

Leadership Perception and Work Engagement: A Bibliometric Analysis of Research Trends and Intellectual Structure (2021–2025)

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the development of literature on leadership perception and work engagement during the 2021–2025 period. Despite the growing number of publications on leadership perception and work engagement, previous studies have largely focused on empirical relationships between the two constructs, while comprehensive mapping of their intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and emerging research directions remains limited. This study addresses that gap by providing a systematic bibliometric overview of the field. The method employed is a bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer version 1.6.21 software. The data population was retrieved from the Dimensions database using relevant keywords and screened via the PRISMA framework, resulting in a final sample dataset instrument of 262 original journal articles. The results indicate a consistently rising annual publication trend, growing from 20 articles in 2021 to 99 articles in 2025. Conceptual structure analysis identified three major clusters, with leadership, work engagement, and transformational leadership emerging as the core concepts dominating the literature. Regarding the intellectual structure, Ronald J. Burke was identified as the most central reference author, serving as a conceptual bridge between different research streams. The thematic evolution analysis revealed a shift from an individual behavior focus toward broader institutional issues. Topics such as sustainability, workplace spirituality, implementation, and city government emerged as cutting-edge themes with low research density, presenting open opportunities for future exploration. These findings establish a systematic foundation for future research agendas, particularly in integrating value-based leadership within specific organizational contexts like Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKI).

Keywords: Leadership Perception, Work Engagement, Bibliometric Analysis, Vosviewer, Transformational Leadership.

INTRODUCTION

The role of leadership in shaping individual work behavior and organizational effectiveness continues to be a primary concern in management and organizational behavior studies. Amid increasingly dynamic work environments, organizations are demanded not only to achieve performance targets but also to maintain the work engagement levels of their members (Mardikaningsih & Darmawan, 2022; Pitaloka & Putri, 2021; Yulan & Bernarto, 2017). Work engagement is understood as a positive psychological state characterized by vigor, dedication, and



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absorption, and contributes to productivity, innovation, and sustainable organizational performance (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018; Schaufeli, 2021).

In this context, leadership perception becomes one of the factors extensively studied because it relates to how individuals evaluate, interpret, and respond to the leadership behaviors they experience in the workplace (Pitaloka & Putri, 2021; Sueb & Sopiah, 2023; Sukandani & Istikhoroh, 2016; Taba et al., 2023). The literature indicates that positive perceptions of leadership correlate with increased work engagement, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and various other positive work behaviors (Breevaart et al., 2014; Schaufeli, 2021). Various leadership approaches, such as transformational leadership, servant leadership, and spiritual leadership, have been used to explain the mechanism of this relationship in various organizational contexts (Djaelani et al., 2020; Parris & Peachey, 2012).

The development of modern organizations also occurs concurrently with increasing demands for digital transformation, changes in work patterns, and institutional adaptation to increasingly complex environments (Karim et al., 2026). In the educational context, these changes drive the need for leadership capable of managing human resources effectively and maintaining the involvement of organizational members in achieving institutional goals. This transformation is increasingly evident in various educational institutions that have begun integrating digital technology and managerial innovation into organizational governance to improve service quality and institutional performance (Karim, 2024; Karim et al., 2026).

Research developments regarding leadership perception and work engagement show a continuously increasing trend in recent years. A search of the Dimensions database indicates that the number of publications increased from 20 articles in 2021 to 99 articles in 2025. During the same period, publications were distributed across 203 journal sources involving 675 authors. This growth demonstrates that studies on leadership and work engagement have developed into one of the increasingly relevant themes in contemporary organizational studies.

Nevertheless, the increase in publication volume has not been accompanied by a comprehensive understanding of the structural development of this research field. Most research

focuses on testing empirical relationships between leadership and work engagement, but the results of these studies are scattered across various disciplines, organizational contexts, and theoretical approaches. This condition makes it difficult to identify dominant themes, intellectual structures, academic collaboration patterns, and the direction of research development that shapes this field of study comprehensively.

The bibliometric approach offers a systematic way to map the development of a field of science through the analysis of publications, citations, collaboration networks, and conceptual relationships among research topics. Through co-authorship, co-citation, and keyword co-occurrence analysis, bibliometrics enables the identification of main academic actors, intellectual foundations, conceptual structures, and developing themes within a research field (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015). However, research that specifically maps publication trends, intellectual structures, thematic evolution, and future research opportunities in the field of leadership perception and work engagement remains relatively limited.

