

# POST-MERGER GOVERNANCE AND PERFORMANCE IN PUBLIC, NON-PROFIT AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS IN AN INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

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## Abstract

**How to cite this paper:** Chasiotou, A., Kourtesi, S., Kafestidis, S., & Lazos, G. (2025). Post-merger governance and performance in public, non-profit and private organizations in an international context: A systematic literature review. *Journal of Governance & Regulation*, 14(2), 81–87. <https://doi.org/10.22495/jgrv14i2art8>

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**ISSN Online:** 2306-6784  
**ISSN Print:** 2220-9352

**Received:** 25.09.2024  
**Revised:** 05.11.2024; 14.12.2024; 28.03.2025  
**Accepted:** 15.04.2025

**JEL Classification:** G34, M49  
**DOI:** 10.22495/jgrv14i2art8

Historically, mergers have been a way for businesses and organizations to expand their operations through external growth. The objective of this study is to analyse the current and future trends in merger processes in the context of two research aspects: 1) the relationship with governance principles in both private and public sector organizations and 2) the current situation and prospects for international or domestic mergers. In order to fulfill the research objectives, a criterion-based selection and analysis of relevant literature were conducted — articles selected from an authoritative database (Scopus). It was found that in the context of corporate mergers, governance theory is of critical importance because the quality of governance can influence post-merger outcomes, and effective corporate governance mechanisms can mitigate risks arising from the behaviour of managers or employees. Based on the result of this study, it is suggested that the research in the field of mergers and governance mechanisms can significantly benefit from further studies that include the advanced analysis of various countries with diverse economic environments.

**Keywords:** Merger, Performance, Corporate Governance, Literature Review

**Authors' individual contribution:** Conceptualization — A.C.; Methodology — A.C. and S.Kour.; Software — A.C. and G.L.; Validation — S.Kaf.; Formal Analysis — S.Kaf. and G.L.; Investigation — A.C.; Resources — S.Kaf.; Writing — Original Draft — A.C. and S.Kour.; Writing — Review & Editing — S.Kaf. and G.L.; Supervision — S.Kour.; Project Administration — S.Kour.

**Declaration of conflicting interests:** The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The act of merger not only serves as a means of external growth for organizations but also represents a strategic decision of an entity that

enhances its competitive position, development and expansion in the domestic market or international arena (Lee et al., 2021; Yang & Ai, 2021; Liu et al., 2024). In recent decades, mergers have brought about significant structural changes in various

industries and attracted international interest (Rao-Nicholson et al., 2016; Soni et al., 2019; Aggarwal & Garg, 2022; Ly-My et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2024). At the same time, it becomes necessary for dynamic organizations to merge or acquire financially distressed organizations, as this strategy provides a fundamental resource for growth and helps in addressing everyday challenges, primarily through cost reduction and overall operational expansion (Mantravadi, 2020; Verma & Kumar, 2024). This approach allows these to reach an increasingly larger customer base and leverage the combined expertise of multiple organizations to better meet consumer demands (Tampakoudis & Anagnostopoulou, 2020; Pazarskis et al., 2022, 2023).

To date, there have been numerous theoretical or review studies focusing on post-merger governance and performance in both private and public sectors, involving international and domestic mergers (Golubov et al., 2013; Wollscheid & Røsdal, 2021; Giovanis & Chasiotou, 2024; Kourtesi et al., 2024; Kafestidis et al., 2024). However, no comprehensive study has yet been carried out addressing the broader topic of governance and post-merger performance across public, non-profit and private organizations, concerning both international and domestic mergers in the format of a systematic literature review. The current study attempts to fill this gap by making an initial attempt to organize and present existing research related to mergers and governance of various organizations, addressing several different aspects.

To analyse the above issues, this study formulates the following research questions:

*RQ1: How is merger research evolving?*

*RQ2: What are the research characteristics of the literature on mergers and their relation to governance?*

The contribution of this study is realized at the theoretical and empirical levels. Initially, at the theoretical level, it contributes to the complex phenomenon at the strategic level and the diachronically relevant problem of functional restructuring such as mergers by capturing the current trends in the international bibliography and analysing various aspects of mergers. Furthermore, at the empirical level, it contributes to the debate on the usefulness or unhelpfulness of mergers and their relationship with governance by offering various valuable comments and conclusions for use by managers, government agencies and market experts.

