

A Review of Inclusive Leadership Research: A Citespace-Based Visualization and Analysis

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Abstract: As the turbulence and diversity of internal and external environments of organizations continue to increase, inclusive leadership, as a diversity management approach, has the characteristics of openness, accessibility, and availability, which can satisfy the diverse needs of organizational members and make full use of the diversity in order to achieve the sustainable development of the organization. In this paper, we take 1,332 English-language literatures from 2017-2025 in the Web of Science database as a research sample, and use the CiteSpace visualization tool to analyze the issuance, research hotspots, frontiers, and future trends of inclusive leadership.

1. Introduction

Since the 21st century, from the external perspective of organizations, the global economic landscape has shifted to multipolarity and economic volatility has intensified; from the internal perspective of organizations, their members have become increasingly diverse in terms of both demographics and values and cultural beliefs [1], and with the rise of humanistic management that emphasizes the well-being of employees and pluralistic inclusiveness, there has been an urgent need for researchers and practitioners to find a leadership approach that can satisfy the diversified needs of the workforce Inclusive Leadership. Inclusive leadership, as a relational leadership style that can lead organizations in chaotic and turbulent environments and promote creative and innovative ideas from a diverse workforce [2], has received much attention from researchers. Inclusive leadership is centered on "inclusion" as a unique approach to diversity management that actively addresses diversity rather than viewing it as a problem to be solved [3]. Inclusion has been introduced into the field of leadership and has led to inclusive leadership, which is different from previous leadership styles in that it emphasizes that leaders encourage others to participate in discussions and decision-making through words and actions that express invitation and appreciation for their contributions, "so that they believe their voices can be heard", thus enhancing employees' sense of psychological security [4]. At the same time, it has been noted that inclusive leadership can have a two-way impact [5], demonstrating openness, accessibility, and availability in its interactions with its followers [6]. Ashikali defines inclusive leadership at both the individual and organizational levels, and that inclusive leadership promotes uniqueness and a sense of belonging to the organization as a means of mitigating the negative relationship between racial and cultural diversity in teams and an inclusive climate [7]. In a recent study on inclusive leadership, Korkmaz et al.

proposed that inclusive leadership includes four dimensions: promoting employee uniqueness, enhancing team belonging, expressing appreciation, and supporting organizational efforts by synthesizing different concepts of inclusive leadership behaviors [3].

Inclusive leadership has been studied at multiple levels. At the individual level, inclusive leadership not only produces positive effects such as enhanced employee performance [4], innovative behaviors [8], employee engagement [9], employee voice [10], and reduced turnover [5]; it also leads to emotional depletion of the leaders themselves [11]. At the organizational level, inclusive leadership can improve knowledge sharing [12], team performance and resilience [13]. However, existing research is relatively fragmented and lacks a well-established system. Therefore, this paper will use the bibliometric analysis software CiteSpace to retrieve data from the Web of Science Core Collection with the theme of "inclusive leadership." The publication period is set from 2017 to 2025, and the language is limited to English. A final sample of 1,332 inclusive leadership records is obtained. This study systematically reviews relevant international research on inclusive leadership, presents the evolving trends in this field, and proposes potential issues and directions for future research to promote the further development of inclusive leadership.

2. Analysis of communications from inclusive leaders

2.1 Temporal and spatial distribution

The number of inclusive leadership studies showed a fluctuating growth trend over the period 2017-2025. The annual number of publications and citation frequency are shown in Figure 1. In 2017, the number of publications and citation frequency related to inclusive leadership were the lowest, while both figures peaked in 2024, reaching 246 publications and 5,463 citations respectively. The cumulative citation frequency of literature exceeds 19,000 times, and the average citation frequency is 14.3 times.

The geographical distribution of inclusive leadership is dominated by the United States with 436 publications, followed by China (197), the United Kingdom (179), and Australia (152). In terms of issuing institutions, University of London (39 articles), University of California System (24 articles), and University System of Ohio (23 articles) have the highest number of articles.

