Mapping Inclusive Leadership Research: A Bibliometric Analysis of Global Trends and Service Science Implications (2020–2025)

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Abstract. Inclusive leadership has gained increasing scholarly attention as organizations confront the challenges of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Yet, the field remains fragmented and undertheorized. This study conducts a bibliometric analysis of 377 Scopus-indexed publications on inclusive leadership, published between 2020 and August 2025. Using VOSviewer, the study maps the intellectual structure, thematic clusters, and global contributors shaping the discourse. The results reveal a marked growth in publications, with China and Pakistan emerging as leading contributors alongside the United States and the United Kingdom. Thematic trends indicate a progression from individual-level outcomes (e.g., psychological safety and self-efficacy), to team-level mechanisms (e.g., inclusive climate and creativity), and finally to organizational-level outcomes (e.g., knowledge sharing, trust, and job satisfaction). These findings underscore inclusive leadership's evolving role as both a relational practice and a strategic driver of organizational effectiveness. By consolidating fragmented insights, this study advances theoretical understanding and offers evidence-based guidance for organizations seeking to embed inclusion into practice.

Keywords: inclusive leadership, bibliometric analysis, VOSviewer

1. Introduction

Leadership has long been recognized as a cornerstone of organizational success, shaping strategic direction, workplace culture, innovation, and employee well-being (Ambilichu et al., 2023; Choi et al., 2017). In today's increasingly diverse, globalized, and interconnected environment, traditional leadership paradigms are being re-evaluated, giving rise to approaches that emphasize equity, diversity, and inclusion (Castell, 2025). Among these, inclusive leadership has emerged as a vital framework that promotes fairness, participation, and respect for individual differences, making it a strategic necessity for organizations navigating complex social and demographic changes (Morgan et al., 2025).

Inclusive leadership is especially crucial in knowledge-intensive service industries, logistics operations, and innovation networks, where value creation relies on collaboration, problem-solving, and the integration of diverse perspectives. By effectively leveraging diverse expertise, inclusive leaders foster trust, transparency, adaptability, and collective creativity. This approach enhances resilience during periods of disruption and facilitates joint value creation across organizations and networks.

Broadly defined, inclusive leadership actively engages diverse voices, leverages individual strengths, and fosters a sense of belonging (Ferdman, 2020). Unlike conventional models that emphasize authority or personal charisma, it is characterized by openness, accessibility, and recognition of unique contributions (Morgan et al., 2025). Research consistently links inclusive leadership with outcomes such as team creativity, employee engagement, knowledge sharing, and organizational innovation (Jia et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2025). It is also increasingly tied to societal expectations concerning corporate responsibility, equity, and sustainability (Fujimoto et al., 2024; Joy & Kumar, 2024). Despite these promising associations, the literature on inclusive leadership remains fragmented, under-theorized, and lacking comprehensive synthesis.

Compared with transformational, authentic, servant (Yayha et al., 2024), or entrepreneurial leadership (Udin & Dananjoyo, 2024)—which benefit from systematic reviews and meta-analyses that consolidate knowledge and advance theory—research on inclusive leadership is still dispersed and underdeveloped (Haque et al., 2024; Kuknor & Bhattacharya, 2022; Veli Korkmaz et al., 2022). Studies have examined its antecedents, behaviors, and outcomes, such as psychological safety (Nishii, 2013) and organizational justice (Randel et al., 2018), but these insights are scattered across fields including organizational behavior, human resource management, and diversity studies. The absence of an integrative overview has limited the ability of scholars and practitioners to identify dominant themes, assess progress, or establish coherent directions for future inquiry.

Bibliometric informatics tools, such as VOSviewer, provide a timely solution by consolidating dispersed knowledge and offering evidence-based insights. By analyzing publication patterns, citation networks, and keyword clusters, bibliometrics identifies influential authors, journals, institutions, and thematic trends (Febriandika & Irawan, 2025; Satiti & Udin, 2025). More importantly, applying bibliometric analysis to inclusive leadership thus enables a comprehensive overview of the field, highlights key contributions, and clarifies its trajectory (Apriantoro et al., 2024). This study provides a comprehensive overview of how inclusive leadership scholarship has evolved, assesses its current state, and identifies emerging themes and underexplored areas. By doing so, it not only advances theoretical understanding but also equips leaders and organizations with evidence-based insights to foster inclusion in increasingly diverse and complex environments.

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Evolution of Inclusive Leadership

Leadership studies have undergone a remarkable transformation over the past century, progressing from trait-based theories to behavioral, contingency, and relational perspectives (Ahmed, 2025; Read, 2025). Early leadership theories emphasized hierarchical authority, charisma, and task-oriented effectiveness, focusing primarily on the leader's capacity to influence subordinates toward organizational goals. As

workplaces became increasingly diverse and globalized, however, these models were criticized for neglecting the importance of inclusion, equity, and belonging. In response, inclusive leadership has emerged as a paradigm attuned to the realities of modern organizations—characterized by demographic shifts, multicultural workforces, and heightened awareness of social justice (Ferdman, 2020).

