AGILE TALENT MANAGEMENT: THE STATE OF THE ART

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Abstract

Purpose – The current article is created to explore and systematize the accumulating nuances in the meaning of the emerging construct of agile talent management. Methodology – Literature review, critical analysis, bibliometric analysis, systematic literature review, and content analysis of selected and accessible full-text publications as journal articles, conference papers, books (book chapters), their summaries, research proposals and reports are implemented as research methods in concern with outlining important shades that disclose the essence of the aforementioned construct by application of the mind-map method. Findings – An elaborate set of interconnected nuances in the meaning of agile talent management is generated which allowed the grounded formulation of a useful definition for this emerging construct. Directions for future research in the sphere of agile talent management are also outlined. Research limitations – Initially the research for the construct of agile talent management started in Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar, but the first two scientific databases prove not to contain enough target scientific publications. That is why the search was concentrated in Google Scholar.

Keywords: agile talent management, agile talent, talent management, talent, agile

JEL: M50, L21, J20

Introduction

The survival and comparatively successful development of the contemporary companies under the conditions of the current business environment, characterized by a post-Covid-19 world, geopolitical tensions, revolving local wars, terrorism, technological (and social) disruptions, climate change and green transition, seems grounded on two fundamental attributes – on one hand, on dominating embedded assumptions about the essence and factors of the business environment, and on the other hand – on identified appropriate behaviours, demonstrated on a daily basis by managers and other contributors (individuals, constituencies) to the respective companies. The adopted assumptions about the essence and dominating factors in the contemporary business environment are frequently and succinctly expressed as "volatility, uncertainties, complexity, and ambiguity" (VUCA) (Mack, Khare, Krämer & Burgartz, 2015; Bennett & Lemoine, 2014).

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But the array of such assumptions brought to the foreground the urgent necessity of not only managers' and other contributors' considering their potential influence on the business entity, but also reacting, or when possible, even proactively undertaking appropriate strategic/tactical moves in order to mitigate pending threats or even transform them into opportunities for the respective firms. The key marker events for the companies, originating from the business environment, seem so bewildering to the managers and other contributors that there is no consensus around the meanings, embedded in its components (i.e. one acronym, different meanings) and even disrupting the set of factors (one business environment, several acronyms). This is the reason why simultaneous implementation of variety of business environment frameworks may be observed in the totality of the functioning companies, besides the aforementioned version of VUCA, as BANI (Brittle, Anxious, Non-linear, and Incomprehensible) (Nataliia & Olena, 2023; Cascio, 2020), RUPT (Rapid, Unpredictable, Paradoxical, and Tangled) (Leading Effectively Staff, 2019), and TUNA (Turbulent-Uncertain-Novel-Ambiguous) (Kohler, 2021).

As far as the leading organizational, managerial and other contributors' behaviours (attitudes, approaches) in contemporary business organizations in response to pending external changes are concerned, there may be outlined a variety of VUCA foundations (Falkenberg, 2019) as VUCA 2 (Vision, Understanding, Courage, Adaptability), VUCA 3 (emphasizing equitability, inclusiveness, diversity of the business world; Vibrancy, Unparalleled Work Output, Challenging Work, Agility) (Stănescu & Romașcanu, 2022; Sreenivasan, 2019), VUCA 4 (positive outlook amid the Covid-19 crisis; Virtuous values, Utilitarian unity, Circumspective clarity, and Agile action) (Stănescu & Romașcanu, 2022; Balita, 2020), and even a positive reiteration to RUPT (Reality, Understanding, Possibilities, Transparency). It becomes evident that under the conditions of such complex, dynamic and unpredictable business environment, the management of the valuable people, contributing to the company, becomes of greater importance. And again there may be detected a variety of human resource theories to mingle and collide for the purpose of disclosing how firms should acquire and sustain a competitive advantage through their human resources and other contributors to the entity in such business environment, i.e. human resource management (Hamid, 2019), human centered management (Lepeley, 2023), human capital management (Hanine & Dinar, 2022), personnel management (Popova & Shynkarenko, 2016), people management (Zhang-Zhang, Rohlfer & Varma, 2022) and talent management (Venkatesh, 2016), which serves as a direct evidence for the lack of consensus around any appropriate management methods of coping with human-related challenges, originating from this business environment. Furthermore, "the war for talent" forced the companies to pursue the attraction

of wider categories of personnel and creatively transform some of the constituencies from the outside to organization's contributors, or even create new ones when going virtual through their business activities (Diamandis & Kotler, 2015; Ismail, Malone, van Geest & Diamandis, 2014; Younger & Smallwood, 2016a; Dimitrov, 2023, 2019). That is why *the subject of this article* is the exploration of the essence and important characteristics of an emerging construct of "agile talent management". The mapping out and clarification of the terrain of agile talent management may be considered as a promising venue for opening a discussion around building a consensus among the enlarging community of organizational stakeholders around gaining and retaining a competitive advantage through people by improving their strategic thinking and collaboration, i.e. adopting appropriate interpretations of important business environment factors and pertinent behaviours to cope with pending and revolving organizational issues or better seizing advantageous business opportunities. Secondary sources are determined as a survey object, i.e. journal articles, conference papers, books (book chapters), their summaries, research proposals and reports by consulting companies or government agencies, indexed in Scopus (***, 2025b), Web of Science (***, 2025c), and Google Scholar (***, 2025a), issued till the end of 2024 year.

Furthermore, in order to ensure the necessary level of discipline in thinking and acting in relation with this research, definitions of three basic concepts are provided, as follows:

- The adopted definition of *talent management* for the purpose of this article is formulated by Dimitrov (2015, p. 21), describing it "as a specific bundle of organization-wide integrated efforts to innovative ideas and creative realizations of contemporary people management that reach far beyond the entity's boundaries, balancing diverse interests of the firm's constituencies and deliberately searching for their contribution to the process of sustainable value creation not only in the company, but also by integrating its endeavours with other social actors, representing even higher-rank systems, oriented to societal well-being".

