







Trends in employee performance: A comprehensive review and bibliometric analysis using Scopus and WOS



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Orientation: Interest in understanding the factors that drive employee performance has increased. However, existing research on the effects of leadership styles and employee engagement lacks conclusive results.

Research purpose: This study seeks to provide a holistic perspective of employee performance and examine the relationships between the types of leadership, employee engagement and employee performance.

Motivation for the study: Despite the critical role of leadership and engagement in enhancing performance, existing literature remains fragmented. A more holistic synthesis is necessary to clarify how these factors interact.

Research approach/design and method: This research conducted a systematic review and bibliometric analysis of 52 published articles sourced from Scopus and Web of Science. The study looked at the evolution of ideas and issues around leadership styles, employee engagement and performance, their challenges and drivers.

Main findings: Research on performance, employee engagement and leadership has increased dramatically in the last 10 years. The findings of this study demonstrate that engaged management methods and strategic leadership philosophies such as transformational and servant leadership improve employee performance. Furthermore, new developments in cross-cultural dynamics, technological integration and sustainable leadership techniques highlight how organisational success is changing.

Practical/managerial implications: This study emphasises how crucial it is to develop leadership styles that complement organisational strategy and culture. Although the characteristics of leaders frequently determine their leadership styles, organisations may influence these via focussed training. In a similar vein, improving organisational success requires fostering optimal employee engagement.

Contribution/value-add: To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first bibliometric analysis focussing on the relationships between the three concepts, that is leadership sub-styles, employee engagement and employee performance, thus adding a new insight into organisational and management studies.

Keywords: leadership styles; employee engagement; employee performance; systematic review; bibliometric analysis.

Introduction

In today's vibrant corporate circumstances, directors of organisations need to manage employee performance accurately using the multiple performance management tools available (Kaliannan et al., 2023). Some studies have highlighted the impact of employee engagement on performance as an important factor, along with leadership (Hee et al., 2018). Competent leadership can motivate employees to utilise their skills and capabilities in carrying out tasks aligned with organisational objectives, fostering a sense of dedication to their roles (Khan et al., 2023). Leadership describes the relationship between leaders and subordinates, and the methods used by leaders to steer their subordinates towards the achievement of organisational objectives. To enhance their growth and

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effectiveness, organisations must address their employees' needs by fostering learning and development opportunities while striving to fulfil other employee demands (Lynn et al., 2016). In the history of leadership, individual and organisational success and engagement have been considered critical factors that combine vitality and sustainability (Jahanshahi et al., 2019). The authors argue that hiring superior talent is one consideration, but maintaining that talent and keeping workers fully engaged is a different challenge. Employers who engage their workers are more likely to retain these employees while ensuring they are successful within the company (Kundu & Lata, 2017). According to Bakker et al. (2014), fostering open communication, acknowledging employee contributions and offering chances for professional development are all common components of successful engagement methods that improve work satisfaction and organisational commitment.

In particular, this research centres on the diverse fields of leadership styles, employee engagement and employee performance for three reasons. Firstly, a social exchange theory supported the necessity for a more balanced connection between leaders and team members, rooted in mutual respect and equitable treatment of individuals (Blau, 1964). However, according to this notion, better performance can only be achieved when there is a proper expectation fit and a fair and equal social exchange between managers and employees. Past research has observed a favourable correlation between employee engagement and employee performance (Dahkoul, 2018; Sugianingrat et al., 2019). Transformational leadership inspires employees to engage more deeply in tasks, enhancing performance and positive behaviours (Lai et al., 2020). Therefore, highly engaged employees will likely feel they possess job-related resources that reduce their work stress and maintain a reciprocal relationship with their organisation by demonstrating improved employee performance (Uddin et al., 2019).

Secondly, the Fiedler Leadership Contingency Model suggests that the effectiveness of employee performance relies on factors such as the leader's aptitude, capabilities, preferred style and behaviour, along with the competency and attitudes of the employees. According to this theory, leaders should adopt a style that aligns with the situation to enhance employee performance effectively (Iqbal et al., 2015). Following the contingency theory, a universally optimal leadership style must be applied. Instead, the most effective approach depends on the characteristics of leaders, the capabilities of followers and, notably, the complexities of the situations and issues in question (Waters, 2014).

Thirdly, the leader-member exchange (LMX) theory posits that leadership comprises three interconnected elements: the leader, the follower and the exchange process (Li et al., 2018). Locke (1999, p. 2) conveyed that 'effective leaders must know how to inspire and relate to their followers', underlining the symbiotic relationship between leaders and followers, where leaders only exist with followers and vice versa. When both

parties have reciprocal positive rapport, the current leadership will be effective and fulfilling. This practical and gratifying leadership can exert psychological influence, potentially enhancing employee performance, although its impact may also vary depending on individual and contextual factors.

Nevertheless, the literature is noticeably lacking in comprehensive systematic reviews that examine the relationship between employee engagement and leadership styles, and how these factors interact to affect employee performance. Few studies have combined these subjects into a coherent framework, even if individual studies have looked at them separately. By synthesising previous research, this study seeks to close this knowledge gap by providing theoretical insights into how leadership styles affect employee engagement and, ultimately, improve organisational success. By offering a more comprehensive understanding of these crucial processes, this work adds to the expanding corpus of knowledge in human capital management. This study is the first comprehensive review of employee performance using a variety of variables that provide a window into the already conducted research on employee performance. Atatsi et al. (2019), who conducted a quantitative review, stand out as a noteworthy exception. However, their study utilised a relatively small sample and relied on manual review methods. Therefore, a quantitative review approach is necessary to utilise big data technology, such as bibliometric analysis. This methodology can provide scholars with a comprehensive review with minimal time and scope limitations.

