

Examining Transformational Leadership: A Thematic and Bibliometric Literature Review

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Abstract

In the current era of digitalization, companies across all sectors are undergoing swift and significant transformations. Transformational leadership is receiving increased scholarly attention due to its distinct traits that differentiate it from conventional leadership methods. This study aims to assess the efficacy and theoretical underpinnings of transformative leadership. In order to accomplish this objective, the present study undertakes a thorough and methodical examination of 3195 scientific articles pertaining to transformative leadership. This inquiry employs the SPAR-4-SLR procedure and utilizes several bibliometric analytic methods such as performance analysis and science mapping. The study incorporates many approaches such as content analysis, keyword co-occurrence analysis, and bibliographic coupling. This study provides an analysis of performance measures, such as publishing and citation patterns, notable publications and authors, and the prevailing concepts and subjects within the intellectual framework of the area. Additionally, the study offers recommendations for future research in this area. Hence, there is a need for research on the concept of "green intellectual capital". Additionally, it can be worth contemplating a particular domain that holds the possibility for transformative leadership.

Keywords: transformational leadership, thematic, bibliometric, literature review

1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a notable rise in the popularity of transformational leadership, as stated by Becker, Coussement, Buttgen, and Weber (2022). Within the context of the current era of digitalization, enterprises across all industries are going through a period of rapid and significant transformation. According to Ahmad, Ambad, and Mohd (2021) and Sadeghi and Pihie (2012), the academic community is placing a greater emphasis on transformational leadership due to the fact that it differs from traditional leadership practices. Throughout history, leadership has always been a sort of social influence that has entailed a wide variety of complicated phenomena that call for an approach that is interdisciplinary. The entire phenomenon, including the instruments that we use to investigate it, is undergoing a significant transition in this age of digitization, which is enabling this transformation to take place. According to Banks, Dionne, Mast, and Sayama (2022), this transition necessitates adopting a fresh perspective while carrying out leadership analysis. On the other hand, this brings up the topic of how leadership is different in the context of the digital era. This study's objective is to address the dearth of research by providing answers to the research questions (RQs) that are listed below, taking into consideration the context described above:

RQ1. How has the research on transformational leadership changed over the past 24 years?

RQ2. What were the primary clusters of study in transformational leadership throughout the course of 24 years?

RQ3. What are the fundamental principles and investigative techniques employed by influential authors in their theoretical work?

RQ4. What are the present emerging subjects and potential prospects for future advancements?

2. Literature Review

Within the framework of the SPAR-4-SLR technique, which was created by Paul et al. (2021), an exhaustive analysis of the current body of literature was carried out. The TCCM framework that was proposed by Paul and Rosado-serrano (2019) served as the basis for the review, which was conducted with the intention of ensuring the transparency and trustworthiness of the results. In the following step, we will develop a strategy for leadership academics to follow as they navigate the beginning of the digital era.

3. Research Method

The SPAR-4-SLR methodology (Paul et al., 2021) has been utilized by researchers now conducting research on consumer behavior in order to analyze a number of different phenomena. Sharma et al. (2023) have utilized this methodology to investigate showrooming, and Das et al. (2022) have utilized it to investigate impulsive purchasing within the setting of social commerce. Both of these studies are examples of how this methodology has been implemented. In addition, Khan et al. (2023) have implemented SPAR-4-SLR (Paul et al., 2021) in order to study the connection between anthropomorphism and the behavior of making purchases. In order to guarantee that the literature review was carried out in an open and honest manner, we adhered to the SPAR-4 SLR methodology, which is depicted in Figure 1.