- *An agile organization* that may belong to any industry and be of any size, is defined as "a network of teams operating in rapid learning and decision-making cycles", enabled by technology and "guided by a common purpose that co-creates value for all stakeholders" by utilizing new data and empowering the teams closest to the information". Through swift and efficient reconfigurations of "strategy, structure, processes, people, and technology toward value-creating and value-protecting opportunities", the agile entity "adds velocity and adaptability to stability, creating a critical source of competitive advantage in volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA)

conditions" (Brosseau, Ebrahim, Handscomb & Thaker, 2019; The McKinsey Agile Tribe, 2017).

• *Agile talent* – the community of full-time employees and "external, project-based, and flexible workforce" (including "outside experts, external staff, contingent workers, free agents, contractors and 'gigsters'"), deliberately attracted, engaged, partnered with, and productively led by succeeding company managers (Younger & Smallwood, 2016a).

Methodology

The current article explores the accumulating nuances in the meaning of the emerging construct of "agile talent management". This is achieved by the implementation of a bibliometric research method, review and critical analysis of open access and full-text publications officially published till the end of 2024 year and indexed in Google scholar academic search engine (***, 2025a) up to the end of April 2025 for the explored construct of "agile talent management". Thus, a list of 90 records (i.e. journal articles, conference papers, books or book chapters, their summaries, research proposals and reports by consulting companies or government agencies) is generated. That is why a systematic literature review, bibliometric analysis, content analysis and critical analysis are implemented as research methods concerning the aforementioned construct (Snyder, 2023; Paul, Khatri & Kaur Duggal, 2023; van Wee & Banister, 2023; Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman & The PRISMA Group, 2009; Ellegaard & Wallin, 2015). Google Scholar is chosen as a preferred research aggregator, because the initially targeted search of the target construct in the core collection of Web of Science (***, 2025c) shows the existence of only one record under the chosen criteria (see Nigam & Chavla, 2022) and the situation in Scopus (***, 2025b) looks almost the same (see Jooss, Collings, McMackin & Dickmann, 2023; Alam, Bergeron & Bogatyreva, 2023). The logical steps in selecting the group of publications from Google Scholar to be analyzed are described in figure 1.
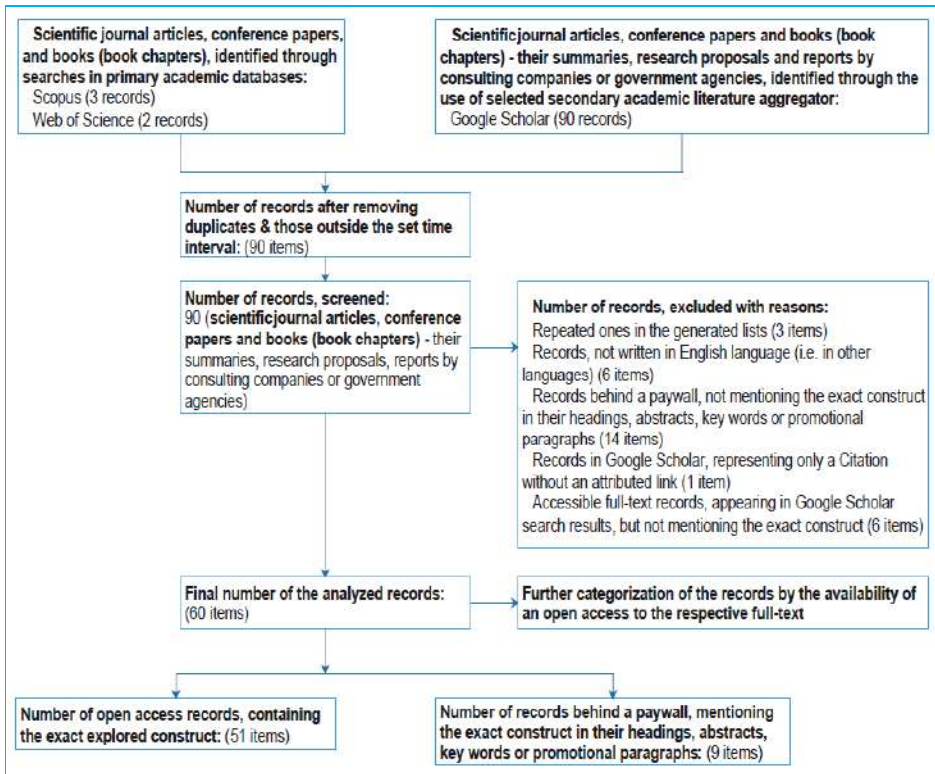
Source: Own analysis.

Figure 1: The steps in selecting the group of publications, subject to analysis for the purpose of the current study

The selection of the reviewed scientific publications is further based on several criteria as the simultaneous availability of a full-text and open access to it online (i.e. not an item behind a paywall); English is chosen as the language of writing for the items; the inclusion of the exact construct in the text body of the respective publication (i.e. excluding the list of the cited literature sources); and removal of record duplicates. That is how the group of the researched publications decreased in number from 90 to 51 items. Since a comparatively low number of records to be investigated is observed, selected by the aforementioned set of criteria, this may be considered as a clear sign of the existence of an under-investigated sub-area in the field of contemporary people management. That is why a greater diversity in the types of records is deliberately allowed for the purpose of the analysis, i.e. not only scientific journal articles, conference papers and books (book chapters), but also their large summaries, detailed research

proposals and reports by consulting companies or government agencies. Thus, important shades of meaning and additional characteristics of the construct agile talent management are identified and by means of the mind-map method (Buzan, 2018) – recapitulated, classified, and illustrated.

