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Understanding Leadership and Employee Behavior in AI-Mediated Workplaces: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract: Artificial intelligence is no longer a distant prospect for organizations — it is an immediate operational reality reshaping how leaders lead and how employees experience work. Yet, the body of scholarship addressing leadership styles, emotional intelligence, and employee behavior within AI-mediated workplaces remains fragmented across disciplines and heavily skewed toward Western organizational contexts. This paper presents a systematic literature review, integrated with bibliometric analysis, of peer-reviewed studies indexed in Scopus from 2020 to 2026. Drawing on publications retrieved through a structured PRISMA-guided selection process, the review maps intellectual trends, influential journals, leading countries, and emerging thematic clusters in this growing field. The findings reveal that while transformational leadership, algorithmic management, and emotional intelligence each attract substantial scholarly attention independently, their integration within AI-enabled organizational settings remains underexplored. The United States, China, India, and the United Kingdom are the primary contributors, though their research emphases differ markedly: Western scholarship leans toward human-centric and psychological dimensions, while Asian-origin research tends to foreground efficiency, performance analytics, and digital transformation. The review identifies three persistent gaps — limited cross-disciplinary integration, the near-absence of qualitative and longitudinal research, and insufficient attention to emerging economies and non-Western socio-cultural contexts. The paper concludes with a theoretically grounded research agenda that calls for culturally sensitive, ethically informed, and methodologically diverse inquiry into how human leadership and emotional intelligence can coexist with, and effectively govern, algorithmic systems in contemporary workplaces.

Introduction

Something quiet but consequential has happened inside organizations over the past decade. Decisions that were once made by managers in corridor conversations or performance appraisals are increasingly being made — or at least heavily shaped — by algorithms. Recruitment systems rank candidates before any human reads a résumé. Productivity dashboards flag underperformance in real time. Chatbots answer employee queries before supervisors are even aware a question was asked. This is the emerging reality of AI-mediated work, and it is changing not only what organizations can do, but who they are — and how the people within them relate to one another.

The relationship between leaders and their employees has always been central to organizational life. Leaders set the tone for psychological safety, trust, and motivation. Employees, in turn, bring discretionary effort, creative energy, and commitment — or withhold them, depending on how they are led. For decades, research has demonstrated that leadership styles shape employee attitudes and behaviors in ways that formal policies and incentive structures alone

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cannot. What the literature has not kept pace with, however, is the infiltration of algorithmic systems into these dynamics. When a machine monitors performance, assigns tasks, or determines who gets a shift, what role does the human leader play? And how does an employee emotionally and behaviorally respond to a system they cannot negotiate with, reason with, or appeal to?

These are not abstract questions. They carry real consequences for wellbeing, productivity, and fairness at work — and they demand a structured, evidence-based account of what existing scholarship tells us. That account is what this paper sets out to provide.

The existing literature on leadership in technology-rich environments is dispersed across management science, information systems, organizational psychology, and human resource management. Studies examine leadership styles, emotional intelligence, and employee outcomes as largely separate tracks, with limited cross-pollination. Empirical evidence is dominated by data from Western, primarily North American and European, organizations — a significant limitation given that AI adoption is accelerating across South and East Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Latin America, where cultural expectations of leadership, emotional expression at work, and attitudes toward surveillance may differ substantially.

This paper addresses those gaps through a dual-method approach: a systematic literature review, guided by PRISMA protocols, and a bibliometric analysis of peer-reviewed publications indexed in Scopus from 2020 to 2026. Together, these methods allow us to both map the intellectual architecture of the field and critically assess its silences and limitations. The review synthesizes what is known about leadership styles, emotional intelligence, and employee behavior in AI-enabled organizations, identifies the most influential journals, authors, and countries, and charts the thematic clusters that are shaping the conversation — and those that remain conspicuously absent from it.

Three contributions motivate this work. First, it provides the first bibliometrically grounded, systematically conducted account of the intersection of leadership, emotional intelligence, and employee behavior within AI-mediated organizational contexts. Second, it diagnoses the structural fragmentation of the field and proposes a framework for its integration. Third, it generates a research agenda that is sensitive to geographic, cultural, and methodological diversity — a corrective to a field that has, thus far, spoken largely from a narrow vantage point.

2. Literature Review

To understand what is at stake in AI-mediated workplaces, it helps to trace how three bodies of scholarship — on emotion and employee behavior, on leadership, and on emotional intelligence — have evolved, and where they have yet to converge.

2.1 Emotions and Employee Behavior in Organizational Settings

For much of the twentieth century, organizational research treated the individual employee as a predominantly rational actor, motivated by economic incentives and task clarity. Emotions, when acknowledged at all, were regarded as noise in the system — disruptions to be managed rather than forces to be understood. That view began to shift meaningfully in the mid-1990s, when scholars recognized that emotional experience is not incidental to organizational life but constitutive of it. Employees feel pride, frustration, gratitude, and resentment, and these feelings shape how they behave — toward their work, their colleagues, and their organizations.

Affective Events Theory, developed by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996), offered the field a rigorous way of thinking about this. The theory proposes that workplace events — a kind word from a supervisor, a perceived injustice in task allocation, the satisfaction of completing something difficult — generate immediate emotional responses, which in turn influence both episodic behaviors and stable attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment. This framework shifted the analytical lens from static personality traits to dynamic emotional processes, and it continues to inform empirical research today.