Based on these conditions, this study aims to analyze the development of literature on leadership perception and work engagement during the 2021–2025 period using a bibliometric approach based on VOSviewer. The analysis focuses on publication trends, main publication sources, influential authors, intellectual structure, conceptual structure, and developing themes in the literature. The research results are expected to provide a more systematic understanding of the direction of field development and identify open research opportunities for future development.

METHOD

This study employs a bibliometric analysis approach to map the development of studies on subjective leadership perception and work engagement in higher education over the last five years, namely the 2021–2025 period. Literature from 2026 is not included because that year is still ongoing, so the available publication data are considered incomplete. This exclusion is conducted to avoid analysis trend bias and to maintain consistency and compatibility of the annual data being compared.

Literature searching was conducted through the Dimensions database source using a combination of keywords relevant to the research topic, including subjective leadership, leadership perception, perceived leadership, work engagement, employee engagement, and higher education.

Dimensions keyword string:

("leadership perception" OR "leadership" OR "perceived leadership") AND ("work engagement" OR "employee engagement" OR "job engagement") AND ("higher education" OR "university" OR "universities" OR "college")

Documents obtained were then selected based on topic relevance, metadata completeness, and the elimination of duplicate data.

Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Database	Dimensions	Databases other than Dimensions
Keywords String	("leadership perception" OR "leadership" OR "perceived leadership") AND ("work engagement" OR "employee engagement" OR "job engagement") AND ("higher education" OR "university" OR "universities" OR "college")	Documents that do not contain the keyword combination
Timespan	Publications between 2021 – 2025	Publications before 2021 or after 2025
Data Integrity	Unique records	Duplicate data

Table 1. Data Selection Criteria (Inclusion and Exclusion)

Data meeting the criteria were exported in a format compatible for analysis using VOSviewer version 1.6.21. Analysis was conducted through several bibliometric techniques, namely citation analysis, co-authorship analysis, co-occurrence analysis, bibliographic coupling, and co-citation analysis.

Visualization of analysis results is presented in the form of network visualization, overlay visualization, and density visualization to identify author collaboration patterns, keyword interconnections, intellectual structures, and research theme developments. The mapping results are then interpreted descriptively to reveal research trends, dominant themes, and opportunities for future research development.

documents. Subsequently, 57 non-article documents were eliminated at the eligibility stage. This process resulted in 262 articles meeting the criteria and used as the research dataset.

The general characteristics of the analyzed dataset are presented in Table 2.

Indicator	Value
Total Documents	262
Publication Years	2021–2025
Total Sources	203
Total Authors	675
Total Citations	262
Average Citations/Document	4.98

Table 2. Overview of Bibliometric Dataset

The research dataset consists of 262 articles published during the 2021–2025 period and distributed across 203 publication sources. All documents involve 675 authors, indicating a high level of collaboration in this field of study. These characteristics indicate that research on leadership perception and work engagement is developing across various disciplines and organizational contexts, thus providing an adequate literature base for further bibliometric analysis.

Source Analysis

Source publication analysis was conducted to identify the most productive journals in publishing research on leadership perception and work engagement. Based on mapping results using VOSviewer, there are 17 publication sources meeting the analysis threshold and forming a connectivity network as shown in Figure 3.

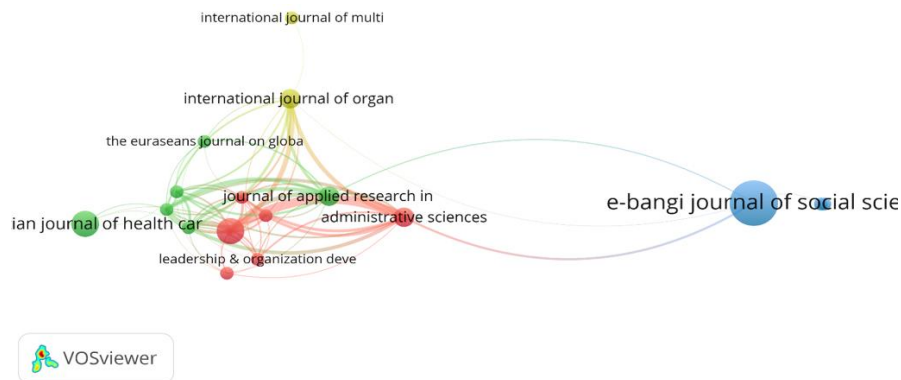


Figure 3. Most Productive Sources

The network visualization in Figure 3 shows that publication sources are divided into four main clusters. The first cluster (red) includes journals largely focused on management, leadership, and organizational fields, such as *Administrative Sciences*, *Cogent Business & Management*, and *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*. The second cluster (green) consists of journals with interdisciplinary coverage, including *Educational Management*, *SAGE Open*, and *Egyptian Journal of Health Care*. The third cluster (blue) is dominated by *e-Bangi Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, while the fourth cluster (yellow) encompasses multidisciplinary journals such as *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*.