Unraveling the nuances in the meaning of the emerging construct of "agile talent management"

The results from the conducted search of the term "agile talent management", positioned in inverted commas in Google Scholar (***, 2025a) limited to the end of 2024 brought to the deliberate formulation of several milestones:

- A list of 90 records is generated by performing the respective command by the search engine.
- The items, constituting the aforementioned list, may be categorized into three important sub-groups, as follows:
  - These that contain the exact explored construct and are open-access and full-text publications (51 publications);
  - Those that are positioned behind a paywall, mentioning the exact construct in their headings, abstracts, key words or promotional paragraphs (9 items);
  - Records, excluded from the research due to grounded reasons that include (30 items): (a) Records, repeated in the generated lists by the accomplished search for the aforementioned construct (3 items); (b) Records, not written in English language (i.e. written in other languages) (6 items); (c) Records behind a paywall, not mentioning the exact construct in their headings, abstracts, key words or publicized promotional paragraphs (14 items); (d) Records within the search lists, representing only a Citation without an attributed link (1 item); and (e) Accessible full-text records, appearing in result lists, but not mentioning the exact construct in their text bodies (6 items).
- The generated list of records contains not only scientific journal articles, conference papers and books (book chapters), but also their summaries, research proposals and reports by consulting companies or government agencies that on one hand, disclose survey results, while on the other hand – serve as an effective advertisement means, or something in-between.
- The few identified records in Scopus (***, 2025b) and Web of Science (***, 2025c) do not affect Google Scholar search results lists (2025a) because of eliminated duplication of literature sources and the impact of the set time period (see table 1).

Table 1: Mapping the presence of the "agile talent management" construct in the primary international academic databases

Primary academic scientific databases	Records	Reason not to be counted
Scopus	Shahriar (2025)	It does not belong to the set time interval for this research, i.e. the end of 2024 year.
	Jooss, Collings, McMackin & Dickmann (2023)	It is duplicated in the Google Scholar search results lists.
	Alam, Bergeron & Bogatyreva (2023)	It is duplicated in the Google Scholar search results lists.
Web of Science	Shahriar (2025)	It does not belong to the set time interval, i.e. the end of 2024. It is identified in Scopus.
	Nigam & Chavla (2022)	It is duplicated in the Google Scholar search results lists.

Source: *** (2025b), *** (2025c).

- One record is transferred from the list for 2021 to this year, presenting 2022 because of the observed difference between the dates of its early online posting "in the press" by the respective publisher and its indexation as open access full-text, and the date of its official attribution to a certain volume and issue of the respective scientific journal (see Arena, 2022).
- All the components of an article are reviewed for the availability of the construct of "agile talent management" with the exception of the references (i.e. applied literature sources).

The analysis, based on the group of open-access and full-text records, containing the exact explored construct, reveals the availability of some simple and succinct definitions of "agile talent management", as follows:

- Described as "a skills-first approach" (Jooss, Collings, McMackin & Dickmann, 2023).
- Labeled as an enhancer of "the overall organization's performance" (Shruti Lakshmi, Dutta & Kumar, 2024) and especially – "sustainable performance" (Mosca, 2020; Martin, 2015).
- Categorized as a change management intervention, oriented to improvements in HR policies and systems, thus inherently associated with potential and cherished performance and productivity increases (Ngcamu, 2021). From

this perspective the agile talent management consists in "contemporary HR practices based on new competencies and modern tools such as talent analytics" (Denning, 2018; Mosca, 2020), that may be adopted gradually – not at once or partially, through an "Agile-lite" approach. Thus, the transition to agile talent management is also associated with heavy reliance on organic approaches, characterized by open systems, self-managed teams, workforce forecasts and planning under the conditions of evolving multigenerational workforce, and continuous demonstration of respect to the interests of all the constituencies by pursuing consensus (Denning, 2018; Mosca, 2020).

• Classified as the newest and highest level of people management practices for senior executives, compared to traditional and agile-lite ones (table 2) (Denning, 2018).

Table 2: Hierarchical classification of people management practices for senior executives

People Management Practices	Succinct Description
First level: Traditional HR	Employees are viewed as one of the company resources that should be used efficiently and effectively in congruence with a top-down strategy. Employees are viewed as costs to be reduced.
Second level: Agile-lite HR	Partial orientation to moderating the negative impact of some traditional HR practices.
Third level: Agile talent management	Employees are empowered with: (a) strategy formulation; (b) participating in the continuous pursuit of "the business goal of delivering increasing value to customers"; (c) "their own performance management".

Source: Denning (2018).

• Disclosed as a logic result from the implementation of "agile management techniques" in the organizational function of "human resource management", and even the professionals, dealing with it, are exaltedly called "HR enthusiasts", assiduously experimenting with transformations in sub-spheres as organizational structure and processes, talent acquisition, performance management, employee engagement and leadership development, bringing to them an added tough of nimbleness, flexibility and resilience in order to actively pursue a state of organizational excellence under the conditions of the VUCA business environment and increase the proactivity of demonstrated business-related behaviors by executives and employees (table 3)

(Atchyutuni & Narasareddy, 2018). The manifestations of work enthusiasm by organizational contributors are frequently associated with accepting new, innovative job roles and obligations, the surmounting of significant difficulties in the ambitious undertakings and the unpredictability in achieving the desired results. That is why it is not surprising that the essence of agile talent management is also outlined by means of some basic characteristics, brought forth by the consulting business – "short-cyclic, iterative, people-focused, feedback-driven and supported by data" (Gieles & van der Meer, 2017) that proved useful for their client-companies, functioning in a changing business environment and using talents from both internal and external sources, even innovatively transforming employment agreements without breaking the enacted labor legislation at the regional, national and international level (Horney, 2016; Atchyutuni & Narasareddy, 2018).