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Evidence from meta-analyses and longitudinal studies has consistently shown that affective experiences predict discretionary behaviors, particularly organizational citizenship behavior — going beyond the formal job description — and withdrawal behaviors such as absenteeism and turnover intention (Cropanzano et al., 2017).

What remains much less understood, however, is how these emotional dynamics play out in workplaces where a significant proportion of the cues, feedback, and authority that employees encounter are not human in origin. When performance feedback arrives through an automated dashboard rather than a conversation, when a task is assigned by an algorithm rather than a manager, and when a system can flag a deviation before any human notices it, the emotional events that employees experience may be qualitatively different from those studied in traditional organizational contexts. The absence of a human face on authority changes both the nature of grievance and the possibilities for repair. Research addressing this territory remains sparse, and the studies that exist tend to focus on behavioral outcomes — compliance, withdrawal, performance — without attending closely to the emotional processes that mediate them.

2.2 Leadership Styles and Their Influence on Employee Behavior

Leadership research has generated one of the richest empirical traditions in organizational science. Among the most enduring distinctions in this tradition is the one between transformational and transactional leadership. Transformational leaders motivate employees by connecting their work to a larger sense of meaning and purpose, encouraging creativity, modeling integrity, and individualizing their attention to each follower (Bass and Avolio, 1994). Transactional leaders, by contrast, operate through a logic of exchange — specifying expectations, monitoring compliance, and applying contingent rewards or corrective action when performance meets or falls short of standards (Judge and Piccolo, 2004). Both styles produce measurable effects on employee behavior, though the outcomes they cultivate differ: transformational leadership is more strongly associated with intrinsic motivation, innovative behavior, and discretionary effort, while transactional leadership tends to produce reliable task performance within defined parameters.

A subtler mechanism through which leaders influence followers is emotional signaling. Leaders are not merely resource allocators or goal-setters; they are also emotional actors whose visible affective states send powerful messages about the safety of the environment, the seriousness of a situation, and the appropriateness of different responses. Emotional contagion — the tendency for individuals to align their emotional states with those around them through mimicry and empathy — has been demonstrated in both laboratory and field settings (Barsade, 2002). Leaders who express enthusiasm, warmth, or calm under pressure can, through these processes, meaningfully shape the emotional climate of their teams, which in turn affects trust, engagement, and performance.

The challenge for this literature is that its foundations were laid in a world of face-to-face interaction. Leadership was something that happened in rooms, in hallways, in conversations. As organizations increasingly distribute these functions across digital platforms and AI-supported systems, the medium through which leadership operates changes fundamentally. Authority is partially embedded in algorithmic rules; feedback arrives through interfaces; monitoring is continuous and automated. Under these conditions, it is not clear how transformational leaders express individual consideration, or how the trust-building functions of leadership translate when so much of the employee experience of control is non-human. Warner and Wäger (2019) raised these concerns in the context of digital transformation more broadly, but they have not been adequately addressed in the leadership literature specifically.

2.3 Emotional Intelligence in Organizational and Leadership Research

Emotional intelligence entered organizational research as an answer to a persistent puzzle: why do some leaders consistently outperform others in interpersonal and relational domains, even when their cognitive abilities and technical expertise are

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comparable? The concept refers to the capacity to perceive, use, understand, manage, and regulate emotions — one's own and others' — in ways that facilitate thinking and interpersonal effectiveness (Mayer et al., 2008). Meta-analyses have demonstrated that emotional intelligence explains variance in leadership effectiveness beyond what is accounted for by general cognitive ability and personality factors, particularly in roles that require navigating complex social dynamics (Joseph and Newman, 2010). High emotional intelligence leaders are better at reading the affective states of their teams, managing conflict constructively, and maintaining trust through periods of uncertainty (Harms and Credé, 2010).

Yet the literature on emotional intelligence carries its own blind spot. It has largely treated EI as a stable attribute of the individual, measured and applied in face-to-face relational contexts. What happens to emotional intelligence when the relational environment is mediated by technology? When feedback loops are algorithmic, when communication is asynchronous and text-based, when the emotional cues that a high-EI leader would normally pick up — a hesitation in speech, a change in posture, a look of suppressed anxiety — are filtered out or never transmitted? The adaptation of emotional intelligence to AI-mediated relational environments is largely unexplored terrain, and yet it may be among the most practically important questions facing organizations today.

2.4 Employee Behavior in High-Technology and AI-Mediated Work Settings

The literature on technology-mediated work offers a useful third vantage point. Research on virtual teams and remote work documented how digital mediation changes communication patterns, collaboration dynamics, and the experience of organizational belonging. Reduced social presence tends to increase the cognitive and emotional labor required of employees, who must work harder to read context, signal intent, and maintain relationships through impoverished communicative channels (Gibson and Gibbs, 2006). More recent work has focused specifically on the behavioral consequences of algorithmic management — the use of AI and data-driven systems to direct, monitor, and evaluate employee performance in real time. Kellogg, Valentine, and Christin (2020) analyzed how algorithmic management systems restructure the experience of control in organizations, noting that they combine the reach of surveillance with the apparent neutrality of computation, creating new forms of worker compliance and new sources of worker resistance. Employees subject to algorithmic oversight report heightened perceptions of being watched, reduced psychological safety, and diminished sense of agency — effects that are particularly pronounced when the algorithms are opaque (Ardito et al., 2021).

