

Characterizing the Relationship between Growth and Development in the Context of Strategic Management via Systems Thinking: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract: The consequence of the complexity of contemporary challenges has a significant impact on the management sphere. Growth and development are two critical stages in the lifecycle of any organization, enterprise, or corporation as a system. The purpose of this study is to conduct an overview of strategic management discourse to characterize the relationship between growth and development processes with the aim of alleviating complexity. In this regard, we conduct a bibliographic analysis in the Web of Science database using a systematic literature review along with a systems thinking approach as a method to synthesize the findings and finally propose a conceptual framework. According to the findings of this study, a lack of attention to the importance of the relationship between growth and development processes is identified. This implies a gap in this research area, emphasizing the importance of more focus on these processes regardless of their attributes. The implications of the findings in this article will provide a holistic perspective for strategic management practitioners, allowing a better understanding of the importance of growth and development convergence. Consequently, this study may provide a path for future research to explore the implications of growth and development process in other disciplines of management.

Keywords: growth and development; strategic management; systems thinking



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1. Introduction

The management sphere has undergone a significant transformation due to the increased complexity on the global scale. In fact, managers are dealing with intricacy in their work environment on a considerable scale [1,2]. From the perspective of leaders and managers, the waves of change are constantly increasing, and they must devise strategies to preserve the quality of their performance while doing so [3]. Moreover, these kinds of complexities are systematic in nature, implicating the employment of a profound systemic research framework in a transdisciplinary manner to offer visible patterns for managers and leaders to grasp the structures and correctly adjust to changes. Organizational complexity grew by 35 times and business complexity increased by 6 times between 1955 and 2010, according to a Boston Consulting Group (BCG) report, indicating a dramatic increase in complexity and complicatedness [2]. Nevertheless, we may include the worldwide impact of COVID-19 as a status quo, emphasizing the vulnerability of socioeconomic systems and the importance of resiliency in the face of unprecedented challenges [4,5].

Concurrently, strategic management, as an important part of international organizations that evaluate the internal and external environments to formulate strategies, is confronting a wide spectrum of complexity, which necessitates a comprehensive approach to unravel complexity management [6,7]. Furthermore, in order to provide a holistic perspective of current and future concerns, complex topics must be tackled utilizing a combination of diverse methodologies and systems approaches [8–13]. In this regard, systems thinking as one of the disciplines in the management domain is a suitable instrument for

providing managers with a tangible understanding of the whole, and it may also aid in the implementation of effective changes (doing the right thing) during complex times [14–16]. The discipline of strategic management still requires new methods and frameworks that optimize its ability to produce more solutions for decision making process improvement [17], which necessitates identifying new research angles for proposing new conceptual models using systems thinking to reduce complexity issues in the field [7].

In this article, we attempt to explore the strategic management literature for publications that examine the relationship between growth and development, their implications and definitions in organizations, and their relevance in the context of strategic management. The phrases “growth” and “development” are key characteristics that are used in the management sphere regardless of the qualities that are related to them. We want to uncover the present research status of these criteria and also extend the study to provide more convergence between growth and development by doing a systematic literature review (SLR) using the PRISMA statement [18] (see PRISMA checklist in the Supplementary Materials). According to the findings of this study, the relationship between growth and development could be given greater consideration. Similarly, this research provides a holistic systems perspective to strategic management practitioners, allowing them to better understand the significance of the convergence between growth and development. This might lead to the identification of new directions in research in order to pave the road to sustainable growth and development through convergence while mitigating the negative effects of complexity in the management sphere.

1.1. Literature Review and Theoretical Background

1.1.1. System Theory and Systems Thinking

A couple of decades have passed since Ludwig von Bertalanffy developed general system theory (1928, 1968) with the aim of creating a “general science of wholeness” [19]. However, the criteria for providing a unified approach capable of both analysis and synthesis to understand the systems without compromising their essential properties [15] have not been developed in a converging and/or integrated manner. It is true that complexity theory broadens our vision to comprehend the dynamics and non-linearity of social and natural phenomena as complex systems in a better way [20]. However, we are diving into the ocean of complexity without an effective understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of systems treatment, which may cause huge compensatory feedback for us as a whole. Many scholars from different schools of thought (Edwards Deming [21], Russell Ackoff [15], James Miller [22], Jay Forrester [23], Peter Checkland [24], Peter Senge [14], Michael Jackson [16], etc.) have tried to develop systems thinking concepts and methods to correspond to complex systematic challenges, particularly those correlated to human society. Furthermore, this effort is still ongoing, and we have essential areas such as management and leadership that require a more diverse disposition to incorporate into these complexities more than before at their discretion [16].

1.1.2. Strategic Management and Complexity

From the beginning to the present, scholars from various disciplines have attempted to investigate and understand complex systems. In this regard, the conjunction of strategic management and complexity may accrue in the essence of understanding complex organizations’ behavior and their interrelationship with their environment [13,25]. Concurrently, enterprises and firms that operate in the business sphere together may create an ecosystem that portrays organizations as adaptive, complex systems [26]. Meanwhile, strategic management is an important aspect of the corporate environment since it serves as a paradigm for long-term decision-making processes related to a corporation’s goals and objectives [27,28]. In the current era, strategic management research is still under development, and scholars are addressing that this field needs strong theories to create applications for providing empirical results via the integration of research to produce novel and valuable methods and approaches [29,30]. According to the book *Implanting*

Strategic Management, “How much complexity is enough for an effective response to the environmental challenge is today one of the central and vexing questions, not only in strategic management, but also in society as a whole” [25]. At the same time, the challenges that strategic management researchers and practitioners are facing at present are complicated, particularly when considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change crisis, hyper-technological advancement, globalization, conflict of interests, etc., on organizations. As a result, pursuing optimization leverage for this field of management from a system viewpoint may be an essential course of action to pursue in order to improve the organization’s interaction with its surroundings.

1.1.3. Growth and Development

In the biological human system, growth and development events begin with birth and end with death [31]. Similarly, organizations, enterprises, and corporations have interchangeable properties in terms of lifecycle events at some levels, similar to organisms [32]. One of the factors in the classic literature that indicates organizational growth is “size”, measuring numbers from sales, employees, assets, warehouses, etc. as a social unit [33]. Additionally, in a biological system (the human body), it is possible to define growth as the augmentation of size and mass [34]. However, organizational growth may be measured by different metrics, such as age, structure, etc., along with the size of a social unit [32]. In a company’s lifecycle, the growth stage correlates with gaining more access to the market, more profits, and an increase in capital [35].

Concurrently, development (in human systems) is a progressive sequence of events in time that provides changes, from a low-organized raw conformation state to an elevated, evolved uniform state [34]. In organization studies, development is an optimization procedure taken by an organization with the goal of effectiveness toward pursuing improvement over time [36]. In other words, organizational development can be defined as simplifying the process of change, gaining understanding of it, leveraging capabilities to be more agile in the face of it, and managing the transformation effectively [37]. Within the framework of systems theory and the system’s criteria, an organization is a system consisting of different elements and properties that together act as a whole for a common purpose or goal [38,39]. At the same time, management has a key role in the arrangements of an organization toward growth and development, and the managerial system is a shared network of collaboration among all the people in an organization [40]. Therefore, management and organizations have reciprocal communication in a systematic overview based on systems thinking.

The concept of organizational lifecycle was developed by economist Kenneth Boulding (1950) on the assumption that organizations go through stages similar to living organisms, such as birth, maturation, decline, and death [41]. However, the analogy comparing organizations to living organisms has faced criticism due to its inappropriate definition of growth as a linear and deterministic process in its lifecycle [42]. This concept shows that there may be an alignment between growth and development within time in the lifecycle of an organization [19,39]. As a result, in this study, we employ bibliometric analysis to identify the relationship between growth and development in strategic management literature in order to propose a conceptual framework from a systems thinking perspective and provide a new direction for future research on these parameters.