Table 3: Peculiarities of agile talent management components

Talent management component	Transformation	Agile realization of the component
Organizational structure and processes	→	Small teams and fluid structures
Talent acquisition	→	Gig workers, contract employment
Performance management	→	Continuous performance feedback
Employee engagement	→	Constant learning opportunities
Leadership development	→	Foresight and change management

Source: Atchyutuni & Narasareddy (2018).

Another approach to identifying key nuances in the meaning of agile talent management is embodied in outlining its contents (i.e. components). *First*, in this way the aforementioned construct is associated with numerous talent rotations and risk takings, implemented without affecting the ongoing operation flow (Radonjić, 2024; Radonjić, Agušaj & Kužnin, 2024).

Second, by recommending a concrete model – "the HR->T model", implemented by a business consulting company for its client organizations (Gieles & van der Meer, 2017). The need to change the way of work for the activities, performed by the HR department ("talent team"), closer to agile practices (e.g.

numerous and short iterations, Kanban or Scrumban) represents a main prereq-uisite for the successful implementation of this model in all the structural units of a client-company. This requires that consultants should build and support a strong desire of the talent team in the client-organization to delegate, empower, advise and inspire the line and functional managers and members of the operating (producing or servicing) teams to perform a greater deal of people-related tasks for them, while re-scheduling more of their working time for data collection and analysis, manager/employee coaching instead of executing in the teams, enticed and trained in self-management. There should be established a healthy balance in the talent team between its orientation to design and the implementation of improvements in the existing and used tasks and tools, and the deliberately and proactively self-started disruptive innovation. Useful attributes of agile culture should be engrained in the talent team as accepting and utilizing the failures as learning opportunities and experiences, reliance on numerous iterations when innovating in the sphere of talent management, paying greater attention to the creation of an appropriate context for reinventions in units and for humans, con-tributing to them, instead of surmounting demonstrated resistance to mastered necessary organizational change. The proposed model consists of respective components, supported by recommended good practices and defined taboos. The last are categorized by belonging to certain components. Thus, some intensive practical experience in the application of the aforementioned model in contem-porary operating companies is revealed (table 4).

The meaning of the agile talent management may be also explained by enact-ing a set of specific implementation rules, underlined by organizational orienta-tion to collaboration and excellence, as design for agility and work meaningful-ness, maintenance of an internally organizational talent deployment market, and organizational culture intelligence (Tötterman, 2023; Denning, 2018).

Table 4: Special features in the structure and use of "the HR->T model"

Component	Good practices	Taboos
1	2	3
Talent Organization: the services and coaching the talent team supplies	Start visualizing the workflow Start coaching and facilitating others Automate and simplify procedures	Keep knowledge to yourselves Stop learning Focus on execution mainly

Continued

1	2	3
Talent Acquisition: getting the appropriate people to the operating teams in demand	Create a recruitment pipeline Make the team the owner Focus on motivation and personal characteristics	Forget the importance of employer branding Create standard competency-based job descriptions Act superior in an interview
Talent Management: encompassing and inventively using of traditional HRM system components as Training and Development, Performance and Compensation	Provide autonomy, mastery and purpose Bind people by interest not by force Let people leave as ambassadors, not adversaries	Fall back on Command & Control Pay for performance Focus on the negative
Talent Data: collecting diverse employee data in order to provide informed managerial decisions under the conditions of a complex work and business environment	Use predictive analysis Experiment with retrieval of unanalyzed data Act on insights	Leave data uncollected Jump to conclusions Work with too small datasets
Talent Strategy: experimenting with new ideas of increasing the knowledge on how to improve employee acquisition and growth	Reduce risk for innovation by using Lean Startup Align HR strategy with Business strategy Do not invest heavily in not tested products	Wait for what tomorrow brings Work in silos Ignore the importance of new and innovative ideas

Source: Gieles & van der Meer (2017).

The nature of agile talent management may also be described through its application spheres that now extend beyond the companies from the information technology sector (HR think tank, 2023; Atchyutuni & Narasareddy, 2018; Lawler III & Worley, 2015; Heikkonen, 2019) and digital communities (Revutska & Maršíková, 2021) to encompass business organizations from the "Irish hospitality industry" (Duffy, 2021), healthcare organizations (Altuntas, Grammatikaki & Rall, 2020; Venkatesh, 2017), the companies from the pharma sector (Jayashree & Harwani, 2020), manufacturing and fast-moving consumer goods industry (HR think tank, 2023), and even implying the possibility of its widespread use across numerous

industries (Jayashree & Harwani, 2020; Gieles & van der Meer, 2017; Atchyutuni & Narasareddy, 2018). The objects of research in the sphere of agile talent management may be not only the large companies (Freiholtz & Carolin, 2021), but also medium-sized and small entities (Mollet, 2021). Beyond the business sphere manifestations of agile talent management may be traced in the US army (McHugh, n.d.), Iran's higher education system (Soleymani, Abbaspour, Rahimian & Taheri, 2020) and the performance of the US government (Dodaro, 2015).

In many of these records the construct of agile talent management is not dwelled on, but just mentioned perfunctory, positioned as just an example, a set of recommendations for organizational performance improvement or as a part of implemented larger and more complex semantic terms, but without being directly, clearly and comprehensively defined, although the formulation of succinct definitions, outlining some nuances in the meaning of the aforementioned construct may be logically implied and inferred by critically analyzing researchers. In fact, the applied larger terms embody the great desire by scientists to explore the occurring business phenomenon of agile talent management, utilizing well-known management theory stances, thus supplementing additional attributes to the construct as strategy (strategies), practices, approach, frameworks, models, methods, (characteristics of) employees, systems, techniques, solutions, standard and processes (table 5).