This literature rarely engages with the leadership and emotional intelligence traditions described above. Studies of algorithmic management tend to treat workers as subjects of system-level control, without attending to the human leaders who coexist with those systems. Similarly, leadership research has been slow to engage with the realities of algorithmic management. The result is a landscape in which we know a good deal about the independent effects of leadership, emotional intelligence, and AI systems on employee behavior, but relatively little about how these forces interact.

2.5 Integrative Assessment and Research Gaps

Taken together, the literature surveyed above points toward a clear diagnosis: the building blocks for a comprehensive understanding of employee behavior in AI-mediated organizations exist, but they have not been assembled. Several specific gaps emerge. First, there is an integration gap — the failure to study leadership styles, emotional intelligence, and AI systems as co-occurring, mutually influencing features of organizational life. Second, there is a methodological gap — an over-reliance on cross-sectional, survey-based, quantitative designs. Third, there is a contextual gap — a concentration of empirical evidence in Western, industrialized settings. And fourth, there is a theoretical gap — the absence of frameworks that specifically account for the human-algorithm interface as a site of leadership, emotion, and behavioral response.

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A systematic review, with bibliometric underpinning, is well positioned to map the contours of this fragmented field, document its intellectual history, and identify the directions in which it most urgently needs to grow. That is the purpose of the sections that follow.

3. Problem Statement

Artificial intelligence is being embedded into organizational processes at a pace that outstrips the development of theoretical understanding and empirical evidence about its human implications. Leaders are being asked to manage workforces in environments where authority is shared with algorithmic systems, where performance data is generated continuously and automatically, and where the traditional cues on which leadership and emotional intelligence rely — physical presence, real-time human feedback, relational continuity — are either absent or fundamentally altered. Employees, meanwhile, navigate these environments without established psychological frameworks for making sense of algorithmic authority, and without clear expectations about what kinds of leadership support they can expect or deserve.

The scholarly literature has not kept pace with these practical realities. Research on leadership in AI-enabled organizations remains thin, fragmented, and methodologically narrow. Studies that address leadership styles, emotional intelligence, and employee behavior in AI-mediated contexts exist, but they are scattered across disciplines, rarely in conversation with one another, and disproportionately grounded in data from North American and European organizations. The result is a significant knowledge deficit: practitioners lack evidence-based guidance for leading effectively in AI-augmented workplaces, and researchers lack a consolidated account of what is known and what remains to be discovered. This study addresses that deficit directly.

4. Research Questions

This review is organized around one central question and four subordinate questions that give it operational specificity.

Main Research Question: How has scholarly understanding of the relationships between leadership styles, emotional intelligence, and employee behavior evolved in the context of AI-mediated organizational environments, and what are the most significant gaps in current knowledge?

Sub-Research Questions:

SRQ1. How have publication trends, influential journals, and intellectual networks in this field evolved between 2020 and 2026, and what do these patterns reveal about the maturation of the field?

SRQ2. Which national research communities, institutions, and individual scholars have most substantially shaped the conversation, and what do regional patterns of emphasis suggest about culturally conditioned understandings of leadership and AI?

SRQ3. What are the dominant and emerging thematic clusters in the literature, and where do the most consequential analytical silences lie?

SRQ4. What conceptual and empirical resources does the existing literature provide for integrating leadership styles, emotional intelligence, and employee behavior into a coherent account of organizational life in AI-mediated environments?

4.1 Theoretical Limitations Concerning the Research Questions

The research questions posed above are demanding precisely because the theoretical tools currently available are not fully adequate to answer them. The foundational theories of leadership — transformational, transactional, servant, and authentic leadership frameworks — were developed in contexts where leadership was unambiguously human, embodied, and relational. They do not account for the partial delegation of leadership functions to algorithmic systems, nor do they specify how leaders should behave when their authority is complemented or contested by AI-generated directives and evaluations.

Affective Events Theory similarly requires extension. The theory was designed to explain how human-generated workplace events trigger emotional responses. It does not specify how

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employees process algorithmic events — whether an automated performance alert or an AI-generated rejection of a leave request — which may operate through different cognitive and emotional mechanisms than human-generated events. Emotional intelligence theory faces perhaps the deepest challenge: if EI is understood as the capacity to read and respond to human emotional signals, its relevance in environments where many signals are numerical, algorithmic, or transmitted asynchronously becomes uncertain. Research has not established what the emotionally intelligent management of an AI-augmented workforce looks like in practice.

5. Aim and Objectives of the Research

5.1 Aim

The aim of this study is to produce a rigorous, integrated account of the current state of scholarship on leadership styles, emotional intelligence, and employee behavior in AI-mediated workplaces — one that maps the field's intellectual structure, diagnoses its limitations, and generates a theoretically grounded agenda for future inquiry.

