

## Journey of Co-creation from Marketing to Management Literature: A Narrative Muhammad Umar Shahzad<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Amir Ishaque<sup>2</sup>

### Keywords:

Narrative literature review, value co-creation, HR co-creation, intimate co-creation, relational co-creation, PRISMA framework

### ABSTRACT

Research on interpersonal collaboration for creative work started in the early 1970s by management scholars. Later on, the concept of value co-creation was first presented in the marketing literature by Prahalad and Ramaswamy in 2004. Since then, there has been significant development on the value co-creation concept by marketing scholars who contributed a lot regarding value co-creation literature. Due to this reason, a perception was developed that the concept of relational co-creation is related only to the field of marketing. However, over the period, the concept of value co-creation transformed into a relational co-creation construct that has been increasingly used in the literature of human resource management as well. Concepts such as relational co-creation, HR co-creation, and intimate co-creation are getting the increased attention of management scholars. However, there is no previous narrative review that summarized the co-creation-based literature concerning its emergence from marketing towards human resource management. The current study has addressed this literature gap with the help of a narrative literature review by reviewing 46 peer-reviewed research papers and 4 books from established databases. Results revealed that the concept of value co-creation in marketing had an inspiration from the co-innovation concept earlier applied in the field of design engineering. The value co-creation concept's popularity in marketing literature and practice made it a source of discussion for relational co-creation in HRM and management literature with the evolution of intimate co-creation and HR co-creation in the literature of management. These developments have exceptional implications for management scholars and practitioners.

### INTRODUCTION

Creative work requires mutual collaboration among employees working in the form of a dyad, group, team, or organization (e.g., Rouse, 2020; Chua, Morris, & Mor, 2012). In the early 1970s, management scholars had found that complex work with the element of uncertainty requires a greater level of mutual collaboration among the employees (Van de Ven et al., 1976). Powell (1990) explained that instead of tall hierarchies in the organizations, a network-based structure is more useful for the organizations concerning better collaboration and enhanced creativity.

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It also helps in the better relationship among employees at the workplace (Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003) and for a better team-building process (Perlow, 1999; Harrison & Rouse, 2015). Such collaboration helps in the involvement of different stakeholders at the workplace (Bechky, 2003).

However, there has been little research to explore what outcomes are possible due to occurrence of such collaborations (Rouse, 2020; Storbacka et al., 2016).

Initially, the concept of value co-creation was more popular for marketing scholars and practitioners. Although, some efforts have been there in the past to integrate the literature on co-creation in marketing and management (e.g., Roser, DeFillippi, & Samson, 2013). As the concept of co-creation has a strategic element embedded in it: hence, it has the potential to be studied in fields other than marketing as well (Jamali, El Dirani & Harwood, 2014). Different forms of co-creation are being studied in human resource management including HR co-creation, relational co-creation and value co-creation etc. (Hewett & Shantz, 2021; Rouse, 2020; Gronroos, 2012; Zhou & Hoever, 2014; Tse & Dasborough, 2008; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004). There is no single agreed-upon theory of co-creation that is acceptable in different fields where the concept of co-creation is applicable (Jones, 2018). However, separate efforts concerning theory development on co-creation have been made in different fields including design engineering, marketing and human resource management (Hewett & Shantz, 2021).

Value co-creation as a new idea for joint collaboration and innovative task accomplishment was first presented in 2004 by Prahalad and Ramaswamy (Hatch & Schultz 2010). Value co-creation is a concept that is emphasized the continuous engagement of employees with the customers for better product and service development (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004). Depending upon the nature and type of organization, any form of co-creation, such as relational co-creation adds to a perception of positive wellbeing in the employees of the organization (Lewis, 2017). The concept of value co-creation had originated from the service-dominant logic. According to service-dominant logic, organizations create value for their stakeholders, especially for the customers by producing effective services. Similarly, product dominant logic is also a relevant concept according to which organizations produce value for the customers through useful innovative products. However, both the concepts of product and service-dominant logic via value co-creation involved interactional co-creation of employees and customers (Vargo & Lusch, 2016).

