

# Transactional leadership: A bibliometric analysis about one of the most effective leadership models in the word



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**Abstract** The objective of this study is to examine how the development trends and distribution of research on transactional leadership are conducted by experts worldwide. Transactional leadership stands as one of the most influential and widely-recognized models on a global scale. A considerable volume of research has been conducted by experts in the realm of transactional leadership. The method employed in this study is a qualitative approach utilizing a literature review methodology. The data source utilized for this study is the Scopus database, with the keyword "transactional leadership." The findings of this study reveal a substantial and consistent increase in transactional leadership studies, as evidenced by the publication of 266 documents over the past decade. Furthermore, there was a notable overall uptrend, with 45 documents published in 2020. In terms of publication volume, Dartey-Baah, K emerged as a prolific author in the field of transactional leadership studies, with a significant portion of contributions originating from the United Kingdom, which serves as a key hub for international networks engaged in transactional leadership research. The most extensively explored topics encompass the study of transformational leadership, transformational performance, its effects, roles, and the impact on employees. Future research endeavors focusing on transactional leadership should consider subjects such as the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), the role of leadership moderators, knowledge sharing, and gender.

**Keywords:** transactional leadership, workers, performance, rewards

## 1. Introduction

Employee development constitutes a substantial domain. It encompasses more than merely facilitating ongoing learning for employees. Employees must be equipped with the knowledge of how to address wants, needs, and expectations (Ariani, 2015). Meanwhile, for the mutual benefit of both employees and organizations, a comprehension of the diverse contexts in which employee development initiatives are implemented is imperative. As articulated by Waal (2015), employees contribute their knowledge, skills, experience, and creativity to the organization, underscoring its significance in the context of organizational development.

One of the approaches taken by an organization or company to enhance employee performance is the application of transactional leadership theory (Sulistiyanto and Murtini, 2018). According to this theory, an organization or company will achieve its goals through the establishment of a contractual relationship between the leader and employees concerning performance targets to be accomplished and the rewards that employees will receive upon successfully attaining the previously agreed-upon targets.

The practice of applying transactional leadership principles has spurred interest among experts in gaining a deeper understanding of transactional leadership theory (Abdelwahed et al., 2023a, 2023b; Antonakis & House, 2014; Deichmann & Stam, 2015; Kanat-Maymon et al., 2020; Klein, 2023; Wofford & Goodwin, 1994). This is achieved through research and the ongoing development of this leadership theory, with the aim of enhancing its effectiveness and applicability in expanding knowledge about leadership theory and its practical utilization in daily life. This study seeks to ascertain how the development trends and distribution patterns of transactional leadership research have been conducted by experts over the past decade.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Leadership



Leadership can be defined as the ability to motivate and support the people needed to achieve organizational goals (DuBrin, 2022). At the same time, leaders can encourage and help the people needed to achieve organizational goals so that the success or failure of achieving the goals of an organization depends mainly on its leader.

One of the most essential leadership elements contributing to leadership effectiveness is the leader's leadership style in the organization. Leadership style is the behavior that leaders exhibit when they appropriately lead members of an organization (Certo & Certo, 2006). Over time, leaders improve their style through experience, education, and training. Research has attempted to explain how leadership style or behavior is related to organizational effectiveness (Dessler & Starje, 2004).

Managers can align human resources with the organization's strategic objectives and ensure that the organization operates in harmony with the external environment (Zaccaro & Klimoski, 2022). In addition, leaders must be able to predict future probabilities and develop effective strategies to deal with uncertainty (Riaz & Haider, 2010). Therefore, organizations need to pay attention to the changing environment, which in turn helps them set the right goals and objectives.

Leadership has the same importance (Komaria, 2014). In addition, leadership is also an essential aspect in determining the success of an organization because leadership has a relationship with a leader's behavior in influencing employees or employees so that employees are willing to work together to realize an organizational goal. Leadership will run well if leaders and employees cooperate reasonably by having the same agreement and the necessary mechanisms and strategies to achieve goals.

## 2.2. Transactional Leadership.

Transactional leadership, having transactions between leaders and employees at its conceptual core, is why we define it as using rewards and contingent sanctions. Thus, transactional leadership uses rewards and contingent sanctions to make employees pursue their self-interest while contributing to achieving organizational goals (Hardi et al., 2022). This is based on the assumption that through the provision of appropriate incentives, the personal interests of employees can be aligned with the organization's interests.

In other words, it can be explained that the success or achievement of the goals of an organization is primarily determined by the success of employees in achieving their personal goals, namely, the success of employees in achieving performance targets that have been agreed upon with their leaders so that the success or failure of a company depends largely on the success or failure of employees in achieving personal goals (performance achievement).