5.2 Research Objectives

1. To examine the growth trajectory and structural characteristics of research on leadership and employee behavior in AI-enabled organizations, using publication and citation trend analysis.
2. To identify the geographic, institutional, and authorial contributions shaping the field, and to analyze regional patterns of thematic emphasis.
3. To assess the most influential publications in the domain by citation impact, and to evaluate their theoretical and empirical contributions.
4. To map thematic clusters and keyword patterns in the literature, and to identify the conceptual and contextual gaps that most urgently require attention.
5. To synthesize existing findings into an integrative framework and to propose a research agenda that is methodologically diverse, geographically inclusive, and theoretically responsive to the realities of AI-mediated workplaces.

6. Research Methodology

This study employs a two-pronged methodological approach: a systematic literature review, conducted in accordance with PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines, and a bibliometric analysis of the resulting dataset. The combination of these approaches is deliberate. The systematic review ensures that the paper selection process is transparent, reproducible, and free from unsystematic inclusion bias. The bibliometric analysis provides a macro-level, quantitative perspective on the field's intellectual architecture — one that complements and contextualizes the thematic insights generated by the review.

6.1 Proposed Methodology

The overall methodology is illustrated in Figure 1 below. It proceeds through three interconnected phases: a structured database search and PRISMA-guided selection process, a bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer, and a thematic synthesis that integrates the quantitative findings with a critical reading of the most influential publications.

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Figure 1. Proposed Methodology

6.2 Database Selection and Search Strategy

Scopus was selected as the primary data source because it provides the largest abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed literature in the world, with comprehensive coverage across management, psychology, information systems, and engineering — the disciplines most relevant to this review (Donthu et al., 2020). The search strategy employed three core conceptual pillars: (i) leadership styles and emotional intelligence, (ii) employee behavior and engagement, and (iii) artificial intelligence and AI-mediated workplaces. Filters restricted the dataset to peer-reviewed English-language journal articles published between January 2020 and April 2026. Conference papers, book chapters, editorials, and non-English publications were excluded.

6.3 PRISMA-Guided Selection Process

The PRISMA framework structured the article selection process through four sequential phases. In the Identification phase, the initial search returned a broad corpus of records, which were then subjected to automated deduplication. In the Screening phase, titles and abstracts were assessed for relevance: studies were retained only if they addressed at least two of the three conceptual pillars. In the Eligibility phase, full-text review was conducted for all retained articles. The final Inclusion phase yielded the corpus used for bibliometric and thematic analysis, as illustrated in Figure 2.

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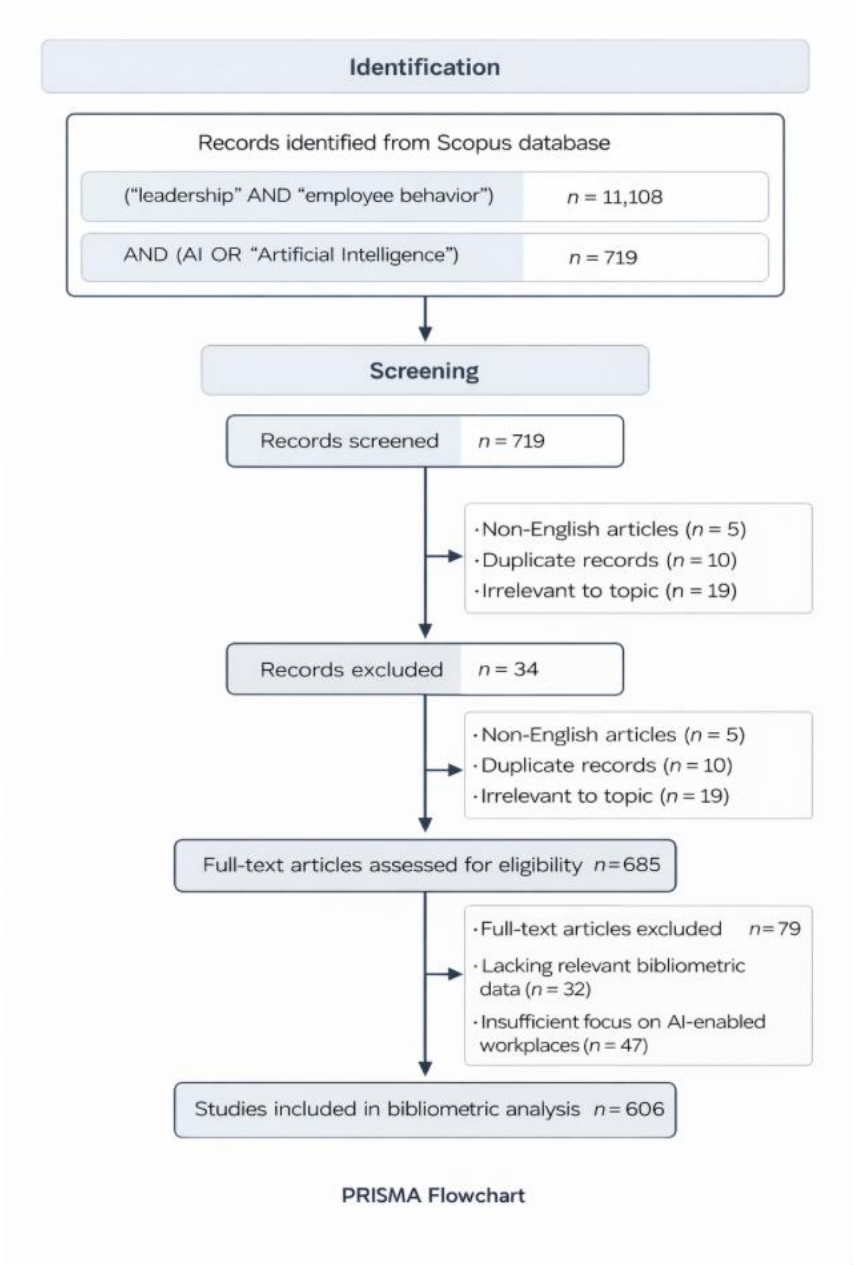

