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Research Trends in Empowering Leadership and Innovative Work Behavior in Business Organizations: A Bibliometric and Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract: *Empowering leadership* is a leadership approach that is gaining increasing attention because of its ability to encourage *innovative work behavior* (IWB) employees. Although the number of publications on this topic continues to increase, research results are still scattered across various contexts, theories, and research methods, requiring a comprehensive synthesis. This study aims to analyze the development of research on *empowering leadership* And *innovative work behavior*, identifying the theory used, dominant mediating and moderating variables, research methods, research context, and identifying gaps and future research agendas. The research uses a qualitative approach. *Systematic Literature Review*(SLR) combined with bibliometric analysis. Articles were obtained from the Scopus database with a publication period of 2021–2026. The selection process was conducted based on PRISMA guidelines, resulting in 14 articles meeting the inclusion criteria for further analysis. The analysis results indicate that *Empowerment Theory*, *Psychological Empowerment Theory*, And *Social Cognitive Theory* is the most widely used theory. The dominant mediating variable is *psychological empowerment*, *employee empowerment*, and *self-efficacy*, while research on moderating variables is still relatively limited. Most studies use quantitative methods with SEM and PLS-SEM approaches and focus on the business and organizational sectors. Furthermore, bibliometric analysis indicates new research trends focusing on communication, digital capabilities, and digital transformation. *Empowering leadership* proven to play an important role in improving *innovative work behavior* through strengthening individual psychological resources and organizational capabilities. However, there are still research gaps related to the integration of communication and digitalization factors, the developing country context, and the use of longitudinal and cross-sectional research designs *mixed methods*. Future research needs to develop a more comprehensive model to explain the relationship between *empowering leadership* and *innovative work behavior* in the era of digital transformation.

Keywords: empowering leadership, innovative work behavior, empowerment, self-efficacy.

INTRODUCTION

In the era of digital transformation and increasingly complex global competition, innovation has become a key factor determining an organization's sustainability and competitive advantage. Organizations are required to adapt to rapidly changing business environments, whether due to technological developments, changing customer needs, or global market dynamics. According to Anderson et al. (2014), innovation is a crucial process that enables organizations to maintain competitiveness and continuously improve performance. In line with this, Afsar et al. (2019) explain that an organization's ability to generate and implement new ideas is heavily influenced by the human factors involved. Therefore, attention to employee innovative behavior is increasing in various management and organizational behavior studies.

One concept widely used to explain individual contributions to the innovation process is Innovative Work Behavior (IWB). This concept refers to a series of behaviors that include idea generation, idea promotion, and implementation of new ideas that can benefit the organization. According to De Jong and Den Hartog (2010), innovative work behavior is not only related to the ability to generate creative ideas, but also includes individual efforts to convince others and realize those ideas into applicable innovations. Over time, IWB has become one of the variables that is widely studied because it has been proven to contribute to increased productivity, organizational effectiveness, and innovation success (Bos-Nehles et al., 2017).

The importance of innovative work behavior is increasingly evident in various organizational sectors, including education, healthcare, manufacturing, and public services. Employees who demonstrate innovative behavior tend to be better able to find solutions to work problems, improve service quality, and create added value for the organization. According to Nazir et al. (2024), organizations that successfully encourage innovative work behavior among their employees have a greater opportunity to achieve competitive advantage than those that do not support individual innovation. Meanwhile, Guo et al. (2024) emphasize that enhancing employee innovative behavior is an effective strategy in facing the increasingly dynamic challenges of modern organizations.

Various studies have identified several factors that can influence innovative work behavior, both originating from the individual and the work environment. These factors include intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, organizational culture, innovation climate, and leadership style. Among these factors, leadership is one of the variables that has received the most attention because leaders have the ability to create a work environment that supports creativity and innovation (Hoch et al., 2018). Through the behavior and policies they implement, leaders can influence the thinking, motivation, and behavior of their subordinates in generating and implementing new ideas (Yukl, 2013).

In recent years, researchers have begun to focus on the concept of empowering leadership as a leadership style that has the potential to encourage innovative work behavior. Empowering leadership is a leadership approach that focuses on empowering employees through granting autonomy, delegating authority, participating in decision-making, and developing individual competencies. According to Amundsen and Martinsen (2014), empowering leadership aims to increase employees' capacity to manage their work independently and take initiative in completing tasks. With this empowerment, employees tend to feel more trusted and have greater opportunities to develop innovative ideas.

The relationship between empowering leadership and innovative work behavior can be explained through various theoretical perspectives. One such theory is Social Exchange Theory, which states that when employees receive support and trust from leaders, they will respond through positive behaviors that benefit the organization (Blau, 1964). Furthermore, Self-Determination Theory explains that granting autonomy by leaders can increase intrinsic motivation, which ultimately encourages innovative behavior (Deci et al., 2017). Thus,

empowering leadership is seen as an important mechanism in creating psychological conditions that support innovation in the workplace.

Various empirical studies have shown that empowering leadership has a positive influence on innovative work behavior. Research conducted by Zhang and Bartol (2010) found that empowering leadership can increase employee creativity through psychological empowerment and intrinsic motivation. More recent findings by Mehboob et al. (2024) suggest that this relationship can also be explained by the mediating role of job crafting and creative self-efficacy. Other research findings reveal that knowledge sharing, work engagement, and psychological safety also play a role in strengthening the influence of empowering leadership on employee innovative behavior (Khan et al., 2021).

Although research on empowering leadership and innovative work behavior continues to grow, existing research findings still show diversity in terms of research context, theoretical approaches, and variables used. Some studies emphasize the role of psychological empowerment as a primary mediator, while others highlight the importance of creative self-efficacy, knowledge sharing, or work engagement. Furthermore, research conducted in various industrial sectors and countries has yielded inconsistent findings (Afsar et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2021). This suggests that the literature on the relationship between empowering leadership and innovative work behavior remains fragmented and requires a more comprehensive synthesis.

The development of publications on empowering leadership and innovative work behavior has also seen a significant increase in recent years. The increasing number of studies has led to a broader scope of available literature, both in terms of theory, methods, and research context. According to Donthu et al. (2021), when a research field develops rapidly, bibliometric studies are necessary to map the intellectual structure, research trends, collaborative networks, and emerging themes within the field. Furthermore, Paul and Criado (2020) emphasize that systematic literature reviews are necessary to synthesize existing empirical findings to generate a more comprehensive understanding of a research topic.

To date, most review studies have generally addressed the relationship between leadership and innovation, while studies specifically mapping the development of research on empowering leadership and innovative work behavior are relatively limited. Consequently, a comprehensive overview of publication trends, influential authors and institutions, dominant research themes, and future research directions is lacking. This gap underpins the importance of conducting this study.

Based on the above description, this study aims to analyze research development trends on empowering leadership and innovative work behavior through bibliometric analysis and a systematic literature review. Bibliometric analysis is used to identify publication trends, authors, institutions, countries, journals, and dominant research themes. Furthermore, a systematic literature review is used to synthesize empirical findings, identify frequently used mediating and moderating variables, and formulate a research agenda for future development.

METHODS

Research Design

This study uses a bibliometric analysis approach combined with a systematic literature review (SLR) to analyze research developments regarding *empowering leadership* And *innovative work behaviour* A bibliometric approach is used to map the intellectual structure, publication trends, collaboration networks, and the development of research themes in the field. Meanwhile, a systematic literature review is used to synthesize empirical findings, theories, mediating and moderating variables, and identify research gaps and future research directions. The combination of these two approaches allows researchers to gain a more comprehensive

understanding of the development of existing research (Donthu et al., 2021; Paul & Criado, 2020).