In addition, a bibliometric approach helps address concerns associated with selection bias and manual interpretations during the sampling process. Consequently, it is both timely and valuable to undertake a holistic, systematic, quantitative and unbiased review of the evolution and trends in leadership, employee engagement and employee performance. To achieve this, this study has employed the bibliometric method to analyse 52 articles on research related to leadership, employee engagement and employee performance.

This article aims to comprehend the interconnection among employee performance, employee engagement and leadership styles while also exploring the representation of this field, considering various factors such as the journal, publication year, country and methodological contexts. The overarching objective also involves scrutinising the progression of current literature on employee performance to identify the research topics that have been explored and to assess if there are still unexplored areas warranting future research. This article explores explicitly the following research inquiries:

- RQ1. *What are the trends in the publication of employee performance over the last 13 years, including prolific authors, influential journals, primary themes, and the intellectual and social structure of the field?*
- RQ2. *To what degree are leadership, employee engagement and employee performance interconnected, and how has this relationship developed over time?*

RQ3. *Which widely recognised and impactful research studies utilise publication citation analysis (global and local citation) and journal citation analysis? What are the predominant keywords employed by authors in this field?*

The rest of the article as is organised as follows: initially, an introduction to the theoretical foundation and principles of leadership, employee engagement and employee performance is given. Following that, we provide information on the data collection and analytical tools in the methodology section. The presentation of the statistical analysis of the gathered data is then followed by co-authorship and country-wide collaborative network analysis. Subsequently, the bibliometric mapping tools, such as VOSviewer covering co-citation analysis, hotspot analysis and research frontiers analysis are discussed. Finally, we recap the key findings, explore their implications and suggest potential avenues for future research.

Theoretical background

Employee performance

This review discloses the various methods employed by authors to evaluate employee performance. The initial group conceptualised performance as the sum of all outputs produced by the individual (Abdullahi et al., 2020; Alfes et al., 2013; Arslan & Roudaki, 2019; Buil et al., 2019; Caillier, 2014; Cesário & Chambel, 2017; Dhir & Shukla, 2019; Youn et al., 2014). Employee performance can be defined as the comprehensive assessment of an individual's capabilities, skills and achievements within the workplace. This involves evaluating how well an employee fulfils job responsibilities, meets or surpasses expectations and contributes to the organisation's overall success (Sugianingrat et al., 2019; Widarko & Anwarodin, 2022). This assessment often incorporates quantitative metrics, such as sales figures, output volume, project completion rates and qualitative aspects, including teamwork, problem-solving abilities and leadership qualities. This holistic approach thoroughly explains an employee's contributions and effectiveness within their role.

The second category is perceived performance from an organisational performance (Awan et al., 2020; Gameda & Lee, 2020; Kaya & Karatepe, 2020; Masa'deh et al., 2016; Sarwar et al., 2020). Organisational performance denotes the overall effectiveness, efficiency and accomplishment of an organisation's goals and objectives. Perceived performance refers to stakeholders' subjective evaluation of how well employees and the organisation as a whole are achieving these outcomes. Employee performance constitutes a vital element of organisational performance, directly influencing collective output, productivity and organisational success (Zhang et al., 2023). From an organisational viewpoint, employee performance is regarded as the collective contribution of all individuals in the workforce towards attaining the company's strategic objectives and goals. This involves evaluating how effectively employees utilise their

skills, knowledge and abilities to carry out tasks, collaborate with colleagues, achieve targets and ultimately contribute to the organisation's success (Kim & Jung, 2022). By linking individual accomplishments to the organisation's overarching strategic goals, perceived performance offers a prism through which the alignment between individual contributions and organisational outcomes may be evaluated.

Leadership styles

Leadership styles have remained one of the most widely discussed areas for researchers worldwide (Gabel et al., 2020). Leadership is an essential aspect of the administrative process that impacts employee performance (Kljajić-Dervić & Dervić, 2017). It can also influence workers' quality and willingness to work and inspire them to maintain their commitment to organisations (Mohammad et al., 2022); thus, organisations' goals can be achieved (Bass, 1985). Bass conceptualised three prominent leaders, represented by three leadership styles: transformational, transactional and laissez-faire. Leadership is the skill of optimising human capital by effectively attracting, developing and retaining individuals (Mohammad et al., 2023). This study explicitly examines leadership styles, which are characterised by a leader's behavioural traits or patterns when guiding, directing and motivating groups of people, thereby influencing followers' behaviours. It addresses the question, 'How do leaders lead?' (Armstrong & Taylor, 2020). The literature currently available identifies a variety of leadership philosophies, ranging from transactional leadership (Bass, 1990) to more modern ideas such as agile leadership (Kaya, 2023). Various leadership styles, treated as independent variables, have been investigated regarding their impact on employee performance and, in a more detailed analysis, organisational performance. The latter denotes an organisation's:

... ability to meet the needs and expectations of customers and other stakeholders in the long term, balanced by effective organisational management, staff awareness, and the implementation of appropriate improvements and innovations. (Stanciu et al., 2014, p. 341)

Employee engagement

Employee engagement is characterised by the attitudes and awareness of employees' connection to the organisation and collaboration with colleagues, aiming to elevate their work standards and enhance the company's performance (Guan & Frenkel, 2018). With such levels of worker engagement, organisations tend to support and promote the involvement of workers and the relationship between employers and employees (Diko & Saxena, 2023). Employee engagement refers to the employee's positive attitude towards the organisation, which requires a bilateral relationship between the two parties (Cesário & Chambel, 2017). This has been recognised as a crucial element for management, as it plays a pivotal role in enhancing the organisation's performance (Suhasini & Koneru, 2018). The social exchange theory is a significant theoretical framework utilised to comprehend the

mechanisms through which employee engagement operates (Alam et al., 2021).