Figure 2. PRISMA Flowchart

By being comprehensive in the filtering process, only those studies clearly aligned with the research objectives were included for in-depth analysis. A complete demonstration of the selection and refinement process is shown in the systematic flow of data retrieval and screening above.

6.4 Three-Phase Analytical Framework

The analysis was structured in three phases. Phase One examined leadership styles and employee behavior as independent research trajectories, establishing their respective empirical bases. Phase Two examined research on AI-mediated workplaces as a distinct strand, focusing on how algorithmic management and digital transformation have been theorized and studied. Phase Three integrated the insights from the first two phases, identifying points of convergence and persistent disconnections, and developing the thematic synthesis presented in Section 8.

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Table 1: Research Design Overview

Research Objective	Data Source	Method of Analysis	Key Indicators
Evolution of research trajectory	Scopus Database	Descriptive bibliometric analysis	Annual trends, growth rate, document types
Geographic and institutional contributions	Scopus Metadata	Citation and co-authorship analysis	Leading countries, prolific authors, institutional output
Most influential publications	Scopus Citation Records	Citation impact analysis	Highly cited papers, journal influence
Thematic patterns and keyword trends	Author Keywords	Co-occurrence and thematic mapping (VOSviewer)	Keyword clusters, emerging themes, research directions

7. Analysis Method

Bibliometric analysis is, at its core, a method for quantifying patterns of scholarly communication. It draws on the metadata embedded in published research — authorship, citations, keywords, journal names, institutional affiliations — to construct a picture of how a field is structured, who its most influential voices are, and how its intellectual concerns have shifted over time (Chen, 2017). Unlike a conventional narrative review, which relies on the reviewer's judgment to select and interpret relevant work, bibliometric analysis applies systematic quantitative rules to a defined dataset, producing results that are, in principle, reproducible and transparent.

Several specific analytical techniques were employed in this study. Publication trend analysis tracked the annual volume of relevant publications across the study period. Journal distribution analysis identified which outlets have been most receptive to this research. Country and institutional analysis mapped the geographic distribution of research output and examined patterns of international collaboration through co-authorship network analysis. Highly-cited paper analysis identified the landmark works that most substantially shaped subsequent scholarship. Keyword co-occurrence analysis, conducted through VOSviewer, mapped the conceptual architecture of the field by identifying clusters of terms that frequently appear together, revealing dominant and emerging thematic groupings.

Together, these methods generate a layered account of the field: its surface structure (publication volumes, journal distribution), its social structure (authorship networks, national contributions), its intellectual structure (citation patterns, landmark works), and its conceptual structure (keyword clusters, thematic evolution). The integration of these layers is what allows bibliometric analysis to produce a map of a field's knowledge landscape that is both systematically grounded and analytically rich.

8. Findings

The findings are organized to follow the structure of the research objectives: from the broad patterns of publication growth and journal distribution, through the geographic and thematic organization of the field, to the keyword clusters that reveal its conceptual priorities.

8.1 Publication Trends: A Field in Sustained Growth

The most immediately striking finding from the bibliometric analysis is the consistent and substantial growth of research in this domain across the study period. In 2020, fewer than thirty peer-reviewed publications addressed the intersection of leadership, employee behavior, and AI-mediated workplaces. By 2023, that figure had more than tripled, approaching ninety. By 2025, it had climbed to approximately one hundred and thirty-two — and the projection for 2026, based on

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the pace of publications indexed through April of that year, suggests a figure approaching one hundred and fifty. This growth trend is visualized in Figure 5.1 below.



Figure 5.1 Publication Timeline Analysis

This growth is not merely a reflection of the general expansion of AI-related research. It reflects a specific and accelerating interest in the human dimensions of AI adoption — in how people lead and are led, how they feel and behave, in organizations that are increasingly governed by algorithmic systems. The sustained upward trajectory indicates that the field has moved beyond its initial exploratory phase and is now generating a substantial body of peer-reviewed scholarship. At the same time, the rate of growth creates its own challenges: with output expanding rapidly, the risk of fragmentation and theoretical dilution increases, underscoring the value of consolidating reviews like this one.

8.2 Journal Distribution: An Interdisciplinary Conversation

The journals most actively publishing in this space are revealing. As shown in Figure 5.2, Frontiers in Psychology leads with over two hundred publications, reflecting the field's strong psychological dimensions. The Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health ranks second, demonstrating that AI surveillance and algorithmic management have implications for employee health that extend into the public health domain. Sustainability, the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, and the Journal of Business Research round out the top contributors, collectively demonstrating that this field draws on and contributes to management science, psychology, and interdisciplinary social science.