Data Sources and Search Strategy

The research data were obtained from the Scopus database, which was selected because it is one of the largest multidisciplinary bibliographic databases and is widely used in bibliometric studies due to its extensive coverage and high-quality indexing of international scientific publications (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016). The literature search was conducted on 25 June 2026 using the Scopus search engine.

The search strategy was developed by combining keywords related to the main research concepts, namely empowering leadership and innovative work behaviour. To accommodate differences in British and American English spelling conventions, both terms “behaviour” and “behavior” were included in the search strategy. The final search string applied in Scopus was:

TITLE-ABS-KEY ("empowering leadership" AND "innovative work behaviour") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("empowering leadership" AND "innovative behavior")

The search was limited based on predefined eligibility criteria. The document types were restricted to articles, while only publications written in English were included. Additional filters were applied to improve the relevance and quality of retrieved studies, including Business, Management and Accounting; Psychology; Social Sciences, and the publication period was limited to 2011–2026]. Studies that did not match the research focus, were not available in English, or were classified as non-research documents were excluded.

All retrieved records were exported from Scopus in CSV and RIS formats to facilitate data cleaning, screening, and further analysis using bibliometric tools and systematic review procedures. The exported metadata included authors’ information, publication year, title, abstract, keywords, citation information, and source details for subsequent analysis.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Articles included in this study must meet several inclusion criteria, namely: (1) discussing the relationship between *empowering leadership* and *innovative work behaviour*; (2) published in a scientific journal indexed by Scopus; (3) written in English; (4) in the form of an empirical or conceptual research article; and (5) available in full text form (*full text*) so that researchers can carry out in-depth analysis of the contents of the article.

On the other hand, articles are excluded from the analysis process if they meet one of the exclusion criteria, namely: (1) they are editorial articles, *book review*, *conference review*, *note*, or *erratum*; (2) does not directly discuss the concept *empowering leadership* and *innovative work behaviour*; (3) identified as a duplicate article in the search results; and (4) not available or not accessible in full text form.

The application of these inclusion and exclusion criteria aims to obtain a collection of articles that are relevant, high quality, and in accordance with the scope of the research so that the results of the analysis obtained can provide a comprehensive picture of the development of related research *empowering leadership* and *innovative work behaviour*.

Article Selection Process

The article selection process is carried out using guidelines *Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses* (PRISMA) 2020 (Page et al., 2021). The selection stages include *identification*, namely identifying all articles obtained from the Scopus database;*screening*, namely removing duplicate articles and filtering articles based on title, abstract, and keywords; *eligibility*, namely evaluating the suitability of articles based on the full text (*full text*); and *included*, which identifies articles that meet all inclusion criteria for

further analysis. The implementation of the PRISMA 2020 stages ensures that only relevant and high-quality articles are used in this study.

Data analysis

1. Bibliometric Analysis

   Bibliometric analysis was performed using VOS viewer software version 1.6.20 and Biblioshiny (*Bibliometrix R Package*) to map the development of research on *empowering leadership* and *innovative work behaviour* the analysis includes annual publication trends, publication sources, authors, countries, and institutions contributing to this research field. In addition, the analysis *co-occurrence* used to identify the relationship between keywords and dominant research themes, *co-citation analysis* used to map intellectual structures based on citation relationships between references, as well as *bibliographic coupling* used to identify relationships between documents based on the similarity of the references used.

2. Systematic Literature Review

   After the bibliometric analysis was conducted, articles that met the inclusion criteria were systematically analyzed using techniques *content analysis* this analysis aims to identify the theories used, dominant mediating and moderating variables, research methods, research sectors and contexts, and the main findings obtained. In addition, the analysis was also conducted to identify research gaps (*research gaps*) and formulate a future research agenda (*future research agenda*). Next, all findings are synthesized and grouped into main themes to provide a comprehensive understanding of the development of related research *empowering leadership* and *innovative work behaviour*.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bibliometric Analysis

Based on the results of data searches conducted on the Scopus database, the bibliometric analysis in this study is based on a total of 63 documents publications published over a period of sixteen years, namely from 2011 to 2026. The data was obtained specifically using a structured search query on the aspects of the title, abstract, and keywords of the document through the command formula: *TITLE-ABS-KEY ("empowering leadership" AND "innovative work behaviour") OR TITLE-ABS-KEY ("empowering leadership" AND "innovative behavior")*. Through this keyword limitation, the focus of the analysis is consistently directed to map the dynamics of relationships, development trends, as well as global scientific contributions that specifically examine the influence of empowering leadership styles (*empowering leadership*) towards the formation of innovative work behavior (*innovative work behavior*) employees across the globe. All of these captured documents were then further extracted and visualized to identify research innovations and established academic collaboration networks.

1. Publication Trend Analysis

   Based on the data presented in Figure 1 regarding the number of document publications per year from 2011 to 2026, there is a fluctuating development trend but tends to experience significant growth, especially in recent years. In the initial phase (2011–2019), publication productivity was still very low and at a stagnant level, where the number of documents published only ranged from 0 to 3 documents per year, even there were no publications at all in 2012 and 2015. Entering 2020, research activity began to show signs of positive acceleration with the recording of 3 documents, which then jumped sharply to 8 documents in 2021.

   This intensive growth phase will continue until it reaches its peak in 2023 as *golden year* a total of 12 documents were published. Despite a slight decline in 2022 (6 documents) and 2024 (7 documents), the publication trend rebounded significantly in 2025, reaching

10 documents. Meanwhile, for the ongoing 2026, research productivity remains well maintained, with a provisional record of 6 documents. Overall, this sharp surge, which has dominated since 2021, indicates that the research topics raised have increasingly received significant attention and become a primary focus among academics and researchers over the past five years.

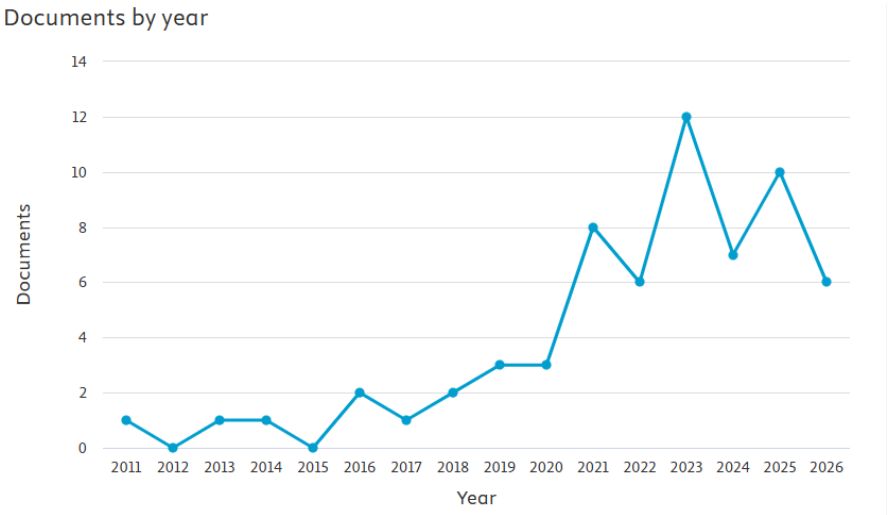


Figure 1. Publication Trends by Year

Based on the data presented in Figure 2 regarding the distribution of publications based on authors with a minimum contribution of two documents, it is clear that research contributions in this topic are spread across several key researchers with quite competitive productivity. The position of the most productive author is occupied by Sharma, H. who leads with a total of 3 documents. Meanwhile, other research contributions are evenly distributed by a group of researchers who each managed to publish 2 documents. This group of researchers includes Amarullah, D., Barattucci, M., Blomme, R.J., Doucet, O., Edelbroek, R., Gaudet, M.C., Jabid, A.W., Kim, M., Madaan, K., Peters, P., Slåtten, T., Turcotte-Légaré, N., Wu, G., and Xie, H. This balanced dominance among authors with at least two documents indicates that although there is one most prominent author, the focus of studies in this research area is also of interest and is actively developed by a fairly broad and varied network of researchers.

