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Transformational leadership and teacher well-being: A bibliometric analysis

Liderazgo transformacional y bienestar docente: un análisis bibliométrico

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Abstract

This study examines the development, intellectual structure, collaboration networks, and main themes of Scopus publications on transformational leadership and teacher well-being, with particular attention to the visibility of organizational climate. A descriptive bibliometric analysis was conducted on journal articles published between 2016 and 2026. A title, abstract, and keyword search identified 170 records; after applying the Scopus article filter, 155 documents were selected. Publication and citation indicators were complemented by author co-authorship, author keyword co-occurrence, and author co-citation analyses using VOSviewer 1.6.21. The corpus received 2,057 citations and achieved an h-index of 22. Scientific output increased markedly after 2022, with 35 indexed articles in 2025 and in the incomplete year 2026. Of the 477 authors identified, 22 published at least two papers, and the largest collaboration group included seven authors. Thirty-six keywords reached a minimum of three occurrences; transformational leadership (92) and job satisfaction (46) were the predominant themes. The co-citation network comprised 21 authors grouped into three clusters. In contrast, organizational climate appeared only once, while school climate and organizational culture were each recorded four times. The findings indicate that this growing interdisciplinary field is grounded in leadership and occupational well-being; however, organizational climate remains poorly visible as a research concept. Bibliometric proximity does not demonstrate causal relationships, and terminological limitations, database coverage, and the absence of manual screening restrict the inferences that can be drawn.

Keywords: transformational leadership, teacher well-being, job satisfaction, educational leadership, organizational climate.

Resumen

El presente estudio examina el desarrollo, la estructura intelectual, las redes de colaboración y las principales temáticas de las publicaciones de Scopus sobre liderazgo transformacional y bienestar docente, prestando especial atención a la visibilidad del clima organizacional. Se realizó un análisis bibliométrico descriptivo de artículos de revistas publicados entre 2016 y 2026. La búsqueda por título, resumen y palabras clave identificó 170 registros; tras aplicar el filtro de artículos de Scopus, se seleccionaron 155 documentos. Los indicadores de producción y citación se complementaron con análisis de coautoría, coocurrencia de palabras clave y cocitación

de autores, utilizando VOSviewer 1.6.21. El corpus obtuvo 2.057 citas y un índice h de 22. La producción científica aumentó notablemente desde 2022, con 35 artículos indexados en 2025 y en el año incompleto de 2026. De los 477 autores identificados, 22 publicaron al menos dos trabajos, y el mayor grupo de colaboración reunió a siete autores. Treinta y seis palabras clave alcanzaron un mínimo de tres apariciones; liderazgo transformacional (92) y satisfacción laboral (46) fueron los temas predominantes. La red de cocitación incluyó 21 autores agrupados en tres clústeres. En cambio, clima organizacional apareció solo una vez, mientras que clima escolar y cultura organizacional se registraron cuatro veces cada una. Los resultados indican que este campo interdisciplinario, en crecimiento, se fundamenta en el liderazgo y el bienestar ocupacional, pero el clima organizacional aún tiene baja visibilidad como concepto de investigación. La proximidad bibliométrica no evidencia relaciones causales, y las limitaciones terminológicas, la cobertura de la base de datos y la ausencia de cribado manual restringen las inferencias.

Palabras clave: liderazgo transformacional, bienestar docente, satisfacción laboral, liderazgo educativo, clima organizacional.

Introduction

Since teaching involves ongoing cognitive, emotional, and organizational demands, teachers' professional well-being has become a central concern in educational administration. Within this context, research has increasingly focused on the influence that principals and other school leaders may exert in creating work environments conducive to professional engagement, job satisfaction, and resilience. Nevertheless, teacher well-being should not be understood as a single or homogeneous outcome: psychological functioning, professional satisfaction, engagement, emotional exhaustion, and perceived stress are related but conceptually distinct dimensions (Viac & Fraser, 2020). Therefore, understanding how the field employs these concepts is essential for adequately interpreting the available findings.

Within this framework, transformational leadership constitutes a particularly relevant analytical tool. Bass (1985) defined it as a process through which an individual influences a group to achieve a common goal. Subsequently, Bass and Avolio (1994) identified four widely accepted dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. When applied to school settings, these dimensions are associated with the development of a shared vision, professional learning, staff motivation, and institutional development. However, their theoretical value must be distinguished from empirical evidence regarding their benefits for teachers, as such evidence depends both on the methodological design of the studies and on the organizational context in which they are conducted.