Assembling	Identification Domain: transformational leadership Research question: (RQ1) How has the research on transformational leadership in the digital world changed over the past 5 years?, (RQ2) What were the primary clusters of study in transformational leadership throughout the course of 24 years? (RQ3) What are the fundamental principles and investigative techniques employed by influential authors in their theoretical work? (RQ4) What are the present emerging subjects and potential prospects for future advancements?
	Acquisition Search mechanism and material acquisition: Scopus Search period: 2000 – present (June 2024) Search keywords: transformational leadership
Arranging	Purification Article type excluded: Articles type excluded due to language (n=6885); duplicates, English only, subject area limitation and non usable information (3690)
	Organization Organizing codes: Language, document type, and subject area
Assessing	Evaluation Analysis method: Bibliometric
	Reporting Reporting convention: Figures depicting visualization maps, figures describe aspects of transformational leadership

Figure 1. Implementation of the systematic literature review according to the SPAR-4-SLR protocol (Paul et al., 2021)

Source: Authors' own work

Scopus-indexed research publications that have been subjected to peer review were utilized for the assembly process. This ensured that the paper's quality was consistent. The combined results of Scopus were 3195 studies. As can be seen in Figure 2, we utilized the Transformational Leadership and Change Model (TCCM) framework in order to evaluate the existing body of knowledge, determine the areas in which research is lacking, and suggest potential future research objectives for (a) theories, (b) characteristics, (c) settings, and (d) methods for transformational leadership. Bibliometric and content analysis were utilized in order to conduct a thorough evaluation of the contents. In the course of the bibliometric inquiry, VOSviewer was utilized for the purposes of cocitation analysis and visualization.