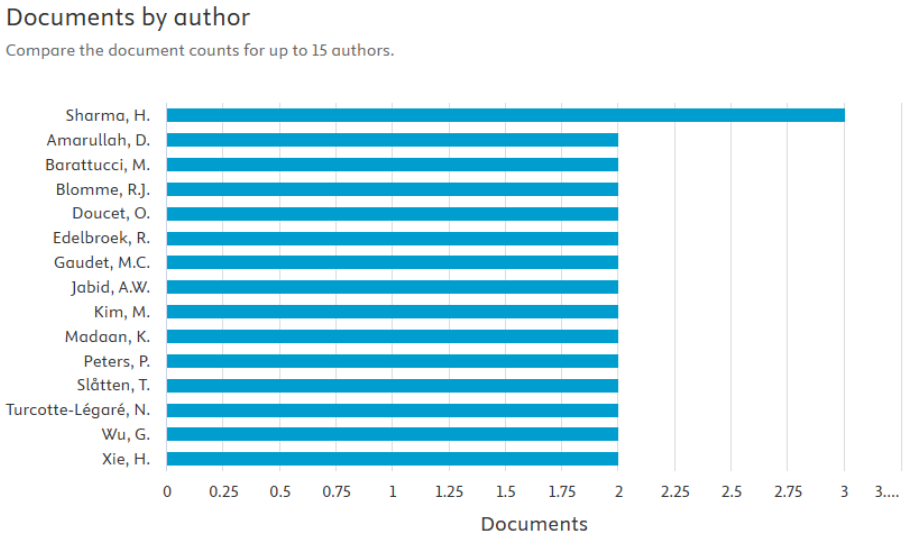


Figure 2. Documents by author

Based on the distribution of documents by institution of origin in Figure 3, publications with at least two documents are dominated by international and national academic institutions actively involved in developing this research. Guru Jambheshwar University of Science & Technology and Aarhus University are the top contributors, with each contributing three documents.

Meanwhile, other research contributions are evenly distributed across several universities across the country, each with two papers. These institutions include HEC Montréal, Kunming University of Science and Technology, Wuhan University of Technology, Chongqing University, Open University, Nyenrode Business University, Khairun University, and Høgskolen i Innlandet. The presence of various global affiliates combined with national institutions such as Khairun University demonstrates that the research topics raised have broad academic appeal and are actively studied through various institutional perspectives at the global level.

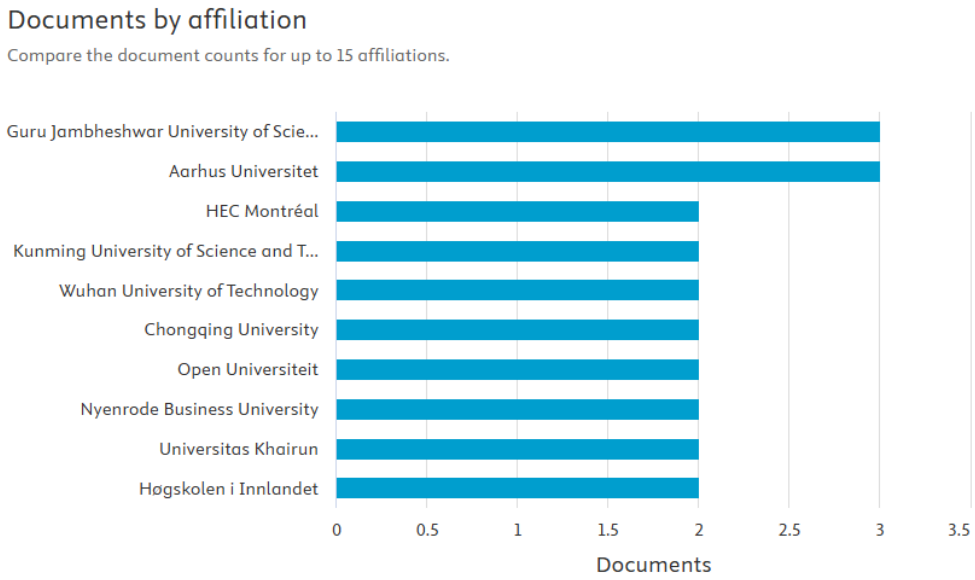


Figure 3. Documents by affiliation

Based on data on the distribution of documents based on scientific fields (*subject area*) presented in Figure 4, it is clear that the focus of this research is strongly dominated by the social sciences, business, and human behavior clusters. The field of Business, Management and Accounting occupies the top position with the most dominant contribution of 41 documents, followed by the field of Social Sciences with 16 documents, and Psychology with 13 documents. The high number of publications in these three main sectors indicates that the core of the research topics raised is closely related to aspects of organizational management, social dynamics, and individual behavior in the work environment and society.

Furthermore, this research topic was also examined from an interdisciplinary perspective, involving other supporting disciplines at a lower-middle level. Economics, Econometrics, and Finance contributed five papers, followed by Decision Sciences with four, and Computer Science and Engineering with three each. More specific contributions were also found in Arts and Humanities, Environmental Science, and Medicine, with two papers each. Several other disciplines, such as Energy, Mathematics, Multidisciplinary, and Nursing, each contributed one document each.

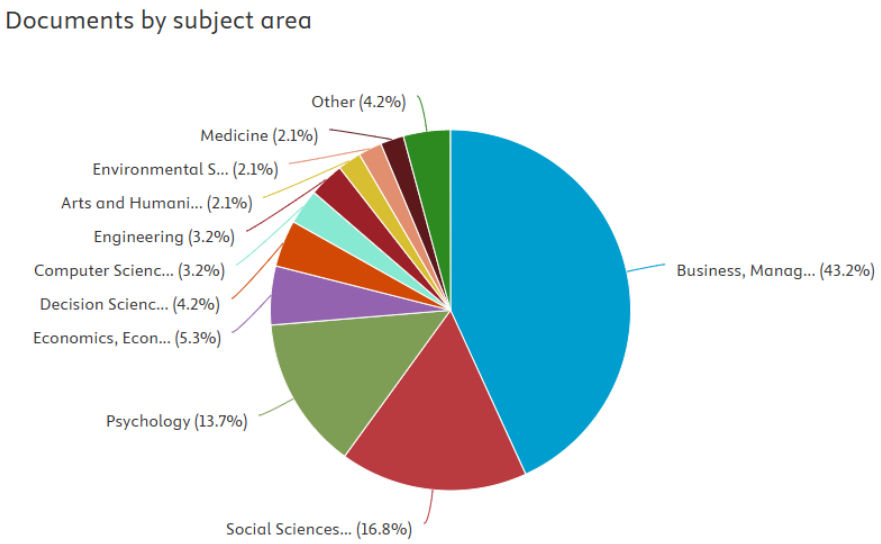


Figure 4. Documents by subject area

Based on the data presented in Figure 5 regarding the distribution of documents by country of origin of researchers with a minimum contribution of three documents, it is clear that the research focus on this topic has attracted global attention, involving strong contributions from Asia, North America, and Europe. The top position is dominated by China with a total of 16 documents, indicating the country's high research productivity and academic attention to this topic. Second place is occupied by Indonesia, which contributed significantly with 8 documents, followed closely by India with 7 documents. The presence of three Asian countries in the top ranking indicates that the dynamics of this research are developing very positively in developing regions and Asian economic centers.