Complementarily, teacher well-being is grounded in principles derived from occupational and motivational theory. The Job Demands-Resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) explains how job demands and resources influence motivational and strain processes. Similarly, self-determination theory emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness for psychological functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Likewise, conservation of resources theory focuses on the resources individuals value and the consequences of their actual or potential loss (Hobfoll, 1989). Although these frameworks provide valuable interpretive lenses, they were not examined individually nor experimentally validated as causal processes in the present bibliometric analysis.

Contemporary research also reflects the diversity of approaches and contexts in which this relationship has been examined. For instance, a study conducted with 994 teachers from 70 schools in Türkiye found that leadership and teachers' psychological capital were related to their well-being (Bellibaş et al., 2025). Similarly, in China, a multilevel study of 949 novice teachers identified distinct pathways linking leadership to engagement and burnout (Fang et al., 2025). In turn, other studies have explored the psychological well-being of English language teachers (Zhou & Guo, 2024), role stress and affective commitment (Yong & Zhang, 2025), and burnout in relation to self-efficacy, emotional intelligence, resilience, organizational support, and workload (Tian & Guo, 2024; Karacabey et al., 2025). Given that these studies differ in their populations, instruments, and analytical techniques, their findings should not be interpreted as interchangeable estimates of a single leadership effect.

In the Peruvian context, national data have linked teacher well-being to school relationships, housing conditions, and professional circumstances (Rentería & Solano, 2025). Consistent with this, a study conducted with 268 teachers from a private Peruvian institution found a favorable correlation between transformational leadership and job satisfaction (Centeno et al., 2025). These findings underscore the need to differentiate between individual experiences of well-being and the organizational conditions that surround them, particularly when evidence is drawn from both school and university settings.

For precisely this reason, the organizational dimension deserves particular attention. Christiani and Sudibjo (2025) examined leadership, trust, and teacher well-being, assigning a mediating role to organizational climate.

Likewise, the relationships between organizational climate and burnout have been studied in early childhood education settings (Wang et al., 2026). Although organizational climate, school climate, and organizational culture are interrelated, they are not equivalent concepts. Consequently, using these labels interchangeably may artificially inflate the presence of organizational climate in publication metadata and complicate the interpretation of results.

Regarding bibliometric antecedents, reviews in related fields have traced educational leadership and teachers' subjective well-being, transformational leadership and teachers, as well as the evolution of school climate research (İçten & Özdemir, 2025; Karakus et al., 2026; Maral, 2026). Even so, there remains a need for a focused description of the publication landscape located explicitly at the intersection of transformational leadership and teachers' occupational or psychological well-being, accompanied by a clear assessment of the use of language related to organizational climate. Bibliometric mapping is appropriate for this purpose because it identifies publication patterns and relationships among bibliographic items without seeking to synthesize estimates of causal effects.

Accordingly, this study seeks to answer five research questions: (1) How has scientific output evolved between 2016 and 2026? (2) Which countries, institutions, authors, and journals make the most visible contributions to the retrieved corpus? (3) Which concepts dominate author keywords, and what recent thematic signals can be identified? (4) How are scientific collaboration and the cited intellectual foundations organized? and (5) What is the relative keyword-level visibility of organizational climate compared with other related organizational terms? Finally, the practical relevance of the topic aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4, although the present analysis retains a strictly descriptive scope.

Methodology

A descriptive bibliometric approach was applied to characterize the scientific output, researcher collaboration, thematic co-occurrence, and intellectual structure of the field. Bibliographic data were obtained exclusively from Scopus. The study covered the period from 2016 to 2026, inclusive, and considered journal articles addressing transformational leadership, teachers or educators, and a set of terms related to well-being and professional experience. It should be noted that no systematic evidence synthesis, quality appraisal of individual primary studies, or calculation of causal relationships was performed.