Overall, it is worth noting that various research from different disciplines and industries, mostly in the energy and economic sectors, has attempted to investigate the ties and correlations between growth factors and other variables related to development [43,44]. Different disciplines of research, both academic and practical, can have a wide range of methodologies and approaches. However, given the importance of sustainable ways to balance the outcome of any enterprise, the lack of a conceptual framework to address the convergence of growth and development is apparent.

2. Materials and Methods

A literature review provides an in-depth understanding of the topics correlated to a specific discipline, allowing for the discovery of present gaps and the development of knowledge in the chosen sector [45]. Consequently, in this article, we conducted a systematic literature review (SLR) in the bibliographic database of the Web of Science with the objective of characterizing the relationship between growth and development in the context of strategic management to identify gaps and challenges within an inclusive overview. The research workflow is presented in a graphical abstract in Figure 1.

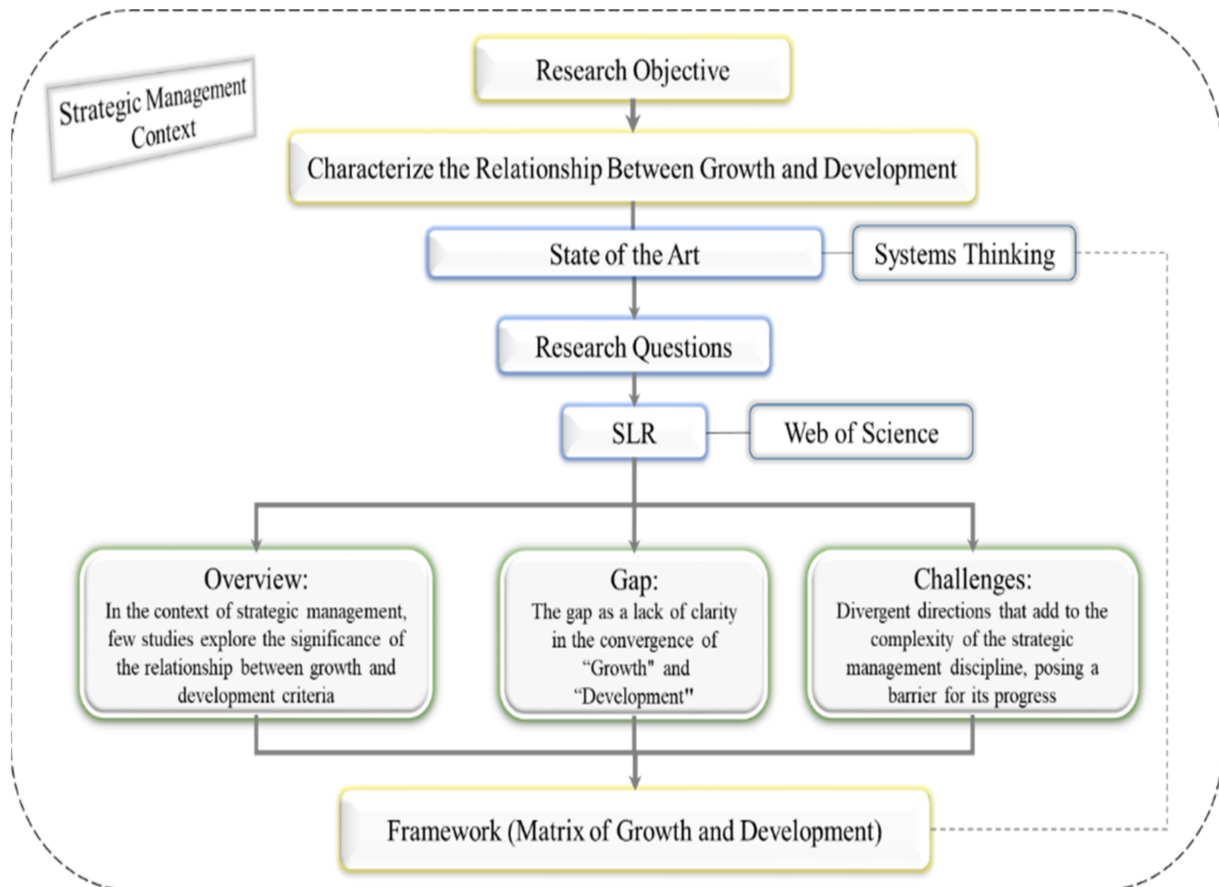


Figure 1. The research workflow.

The literature selection procedure was divided into steps in order to identify the most relevant publications associated with the relationship between growth and development in the strategic management field from the Web of Science (WOS) database. Figure 2 depicts the steps involved in SLR.

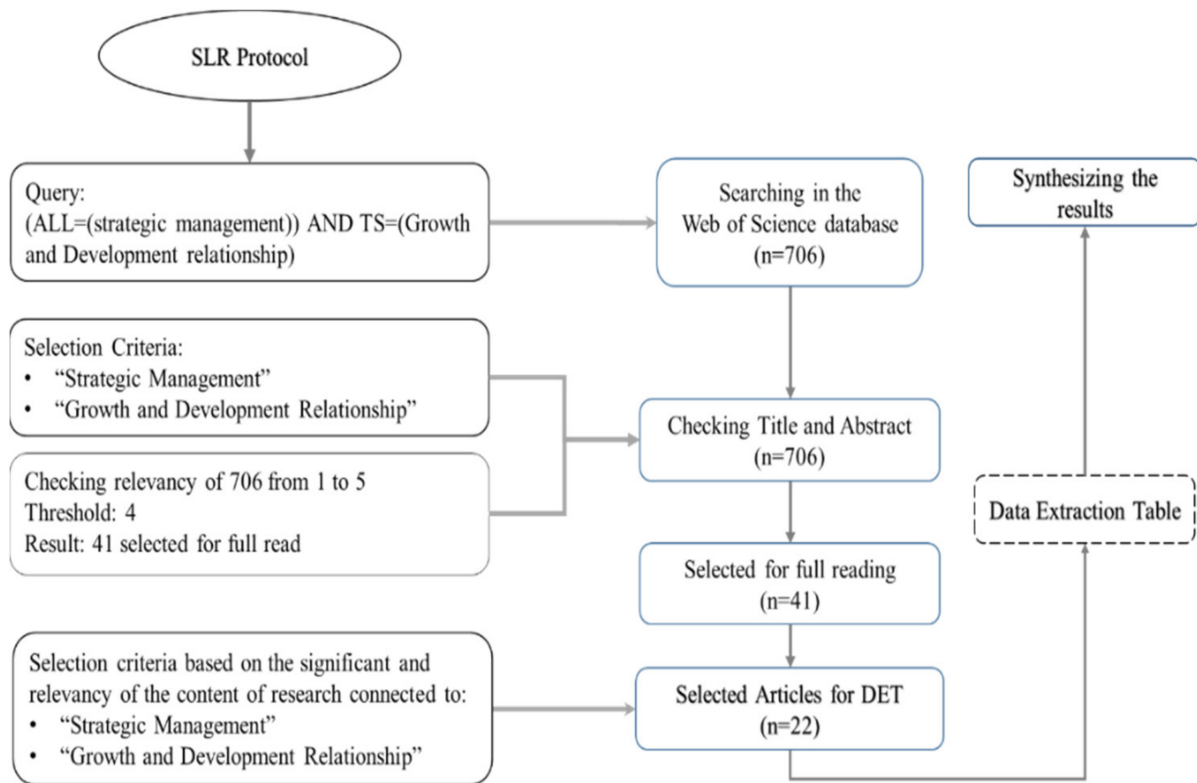


Figure 2. The process of SLR steps.