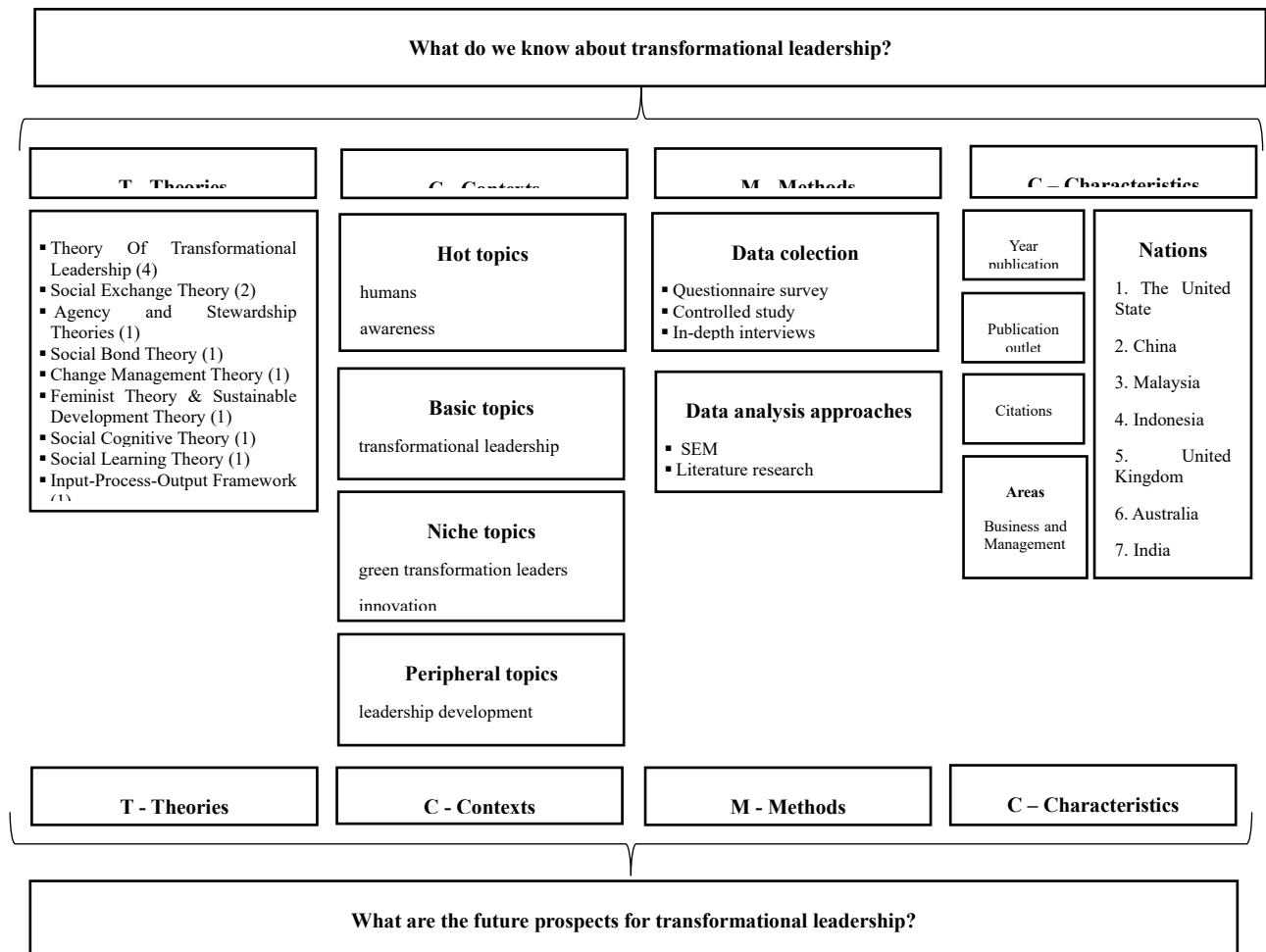


Figure 2. TCCM framework (Paul and Rosado-Serrano, 2019)

4. Finding and Discussion

4.1 Publication trend of transformational leadership research (RQ1)

In this study, we present growth data on the literature related to transformational leadership from the 4.0 industrial revolution milestone in 2000 to onwards. Figure 3 shows that in the early stages of the 4.0 industrial revolution (from the beginning in 2000 to the year of the Industrial Revolution's explosion in 2013), the number of articles published related to transformational leadership was very low, approximately 150 articles in 2013. Following that, there was a significant increase in the number of related publications, particularly in the period from 2018 to the present. Specifically, it reached its peak in 2023 at over 350 articles, with an expected further increase in 2024.

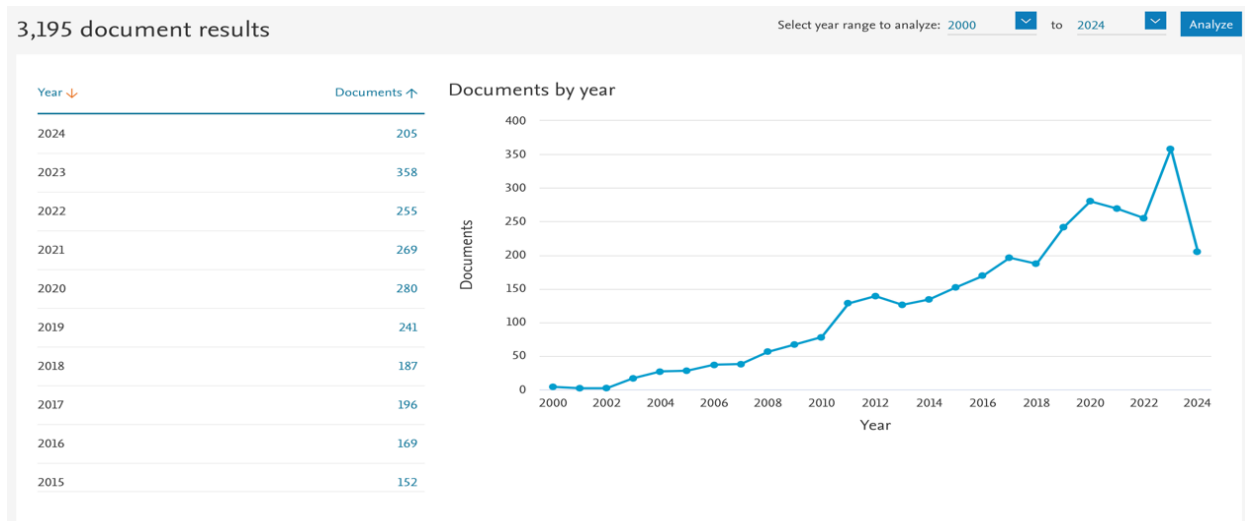


Figure 3. The increasing publication related to transformational leadership from 2000 to 2024 (n=3195)