In addition to Asia's dominance, research contributions are also strengthened by the involvement of researchers from other parts of the world who maintain high research standards. Canada contributed five documents, followed by Denmark with four. Meanwhile, six countries with equal productivity, each contributing three documents: Australia, Norway, South Korea, Spain, and Vietnam. This broad and even geographic distribution confirms that the issues raised in this research are not merely local phenomena, but rather topics of universal and global relevance, actively studied by various international academic communities.

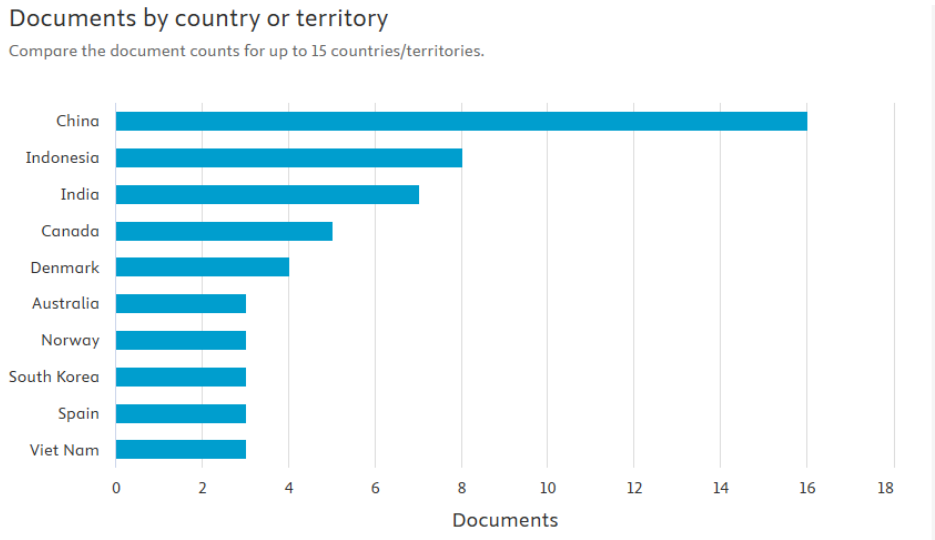


Figure 5. Documents by Country

2. Analysis Co-occurrence

Based on the network visualization analysis in Figure 6, the conceptual structure of this research is strongly centered on two main variables: "empowering leadership" and "relationship," which are indicated by the largest node size. These two central variables act as bridges connecting elements of leadership style, communication, and their impact on the organization. Specifically, this network shows that "empowering leadership" has a linear and direct relationship with "communication" on the one hand, and is connected to "competitive orientation" and "digital enterprise employee" on the other. All interactions of these variables ultimately lead to strengthening the relationship pattern. Overall, this visualization emphasizes that the main focus of this research is to examine how the role of communication and empowering leadership is applied to employees in the digital era to build a solid competitive orientation for the organization.

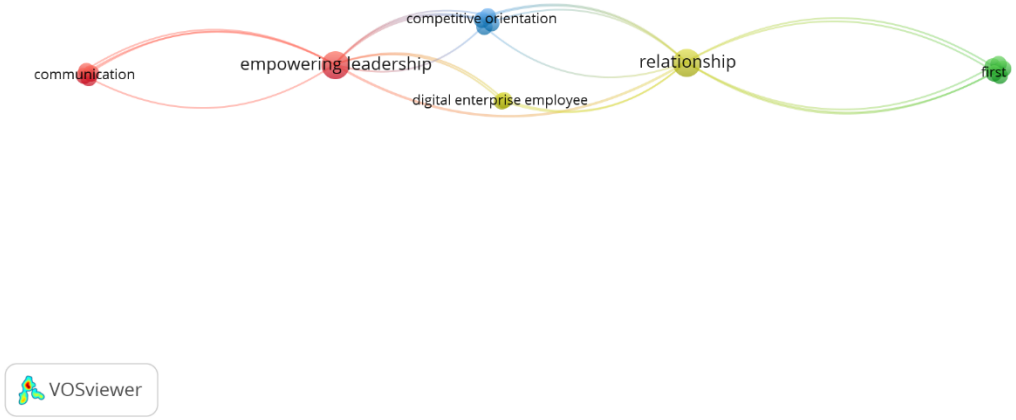


Figure 6. Network Visualization

Based on the analysis *overlay visualization* Figure 7 shows a dynamic shift in research trends from 2021 to 2025, based on the color gradient from purple to bright yellow. The visual structure shows that the initial focus of research in the 2021–2022 period was dominated by the variables "relationship," "digital enterprise employee," and "first," which are marked in bluish-purple, indicating that the research is rooted in the fundamental relationships between employees in the digital industry. Furthermore, entering the transition phase in 2023, the trend shifts toward strategic modeling with the emergence of the variables "empowering leadership" and "competitive orientation" in turquoise. Interestingly, the variable "communication" stands out in bright yellow, confirming that the topic of communication is a new trend (*novelty*) is the most recent and is the main focus that will be most developed by researchers in the period 2024 to 2025.

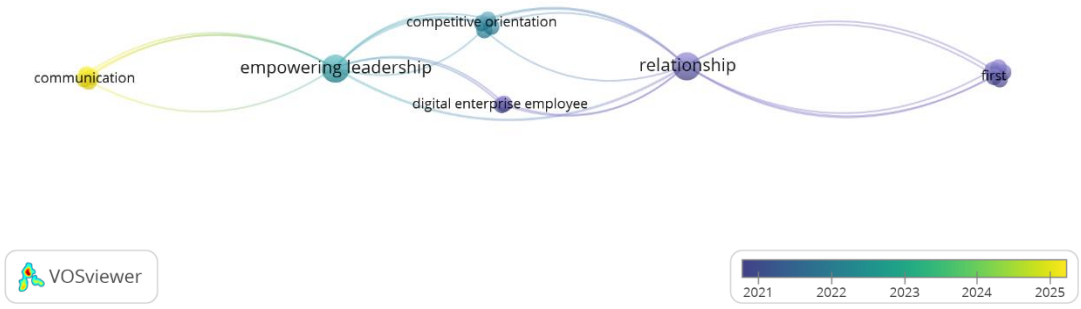


Figure 7. Overlay Visualization

3. Co-citation Analysis

Based on network visualization analysis *co-citation* references in Figure 8 show that the theoretical foundation structure of this research is divided into several main clusters that are interconnected, depicting the scientific references that are most frequently cited simultaneously by researchers. The most dominant main reference in the red cluster is represented by the work of Bartol K.M. (*Linking Empowering*), which became an important theoretical anchor along with the classic social psychology literature of Bandura A. (*Social Foundations*) and the regression analysis methodology by West S.G. (*Multiple Regression*). This red cluster interacts closely with the green cluster next to it which focuses on developing leadership instruments, led by Titiyal R. (*Empowering Leaders*) as well as a guide to the latest PLS-SEM methodology from Sarstedt M. (*A New Criterion*).