Step 1. In management studies, developing the SLR protocol may be viewed as the first stage in organizing the systematic review as a cyclical process. This process began by establishing clear research questions in order to create a string for searching bibliographic databases [46]. To this end, the following research questions were designed in order to be concise and relevant to the study's aim and its peripheral features:

- RQ1: In the strategic management literature, do we have any studies that focus on the significance of the relationship between growth and development?
- RQ2: If any studies have been conducted, what are their remarks and contributions?
- RQ3: Is there any gap in the strategic management literature that shows a lack of convergence in growth and development synchronization?
- RQ4: What are the possibilities for future research?

Step 2. The WOS search engine's selected queries were based on the research questions that are provided, with a focus on the keywords "growth", "development", and "relationship" in the overall context of "strategic management". The queries were as simple as possible with the aim of providing the best results of available publications with high relevancy to the mentioned keywords. The following query in the WOS search portal found 706 publications on 20 January 2022.

- (ALL = (strategic management)) AND TS = (growth and development relationship)

Step 3. The criterion for evaluating the relevancy of the publications began with a review of the title and abstract to determine the significance of their content to the topic of research based on the selection in this article. Furthermore, the relevancy check used a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being out of scope and 5 being the highest rate of relevancy, and the publications for full reading were selected from scores of 4 to 5. Moreover, a score of 3 was considered low and a score 2 was considered very low (Figure 3).

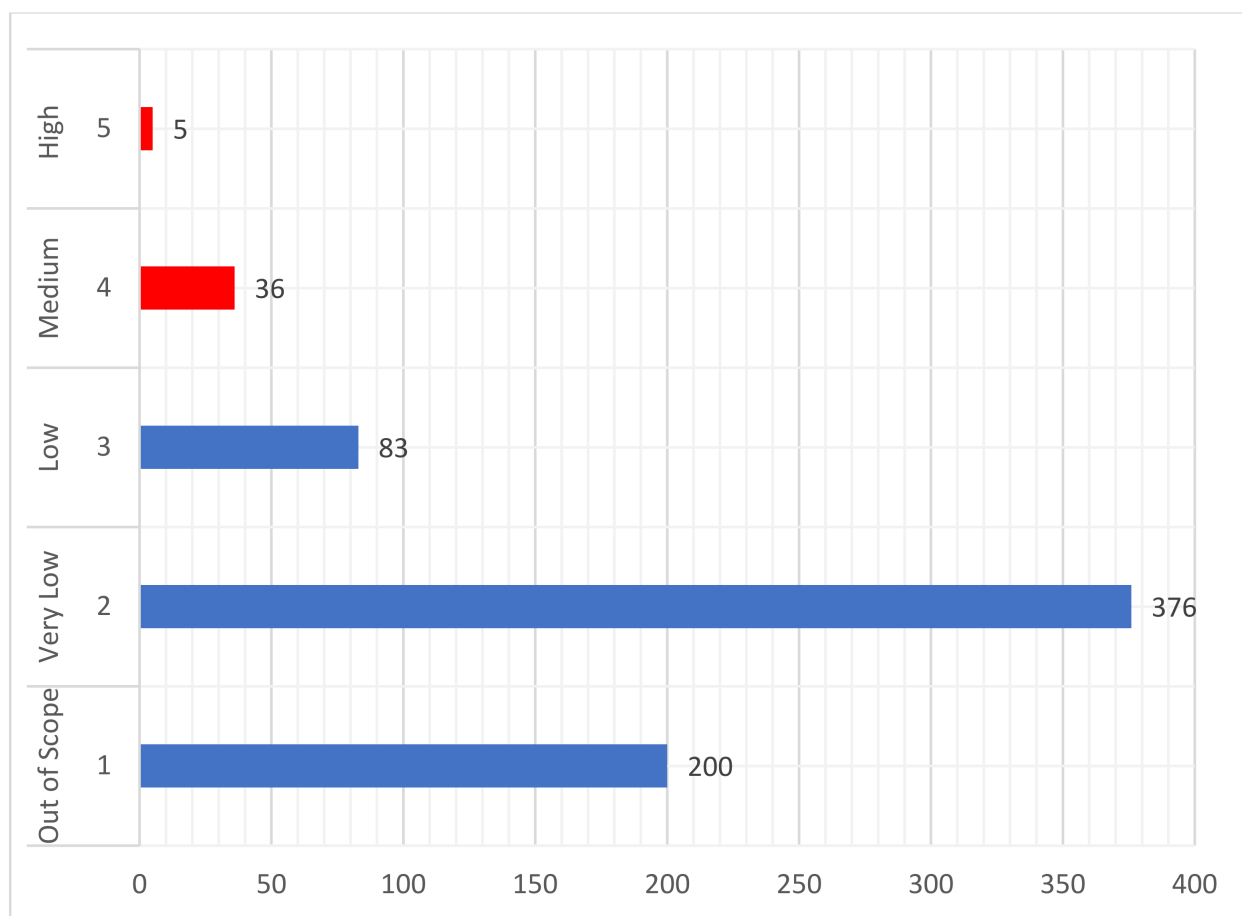


Figure 3. The relevancy check out of 706 publications (For a full read, selected papers have been highlighted in red, while those not included have been highlighted in blue).

3. Results

In this section, we organize the findings of this study into three subsections to make them more cohesive. In this light, first, we explored the WOS analysis from the results of the queries that were inserted into the search engine. Second, we conducted a visualized bibliometric network analysis of the result of the WOS exported file to explore the map of the keywords and their co-occurrence in all publications. Third, we explored the data-extraction table as the result of the investigation through the content of the chosen publications according to selection criteria and the response to the research questions that were established in the SLR protocol. Furthermore, in the next part, we attempted to elaborate on the findings and responses to the research questions through discussion in order to investigate the overall findings, research gaps, challenges, and opportunities.

3.1. Analysis of the Web of Science Results

The analysis of publishing and citations from the WOS portal to trace the history of publication reveals the lowest slope of publication and citations between 1990 and 2000, and a larger slope of publication and citations in the following ten years until 2010. Similarly, the rate grew to its peak between 2010 and 2020, indicating the peak of publications. However, we witness fewer publications and more citations in 2021 (Figure 4).

