis (1982). Its origins are rooted in Latin (lat. *competentia*: responsibility, congruence from *competere* – to come together, to agree, to suit, to compete (Kopaliński, 1999). Hence, a competent organizational member is a person who performs his or her job effectively, has relevant knowledge and skills, and is able to use them effectively for the good of the organization (Bouteiller and Gilbert, 2016). Competencies are therefore correlated with the task to be performed or a specific activity (Carney and Fluitman, 1995). They are derived from experience and form a well-defined set of knowledge, skills and attitudes (Bassellier et al., 2003), integrated among themselves, as long as the competent person mobilizes this knowledge and skills consciously, without the need for consultation (Cardy and Selvarajan, 2006), and also emphasised by Bassellier et al. (2003), perceiving competency as collections of models of behaviour that are needed for effective performance on the job. Moreover, competencies constitute the intellectual property of companies and are an important factor in strategic decision-making and the selection of suitable candidates for the job. They are a derivative of skills, experiences and behavioural patterns that are crucial both to the organization and the employee to effectively achieve (perform towards) the desired goals at present and also in the future. The intensity level of each of these elements constituting competency (as a complex construct) determines the employee to be perceived as an average, experienced or expert (talent) within the organization (Rogers et al., 2015). Carnegie states that everyone needs to strive towards acquiring not only wealth but also competence; competence becomes the conclusive quintessential fundamental (Carnegie, 2017). This statement is reflected in the research results with a tendency to increase the importance in future studies (Figure 7). Its significance in the context of future studies is also proven with a high correlation ratio (0.83) with direct performance (Table 1). Moreover, as proven by Janowski and Przekota (2020), what is equally if not more important, is that competency can be recompensed, which seems to be a key factor for organizations in the context of talent management programmes. HR managers can ‘turn up’ those elements of competencies which are most suitable for an individual and put less effort for achieving less important ones. This research-based knowledge may offer a contribution to the achievement of organizational effectiveness in relation to HRM.
- talent as a personality (trait) – represented by 7.53% of scholars in the study (Figure 8) – the subject literature analysis indicates that research on the personality was initiated in the early concepts of human beings, introduced by classical philosophers, such as Hippocrates (Kavirayani, 2018), Plato (Nikolaidis, 2019), Aristotle (Samuel and Tay, 2019) and Kant (Johnston, 2019). It is their opinions

that are widely used in contemporary personality theories (Buss, 1991), which include a set of assumptions about human behaviour with the necessary empirical definitions (e.g. Popper, 1992). The approach to personality in the 21st century organizational environment is strongly grounded in these foundations (McCrae and Costa, 2021). The same opinion was expressed by Woods and Sofat (2013), who proved a positivistic relation between personality traits and work engagement. Furthermore, Oldham and Fried (2016) concluded that employees respond differently to the characteristics of their job as a function of their personality traits. As a consequence, personality researches indicate that one's personality may affect attitudes towards work (Palaiou et al., 2016), the levels of experience to meet criteria required for the job (Ehrhart, 2006) and, most significantly, the job or task performance (Peral and Geldenhuys, 2020). This approach, however, includes one fundamental flaw: the set of personality traits, according to McCrae and Costa (2021), the inventors of the Big 5 model, cannot be modifiable or trained and, as such, it is impossible to develop it. In this context, trait based talent is innate (Sood, 2018), in contradiction to the theses postulated in 19.67% of the papers reviewed. The next consideration refers to definitions of competency, which include the term of "attitude" (Bassellier et al., 2003), "collection of behaviours" "behavioural patterns", which is the external exemplification of personality traits of an individual. In that context, personality traits are a component of competency (Bassellier et al., 2003),

- talent as a (human) performance (effectiveness): the direct relation of talent management and organizational effectiveness is confirmed in many papers (e.g. Al Ariss et al., 2014; Cascio & Boudreau, 2016), where talent management is perceived as a process of the selection, development and retention of the highest performers. Additionally, Scullion et al. (2010), Schuler et al. (2011) and Al Ariss et al. (2014), claimed that understanding the relation between talent management and performance is extremely important to establish the academic legitimacy of the field. Furthermore, O'Boyle and Kroska (2017) and Call et al. (2021) proved that the growing body of literature focuses on "star" individuals and their performance. What is particularly significant, in the opinion of those authors, and confirmed by O'Boyle and Kroska (2017), is that high performers (stars) constitute a relatively small proportion of employees, yet they contribute disproportionately positively to organizational effectiveness. These determinants suggest, based on the research results (18.41% of papers supported this approach) in this study, that the validity of perceiving the term of talent in the context of direct performance is confirmed. This approach seems to be dominant, in contrast to the indirect one (PII), represented in 7.11% of papers, which is supposed to diminish by the year of 2136 (Figure 9). Additionally, there are, although admittedly few (3.35%), voices referring to talent management (not the talent itself), which categorise this process as a threat to the organization. According to Swailes (2013), TM determines negative reactions in non-talented individuals, which could potentially

generate negative “net effects”. Academics and practitioners are sometimes afraid of communicating openly about TM because this can lead to jealousy (Dries et al., 2014), hostile competitiveness (King, 2016), and feelings of being excluded (Swailles, 2013), among individuals not perceived as talents.

