Research Article

Mapping Research Trends on Emotional Intelligence and Leadership: A Bibliometric Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates emotional intelligence with respect to leadership research by analyzing 1881 Scopus-indexed relevant documents from between 1952 and 2024. Through bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer and the Bibliometrix package in R, the mapping has been analyzed for publication trends, leading authors, influential journals, conceptual themes, and global collaboration networks. The results reveal scholarly activity moving slowly at first but then accelerating significantly starting in 2010, which coincides with the growing recognition of emotional intelligence as an important factor in effective leadership and high organizational performance. Some notable authors are Boyatzis, Stoller, and Humphrey whose works are tending to be referred to for continuing to shape research development. The analysis of themes denotes two major areas: (1) Individual emotional skill, psychological dimension, and personality trait-centered research and (2) studies on the use of emotional intelligence in leadership, teamwork, interaction, and organizational management in workplaces. Integration of Emotional Intelligence theory with leadership practice is still limited despite a good number of publications, as much output is concentrated in management and healthcare, with many other industries missing out. Moreover, collaboration patterns indicate strong inputs from Western countries while developing regions remain less visible. These results imply that, despite the further development of the area, there are considerable gaps in the research, especially regarding the integration of emotional intelligence and online leadership situations, management teams, and artificial-intelligence-based organizational frameworks, and in the cross-cultural and underrepresented regional contexts. This bibliometric analysis will give an overall systematic view of the field while revealing some potential future directions for continued inquiry.

Background

Emotional Intelligence (EI) and leadership remain important topics in understanding individual behavior and improving organizational effectiveness. EI can be described as the capacity of the person to understand and manage his or her own emotions as well as those of others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Goleman, 1995). Therefore, individuals with higher emotional intelligence are better at reading social signals, are more communicative, build relationships, make decisions under stress, and react positively to difficulties. (Mayer et al., 2004; Cherniss, 2010).

On the other hand, leadership is the act of influencing people to become involved in and realize a collective objective. It also involves conditions that stimulate personal and team development (Northouse, 2021). Emotionally intelligent leaders do employ team management skills more productively, conflict resolution through constructive negotiation, and they enhance employee engagement levels (Goleman et al., 2013; Boyatzis, 2018). Early EI in leaders promotes healthy stress regulation, communication clarity, and favorable work environments for promoting employee well-being (Ashkanasy & Daus, 2005; Carmeli, 2003). EI in this case has been shown to condition transformational leadership styles and managerial effectiveness, as well as organizational performance (Miao et al., 2018; O'Boyle et al., 2011).

Research on EI and leadership is proliferating with time, yet these findings are scattered across countries, industries, and subtopics. Most studies investigated only specific demographic factors or sector-specific isolation, lacking a holistic understanding of the field (Linan et al., 2024; Donthu et al., 2021 Moreover, the growing volume of recent publications renders manual synthesis increasingly difficult.

It provides a systematic methodology to organize the interpretation of massive research collections through the analysis of publication data, citation patterns, authorship networks, and thematic structures (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017; Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). Using Bibliometrix, biblioshiny, and VOSviewer tools allows visualization on research clusters, trends, and global collaboration.

This study aims to map the existing research on emotional intelligence and leadership by publication trends, key contributors, thematic clusters, and collaboration networks, while also identifying research gaps and directions for future scholarship.

Materials and Methods
Data Analysis

This bibliometric study examined research on emotional intelligence and leadership using data extracted from Scopus. Analysis was conducted using Bibliometrix in R and VOSviewer for visualization.

Data Source and Search

Scopus was selected due to its broad coverage of peer-reviewed literature suitable for bibliometric tools. The search used the query: TITLE-ABS-KEY ("emotional intelligence" AND "leadership"). Documents included English-language articles and reviews published from 1952 to 2024.

Data Extraction

Data were retrieved from Scopus on November 05, 2025. The search was restricted to publications published between 1952 and 2024 to ensure complete yearly coverage for trend analysis**.** Retrieved metadata included authors, publication year, keywords, abstracts, citations, and reference lists. Editorials, notes, and irrelevant items were removed. Records were exported in CSV format for analysis.

Duplicates and incomplete records were removed, author names standardized, and keywords corrected, merged, and harmonized for consistency.