The concept of inclusive leadership began gaining prominence in the early 2000s, particularly through the work of Carmeli et al. (2010), who defined it as leadership behaviors that invite and value the contributions of all members. Since then, scholarship on inclusive leadership has expanded to examine its behavioral dimensions (e.g., openness, accessibility, availability), relational aspects (e.g., trust, respect, psychological safety), and outcomes (e.g., innovation, engagement, fairness). Despite this progress, the development of inclusive leadership research has been less systematic than that of other leadership styles, such as servant or transformational leadership, highlighting the need for integrative synthesis (Morgan et al., 2025; Rueda-López et al., 2024).

2.2. Conceptual Foundation of Inclusive Leadership

Inclusive leadership is a multifaceted construct grounded in diverse theoretical perspectives rather than a single uniform approach (Morgan et al., 2025). It centers on leader behaviors that create environments where individuals feel valued, respected, and empowered to contribute meaningfully, regardless of background or identity. Scholars identify three core dimensions of inclusive leadership: (1) *Openness*— the willingness to consider diverse viewpoints and facilitate dialogue across perspectives; (2) *Accessibility*—the leader's approachability and provision of opportunities for team members to share ideas; and (3) *Availability*—the leader's consistent presence and responsiveness to employees' needs, ensuring timely and relevant support (Ferdman, 2020; Rueda-López et al., 2024). Collectively, these dimensions demonstrate that inclusive leadership extends beyond procedural fairness, emphasizing relational and behavioral practices that foster engagement, trust, and a sense of belonging within organizations.

However, conceptual ambiguity persists. Some scholars equate inclusive leadership with diversity management practices (Jerónimo et al., 2022), while others frame it as a moral or ethical stance (Abbas, 2023). Still others emphasize its overlap with transformational or servant leadership, raising questions about whether inclusive leadership represents a genuinely distinct paradigm or merely a repackaging of existing constructs (Kuknor & Bhattacharya, 2022). This lack of consensus complicates operationalization and measurement, as studies employ varied scales and conceptual boundaries. A critical synthesis of these perspectives is therefore necessary to prevent conceptual dilution. Accordingly, this study adopts an integrative view that positions inclusive leadership as a relational and behavioral construct that intersects with—but remains distinct from—diversity management and ethical leadership frameworks.

2.3. Antecedents and Outcomes of Inclusive Leadership

Several factors have been identified as antecedents of inclusive leadership, reflecting the interplay between individual traits, organizational culture, and broader environmental influences. Leader characteristics are particularly salient; traits such as empathy, humility, and openness to experience consistently align with inclusive behaviors, enabling leaders to recognize, value, and leverage diverse perspectives (Ashikali, 2023; Morgan et al., 2025). Organizational culture also exerts a strong influence, as cultures that emphasize diversity, equity, and inclusion provide fertile ground for inclusive leadership to flourish (Singha, 2024). Beyond the organizational level, contextual dynamics—including globalization, cross-cultural teams, and hybrid work arrangements—further heighten the demand for inclusive practices, compelling leaders to navigate increasingly complex, diverse, and geographically dispersed workforces (Obuobisa-Darko et al., 2023).

Inclusive leadership is linked to a broad range of positive outcomes across individual, team, and organizational levels. At the individual level, it enhances job performance, job satisfaction, and psychological well-being (Zafar et al., 2024), while fostering greater motivation, commitment, and a

sense of belonging. At the team level, inclusive leaders facilitate information sharing, creativity, and collective innovation by effectively leveraging diverse perspectives (Leroy et al., 2022; Royston & Reiter-Palmon, 2022). At the organizational level, inclusive leadership strengthens reputation, reduces employee turnover, and enhances adaptability in complex and dynamic environments (Ferdman, 2020; Morgan et al., 2025; Wu et al., 2025).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design
This study adopts a bibliometric research design to systematically map the intellectual structure and thematic evolution of inclusive leadership research. Bibliometric analysis is particularly suitable for emerging fields like inclusive leadership, as it enables the objective identification of trends, influential contributions, and research clusters using large-scale publication and citation data (Udin et al., 2025; Van et al., 2025). By relying on bibliographic records rather than subjective interpretation, bibliometric methods enhance the transparency, replicability, and validity of literature synthesis.