In the practice of transactional leadership, there is a contract agreement between leaders and employees related to achieving performance targets for a job and providing rewards or sanctions for achieving these performance targets. If the employee can perform the agreed performance target, he can receive an award according to the agreement set. Conversely, if the employee does not meet the agreed performance target, he will receive sanctions or will not receive an award from the company.

Transactional leadership builds relationships between leaders and followers through exchange. Motivation is made to followers by rewarding extra performance that has been achieved (Winkler, 2010; Robbins & Judge, 2017) states. "Transactional leaders: Leaders who guide or motivate their followers toward established goals by clarifying role and task requirements." Transactional leaders guide or motivate followers toward goals by explaining roles and task requirements. The relationship between the transactional leader and the employee is reflected in three things: the leader knows what employees want and explains what they will get if their work follows expectations, the leader exchanges the efforts made by employees for rewards, and the leader is responsive to the personal interests of employees as long as those interests are proportional to the value of the work the employee has done.

The characteristics of transactional leadership have the following dimensions: 1) dependent rewards (contracting out the exchange of rewards for good performance, recognizing achievements); 2) management with exceptions (active), maintaining and seeking deviations from rules and standards, and taking corrective actions; 3) management with passive exceptions (only intervening if standards are not met); and 4) laissez faire (abdicated responsibility, avoiding decision making) (Soekarso, 2007). According to Robbins and Judge (2013), the characteristics of transactional leaders are as follows: 1) Contingent Reward: The leader contracts rewards for effort, promises rewards for good performance, and recognizes achievements; 2) Management by Exception (active): the leader watches and looks for deviations from rules and standards, takes appropriate action; and 3) Management by Exception (passive). In passive exception management, the leader intervenes if standards are unmet. 4) Laissez Faire abdicates responsibility and avoids making decisions.

As one of the most effective leadership models to achieve organizational goals, this model is more likely to improve the performance of members/employees by building an agreement between the leader and employees/members of the organization. The work agreement is in the form of targets that must be achieved by each employee/member of the organization within a certain period. To achieve these performance targets, company/organization leaders are obliged to provide rewards in the form of salaries and other rights that have been agreed upon.

Performance is one of the essential factors in transactional leadership theory. The success or failure of achieving organizational goals depends mainly on the organization's performance. The achievement of corporate performance targets

relies on employee performance targets. Likewise, the achievement of rewards for employees depends on the performance of employees, both individually and collectively. In other words, it can be said that an employee's success reflects the success of his organization.

Performance results from work related to organizational goals such as quality, efficiency, and other criteria of effectiveness (Gibson, 2015). Job performance is formally defined as the value of the set of employee behaviors that contribute positively or negatively to organizational goal accomplishment". Performance has several factors: quality, quantity, cooperation, knowledge of work, reliability, attendance and punctuality, knowledge of administrative policies and goals, and initiative and consideration (Widodo, 2020). The contributions of other parties influence leaders' success in carrying out their duties. That is, the leader's performance will be influenced by individual performance. If the performance of the individual is good, it will affect the performance of the leader and organizational performance (Sinambela, 2012). Therefore, every company strives so that employees involved in company activities can provide optimal performance.

According to Edison et al. (2016), the performance dimension consists of 1) Target: Target is an indicator of the fulfillment of the number of goods, work, or the amount of money produced; 2) Quality: Quality is an essential element because the quality produced becomes a strength in maintaining customer loyalty; and 3) Turnaround time: Timely completion makes the certainty of distribution and delivery of work certain. It is the capital to create customer trust. 4) Adhere to the principle: not only must it meet targets, quality, and on time, but it must also be done correctly, transparently, and accountable.

To determine the success or failure of achieving the performance targets of an organization, it is necessary to measure organizational performance. Organizational performance is measured by measuring the organizational performance of units in the organization. At the same time, organizational performance measurement is carried out by measuring employee performance.

Employee performance *appraisal* is a systematic study of working conditions carried out formally and is associated with work standards determined by a company (Rivai, 2010). Based on another opinion, performance appraisal means an evaluation of employee performance carried out now and in the past. This depends on the performance standards that have been determined.