On the other hand, the expansion of leadership theory and multi-level analysis methodology is strongly reflected in the blue cluster on the right, which is centered on the prominent methodological publications of Aguinis H. (*Applied Psychology*), and supported by leadership literature from Snape E. (*Empowering Leadershi*) and Kirkman B.L. (*Cross-Level*). Supporting clusters such as the yellow cluster which contains joint leadership research by Deng X. (*From Shared Leadershi*) and self-efficacy by Beehr T.A. (*Self-Efficacy and*), as well as the purple cluster in the lower left corner related to job demands such as Janssen O. (*Job Demands*), further complementing the diversification of theoretical references. Overall, the density of the inter-cluster line network proves the strong integration between empowering leadership theory (*empowering leadership*), strengthening the psychological aspects of employees, as well as a solid quantitative analysis methodology as the main pillars forming this research trend.

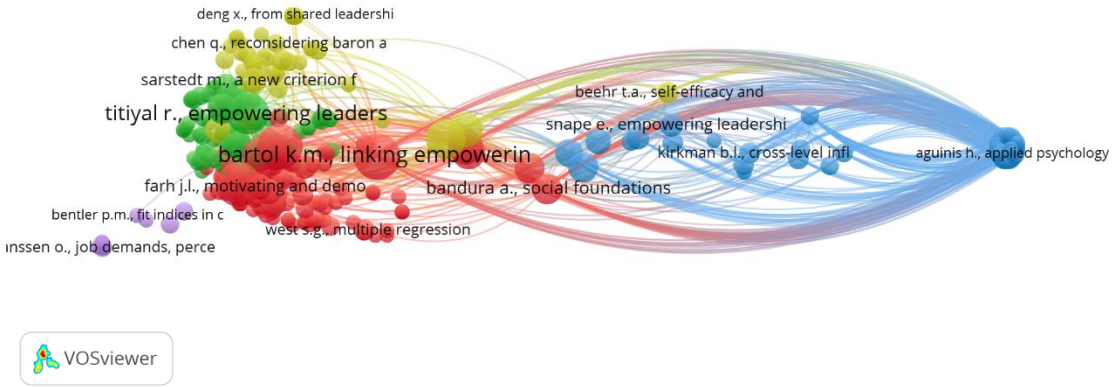


Figure 8. Network Visualization

Based on the analysis *density visualization* in Figure 9, this visual map shows the level of citation density (*citation density*) of the main references that form the basis of the research, where the bright yellow areas indicate the highest intensity of citations and frequent co-citations. The most massive density saturation points are clearly concentrated in two main areas. The first sector is on the left side, which is strongly dominated by the work of Bartol K.M. (*Linking Empowering*) dan Titiyal R. (*Empowering Leaders*), confirming that these two literatures are the main theoretical upstreams most densely referenced in the development of empowering leadership research. The second density championship sector that stands firmly independently on the right side is represented by Aguinis H. (*Applied Psychology*), signifying its fundamental and crucial methodological contribution to researchers in this field. Meanwhile, other supporting references such as Bandura A., Snape E., Kirkman B.L., and Sarstedt M. are in the bluish-green transition area with a dimmer glow. This proves that although the supporting literature remains integrated

in the network, the main and most mature reference focus in this academic map remains on strengthening the concept *empowering leadership* from Bartol and Titiyal and the applied psychology approach from Aguinis.

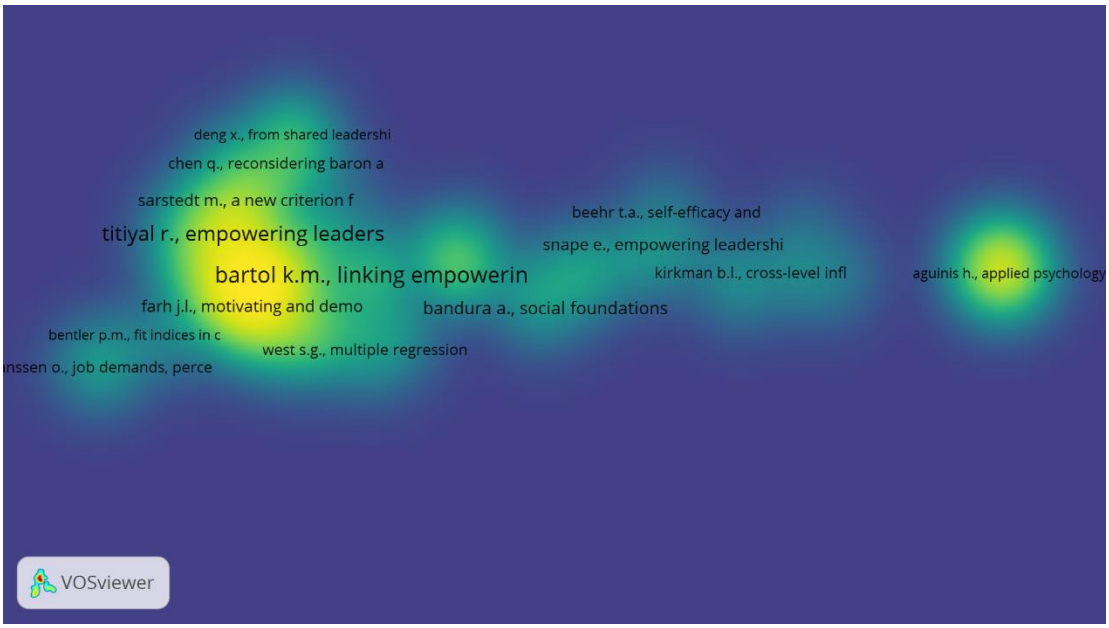


Figure 9. Density Visualization

4. Bibliographic Coupling

Based on network visualization analysis *bibliographic coupling* in Figure 10, inter-document academic connections between researchers are identified based on the similarities in their references, which are visually divided into four densely intersecting primary color clusters. The network structure shows a very strong fundamental contribution in the yellow cluster on the left side, which is predominantly led by Hoch (2013) as one of the largest nodes, supported by other influential literature such as Slåtten (2011) and Mutonyi (2020). This theoretical network is closely connected to the red cluster in the center, which displays Rao Jada (2019) as the center of gravity of the research, surrounded by supporting documents such as Zhu (2019), Rai (2021), and Jønsson (2016) at the bottom.

Meanwhile, the development of modern research is moving towards the green cluster on the right side, inhabited by a network of contemporary researchers such as Guo (2023), Kyei-frimpong (2024), Marampa (2025), and Madaan (2026). The presence of this massive green cluster indicates the presence of a new group of researchers intensively sharing the same theoretical foundation in exploring the continuation of this topic. Finally, the blue cluster at the top, represented by Gkorezis (2016), Lin (2022), and Zheng (2023b), completes this research convergence as a connecting group. The high density of inter-cluster lines from older documents to the most recent documents in 2026 proves that the research community in this field has a very strong consistency of references, indicating that the literature map underlying this study is well established, integrated, and continues to evolve continuously.