The remainder of the study is organized as follows. Section 2 provides a literature review, Section 3 outlines the research methodology, while Section 4 presents the study's results. Section 5 discusses the study's findings, and the last Section 6 includes conclusions, limitations, and recommendations.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Several previous studies have examined the issue of mergers and performance in public, non-profit and private organizations, covering both international and domestic mergers in a diachronic literature review format. To begin with, through an assessment of the relevant literature, Giovanis and Chasiotou (2025) investigated the mergers of higher education

institutions (HEIs), their relationship with governance and other related topics. The study by Giovanis and Chasiotou (2025) examined several issues related to the problems, prospects and current trends in HEI's mergers. All relevant content was analysed using a systematic literature review procedure. Nearly half of the articles reviewed in this study focused on mergers of HEIs and their impact on governance, management, and administration, highlighting the significance of governance in HEIs.

According to Liu et al. (2024), the academic literature often represents a fragmented research approach, and previous assessments of cross-border mergers and acquisitions (M&A) have not offered a thorough examination. To fill any gaps in the literature and examine the development of ideas and topics, their study combined text mining with bibliometric analysis. To further evaluate the sub-topics of the articles and their dynamics, Liu et al. (2024) further divided the articles into 10 sub-areas using a topic modelling approach. They reviewed 1,197 publications published between 1989 and 2022. By offering insights into the co-emergence of theory and topic and its development in cross-border M&A, acknowledging popular research trends, and offering fresh perspectives, Liu et al.'s (2024) study strengthened the collection of current literature on cross-border M&A.

Applying international agreements and regulations is one of the ways in which Kayser and Zülch (2024) highlighted the importance of changing corporate models and operations towards a sustainable economy. According to Kayser and Zülch (2024), there is little information on the pre- and post-deal stages of M&A procedures that examine the relationship between sustainability and M&A. They conducted a thorough review of the scientific literature on the importance and impact of sustainability on M&A. According to Kayser and Zülch (2024), sustainability was found to influence or be impacted by M&A activity at every stage considered both pre- and post-deal.

Candra et al. (2021) argued that M&A as a tool for intra-firm growth and corporate restructuring can help an entity achieve profit growth, gain a dominant position in the product market, and achieve a competitive advantage over other competitors. Candra et al. (2021) argued that by analysing the theories related to mergers, the behaviour of entities in adopting mergers as methods of strategic reorganization can be interpreted. In order to answer this question, they studied various previous studies through a literature review and put forward various theories that contribute to the implementation of M&A such as synergy hypothesis, agency theory, hubris hypothesis, etc.

According to Battisti et al. (2021), the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region presents a scarcity of literature reviews on M&A business strategies and their characteristics. According to Battisti et al. (2021), they were able to identify the characteristics and reasons for M&A in the MENA regions using the resource-based approach, agency theory, and shareholder maximization theory. They found 37 publications on M&As in MENA countries that were cited in the Chartered Association of

Business Schools (CABS) ranking and published in peer-reviewed journals after employing a methodical literature review approach. According to Battisti et al. (2021), their study mapped the body of literature already written on this topic in the MENA region and provided a detailed framework of these characteristics for further research and broadening the field's borders.

Through a thorough literature review, Wollscheid and Røsdal (2021) examined previous studies of mergers in higher education, particularly studies that focus on micro-level dynamics. They reviewed 21 articles with different topics from different countries. According to Wollscheid and Røsdal (2021), disciplinary cultures, personnel and institutional circumstances, and time also clearly affect micro-level processes following a merger. Additionally, Wollscheid and Røsdal (2021) contended that examining how mergers affect fundamental academic operations is complex and requires a more comprehensive perspective that includes personnel and quantitative measures.