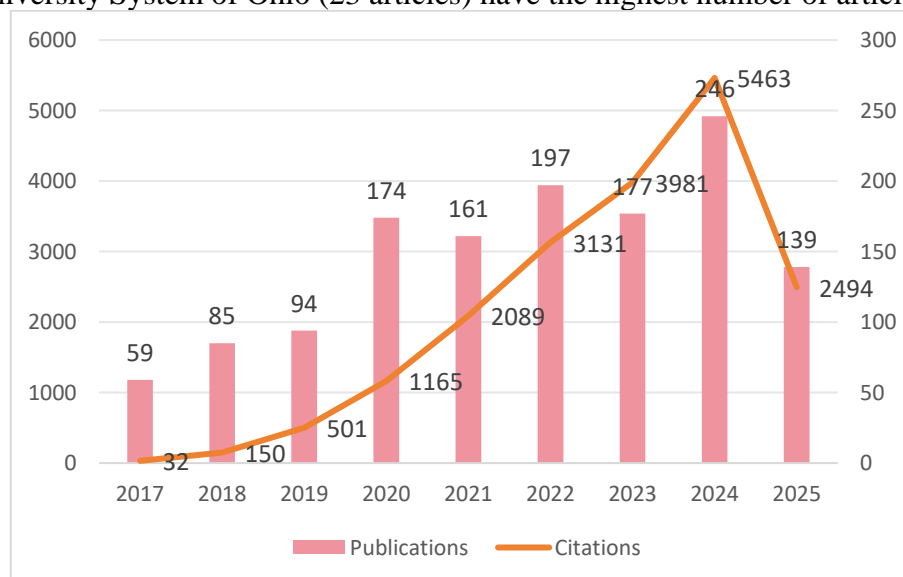


Figure 1 Literature in the field of inclusive leadership research in terms of number of publications, frequency of citations

2.2 Distribution of journals and fields

Journal type and field of study reflect the interdisciplinary nature of inclusive leadership. Sustainability is the most widely published journal on inclusive leadership, followed by Frontiers of Psychology, International Journal of inclusive Education, Journal of Educational Administration, and others.

The current trend of inclusive leadership has been led by the two disciplines of management and education, with the cross-fertilization of disciplines such as environmental science, psychology, green sustainable science and technology, and nursing.

2.3 Analysis of highly cited literature

The citation frequency of the literature implies a high impact position in the field, and the top 5 cited literatures in the field were selected to further explore the citation status in the field of inclusive leadership research (e.g., Table 1). Shore, Lynn M.'s Inclusive workplaces: a review and model published in 2018 is the most cited journal, which presents a model of inclusive organizations that emphasizes the importance of inclusive treatment of employees and opportunities for advancement at all levels of the organization. Four other highly cited papers explore the positive impact of inclusive leadership, and the implications in psychology and sociology, among others.

Table 1 5 cited literature in the field of inclusive leadership research

Article Title	Author(s)	Journal	Times Cited
Inclusive workplaces: a review and model [14]	Shore, Lynn M.	Human Resource Management Review	439
Inclusive leadership: Realizing positive outcomes through belongingness and being valued for uniqueness[15]	Randel, Amy E..	Human Resource Management Review	417
Impact of inclusive leadership on innovative work behavior: The role of psychological safety [16]	Javed, Basharat	Journal of Management&Organization	243
Green inclusive leadership and green creativity in the tourism and hospitality sector: serial mediation of green psychological climate and work Green inclusive leadership and green creativity in the tourism and hospitality sector: serial mediation of green psychological climate and work engagement[17]	Bhutto, Tahseen Ahmed	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	229
Strategic sustainable development of Industry 4.0 through the lens of social responsibility: The role of human resource practices [18]	Mukhuty, Sumona	Business Strategy and the Environment	106

3. Visual Analysis of Inclusive Leadership Research Hotspots

3.1 Keyword co-occurrence mapping analysis

Keyword co-occurrence analysis reveals the hot topics, knowledge structure and their associations in the research field by counting the frequency of keywords co-occurring in the same

literature. The keyword co-occurrence knowledge map is drawn by synthesizing the research results in the field of inclusive leadership from 2017 to 2025, with the nodes representing the keywords, the node size reflecting the keyword frequency, and the high-frequency keywords reflecting the hot issues in the field. The top keywords include "inclusive leadership", "transformational leadership", "ethical management", "diversity management", "behavior", "work", "perceptions" and "education". The shade of the purple circle in the outermost circle of the node represents the mediating role of the keyword, e.g., "inclusive leadership" "transformation leadership" "diversity management", "ethical leadership", "behavior", "children", "education". "children" and "perceptions" are the most obvious.(see Fig. 2)