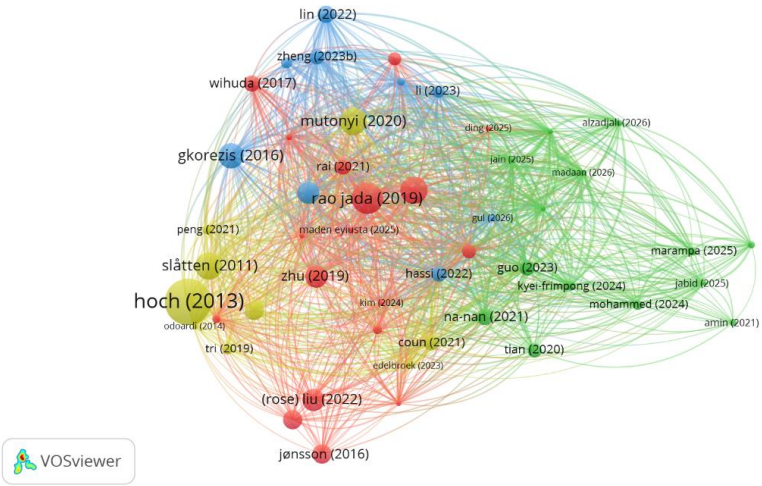


Figure 10. Network Visualization

Based on the overlay visualization analysis in Figure 11, the inter-document linkage map shows chronological evolution and novelty based on reference similarities from 2018 to 2026, indicated by a color gradation from dark purple to bright yellow. The visual structure shows that the initial research foundation (phase before 2020) is centered on the bottom left side with a dominance of dark bluish purple documents such as slåtten (2011), hoch (2013), gkorezis (2016), and zhu (2019). This trend then develops massively towards the center in the transition phase (2021–2023) which is dominated by turquoise, represented by influential documents such as rao jada (2019), mutonyi (2020), na-nan (2021), and guo (2023). Entering the cutting-edge phase (2024–2026), the focus of research linkages shifted significantly to the upper right side, marked by a yellowish-green to bright yellow glow, as indicated by the documents of Marampa (2025), Jain (2025), Alzadjali (2026), Gul (2026), and Madaan (2026). This dynamic shift in chronological clusters from left to right proves that the research community in this field continues to update their literature base and actively creates new research groups focused on developing the most cutting-edge contemporary trends.

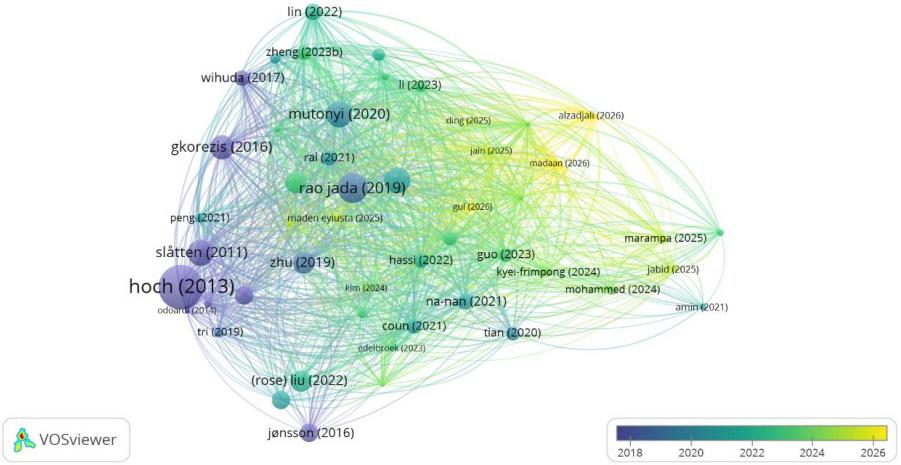


Figure 11. Overlay Visualization

Systematic Literature Review

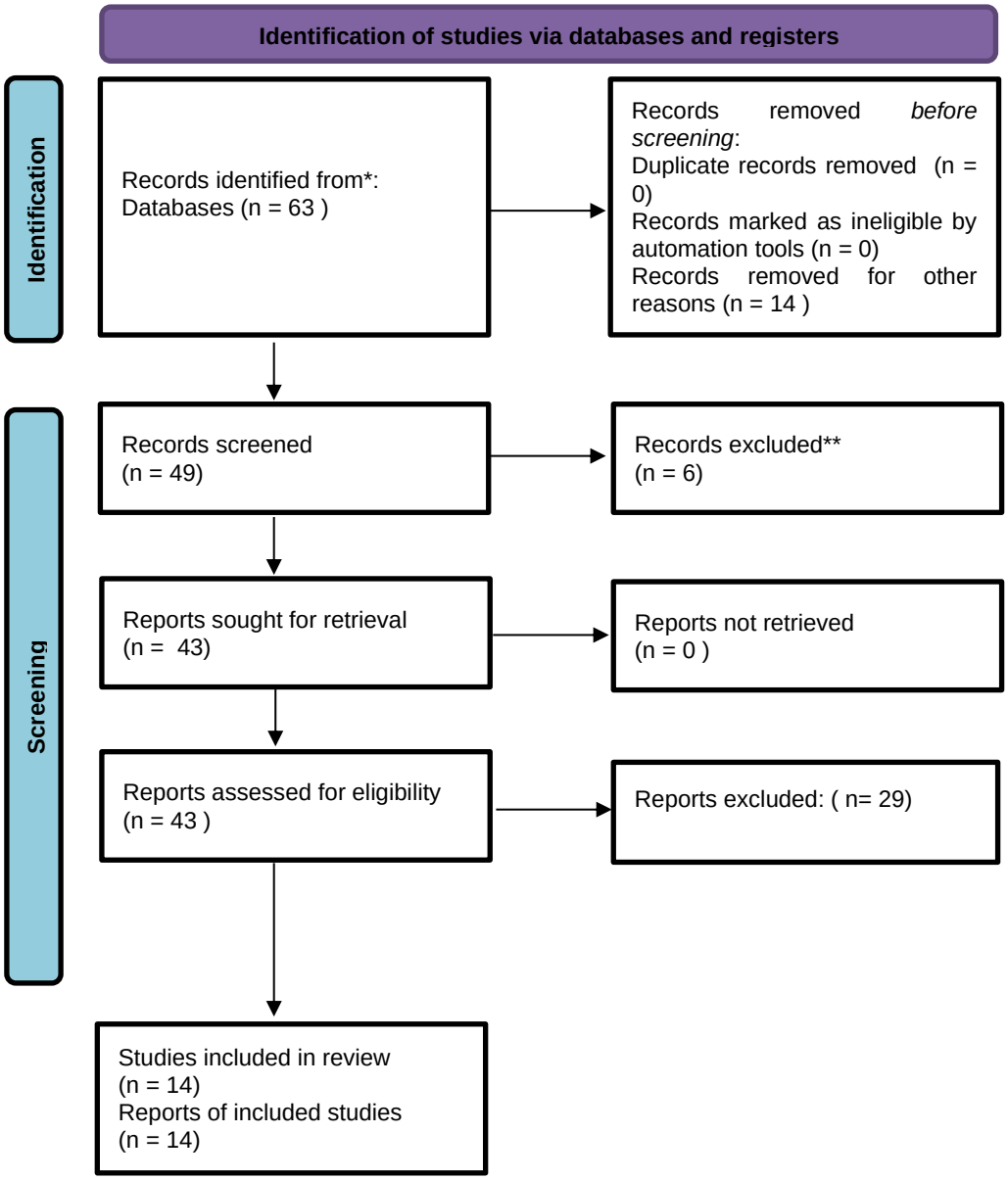


Figure 12. Diagram PRISMA

Characteristics Article

Table 1 Characteristics of Articles (n=14)

No	Author (Year)	Main Theory	Mediating Variables	Moderating Variables	Research methods	Sector/Context	Key Findings
1	Sánchez-Pérez et al. (2025)	High-Performance Work Systems & Engagement Theory	-	Gender, work experience	QCA (Qualitative Comparative Analysis)	Education (teacher)	Engagement and HPWS are the main drivers of teachers' innovative behavior.
2	Jønsson et al. (2021)	Distributed Leadership Theory	Self-efficacy, Distributed Leadership Agency	-	Cross-country survey	Hospital/nurse	Empowering leadership increases self-efficacy and innovation through distributed leadership.
3	Hassi et al. (2022)	Empowering Leadership Theory	Climate for Initiative; Job Autonomy	-	SEM Bayesian	Moroccan SMEs	Climate for initiative and job autonomy mediate the relationship between empowering leadership and IWB.
4	Faulks et al. (2021)	Leadership & Organizational Learning Theory	Innovative Work Behavior	Organizational Learning Readiness	CFA-SEM (AMOS)	Companies in Russia during COVID-19	IWB mediates the influence of empowering leadership on sustainable economic performance.
5	Basar et al. (2024)	Self-Efficacy Theory	Work Self-Efficacy	Well-being	PLS-SEM	Education (junior high school teacher)	Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between empowering leadership and IWB; well-being does not moderate.
6	Peng (2021)	-	-	-	Bibliometrics	Innovation literature	Mapping the development of innovation research and empowering leadership.