Moreover, bibliometrics is highly relevant to service and organizational informatics (Khadka et al., 2024; Sang, 2022), as it transforms dispersed knowledge into structured insights that support evidence-based decision-making. Techniques such as co-authorship, co-citation, and keyword mapping reveal how ideas evolve, diffuse, and cluster across domains including management, psychology, and logistics. This systemic perspective reflects the dynamics of service systems and innovation networks, where information integration and cross-disciplinary collaboration are essential. Consequently, bibliometric mapping allows organizations and policymakers in logistics and service industries to detect intellectual trends and implement evidence-based inclusive leadership strategies.

3.2. Database Selection
The Scopus database was selected as the exclusive source of bibliographic data. Scopus is widely recognized for its comprehensive coverage of peer-reviewed literature in the social sciences, management, psychology, and organizational studies—domains most relevant to inclusive leadership. Compared to Web of Science, Scopus offers broader journal inclusion and more advanced citation tracking, making it highly suitable for bibliometric research. Google Scholar, while extensive, was excluded due to its lack of standardized indexing and quality control. Thus, Scopus was chosen to ensure a robust, reliable, and replicable dataset aligned with the standards of prior bibliometric studies in leadership research.

3.3. Data Collection
The initial search conducted in the Scopus database using the keyword *"inclusive leadership"* yielded a total of 5,924 documents, without applying any restrictions on publication year or language. To refine the results and capture more recent scholarly developments, the search was narrowed to the period 2020 to August 2025, which reduced the number of publications to 4,205 documents. This trend indicates a substantial concentration of research on inclusive leadership within the last five years, reflecting its growing significance in contemporary leadership and management studies. Furthermore, when an additional filter was applied to include only documents published in English, the number of relevant publications declined markedly to 377 documents. This considerable reduction suggests that while inclusive leadership is gaining traction globally, a large proportion of the discourse is disseminated in non-English publications, highlighting both the international relevance of the topic and the linguistic diversity of its research landscape.

In terms of accessibility, the analysis revealed that a considerable proportion of the 377 documents on inclusive leadership are available through open access platforms. All open access emerged as the largest category, comprising 122 documents (32.36%), followed by Gold open access with 87 documents (23.08%), and Green open access with 54 documents (14.33%). Hybrid Gold open access

accounted for 20 documents (5.31%), while Bronze access contributed 6 documents (1.59%). The remaining 88 documents (23.33%) were not openly accessible. These findings indicate that nearly three-quarters of the literature on inclusive leadership is disseminated through open access channels, reflecting a strong trend toward increasing research visibility and knowledge sharing within this domain.

Regarding source types, the vast majority of studies were published in peer-reviewed journals, accounting for 340 documents (90.19%). Books contributed 20 documents (5.31%), while conference proceedings and book series accounted for 11 documents (2.92%) and 6 documents (1.59%), respectively. This distribution underscores the dominance of journal publications as the primary medium for advancing scholarly discourse on inclusive leadership, while other publication outlets, such as books and conferences, play only a supplementary role in shaping the field.

4. Results and Discussion

The analysis of annual scientific production from 2020 to 2025, illustrated in Fig. 1, reveals a steady increase in research on inclusive leadership. In 2020, 18 publications were recorded, representing 4.8% of the total output, which rose to 33 publications (8.7%) in 2021 and 55 publications (14.6%) in 2022. The upward trajectory continued with 68 publications (18.0%) in 2023 and peaked at 111 publications (29.4%) in 2024, followed by a slight decline to 92 publications (24.4%) in 2025. Overall, these figures indicate a growing scholarly interest in inclusive leadership, underscoring the field's expanding relevance and the increasing global attention it has attracted over the past six years.
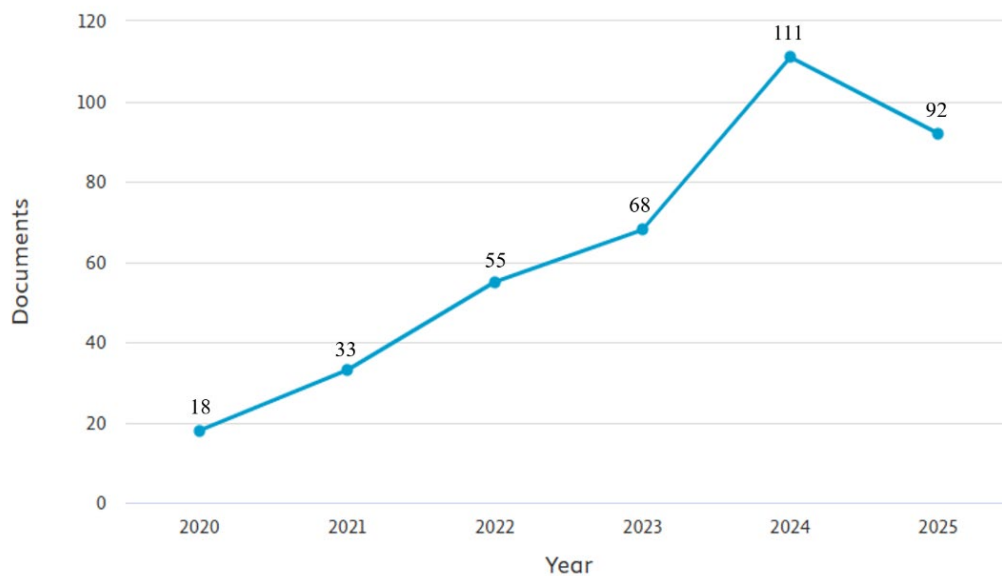