Several authors have endorsed that engagement is a pivotal catalyst for individual attitude, behaviour and performance, as well as organisational performance, productivity and retention (Aktar, 2016; Sundari & Vasantha, 2018). Bakker et al. (2012) delineate employee engagement through three components: vigour (where work is perceived as stimulating and energetic, involving tasks that employees are eager to invest effort and time in), absorption (where work is captivating and demands complete concentration of the worker) and dedication (where work is deemed a significant and meaningful pursuit).

Methodology

In this study, the selected dataset undergoes analysis using a science mapping method, a technique employed for scrutinising existing literature that examines bibliographic data from a designated field of study (Garrigos-Simon et al., 2018). Bibliometric analysis is a way to organise large amounts of scientific literature (González-Torres et al., 2020). It follows a methodical approach similar to systematic literature reviews (SLRs) and uses strict methods to ensure the quality of the information and output results (Liao et al., 2018). The author employs VOSviewer software to construct and visualise linkages among bibliometric sources, identifying top authors, affiliations and sources from the Web of Science (WOS) and Scopus databases to extract refined information.

A second analysis uses an SLR, a scientific, thorough, objective, repeatable and open way to do empirical research by looking through existing literature on essential issues (Tranfield et al., 2003). The study adopts the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review (PRISMA) standard. This study follows Kitchenham's (2004) three main steps for systematic reviews: planning, conducting and reporting. These steps include finding resources, choosing studies, extracting data, putting data together and writing reports, just as Kitchenham (2004) and Kitchenham et al. (2009) say they should be done. In addition, through an SLR, researchers and practitioners in the management field can gain further information and knowledge on specific subjects that align with their cognitive, social and political demands (Klassen et al., 1998; Thorpe et al., 2005). Considering these deliberations, this research systematically collects data and categorises literary articles based on content analysis and potential research areas.

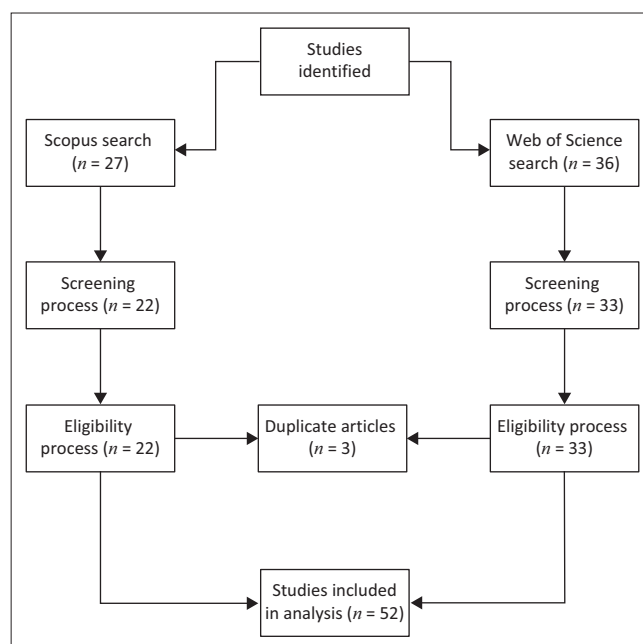
In summary, the PRISMA technique is employed in this study (Figure 1), involving data location, reviewing foundational data, addressing eligibility issues, and ultimately incorporating the data to ensure a systematic and transparent approach to data collection and analysis. The technique consists of the following steps: locating and classifying relevant information sources; evaluating and screening foundational data for quality and relevance; addressing eligibility criteria to weed out irrelevant or subpar

studies; and finally integrating the filtered data into the analysis. The data, sourced from the Scopus and WOS databases for meta-data evaluation, are considered reliable by many researchers (Apriliyanti & Alon, 2017; Tian et al., 2018). These data are gathered to provide unique knowledge and research ideas for upcoming studies. Using PRISMA in this instance guarantees comprehensive data processing and selection, allowing the study to offer solid insights and original knowledge for further investigation.

Data extraction

Datasets from all of the main publishers were integrated, including WOS, Taylor & Francis, Springer, Wiley, Emerald and Scopus. Nevertheless, Figure 1 only includes information from WOS and Scopus; the other publishers are included in the larger dataset but are not included in Figure 1. The search includes scientific publications that were published between 2011 and 2023. Keywords in the study's introduction include 'employee performance', 'employee engagement' and 'leadership'. The first search terms comprised the article's title, abstract and keywords. These keywords were selected to improve the articles' relationship and make locating the desired articles simpler. These keywords are highly suitable for identifying the primary articles to be incorporated into this study, given that the central theme of this article revolves around employee performance. The initial Scopus and WOS search engine results are displayed in Table 1.

The journal articles under consideration for the evaluation and review procedure were published between the beginning of 2011 and the beginning of 2023. As a result of Atatsi et al. (2019) using the year 2011 as a benchmark, this year was chosen as the starting point for gathering the pertinent data.



Source: Moher, D., Liberati, A., Tetzlaff, J., Altman, D.G., & PRISMA Group*, T. (2009). Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses: The PRISMA statement. *Annals of internal medicine*, 151(4), 264–269

FIGURE 1: Process of selection, analysis and reporting.

Given the rise in articles discussing this crucial issue, 2023 was chosen as the endpoint for the most current academic journal publications.