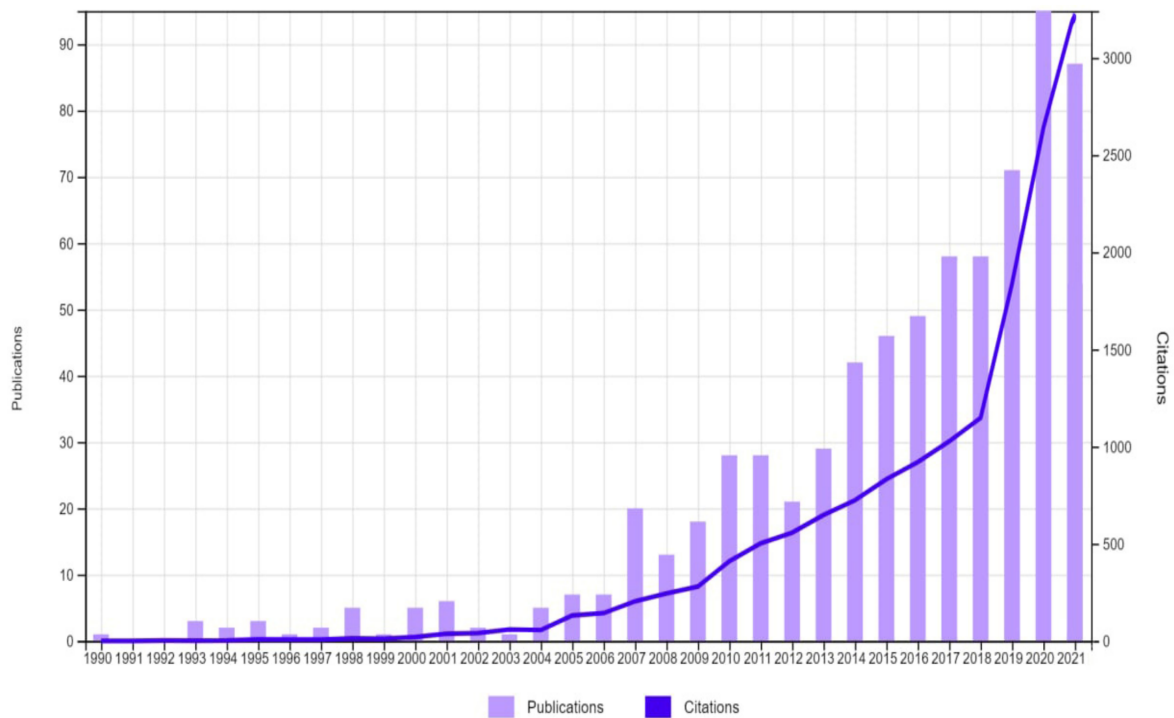


Figure 4. Historical analysis of publication and citations. Source: Web of Science (from 1 January 1990 to 30 December 2021).

Concurrently, in Figure 5, the research area for the 706 publications and the number of publications showing the highest attention in the chosen field was Business Economics, with 428 publications. Furthermore, Environmental Science Ecology, with 98 publications; Science Technology, with 79; and Engineering, with 78, have a larger capacity for publications compared to other research areas. Furthermore, the bar chart of the research area in Figure 4 shows that, in comparison to other areas, growth and development in the framework of strategic management have been more prominent in the domain of *Business Economics*.

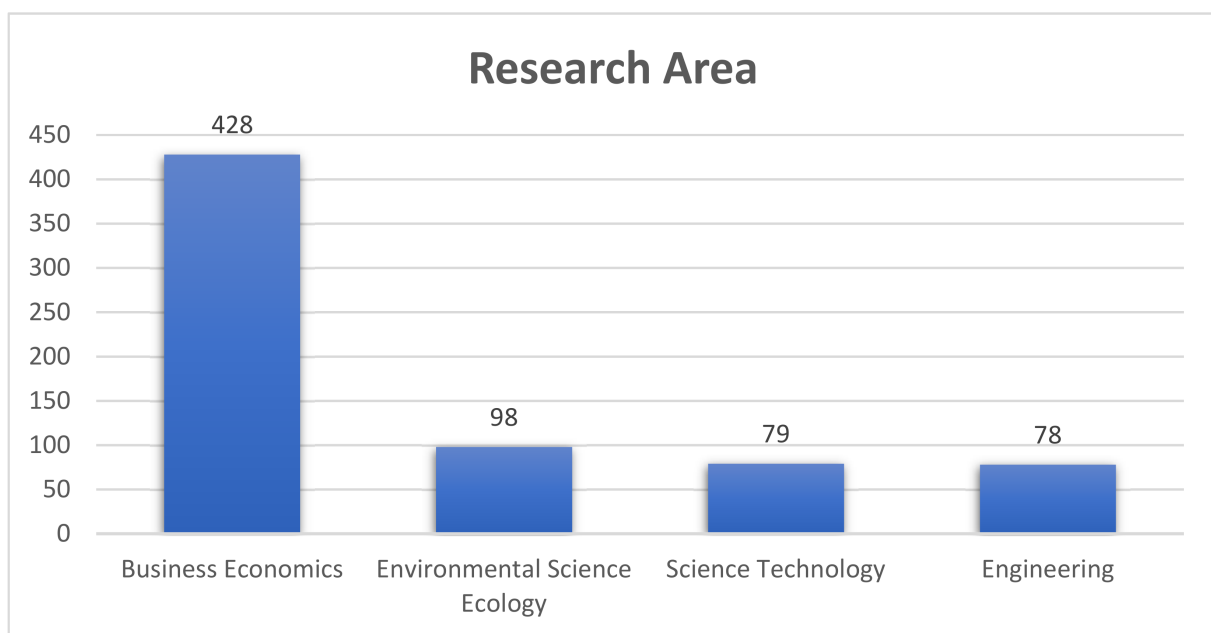


Figure 5. Research area of publications. Source: Web of Science (20 January 2022).

Furthermore, the WOS category of publications reveals that *Management* is at the top of the list with 296 records, followed by 201 for *Business*, 77 for *Environmental Science*, 75 for *Economics*, and so on, all of which indicate where the categories of the specified criteria are more concentrated in publications (Figure 6). Furthermore, we may consider the effect of *Management* and *Business* as more dominating categories to incorporate “growth” and “development” into the framework of strategic management based on an overview of Figure 6. This analogy, however, is based on the study question and may differ in different circumstances of the focus area.

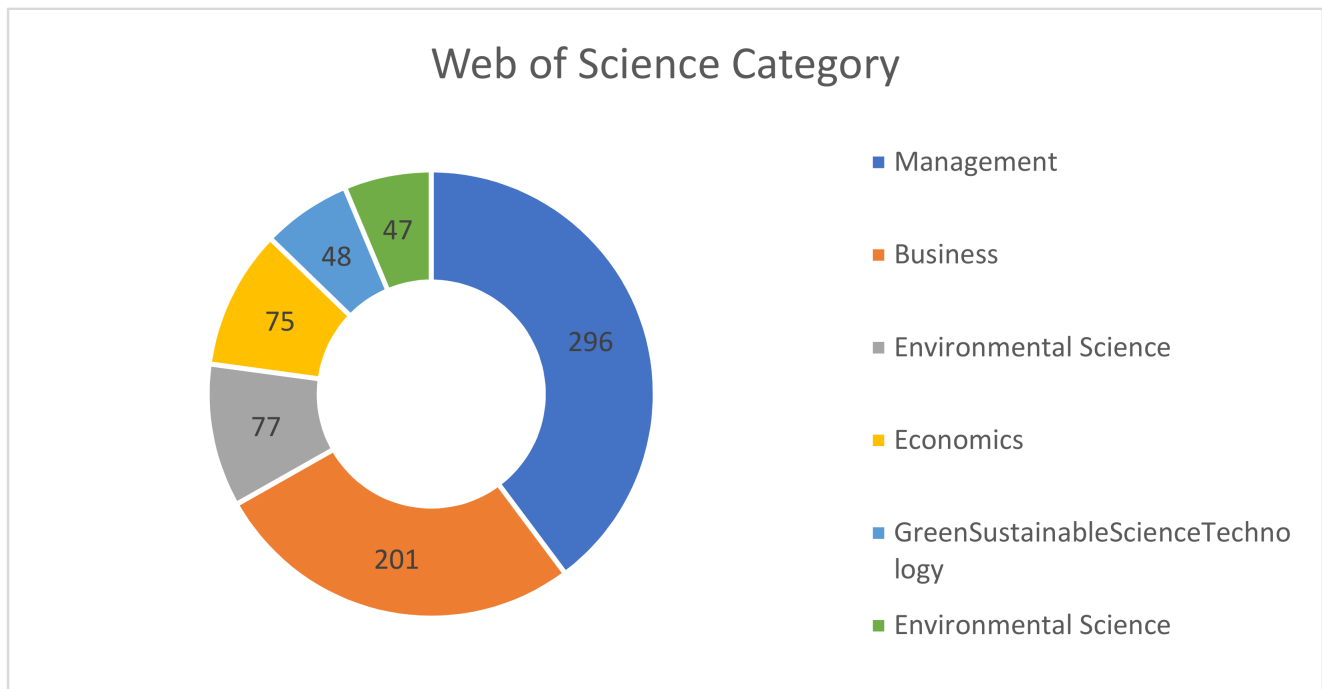


Figure 6. WOS category of publications. Source: Web of Science (20 January 2022).