According to Golubov et al. (2013), many economic and financial theories are tested in academic studies of M&A. This is because these transactions are the largest and most visible type of corporate investment, but there is also very little information about the investment plans that firms regularly implement in the course of their operations. Golubov et al. (2013) focused their study of the relevant academic literature on the performance, motives, and activity of M&A. Research could also focus on other countries, as most of them deal with the US acquisition market, with less attention paid to Canadian and European (mainly UK) companies. In addition, Golubov et al. (2013) argued that as M&A activity becomes increasingly global, many interesting tests could be conducted in different countries simultaneously.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

A systematic literature review procedure was used to create the methodology section. Literature reviews and theoretical studies are useful tools for providing targeted information on a specific research problem in various business sectors or the public or private sector (Sageder & Feldbauer-Durstmüller, 2019; Liu et al., 2024; Kayser & Zülch, 2024). Within the framework of both international and domestic mergers, this study uses a review approach to assess post-merger governance and performance in public, non-profit and private organizations. The methodology implemented in this study was developed in line with and built on previous studies that used this research tool (Busalim & Hussin, 2016; Nerantzidis et al., 2023; Giovanis & Chasiotou, 2025). The primary steps of the review process are the systematic literature

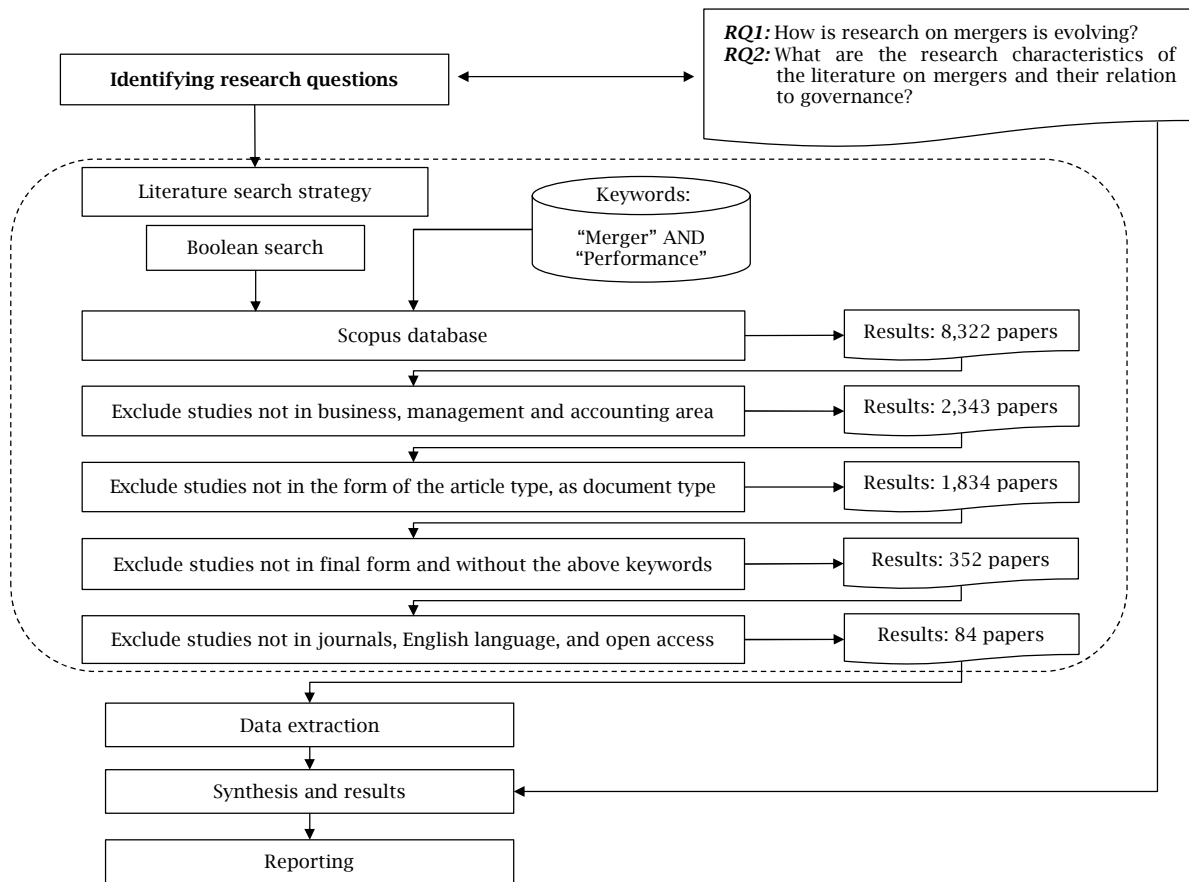
search method using selected keywords, data extraction and discussion of the results obtained.