Fig. 1: Annual Scientific Production (2020 to 2025)

An analysis of subject areas for inclusive leadership research between 2020 and 2025 (Fig. 2) shows a dominant focus on Business, Management, and Accounting (220 publications; 58.3%), followed by Social Sciences (128; 33.9%) and Psychology (85; 22.5%). Other fields, including Economics, Computer Science, and Decision Sciences, contributed moderately, while smaller yet notable outputs emerged from Environmental Science, Medicine, and Arts and Humanities. Collectively, these findings indicate that inclusive leadership research is primarily rooted in business and social science disciplines, with interdisciplinary engagement gradually expanding across other scientific domains.
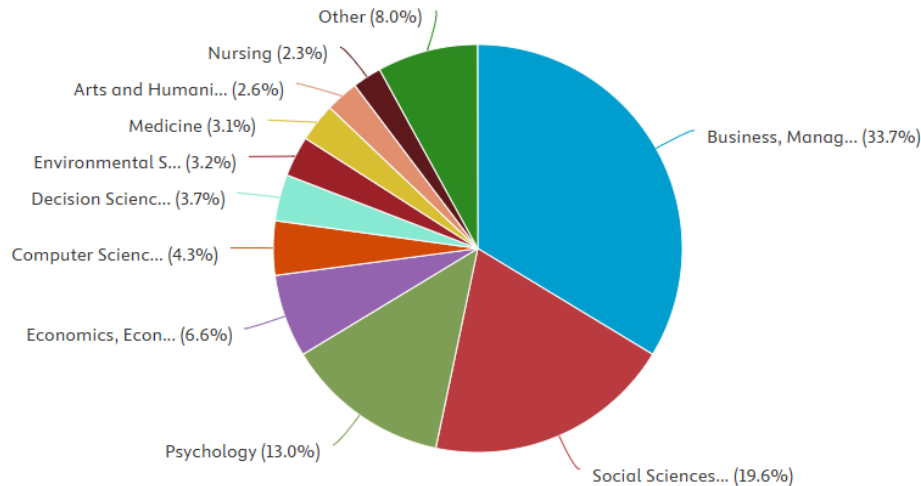
Fig. 2: Subject Area of Publication (2020 to 2025)

Table 1 highlights the most locally cited publications in inclusive leadership research, reflecting its broad organizational and psychological impact. Leading the list, Ashikali et al. (2021) emphasize the role of inclusive leadership in fostering team inclusivity (193 citations), followed by Veli Korkmaz et al. (2022) who underscore theoretical and empirical developments in the field (172 citations). Other highly cited studies explore its influence on psychological safety, employee voice, and organizational inclusion across healthcare and public sector contexts. Collectively, these works demonstrate the multidimensional relevance and growing scholarly influence of inclusive leadership.

Table 1. Top 7 locally cited references

Rank	Document title	Authors	Source	Year	Citations
1	The role of inclusive leadership in supporting an inclusive climate in diverse public sector teams	Ashikali, T., Groeneveld, S., Kuipers, B.	Review of Public Personnel Administration, 41(3), pp. 497–519	2021	193
2	About and beyond leading uniqueness and belongingness: A systematic review of inclusive leadership research	Veli Korkmaz, A., van Engen, M.L., Knappert, L., Schalk, R.	Human Resource Management Review, 32(4), 100894	2022	172
3	Inclusive leadership and taking-charge behavior: Roles of psychological safety and thriving at work	Zeng, H., Zhao, L., Zhao, Y.	Frontiers in Psychology, 11, 62	2020	134
4	Caring for the caregiver during COVID-19 outbreak: Does inclusive leadership improve psychological safety and curb psychological distress? A cross-sectional study	Zhao, F., Ahmed, F., Faraz, N.A.	International Journal of Nursing Studies, 110, 103725	2020	127
5	Inclusive leadership, leader identification and employee voice behavior: The moderating role of power distance	Guo, Y., Zhu, Y., Zhang, L.	Current Psychology, 41(3), pp. 1301–1310	2022	88
6	Psychological safety as a mediator of the relationship between inclusive leadership and nurse voice behaviors and error reporting	Lee, S.E., Dahinten, V.S.	Journal of Nursing Scholarship, 53(6), pp. 737–745	2021	87
7	Inclusive leadership: New age leadership to foster organizational inclusion	Kuknor, S.C., Bhattacharya, S.	European Journal of Training and Development, 46(9), pp. 771–797	2022	86

Table 2 highlights the most influential authors in inclusive leadership research, reflecting both productivity and scholarly impact. Leading contributors include Ahmed, F. from Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China, with five publications and 321 citations, and Javed, B. from Al Ghazali University, Pakistan, with five publications and 258 citations; both authors demonstrate high citation counts and H-indices. Scholars such as Nejati, M. and Ahmed, I. also show substantial influence relative to their publication output. This author-level analysis underscores the geographical diversity of research contributions and the varying impact of key scholars shaping inclusive leadership research worldwide.