Table 5: Perfunctory uses of agile talent management & as a building block of larger semantic constructs

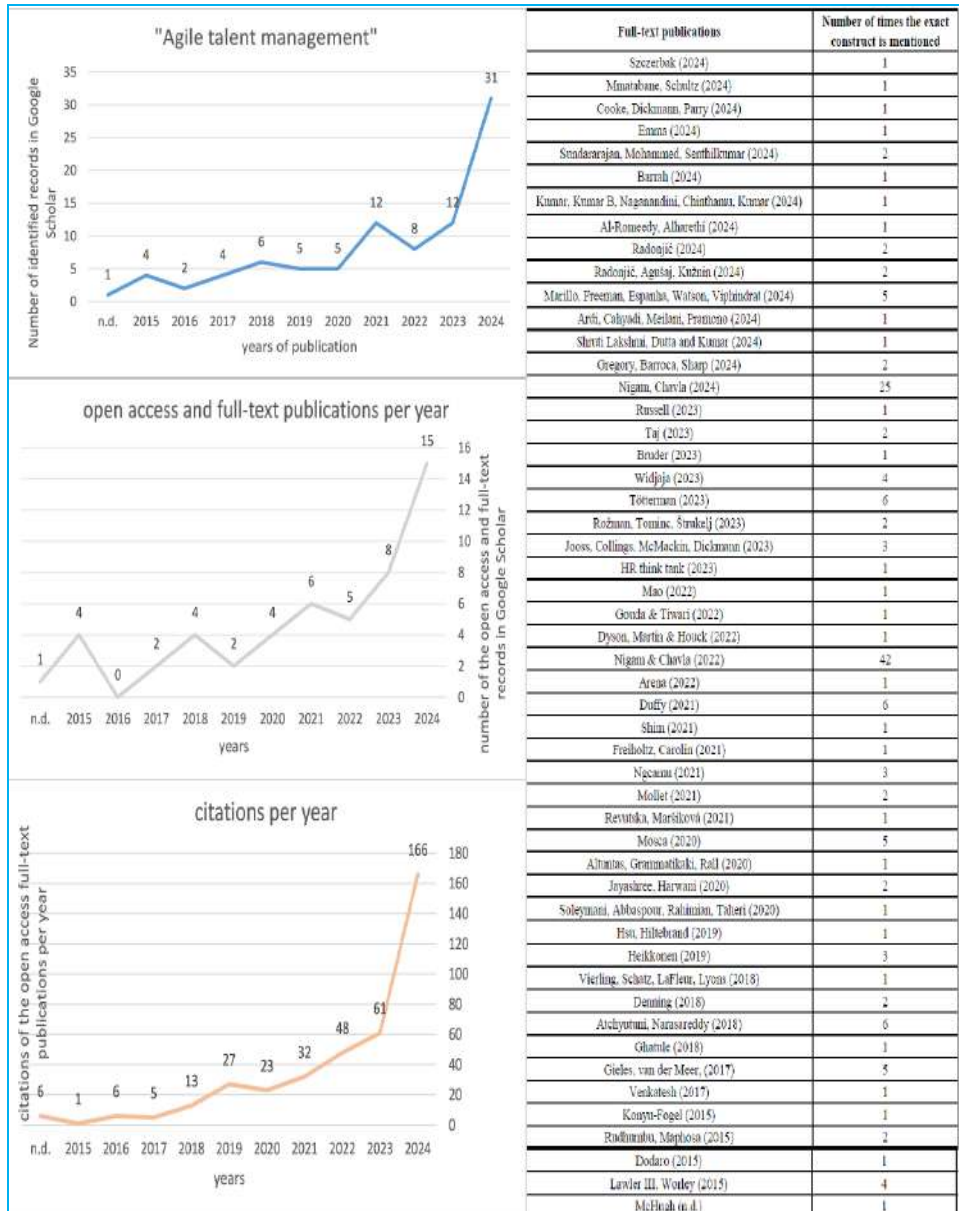| Types of uses	Inferred meanings & relationships
(1)	(2)
Agile talent management	No comments & explanations (Cooke, Dickmann & Parry, 2024). It requires implementing flexible and adaptable practices in the sphere of performance management, training, and recruitment (Sundararajan, Mohammed & Senthilkumar, 2024). MNCs are indicated as a setting of implementation (a research object) (Barrah, 2024). An innovative HR practice, fostering innovation culture, creativity, collaboration, and experimentation as key drivers of organizational success (Kumar, Kumar B, Naganandini, Chinthamu & Kumar, 2024). An organizational unique capability, oriented to competitiveness maintenance (Al-Romeedy & Alharethi, 2024; Bruder, 2023; Russell, 2023). A construct, scored on a 1–5 scale that is not shown in an appendix (Nigam & Chavla, 2024). A mediator in the relationship among agile competencies, agile talent management practices, and organizational agility (Nigam & Chavla, 2024; Taj, 2023). It fosters organizational agility (Nigam & Chavla, 2024). It is recognized as a means of achieving sustainable business results through innovation adoption, strategic capabilities enhancement, expenditures minimization, and adoption of emerging science and technology (Muduli, 2016 cited in Gouda & Tiwari, 2022; Vierling, Schatz, LaFleur & Lyons, 2018).