The fields of business, management, and accounting currently publish the majority of research on transformational leadership (with 2376 articles, accounting for 40.3%), the social sciences come next, accounting for 1477 articles at a rate of 25%. The remaining fields account for less than 10%, specifically economics, econometrics, and finance; psychology and decision sciences have a rate of approximately 6%; and other fields have a rate of less than 4% or less. The US generates the most transformational leadership publications. The top five research paper producers are the US, China, Malaysia, Indonesia, and UK. This demonstrates that Asian nations exhibit a significant level of concern towards this subject matter. Specifically, the Southeast Asia area, represented by individuals A and B, likewise has a focus on transformative leadership. Nevertheless, there remains a dearth of research on this subject in Vietnam.

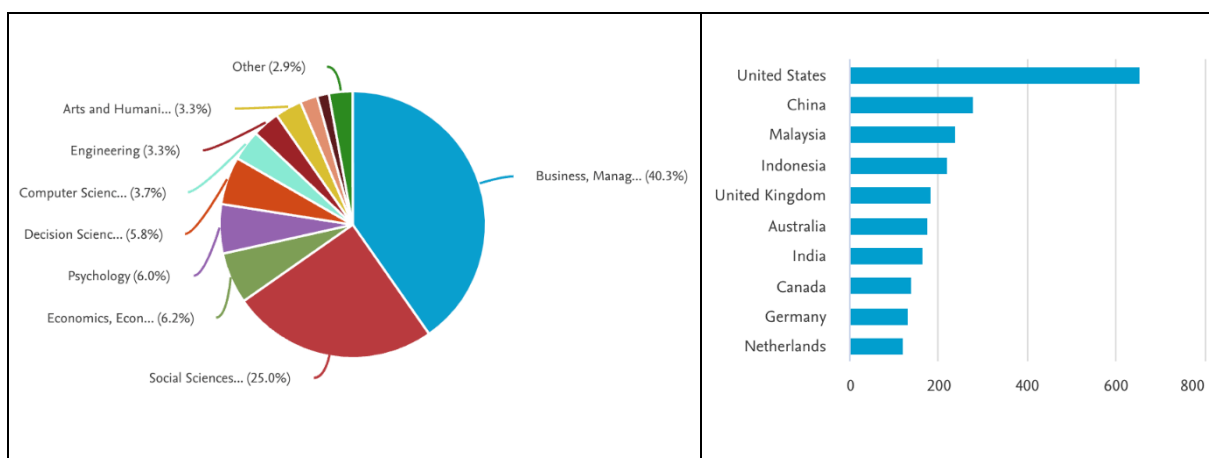


Figure 4. Reasearch documents about transformational leadership by subject areas and by country

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3	Luu	2023	Agency and Stewardship Theories	23	Journal of Family Business Management	Q1	Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)
4	Islam	2023	Social Theory Bond	19	South Asian Journal of Human Resources Management	Q3	Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)
5	Rahi	2022	Theory of Transformational Leadership	24	International Journal of Ethics and Systems	Q1	Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)
6	Lei, Gui & Le	2021	Theory of Transformational Leadership	90	Journal of Knowledge Management	Q1	Quantitative Research Method and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)
7	Yang, Luu & Qian	2021	Social Cognitive Theory	43	International Journal of Hospitality Management	Q1	Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)
8	Islam, Furuoka, & Idris	2020	Change Management Theory	154	Global Business and Organizational Excellence	Q1	Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)
9	Park & Pierce	2020	Theory Of Transformational Leadership	37	Children and Youth Services Review	Q1	Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)
10	Kim & Vandenberghe	2020	Social Learning Theory	59	Group & Organization Management	Q1	Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