Of late, scholars have emphasized for the need of more research on interactional forms of co-creation (Gronroos, 2012; Zhou & Hoever, 2014; Tse & Dasborough, 2008). These include different types of co-creation that are under discussion in the HRM literature including intimate co-creation and HR co-creation (Hewett & Shantz, 2021; Rouse, 2020). The literature on different forms of relational co-creation is available. However, the gap in the management literature is that no study concisely integrates literature on different forms of co-creation especially with its evolution from marketing towards human resource management (e.g., Hewett & Shantz, 2021; Rouse, 2020). The current study is an attempt to discuss the journey of co-creation literature from value co-creation in marketing to intimate co-creation and HR co-creation in human resource management. This is a significant contribution to the body of knowledge not just in the literature related to value co-creation in marketing but in management as well. Using Preferred Reporting of Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (*PRISMA*) framework, a methodological approach has been adopted for this narrative literature review.

## **MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY**

The literature on different forms of relational co-creation has an increasing trend (Hewett & Shantz, 2021; Rouse, 2020; Gronroos, 2012; Zhou & Hoever, 2014; Tse & Dasborough, 2008; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004). However, according to the best of authors' knowledge, there is no single research study that elaborates different forms of co-creation such as value co-creation, co-innovation, intimate co-creation and HR co-creation etc. Especially, no study elaborates how the concept of value co-creation that emerged in marketing in 2004 as presented by Prahalad and Ramaswamy was inspired by the design engineering of popular Scandinavian approach used in 1970s and how later on different other forms of co-creation such as HR co-creation, relational co-creation and intimate co-creation emerged in the management literature (Hatch & Schultz 2010; Rouse, 2020). This study has tried to address that

literature gap.

The current study revolves around the research question that *“how the different forms of co-creation have emerged in the management literature. Primarily, how this concept of co-creation that emerged in marketing as value co-creation in 2004 by Prahalad and Ramaswamy which later evolved into a relational co-creation construct and how the different forms of co-creation such intimate co-creation and HR co-creation were evolved in the management / HR literature over the period time”*

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Literature on the concept of value co-creation has been heavily studied in the field of marketing. Based on the service-dominant logic, this concept evolved gradually in the marketing literature. However, co-creation literature has potential for study in different fields other than marketing as well (Jamali, El Dirani & Harwood, 2014). Scholars have the consensus that value co-creation is a form of relational co-creation as it involves interpersonal interaction among the stakeholders of value co-creation process. In case of value co-creation, such interpersonal interaction occurs among employees and customers who jointly design the customized product or service as per the demand of the customers (Hatch & Schultz 2010). However, over the period of time, scholars tried to study the other forms of interactions such as co-innovation, co-invention, co-production, co-entrepreneurship and value co-creation under the umbrella of relational co-creation. Although, there is no single theory of co-creation in the literature; however, scholars have tried to integrate different studies on relational forms of co-creation (e.g., Roser, DeFillippi, & Samson, 2013).

Over time, interpersonal interaction at dyadic, group and team level has become a source of scholarly interest (Rouse, 2020; Chua, Morris, & Mor, 2012). Rouse (2020) proposed that interpersonal interaction for creative tasks especially at the dyadic level where members also have consensus on joint tasks is a source of workplace creativity, long-term relationship and better performance. Such personal intimacies leading to co-creation phenomenon were named as “intimate co-creation” and are being studied in the management literature instead of marketing. Hewett and Shantz (2021) had introduced the idea of HR co-creation that encourages the role of multiple stakeholders in HR practices. HR co-creation has been presented in the management literature as an alternate form of co-creation that presents a different perspective for the use of service-dominant logic. However, previous literature in management had ignored this aspect that how HR creates value through the process of co-creation and instead the focus only was on value co-creation in marketing (Beer et al., 2015; Westerman et al., 2020). Because of the growing literature on different forms of relational co-creation, a study is needed that could segregate the emergence of value co-creation literature from the developments that took place later on in the management literature including HR co-creation and intimate co-creation. Current study has attempted to fulfill this gap through a narrative literature review.