Continued

(1)	(2)
Agile talent management strategy (strategies)	A means of preparing organizational response to future challenges and enhancing competency management (Szczerbak, 2024). Its goal is to enhance workforce productivity and capabilities, considering key changes in business units, talent market, and dynamic economy through proactive, rapid, seamless, flexible and obviously continuous adjustments of implemented talent management approaches, tools, and resources in congruence with business life cycles (Rožman, Tominc & Štrukelj, 2023). A facilitator of organizational agility during transformation (Widjaja, 2023). No comments & explanations (Ardi, Cahyadi, Meilani & Pramono, 2024; Nigam & Chavla, 2024; Ghatule, 2018; Rudhumbu & Maphosa, 2015). It is related with digitalization of business organizations (Mao, 2022).
Agile talent management practices	A set of cross-functional rotations, job rotations, talent mobility programs, competency-based recruitment, performance management, and development planning (Marillo, Freeman, Espanha, Watson & Viphindrat, 2024). Basic characteristics: faster hiring processes, decreasing respective expenses and better recruitment experience for candidates (Gregory, Barroca & Sharp, 2024). No comments & explanations (Nigam & Chavla, 2024). An incredibly high relationship with agile competencies (Nigam & Chavla, 2022). Proposed set of formulated and clearly described practices: (1) network-oriented attraction; (2) cooperative selection; (3) individualized, self-responsible, general development; and (4) autonomy-driven retention (Nigam & Chavla, 2022). Associated with innovativeness, employees' dedication (Hsu & Hiltebrand, 2019). Associated with the revolving challenges in developing effective, talented, and productive organizational contributors (Konyu-Fogel, 2015). Associated not only with the achievement of short-term successes, but also with the conquest of competitive advantage (Rudhumbu & Maphosa, 2015).
Agile talent management approach	Oriented to the better utilization of innovation and emerging science and technology (Vierling, Schatz, LaFleur & Lyons, 2018).
Agile talent management frameworks	Organizational enablers for fast adaptation to market dynamics and technological disruptions through flexibility, continuous learning, and talent mobility (Widjaja, 2023).
Agile talent management models	No comments & explanations (Gregory, Barroca & Sharp (2024).
Agile talent management methods	No comments & explanations (Nigam & Chavla, 2024).

Continued

(1)	(2)
Agile talent management employees	Their image consists in: (a) pursuing the organizational goal of "delivering continuous value to customers"; (b) formulation of respective strategy; (c) highly empowered decision-makers as individuals or teams (Tötterman, 2023).
Agile talent management systems	No comments & explanations (Emma, 2024; Arena, 2022).
Agile talent management techniques	Performance systems and continuous feedback (Mmatabane & Schultz, 2024). No comments & explanations (Nigam & Chavla, 2024).
Agile talent management solutions	Associated with talent deployment (Dyson, Martin & Houck, 2022).
Agile talent acquisition & management	A set of key attributes is defined (Subramanian & Suresh, 2022): (1) a team of specialists with cross-functional skills able to align strategy & recruitment goals; (2) exclusive orientation to open, adaptive, resourceful, rational, resilient and performing under pressure candidates; (3) prioritization & alignment of talent practices, identifying and tracking candidates with higher probability of developing in an agile workplace & supporting organizational agility; (4) setting up a performance measurement system for the recruitment efforts; and (5) an applicant tracking system and recruitment software solution, task automation of candidate screening and recruitment.
Agile Talent Management Standard	No comments & explanations (Shim, 2021).
Agile talent management processes	Implied association not only with the achievement of short-term successes, but also with the conquest of long-term and sustainable competitive advantage (Rudhumbu & Maphosa, 2015).

Source: Own analysis

The performed bibliometric analysis (figure 2) reveals that the number of re-cords, representing at least partially the essence and emerging characteristics of the construct of "agile talent management" is comparatively low (51 items) for an interval locked between 2015 – 2024, reaching a publishing peak after the Covid-19 pandemic period (i.e. the year of 2024; 31 records).

Full-text publications	Number of times the exact construct is mentioned
Szczerbak (2024)	1
Mmatabane, Schultz (2024)	1
Cooke, Dickmann, Parry (2024)	1
Emens (2024)	1
Sundararajan, Mohammed, Senthilkumar (2024)	2
Barrah (2024)	1
Kumar, Kumar B, Nagamandini, Chinthanu, Kumar (2024)	1
Al-Romeedy, Alharethi (2024)	1
Radonjić (2024)	2
Radonjić, Agnšaj, Kužnin (2024)	2
Marillo, Freeman, Espanha, Watson, Viphindrat (2024)	5
Arfi, Cahyadi, Meilani, Pramono (2024)	1
Shruti Lakshmi, Dutta and Kumar (2024)	1
Gregory, Barroca, Sharp (2024)	2
Nigam, Chavla (2024)	25
Russell (2023)	1
Taj (2023)	2
Bruder (2023)	1
Widjaja (2023)	4
Tötterman (2023)	6
Rožman, Tominc, Štrukelj (2023)	2
Jooss, Collings, McMackin, Dickmann (2023)	3
HR think tank (2023)	1
Mao (2022)	1
Gonda & Tiwari (2022)	1
Dyson, Martin & Houck (2022)	1
Nigam & Chavla (2022)	42
Arena (2022)	1
Duffy (2021)	6
Shim (2021)	1
Freiholtz, Carolin (2021)	1
Ngcamu (2021)	3
Mollet (2021)	2
Revutska, Marišková (2021)	1
Mosca (2020)	5
Altuntas, Grammatikaki, Ratl (2020)	1
Jayashree, Harwani (2020)	2
Soleymani, Abbaspour, Rahimian, Taheri (2020)	1
Hsu, Hiltebrand (2019)	1
Heikkonen (2019)	3
Vierling, Schatz, LaFleur, Lyons (2018)	1
Denning (2018)	2
Atchyutuni, Narasareddy (2018)	6
Ghatule (2018)	1
Gieles, van der Meer, (2017)	5
Venkatesh (2017)	1
Konyu-Fogel (2015)	1
Rudhumbu, Maphosa (2015)	2
Dodaro (2015)	1
Lawler III, Worley (2015)	4
McHugh (n.d.)	1