3.2. Network Analysis Results (VOSviewer)

Following the export of WOS data, a map of research from 706 publications was analyzed using VOSviewer software to display the network of publications and depict the co-occurrence of keywords using the fractional counting approach and a minimum of three occurrences per keyword. Figure 7 depicts the relationship between strategic management and growth, which is analogous to the relationship between growth and development. However, there is no link between development and strategic management, indicating a gap that will be investigated based on the findings of the data extraction table.

By examining the above visualization, we can see that, in comparison to other keywords such as *strategic management* and *growth*, the *development* keyword appears to have shown more recent usage around the year 2017. In addition, for all 706 publications, we can examine the strength of the links and the occurrence of each keyword along with the average number of publications per year in Table 1 based on the network map analysis.

Table 1. The analysis of co-occurrence and links for keywords from VOSviewer.

Keywords	Occurrence	Links	Total Link Strength	Average Publication per Year
Strategic Management	30	100	26	2016
Growth	122	256	117	2014
Development	9	32	8	2017

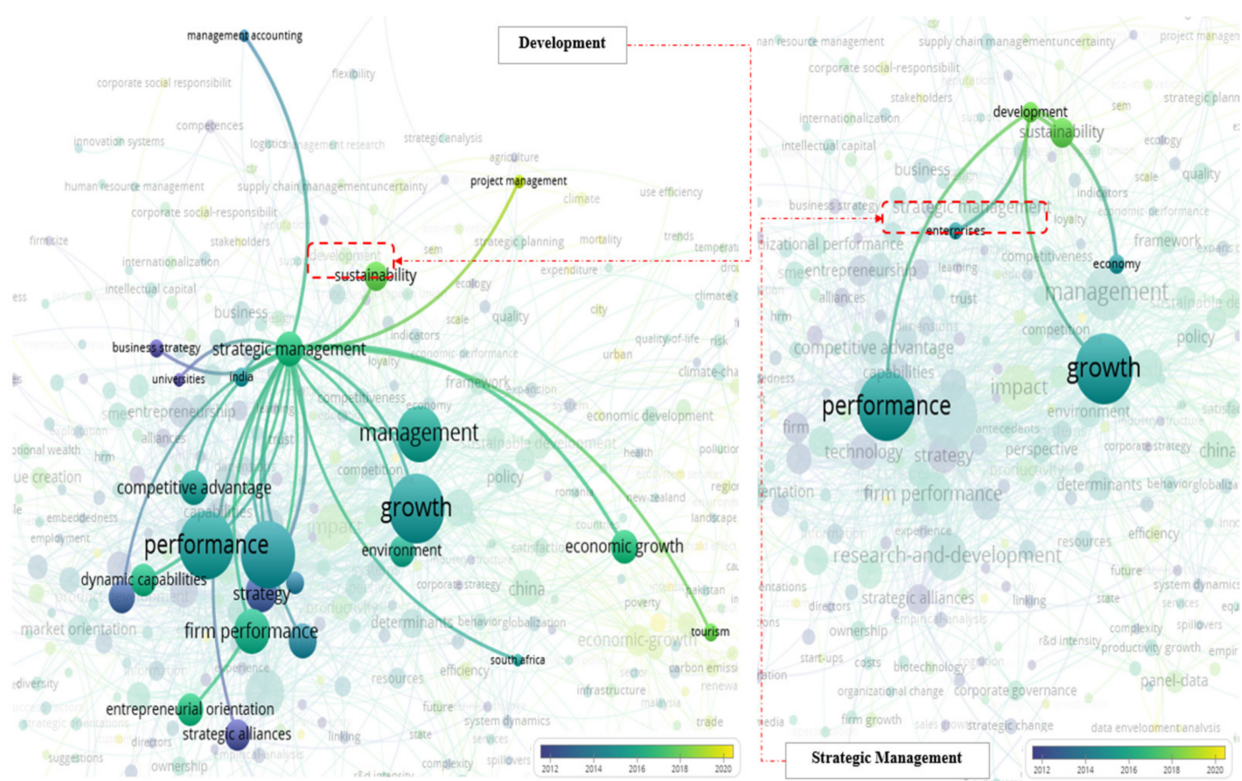


Figure 7. View of overt visualization with a focus on keywords from VOSviewer.

Furthermore, the network map shows that growth is more popular as a keyword with stronger impulses, while development has fewer ties with strategic management context. This may indicate a substantial gap in the strategic management field's exploration of "growth" and "development", as well as the need for more investigations into this area for future research. Overall, Table 1 indicates the overall growth link strength of 117, compared to 26 for strategic management and 8 for development. In this regard, in the context of strategic management, the absence of convergence between growth and development may necessitate careful consideration.

3.3. Data Extraction Table

In this section, we examine the findings from 41 publications and show information (data) in the extraction table, which is based on selection criteria for the most relevant publications using growth and development relationships as criteria in the context of strategic management and/or its peripheral disciplines. As a result, after careful reading, 22 publications were found to be more relevant to the selection criteria for extracting and transferring their content into the data-extraction tables (Table 3 and Table A1 in the Appendix A), which contain information about the context of the publications.

In Tables 2, 3 and A1, we attempted to organize the tables into several main components based on the selection criteria and after examining the publications selected for data extraction. As a result, we provided information about the authors and the years of publication, significance of keywords, as well as details about the methods, a description of the research topic and subject, a summary of the findings and contributions of the chosen study, and the citation results. Moreover, the aim of the content extraction from publications is to provide a specific overview of the overall focus of the publications on selected criteria for which gaps and challenges have been found, along with the possibility of future studies in connection to the purpose of the study, which is to characterize the relationship between growth and development in the context of strategic management. Concurrently, to find the answers to four research questions, we investigated the result of the information from publications (Tables 2, 3 and A1) to align with the objective of the SLR protocol.

Table 2. The significance of keywords and their impact on the content of 22 publications.

Articles	Growth and Development	Strategic Management	Growth	Development
[47]	High	High	High	High
[48]	Low	Low	High	Medium
[49]	Medium	Low	High	Medium
[50]	Non	Low	High	Medium
[51]	Non	Low	Low	Low
[52]	Non	Non	High	High
[53]	Non	Low	High	Medium
[54]	Non	Medium	Low	Low
[55]	Low	Low	Medium	Low
[56]	Non	Non	High	Low
[57]	Non	Medium	Low	High
[58]	Non	Low	Low	Low
[59]	Low	Low	Medium	High
[60]	Non	Low	High	Low
[61]	Non	Low	Medium	High
[62]	Low	Low	High	High
[63]	Non	Low	High	Low
[64]	Non	Low	Medium	High
[65]	Non	Low	High	Low
[66]	Non	Low	High	Medium
[67]	Non	Low	High	Low
[68]	Non	Low	Medium	Low

According to Table 2, each article has been classified into four categories of evaluation. The specification of the keywords, as well as their influence on the content of the research, has been examined to categorize the impact of each article into four ranges of assessment. Similarly, the number of terms and their relevancy in relation to the research questions of this study form the basis of the assessment. The majority of the articles sought to focus on “growth” and “development” separately, with just a few seeking to use the terms “growth” and “development” as a conjunction for convergence (see Table 2).