Node size in the visualization indicates publication source productivity levels, while connecting lines represent inter-source relationships in the bibliometric network. These findings indicate that research on leadership perception and work engagement is developing not only within management and leadership disciplines but also extending to education, health, and social science fields.

In addition to publication source analysis, research development trends were also analyzed based on the number of annual publications as shown in Figure 4.

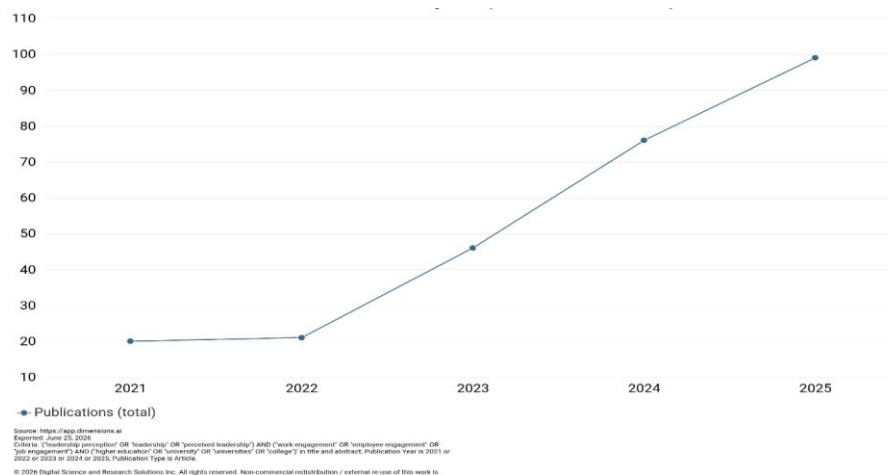


Figure 4. Annual Publication Trends

Based on Figure 4, the number of publications shows an increase during the observation period. In 2021, 20 publications were recorded, increasing to 21 publications in 2022. Higher growth began to appear in 2023 with 46 publications, then increased to 76 publications in 2024

and reached 99 publications in 2025. This pattern indicates increasing academic attention toward the topic of leadership perception and work engagement in various organizational contexts over the last five years.

The accelerated growth after 2023 suggests that leadership perception and work engagement have become increasingly relevant in response to organizational changes following the COVID-19 pandemic, digital transformation, and the growing emphasis on employee well-being. Rather than representing a temporary publication surge, this trend indicates the maturation of the research field and its expanding relevance across multiple organizational contexts.

Author Analysis

Author analysis was conducted to identify individuals with the most prominent contributions to the development of research on leadership perception and work engagement. Author influence in this study was measured based on the number of documents indexed in the dataset and the accumulation of citations obtained.

Author	Documents	Citations
Mrugahku, Beata	2	62
Umair, Sonia	2	62
Waqas, Umair	2	62
Abdullahi, Mohammed Sani	2	43
Raman, Kavitha	2	43
Sofarin, Sakiru Adebola	2	43
Mohamed, Hanan Meslhy	2	8
Rafiq-uz-Zaman, Muhammad	3	4
Bashir, Madiha	3	1
Qadzali, Silvy Sondari	2	1

Table 3. *Most Influential Authors*

Based on Table 3, Beata Mrugahku, Sonia Umair, and Umair Waqas are the authors with the highest citation counts, each obtaining 62 citations from two publications. The next positions are occupied by Mohammed Sani Abdullahi, Kavitha Raman, and Sakiru Adebola Sofarin with 43 citations from two publications. These findings indicate that although the number of publications by these authors is relatively limited, their works have considerable influence on the development of literature on leadership perception and work engagement.

To understand the academic collaboration patterns formed in this field of study, co-authorship analysis was conducted using VOSviewer. The author collaboration network visualization results are presented in Figure 5.