Source: Own calculations

Figure 2: Bibliographic characteristics of the open access full-text publications, mentioning the exact construct of "agile talent management"

In fact, the next years will show whether 2023 could be defined as an inflection point, denoting the beginning of the exponential growth of demonstrated research interest within this scientific sphere or just the continuation of a fluctuating interest, marked by consecutive increases and decreases and characterized by very slow growth. The last full calendar year (i.e. 2024) may also be considered as a peak for the issued open access and full-text publications, indexed by Google Scholar (15 records). In few of these publications the exact construct is utilized intensively (Nigam & Chavla, 2022; 2024). It is repeated just several times in respective full-texts of a larger subgroup of items (Marillo, Freeman, Espanha, Watson & Viphindrat, 2024; Widjaja, 2023; Tötterman, 2023; Jooss, Collings, McMackin & Dickmann, 2023; Duffy, 2021; Ngcamu, 2021; Mosca, 2020; Heikkonen, 2019; Atchyutuni & Narasareddy, 2018; Gieles & van der Meer, 2017; Lawler III & Worley, 2015). While in a third subgroup of records it is mentioned twice (Sundararajan, Mohammed & Senthilkumar, 2024; Radonjić, 2024; Radonjić, Agušaj & Kužnin, 2024; Gregory, Barroca & Sharp, 2024; Taj, 2023; Rožman, Tominc & Štrukelj, 2023; Mollet, 2021; Jayashree & Harwani, 2020; Denning, 2018; Rudhumbu & Maphosa, 2015), but in the greatest part of the full-text records the construct is discovered just once (Szczerbak, 2024; Mmatabane & Schultz, 2024; Cooke, Dickmann & Parry, 2024; Emma, 2024; Barrah, 2024; Kumar, Kumar B, Naganandini, Chinthamu & Kumar, 2024; Al-Romeedy & Alharethi, 2024; Ardi, Cahyadi, Meilani & Pramono, 2024; Shruti Lakshmi, Dutta & Kumar, 2024; Russell, 2023; Bruder, 2023; HR think tank, 2023; Mao, 2022; Gouda & Tiwari, 2022; Dyson, Martin & Houck, 2022; Arena, 2022; Shim, 2021; Freiholtz & Carolin, 2021; Revutska & Maršíková, 2021; Altuntas, Grammatikaki & Rall, 2020; Soleymani, Abbaspour, Rahimian & Taheri, 2020; Hsu & Hiltebrand, 2019; Vierling, Schatz, LaFleur & Lyons, 2018; Ghatule, 2018; Venkatesh, 2017; Konyu-Fogel, 2015; Dodaro, 2015; McHugh, n.d.).

As far as the observed citations of "agile talent management" are concerned, the identified group of open access and full-text records reveals that their use in other scientific publications starts in 2015 and reaches its peak in 2024 (166 citations), manifesting more than a twofold increase in citation number in comparison with the previous year that may indicate the end of an initial eight year period, characterized by slow increase in the popularity of the term and the associated with it research topics. A great diversity of researchers in the field is found with just Nigam & Chavla (2022; 2024) demonstrating some sustainability in retaining and developing their scientific interest within this sphere. Still qualitative research methods (i.e. secondary research and case-studies) are the most popular ones, applied within this group of these publications. In few of them interviews, questionnaires, focus groups and service design methods are implemented. Thus, it may be concluded that researchers are yet to enter the blurred area of agile talent management.

Research limitations

The performed analysis is designed to be directly oriented to uncovering the bundle of the shades, embedded in the meaning of the emerging construct of "agile talent management". But it should be considered that the initial search of literature sources in Google Scholar led to the identification of at least several iterations to the aforementioned exact construct as "managing agile talent workforce", "agile approach to talent", "agility in talent management" or the existence of a (in)direct semantic (thematic) relationship between talent management and organizational agility (Harsch & Festing, 2020; Baran & Woznyj, 2020; Claus, 2019; Brosseau, Ebrahim, Handscomb & Thaker, 2019; Horney, 2016; Martin, 2015) that are excluded from the selected list of reviewed literature sources due to proactive avoiding the implicit collision and contradictions due to bewildering diversity in simultaneous adoption of at least several theoretical stances in the sphere of people management (Michailova, Hutchings & Wilkinson, 2024; Cafferkey, Dundon, Townsend & McDermott, 2019). Such situation may also imply that the explored construct is still emerging, because the used professional language by the respective researchers does not seem stable and disciplined.

For example, the most eminent book in this field (Younger & Smallwood, 2016a) does not contain the exact term, although the topic is centrally discussed, and for the first time from the strategic point of view. Also, a certain instability may be detected in the conundrum of diverse theories within the broader sphere people management that leads to the use of larger descriptive expressions as "managing your agile talent workforce", even without explaining the construct (Younger & Smallwood, 2016b; Azmy, 2021; Varshney, 2020; Frankiewicz & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2020; Massie, 2015; Martin, 2015), partially maybe because of the existence of the related prominent book, created by the same duo of leading researchers (Younger, Smallwood, 2016a) and its potential influence on a geographically scattered research community, analyzing the problematic sphere from numerous perspectives.

In contrast to such an approach Sherehiy & Karwowski (2014, p. 468) provide a detailed definition of "workforce agility", determined as "an observable agile performance or behaviors at work, not the agile personality, predispositions, or attributes", thus creating a matrix, comprising of dimensions (as proactivity, adaptivity and resilience), supplied with succinct descriptions, and specific prescribed sets of appropriate work-related behaviors for on-the-job demonstration by the employees, corresponding to each dimension, regarding upcoming changes, tolerating learning of newness, professional flexibility, interpersonal and cultural adaptability, and work under stress. Thus, Sherehiy & Karwowski (2014) succeed in formulating a thorough and useful description for the construct of "workforce agility", although the implied opposition between "performance

or behaviors at work" and "personality, predispositions, or attributes" does not seem productive in the long run from a cultural point of view and the tendency of dissolving for the organizational boundaries (Schein & Schein, 2017; Dimitrov, 2012), because it raises the revolving issues of employee on-the-job engagement, happiness and wellbeing.