Data Analysis

Bibliometrix functions (e.g., *biblioAnalysis*, *summary*, *conceptualStructure*) were used to compute descriptive statistics, identify trends,

and generate thematic and conceptual maps. Network files were exported to VOSviewer for co-authorship, citation, and co-occurrence visualizations.

Result and Discussion

Recognizing the growing academic interest in emotional intelligence and leadership, this study employs a bibliometric analysis to examine and map the current state of research. The following are the results of this study:

Emotional intelligence (EI) and research output in the field of leadership have steadily risen over the years from 1953 to 2024. The overall growth rate was moderate, but it was stronger after 2010 and reached its momentum in 2012. The highest levels of publication were recorded in 2018 and 2020, which implies the existence of increased scholarly interest in the subject of EI and leadership. This tendency is consistent with the results of the past, which indicated that the field has become more relevant to organizational studies in the last decade (Rahman and Mahadi, 2024). This rise can be explained by the fact that leadership research has shifted after the 2008 global financial crisis, focusing on genuine, ethical, and empathetic leadership approaches. Emotional intelligence has become a primary research topic in leadership due to the growing significance of the capacity of leaders to regulate their emotions, develop trust, and cope with uncertainty.

1. Overview of the Dataset

Table 1. Summary Statistics of the Bibliometric Dataset

Main Information	
Description	**Results**
Documents	1881
Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	983
Keywords Plus (ID)	3256
Author's Keywords (DE)	3774
Timespan	1952:2024
Average citations per document	23.65
Authors	5143
Author Appearances	5677
Authors of single-authored documents	404
Authors of multi-authored documents	4739
Average years from publication	7.86
Single-authored documents	436
Documents per Author	0.366
Authors per Document	2.73
Co-Authors per Document	3.02
Collaboration Index	8.25

Table 1 outlines the key attributes of the data that are considered in this research. It analyzes 1,881 documents published between 1952 and 2024, from 983 different sources. These publications were done by 5,143 authors, and the average number of authors per document was about three authors; hence, showing a strong inclination towards group research. Even though 436 documents were written individually, most of them were written by two or more authors. The Collaboration Index of 8.25, quite high, implies that the discipline is very networked and that researchers are often involved in recurring and large-scale collaborative relationships within the field. As a whole, these numbers suggest that the research of this area is highly collaborative and that it is also defined by close networks of authors over decades.

2. Key Authors and Journals

Table 2. Most Productive Authors in Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Research

Author	Articles
BOYATZIS RE	13
STOLLER JK	12
HUMPHREY RH	6
PIPE T	6
BRACKETT MA	5
HOPKINS MM	5
MÜLLER R	5
TURNER JR	5
ASHKANASY NM	4
DEWAR B	4

Table 2 shows the dataset's top authors by publication output. Boyatzis RE leads with 13 articles, and Stoller JK follows with 12. Authors like Humphrey RH, Pipe T, Brackett MA, Hopkins MM, and Turner JR wrote 5 to 6 articles. Ashkanasy NM and Dewar B each contributed 4 articles, accounting for shared authorship. The concentration of academic output of leading authors and journals highlights the intense influence of healthcare and nursing settings on emotional intelligence and leadership research. Many prominent researchers have oriented their studies on the topic of leadership within emotionally demanding professional environments, where the role of interpersonal sensitivity, the process of stress regulation, and ethical reasoning are key issues. In healthcare and nursing milieus, leaders have to balance patient-centered care with heavy work-loads and emotional work, which makes emotional intelligence one of the critical leadership abilities. This contextual relevance explains the high profile showing of the healthcare-related studies as part of the bibliometric results.