## **JUSTIFICATION FOR THE NARRATIVE LITERATURE REVIEW**

As most of the previous literature available on interactional forms of co-creation is of value co-creation that falls in the domain of marketing. However, increased scholarly interest on value co-creation in the last two decades has given an intellectual stimulation to the scholars of human resource management for borrowing this concept in the management literature. Hence, inspired by this interactional co-creation phenomenon, Rouse (2020) proposed the concept of intimate co-creation and then Hewett and Shantz (2021) presented the idea of HR co-creation which are being cited by scholars of human resource management. There is need to integrate this literature by focusing on its emergence from marketing towards human resource management. Although, sufficient literature is available on value co-creation for the past one decade; but, literature on intimate co-creation and HR co-creation is more recent (Hewett & Shantz, 2021; Rouse, 2020).

As intimate co-creation and HR co-creation are relatively nascent phenomena in the literature of human resource management; therefore, a narrative literature review is more recommended compared to a systematic literature review where a large body of literature is summarized while in narrative literature review, arguments are constructed to build a case in literature. Here, the limitation is that the literature

on co-creation in human resource management, i.e., intimate co-creation and HR co-creation is limited. Hence, a narrative literature review has been conducted. However, to give a methodological approach, Preferred Review of Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) framework has been used in this study.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of workplace co-creation had a gradual evolution from the world of creative design engineering towards the field of marketing. In marketing, it was initially used as value co-creation. Further research was on the relational aspects of co-creation where it was linked with different others forms of co-creation that are now being researched even in the field of human resource management. For example, intimate co-creation and HR co-creation are the two latest forms of relational co-creation that are being studied in human resource management (Hewett & Shantz, 2021; Rouse, 2020).

It is important to have a brief analysis about the historical development of this of this concept of co-creation. In the 1970s, management scholars started writing that complex and uncertain work in the organizations requires greater collaboration among the employees (e.g., Van de Ven et al., 1976). Powell (1990) explained that the network-based structure of organizations is better as compared to tall hierarchies in the organizations because as the work becomes more creative; the relationship improves among employees (e.g., Perry-Smith & Shalley, 2003). This also enhances the team-member exchange among the employees. However, research needs to be done regarding the outcomes of engagement from heterogeneous actors at the workplace (Rouse, 2020; Storbacka et al., 2016). With respect to different forms of co-creation; intimate co-creation is the most basic form of co-creation whereby an individual interacts in a dyadic or team-based relationship with shared interpersonal boundaries (Rouse, 2020). Research on co-creation in the past has been primarily conducted with respect to groups and teams. However, intimate co-creation is a unique form of co-creation that typically occurs at the dyadic level at the start with the positive spillover effects on groups and teams (Rouse, 2020).

There have been attempts to integrate the literature on co-creation from marketing and management. However, the concept of co-creation has been explored in many other fields due to its strategic connotations (Jamali, El Dirani & Harwood, 2014). This includes different other forms of relational co-creation such as intimate co-creation and HR co-creation etc. (Hewett & Shantz, 2021; Rouse, 2020; Gronroos, 2012). There is no single theory on the concept of co-creation that represents different forms of co-creation. Past research had little focus on interactional forms of co-creation (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018). Even the concept of value co-creation that is based on service-dominant logic in marketing is based on interactional form of co-creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2016). Therefore, it involves the aspect of relational intimacy. Value co-creation concept was first introduced by Prahalad and Ramaswamy in 2004 (Hatch & Schultz 2010). It involves various stakeholders that enhance value of products or services being offered by a company (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004). Creative work is often encouraged in companies such as in software houses and in advertising agencies where intimate co-creation is encouraged and workers can form the pairs of their choice for joint tasks. Similarly, in value co-creation, companies encourage customers to jointly work with the employees for customization of their products and services as per their choice (Rouse, 2020; Hackley & Kover, 2007; Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2017). Different forms of co-creation have gained more popularity in the recent past (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018).