Study selection process

The initial search results included papers, book chapters, textbooks and conference proceedings. However, only papers were chosen for additional examination in the following phases in order to preserve emphasis on peer-reviewed academic research and guarantee conformity with the study's goals. In this metadata analysis, the researchers utilised 27 articles from the Scopus dataset and 36 articles from the WOS dataset, affirming the reliability of the data source. These databases index journals from significant datasets such as Elsevier, ScienceDirect and Emerald, making them suitable for generalisation. However, data should ideally originate from more renowned sources for a more robust foundation to share insights and perspectives.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Results

To provide an extensive overview of the findings, the results are shown in the section that follows. The analysis starts with a review of the performance analysis, emphasising important

TABLE 1: Results of the initial Scopus and Web of Science search engine.

Keyword	Source	Findings (article numbers)	Limitation up to
'Employee performance' AND 'Employee Engagement' AND 'Leadership'	Scopus	27	Title, abstract, keywords
'Employee performance' AND 'Employee Engagement' AND 'Leadership'	WOS	36	Title, abstract, keywords

WOS, Web of Science.

indicators including publication by citation, the top 10 authors in the field, exploration of articles and contributions across subject areas and most frequently used words. The report's following section explores the analysis of citations, including journal citation analysis and keyword analysis. In order to comprehend the methods used by researchers in this field, the methodology and theoretical frameworks used in the investigations are finally reviewing. Finally, the methodologies and theories employed by researchers in this field are employed. This structured analysis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research trends and contributions within the field.

Performance analysis

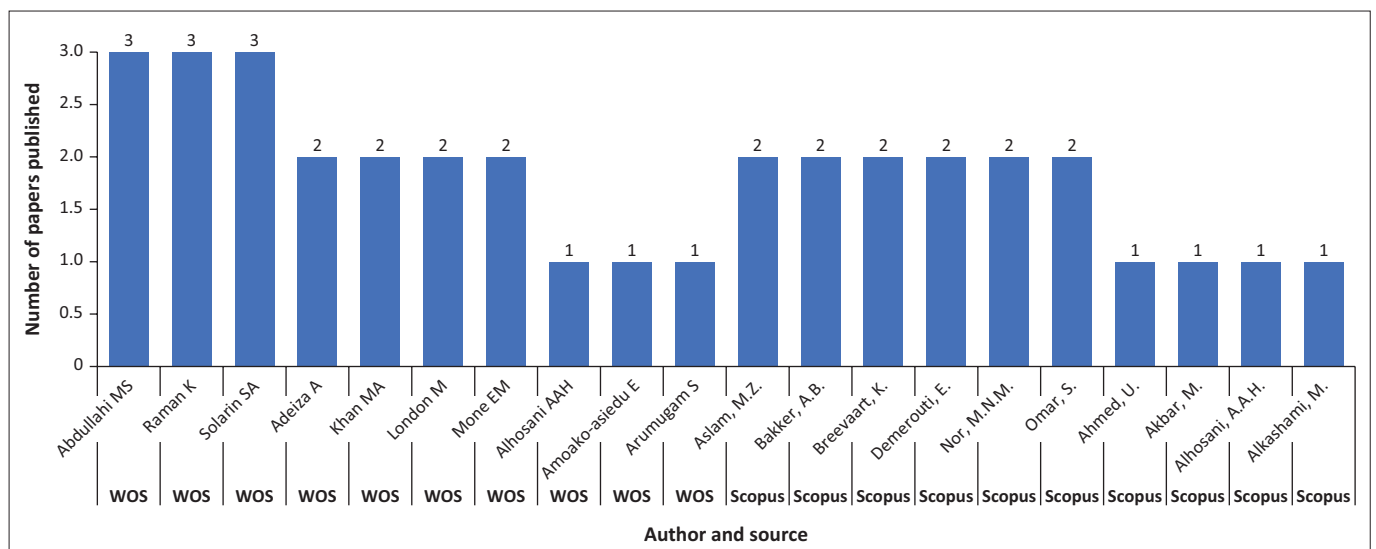
As Heradio et al. (2016) outlined, the primary method for assessing research performance is citation analysis, signifying that an article's influence in a particular field increases with the number of citations it receives. The h-index is acknowledged as an appropriate metric for gauging the quantity and impact of a researcher's scientific output in their publications.

Publication by citation

Table 2 presents the top 10 most cited publications in the Scopus dataset and WOS systems study. According to the table, Schaufeli (2015) received the highest number of citations (214), followed by Breevaart et al. (2016), who had 132 citations. Consequently, it is justifiable to assert that all the authors listed in Table 2 are among the most renowned figures in the field.

Top 10 authors

Figure 2 illustrates the top 10 authors in review papers on digital marketing, a field that is relevant to our research because of its multidisciplinary links to employee performance and engagement. Among these are Abdullahi (3), Raman (3),



Note: Please the full reference list of this article, Mohammad, A.M., Menhat, M., Shafi, S., Hussein, A.-H.M.A., Al-Mubaideen, M.A., & Alshakehtep, K. (2025). Trends in employee performance: A comprehensive review and bibliometric analysis using Scopus and WOS. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management/SA Tydskrif vir Menslikehulpbronbestuur*, 23(0), a2887. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v23i0.2887> for more information.

WOS, Web of Science.

FIGURE 2: Most relevant authors.

TABLE 2: Top 10 cited papers.