Table 2. The 7 most referenced authors

Rank	Author	Affiliation	Country	Documents	Citations	H-index Scopus
1	Ahmed, F.	Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University	China	5	321	14
2	Javed, B.	Al Ghazali University	Pakistan	5	258	17
3	Kuknor, S.	Symbiosis Institute of Business Management	India	5	58	5
4	Fang, Y.	Zhejiang University of Technology	China	5	33	5
5	Faraz, N.A.	Hunan University	China	4	308	15
6	Nejati, M.	Edith Cowan University	Australia	4	90	25
7	Ahmed, I.	University of Buraimi	Oman	4	22	26

Table 3 presents the seven most productive journals in inclusive leadership research, highlighting their contribution, impact, and disciplinary focus. *Frontiers in Psychology* leads with 22 publications and 587 citations, followed by *Leadership and Organization Development Journal* and *Current Psychology*, each with nine publications and high citation counts. Other notable journals include *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, *Administrative Sciences*, *Baltic Journal of Management*, and *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, representing a mix of psychology, business, management, and interdisciplinary domains. Collectively, these journals reflect the diverse scholarly outlets driving research on inclusive leadership, with Scientific Journal Rankings (SJR) scores ranging from 0.688 to 1.687 and H-indices indicating strong academic influence.

Table 3. The 7 most productive journals

Rank	Journal	Publisher	Documents	Citations	SJR	H-index	Category
1	Frontiers in Psychology	Frontiers Media S.A.	22	587	0.872	212	Psychology (Q2)
2	Leadership and Organization Development Journal	Emerald Publishing	9	213	1.117	89	Business, Management and Accounting (Q1)
3	Current Psychology	Springer Nature	9	171	1.024	1.024	Psychology (Q1)
4	Sustainability (Switzerland)	MDPI	8	107	0.688	207	Geography, Planning and Development (Q1)
5	Administrative Sciences	MDPI	6	68	0.706	42	Business, Management and Accounting (Q2)
6	Baltic Journal of Management	Emerald Publishing	4	84	0.752	43	Business, Management and Accounting (Q2)
7	Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies	Sage	4	80	1.687	66	Business, Management and Accounting (Q1)

Table 4 highlights the most productive affiliations in inclusive leadership research from 2020 to 2025. Leading institutions include Tilburg University, Netherlands, and Symbiosis International (Deemed University), India, each with eight publications and 243 and 162 citations, respectively. Wuhan University and Zhejiang University, China, follow with six publications each, receiving 324 and 65 citations, while Edith Cowan University, Australia, and the University of Science and Technology of China contributed five publications each, with 108 and 85 citations. The American University of Sharjah, United Arab Emirates (UAE), also produced five publications, accumulating 56 citations. These findings reveal the geographic diversity of leading institutions across Europe, Asia, Australia, and the Middle East and indicate that high publication output does not always correspond to higher citation impact. Moreover, contributions from both highly ranked and mid-ranked institutions, according to QS World University Rankings, highlight the broad and significant engagement in inclusive leadership research.

Table 4. The 7 most productive affiliations

Rank	Affiliation	Country	QS World University Rankings	Number of articles	Citations
1	Tilburg University	Netherlands	347	8	243
2	Symbiosis International (Deemed University)	India	696	8	162
3	Wuhan University	China	951-1000	6	324
4	Zhejiang University	China	49	6	65
5	Edith Cowan University	Australia	487	5	108
6	University of Science and Technology of China	China	132	5	85
7	American University of Sharjah	UAE	272	5	56

Table 5 shows that China emerged as the most prolific contributor to inclusive leadership research, producing 109 publications (28.9%), followed by the United States with 67 publications (17.8%). Pakistan and India ranked third and fourth, contributing 39 (10.3%) and 35 (9.3%) publications, respectively. The United Kingdom and Malaysia each accounted for 21 publications (5.6%), while Australia contributed 19 publications (5.0%). This pattern underscores the dominant role of Asian countries—particularly China and Pakistan—in shaping the discourse on inclusive leadership, while Western nations such as the United States and the United Kingdom continue to exert a substantial influence. The distribution not only reflects regional research productivity but also suggests emerging centers of scholarly interest and collaboration in the field.