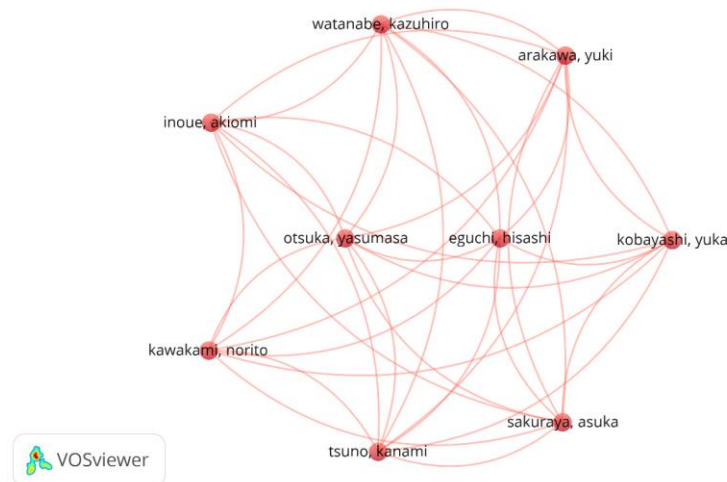


Figure 5. Co-authorship Network

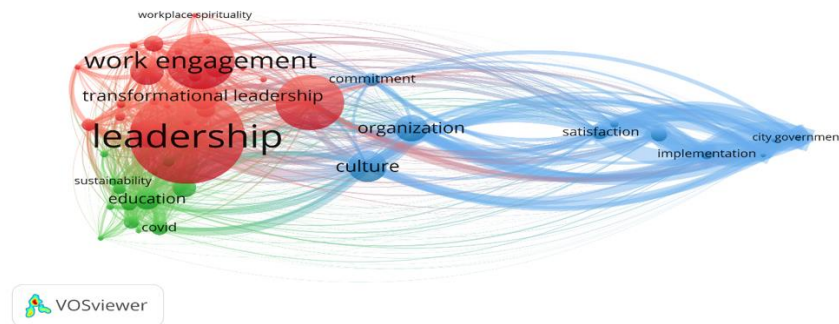
The visualization in Figure 5 shows the formation of one main collaboration cluster consisting of several authors with close working relationships, including Kazuhiro Watanabe, Yuki Arakawa, Akiomi Inoue, Yasumasa Otsuka, Hisashi Eguchi, Yuka Kobayashi, Asuka Sakuraya, Kanami Tsuno, and Norito Kawakami. Inter-author relationships are represented through connecting links, while node size indicates the level of contribution within the collaboration network.

The density of relationships within this cluster indicates intensive collaboration in producing publications related to leadership perception and work engagement. These findings suggest that research development in this field is largely supported by sustainable research team collaboration, particularly in studies connecting leadership aspects, work psychology, and organizational behavior.

Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis

Keyword co-occurrence analysis was conducted to identify the conceptual structure and inter-topic relationships in research on leadership perception and work engagement. Based on

mapping using VOSviewer, keywords meeting the minimum occurrence threshold formed a network consisting of three main clusters as shown in Figure 6.



Gambar 6. Network Visualization Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis

The visualization results show that the first cluster (red) is centered on the keywords *leadership*, *work engagement*, and *transformational leadership*. These three terms have relatively larger node sizes compared to other keywords, indicating higher occurrence frequency in the dataset. Additionally, strong inter-node relationships indicate high conceptual connectivity between leadership and work engagement in the analyzed literature.

The second cluster (green) is dominated by the keywords *education*, *sustainability*, and *covid*. This cluster shows that research on leadership and work engagement is also developing within educational contexts and organizational environmental changes influenced by global challenges, including the post-pandemic period.

Meanwhile, the third cluster (blue) encompasses the keywords *organization*, *culture*, *commitment*, and *satisfaction*. The presence of these keywords indicates that research is not only focused on the direct relationship between leadership and work engagement but also involves various organizational factors related to individual work attitudes and behaviors.

The network structure shows that *leadership* and *work engagement* act as core themes connecting various other topics in the literature. The position of these two keywords at the network center indicates their role as main concepts in research development, while the emergence of keywords such as *sustainability*, *culture*, and *satisfaction* indicates an expansion of research focus toward more contextual and multidimensional organizational issues.

The coexistence of leadership, transformational leadership, organizational culture, and sustainability within the same conceptual network indicates that contemporary studies increasingly examine leadership as a multidimensional organizational capability rather than merely an individual managerial attribute. This pattern reflects a gradual shift toward broader organizational effectiveness perspectives.

Thematic Evolution Analysis

Thematic evolution analysis was conducted using the overlay visualization feature in VOSviewer to identify research theme developments based on the average publication year of keywords appearing in the dataset. This visualization enables the identification of themes that emerged relatively earlier as well as themes developing in the most recent period.