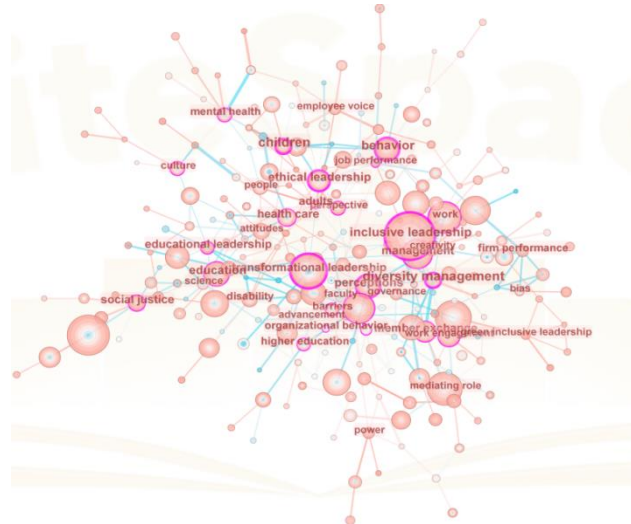


Figure 2 Keyword co-occurrence mapping in the field of inclusive leadership research

3.2 Keyword clustering mapping analysis

Based on the keyword co-occurrence, Citespace automatically clusters the keywords through a clustering algorithm, and similar categories form clustering groups (see Fig. 3), and displays the generated Modularity (Q-value) and Silhouette (S-value), the algorithm stipulates that Q-value is greater than 0.3, the clustering structure is significant, and the division of the community is reasonable, and the S-value is greater than 0.7, and the clustering results are reasonable, the node matches well with its own clustering.

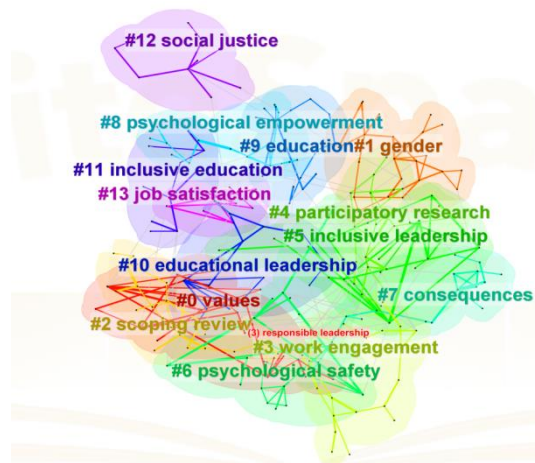


Figure 3 Keyword clustering mapping in the field of inclusive leadership research

In this paper, keyword clustering analysis was conducted with inclusive leadership related literature from 2017-2025, and 14 key clusters were obtained, including #0values, #1gender, #2scoping review, #3work engagement, #4participatory research, #5inclusive leadership, #6psychological safety, #7consequences, #8psychological empowerment, #9education, #10educational leadership, #11inclusive education, #12social justice, and #13job satisfaction. The clustering module value of $Q=0.7274$ and the mean profile value of $S=0.8815$ indicate that the clustering results of this study are highly credible.

3.3 Keyword clustering time zone mapping analysis and keyword emergence analysis

The keyword clustering time zone mapping and keyword emergence mapping analyses demonstrate the overall dynamics of inclusive leadership, and grasp the recent status of research conduct and cutting-edge academic dynamics from the historical dimension (e.g., Figs. 4-5).