Additionally, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were established for the study. First of all, it was important to have access to the full texts of the articles as well as to search the specified database. Therefore, the inclusion of highly ranked journals from the academic community, such as those included in a reputable database such as Scopus, was another strategic approach that was implemented (Nerantzidis et al., 2023; Giovanis & Chasiotou, 2025). Furthermore, the articles considered should also be in English to avoid translation difficulties and improve the reproducibility of the study (Bartocci et al., 2023). Finally, publications that were in the press and considered irrelevant or incomplete regarding the topic under study were removed from the sample (Busalim & Hussin, 2016; Battisti et al., 2021). Additionally, in order not to significantly limit the examined sample of studies, no additional restrictions were applied, such as the CABS list or the use of some levels of this list, as was done in previous studies (Sageder & Feldbauer-Durstmüller, 2019).

The search query in Scopus was: *TITLE-ABS-KEY (merger AND performance) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "BUSI")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar")) AND (LIMIT TO (PUBSTAGE, "final")) AND (LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD, "Mergers") OR LIMIT TO (EXACTKEYWORD, "Performance") OR LIMIT-TO (EXACTKEYWORD, "Merger")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE, "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English")) AND (LIMIT-TO (OA, "all"))*

Thus, in November 2024, a Boolean search was conducted in the Scopus database using the keywords "merger" and "performance". The first result was 8,322 documents found in the initial search in the Scopus database (by title, abstract and keywords). The results were then limited to the selected subject area "Business, management and accounting" and 2,343 documents were found. The number of documents found was then limited by the document type and 1,834 documents were found when selecting the article type. Furthermore, there was a limitation on the publication stage: only documents in their final form were considered. Thus, 1,792 documents were found. Another limitation was the selected keywords: "merger", "mergers", and "performance", and 352 documents were found. These documents were also limited by the source type (only journals) and 318 documents were found. Considering the limited criterion of language (English only), 316 documents were retrieved. Finally, all open access (OA) articles were selected due to accessibility, resulting in a final sample of 84 documents. As a result, the review protocol is presented below.

Figure 1. Review protocol



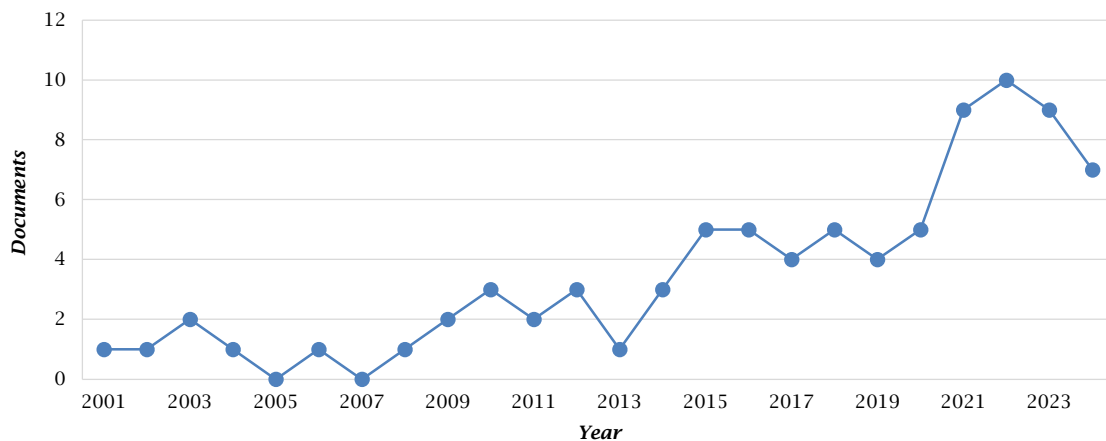
Source: Author's elaboration.