Meanwhile, out of the 22 publications, Anna Witek-Crabb (2014) has the highest level of significance on the criteria correlated to RQ1, RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4, with a greater focus on the chosen terms via identifying the relationship between business growth and organizational development, which is tested in 150 small, medium, and large businesses in Poland [47]. Similarly, the next article, with a medium level of focus on growth and development but higher attention to growth, tried to assess the management practices of growth-oriented firms in Wales to empower entrepreneurial capacity for long-term growth [49]. The following publications have a low level of influence, since they attempted to use the terms “growth and development” in a broad and divergent manner, with the least significant impact on research questions in total. For example, Steve Fong (2016), Wu Ning et al. (2019), Ahmadi et al. (2020), and Flamholtz et al. (2016) use the terms “growth and development” without any specification of their relationship. Similarly, the remaining “non” publications do not clarify the relationship between growth and development, instead focusing solely on each term associated with an attribute within the context of their research. In this respect, one may argue that the terms “growth” and “development” have been defined independently more than together.

Tables 2 and 3 may both provide responses to all research questions for this study, indicating that there are studies that focus on the relationship between “growth” and “development” in the context of strategic management (RQ1) but not in a strong sense of convergence. However, the findings and remark of the studies suggest that there is a gap (RQ2 and RQ3) in strategic management in terms of defining clarity between these two concepts, which might pose a challenge (RQ4) to enterprises’ strategic management processes during complex times.

Overall, in the discussion section, we will look at the significance of the studies in order to cover all aspects of the findings related to research questions.

Table 3. Data extraction.

Articles	Subject/Topic	Contribution/Remarks
[47]	Exploring the relationship between a business's growth and organizational development in 150 Polish small, medium, and large enterprises in the context of strategic management.	According to the study, the relationship between business growth and organizational development in the examined enterprises is complex and hence unclear. The study's key result is that when businesses grow, their strategic management direction changes as well, but not always in all of the examined enterprises in this research.
[48]	Using the strategic management accounting (SMA) spectrum, examine the growth and development of a China SNS service firm.	This study provides insight into the connections between company strategy, accountancy, and social life.
[49]	The paper investigates how growth-oriented businesses in Wales have implemented management strategies to develop the entrepreneurial ability needed to maintain growth.	This work supports earlier research that asserts that support programs and activities that communicate the value of management practice adoption are critical for small business development and growth.
[50]	Investigating Edith Penrose's contributions and theory of the growth of the firm, the nature of the firm, and stakeholders criteria.	Overviewing Edith Penrose's theory of the growth of the firm, exploring the definitions and peripheral criteria that led to the development of the stakeholders theory of the firm.
[51]	The goal of this research is to see if enterprises' cooperative efforts, notably "coopetition," have an impact on company success.	The findings of this study may be utilized to address and diagnose problems in Korean companies by examining links between cooperative activities, innovation outputs, and management performance in the structural environment.
[52]	Using banking sector and stock market development indicators, this study investigates the link between financial development and economic growth for five key rising economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South (BRICS) from 1993 to 2014.	The study's key finding is that financial development and economic growth in certain economies have a substantial and favorable relationship. The expansion of bank and stock market activity at the same time is critical to an economy's progress.
[53]	Entrepreneurial leadership behavior, top management team heterogeneity, and environmental dynamism are all examined in the context of new venture performance.	This study highlights the complexities of executive leadership by demonstrating critical connections between individual, team, and firm-level characteristics.
[54]	From the perspective of decision making and business success, this study examines the link between boards and board activities and subsequent company performance in the setting of high-growth enterprises.	Indicating the importance of the influence of the board in being involved in the strategic development process, assessment, options, and strategic management criteria.
[55]	This study explores the organization's growth and development lifecycle model to find the relationship between high-performance work systems and performance in firms within human resource management criteria.	This article contributes to the literature on strategic human resource management with the focus on high-performance work systems' relationships with SME performances.
[56]	In this research on a freshwater fishery, the authors use the Morris and Sobol techniques to conduct a complete global sensitivity analysis to determine the life-history characteristics that have the greatest impact on model outputs.	This study discovered that growth-related factors, such as the von Bertalanffy growth coefficient and asymptotic mass, had the biggest impact on the outcomes of our size spectrum model (contributing to fisheries' management).

Table 3. Cont.

Articles	Subject/Topic	Contribution/Remarks
[57]	A conceptual study to overview major innovation (MI) and its importance for the growth of an enterprise, using system theory and dynamic capability theory to develop a framework for MI dynamic capability.	Comprehensive overview to develop MI dynamic capability.
[58]	Strategic alliances and the nature of international business. The goal of this research is to see if a realignment of company incentives and the use of game theory may help to promote stable collaboration and improved alliance performance.	The literature on strategic alliances and game theory criteria is expanded in this study. In addition, it determines whether game theory is appropriate for forming strategic alliances.
[59]	In this study, the link between a manager's Strategic Intelligence (SI), Organizational Development (OD), and Entrepreneurial Behavior (EB) in governmental agencies in developing nations is investigated.	According to this study, there is a substantial positive association between the manager's SI and organizational development, as well as a significant positive relationship between the manager's SI and entrepreneurial activity.
[60]	As markets evolve from fledgling to growth stage, this study examines how varying degrees of uncertainty and competitiveness impact interfirm connections of entrepreneurial enterprises.	Due to the variation in their relationships and power compared to partners, the findings of this study suggest that shifting degrees of uncertainty and competitiveness in growth stage marketplaces might have various effects for enterprises. The findings pave the way for a better understanding of the relationships between firms, interfirm linkages, and market dynamics.
[61]	The implications of social capital in critical customer connections on knowledge acquisition and exploitation are investigated in this study.	According to the findings of this study, the social contact and network linkages of social capital are certainly connected with better knowledge acquisition; however, the relationship quality component is inversely associated with knowledge acquisition.
[62]	This study proposes a framework for the organizational effectiveness model in continuation of the previous research framework for organizational development strategy by Eric Flamholtz (1995).	The current research improves on this earlier framework by conducting an empirical examination of the proposed link between "organizational growing pains" and corporate financial performance.
[63]	This study develops a system dynamic model to investigate how CEO attitudes influence organizational transformation (change) that leads to high performance (case study of General Electric Corporation).	This study employed a simulation model (system dynamic) to show how a leader's belief system affects organizational transformation, which in turn affects the company's strategy for reaching a better financial outcome.
[64]	The goal of this research is to see how strategic innovation affects company development, organizational effectiveness, and business performance in Thailand's Industrial Estate.	With a focus on research-based theory and contingency theory, this study finds that strategic innovation has a favorable impact on organizational development, organizational effectiveness, and firm success. According to the findings, strategic innovation is critical for businesses to grow.
[65]	This study analyzes the growth, profitability, and productivity via concentration-based entropy as an instrument for quantification.	This study proposes criteria to define the relationship between innovation and performance, taking into account the level of innovation and the size of the business. It develops a novel methodology for analyzing the impact of innovation and performance based on information theory.
[67]	The objective of this paper is to highlight how phases of growth models have been used in management research to explain a variety of organizational phenomena.	This study adds to the development of a framework for assessing an industrial organization's current stage and determining its strategic direction in the future.

Table 3. Cont.