The time zone mapping of inclusive leadership keywords for the period 2017-2025 was analyzed to summarize the trends in inclusive leadership (as shown in Figure 4). In terms of research hotspot associations, inclusive leadership is closely related to "diversity" "management", indicating that inclusive leadership research focuses on exploring how inclusive leaders can achieve effective management in diverse organizational environments; It is also associated with "job performance" "firm performance", focusing on its impact on individual and organizational performance, and exploring whether it is possible to stimulate employees' potential and enhance corporate performance by creating a positive atmosphere. In terms of time evolution, during the period of 2017-2025, inclusive leadership research moves from theoretical construction to practical scenarios, and is gradually associated with "green" in order to meet society's requirements for sustainable development of enterprises. In terms of cross-disciplinary integration, inclusive leadership is linked to the fields of "health care" and "education", etc. This reflects the application of the concept of inclusive leadership. This reflects the broad and in-depth application of the concept of inclusive leadership, as well as the recognition and exploration of its value by various industries.

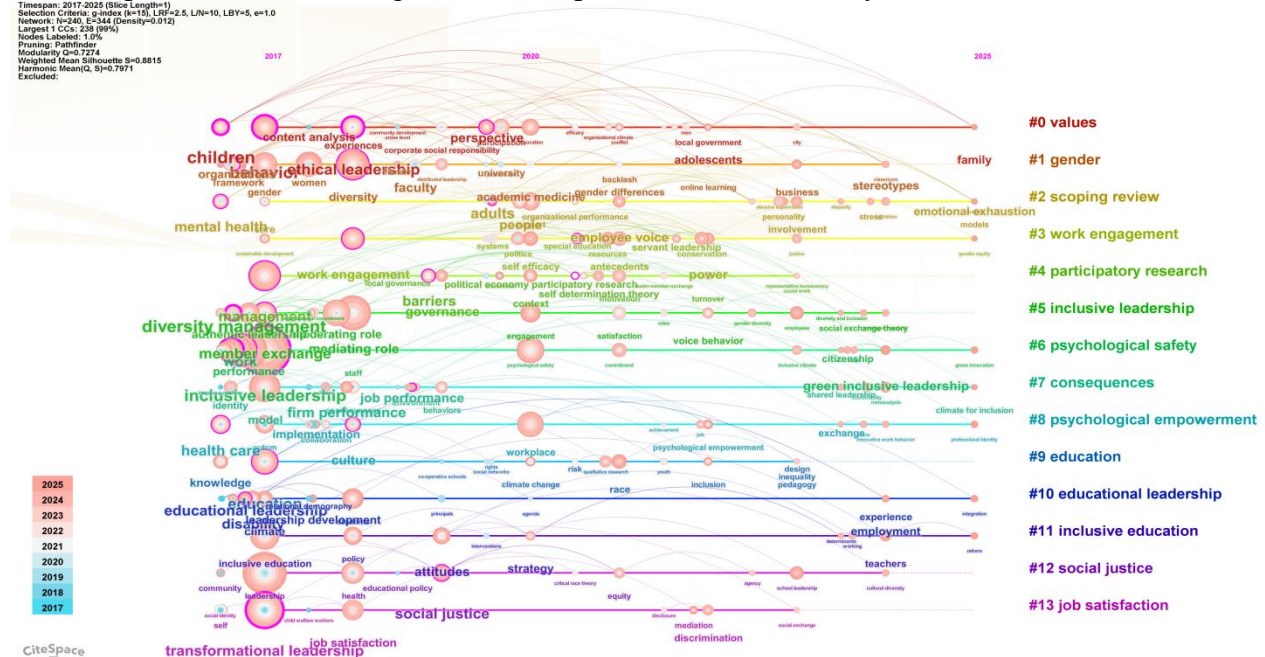


Figure 4 Time zone mapping of inclusive leadership keyword clustering

A emergent word is a keyword that appears more frequently during a certain period of time and represents a hot research topic during that period of time. The keyword emergence map contains a

total of 32 different keywords covering a wide range of fields, such as healthcare, leadership, society, environment, etc. In terms of the year in which the keywords became research hotspots, "care" "leadership" "corporate social responsibility" related topics started to be researched in 2017, 2018 and 2019 respectively; from the perspective of the duration time of the research hotspot, "care", "educational leadership", "corporate social responsibility" are all 4 years; from the perspective of the intensity of keyword emergence, "outcm" is in the first place with 4.78, and the other "satisfaction", "leadership" and "care" have become strong hotspots in the field of inclusive leadership research. In addition, the emergence of the hot keywords "inclusive climate", "justice", and "employees" in 2023 indicates that Inclusive leadership research is deeply integrating with topics such as organizational equity and employee well-being. (as shown in Figure 5)