Search Strategy and Corpus Identification

The search was conducted in the Scopus TITLE-ABS-KEY fields using the following query, which is reproduced without modification to preserve its operational definition: TITLE-ABS-KEY("transformational leadership" AND (teacher* OR educator*) AND ("teacher well-being" OR "teacher wellbeing" OR "teachers' well-being" OR wellbeing OR "psychological well-being" OR "psychological wellbeing" OR "job satisfaction" OR burnout OR "work engagement" OR "teacher engagement" OR "occupational well-being" OR "professional well-being" OR "role stress" OR "job stress")) AND PUBYEAR > 2015 AND PUBYEAR < 2027

The initial search identified 170 records, with no restriction on document type. Subsequently, after applying the filter AND (LIMIT-TO(DOCTYPE, "ar")), 155 journal articles were selected, and 15 documents of other types were excluded. No language restriction was applied, and no subsequent relevance screening was conducted. The metadata were exported in CSV format from Scopus and constitute the basis of the corpus and the citation snapshot analyzed.

The search was conceptually structured according to the PICO format. However, this approach does not correspond to a review of intervention effectiveness. In descriptive terms, the population of interest comprised teachers or educators; the central topic was transformational leadership; and the outcome-related search language included teacher well-being and associated occupational dimensions. No comparison group was defined, which is consistent with the nature of the study, which was oriented toward bibliometric mapping rather than the testing of causal relationships.

Figure 1
Identification and document-type restriction of Scopus records



Note. The 15 exclusions correspond only to document type; this figure does not constitute a PRISMA screening flow diagram

Data Extraction and Bibliometric Procedures

The descriptive analysis included annual output, country affiliations, institutions, most prolific authors, publication venues, Scopus subject categories, citation counts, and the h-index. It is important to note that country and subject-area distributions represent overlapping categories; that is, a single document may contribute to more than one country or category. Consequently, the counts are not mutually exclusive, and the number of articles should not be confused with the number of affiliation-based observations.

Network analyses were performed using VOSviewer, version 1.6.21, with full counting. The following thresholds were established: for author co-authorship, a minimum of two documents per author; for author keyword co-occurrence, a minimum of three occurrences per keyword; and for author co-citation, a minimum of 20 citations per cited author. These thresholds refer to the visual eligibility of nodes rather than to the total number of records included in the 155-article corpus. Synonym merging, keyword thesaurus harmonization, normalization options, and manual data-cleaning procedures were documented as part of the data preparation process.

Interpretive Safeguards and Research Ethics

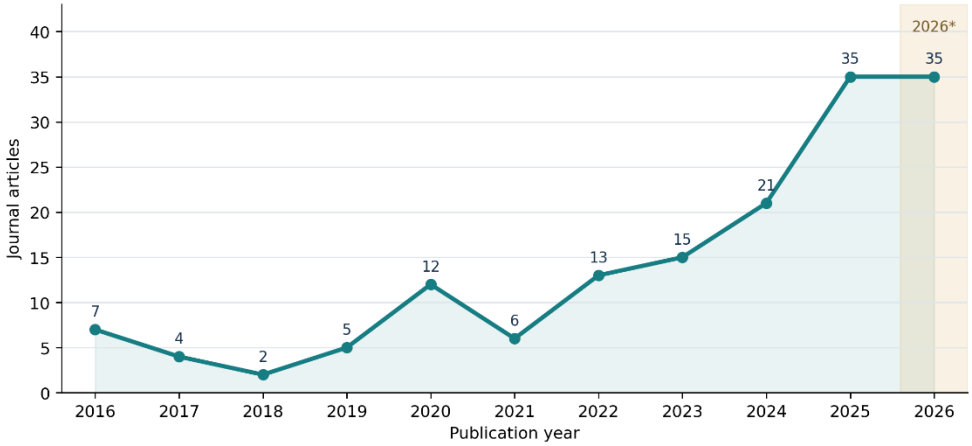
The resulting maps represent bibliographic relationships rather than effect sizes. In this regard, co-authorship indicates co-publications, keyword co-occurrence reflects the joint presence of terms in metadata, and author co-citation reveals patterns of joint citation. Consequently, none of the analyses can demonstrate that a leadership practice caused an improvement in well-being. The study was based exclusively on bibliographic records rather than data from human subjects; therefore, no participants were contacted or subjected to any intervention. Finally, the indexing date, the Scopus CSV export, the VOSviewer project files, and the remaining mapping parameters were retained to ensure the reproducibility of the analysis.

Results and Discussion

The final corpus included 155 journal articles published in the period 2016-2026. However, annual production was irregular and increased significantly in the latter period: 7, 4, 2, 5, 12 and 6 articles were published in 2016–2021, respectively, followed by 13, 15, 21, 35 and 35 in 2022–2026. The concentration of publication activity in recent years is evidenced by 119 indexed items (76.8% of the documented corpus) from 2022 onward. The statistic should not be regarded as a final yearly total as 2026 was incomplete at the time of consultation. The provided corpus has collected 2,057 Scopus citations and an h-index of 22, both time-dependent metrics.