Performance appraisal is the process of evaluating how well employees perform a job compared to predetermined standards. Then, the information obtained from the evaluation will be communicated to the employee concerned. From some of the experts' opinions above, it can be concluded that performance *appraisal* is the process of assessing or evaluating the performance of employees working in a company in a certain period. According to Rivai (2010), there are ten objectives and five benefits of employee performance appraisal, including (Figure 1):

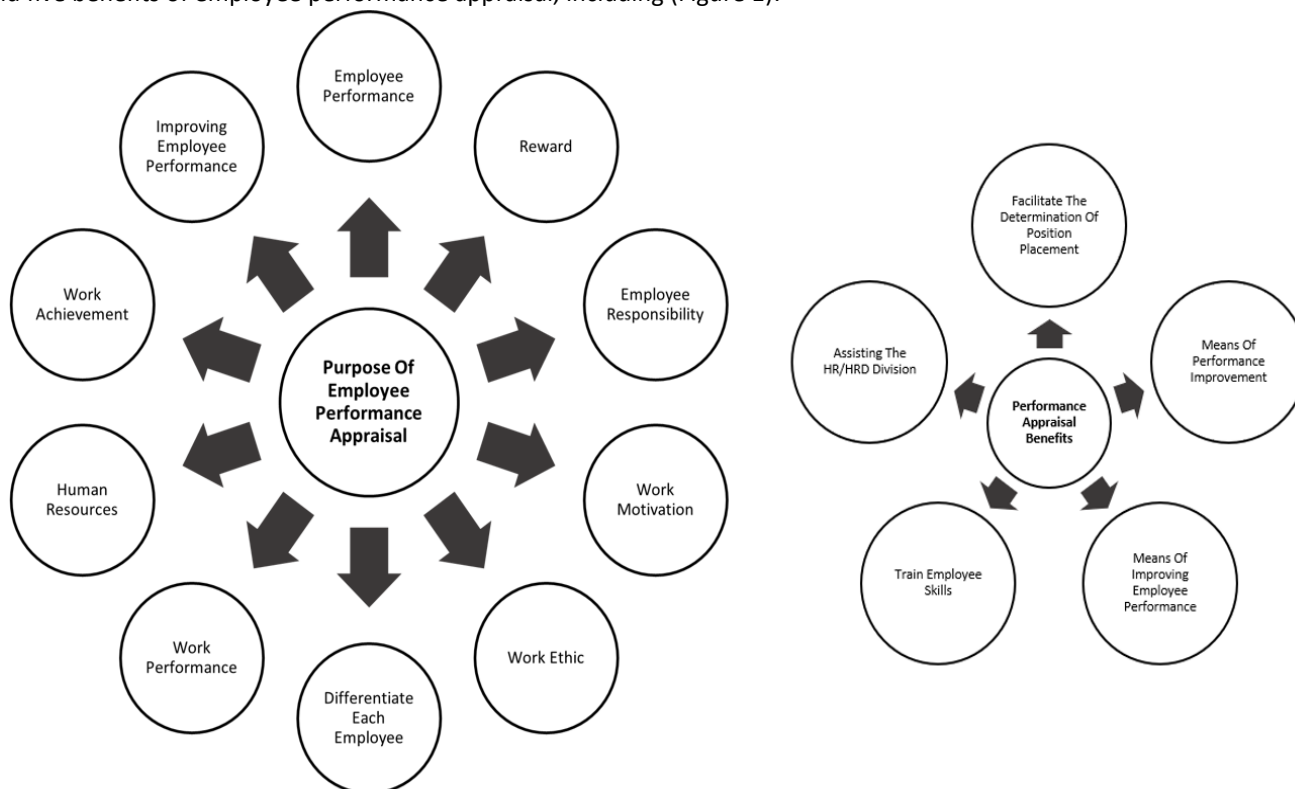


Figure 1 Purpose And Benefits of Employee Performance Appraisal. Source: (Rivai 2010).



### 3. Materials and Methods

This research uses qualitative methods with a literature study approach. Qualitative research prioritizes excavation, discovery, reading, interpretation, and conveying the meaning or symbol of data expressed or implied from the collected data (Tonon, 2016). Meanwhile, according to Rukhmana et al. (2022); Sugiyono (2011), literature research is a systematic academic literature research method that includes collecting literature materials relevant to the research objectives, collection techniques using literature methods, and data organization and presentation. It can be concluded that qualitative research methods using literature search techniques are data collection techniques based on searching written data such as notes, books, papers or articles, and journals.