Conclusion

The exploration and clarification of agile talent management in this paper proves to be of great value for initiating a conversation aimed at reaching agreement among the growing array of organizational stakeholders on achieving and maintaining a competitive edge through people due to the deliberate proposition of certain deliverables as a mind-map of the identified shades in a construct's meaning, a useful definition for it, and an outline of the main directions of future research in its field. *First*, the logic summary of the identified important shades in the meaning of the construct "agile talent management" is presented in the following mind map (figure 3) where the identified contributions from the record in the group of open access publications, mentioning the exact construct, are summarized.
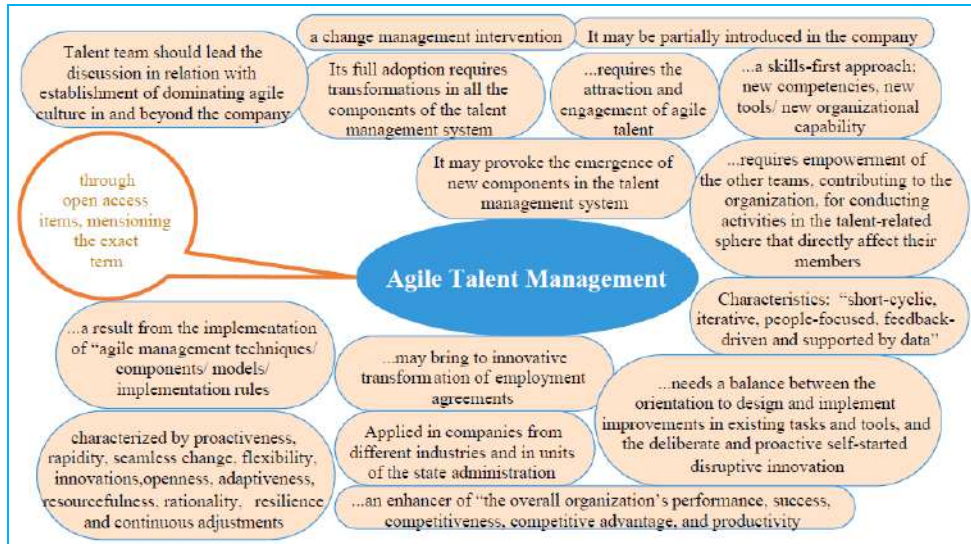
Source: Own analysis

Figure 3: The mind map for the agile talent management

Second, based on the identified basic nuances through the aforementioned group of records, a new useful definition for the "agile talent management" is

proposed. The quality of the formulation process and result for the aforementioned construct is ensured by first proposing comprehensive definitions of the underlying base terms as "talent management", "an agile organization" and "agile talent" in the introduction of the study. On this basis the construct "agile talent management" stands for *a deliberate and consecutive use of agile attributes (i.e. techniques, components, models, implementation rules, strategies and practices) and information technology to transform the traditionally performed activities by the talent team, and its interactions with other teams in the business organization and beyond its boundaries, but all of them contributing to its business success, in relation with the implemented components of the elaborated talent management system. The talent team prioritizes development of agile talent and empowerment of the interacting organizational teams in the talent-related sphere, while preserving for themselves the entire work activity within coaching and human-related data analytics components. The talent team is expected to initiate and lead the discussion around the creation of dominating agile culture (informal and proclaimed/ professed/ publicized) in the business organization and the intelligent transposing of some of its desired characteristics to other cultural levels, constituencies, entities and even in the virtual realm*.

Third, the conducted research permits outlining several main directions of future research in the field of agile talent management. *First*, new research is necessary to explore the emergence, development and implementation context of agile talent management in business organizations from more countries, not only concentrating on these, originating from developed countries or regional leaders. For example, for the European Union it means disclosing the situation around the adoption of agile talent management in entities from all member states. *Second*, the majority of publications have business organizations as research objects, and minority of them – target units from the state administration (e.g. the military, universities). Yet, the organizations from the NGO sector have not attracted the interest of the scientists in this field. *Third*, companies, implementing agile talent management from more industries should be examined in order to construct a richer map of the realization of agile talent management, make useful comparisons, and identify important relationships. *Fourth*, it is useful to work in the conducted searches with representative samples of (business) organizations in order to be able to make conclusions and recommendations that matter not only to groups of surveyed entities, but also to all the organizations from whole industries that may increase the spread of good practices and boost corporate growth. *Fifth*, there is a great necessity of exploring the potential relationships between different human resource management methods (theories) and the agile talent management. *Sixth*, further exploring the transformation processes from the organizational status quo, taken for the use of traditional and modern methods (theories) of human resource management, to the establish-

ment of agile talent management in companies or units of theirs, thus opening a door for outlining (dis-)advantages, causes and effects in each specific situation, further performing comparative and critical analysis, and formulating managerial recommendations. *Seventh*, the position of agile talent management should be clearly determined among the array of other emergent methods of human resource (people) management, expressed for example by its recent trends (Coleman, 2023; Dixit, n.d., Denning, 2018), the exponential human resource management (Ismail, Malone, van Geest & Diamandis, 2014; Dimitrov, 2019), green human resource management (Papademetriou, Ragazou, Garefalakis & Passas, 2023; Dimitrov, K.R., 2021) and others. *Eighth*, the manifestations of agility in talent management in the companies require deeper research penetration (i.e. empirical surveys), because these cannot be characterized as an irreversible phenomena with predictable changes in the future.

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