No.	Authors	Title	Year	Source title	Cited by	Source
1	Schaufeli	'Engaging leadership in the job demands-resources model'	2015	Career Development International	214	Scopus
2	Breevaart et al.	'Who takes the lead? A multi-source diary study on leadership, work engagement, and job performance'	2016	Journal of Organizational Behavior	132	Scopus
3	Breevaart et al.	'Bureaucratic leadership, trust building, and employee engagement in the public sector in Ghana the perspective of social exchange theory'	2020	International Journal of Public Leadership	129	WOS
4	Dewettinck and Vroonen	'Antecedents and consequences of performance management enactment by front-line managers. Evidence from Belgium'	2017	International Journal of Human Resource Management	125	WOS
5	Abdullahi et al.	'Mediating role of employee engagement on the relationship between succession planning practice and employee performance in academic institutions: PLS-SEM approach'	2022	Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education	114	WOS
6	Sugianingrat et al.	'The employee engagement and OCB as mediating on employee performance'	2019	International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management	112	WOS
7	Gupta and Sharma	'Relationship between leader-member exchange (LMX), high-involvement HRP and employee resilience on extra-role performance: Mediating role of employee engagement'	2018	Journal of Indian Business Research	110	WOS
8	Nagarajan et al.	'The COVID-19 impact on employee performance and satisfaction: A moderated moderated-mediation conditional model of job crafting and employee engagement'	2022	Human Resource Development International	103	WOS
9	Usadolo	'The Influence of Participative Leadership on Agricultural Extension Officers' Engagement'	2020	Sage Open	103	WOS
10	Shaheen et al.	'Does Organizational Cronyism Lead to Lower Employee Performance?' 'Examining the Mediating Role of Employee Engagement and Moderating Role of Islamic Work Ethics'	2020	Frontiers in Psychology	94	WOS

Note: Please the full reference list of this article, Mohammad, A.M., Menhat, M., Shafi, S., Hussein, A.-H.M.A., Al-Mubaideen, M.A., & Alshakehtep, K. (2025). Trends in employee performance: A comprehensive review and bibliometric analysis using Scopus and WOS. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management/SA Tydskrif vir Menslikehulpbronbestuur*, 23(0), a2887. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v23i0.2887> for more information.

WOS, Web of Science.

Solarin (3), Adeiza (2) and others, as sourced from the WOS and Scopus databases. This study compares the authors' works in the Scopus and WOS databases to provide a comprehensive overview of the top 10 authors, considering the number of papers published. Their greater number of publications in reputable databases, which shows that they actively contribute to the advancement of digital marketing research, determines these authors' importance. In addition, given their prominence across both databases, it is probable that their works address important issues or provide insightful information that appeals to the academic community. This comparison offers an in-depth overview of major figures in the business.

Exploration of articles and contributions across subject areas

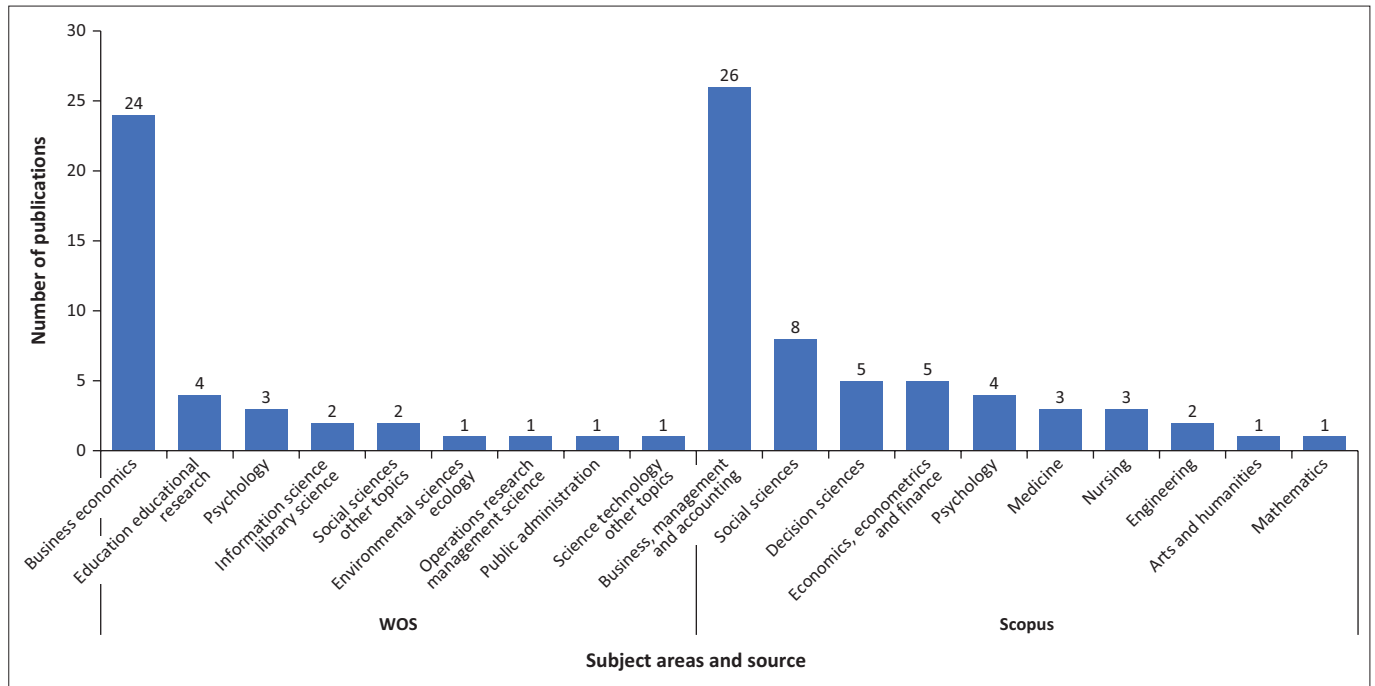
Incorporating various disciplines in the literature concerning employee performance underscores their importance and acknowledgement within the academic realm. Figure 3 indicates that Business and Economics in the WOS and Business Management in Scopus yielded the highest number of publications, accounting for 24 and 26, respectively. The result highlights how important these areas are to the studies of employee performance, perhaps because they directly address organisational productivity, leadership and human resources (HR) procedures. Despite their similarities, business management and business and economics are classified as distinct groups because of the subtle differences in how these databases categorise subjects. A comprehensive examination of these classifications highlights the wide range of scholarly interests and increasing attention being paid to this topic in several areas. These findings have importance because they highlight critical academic disciplines that influence the conversation and comprehension of employee performance. This will help future researchers investigate these fields of study while taking into account the growing

interest in under-represented fields such as engineering and the arts, which may provide fresh viewpoints. On the other hand, the contributions from the Scopus and WOS databases show that this topic is becoming more and more popular in various sectors, including Decision Sciences, Psychology, Medicine, Nursing, Engineering, Arts and Humanities, and Mathematics. These new fields point to a more multidisciplinary approach, implying that studies of performance, engagement and leadership are moving outside the conventional fields of business and economics.