#### 3.1. Data Sources and Data Collection Techniques

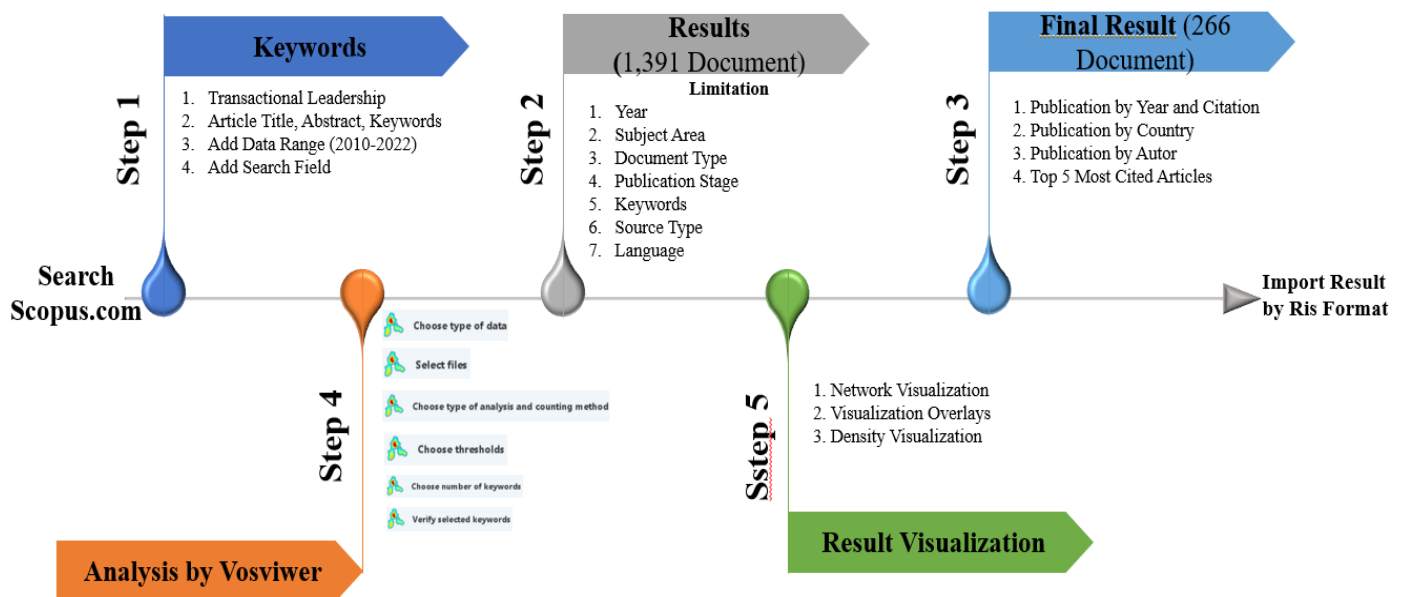
The authors used the Scopus database as a data source in this study. The keyword used as a data search is "Transactional Leadership." The initial data obtained were 2,245 titles. After the deadline for the publication year 2013-2022, with the subject areas of business, management and accounting, psychology, business, econometrics and finance, 266 documents relevant to the study were obtained after data reduction. The data were evaluated descriptively based on the number and year of publication, author, publishing unit, country of issue, type of document, and field of research. Next, the data are viewed, and the amount of data is analyzed.

**Table 1** Data Sources.

Year	Document	Year	Document
2013	25	2018	38
2014	31	2019	33
2015	34	2020	45
2016	26	2021	23
2017	35	2022	32

Source: Scopus database (<https://www.scopus.com>).

Based on the data above is the author's basis for analyzing transactional leadership studies with the last ten years of limitations and using references for the previous ten years based on the author using the latest concerns and updates. Furthermore, the data are exported in RIS format and processed and compiled using Vosviewer software. The following are data collection techniques and data analysis techniques (Figure 2).



**Figure 2** Data collection and data analysis techniques.

Based on the picture above, you can see the data collection and analysis process. The data visualized using Vosviewer's tools are threefold. First, network visualization is used to analyze the network keyword network in the study of transactional leadership. Second, overlay visualization was used to examine the portraits of the development of studies from year to year. Third, density visualization to analyze gap analysis has not been studied much by transactional leaders. Therefore, this study has a theoretical and practical contribution.



### 4. Results and Discussion

#### 4.1. Portrait of The Development of Transactional Leadership Studies

The study of transactional leadership has been interesting over the past decade. This is evident in the last ten years. There have been 266 documents with a total citation of 7,993. The highest number of documents was in 2020. This can be seen in the following picture.