Top 32 Keywords with the Strongest Citation Bursts

Keywords	Year	Strength	Begin	End	2017 - 2025
outcm	2017	4.78	2017	2018	
care	2017	3.94	2017	2020	
social identity	2017	3.68	2017	2018	
health care	2017	3.2	2017	2019	
member exchange	2017	2.85	2017	2019	
transformational leadership	2017	2.65	2017	2019	
identity	2017	2.45	2017	2019	
professional development	2017	2.45	2017	2018	
educational leadership	2017	2.33	2017	2020	
framework	2017	2.32	2017	2018	
leadership	2017	3.95	2018	2019	
health	2018	3.25	2018	2020	
perceptions	2017	2.74	2018	2019	
culture	2018	2.34	2018	2020	
science	2017	3.45	2019	2020	
faculty	2019	3.05	2019	2020	
challenges	2017	2.85	2019	2020	
corporate social responsibility	2019	2.84	2019	2022	
policy	2018	2.55	2019	2020	
systems	2020	2.92	2020	2022	
climate change	2020	2.86	2020	2021	
people	2020	2.57	2020	2021	
academic medicine	2020	2.56	2020	2021	
satisfaction	2021	4.07	2021	2023	
access	2021	3.52	2021	2022	
perspectives	2021	3.08	2021	2022	
ethical leadership	2018	2.92	2021	2022	
turnover	2022	2.79	2022	2023	
local government	2022	2.39	2022	2023	
inclusive climate	2023	3.01	2023	2025	
justice	2023	3.01	2023	2025	
employees	2023	2.53	2023	2025	

Figure 5 Inclusive leadership keyword emergence mapping

4. Summary and Limitations

In this paper, Citespace visual analysis tool is used to analyze the knowledge map in terms of publications, keyword co-occurrence, keyword clustering, and keyword time zone clustering in the field of Inclusive Leadership research during the period of 2017-2025, to dig deeper into the current status of Inclusive Leadership research and future development trends. Quantitative processing is used to analyze the existing literature, which is able to visualize the research hotspots and relevant connections compared with the traditional quantitative analysis method. The results of the study show that: the number of publications on inclusive leadership shows a fluctuating growth trend, and the countries and organizations with the most publications are USA and University of London, and the journals and fields with the most publications are Sustainability and Management; through the analysis of keyword co-occurrence, the keywords of " inclusive leadership" "transformational leadership" "ethical management" "diversity management" "behavior" "work" perceptions" and "education" are the research focuses of this research field; keyword clustering analysis shows that

the clustering community is reasonably divided and the nodes have a high degree of matching with their own clusters; keyword clustering time zones and emergence maps show the hotspot changes and the research evolution history of different topics in each year. The time zone and emergence map of keyword clustering show the hotspot changes of different topics in each year and the research evolution.

This study is of value to practitioners. First, this paper provides a comprehensive and objective review of the literature in the field of inclusive leadership through bibliometric methods, which can help practitioners understand the inherent mechanisms of inclusive leadership and thus enhance employees' performance. Second, inclusive leadership is a leadership style of diversity management that can stimulate the potential and creativity of employees, enhance their uniqueness and sense of belonging, and promote the two-way influence between leaders and employees, so organizations can select and hire or cultivate a large number of inclusive leaders to promote the organization to maintain competitiveness. Finally, organizations should also pay attention to the two sides of inclusive leadership in practice. Over-emphasis on inclusive leadership can lead to emotional exhaustion of leaders and cognitive dependence of members, thus reducing organizational performance and innovation.

This study also has some limitations. First, there are limitations in data processing. The analysis of this article mainly relies on existing literature in Web of Science, and newly published or low-frequency cited literature is difficult to be included in the analysis, and there may be omission of cutting-edge or niche research. Second, the article only analyzes English journals in the field of inclusive leadership, and does not include Chinese journals, so it lacks the ability to dig out the deep rules of theory and practice from the differences in cross-cultural, institutional, and social contexts, and provide a multidimensional perspective for academic research and management practice.

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