Figure 2

Annual publication output on transformational leadership and teacher well-being, 2016–2026



Note. Replotted from yearly counts reported in the source manuscript;
*2026 is a partial indexing year as of the undocumented original consultation date

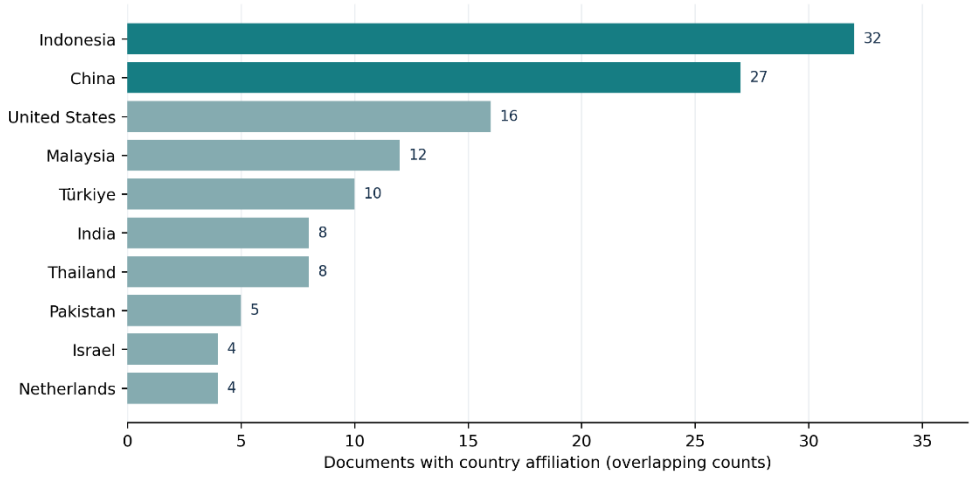
The rising trend may suggest more focus on teachers' working circumstances, more frequent use of broader well-being definitions, and a growing number of indexed articles. These are reasonable interpretative reasons rather than proven sources of bibliometric increase. Importantly, more publications are a sign of intellectual engagement and cannot alone serve as evidence of the efficacy of transformative leadership.

Geographical distribution and publication outlets

Indonesia provided 32 records, followed by China with 27, the United States (16), Malaysia (12), Türkiye (10), India and Thailand (8 each), Pakistan (5), and Israel and the Netherlands (4 each). These figures are based on nations stated in article affiliation information, not the nationality of writers or the exclusive provenance of publishing. Cross-country coauthorship may cause overlapping country counts. The Chinese and other Asian contexts in the corpus may be important for the contextual transferability of themes. The coverage in Scopus and the exact search syntax impact which nations are more visible.

Figure 3

Countries or territories with the largest affiliation counts in the retrieved corpus



Note. Constructed from country counts reported in the source.
Values are not additive because internationally coauthored documents can be assigned to multiple countries

Institutional affiliations were relatively dispersed: Universiti Utara Malaysia, University of Ioannina, Gazi Üniversitesi, Beijing Normal University, Universitas Pelita Harapan, Karabük Üniversitesi, Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Universitas Negeri Malang, and Universitas Negeri Makassar all appeared with three articles in the original account. At the author level, M. Polatcan appeared on four documents and S. Anastasiou on three, while numerous other writers were affiliated with two. Productivity rankings and position in the collaboration-network are independent measures and should be read individually.

Educational Management Administration & Leadership lead the publication- channel distribution with eight articles. Frontiers in Psychology and International Journal of Educational Management had five contributions apiece, followed by Behavioral Sciences (four) and Acta Psychologica, European Journal of Education, Frontiers in Education and Journal of Educational Administration (three each). The corpus was interdisciplinary. Subject area assignments on Scopus covered the fields of Social Sciences (115), Business, Management and Accounting (44), Psychology (35), Arts and Humanities (16), Computer Science (10), Decision Sciences (6), Biochemistry, Genetics and Molecular Biology (5) and Medicine (5). The shown set of subject-area assignments assigned 42.0% to Social Sciences, not 42.0% of the 155 unique articles. Disciplinary percentages need to be interpreted with their proper denominator.