#### 4. RESULTS

To answer the first research question (RQ1) on how merger research is evolving, an analysis of the number of published articles by year, country, and author affiliation was conducted.

The analysis revealed a continuous increase in the number of articles on this topic in diachronic order, with a marked increase in the growth rate after 2015, and the largest number of published articles in 2022.

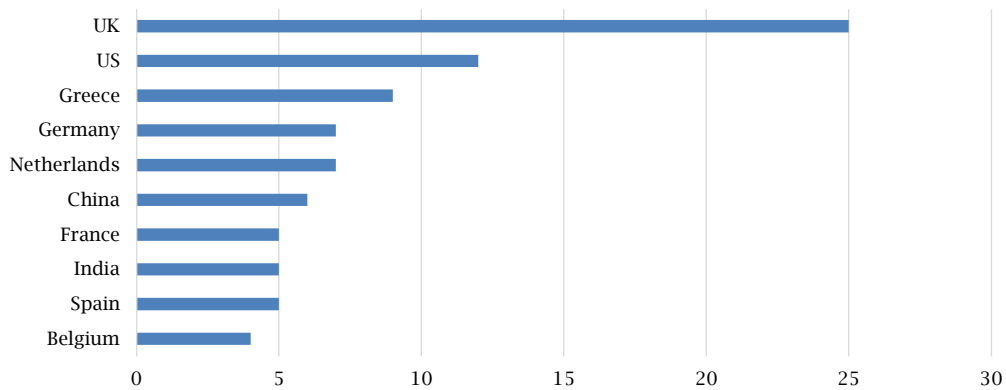
Figure 2. Number of articles published by year



Source: Author's elaboration.

Regarding the articles by country published on the topic of M&A and performance, it was noted that the largest number of articles were published in the UK (25 articles) and the US (12 articles). The next hierarchy is represented

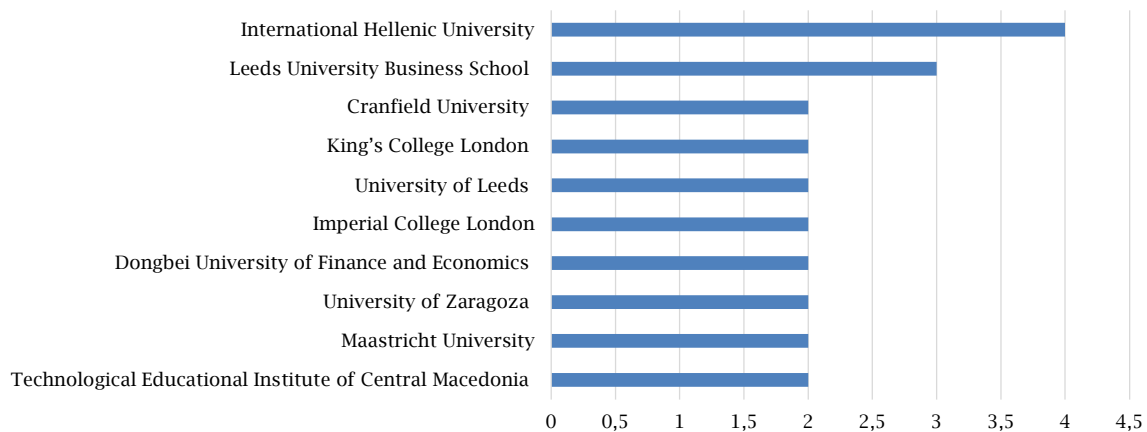
by countries: Greece (nine articles), Germany and the Netherlands (seven related articles each), China (six), France, Spain and India (five articles each), etc. (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3.** Number of articles published by country

Source: Author's elaboration.

The highest concentration of research (with the publication of articles) devoted to this topic was noted in the following universities: International Hellenic University (Greece) — four articles, Leeds University Business School (UK) — three articles. Two articles were published by authors affiliated with Cranfield University (UK), King's College

London (UK), University of Leeds (UK), Imperial College London (UK), Dongbei University of Finance and Economics (China), University of Zaragoza (Spain), Maastricht University (the Netherlands), Technological Educational Institute of Central Macedonia (T.E.I. of Central Macedonia, Greece), etc.