Articles	Subject/Topic	Contribution/Remarks
[68]	This article examines the importance of creating sustainable firms and the extension of sustainable development standards in industry from a systems perspective.	This article navigates the importance of creating a sustainable enterprise and also how businesses are changing due to the transformation of concepts via a systems perspective.
[66]	The topic of this paper is how Chinese economic development can achieve sustainable development of enterprises via an examination of the link between intellectual capital and corporate sustainable growth.	This research backs up the idea that intellectual capital has a favorable impact on a corporate sustainable growth.

4. Discussion

In this article, we conduct systematic literature review exploring growth and development relationship in the context of strategic management to characterize its significance for the current and future challenges of the field in a management sphere. As shown by investigating the 706 publications that have been found based on the query in the database of WOS, a large part of the explored content has been filtered due to not having a clear connection with the research questions, as well as diversity in the context of the fields that mainly use both “growth” and “development” in separate manners and have divergent definitions. As a result, out of 706 publications, after a filtering process based on selection criteria, 41 publications were chosen for full reading. After a careful review, 22 publications were chosen with the highest relevancy for the data extraction table in the context of this study.

4.1. An Overview of the Study’s Findings

According to the findings of this study, the significance of the relationship between growth and development processes is underrated. This indicates a gap in this field, underlining the significance of focusing greater attention on these processes.

Concurrently, looking at the data extraction table and the significance of the chosen keywords in the content of each of the 22 publications provides an affirmative answer to RQ1, which is that there are studies in the context of strategic management that explore the significance of the relationship between growth and development criteria [47–49,55,59,62]. However, we recognize that only one article specifically focuses on the relationship between growth and development, with a hybrid method, and uses both concepts as business growth and organizational development in the framework of strategic management, testing them on 150 small, medium, and large enterprises [47].

Following a careful examination of 22 publications, via exploring the topics and remarks of the studies (Table 3), it was discovered that the majority of them employ the concepts of “growth” and “development” in divergent and different ways and that their definitions are largely detached from the nexus of both terms. Nevertheless, there are few studies that try to focus on the chosen criteria and provide contributions to the field. In particular, two papers in response to RQ2 focused more on strategic management and strategic processes, highlighting the significance of growth and development, among other publications [47,49]. Therefore, the response to RQ3 is affirmative, and there may be a gap in the convergence of growth and development in the context of strategic management. However, there are some publications that try to cover some general aspects of “growth” and “development” with a different focus on other fields. It is noteworthy to acknowledge that in this study, we tried to recognize these terms not metaphorically but literally, which lowers the ambiguity of the chosen term and strengthens their overall effect for future research.

Overall, the findings of this study suggest that there is a need for more research into the relationship between growth and development in the context of strategic management and

that it is essential to expand an integrated systems approach to propose a framework and/or a model in both theoretical and practical ways to facilitate the convergence of growth and development. Consequently, this may open a new chapter for strategic management practitioners and scholars looking to improve the field via a systems perspective, and this topic might also create a new chapter for other fields of management to focus more on the importance of the convergence of growth and development.

4.2. The Gap in the Convergence of Growth and Development

To elaborate more on RQ3 and open up the chapter for challenges and opportunities, in this section, we try to discuss the importance of the gap as the lack of convergence in the relationship between growth and development and the necessity of designing a framework to converge growth and development in a more synchronized way. According to the SLR findings, growth and development may have complex and multifaceted interconnections, and identifying their relationships requires a multi-layered analysis in the context of strategic management [47]. Moreover, management development may have a positive impact on firms' strategic directions toward long-term growth [49]. As a result of an organization's rapid growth, managers may face issues anticipating potential problems and giving attention to critical infrastructures for the development of strategic organizational [62]. Furthermore, the literature shows that a manager's strategic intelligence has a positive relationship with organizational development and may provide a competitive advantage for the whole organization [59]. Based on an overview of the literature, we can identify the gap as a lack of clarity in the convergence of "growth" and "development" in relation to numerous concepts in the context of strategic management. In this sense, this study may provide a path for future research to broaden the idea of the convergence of growth and development in the context of strategic management with the aim of improving the interconnectedness among two important processes connected to organizational and management studies.

4.3. Challenges and Opportunities

The complexity of management and organizational systems is increasing more toward higher levels due to the increase in information load in the information age [69]. To understand this complexity, we may need to utilize system theory and a nonlinear system perspective such as systems thinking to identify solutions and implement them effectively to solve complex problems [13]. According to the literature review undertaken for this study, growth and development are two essential processes that have connections with each other but are mainly defined separately in the context of strategic management with various factors (Tables 2 and 3). To elaborate on the response to the RQ4, the lack of interconnection between growth and development may promote divergent directions that create challenges for the progress of the strategic management field by producing more complexity. On the other hand, this gap might be a future research opportunity for developing a paradigm that converges growth and development as two interrelated processes.

5. The Conceptual Framework and Future Research

In this section, we try to propose a conceptual framework (Figure 8) in response to the results of the SLR and theoretical background, along with research questions, in order to provide a path for future research in a more clear manner. As a result, to connect the processes of growth and development while taking into account the attributes that may be associated with them, we propose a growth and development matrix to provide alignment for these two processes with a systems thinking perspective, as shown in Figure 8. Moreover, in light of the fact that complex challenges necessitate a more integrated system approach to addressing them in management discipline [7,13–16,19,26,39,47], with a systems perspective, the convergence of growth and development in the context of strategic management may have a positive impact on organizations when studying the relationship between these processes in a more comprehensive way.

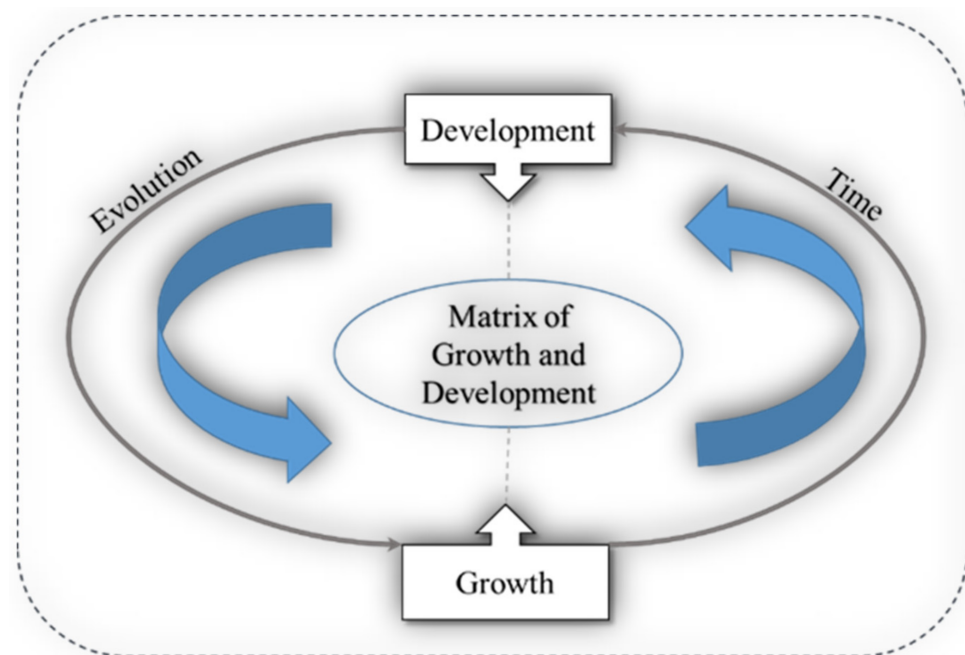


Figure 8. Conceptual framework for the convergence of growth and development. Source: Own study.