Most frequently used words

The parameters remained constant in this segment, except for modifying the node type to the keyword. Much like the co-citation analysis, the co-word analysis produced a compilation of keywords. The co-word analysis employs a method rooted in content analysis, utilising the relationships between co-occurring keywords, indicative of substantial content in different articles, to craft a scholarly map of a specific field (Sedighi, 2016). More precisely, by extracting the fundamental concepts encapsulated in keywords and their frequency of occurrence across various articles, researchers can identify focal points of research and emerging areas (Chen et al., 2016).

The most frequently used words in articles on employee performance were determined using wordart.com (an open web software for conducting keyword searches and creating word clouds). The most frequently used words in the headlines are 'employee' and 'performance', appearing 50 and 33 times, respectively, followed by 'engagement', 'leadership' and so forth. Although these words can appear general, their frequent use emphasises how crucial they are to the conversation on employee performance. As fundamental words that ground the study area, 'employee' and 'performance' denote the primary emphasis on the



WOS, Web of Science.

FIGURE 3: Publications by subject area.

people who work for organisations and their contributions to organisational results. In a similar vein, the terms 'engagement' and 'leadership' refer to the dominant issues considered in the literature, such as how leadership styles may promote employee engagement and enhance both individual and group performance. These keywords provide insights into the prevailing trends and main areas of scholarly investigation, reflecting the fundamental issues and goals of this discipline from a value standpoint.

Analysis of citations

Research query 3 was addressed through citation analysis, a technique that reveals the article's relative importance and standing based on how frequently it is referenced by other articles (Ding et al., 2001). Citation analysis entails assessing the number of citations an article garners from various sources (Kataria et al., 2021). Scrutinising the citation count enhances the research by unveiling intellectual connections – disclosing patterns of scientific cooperation, charting scholarly disciplinary terrains, gauging the influence of research results and monitoring the transfer of knowledge across fields (Ding et al., 2001).

Journal citation analysis

The VOSviewer software was employed to create essential journal distributions and linkages, isolating those generated through citation analysis of cited sources (Figure 4). It illustrates the relationships between several employee performance research publications. The phrase 'distribution and linkages' could require more explanation, though. Each journal node's position in the picture indicates how close it is to other journals in the citation network, and the colours indicate groups of journals with related citation patterns or research subjects.

Each node's size reflects how many papers from that journal were used in the study. Larger nodes are more vital to the network as they represent journals with more articles. Thicker lines indicate stronger or more frequent citations, while the connections (lines joining the nodes) show the citation ties between journals. These visual clues are important because they make it easier to identify the journals that have the most influence in the area. Common citation styles or study subjects link journals that are closer to one another or have similar colours. The thicker linkages show how these journals influence one another in terms of citations, and the positions also emphasise the key journals that have a significant influence on academic research on employee performance.

The top 10 ranked journals from WOS and Scopus were categorised based on two criteria: journals with the highest number of documents and journals with the most diverse subject-matter publications. In addition, journals with a highly cited number of documents were ranked accordingly, as shown in Table 3. The citation count of these journals shows their importance in the area and provides insight into the links between articles. As an illustration of its significance, the Journal of Asian Finance Economics and Business (WOS) has 3 papers and 20 citations, ranking first, while the Leadership & Organisation Development Journal (WOS) has 2 papers and 57 citations. These citation links help scholars find key sources and significant studies by graphically illustrating how these publications add to the larger scholarly discussion on employee performance.

Keyword analysis

The justification for employing keyword analysis lies in its ability to effectively capture the keywords used by authors,

leadership, engagement and performance. Some studies opt for combining quantitative and qualitative methods to achieve a comprehensive understanding. By triangulating data from different sources, researchers can offer a more holistic view of the complex relationships between leadership, engagement and performance, a research approach known as mixed methods. Of the reviewed articles, approximately 87% employed quantitative approaches, 13% utilised qualitative approaches, and none adopted the mixed methods approach. The fact that 87% of the examined studies used quantitative methodologies is noteworthy in the context of this article, as it emphasises how prevalent numerical and statistical tools are when examining employee performance. This pattern implies that academics in this area frequently concentrate on quantifiable, data-driven insights, such as productivity indicators, engagement scores and performance metrics. A lesser but significant interest in examining employee performance through case studies, theme analysis or interviews is indicated by the 13% that employed qualitative methodologies. The lack of mixed methods research, however, points to a knowledge vacuum in the area where mixing quantitative and qualitative techniques might offer a more comprehensive picture of employee performance, incorporating both quantifiable results and more profound insights into the experiences and views of employees.