7	Jabid et al. (2025)	Empowerment Theory	Employee Empowerment	-	Quantitative	Organization/Business	Empowerment is the main mechanism for increasing employee innovation.
8	Wang et al. (2021)	Intellectual Capital Theory	Intellectual Capital	-	Quantitative	Organization	Intellectual capital increases organizational innovation.
9	Kim (2024)	Social Exchange Theory	-	Social and psychological factors	Survey	Organization	The social environment supports innovative behavior.
10	Schermuly (2025)	Psychological Empowerment Theory	Psychological Empowerment	-	Conceptual/Quantitative	HR	Psychological empowerment is a key factor in work innovation.
11	Fan (2026)	Digital Leadership Theory	Digital Capability	-	Quantitative	Digital transformation	Digital capabilities enhance innovative behavior and organizational performance.
12	Coun et al. (2021)	Leadership Theory	-	Leadership Support	Survey	Organization	Leader support strengthens employee innovative behavior.
13	Zheng et al. (2023)	Ambidexterity Theory	Organizational Ambidexterity	-	Quantitative	Organization	Ambidexterity improves organizational innovation and performance.
14	Jabid et al. (2023)	Empowerment Theory	Employee Empowerment	-	Quantitative	Organization	Empowerment has a positive effect on innovation and performance.

Discussion

The synthesis of 14 articles indicates that empowering leadership consistently emerges as an important antecedent of innovative work behavior (IWB) across various organizational contexts. The overall findings demonstrate that leadership practices emphasizing autonomy, delegation of authority, participation in decision-making, and employee development contribute significantly to employees' willingness and ability to generate, promote, and implement new ideas. This pattern is consistent with previous studies showing that empowering leaders create psychological conditions that encourage employees to take initiative, experiment with new approaches, and engage in innovation-related activities (Jønsson et al., 2021; Hassi et al., 2022; Basar et al., 2024; Jabid et al., 2025). From this perspective, empowering leadership functions not merely as a managerial style but as a mechanism for creating an innovation-supportive work environment.

The consistency of these findings supports the fundamental assumptions of Empowerment Theory, which argues that providing individuals with authority, meaningful responsibility, and access to resources strengthens their sense of competence, autonomy, and ownership of work outcomes. When employees perceive that leaders trust their capabilities and provide freedom to make decisions, they are more likely to develop intrinsic motivation and psychological readiness to engage in innovative activities. Therefore, the positive relationship between empowering leadership and IWB found in this review reinforces the theoretical argument that employee innovation is strongly influenced by the extent to which organizations distribute power and encourage employee involvement.

However, although most studies reported a positive relationship between empowering leadership and IWB, the synthesis also indicates that this relationship is rarely direct. Instead, psychological and behavioral mechanisms frequently mediate the influence of empowering leadership on innovative behavior. Psychological empowerment, employee empowerment, and self-efficacy were identified as the most dominant mediating variables across the reviewed studies (Jønsson et al., 2021; Hassi et al., 2022; Basar et al., 2024; Schermuly, 2025). These findings provide a more nuanced understanding that leadership empowerment alone is insufficient to automatically generate innovation. Leaders may provide autonomy and authority; however, employees must first develop internal beliefs regarding their competence, confidence, and ability to influence work outcomes.

This finding is theoretically consistent with Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes that individual behavior is shaped by reciprocal interactions between personal cognition, environmental conditions, and behavioral responses. Employees with higher self-efficacy are more likely to perceive innovation tasks as achievable challenges rather than threats, increasing their willingness to explore new ideas and tolerate uncertainty. Therefore, empowering leadership contributes to innovation primarily by strengthening employees' psychological resources. The implication is that leadership effectiveness should not only be evaluated based on the extent to which authority is delegated but also on whether empowerment creates employees who feel capable and confident in utilizing that authority.

Nevertheless, some differences were identified among previous studies regarding the strength and mechanisms of the relationship between empowering leadership and IWB. Several studies reported strong direct effects of empowering leadership on innovative behavior, whereas others found that the relationship became weaker or insignificant when psychological variables were included in the model. These inconsistencies suggest that empowering leadership does not operate uniformly across all organizational settings. One possible explanation is that empowerment practices may produce different outcomes depending on organizational culture, employee characteristics, job complexity, and availability of innovation-supporting resources. In highly bureaucratic organizations, for example, increased

autonomy from leaders may not necessarily translate into innovation if employees face structural constraints, limited resources, or low psychological safety.

Beyond individual psychological mechanisms, the synthesis reveals an increasing research interest in organizational-level capabilities that shape the effectiveness of empowering leadership. Several studies have incorporated digital capability, organizational ambidexterity, intellectual capital, and climate for initiative as explanatory mechanisms linking leadership empowerment with innovation outcomes (Wang et al., 2021; Zheng et al., 2023; Fan et al., 2026; Hassi et al., 2022). This development indicates a theoretical shift from a purely leader-centered perspective toward a multilevel understanding of innovation. Previous research mainly emphasized how leaders influence employee attitudes and motivation; however, recent evidence suggests that innovation also depends on whether organizations possess sufficient technological, structural, and knowledge-based capabilities.

The role of digital capability represents an important extension of existing leadership theories. In the digital transformation era, employee creativity and innovation increasingly depend on access to digital tools, information systems, and technological knowledge. Empowering leadership may encourage employees to propose new ideas, but without adequate technological infrastructure, these ideas may not be effectively developed or implemented. Similarly, organizational ambidexterity enables firms to balance exploration of new opportunities with exploitation of existing capabilities, thereby creating an environment where innovative behavior can generate sustainable organizational value (Fan et al., 2026; Zheng et al., 2023). These findings extend Empowerment Theory by demonstrating that empowerment is not only a psychological process but also an organizational capability-building process.

The synthesis also indicates that innovative work behavior functions not only as an outcome variable but also as an important mechanism contributing to broader organizational performance. Several studies demonstrated that employee innovation enhances productivity, organizational effectiveness, adaptability, and long-term competitiveness (Faulks et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2021; Zheng et al., 2023). This supports the strategic human resource management perspective, which views employee knowledge, creativity, and initiative as valuable organizational resources. Thus, empowering leadership contributes to organizational advantage indirectly through the development of innovative employees who can respond effectively to environmental uncertainty.