Figure 3 shows a portrait of the development of transactional leadership studies. The number of publications related to transactional leadership research has generally increased significantly. In addition, the overall trend increased in 2020 to 45 documents. In that year, many studies on transactional leadership were studied from the transformational side and transactional leadership with findings that transactional leadership is positively related to organizational performance. This was confirmed by results conducted by (Alrowwad et al., 2020). Another question is whether transformational leadership better explains work engagement and outcomes than transactional leadership. These findings confirm that transformational leadership's indirect influence on affective commitment and organizational and civic behavior through work engagement is stronger than the indirect effects of transactional leadership (Aboramadan & Kundi, 2020).

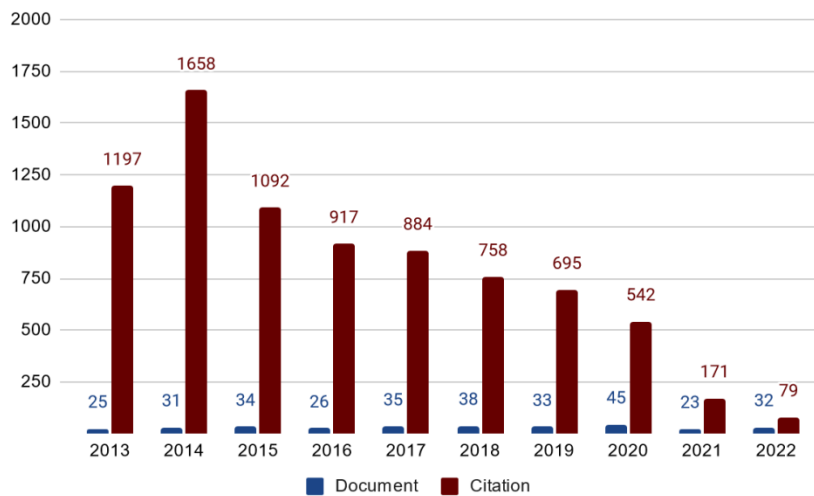


Figure 3 Publication by Year.  
Source: Scopus Database.

Furthermore, the average number of article citations per year in Figure 3 shows that the average number of sources for transactional leadership can remain stable despite decreasing over time. Therefore, we can conclude that the field is currently in a phase of steady growth in global trends in publications. Furthermore, from the number of published documents, several authors have contributed to transactional leadership studies spread across several countries. The following can be seen in the next image (Figure 4).

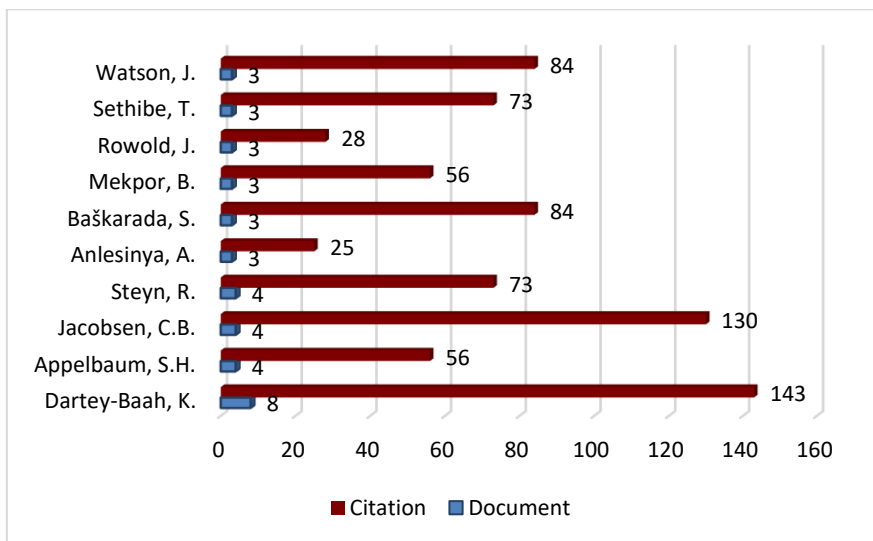


Figure 4 Publication by Author.



A total of 160 authors contributed 266 publications related to transactional leadership research. Figure 4 shows the top 10 most relevant authors. Regarding the number of publications, Dartey-Baah, K is a prolific writer, with eight publications and the highest number of citations of 143 over the past ten years. One of the studies authored by Dartey-Baah is *Resilient Leadership: a transformational-transactional leadership mix* (Aboramadan & Kundi, 2020). Furthermore, the authors who contributed the most to the study of transactional leadership were Appelbaum, S.H., Jacobsen, C.B., and Steyn, R. each of the four documents with the highest number of citations Jacobsen, C.B. is 130. Furthermore, any author in various countries can be seen as follows.