The structure of this matrix is set with the alignment of growth in the horizontal line with the arrow of time, along with development as a vertical line with evolution (Figure 9). In an interdisciplinary analogy with an integrated systems thinking perspective, in an open system that interacts with its environment, growth may expand with the passage of time and an increase in size, and the process of evolution through development may occur at the same time [14,15,19,34,39,47,70–72]. Nevertheless, in order to address the gap revealed in this study, this conceptual framework may serve as a foundation for future research targeted at expanding the convergence of growth and development into a management and organizational studies paradigm, notably in the area of strategic management.

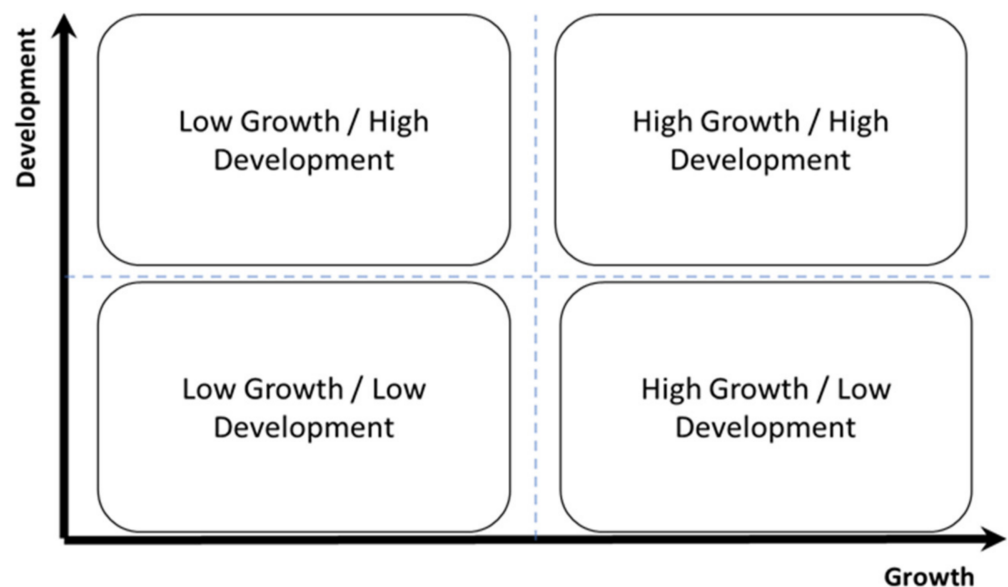


Figure 9. Matrix of Growth and Development. Source: Own study.

6. Conclusions

To better understand the nature of complex systems, it is critical to use an integrated systems perspective to generate new models and frameworks in conjunction with systems thinking to solve complex problems. To deal with the ever-increasing complexity of organizations on a global scale, management sectors in today's climate demand a comprehensive perspective that employs integrated systems approaches to optimize their performance. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to identify the current state of the art in the field of strategic management that has studied the relationship between growth and development, using a systematic literature review to find the gap, and finally propose a framework as a starting point for future studies to characterize the convergence of growth and development in management and organizational studies. By constructing an SLR protocol to run a query in the WOS database, we identified 706 publications related to growth and development relationships in the context of strategic management. According to the WOS results, the majority of the publications are in the field of business economics, and among the categories, management and business are at the top of the list in the dataset that includes material related to the applied query. The overview of the literature provides this understanding that a major part of the literature utilizes the relationship between growth and development in a divergent manner. Hence, there is a gap for employing convergence between these two processes regardless of the peripheral attributes that are attached to them in the chosen field. The highlights of the findings in this study are summarized in the following criteria in response to research questions:

- A few publications have investigated the relationship between organizational growth and development in the context of strategic management. However, the significance of this process has not been investigated enough, regardless of the importance of the topic.
- The gap was discovered to be due to a lack of clarity in this research area regarding the convergence of growth and development processes, as well as a lack of research focus.
- A challenge stems from the increased complexity caused by various approaches that investigate growth and development processes in a divergent rather than convergent manner.
- An opportunity was identified to use an integrated systems approach to provide a framework for future research in order to chart a path for converging the growth and development processes in the management field.

Concurrently, a lack of focus in this field of research was discovered by investigating the outcomes of this study via exploring the publications that sought to investigate the relationship between growth and development processes in the context of strategic management. Therefore, to elaborate on the identified gap, we proposed a conceptual framework in the form of a growth and development matrix via a systems thinking perspective to pave the way for future research into the convergence of these processes in the management sphere, particularly in the context of strategic management. The new conceptual framework may aid leaders and managers in improving their overall insight into the converging growth and development processes of their organizations while promoting an integrated systems approach that allows them to deal effectively with complexity. Furthermore, we conducted the SLR in this study with a focus on the strategic management field and analyzed the Web of Science database, which suggests a path for further research to explore in various bibliographical databases as well as different disciplines to investigate the same queries. Moreover, mainly in the management sphere, future studies in academic and practical environments may be conducted in both qualitative and quantitative terms to expand the criteria of the proposed framework in an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary manner. As a result, we acknowledge the limitation of this study and the importance of a larger investigation into the examined criteria. Overall, this study may pave the way for more research on the significance of growth and development processes in the future for other management disciplines, along with the extension of the proposed framework.

Supplementary Materials: The following supporting information can be downloaded at: <https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/su14095561/s1>, Table S1: PRISMA 2020 Checklist.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Data extraction.

Articles	Research Method	Keywords	Citation
[47]	Hybrid, Qualitative and Quantitative.	Business growth; organizational development; strategic management	5
[48]	Qualitative	China, Business formation, Management accounting, Social networking sites, Popular culture	0
[49]	Qualitative	Management development; Business development; Small enterprises; Small to medium-sized enterprises; United Kingdom.	5
[50]	Qualitative	The growth of the firm, Firms nature, Stakeholders	20
[51]	Quantitative	Coopetition; cooperation; innovation performance; management performance; structural equation model (SEM)	3
[52]	Hybrid, Qualitative and Quantitative.	Growth	0
[53]	Quantitative	Entrepreneur leadership behavior empowering, Top management team, Industry environmental dynamism, New venture performance.	165
[54]	Qualitative	Corporate governance; Strategic management; Agency theory; Critical realism; Black box	5
[55]	Quantitative	HPWS; small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); performance; best fit; organizational growth and development	42
[56]	Quantitative	Ecosystem-based approach, Fisheries modelling,	0
[57]	Qualitative	Major Innovation, Dynamic capability, System theory	169
[58]	Hybrid, Qualitative and Quantitative	Strategic alliances; intercountry differences; structure-performance relationship; game theory; interfirm cooperation	131
[59]	Quantitative	Intelligence; Strategic intelligence; Organization development; Entrepreneurial behavior	1
[60]	Qualitative, Multiple case study	competition; entrepreneurial firms; interfirm ties; market growth; uncertainty	18
[61]	Qualitative	social capital; knowledge acquisition and knowledge exploitation; young technology-based firm.	1526

Table A1. Cont.

Articles	Research Method	Keywords	Citation
[62]	Hybrid, Quantitative and Quantitative	Strategic organizational development; stages of growth developmental gap; growing pains; pyramid of organizational development	6
[63]	Hybrid, Quantitative and Qualitative,	System dynamics; organizational change; belief system; time delay; limit to growth	5
[64]	Quantitative	Strategic Innovation; Organization Development; Organizational Effectiveness; Firm Performance	0
[65]	Quantitative	Entropy; innovation; business performance	15
[67]	Qualitative	Management research; Business development; Outsourcing; Modelling	8
[68]	Qualitative	Sustainable enterprise, Systems thinking, Sustainable development	185
[66]	Quantitative	Intellectual capital efficiency; Capital employed efficiency; Corporate sustainable growth; MVAIC (Modified value-added intellectual coefficient) model	1

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