11	Kim & Park	2019	Social Exchange Theory	114	International Journal Of Manpower	Q1	Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)
12	Pla-Julián & Guevara	2019	Feminist Theory & Sustainable Development Theory	88	Futures	Q1	Literature research & A technical team (in-depth interviews & discussion groups)
13	Xie	2019	-	83	European journal of training and development	Q2	Systematic Literature Review
14	Mysirlaki & Paraskeva	2019	Input-Process-Output Framework	67	Journal of Leadership Studies	Q3	Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Most famous studies on transformational leadership in the digital age utilize quantitative methodologies, particularly Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), along with a small number of qualitative studies and theoretical systematization. Qualitative research is essential for contributing, alongside quantitative research, to the generalization of schools, background theories, and research objectives in this discipline. The Theory of Transformational Leadership is widely employed in influential research. Explaining this is straightforward, given the notion is closely related to transformational leadership.

4.4 The present emerging subjects and potential prospects for future advancements (RQ4)

Thematic analysis, a commonly employed technique in bibliometrics, is intended to uncover the conceptual framework of a specific field of study. It has been applied to identify distinct historical periods and the dominant themes of discussion associated with them. Graphical mapping was used to represent these subjects, making it easier to understand the discourse. This allowed for new applications of theme analysis in the social sciences. The strategic diagram facilitates the identification of four distinct categories of themes, based on their placement inside specific quadrants (Aria et al., 2022).

- T1: Higher values of centrality and density define the hot topics, well developed and relevant for structuring the conceptual framework of the domain;
- T2: Higher values of centrality and lower values of density define the basic topics, significant for the domain and cross-cutting to its different areas;

- T3: Lower values of centrality and higher values of density define niche topics, strongly developed but still marginal for the domain under investigation;
- Tk: Lower values of centrality and density define peripheral topics, not fully developed for the domain.

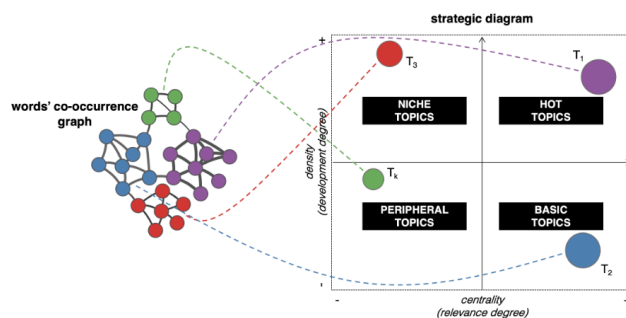
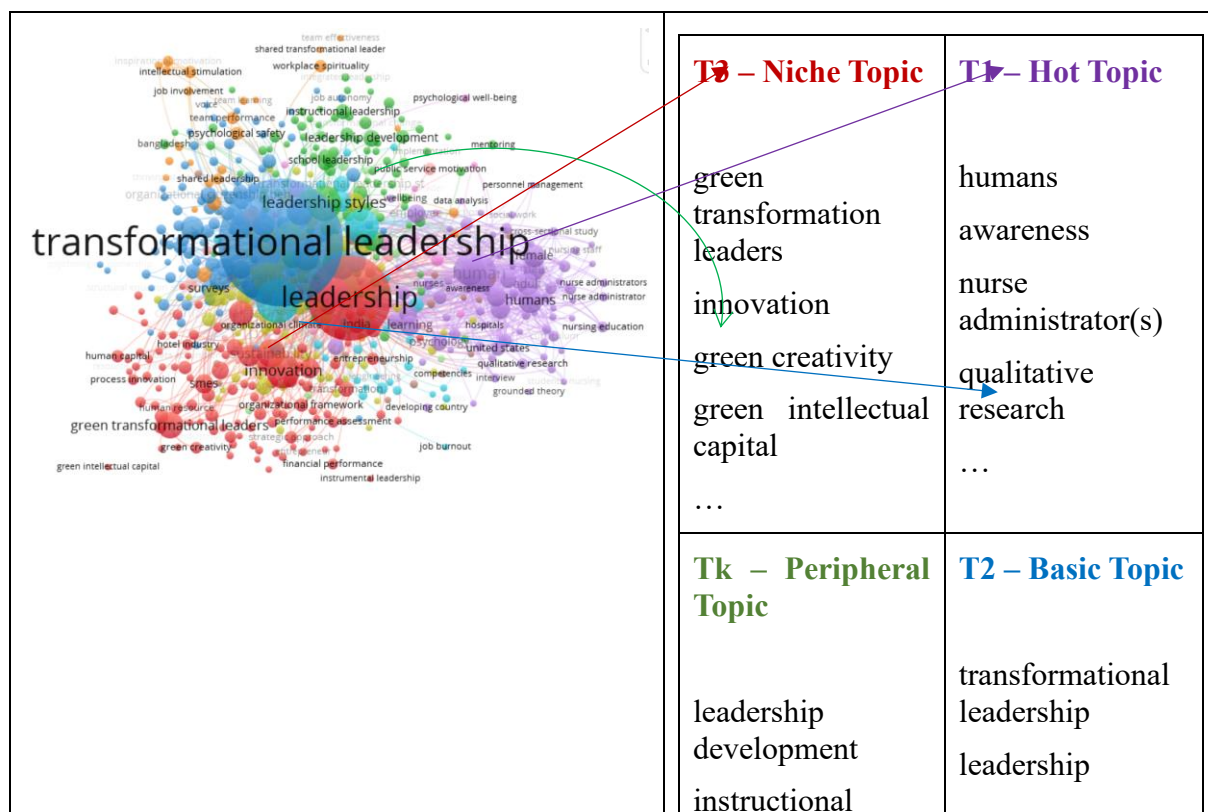