Harney and Collings (2021) explained that the role of HR practices is changing and one of the new trends in the effectiveness of HR practices is of HR co-creation. Hewett & Shantz (2021) had introduced the idea of HR co-creation that encourages the role of multiple stakeholders in HR practices. HR co-creation has been presented in the management literature as an alternate form of co-creation that presents a different perspective for the use of service-dominant logic in organizational setup rather than totally oriented towards marketing perspective. However, previous literature in management had ignored this aspect that how HR creates value through the process of co-creation (Beer et al., 2015; Westerman et al., 2020). Some scholars were of the view that employees create value through the use of service-dominant logic that applies to the management literature as well (Meijerink et al., 2016; Meijerink & Bondarouk, 2018). Hence, theory of HR co-creation also builds upon service-dominant logic by

proposing that employees can create more value with the engagement of multiple relevant stakeholders (Hewett & Shantz, 2021). This encourages employees' participation and democratization process at the workplace (Cleveland et al., 2015; Greenwood & Simmons, 2004).

The co-creation-based activities started in 1970s in the design engineering field where feedback and employees' participation were sentential. That approach of co-creation in design engineering was called Scandinavian approach (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Later on, Scandinavian approach was applied in different other fields such as in healthcare sectors and in governance mechanisms (Ind, Fuller & Trevail 2012). In literature, alternate terms for co-creation have also been used such as co-innovation which is thought to be difficult to imitate (Lee, Olson & Trimi, 2012). Any form of interaction-based co-creation such as value co-creation, intimate co-creation or interactional co-creation are the source of meaningful action at workplace (De Jaegher, Perakyla & Stevanovic, 2016).

The word of co-creation gained more popularity in the last one decade (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018). It has been associated with different actions in the past including but not limited to collective design of products and services in creative ways (e.g., Mahr, Lievens, & Blazevic, 2014; Nambisan, 2009), joint work of employees and customers (e.g., Bogers, Afuah, & Bastian, 2010), joint customization for users of products and services (e.g., Franke & Piller, 2004; Syam & Pazgal, 2013), involvement of general public in organizational affairs (e.g., Ind, Fuller, & Trevail, 2012; Kozinets, Hemetsberger, & Schau, 2008), networks for knowledge exchange (e.g., Hakanen, 2014; Komulainen, 2014), company level engagements (e.g., Ceccagnoli, Forman, Huang, & Wu, 2012), innovative business collaborations (e.g., Chesbrough, 2013) new innovations based on co-innovation (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018) and dyadic level creative associations for intimate co-creation (e.g., Rouse, 2020).

People behave on the basis of their social interaction and associated learning due to it. An informal interaction on a dinner or a cup of coffee can help people in mutual understanding of each other (Markus & Wurf, 1987; Shenk, 2014). Friendly relationship at the workplace is the source of honest discussion and feedback (Gruenfeld et al. 1996; Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2017). Workplace diversity also fosters the intimate co-creation. To start with, intimate co-creation typically happens at the dyadic level and then has a sporadic effect at the group and team level (Rouse, 2020; Chua, Morris, & Mor, 2012). Diversity and creativity at the workplace are interlinked (Mannix & Neale, 2005). It also requires persuasion skills by the employees at the workplace (Jena & Pradhan, 2020). Individuals' socialization is important for all the co-creation related activities especially for relational forms of co-creation such as intimate co-creation (Tse & Dasborough, 2008). However, some sectors have more prominent potential for research on intimate co-creation such as academia and healthcare sectors (Rouse, 2020). Positive interventions by leadership can enhance the level of co-creation-based activities at the workplace (Cordova & Scott, 2001). Relational co-creation such as intimate co-creation generates a sense of collective wellbeing (Rouse, 2020; Tse & Dasborough, 2008; Perry-Smith & Mannucci, 2017). However, it is important to consider that relational co-creation such as intimate co-creation starts at the dyadic level (Rouse, 2020; Svejenova et al., 2010).