Figure 5 shows any author from various countries. There are 9 clusters of any country in the transactional leadership study of two countries, including the United Kingdom and the United States, which have networks between countries. The United Kingdom network has a total link strength of 21 with several documents 18, namely, Greece, Spain, Malaysia, Thailand, China, Australia, the United States, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, and France. The United States network has a total link strength of 29, and the number of documents is 44, including Germany, Switzerland, Canada, Turkey, South Korea, Italy, and Taiwan. Furthermore, of the many transactional leadership studies, five article titles were published with the highest number of citations in 2014. Here are the articles with the number of sources ranked by the total citation index over the past ten years. Table 2 shows the most famous documents with citations (Breevaart et al., 2014). The document was widely published in the Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology.

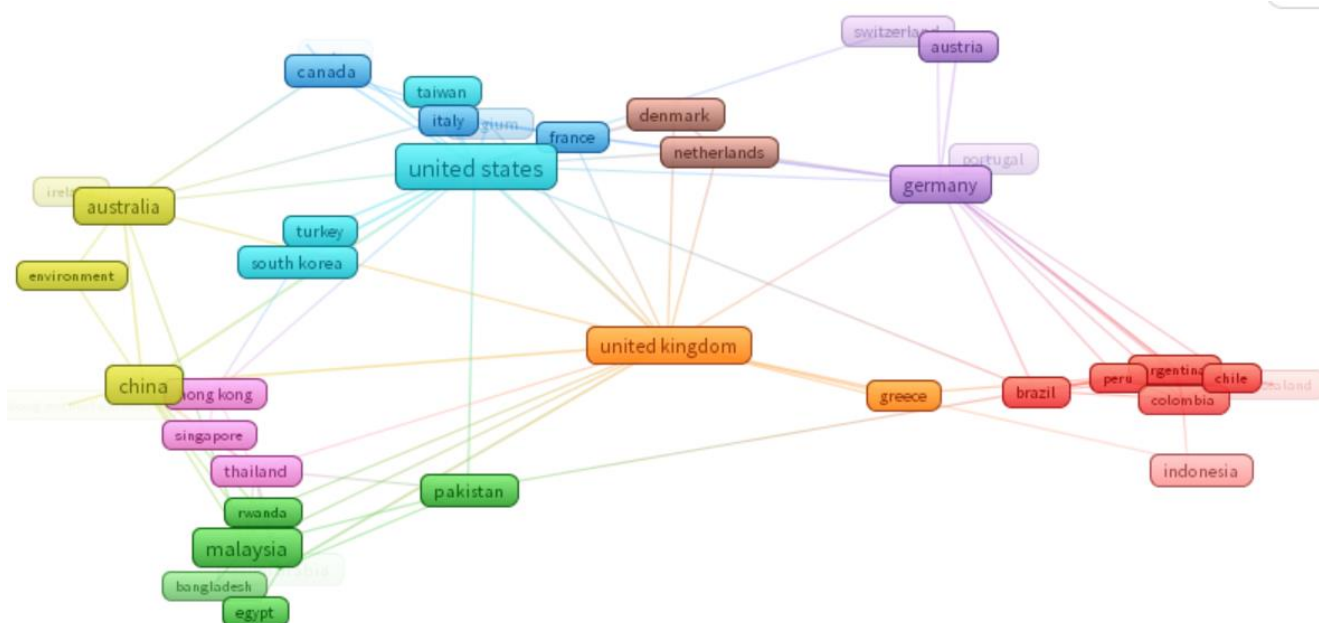


Figure 5 Author Network by Country.

Table 2 Top 5 Most Cited Articles.

Rank	Title	Year	Citation	Source
1	Daily transactional and transformational leadership and daily employee engagement	2014	315	(Breevaart et al. 2014)
2	A Meta-analytic Review of Ethical Leadership Outcomes and Moderators	2016	295	(Bedi, Alpaslan, and Green 2016)
3	Knowledge management and organizational performance in the service industry: The role of transformational leadership Beyond the effects of transactional leadership	2014	186	(Birasnav 2014)
4	Instrumental leadership: Measurement and extension of transformational-transactional leadership theory	2014	182	(Antonakis and House 2014)
5	The effects of leadership style on employee well-being in hospitality	2013	152	(Kara et al. 2013)

Based on the table 2, it was found that there were five articles with the highest number of citations with specific transactional leadership studies. First, the study of transactional leadership is seen from the side of leadership behavior that focuses on followers' work environment and daily work involvement (Breevaart et al., 2014). Second, transactional leadership is seen in the relationship between ethical leadership and followers' work (Bedi et al., 2016). Third, transformational and



transactional leadership, knowledge management processes (KM), and organizational performance (Birasnav, 2014). Fourth, instrumental leadership, measurement, and expansion of transformational–transactional leadership theory (Antonakis & House, 2014). Finally, criticism of the study of transactional leadership is the assumption that transformational leadership styles are more effective than transactional leadership styles by fostering employee well-being (improving quality of work life and life satisfaction), increasing organizational commitment, and reducing employee burnout (Kara et al., 2013).