## 3. Conceptual and Thematic Structure
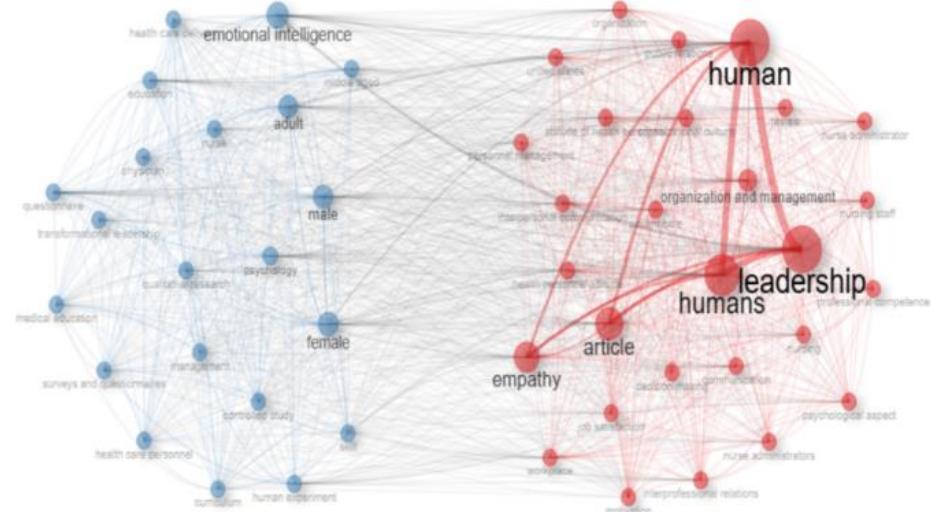
Figure 1. Keyword Co-Occurrence Network in Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Research

Figure 1 shows two clusters in the network visualization. The blue cluster focuses on personal traits and individual development, studying emotional intelligence as a characteristic shaped by thoughts and feelings. It explores EI intervention in learning and behavior.

On the other hand, the red cluster centers on leadership and organizational aspects, examining how EI aids in communication and team management. The link between the two clusters highlights how EI connects personal traits to leadership behaviors, showing its progression from individual understanding to organizational success.
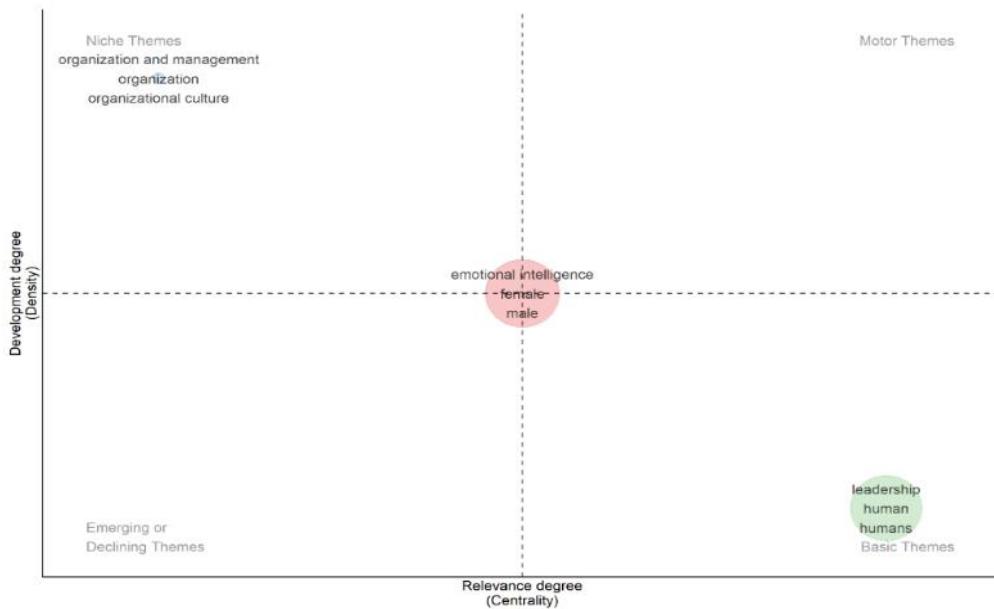

Figure 2. Thematic Map of Emotional Intelligence and Leadership Studies

The thematic map presented in Figure 2 relates to emotional intelligence and leadership studies. Its main themes are emotional intelligence and leadership, thus depicting a strong conceptual linkage and sustained scholarly relevance. The themes related to organizational management, teamwork, and professional development are also noticeable, though in more specific and advanced forms.

Themes that are emerging or peripheral are a pointer to other areas of future research to include such as how emotional intelligence frameworks can be applied in broader organizational and leadership contexts. All in all, the theme of organization highlights a developing area characterized by gradual conceptualization.