Theoretical frameworks play a crucial role in providing guiding principles for understanding the intricate dynamics of leadership, employee engagement and employee performance within organisational contexts. Given the multifaceted nature of these concepts, a thorough exploration of theories is necessary to underpin and elucidate the interplay between leadership styles and their impact on employee engagement and performance outcomes. This section delves into critical theories that have significantly shaped research and understanding in this domain, laying a solid foundation for comprehending the intricate relationships within the organisational landscape. Central to the discussion of leadership styles are several well-established theories that illuminate the mechanisms through which leaders influence employee behaviour, motivation and performance. Among these theories, the transformational leadership theory posits that leaders who inspire and motivate their followers, instil a vision and provide intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration foster high levels of engagement and performance (Ehrnrooth et al., 2021).

Moreover, the transactional leadership theory underscores the significance of contingent rewards and management by exception, emphasising the transactional relationship between leaders and followers as a catalyst for specific performance outcomes (Bass, 1985). Understanding the intricacies of employee engagement and performance also relies on several foundational theories. As an example, self-determination theory highlights the importance of autonomy, competence and relatedness in fostering intrinsic motivation, consequently impacting employee engagement and performance (Aslam et al., 2020; Schaufeli, 2015; Singh et al., 2024).

Precisely 60% of the authors substantiated their studies with theoretical frameworks, with social exchange theory being the most frequently employed (Dewettinck & Vroonen, 2017; Ghaedi et al., 2020; Hurtienne & Hurtienne, 2024; Nagarajan et al., 2022). The widespread use of this theory demonstrates its applicability in comprehending behaviour in the workplace, especially when it comes to promoting constructive relationships between superiors and subordinates (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Because of its ability to explain how reciprocal interactions in the workplace, such as offering job-related resources and encouraging involvement, may result in less stress and better employee performance, authors frequently use social exchange theory (Nagarajan et al., 2022; Uddin et al., 2019). This pattern points to a preponderance of ideas that link employee engagement to organisational results, emphasising the role that mutual support and benefit play in boosting output.

These methodologies and theories provide a robust framework for researchers to explore and understand the complex relationships between leadership styles, employee engagement and employee performance, guiding the design and interpretation of studies in this field. Readers can discover current research trends, gaps and potential for future studies by reading this article's summary and discussion of various methodologies. The design, scope and theoretical foundations of future studies into dynamic organisational dynamics can be influenced by these observations. Multiple methodologies and theories are frequently used by researchers to thoroughly examine these dynamic organisational dynamics. A better comprehension of intricate organisational phenomena, such as the relationship between performance, employee engagement and leadership, is made possible by the integration of diverse perspectives. For example, qualitative approaches examine the complex viewpoints of leaders and employees, whereas quantitative approaches are usually employed to find trends and test theories. Some research integrates both strategies, employing a combination of techniques to offer contextual richness and statistical rigour. It is possible to demonstrate these approaches' contributions to the advancement of knowledge about organisational dynamics by presenting them in tabular form, as shown in Table 4.

Future research directions and knowledge gap

This review analysed actual data and investigated how leadership philosophies and employee engagement influence employee performance. While employee performance has been extensively studied, reviewing previous literature has revealed notable research gaps that need addressing. This study suggests potential avenues for future research by thoroughly analysing the state of the art in academic research. The limits and recommendations for further study made by the authors of the examined papers, as well as the research gaps found throughout the evaluation process, inform these directions. By combining these ideas, the study provides insightful viewpoints on the ever-evolving fields of

TABLE 4: Overview of methodologies, theories and examples.

Methodology	Purpose or contribution	Example theories used	Example studies
Quantitative methods	Identify patterns, relationships and causal inferences	Social exchange theory	Dewettinck and Vroonen (2017)
Qualitative methods	Explore employee and leader perspectives	Organizational culture theory	Ghaedi et al. (2020)
Mixed methods	Combine depth of qualitative with rigour of quantitative	Transformational leadership theory	Nagarajan et al. (2022)

Note: Please see the full reference list of this article, Mohammad, A.M., Menhat, M., Shafi, S., Hussein, A.-H.M.A., Al-Mubaideen, M.A., & Alshakehtep, K. (2025). Trends in employee performance: A comprehensive review and bibliometric analysis using Scopus and WOS. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management/SA Tydskrif vir Menslikehulpbronbestuur*, 23(0), a2887. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v23i0.2887> for more information.

organisational behaviour and effective leadership, advancing our knowledge of open problems and possible research directions.

Expanding on the literature review and bibliometric analysis conducted between 2010 and 2023, several prospective research directions become apparent:

- **Intersectionality of Leadership Styles:** Several leadership philosophies, including transformational, transactional, servant and authentic leadership, have been thoroughly studied by academics. However, future studies should examine how these styles interact and operate in various organisational contexts (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Northouse, 2004). A more comprehensive understanding of the combined effects of these styles on worker engagement and productivity can be gained by investigating how they complement or clash with one another. Research should specifically examine if leaders have a variety of leadership philosophies and modify their methods according to the demands of the moment, or whether teams within the same organisation – or even separate organisations – are affected differently by a single leadership style. Examining these relationships can yield a more thorough comprehension of how various approaches function in concert or in opposition to one another, eventually impacting employee engagement and output.
- **Cross-cultural Perspectives:** Leadership behaviours and their impacts on employee engagement and performance are significantly influenced by cultural factors (Al-Mutairi, 2024). Future research should conduct comparative studies across cultures and geographical areas to elucidate the cultural subtleties affecting leadership practices and their effectiveness in diverse sociocultural contexts.
- **Technology and Remote Work Impact:** Research on the effects of technology integration into leadership practices and the growing prevalence of remote work on employee engagement and performance is required (Golden & Veiga, 2008). Examining how managers can inspire and engage remote teams while maintaining high-performance standards in the ever-changing workplace is critical.
- **Psychological Factors in Engagement and Performance:** Employee behaviour and performance outcomes are significantly influenced by psychological variables such as motivation, self-efficacy and job satisfaction (Locke & Latham, 1990; Deci & Ryan, 1985). Further research is needed on these psychological mechanisms to understand

how different leadership philosophies impact these variables and, in turn, affect worker engagement and productivity.