In spite of the presented complexity, the fundamental talent concept is still available for examination in the future (RQ2). The crucial recommendation, based on the research results, is expected to establish a general, commonly accepted and unambiguous term of talent which, according to the studies, evolves directly into performance/effectiveness (Table 1). According to Hensel (2019), this will determine the path towards the correctness in future scientific TM research and implement a synergy effect of academic efforts.

Taking these assumptions into consideration, the answer to RQ3 cannot be unequivocal. In 84.7% of the articles reviewed, the authors did not find the talent definition necessary to achieve their research goals: the talent becomes an axiom in the theoretical dimension and, as such, there is no need to challenge it. However, in that context, the discussion of present and future scientific research directions arises (cf. Herfeld, 2016). In an organizational environment, talent is perceived as the highest level of (human) performance. Since the terms of talent and performance are not synonyms, the latter, as a primary with regard to the first, should be considered (axiom theory, see e.g. Symons and Holton, 2020). On the contrary, in the context of art (e.g. sculpture, opera music, painting), performance-based referral to talent is secondary to the personality (potential) approach (represented by 7.53% of scholars in the review). Therefore, the answer to RQ3 is context-related and needs further research.

This study is based on the SLR and bibliometrics methods combined. The research was conducted in talent oriented papers, published in IF-ranked management journals. The subject of the analysis was the content of 235 talent oriented articles, published in the abovementioned journals from its beginnings to July 2021, in the context of talent defining, which constitutes, to the best of the author’s knowledge, the first attempt to investigate the process of creating talent definition and the development from its origins to 2021.

Firstly, this research provides a coherent picture of the origins and semantic history of the establishment, evolution and development of the term ‘talent’. The study also described contemporary trends in talent defining literature by classifying studies related to fundamental characteristics, such as the context of the study, the qualities of the researcher/team, as well as the subject matter of talent definitions and the ways in which the notion is perceived. This investigation identified the leading trends and gaps in the discipline in question, for example a lack of a universal talent definition and an unlimited freedom in the talent defining between the academics, regardless of scientific rigours. It was also noted that, in the talent-related IF-ranked management literature under review, there were three approaches to talent understanding, namely: irrelevance in this context (the authors do not consider it

important to address) [L]; someone else's definition implementations [M]; one's own construct to create [N]. Regarding the content of contemporary approaches to defining talent, the analysis distinguished three major trends in the abovementioned semantic areas: talent as a (personality) trait (where talent is perceived as a set of unmodifiable, externally observed attitudes), competence, and performance, divided into two streams: direct and indirect (with the predominance of the first one), integrating the two previous trends.

Another significant addition to the development of talent defining discussed in this paper, is that it provides a revised rigorous overview of the approaches to talent implemented in management-oriented publications with the highest impact in the world of science, which is particularly noteworthy for the future effectiveness of talent-management-oriented research.

The third contribution provided in this article is a thorough analysis of the origins of the notion of talent, which may establish the foundations for a reconstruction (towards unambiguousness) of its contemporary understanding, reflected in the most valuable management literature. The considerable need for an interpretation and consolidation of the concept of talent, both in the academic and organizational spheres, to continue the further development of talent management, is confirmed. As a consequence, this discussion is no longer just a managerial debate, focused on corporate benefits and costs related to organizational talent activity.

The final aspect of the paper, which seems to be extremely important for the development of management sciences, is the attempt to solve the problem indicated by Boudreau and Ramstadt (2005) and continued by Cascio and Boudreau (2016), as to whether there is a need for defining talent. The answer is "no". As long as the organizations are obliged by owners/shareholders to generate profits, and universities are financed by the derivatives of profits (taxes, donations), the effectiveness/performance will remain the ultimate criterion. As a consequence, all the organizational assets and resources (including talented individuals) will be subordinated to it.

Lastly, the advantages and limitations of this study need to be pointed out. Taking into consideration the potential advantages, rigorous (SLR, bibliometrics) methods were adopted during the literature review. A careful selection of studies was made, with particular attention paid to those that are management-oriented and closely related to talent, published in a top-ranked management journal (IF scored). Regarding the limitations, as the review is focused on theoretical aspects, the articles had to follow strict quality and content criteria. As a result, numerous papers outside the IF-score journals, had to be excluded. Furthermore, the author's suggestions for future research were evaluated estimated based on the literature review. The author also believes that this approach has determined the limitation of creativity and innovation in the talent defining scientific area. Therefore, it formed a solid foundation for future research directions to enhance talent management literature and to provide scientific support to talent management directors and specialists.

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