Table 5. The 7 most productive countries/regions

Rank	Countries/ regions	Number of articles	Percentage (%)
1	China	109	28.9
2	United States	67	17.8
3	Pakistan	39	10.3
4	India	35	9.3
5	United Kingdom	21	5.6
6	Malaysia	21	5.6
7	Australia	19	5.0

Fig. 3 illustrates the co-authorship network in inclusive leadership research, highlighting authors with at least three collaborations. The most central figures in the network include Wang, D. (Nanjing University of Finance and Economics), Fang, Y. (Zhejiang University of Technology), Ahmed, F. (Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University), Huang, H. (Wuhan University of Technology), Liu, Z.

(University of Science and Technology of China), and Li, X. (Institute of Psychology, Chinese Academy of Sciences), all based in China. Their prominence highlights their pivotal role in advancing inclusive leadership scholarship by building collaborative networks, incorporating diverse perspectives, and producing influential research. This central positioning not only demonstrates their productivity but also underscores their function as knowledge brokers, bridging institutions and disciplines to shape the future trajectory of the field.
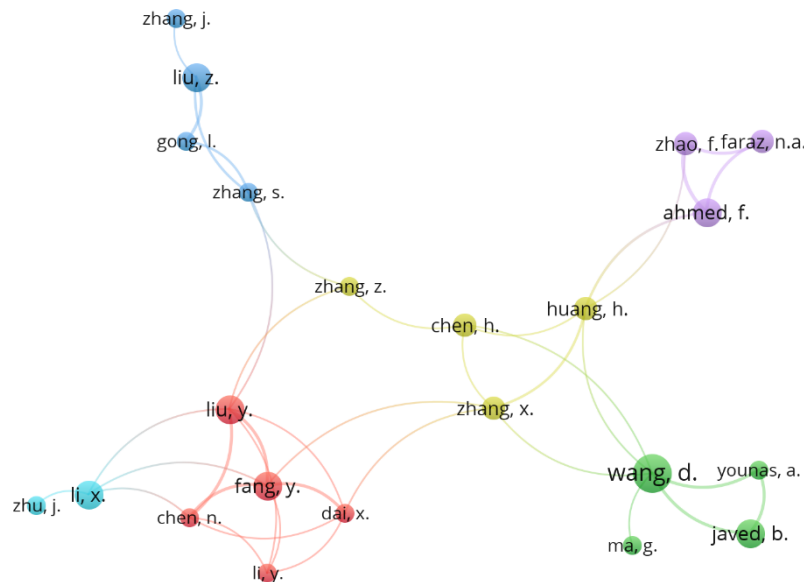

Fig. 3: Co-authorship networks

Fig. 4 illustrates the evolution of research trends in inclusive leadership from 2020 to 2025, as mapped using VOSviewer. Early studies (2020–2022) focused primarily on psychological outcomes—such as distress, safety, and affective commitment—reflecting heightened concern for employee well-being during the post-pandemic recovery. From 2022 to 2023, attention shifted toward individual and team mechanisms, including self-efficacy, inclusive climate, belongingness, and innovative work behavior, highlighting the role of inclusive leadership in fostering positive attitudes and innovation. Research in 2023–2024 emphasized psychological empowerment, creativity, work engagement, and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), underscoring its capacity to stimulate proactive and discretionary employee contributions. Most recently (2024–2025), the discourse expanded to organizational-level outcomes, linking inclusive leadership with knowledge sharing, social justice, culture, trust, and job satisfaction. Overall, the trajectory shows a clear progression from individual psychological needs to broader organizational dynamics, positioning inclusive leadership as both a driver of employee well-being and a strategic lever for organizational effectiveness.
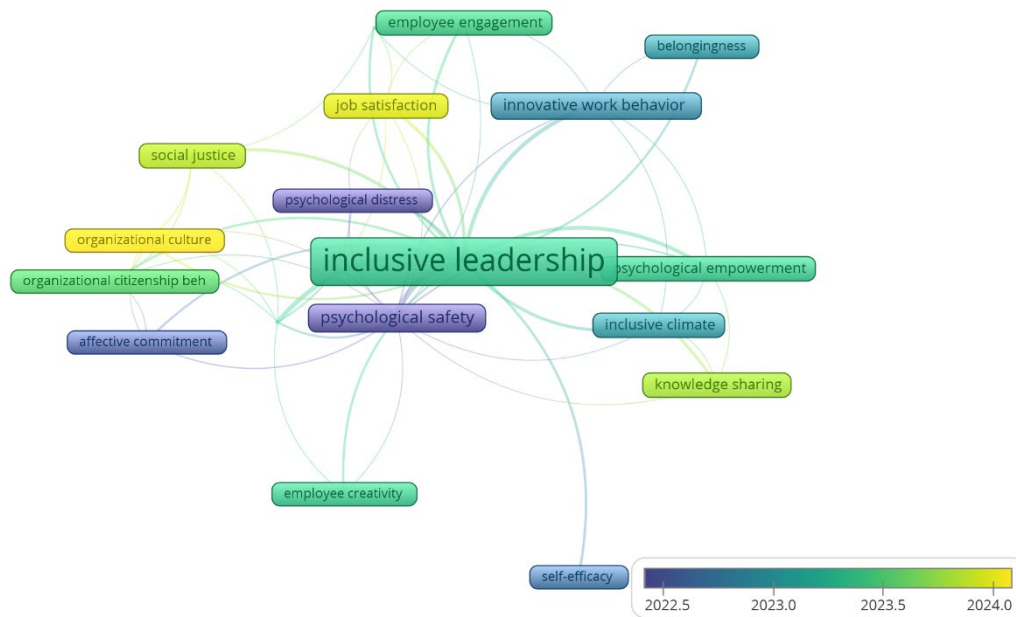
Fig. 4: Evolving research trends in inclusive leadership (2020 to 2025)