- **Longitudinal Studies and Sustainability:** Longitudinal studies tracking the long-term impacts of leadership philosophies – defined as broad values and ideals that direct leadership conduct – on employee engagement and output are crucial (Podsakoff et al., 2000). On the other hand, leadership styles describe certain strategies or tactics that leaders use to communicate with employees and oversee groups. In addition, research is needed in the developing field of sustainable leadership practices and their effects on long-term employee engagement, well-being and organisational performance.

The definition of employee performance is not widely accepted (Alfes et al., 2013; Breevaart et al., 2014; Caillier, 2014; Hasib et al., 2020). Employee engagement is believed to impact overall organisational performance, per a compelling definition considering the relationship between leadership and employee engagement (Lai et al., 2020). Since engagement is an individual-level construct, this relationship may influence overall business performance as reflected through individual performance (Alfes et al., 2013). According to Hussein et al. (2024), business owners require workers who can fulfil their responsibilities well because staff competency is essential to the company's overall performance. In other words, company executives need to consider the primary benefits of employee performance to develop reliable and precise employee evaluation standards (Sarwar et al., 2020).

Few articles thoroughly addressed the selected topics, indicating the need for additional research. This finding is supported by a thorough review of the literature that identified coverage gaps in particular sectors and organisational environments. The majority of the articles by Anitha (2014), Gameda and Lee (2020), Hasib et al. (2020), Li et al. (2018), Alhaimer (2024), Hassan et al. (2021) concentrated on general settings, but they did not sufficiently explore niche industries such as restaurants, athletic events, airlines, small-scale businesses, tourism, textiles and small-scale organisations. In addition, sectors such as the military, home care services and financial services were found to be understudied, indicating need for greater research.

Engaging in qualitative research can assist researchers in comprehending real-world events and acquiring knowledge about their subject. Over time, this understanding could be refined into cutting-edge techniques applied in the corporate

world (Halcomb, 2016). Future research endeavours could explore diverse methodologies, mainly mixed methods. This is crucial for contrasting and comparing the outcomes of various methods. Furthermore, employing mixed methods offers benefits that outweigh the drawbacks of relying solely on one research methodology, providing additional information on a topic and resulting in a superior dataset.

Conclusion

From 2010 to 2023, a thorough review of existing literature and an analysis of data have shed light on the evolving nature of leadership styles, employee engagement and employee performance within organisations. This research endeavour has yielded insights into the trends, patterns and trajectories in discussions, providing a nuanced understanding of how different leadership approaches influence levels of employee engagement and subsequent performance outcomes. Throughout the study period, numerous studies have emphasised the importance of leadership styles in shaping employee motivation and overall organisational effectiveness. By exploring transactional, servant and authentic leadership models, researchers have revealed the intricate ways in which different approaches impact employee commitment and motivation.

The results also highlight the increasing focus on the connection between employee performance, engagement and leadership styles. The purpose of this publication is to draw attention to the fact that this connection exists as well as the common patterns and conclusions about how these structures interact. Through examining these patterns, the research offers a deeper comprehension of the mechanics underlying this crucial relationship and its consequences for the success of organisations. Scholars are increasingly recognising the role that actively engaged employees play in boosting productivity, fostering innovation and yielding positive outcomes for the entire organisation. The connection between employee engagement and performance has been a focus, with studies investigating how engaged employees contribute to achieving goals and gaining a competitive edge. To identify major authors, top journals and reoccurring major topics in this discipline, a thorough bibliometric analysis has been carried out using data from Scopus and WOS in conjunction with an SLR. This integrated approach draws attention to areas of great study interest, such as cross-cultural perspectives, technological integration, work dynamics and sustainable leadership practices. Furthermore, it offers significant perspectives on the academic works that have shaped this field, demonstrating the interdependence of these topics and their consequences for improving organisational performance and leadership. The results provide a basis for future study initiatives and highlight the topics' applicability to current issues.

Even though this research has given much helpful information, it is essential to recognise the limitations of studying it. Bibliometric analyses, which involve looking

at publication and citation patterns, have drawbacks, such as possible biases in data collection and not including specific sources. Also, because organisations are constantly changing, we must keep researching to understand the new trends and shifts in leadership, engagement and performance metrics.

Looking ahead, finding suitable leadership styles that boost employee engagement and improve performance is significant for both research and practical use. Researchers, practitioners and leaders need to work together to explore new ideas, use new theories and adjust strategies to match the changing needs of the workforce in a constantly changing global world. In summary, this thorough review and analysis of publications have helped us understand the trends in leadership styles, employee engagement and performance. By using this information, those involved can create workplaces that motivate employees, support good leadership and ultimately lead to success in the future. Looking at employee performance from different angles can help us understand it better and offer insights for dealing with real-world challenges and finding solutions to improve performance.

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Authors' contributions

A.M.M., M.M., S.S., A.-H.M.A.H. wrote the original draft. Visualisation was done by A.M.M., S.S. and M.M. Resources were gathered by S.S., A.M.M., M.A.A.-M. and K.A. Supervision was rendered by A.M.M. and M.M. A.M.M. handled the acquisition of funding. All authors constructed the methodology, conceptualised the study and validated the results of the findings. K.A., S.S., M.M. and A.M.M. led the investigation. Project administration was managed by A.-H.M.A.H., M.M. and A.M.M. Review and editing was conducted by A.M.M., A.-H.M.A.H., M.A.A.-M. and K.A.

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Data availability

Data sharing does not apply to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

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