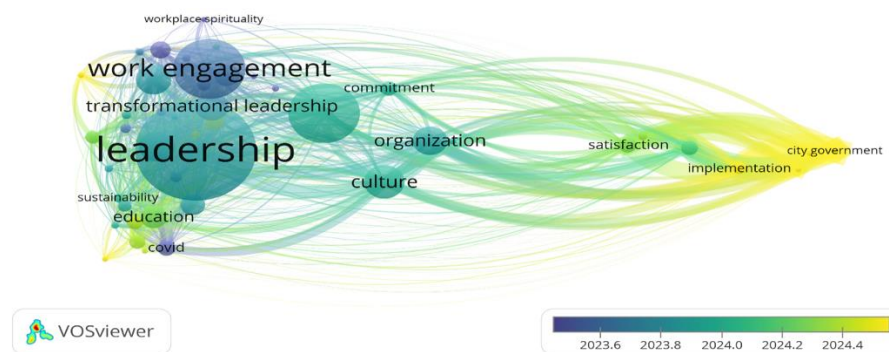


Figure 7. *Overlay Visualization Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis*

Based on Figure 7, the keyword network shows a pattern of theme development moving from basic concepts toward more specific and contextual themes. In the early phase, research was dominated by the keywords *leadership* and *work engagement* occupying central positions in the network. These two concepts became the main foundation connecting various other themes in the literature.

In the subsequent phase, research attention began to shift toward the keywords *transformational leadership*, *commitment*, *culture*, and *education*. The emergence of these themes indicates the development of studies that not only focus on the relationship between leadership and work engagement but also consider organizational and institutional context factors influencing that relationship.

Meanwhile, keywords such as *sustainability*, *satisfaction*, *implementation*, and *city government* tend to appear in more recent periods compared to other keywords. The position of these keywords in the visualization indicates an expansion of research scope toward organizational sustainability issues, policy implementation, and public sector contexts.

The overlay visualization results show that research development regarding leadership perception and work engagement is moving from individually-oriented behavior themes toward more contextual and multidimensional studies. This change reflects the increasingly broad application of leadership and work engagement concepts in various organizational environments as well as increasing attention to factors influencing organizational effectiveness in the long term.

Intellectual Structure Analysis

Intellectual structure analysis was conducted using author co-citation analysis to identify the main reference authors and the intellectual relationships forming the development of research on leadership perception and work engagement. The co-citation network visualization is presented in Figure 8.

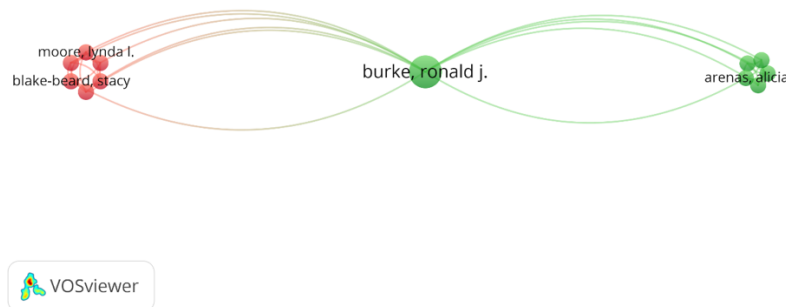


Figure 8. Author Co-citation Analysis

The analysis results show that the intellectual structure of this research field is formed in two main interconnected clusters. The first cluster (red) includes Linda L. Moore, Stacy Blake-Beard, and several other authors with strong citation relationships. The second cluster (green) is centered on Alicia Arenas and a group of authors with intellectual proximity in the analyzed literature.

Ronald J. Burke occupies the most central position with the largest node size compared to other authors. In co-citation analysis, node size represents the frequency of an author's appearance in reference lists cited simultaneously, while connecting lines indicate the strength of citation

relationships among authors. Ronald J. Burke's position as a central node indicates that his works have become one of the main references connecting various research streams in this field.

Both clusters show relatively strong connectivity through Ronald J. Burke as a bridging author. This pattern shows that the development of research on leadership perception and work engagement is not formed in separate literature groups, but rather develops through interconnected reference networks. Cross-cluster relationships reflect the existence of conceptual integration between various perspectives used to explain the relationship between leadership, work behavior, and organizational dynamics.

These findings indicate that the intellectual structure of this research field is still centered on a number of key authors who serve as common references in various studies. The presence of central authors and inter-cluster relationships shows that the conceptual foundation of research is built through strong inter-literature group linkages, thus forming a relatively integrated knowledge base.