Fig. 5: Keyword co-occurrence

Fig. 5 presents the keyword co-occurrence network, illustrating the thematic linkages within inclusive leadership research. The analysis shows strong associations with individual-level outcomes (e.g., psychological distress, psychological safety, affective commitment, self-efficacy, and belongingness), team-level constructs (e.g., inclusive climate, innovative work behavior, psychological empowerment, employee creativity, and work engagement), and organizational-level outcomes (e.g., OCB, knowledge sharing, social justice, organizational culture, trust, and job satisfaction). These patterns indicate that inclusive leadership operates as a multidimensional construct spanning individual, team, and organizational domains, reinforcing its role as a critical driver of employee well-being and organizational effectiveness.

At the individual level, inclusive leadership plays a pivotal role in promoting workplace well-being by addressing and fulfilling employees' core psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—thereby fostering a sense of intrinsic motivation and engagement. When leaders provide developmental feedback, employees experience heightened vigor and sustained energy, which not only

enhances task performance but also reinforces resilience in the face of workplace challenges (Liu et al., 2024). Beyond general organizational settings, the impact of inclusive leadership is particularly pronounced in high-stakes contexts such as healthcare, where the complexity and pressure of work demand optimal individual functioning. In such environments, inclusive leadership not only strengthens job performance but also cultivates self-efficacy and organization-based self-esteem, empowering employees to confidently navigate demanding tasks while feeling valued and recognized by the organization (Huang et al., 2025). This suggests that inclusive leadership functions not merely as a managerial approach but as a critical psychological resource that shapes how employees perceive their capabilities, relationships, and overall work experience.

At the team level, inclusive leadership functions as a critical enabler of psychological safety, creating an environment in which team members feel confident in expressing diverse perspectives, challenging existing norms, and proposing unconventional or experimental ideas without fear of negative consequences. This sense of safety not only encourages open communication but also nurtures collective learning, collaboration, and adaptive problem-solving, all of which are essential for sustaining innovation in dynamic organizational contexts. Research indicates that teams led by inclusive leaders exhibit higher levels of trust, mutual respect, and willingness to engage in constructive debate, which in turn amplifies both creativity and overall team performance. Multi-level studies further reveal that inclusive leadership simultaneously shapes outcomes at both individual and team levels: individual perceptions of being valued and included enhance personal engagement and idea generation, while team-level perceptions foster cohesive collaboration and shared responsibility for innovation. Notably, psychological safety emerges as a central mediating mechanism, bridging leadership behaviors with innovative performance by translating supportive, inclusive practices into tangible creative outcomes (Bao et al., 2025; Javed et al., 2019). This underscores that fostering inclusion is not merely a moral or cultural imperative but a strategic lever for enhancing collective intelligence and competitive advantage in knowledge-intensive and innovation-driven industries.

From an organizational standpoint, inclusive leadership serves as a pivotal driver of work engagement by cultivating an environment characterized by psychological safety and trust in leadership. When employees perceive that their contributions are genuinely valued and that mistakes are treated as learning opportunities rather than punishable failures, they are more likely to invest discretionary effort, remain committed to organizational goals, and demonstrate sustained motivation in their roles (Siyal, 2023). This enhanced engagement is not only a reflection of positive affective attachment but also a manifestation of employees' confidence that their voices and perspectives influence decision-making, reinforcing a cycle of mutual trust and organizational loyalty.

Inclusive leadership actively shapes innovative work behavior by encouraging job crafting, a process in which employees proactively modify the boundaries, demands, and resources of their roles to better align with their strengths, interests, and the evolving needs of the organization. By empowering employees to take ownership of this adaptive process, inclusive leaders facilitate the generation and implementation of novel solutions, knowledge sharing, and experimentation across teams and departments. Such practices translate individual creativity into systemic innovation, reinforcing the organization's capacity for agility, learning, and sustainable competitive advantage (Guo et al., 2023).