Table 1

Selected descriptive characteristics of the Scopus corpus

Indicator	Original report	Interpretive qualifier
Eligible journal articles	155	Document-type filtering; no later manual screening
Total citations	2,057	Scopus snapshot; date not specified
h-index	22	Corpus-level, time-sensitive indicator
Most productive authors	M. Polatcan (4); S. Anastasiou (3)	Document counts rather than network centrality
Largest outlet	Educational Management Administration & Leadership (8)	Within the retrieved corpus only
Highest country counts	Indonesia (32); China (27)	Affiliation counts can overlap

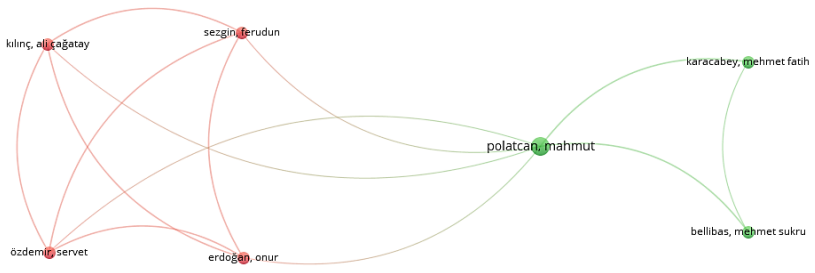
Note. All values are transcribed from the original manuscript, not recalculated from a newly retrieved Scopus export

Co-authorship: a concentrated connected core

VOSviewer identified 477 distinct authors within the 155-article corpus. At the minimum productivity threshold of two documents, 22 authors qualified for analysis. Their collaboration structure was not fully connected: the largest connected component contained seven authors across two clusters, with 13 links and a total link strength of 21. Mahmut Polatcan occupied a bridging position between the two principal groups in the original network depiction (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Largest connected author co-authorship component



Note. Original VOSviewer 1.6.21 network retained from the source. Full counting; at least two documents per author; largest component of seven authors, two clusters, 13 links, total link strength 21

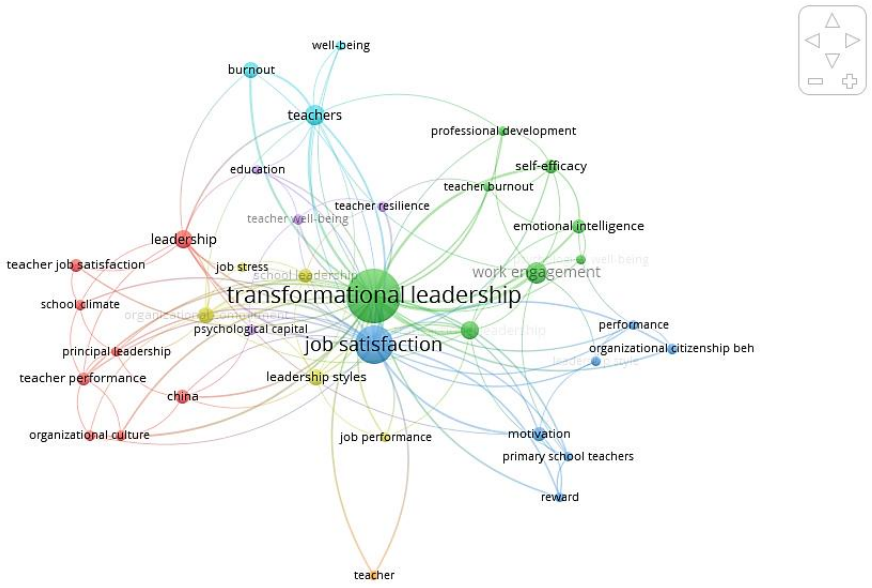
The separation between 477 identified contributors and the small largest connected component signals that recurring co-publication links are concentrated in limited collaborative cores. This does not necessarily mean that researchers work in isolation: a two-document threshold omits one-time contributors, co-author links outside the displayed component, and other forms of scholarly cooperation. Nevertheless, the result highlights a practical opportunity for comparative, multicountry collaboration and shared measurement protocols. Related bibliometric studies likewise portray educational leadership research as a field composed of multiple author networks and thematic lines (İçten & Özdemir, 2025; Karakus et al., 2026).