#### 4.2. Linkage and clustering of themes in transactional leadership

In this finding, concepts were presented in several visualizations related to the theme of this study, and 30 of them were identified and visualized in 266 articles. It was further found that there are five concept groups, as seen in Figure 5. Next, each color code is used to see a list of concepts that stand out from each cluster. The goal is to identify as many themes as possible that were often discussed in previous studies and used in future studies. Figure 5 shows that different colors distinguish the cluster density of each cluster.

The mapping findings in Figure 6 can help researchers, especially those just starting in budding research. When they find an exciting topic in a particular field that they are interested in, they can read articles related to that topic with the help of this research. For example, in Cluster 1, related concepts are Employee, Innovation, and mediating roles. While Cluster 2 emphasizes transformational leadership and performance, cluster 3 aims at organizational commitment, job satisfaction, leadership, and effect—cluster 4 focuses on roles and influences. Furthermore, Cluster 5 focuses on transformational, evidence, transactional, and multifactor leadership. For researchers who want to discuss the theme of transactional leadership, this clustering will help analyze related concepts. For example, when a researcher chooses Cluster 2, the starting point that needs to be used as a body of literature is transformational leadership. Researchers can also search literature related to performance references with keywords in the Cluster 2 category.

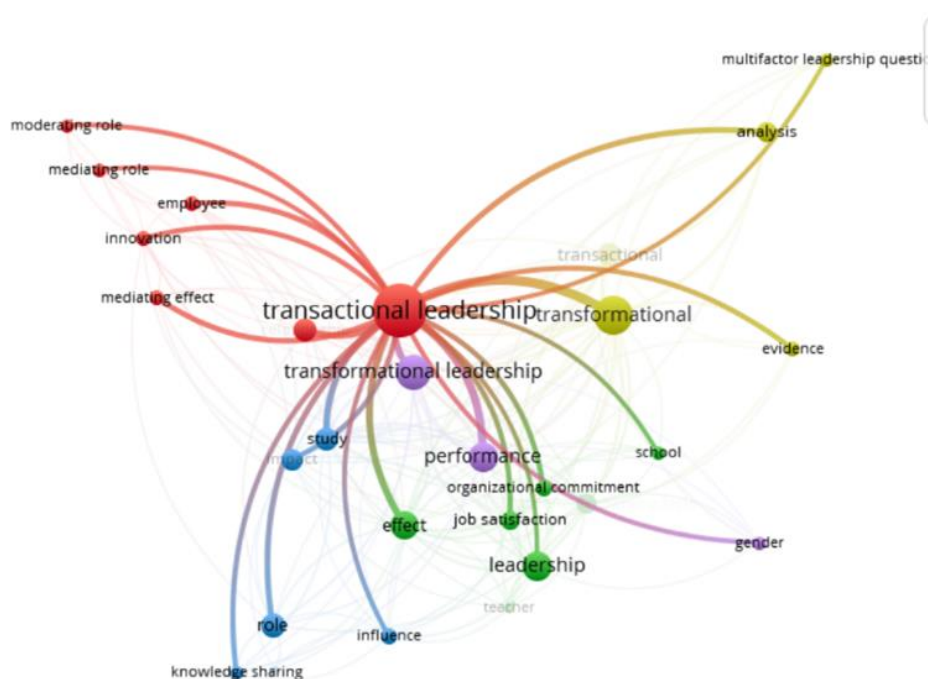


Figure 6 Keyword Network Used in the Study of Transactional Leadership.

Figure 6 shows that the word "transactional leadership" has a close relationship with the words "transformational leadership," "transformational," "transactional," "innovation," "performance," "moderating role," "effect," "analysis," "employee," "mediating role," "mediating" and "moderating." This shows that research on traditional leadership is closely related to research on transformational leadership, innovation, mediation, moderation, performance, and other matters related to transformational leadership.

#### 4.3. Overlay visualization of keywords in transactional leadership

In this visualization, the color of a node represents the keyword and the year in which the article containing the keyword was published. The darker the paint on the nodes, the longer the study covers the topic. Here, the visualization can be seen.