Based on the literature review, the following propositions are proposed for further empirical validations for future researchers.

*Proposition 1:* All the major forms of co-creation-based activities in the management literature can be grouped under the category of relational co-creation.

*Proposition 2:* Earliest evidence on relational co-creation can be traced in literature in the 1970s from the area of design engineering and the Scandinavian approach.

*Proposition 3:* The idea of relational co-creation was first presented in the marketing literature in 2004 by Ramaswamy and Prahalad as the concept of value co-creation based on the service-dominant logic.

*Proposition 4:* Relational forms of co-creation such as intimate co-creation and HR co-creation are now

being researched in the HRM literature.

**Table 1:** Prominent studies showing gradual progress for co-creation-related literature.

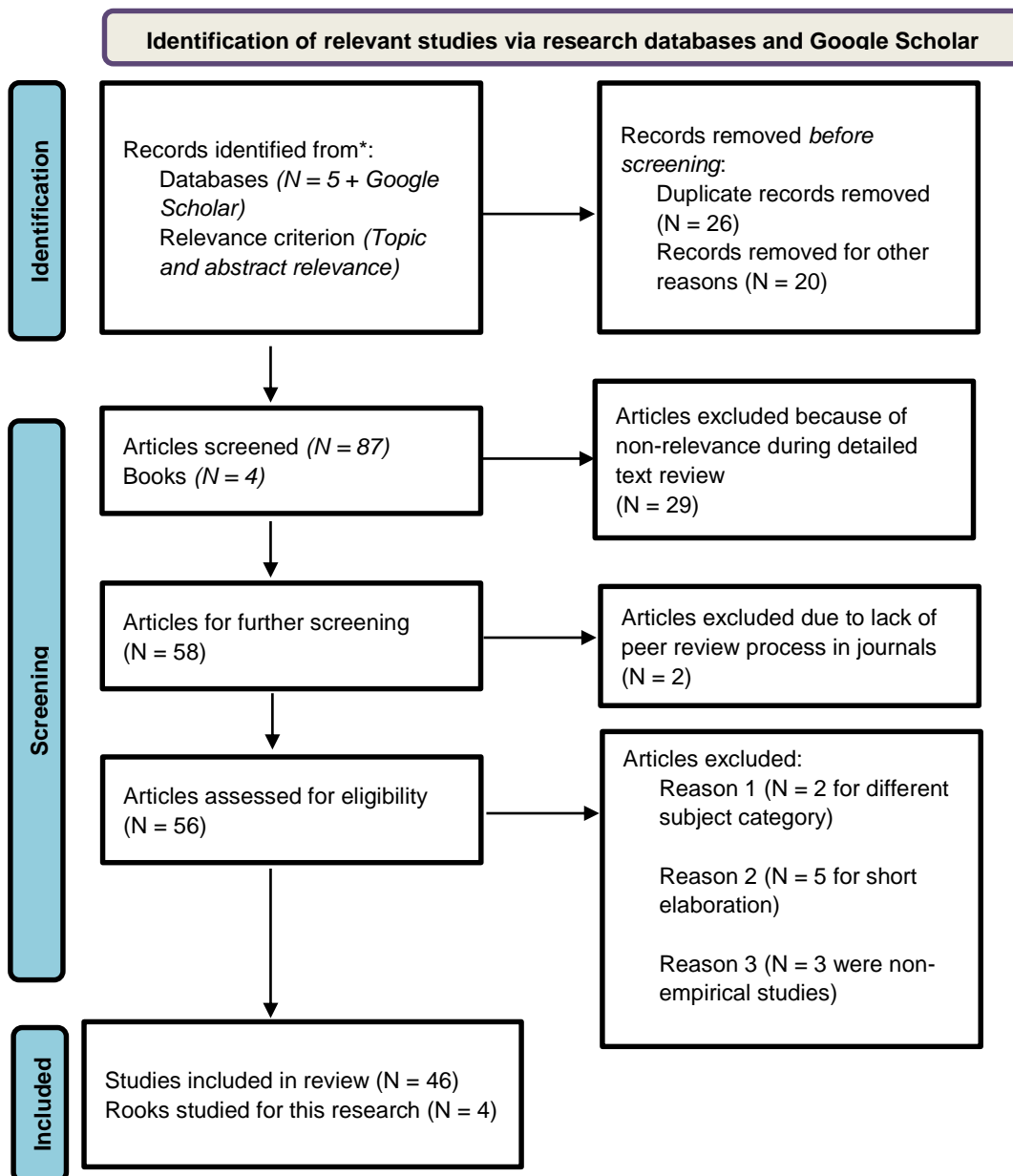
Study Field	Year	Major Research Finding
Design Engineering	Van de Ven et al., 1976	Management scholars realized that complex and uncertain work requires greater collaboration.
Management	Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995	Management scholars were impressed by the co-innovation concept of design engineering from the 1970s as per the Scandinavian approach
Marketing	Hatch & Schultz 2010;	Ramaswamy and Prahalad introduced the famous concept of value co-creation in marketing based on service-dominant logic.
Marketing	Gronroos, 2012; Zhou & Hoever, 2014	Any form of co-creation-based activity involving human actors or stakeholders is a relational form of co-creation
Marketing	Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018	There is no single theory that describes all forms of co-creation
HRM	Rouse, 2020	Intimate co-creation is the most basic form of co-creation that initiates at dyadic level. It generates a sense of "we" among employees.
HRM	Hewett & Shantz, 2021	HR co-creation happens when the human resources of an organization collaborate with the key stakeholders of the organization