Author keywords: core concepts and organizational terminology

Across the corpus, 449 distinct author-keyword strings were identified. At a minimum of three occurrences, 36 keywords entered a seven-cluster network containing 123 links and total link strength of 274. Transformational leadership was the dominant node (92 occurrences; total link strength 139), followed by job satisfaction (46; total link strength 91). Other visible terms included teacher well-being, work engagement, psychological well-being, burnout, self-efficacy, and teacher resilience. Thus, the thematic structure joins leadership vocabulary to multiple indicators of teachers' occupational and psychological experiences rather than relying on one definition of well-being.

Figure 5

Co-occurrence network of author keywords



Note. Original VOSviewer map. Full counting; minimum three occurrences; 36 terms in seven clusters, with 123 links and total link strength 274

The organizational vocabulary requires careful differentiation. School climate and organizational culture each had four author-keyword occurrences and therefore qualified for the map. Organizational climate appeared once, with a reported total link strength of 6, and fell below the three-occurrence threshold. A keyword below threshold is not absent from the underlying publications, nor does its low frequency establish that researchers neglected all organizational processes. Conversely, it would be misleading to combine the three terms under a single synonym without an explicit coding rationale. The proper conclusion is that the exact organizational climate label had limited visibility among author keywords in this particular retrieved corpus.

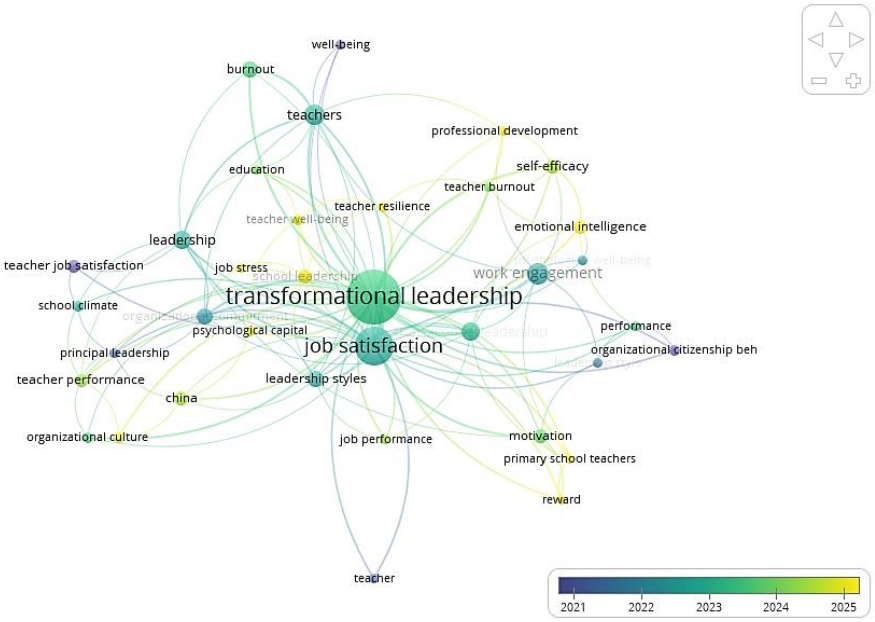
The prominence of job satisfaction is consistent with empirical work addressing its connection to role stress and affective commitment (Yong & Zhang, 2025). The presence of resilience, burnout, self-efficacy, and psychological capital also resonates with studies of occupational resources and demands (Bellibaş et al., 2025; Tian & Guo, 2024; Karacabey et al., 2025). These connections help situate the keyword map in theory, but the map itself contains no effect estimates and does not discriminate supportive from contradictory empirical conclusions.

Temporal overlay: emerging lines of inquiry

The overlay visualization represents the mean publication year of items through a color scale extending approximately from 2021 to 2025. Terms nearer its more recent end included professional development, teacher resilience, emotional intelligence, teacher burnout, psychological capital, motivation, primary school teachers, and reward (Figure 4). A mean-year overlay is not a chronology of first occurrences; recent coloring may reflect the publication distribution of articles carrying a keyword, and raw year values for each node were not included in the source.