The development trend of transactional leadership studies in the last ten years. From these ten years, the author conducted mapping based on studies. First, from 2010-2012, transactional leadership was studied in terms of leadership, and

transformational leadership in 2014-2016, namely, performance, effect, leadership, transactional leadership style, impact, influence, mediating effect, and innovation. Finally, 2018-2022 is knowledge, teacher, evidence, employee, and mediating role. Furthermore, from the development trend of studies for ten years, there were gaps in analysis that had not been widely studied, namely, transactional leadership in terms of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), moderator leadership roles, knowledge sharing, and gender. The following can be seen as a visualization of the gap analysis from the transaction leadership study.

Figure 7 above shows the color configuration in the picture above, where the most dominant colors often used in studies on transactional leadership are transactional leadership, transformational, transactional, leadership, performance, effect, role, and employee. At the same time, studies have not been studied much regarding the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), moderator leadership role, knowledge sharing, and gender (Figure 8). This finding can be a reference for further research to complement previous research and bring new perspectives.

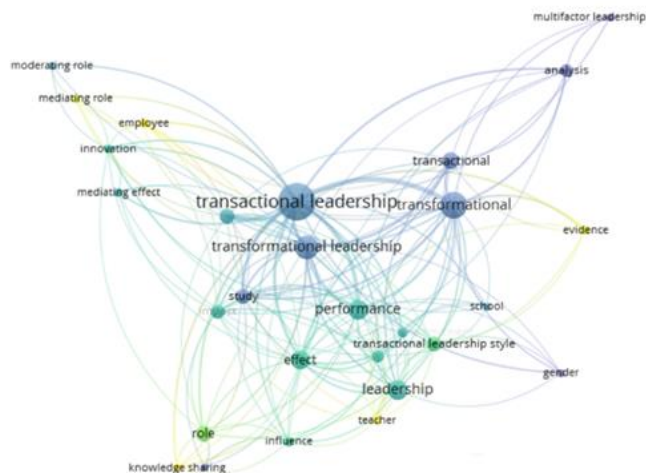


Figure 7 Data on Research Development Trends on Transactional Leadership from year to year.

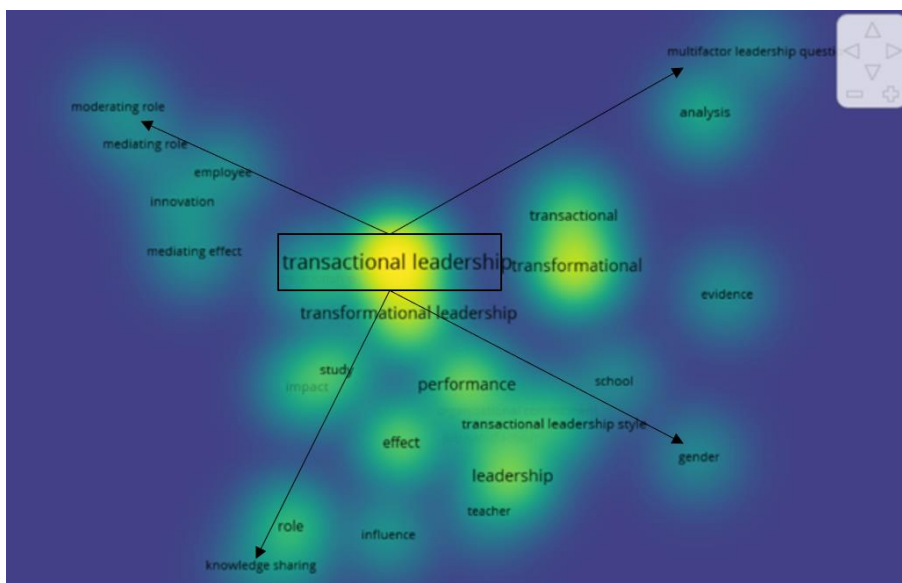


Figure 8 Transactional Leadership Analysis Gap (2010-2022).

**5. Final considerations**

From the presentation of the findings above, it can be concluded that the study of transactional leadership, in general, has increased significantly. In addition, the overall trend increased in 2020 to 45 documents. Regarding the number of publications, Dartey-Baah, K is a prolific author of transactional leadership studies. Some of them come from the United Kingdom as a country that is a node country with networks with other countries that study transactional leadership. The most studied issue is the study of transformational leadership, transformational performance, effect, role, and employee. In future



research, we can learn about transactional leaders through the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), moderator leadership role, knowledge sharing, and gender.

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### Ethical considerations

Not Applicable.

### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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