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Figure 5.2 Journal-Wise Analysis

The breadth of journal outlets signals something important: the question of how humans lead and respond in AI-mediated workplaces is not the exclusive property of any single discipline. It is being addressed, from different angles and with different theoretical assumptions, by scholars in psychology, management, public health, sustainability studies, and information systems. This interdisciplinarity is a strength — it brings multiple analytical lenses to bear on a complex phenomenon — while simultaneously creating the challenge that scholars in any one discipline may be unaware of relevant work emerging from adjacent fields.

8.3 Subject Area Distribution: Management at the Centre, Technology at the Margins

Subject area analysis, shown in Figure 5.3, confirms the interdisciplinary character of the field while revealing an imbalance. Management and Business constitute the largest subject area cluster, followed by Social Sciences and Psychology. Computer Science represents a third, growing cluster — but it remains smaller than one might expect given the centrality of AI to the research questions being addressed. This distribution suggests that the conversation about AI in workplaces is being led primarily by scholars whose primary training is in organizational and behavioral sciences, rather than by computer scientists or information systems researchers.

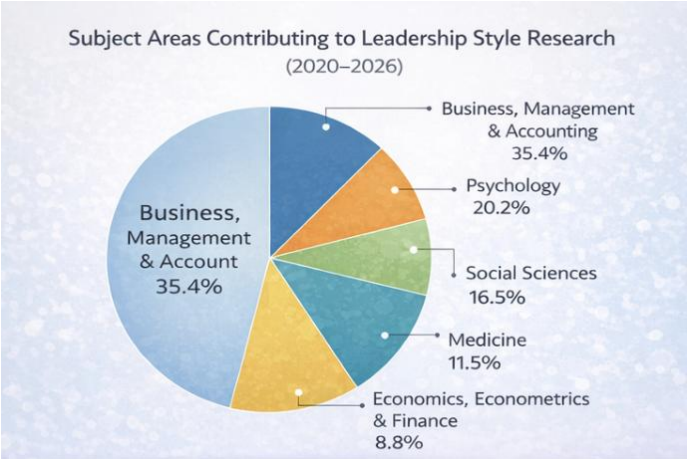

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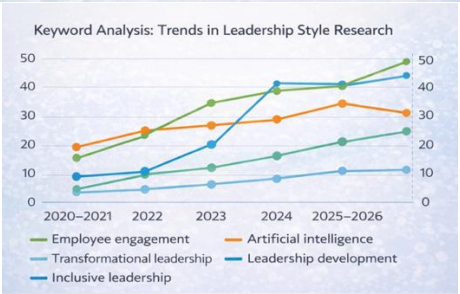
Figure 5.3 Analysis of Subject Areas

This has consequences for the kinds of questions that get asked and the kinds of answers that are considered satisfying: the literature tends to foreground human and organizational outcomes, and to treat the AI systems themselves as relatively undifferentiated inputs rather than as complex, consequential technical artifacts whose design choices matter enormously.

8.4 Country Analysis: Global Interest, Regional Divergence

Research contributions to this field are geographically distributed across five major producing regions: the United States, China, the United Kingdom, India, and Australia, with Germany, Canada, and Malaysia also registering significant output. The visualizations below illustrate both the volume of contributions and the patterns of international research collaboration.







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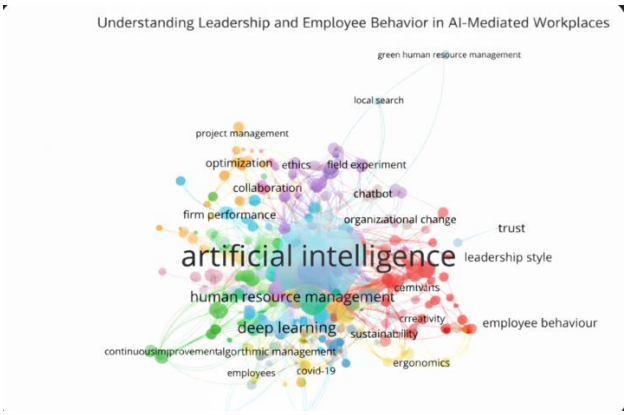

Figures 5.4a–5.4d: Country Contributions and Keyword Co-occurrence Networks

Importantly, geographic origin is not merely a demographic variable — it is associated with systematic differences in thematic emphasis. American scholarship in this domain tends to prioritize the human and psychological dimensions of AI adoption: how employees emotionally experience algorithmic management, how leaders build trust in AI-mediated environments. Chinese and Indian scholarship, by contrast, tends to foreground efficiency, performance management, and digital transformation as organizational capabilities. These differences suggest that the concept of what good leadership or positive employee experience looks like in an AI-mediated workplace may not be culturally universal.

8.5 Keyword Analysis: The Field's Conceptual Map

Keyword co-occurrence analysis reveals a field organized around three loosely connected clusters. The first and largest cluster centers on leadership style, employee behavior, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction — the traditional vocabulary of organizational behavior research, now extended into technology-mediated contexts. The second cluster groups artificial intelligence, digital transformation, algorithmic management, and technology adoption. The third, smaller cluster involves employee engagement, work performance, and organizational culture — bridging the behavioral and technological clusters but not yet firmly integrating them.