Figure 6. Construction of the thematic map from the words' co-occurrence graph

Source: Aria et al. (2022)

Figure 7 depicts the identification of several themes including a wide range of research objectives related to transformational leadership. The authors used keyword co-occurrence analysis to categorize journals that publish research on transformational leadership.



	leadership school leadership ...	leadership styles ...
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Figure 7. Construction of the thematic map from the words' co-occurrence graph of research objectives related to transformational leadership

Humans, awareness, and nurse administrator are now hot topic that have been extensively explored and are crucial for establishing the conceptual framework within this area via qualitative research method. The basic topic including transformational leadership, leadership, and leadership styles are of great importance within the sector and have broad applicability across other disciplines. Green transformation leaders, innovation, green creativity, and green intellectual capital are considered niche topic of study that have been extensively explored but remain somewhat peripheral within the field being examined. The concepts of leadership development, instructional leadership, and school leadership are considered peripheral topic within the area, lacking comprehensive development.

Utilizing keyword analysis to identify study subjects. Figure 8 displays the network and overlay visualization outcomes obtained from this study area based on the keywords used by previous authors. The analytic program identified a total of 7523 author keywords. Out of these, 793 keywords met the authors' condition of appearing at least three times.

fields that have been studied but are ancillary to the overall problem. Insufficient conceptual frameworks exist for leadership development, instructional leadership, and school leadership. VOS viewer for author keyword network visualization offers exploring purpose or continuation antecedents. Consequently, there is a need for research on the concept of "green intellectual capital". Additionally, it is important contemplating a particular domain that holds the possibility for transformative leadership.

5. Conclusion

This systematic review has several limitations. First, the inclusion criteria on peer-reviewed articles in Scopus and Web of Scineces databases may lead to omitting relevant studies (He and Zhang, 2022). Second, with only 3417 articles in the review of 24 recent years' literature, so trends in the data are indicative. Third, the sole focus on digital era may hinder comparison with the traditional environment contexts.

In order to enhance the understanding of transformational leadership, future research should focus on investigating impact variables, mediating variables, moderating variables, and outcomes in greater depth. This will contribute to the development of a comprehensive reference framework. Simultaneously, a comparison can be made between transformative leadership over two distinct periods: pre and post the digital era, in order to highlight the disparities between these two timeframes.

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