## METHODOLOGY

Moher et al. (2009) explained that Preferred Reporting of Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (*PRISMA*) is a useful way of narrating systematic literature reviews if a method is to be followed for a literature review. However, it is useful for the narrative literature review as well; although, not necessary but as an option to add rigor to the methodology. The current study followed the *PRISMA* framework approach for identifying some of the key databases for article selection based on their relevance and then related articles were extracted.

Green et al. (2006) stated that narrative literature review provides a broad discussion on a topic that may help summarize the literature on a specific subject. It also helps future researchers in providing them with new avenues for research in the form of literature gaps identified in this broader form of literature review. Gasparyan et al. (2011) further supported the suggestions provided by earlier researchers such as Green et al. (2006). Search key words for finding literature for this study included, “*co-creation, value co-creation, intimate co-creation, relational co-creation, HR co-creation, co-creation in*

marketing, co-creation in management and HRM". Articles were searched from Google Scholar and databases including Emerald, Jstore, Springer, Willey Blackwell and EBSCO Host". Some of the articles were initially screened out on the basis of non-relevance. Initial screening found 87 articles and 4 books. Both empirical and non-empirical journal articles were included in this study. Upon detailed review of those articles, 29 articles were further excluded on the basis of little relevance to the subject of the study. After this, 58 articles were remaining out of which 2 articles were removed because of the lack of peer review process. At this stage, 56 articles were left out of which 10 more articles were removed for the reasons mentioned in the PRISMA framework. Finally, 46 journal articles and 4 books were reviewed and were included in the current study. Following is the PRISMA diagram that is self-explanatory with respect to selection of articles and books included in this study.