The relative smallness of the bridging cluster is the most theoretically significant finding of the keyword analysis. It confirms what the literature review suggested: that leadership and AI research are developing largely in parallel rather than in productive dialogue. Studies that explicitly integrate leadership styles, emotional intelligence, and AI-mediated control mechanisms remain a small minority of the overall literature. This is the conceptual gap that future research most urgently needs to close.

Table 2: Summary of Key Findings

Dimension	Key Finding	Interpretation
Publication Growth	Continuous increase from ~28 (2020) to ~150 (projected 2026)	Rising academic interest; field entering consolidation phase
Top Journals	Frontiers in Psychology, Journal of Environmental Research & Public Health, Sustainability	Interdisciplinary field spanning psychology, management, and public health
Subject Areas	Management and Business leads; Computer Science a growing third cluster	Human-behavioral framing dominant; technology-focused framing underrepresented

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Dimension	Key Finding	Interpretation
Leading Countries	USA, China, India, UK, Australia	Global reach, but regional thematic divergence in emphases
Keyword Clusters	Three clusters: traditional OB, AI/technology, and bridging engagement terms	Integration of leadership, EI, and AI remains the key gap
Research Collaboration	Strong international co-authorship networks	Growing global collaboration in leadership and AI-related research
Emerging Themes	AI adoption, digital leadership, organizational transformation	Future research directions centered on AI integration and workforce dynamics

9. Discussion of Findings

The findings reported above tell a coherent story, even if it is not a fully reassuring one. Research on leadership, emotional intelligence, and employee behavior in AI-mediated workplaces is growing rapidly and attracting attention across disciplines and geographies. This is, on one level, encouraging: the field is alive, expanding, and drawing intellectual energy from multiple directions. On another level, however, the findings reveal a field that is growing faster than it is deepening — accumulating studies without yet developing the integrative frameworks needed to make sense of what they collectively reveal.

The most consequential finding is the persistent gap between the literature on leadership and the literature on algorithmic management. Studies of transformational or servant leadership in organizational contexts rarely engage with the question of what happens when a significant proportion of the authority, feedback, and evaluation that employees experience comes not from a human leader but from an algorithmic system. Conversely, studies of algorithmic management — often rich in detail about surveillance dynamics, performance metrics, and compliance behavior — rarely theorize the role of the human leader as a mediating or moderating variable. This mutual neglect produces a distorted picture of contemporary organizational life, in which leadership and technology are analyzed as if they operate in separate registers rather than as interacting features of the same work environment.

The geographic findings add an important dimension to this diagnosis. The dominance of US-based scholarship in the human-psychological cluster and of Chinese and Indian scholarship in the technology-efficiency cluster reflects not merely different research traditions but potentially different assumptions about what AI in the workplace is fundamentally for. A field that does not bring these framings into dialogue with each other risks developing a literature that is internally coherent within each regional context but insufficiently comparative and insufficiently global.

The dominance of quantitative, survey-based, cross-sectional designs is a third concern. The phenomena most important to this field — how employees emotionally process algorithmic authority, how leaders adapt their style and emotional intelligence to AI-mediated environments, how trust is built or eroded over time in AI-augmented teams — are dynamic, relational, and context-dependent. They are not well captured by one-time surveys of self-reported attitudes. The field needs more qualitative research, more longitudinal research, and more research that combines methods in ways suited to the complexity of its subject matter.

Finally, the findings confirm the theoretical limitations identified in Section 4.1. The frameworks that currently dominate the field — transformational leadership theory, affective events theory, emotional intelligence models — were not designed with AI-mediated environments

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in mind. They require either significant extension or supplementation by new theoretical structures that can account for the distinctive features of these environments: the opacity of algorithmic authority, the compression or elimination of traditional emotional cues, the co-presence of human and non-human sources of control.

10. Contribution to Knowledge, Theory, and Practice

10.1 Contribution to Knowledge

This review makes three specific contributions to the existing body of knowledge. First, it provides the first bibliometrically grounded, systematically conducted account of the intellectual landscape at the intersection of leadership, emotional intelligence, employee behavior, and AI-mediated workplaces. Second, it demonstrates, with quantitative precision, the structural fragmentation of the field. Third, it documents the geographic and disciplinary distribution of contributions in a way that makes the biases and blind spots of the existing literature visible and addressable.

10.2 Contribution to Theory

Theoretically, the review contributes by specifying more precisely what existing frameworks can and cannot explain in AI-mediated organizational contexts. Transformational leadership theory provides a well-validated account of how leaders motivate employees — but it says nothing about what happens when relational processes are partially mediated by algorithmic systems. This review makes that limitation visible and proposes, as a direction for future theoretical development, the construction of frameworks that explicitly account for the human-algorithm interface as a site of leadership enactment.

Similarly, the review contributes to the emotional intelligence literature by identifying a theoretical lacuna: the absence of conceptual and empirical work on how emotional intelligence functions when significant dimensions of interpersonal communication are mediated by technology or replaced by algorithmic processes. This is genuinely new theoretical territory, and this review helps to define its boundaries.