The central role of Ronald J. Burke further indicates that the intellectual development of this research field continues to rely on several foundational scholars whose works bridge leadership theory, employee well-being, and organizational behavior. Such a pattern is commonly observed in developing research domains where knowledge accumulation remains concentrated around influential conceptual references.

Research Density and Emerging Topics

Density visualization analysis was conducted to identify research density levels for each theme appearing in the keyword network. This visualization helps differentiate between well-established themes and topics that still have room for research development. The mapping results are presented in Figure 9.



Figure 9. Density Visualization Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis

Based on Figure 9, the area with the highest density is indicated by the keywords *leadership*, *work engagement*, and *transformational leadership*. These three terms are located in bright yellow zones indicating high occurrence frequency and strong connectivity with other themes in the network. This position indicates that the relationship between leadership and work engagement has become the main focus in the literature during the observation period.

On the other hand, several keywords such as *sustainability*, *workplace spirituality*, *satisfaction*, *implementation*, and *city government* are located in areas with lower density levels. This position indicates that these themes still have relatively limited publication numbers compared to the core themes dominating the research network.

These findings become clearer when linked with the overlay visualization results in Figure 7. A number of keywords located in low-density areas also emerge as developing themes in more recent publication periods. This condition indicates that research on leadership perception and work engagement is beginning to move toward more specific contexts, including organizational sustainability, public sector, policy implementation, as well as psychological and value dimensions in the workplace.

The formed pattern shows a difference between established themes and developing themes. Themes such as *leadership*, *work engagement*, and *transformational leadership* already have broad literature bases, while *sustainability*, *workplace spirituality*, *implementation*, and *city government* are still in relatively open areas for exploration. The position of these themes in the density map

and thematic evolution indicates potential for future research agenda development, particularly in integrating leadership perspectives with sustainability, public governance, and contemporary organizational dynamics issues.

Discussion

Growth and Development

The increase in publication numbers during the 2021–2025 period indicates that the relationship between leadership perception and work engagement has developed into one of the themes receiving increasing attention in organizational behavior and human resource management studies in the last five years. This finding indicates increasing academic attention toward the role of leadership in shaping individual work behavior and organizational effectiveness. In the context of modern organizations, leadership is no longer understood merely as a decision-making function, but also as a mechanism influencing motivation, commitment, psychological well-being, and member engagement with work (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018; Schaufeli, 2021).

The centrality of the keywords *leadership* and *work engagement* in the bibliometric network shows that these two concepts function as a conceptual core connecting various derivative themes in the literature. Previous literature explains that positive perceptions of leaders contribute to increased work vigor, dedication, and individual involvement in organizational activities (Breevaart et al., 2014; Schaufeli, 2021). Therefore, the increasing volume of publications during the observation period can be understood as an academic response to organizational needs to build adaptive and competitive human resources.

Findings from the publication source analysis also show that studies on leadership perception and work engagement are no longer limited to management and organizational behavior disciplines. The emergence of journals from education, health, and social science fields shows that these two concepts have developed into cross-disciplinary issues. This development aligns with the view that leadership effectiveness is a relevant factor in various organizational contexts, including higher education institutions, public service organizations, and health sectors (Avolio et al., 2009; Northouse, 2022).



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The growth in publications increasing after 2022 can also be linked to post-pandemic workplace environmental changes. This period drove the emergence of needs to understand how leadership is able to maintain work engagement in situations marked by uncertainty, digital transformation, and changes in organizational work patterns (Kniffin et al., 2021; Wang & Wang, 2021). This condition explains why research on leadership and work engagement has experienced significant increases in recent years.

Bibliometric results indicate that this research field is still in an expansion phase. The increasing number of publications, diversity of journal sources, and growing involvement of researchers from various disciplines indicate that studies on leadership perception and work engagement continue to develop as one of the important themes in contemporary organizational studies. This development simultaneously opens space for exploration of more specific research contexts, including in higher education institutions and value-based organizations that remain relatively limited in international literature.

Conceptual Structure

Keyword co-occurrence analysis results show that *leadership*, *work engagement*, and *transformational leadership* are concepts occupying the most central positions in the research network. This finding indicates that literature during the 2021–2025 period is still dominated by efforts to explain how individual perceptions of leader behavior influence their engagement with work and the organization. The position of these three keywords as main nodes indicates that the relationship between leadership and work engagement has developed into one of the most stable research foci in organizational behavior studies (Breevaart et al., 2014; Schaufeli, 2021).