However, research examining boundary conditions of the empowering leadership–IWB relationship remains relatively limited and inconsistent. Several moderating variables, including employee well-being, organizational learning readiness, leadership support, gender, and work experience, have been examined, but their effects have not produced consistent conclusions (Basar et al., 2024; Faulks et al., 2021; Coun et al., 2021; Sánchez-Pérez et al., 2025). These inconsistencies highlight that empowering leadership may be context-dependent rather than universally effective. For example, empowerment may generate positive outcomes among employees with high autonomy orientation but may create uncertainty among employees who prefer clear guidance and structured decision-making. Therefore, future studies should examine individual differences and organizational conditions that determine when empowerment becomes beneficial or ineffective.

From a methodological perspective, the reviewed studies are predominantly quantitative and frequently employ Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) or Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) to test conceptual relationships among variables (Hassi et al., 2022; Basar et al., 2024; Faulks et al., 2021). While these approaches provide valuable statistical evidence regarding relationships among constructs, the dominance of cross-sectional designs limits the ability to explain how innovative behavior develops dynamically over time. Innovation is inherently a continuous process involving idea generation, experimentation, implementation, and organizational learning. Therefore, future research should incorporate

longitudinal designs, qualitative approaches, and mixed-method studies to capture the complexity of innovation development processes.

Furthermore, the reviewed literature reveals several important theoretical gaps. First, existing studies remain strongly concentrated on psychological empowerment and self-efficacy perspectives, while emerging technological factors such as artificial intelligence, digital platforms, and intelligent work systems remain underexplored. This represents an important limitation considering that contemporary innovation increasingly occurs within digitally mediated work environments. Second, most studies have been conducted in private-sector organizations, particularly business and manufacturing contexts, creating limited understanding of empowering leadership in education, healthcare, and public-sector organizations. Third, existing models tend to examine leadership and employee-level mechanisms separately, whereas innovation increasingly requires integration between leadership behavior, employee psychological resources, and organizational technological capabilities.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that empowering leadership represents a critical foundation for enhancing innovative work behavior, but its effectiveness depends on the interaction between leadership practices, employee psychological resources, and organizational capabilities. Theoretically, this review extends existing leadership and innovation theories by emphasizing that empowerment should be understood as a multilevel process involving psychological, organizational, and technological dimensions. Future research should therefore develop more comprehensive models that integrate empowering leadership with digital transformation factors, particularly artificial intelligence and organizational technology readiness, to explain how innovative work behavior emerges in contemporary organizations.

Research Theme Synthesis

Table 2 Synthesis of Main Research Themes

Main Theme	Theme Description	Supporting Articles	Key Findings
Empowering Leadership as a Determinan of Innovative Work Behavior	Empowering leadership encourages employees to participate in decision-making, increases work autonomy, and develops creativity, thus fostering innovative behavior.	Jønsson et al. (2021); Hassi et al. (2022); Basar et al. (2024); Jabid et al. (2023; 2025); Schermuly (2025)	Empowering leadership consistently has a positive influence on innovative work behavior in various organizational sectors.
The Role of Empowerment as a Mediation Mechanism	The influence of empowering leadership on innovative work behavior occurs through increasing psychological empowerment and employee empowerment.	Hassi et al. (2022); Jabid et al. (2023); Jabid et al. (2025); Schermuly (2025)	Employees who feel empowered tend to be more confident, proactive, and bold in developing new ideas.
Self-Efficacy as an Important Psychological Factor	Self-efficacy explains how empowering leadership increases an individual's belief in their ability to complete tasks and produce innovation.	Jønsson et al. (2021); Basar et al. (2024)	Self-efficacy has been shown to be a significant mediator that strengthens the relationship between empowering leadership and innovative work behavior.
Organizational Capabilities as	Organizational capabilities such as intellectual capital, digital capability,	Wang et al. (2021); Zheng et al. (2023); Fan et	Organizations that have high levels of knowledge resources, digital

Drivers of Innovation	organizational ambidexterity, and climate for initiative are factors that strengthen innovation.	al. (2026); Hassi et al. (2022)	capabilities, and flexibility demonstrate better levels of innovation.
Innovative Work Behavior as a Link to Organizational Performance	Innovative work behavior is not only the result of empowering leadership, but also acts as a mediator that improves organizational performance.	Faulks et al. (2021); Wang et al. (2021); Zheng et al. (2023)	Employee innovative behavior contributes to increased productivity, competitiveness, and organizational sustainability.
The Role of Contextual and Moderating Factors	Several studies have examined factors that strengthen or weaken the relationship between empowering leadership and innovative work behavior.	Basar et al. (2024); Faulks et al. (2021); Sánchez-Pérez et al. (2025); Coun et al. (2021)	Factors such as well-being, organizational learning readiness, gender, work experience, and leadership support show varying influences.
Expanding the Research Context in the Digital Era and Crisis	Recent research has begun to examine empowering leadership in the context of digital transformation, organizational change, and the post-pandemic era.	Fan et al. (2026); Faulks et al. (2021); Kim et al. (2024)	Digital capabilities and organizational adaptability are critical factors in sustaining innovation in a dynamic environment.

Research Gap

Although research on *empowering leadership* continues to increase, the results of bibliometric analysis and systematic literature review (SLR) indicate several gaps that still need to be studied. Conceptually, most research still focuses on the relationship between *empowering leadership*, *psychological empowerment*, and *self-efficacy*, while the role of factors more relevant to the modern work environment, such as strategic communication, digital capabilities, and digital collaboration, remains relatively limited. In addition, theoretical models that integrate *empowering leadership* with the demands of digital transformation not yet being widely developed.

In terms of research context, most studies are conducted in the conventional business and organizational sectors, while research in the education, health, public organization, and digital work environment sectors such as *remote working* and *hybrid working*is still limited. Geographically, publications are dominated by countries like China and Western countries, so research is still needed in the context of developing countries, particularly Indonesia, which has different work culture characteristics.

From a methodological perspective, the majority of studies use a quantitative approach with a descriptive design *cross-sectional* and SEM or PLS-SEM techniques. This condition results in a limited understanding of the long-term impact s*empowering leadership* to *innovative work behavior* Therefore, further research needs to develop a more comprehensive model by integrating communication factors and digital capabilities, and testing it in more diverse organizational and cultural contexts.

Future Research

Based on the results of the bibliometric analysis and systematic literature review, several future research agendas can be developed. First, further research needs to integrate *empowering leadership* with variables more relevant to digital transformation, such as strategic communication, digital capabilities, artificial intelligence (AI), and virtual collaboration to understand how leadership can drive innovative behavior in the modern work environment.

Second, future research needs to broaden the research context to sectors that are still rarely studied, such as education, health, public organizations, and technology-based

companies. Furthermore, the context of remote work (*remote working*) and hybrid work (*hybrid working*) also needs to be explored because it has the potential to influence effectiveness *empowering leadership*.

Third, although Indonesia has emerged as one of the most productive contributing countries in this research domain, future research needs to go beyond quantity by exploring the qualitative depth of the Indonesian context, particularly how unique cultural characteristics such as collectivism, high power distance, and hierarchical organizational structures may shape the effectiveness of empowering leadership on innovative work behavior.

Fourth, from a methodological perspective, longitudinal research,*mixed methods*, and qualitative approaches need to be improved to gain a deeper understanding of the formation process *innovative work behavior* and long-term impacts *empowering leadership* towards individuals and organizations.

Finally, future research can develop a more comprehensive model by testing the role of new mediating and moderating variables, such as organizational communication, digital capability, organizational learning, innovation climate, and employee resilience, so as to enrich the understanding of the mechanisms that support employee innovative behavior.

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