10.3 Contribution to Practice

For organizational practitioners — senior leaders, HR professionals, organizational development specialists — the review offers three practical implications. First, it underscores the importance of human leadership even in highly automated environments. The evidence reviewed here consistently shows that employees' experience of algorithmic systems is shaped by how their human leaders contextualize, explain, and respond to those systems. Leaders who are emotionally intelligent, transparent, and genuinely invested in employee wellbeing can significantly buffer the negative effects of algorithmic surveillance and control.

Second, the review suggests that the emotional dimensions of AI adoption are systematically underestimated by organizations. Employees need to be able to make sense of the algorithmic systems they work within — to understand their logic, trust their fairness, and feel confident in their ability to seek redress when those systems produce problematic outcomes. Third, the geographic findings have direct implications for multinational organizations: an approach to AI-augmented leadership that assumes Western psychological frameworks will resonate equally in Indian, Chinese, or African organizational contexts is likely to be both theoretically incomplete and practically ineffective.

11. Limitations and Future Research

11.1 Limitations of This Study

A study of this kind comes with limitations that should be acknowledged clearly, not as defensive disclaimers, but as guides for interpreting the findings and designing the research that should follow.

The restriction to Scopus as a single data source means that studies indexed only in the Web of Science, Google Scholar, EBSCO, or discipline-specific databases may have been missed. The English-language filter, applied for analytical consistency, excludes a significant body of scholarship produced in Chinese, German, Spanish, Arabic, and other languages. Given that China and India are among the most prolific contributors to

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this field, the exclusion of non-English publications represents a potentially significant source of bias.

The reliance on VOSviewer as the sole bibliometric software introduces methodological path dependency. CiteSpace, Bibliometrix, and Gephi employ different algorithms for clustering, visualization, and temporal network analysis, and would likely produce somewhat different maps of the field. Future analyses should consider multi-software approaches to ensure robustness.

Finally, bibliometric analysis is a tool for mapping, not for evaluating. Citation counts and co-authorship networks reveal influence and connectivity, but they do not assess the methodological rigor, theoretical depth, or practical relevance of the studies they map. The findings reported here should be read as a map of the field's intellectual architecture, not as a ranking of its most valuable contributions.

11.2 Future Research Directions

The limitations of this study point directly toward the research most urgently needed. Four directions stand out.

First, the field needs longitudinal research designs — studies that follow organizations and their employees over time as AI systems are introduced, evolved, and in some cases withdrawn. Cross-sectional snapshots cannot capture the dynamic, evolving nature of the relationships between leadership, employee behavior, and AI-mediated control. Longitudinal approaches, combined with organizational ethnography and experience sampling methods, would dramatically deepen understanding.

Second, qualitative and mixed-methods research is urgently needed. The emotional and interpretive dimensions of working in AI-mediated environments — how employees make sense of algorithmic authority, how leaders construct narratives that legitimate or critique AI systems, how trust develops or erodes in hybrid human-machine authority structures — require thick, contextually rich data of the kind that only qualitative methods can generate.

Third, the field must expand its geographic reach. Research conducted in South Asia, Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East — regions with rapidly growing AI adoption and very different cultural frameworks for authority, emotion, and work — is both theoretically important and practically necessary.

Fourth, theoretical development should move toward explicitly integrating leadership, emotional intelligence, and AI system design as co-occurring, mutually constitutive features of contemporary organizations. The field needs frameworks that specify how these elements interact — how a high-EI leader moderates the effects of algorithmic surveillance on employee wellbeing, or how the design of an AI performance management system either facilitates or undermines the relational processes through which transformational leadership operates.

12. Conclusions

This review began with a simple observation: the scholarship on leadership and employee behavior has not kept pace with the organizational realities created by artificial intelligence. The findings confirm this gap and add texture to it. The literature on AI-mediated workplaces is growing fast, drawing contributions from scholars around the world and across multiple disciplines — and yet it remains structurally fragmented, methodologically narrow, and geographically skewed in ways that limit both its theoretical depth and its practical reach.

Three things are clear from this analysis. First, human leadership continues to matter — deeply — even in highly automated organizations. The evidence reviewed here consistently shows that the emotional and relational quality of leadership shapes how employees experience, interpret, and respond to algorithmic systems. A leader who communicates transparently, responds empathetically to employee concerns, and advocates for fairness in how AI systems are designed and applied can significantly modify the impact of those systems on wellbeing, trust, and performance.

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Second, emotional intelligence may be one of the most important — and most underresearched — leadership competencies for the AI era. The capacity to read and respond to the emotional states of employees who are navigating unfamiliar, opaque, and sometimes threatening algorithmic environments requires precisely the kinds of perceptual sensitivity, empathic responsiveness, and emotional self-regulation that emotional intelligence theory describes.

Third, the conversation about AI, leadership, and work needs to become genuinely global. The assumptions embedded in existing frameworks — about authority, emotional expression, fairness, and the appropriate boundaries of technological control — are not culturally universal. Building a science of leadership in AI-mediated organizations that can speak meaningfully to the majority of the world's workers requires sustained, deliberate, and methodologically sophisticated engagement with organizational contexts beyond the Western academic mainstream.

This review has tried to provide the kind of critical, consolidated account that the field currently lacks — a map of where it has been, a diagnosis of where it is stuck, and a direction for where it needs to go. The work of actually going there remains to be done. But it is work that matters, because the organizations taking shape around us, and the people working within them, deserve scholarship that is equal to their complexity.

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