Figure 6

Temporal overlay of author-keyword co-occurrence



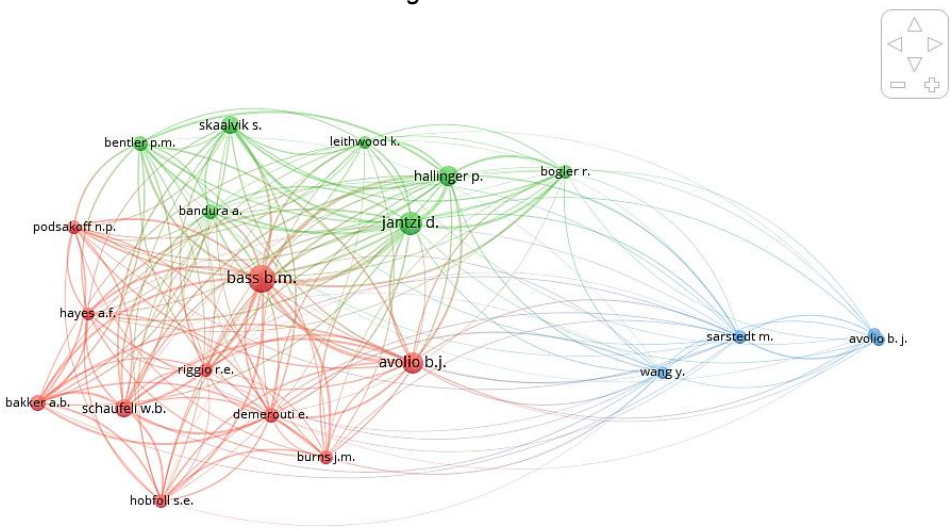
Note. Original VOSviewer overlay; colors indicate the mean publication year associated with a keyword, not its first year of appearance

These signals suggest a research agenda increasingly attentive to differentiated mechanisms and specific occupational experiences: the demands that contribute to exhaustion, the psychosocial resources that may sustain engagement, and the possible influence of professional development opportunities. The JD-R model and conservation-of-resources theory provide useful ways to formulate subsequent hypotheses, but overlay recency does not establish that these approaches are superior or that any particular pathway has been verified (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Hobfoll, 1989).

Author co-citation: intellectual foundations

The co-citation approach retrieved 6783 cited authors from references included in the Scopus corpus. Using a threshold of 20 citations, we identified 21 cited authors in a network of three clusters with 183 linkages with a total link strength of 2,318. Bass (89 citations; link strength 546) and Avolio (55 citations; link strength 327) were notably prominent. Other names that appeared in the viewable text were Bakker, Demerouti, Hobfoll, Bandura, Hallinger, Jantzi, Leithwood and Skaalvik. The network therefore incorporates the seminal work on educational leadership, occupational stress and resources, and transformational leadership.

Figure 7
Author co-citation network and foundational knowledge communities



Note. Original VOSviewer network cropped to remove application controls. Full counting; at least 20 citations per cited author; 21 authors, three clusters, 183 links, total link strength 2,318

The intellectual structure is a valuable addition to the keyword map. Leadership principles provide one theoretical axis, whereas occupational psychology, self-efficacy, and job demands give additional bases for assessing teacher results. But co-citation is a metric of bibliographic closeness, and two references may be co-cited because they are compared, challenged, or merged, rather than because academics agree with their statements. So the map reveals sources of information that are often shared, rather than an established agreement on processes of well-being.

Table 2
VOSviewer network settings and results

Analysis	Eligibility rule	Eligible items / clusters	Network structure
Author co-authorship	≥2 documents / author	22 eligible; largest component 7 / 2	13 links; total link strength 21 (largest component)
Author-keyword co-occurrence	≥3 occurrences / keyword	36 terms / 7	123 links; total link strength 274
Author co-citation	≥20 citations / cited author	21 cited authors / 3	183 links; total link strength 2,318

Note. The underlying corpus remained 155 articles in all analyses.
Co-authorship connectivity refers to the largest connected component; other rows refer to the displayed network

Organizational context: a gap in terminology, not proof of absence

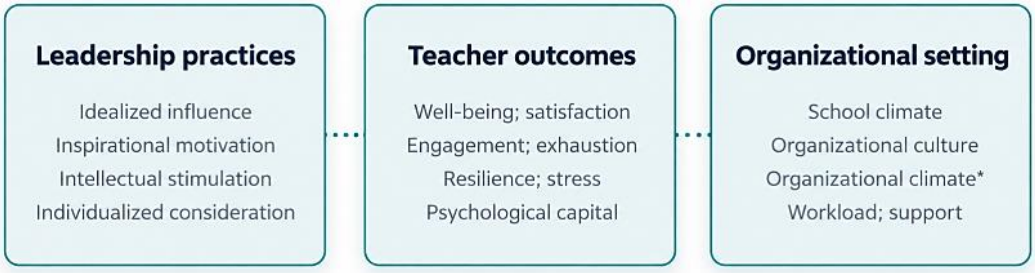
Organizational climate is best seen as a focused thematic lens, not a third search criteria or an extra causative variable. The query included leadership, educator, and well-being keywords to identify papers, so it was not optimized to catch the complete organizational-climate literature. The one occurrence finding thus supports a more limited claim: explicit usage of organizational climate in the author keywords of the examined corpus is rare. Studies that speak to trust in leaders, workload, collegial support or school environment may be tapping similarly linked processes without taking on that term.