4. Collaboration Analysis
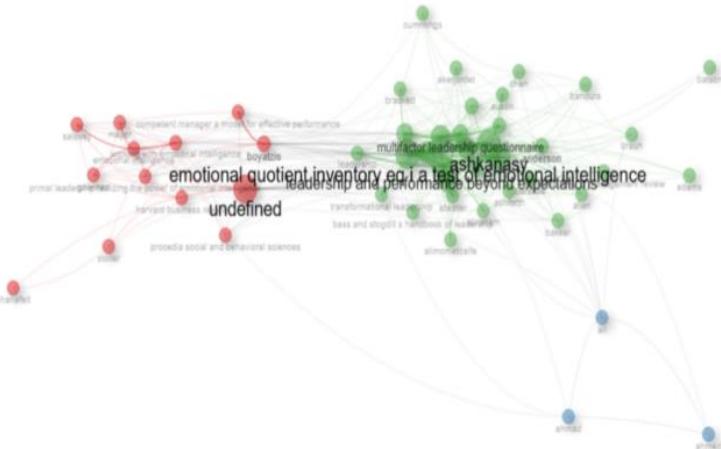
Figure 3. Co-Authorship Network

In Figure 3, the three main researcher groups focus on emotional intelligence (EI) and leadership. One group includes authors like Mayer, Salovey, and Boyatzis, focusing on EI theoretical frameworks and tools like the EQ-i. The largest cluster, in the center-right, consists of leadership scholars collaborating on transformational leadership and tools like MLQ. A smaller cluster in the bottom right, with recent or local connections, contributes to the growing focus on EI and leadership in contemporary contexts.
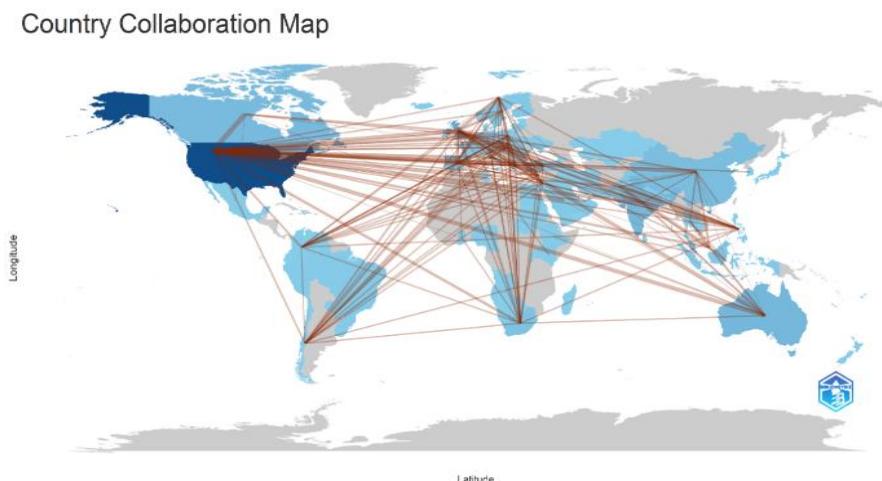
Figure 4. Country Collaboration Map

The research map illustrates worldwide collaboration in emotional intelligence and leadership among countries like Australia, Canada, the US, China, and the UK. These nations engage with others across Asia, Europe, Africa, and South America, with significant participation from France, Germany, and Chile. Notably, Australia, Canada, and the USA lead global research efforts, especially in conferences with partners such as China, India, Malaysia, and Singapore. Collaboration is expanding in Asia and reaching the Middle East, Africa, and South America, creating a truly global network of shared research efforts.

Conclusion

This study examines EI and leadership research trends using 1,881 documents indexed in Scopus. Since 2010, publications on EI have significantly increased, notably in 2018 and 2020, emphasizing its growing relevance in management, psychology, and nursing. Key contributors, like Boyatzis with 13 papers and the Journal of Nursing Management with 41 articles, are influential. Notably cited works, such as Wong & Law's 2002 study, highlight lasting impact. Thematic clusters focus on individual EI traits and organizational uses, with international collaboration networks indicating strong connections but with limited contributions from certain regions.

The field lacks full integration of EI with leadership theories, especially in areas beyond healthcare and management, neglecting emerging challenges like digital leadership, virtual teams, AI impacts, and post-pandemic management. Future research should address gaps with cross-cultural studies, longitudinal designs, and sector-specific approaches to enhance theoretical connections and practical tools for more inclusive and adaptable organizational practices.

Acknowledgement

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