**Figure 1:** Shows PRISMA framework and the screening process for studies

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This narrative review has revealed that most of the management scholars have taken inspiration from the concept of co-innovation in the field of design engineering from the 1970s (Van de Ven et al., 1976). Later on, this concept of co-innovation and co-creation had been a source of debate in the management literature. However, researchers had seen this concept of co-creation from different theoretical perspectives (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). This concept of co-creation was first introduced in the marketing literature as the concept of value co-creation by Ramaswamy and Prahalad in 2004. The concept of value co-creation not only gained popularity by management scholars but also by the practitioners of marketing. Later debate with respect to value creation in HR and management literature became a source of literary debate (Hatch & Schultz 2010). There was a mushroom growth in the literature on value co-creation which was a concept based on service-dominant logic. However, scholars realized that any form of co-creation-based activity that involves human actors can be categorized as “relational co-creation” (Gronroos, 2012; Zhou & Hoever, 2014). There is no single theory that elaborates different forms of co-creation being used in different fields. In marketing, different theoretical narratives have been linked with the concept of value co-creation such as resource-based view, social exchange theory, social identity theory along with other (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018). With the passage of time, the concept of co-creation was adopted in the HR literature. Rouse (2020) introduced the concept of intimate co-creation for the very first time. Hewett and Shantz. (2021) introduced the concept of HR co-creation. Both these concepts are in debate in the management literature. Such research on the concept of co-creation in management literature is being increasingly adopted by other researchers for empirical validation. However, some aspects such as theoretical narratives and measurement scale on such concepts such as value co-creation are needed.

Out of 50 resources for this narrative literature review (including 46 journal articles and 4 books); the study of four books revealed that co-creation is a phenomenon that promotes collaboration, job satisfaction, and overall efficiency among employees at the workplace. For example, in the case of value co-creation, the customer as a primary stakeholder gets involved in the organizational processes and procedures for product and service design. Similarly, a friendly relationship changes the mind set of individuals in a positive way (e.g., Lewis, 2017). From the shortlisted 46 articles, 2 articles were related to HR co-creation, 1 article was directly related to intimate co-creation and 5 were related to value co-creation. The remaining 38 articles discussed relational co-creation in general with its benefits for multiple organizational stakeholders. Relational co-creation covers all forms of co-creation.

Concerning theoretical debate, the theory of planned behavior and social exchange theories were highlighted in the past literature. However, intimate co-creation and HR co-creation have been newly theorized concepts based on conceptual grounds and this requires their empirical validation (Rouse, 2020; Hewett & Shantz, 2021). The current study is of interest to practitioners and scholars at the same



time. Practitioners may find this study as a reference point to know about different forms of co-creation and to use them at the workplace. Co-creation is a source of innovation, creativity, and work performance (Gronroos, 2012). For scholars, it is the first study that summarized the literature on different forms of co-creation and a journey of this concept has been discussed from design engineering to marketing till human resource management. There is no such study available in the literature that summarized the literature on different forms of co-creation. The current study has fulfilled this gap. The limitation of this study is that it is based on just 46 peer-reviewed articles. Future researchers may want to increase this number ideally through a systematic literature review. The propositions of this study are well-grounded in the literature cited in this narrative literature review. However, future researchers may want to further validate these propositions through empirical yardsticks.

## CONCLUSION

There has been gradual progress in the management literature stressing better interpersonal collaboration and socialization of employees and that how it affects the work output. The concept of value co-creation in marketing had an inspiration from a co-innovation concept from design engineering. The value co-creation concept's popularity in marketing literature and practice made it a source of discussion for relational co-creation in HRM and management literature. Later on, the conceptual theorization of intimate co-creation and HR co-creation has opened a new avenue for debate on workplace co-creation in management and HRM fields after marketing's great debate on value co-creation. This study is thought to be of valuable importance for scholars who want to understand and further explore the concepts related to relational forms of co-creation at the workplace.

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