The difference counts theoretically, too. School climate generally reflects impressions of the school environment and interactions. Organizational culture refers to shared beliefs, assumptions, or practices. Organizational climate more generally reflects perceived organizational features and procedures. Their meanings differ among fields and none should be blindly taken as a replacement for the others. Further exploration is inspired

by the related literature on leadership, trust, and well-being (Christiani & Sudibjo, 2025), and organizational environment and burnout (Wang et al., 2026) but does not provide a mediational bibliometric test in the present study.

Figure 8

Conceptual research agenda linking leadership, teacher outcomes, and organizational context



Note. Author-developed interpretive framework based on concepts discussed in the manuscript. The three blocks are not extracted clusters and do not assert direction, mediation, or causality

Critical appraisal of the bibliometric design

Several design considerations restrict these results. First, usage of Scopus excludes journals and regional databases that are not covered by Scopus. Second, the search deliberately incorporated job satisfaction, work engagement, burnout, and stress as proxies or nearby notions of teacher well-being. The tradeoff of a bigger vocabulary is that it enhances memory but also increases conceptual heterogeneity. Third, the author-keyword network is sensitive to spelling variants, to singular vs plural phrases, and to the lack of uniformity of synonyms. Fourth, there is no mention of manual relevance screening following the document-type filter, and so the 155 entries should be considered a query-defined bibliometric corpus rather than a carefully validated set of all empirically relevant studies.

Fifth, the current deliverable cannot be reanalyzed independently at a bibliographic count level since it does not contain a specific date of search/export and shared record level data. Sixth, year 2026 is an unfinished period and citation counts are changing with time and database upgrading. Finally, the choice of node thresholds impacts minor collaboration components and sparse occurrences: the lack of a node from a figure cannot be used as a justification to assert the non-existence of the research subject or author associated with it.

Additionally, to improve transparency for journal submission, a supplementary archive should include the exact search date, raw Scopus CSV export (as per licensing constraints), an exclusion/cleaning log if performed, normalized author and keyword labels, VOSviewer settings and files, and a table to reconcile each reported bibliometric indicator. Robustness tests under other keyword criteria and a sensitivity analysis separating narrow well-being keywords from connected occupational dimensions would also be valuable. Recommendations for future validation, not processes claimed to have been performed.

Conclusions

This bibliometric mapping reveals a rapidly increasing number of Scopus-indexed journal publications on the junction of transformational leadership and teacher-related well-being dimensions. The production grew particularly focused after 2022; the initial Scopus citation snapshot showed 2,057 citations and an h-index of 22 among 155 papers published in 2016–2026. The main publication venues were journals on educational administration and psychology, and the highest affiliation counts were for Indonesia and China.

Thematic analysis showed that the most evident author keywords were transformational leadership and job happiness, in addition to work engagement, burnout, resilience, self-efficacy and psychological well-being. At the selected level of productivity, co-authorship was comparatively fragmented, but author co-citation related core sources in transformational leadership and occupational psychology. These complimentary maps capture separate parts of the knowledge structure and are not to be combined into causal inferences.

The identical author term organizational climate appeared once only, within the visualization threshold. School climate and organizational culture occurred four times each. This finding points to a lack of explicit keyword-level presence of one term in a corpus specified by a query, but it does not show the absence of organizational conditions in the larger literature or that constructs are synonyms. Future research should specifically address the

relations between school leadership and working conditions and certain dimensions of teacher well-being with appropriate longitudinal or intervention designs and context-sensitive metrics.

The contribution of the present study is thus a distinct bibliometric account and a well-bounded research plan. The article can aid in hypothesis formation and comparative study, but its descriptive approaches are not sufficient to prove the effectiveness of leadership strategies.

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