5. Conclusion

This bibliometric study provides the first comprehensive overview of inclusive leadership research from 2020 to 2025. It highlights rapid growth in scholarly output and the increasing influence of Asian countries—particularly China and Pakistan—alongside major contributions from the United States and the United Kingdom. The analysis shows that the field has evolved from a focus on individual well-being and psychological safety, to team-level mechanisms of creativity and empowerment, and to organizational-level outcomes such as trust, social justice, and knowledge sharing. These thematic shifts confirm inclusive leadership's multidimensional significance in enhancing employee well-being,

fostering collaboration, and strengthening organizational effectiveness.

Nonetheless, the field remains fragmented, with insufficient theoretical integration and limited cross-contextual analysis. Future research should extend beyond bibliometrics to incorporate systematic reviews or meta-analyses, examine cultural and industry-specific contingencies, and explore connections with emerging paradigms such as digital or sustainable leadership. Practically, organizations should translate inclusive leadership principles into specific programs that promote psychological safety, participative decision-making, and transparent communication systems. By embedding inclusiveness into leadership practice and organizational culture, organizations can transform diversity into a source of resilience and innovation. This study thus positions inclusive leadership not as a passing trend but as a vital paradigm for building equitable and adaptive organizations in the twenty-first century.

5.1. Managerial Implications

The bibliometric findings of this study yield several concrete recommendations for leaders and organizations aiming to translate inclusive leadership into practice.

First, the keyword analysis reveals that psychological safety, belongingness, and self-efficacy are central outcomes at the individual level. Managers should therefore design leadership development programs that intentionally cultivate these psychological resources. For instance, training modules on active listening, empathy, and inclusive communication can strengthen employees' sense of belonging and confidence. In addition, organizations may establish mentorship programs that encourage leaders to remain approachable and supportive—behaviors consistently highlighted in the literature as hallmarks of inclusiveness.

Second, the evolution of research trends reveals an increasing focus on team-level outcomes, including inclusive climate, innovative work behavior, and psychological empowerment (2022–2024). This suggests that inclusive leadership is most effective when embedded within team processes. Managers should therefore prioritize participative decision-making and establish structured opportunities for diverse team members to voice their ideas. To foster creativity, leaders can implement mechanisms such as innovation labs, cross-functional workshops, and rotating leadership responsibilities, thereby ensuring that diverse perspectives meaningfully shape team outputs.

Third, the country-level analysis highlights the increasing influence of Asian countries, particularly China, Pakistan, and India. This indicates that inclusive leadership practices may need to be adapted to cultural contexts characterized by collectivist values and hierarchical traditions. Multinational corporations should therefore localize their leadership development strategies by incorporating cultural sensitivity training and integrating context-specific examples of inclusive practices.

Fourth, the co-authorship networks reveal the dominance of collaborative clusters in Asia. This underscores the importance of inter-organizational and cross-institutional knowledge sharing. Organizations can emulate this collaborative model by establishing cross-departmental task forces and global knowledge-sharing platforms that replicate the co-authorship dynamics observed in research.

Finally, the journal and institutional analysis shows that inclusive leadership is examined across psychology, management, and public administration outlets. Practitioners should therefore recognize that inclusiveness is not merely an HR function but a cross-functional strategic capability. Embedding inclusiveness into organizational policies—such as performance appraisals, reward systems, and innovation strategies—can help ensure that inclusive leadership becomes part of organizational culture rather than remaining limited to isolated initiatives.

5.2. Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study is not without limitations. First, the analysis was confined to Scopus-indexed publications which, while ensuring high-quality sources, may have excluded relevant contributions from other databases such as Web of Science, PubMed, or Google Scholar. Future research adopting a multi-

database approach would provide a more comprehensive understanding of inclusive leadership research. Second, the use of bibliometric techniques via VOSviewer, although effective for mapping publication trends and knowledge networks (Udin, 2023; Udin et al., 2025), cannot fully capture the theoretical depth or contextual nuances of the field. Complementary approaches such as systematic literature reviews or meta-analyses are therefore recommended.

Moreover, the temporal scope of this study (2020–August 2025) reflects the recent surge of interest in inclusive leadership but limits longitudinal insights into its conceptual evolution. Extending the timeframe or employing longitudinal bibliometric analyses could reveal deeper paradigm shifts. Finally, while this study emphasizes outcomes across individual, team, and organizational levels, it does not account for boundary conditions such as cultural context, industry dynamics, or digital work environments. Future studies should examine these contingencies and investigate intersections with emerging paradigms such as quantum leadership, digital leadership, and sustainable leadership.

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