The dominance of *transformational leadership* in the conceptual map shows that this leadership model remains the most widely used theoretical approach to explain the emergence of work engagement. Transformational leaders are viewed as capable of enhancing work meaning, providing inspiration, and building work environments that support individual development (Bass & Riggio, 2006). This condition drives higher levels of dedication, enthusiasm, and involvement among organizational members (Breevaart et al., 2014). This bibliometric finding confirms that

transformational leadership emerges as one of the themes most frequently associated with *work engagement* in the analyzed literature.

Thematic evolution analysis shows that research focus does not stop at the direct relationship between leadership and work engagement. Literature has begun to develop toward more complex organizational variables, such as organizational commitment, organizational culture, and education contexts. This development indicates a shift from an individual-centered approach toward an approach that considers institutional factors shaping organizational members' work experiences (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016; Saks et al., 2022).

The emergence of the keyword *education* in the thematic network also shows that research on leadership and work engagement is increasingly applied to the education sector. The increasingly dynamic educational environment demands institutions to develop leadership models capable of maintaining the involvement of lecturers, educational staff, and other organizational members. In the higher education context, perceptions of leadership quality are often associated with institutional commitment, job satisfaction, and sustainable academic performance (Bolden et al., 2015; Bryman, 2007).

Overlay visualization results show the emergence of newer themes such as *sustainability*, *implementation*, *satisfaction*, and *city government*. The emergence of these themes indicates that research is beginning to shift from a focus on individual relationships toward broader organizational and institutional implications. This change shows that research on leadership perception and work engagement is beginning to move toward wider and more applicable contexts. Literature is no longer only attempting to explain conceptual relationships between variables but also examining how leadership contributes to organizational sustainability, policy implementation effectiveness, and public service quality improvement (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011; Robertson & Barling, 2017).

This development indicates that the conceptual structure of this field is experiencing expansion from classical themes toward more contextual issues. Although *leadership* and *work engagement* remain the main foundations, the direction of literature development shows increasing



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attention toward the integration of organizational, sustainability, and more diverse sectoral context aspects. This pattern shows that research is not only focused on individual effectiveness but also on leadership contributions to organizational continuity and performance in the long term.

Intellectual Structure and Scholarly Collaboration

Co-authorship and author co-citation analyses show that the development of research on leadership perception and work engagement is determined not only by increasing publication numbers but also by the formation of relatively integrated collaboration networks and intellectual structures. In bibliometric studies, this pattern reflects the existence of academic communities that play a role in building, disseminating, and developing knowledge in a research field (Donthu et al., 2021).

Co-authorship analysis results show that research collaboration tends to be concentrated in certain researcher groups with close working relationships. This finding indicates that knowledge development regarding leadership perception and work engagement is largely conducted through sustainable collaborative research. This pattern aligns with the development of contemporary organizational research that increasingly demands the integration of various scientific perspectives to explain work behavior phenomena more comprehensively (Hall et al., 2018).

Meanwhile, author co-citation analysis results show that Ronald J. Burke occupies a central position in the citation network. This position indicates that his works function as one of the bridging references used by various researcher groups in explaining the relationship between leadership, work well-being, and organizational behavior. From a bibliometric perspective, authors occupying central positions in co-citation networks generally serve as conceptual connectors facilitating the integration of various research streams (Small, 1973; Zupic & Čater, 2015).

The existence of two main clusters in the co-citation network shows that research on leadership perception and work engagement develops through literature groups with different foci but remains interconnected. This condition indicates that this research field does not develop in a fragmented manner but is built upon relatively integrated conceptual foundations. This integration enables more systematic knowledge accumulation and supports the development of increasingly

complex conceptual models in explaining the relationship between leadership and work engagement (Boyack & Klavans, 2010).

These findings indicate that the development of literature on leadership perception and work engagement is still influenced by certain academic networks that serve as centers of knowledge production and dissemination. Therefore, expanding cross-country, cross-institutional, and cross-organizational context collaboration becomes important to enrich research perspectives while increasing the relevance of findings in various work environments, including higher education institutions.

Emerging Themes and Future Research Directions

Density visualization and overlay visualization analyses show that research on leadership perception and work engagement is experiencing development from established themes toward more contextual and multidimensional issues. Keywords such as *leadership*, *work engagement*, and *transformational leadership* remain dominant themes in the literature. However, the high density of research on these themes indicates that the relationships between these variables have been extensively explored in various organizational contexts. This condition indicates the need for new perspective development to expand theoretical and empirical research contributions in the future (Donthu et al., 2021; Zupic & Čater, 2015).