**Figure 4.** Number of articles published by author affiliation

Source: Author's elaboration.

To answer the second research question (RQ2), several results were tracked. Regarding the category of entities and the considered sample, falling in the private or public sector, nine papers (about 11%) refer to non-profit and public organizations, and all the rest considered samples and issues related to the private sector. Considering the geographical characteristics of merger deals, eight studies (about 10%) focused on international mergers, and the rest were related to domestic mergers. Also, from the examined articles, it is revealed that corporate governance theory plays a key role, as governance quality can influence post-merger performance and corporate governance mechanisms lead to risk reduction from managers' or employees' behaviours.

Furthermore, numerous researchers have advocated for additional empirical investigations in the future that involve larger sample sizes, longer time horizons, control samples, and more sophisticated methodologies to analyse the outcomes, results, and effects of mergers, which present a significant yet complex challenge in quantifying and evaluating merger gains. Moreover, the existing literature reveals a gap in reliable indicators and

various well-acceptable metrics and evaluation techniques of performance regarding public organizations, especially after mergers.

## 5. DISCUSSION

In recent years, mergers have resulted in notable structural transformations across various sectors and have attracted global attention (Battisti et al., 2021; Candra et al., 2021; Ly-My et al., 2024). Mergers not only act as external growth strategies for organizations, but also represent a tactical choice for a company that improves its performance, profitability, development, and expansion, whether in local markets or internationally (Golubov et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2021).

The current study aimed to investigate this phenomenon by examining mergers and governance principles in both private and public organizations, as well as in international and domestic mergers, through a literature review that assesses their current status and future prospects. To this end, a thorough review of the relevant literature was conducted. In the merger arena, governance theory is crucial, as the effectiveness of governance

can affect the results following a merger, and strong corporate governance practices can help reduce risks associated with managerial or employee actions.

In light of the findings of previous studies that examined the relationship between mergers and performance in the public, non-profit and private sectors at the national and international levels, this current study offers distinct perspectives. Giovanis and Chasiotou (2025) and Wollscheid and Røsdal (2021) focused their research on the public and non-profit sectors, omitting the private sector, analyzing HEI's mergers, their links to governance and related issues. Nevertheless, Giovanis and Chasiotou (2025) emphasized, as does the present study, the significance of governance in mergers of HEIs.

On the other hand, Liu et al. (2024) concentrate on cross-border M&A; however, their study does not offer comparative insights regarding the public and non-profit sectors. Also, Kayser and Zülch (2024) investigated the importance of adapting corporate models and operations for a sustainable economy, and Battisti et al. (2021) studied M&As in the MENA region, but their study does not provide any reference to a comparative analysis of private and public sector organizations or to the distinction between international and domestic mergers.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In this study, a literature review approach was used to analyse targeted information related to post-merger governance and performance in the public, non-profit, and private sectors through both international and domestic mergers. By conducting

a Boolean search in the Scopus database using the keywords “merger” and “performance” and the corresponding data extraction, it was found that most of the reviewed articles emphasized the significance of mergers and their relationship with governance, management, or public administration.

The present paper develops critical issues of the relevant literature by providing useful insights from a theoretical perspective. The available literature on mergers and performance revealed that there has been an increase in this subject during the last years and it is systematically presented as an important issue to many countries within the relevant literature, apart from the well-explored US and UK capital markets.

However, the limitations of this work include the fact that: 1) the search was conducted only in one database of catalogued journals (Scopus) and no other databases were included (Google Scholar, EconLit, Web of Science, etc.), 2) there was a limitation in the criteria for selecting articles for study, 3) the data analysis of the present research stops in the year 2024.

Finally, future extensions of this study could examine the available data on theories of mergers and governance by evaluating performance across multiple studies and countries or identifying changes over longer time periods than in this study.

Further research is also needed to understand how different organizations across various countries and change managers have effectively responded to the challenge of unification, as well as how these entities have formulated their own policies in the event of a merger.

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