One theme showing development in the most recent publication period is *sustainability*. The emergence of this theme indicates an expansion of research focus from individual effectiveness toward organizational sustainability. Contemporary literature explains that leadership not only plays a role in improving performance and work engagement but also in building organizational capacity to maintain continuity, adaptability, and institutional resilience in the long term (Avery & Bergsteiner, 2011).

Additionally, the keyword *workplace spirituality* emerges as a theme that still has relatively low research density. Although not yet extensively explored, this concept has relevance to work meaning, organizational values, and individual connectedness to institutional goals (Fry, 2003; Karakas, 2010). The position of this theme in the bibliometric map indicates opportunities to



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develop research models that connect leadership perception, organizational values, and work engagement more comprehensively.

The emergence of keywords *implementation*, *satisfaction*, and *city government* also shows that research is beginning to shift from a focus on individual relationships toward broader organizational and institutional implications. This development indicates that studies on leadership perception and work engagement are no longer limited to individual behavior but are beginning to be directed toward organizational effectiveness, policy implementation, and public service quality.

These findings have important implications for research development in the field of Islamic Education Management. Although research on leadership perception and work engagement continues to develop, the context of Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions (PTKI) has not yet appeared as a dominant focus in the analyzed literature map. Yet, PTKI has organizational characteristics that combine academic functions, institutional governance, and the internalization of Islamic values. These characteristics open opportunities to develop leadership models that are not only oriented toward organizational performance but also toward the formation of work meaning and the strengthening of institutional values.

Based on bibliometric findings, several research agendas can be considered for the future. First, examining the role of workplace spirituality as a mediating or moderating variable in the relationship between leadership perception and work engagement. Second, integrating the organizational sustainability perspective to explain the long-term impact of leadership on the continuity of higher education institutions. Third, expanding research contexts to PTKI environments to understand how value-based leadership influences the work engagement of lecturers and educational staff. These agendas have the potential to provide theoretical contributions while enriching the development of Islamic Education Management studies in the future.

This study aims to map the development of studies on leadership perception and work engagement through bibliometric analysis of 262 articles published during the 2021–2025 period. The research results show that this topic has experienced consistent publication growth and is increasingly gaining attention in various disciplines, particularly management, education, health, and organizational behavior. The increase in publication numbers indicates the growing academic interest in the role of leadership perception in shaping individual work engagement and organizational effectiveness.

Conceptual structure analysis shows that *leadership*, *work engagement*, and *transformational leadership* are core themes dominating the literature. Research theme development has moved from a focus on leadership and individual work behavior relationships toward broader issues such as organizational culture, commitment, sustainability, implementation, and satisfaction. This finding indicates an expansion of research perspectives from the individual level toward the organizational and institutional levels.

From the intellectual structure side, research on leadership perception and work engagement is built by relatively integrated citation networks with Ronald J. Burke as one of the central references. Meanwhile, author collaboration analysis shows that the development of this field is supported by researcher groups with strong and sustainable working relationships.

Density visualization and overlay visualization analyses identify several themes that still have development opportunities, namely *workplace spirituality*, *sustainability*, *implementation*, and *city government*. These themes show relatively low research density but are beginning to emerge as developing research foci in the most recent publication periods. This condition indicates the existence of open research space to expand theoretical and empirical context development.

From the Islamic Education Management perspective, the research results show that the context of Islamic Religious Higher Education Institutions (PTKI) has not yet become a dominant focus in international literature. Therefore, future research can be directed toward developing value-based leadership models that integrate leadership perception, work engagement, workplace

spirituality, and organizational sustainability in PTKI environments. The development of this agenda has the potential to contribute to the strengthening of Islamic educational leadership studies while expanding empirical contexts in global literature.

Theoretically, this study enriches the bibliometric understanding of leadership perception and work engagement by identifying the field's conceptual foundations, intellectual structure, and emerging research themes. The findings also provide a systematic knowledge base for future theory development, particularly regarding the integration of leadership, workplace spirituality, and organizational sustainability. Practically, the findings may assist researchers in identifying promising research opportunities and support institutional leaders in understanding evolving leadership issues that influence employee engagement across different organizational settings.

This study is limited by the exclusive use of the Dimensions database and publications indexed during the 2021–2025 period. Consequently, relevant studies indexed in other databases or published outside the selected timeframe may not be represented. Future bibliometric studies are encouraged to integrate multiple international databases and extend the observation period to obtain a more comprehensive overview of the field.

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