

# Leadership for Learning: A Bibliometric Analysis of Transformational Leadership Research in the Higher Education Landscape

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## Abstract

This paper reflects a bibliometric analysis on the topic of transformational leadership in higher education institutions (HEIs). The paper examines publications in each year, patterns in citations, collaborative work, co-authorship analysis which helps in mapping the intellectual landscape of the interdisciplinary fields. Data for this study has been extracted by the Dimensions.ai which is mainly focussed on the articles related to "Transformational leadership" and "Higher Education Institutes" (HEIs). The study shows some important research areas, influential authors and emerging trends, and it also reflects the gaps particularly in the field of research in this category. The findings shows that there is a growing interest in the Transformational leadership in the Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), which shows the implications of both the institutional policymaker and academic researchers. The analysis underscores the importance of inter-university collaborations and the need of strategic efforts to enhance the quality and impact of research in this vital domain.

**Keywords:** Transformational Leadership, Higher Education Institutes

## Introduction

Transformational leadership, characterized by the ability to inspire followers to achieve extraordinary results (Rao, 2014), which has been an increasing context in the higher education institutions. As the academic environment is evolving rapidly, HEIs go through various challenges which includes expectations of stakeholders, globalization and the continuous need for innovation (Black, 2015; Ngcamu & Teferra, 2015). Leadership has become a vital role due to these challenges that helps in driving the transformation and also helps in fostering an excellent culture.

Higher education institutions are considered as formal organizations which are characterized by a defined purpose, a community of individuals, and a hierarchical structure. Beyond these basic elements, however, higher education institutions are complex systems with unique governance structures, academic cultures, and a diverse group of stakeholders (Gr, 1992). Since the 1980s, leadership in higher education institutions has come under increasing scrutiny in response to increases in student numbers, changes in student aid, increased marketization and student choice, and the continued globalization of the higher education sector (Black, 2015). Effective leadership is important for these complexities & ensuring the long-term success & for the sustainability of these institutions (Rao, 2014).

Components of Transformational Leadership:

- Idealized Influence: In idealized influence the leaders are more like role models, respected and admired for their commitment and ethics and followers in this component trust and copy them for their betterment (Rao, 2014).
- Inspirational Motivation: In inspirational motivation, the leaders here work with a vision, inspires and motivates the followers to achieve more than they have thought for (Gr, 1992). Leaders here create positive environment and enthusiasm to work.

- Intellectual Stimulation: Leaders shows innovation and creativity by making challenging assumptions, risks, and soliciting followers' ideas (Huang & Liao, 2011).

- Individualized Consideration: Leaders here pay attention to the individuals need and grow by acting as coaches or mentors (McCann, 2011). They help in fostering personal growth

Characteristics of Higher Education Institutions:

- Purpose: The purpose of HEIs is to provide education, research conduction and contribute to the community in broader sense.

- People: This consists of diverse groups, which includes people, faculty, administration, staff and alumni.

- Hierarchy: The HEIs follow the hierarchy structure with gvt. Boards, presidents, department chairs.

- Shared Governance: Through shared governance structure, the faculties play a significant role in the making of discussion (Gr, 1992).

- Academic Culture: It fosters culture of academic freedom, peer review and intellectual inquiry (Gr, 1992).

Recently, transformational leadership has emerged as a very important framework which will help in understanding the dynamics of leadership across the context of organisation, which includes the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Originally conceptualized by Burns (1978) and further developed by Bass (1985), transformational leadership emphasizes vision, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and personal consideration, which makes it highly relevant to academic environments that constantly demand innovation, motivation, and change. Unlike transactional leadership, which is based on exchange and formal authority, transformational leadership fosters intrinsic motivation and commitment to organizational goals (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Today's higher education institutions face many challenges—from digital disruption and globalization to policy reforms, accountability pressures, and changing student expectations. In such a volatile environment, the role of leadership is not merely administrative but transformational, influencing institutional culture, faculty engagement, and academic outcomes (Gigliotti, 2017). Transformational leaders in academia play a key role in setting strategic direction, promoting collaborative governance, and driving institutional innovation (Bryman, 2007). This leadership style is particularly relevant in developing countries such as India, where higher education institutions strive to improve quality, global ranking and social relevance amid structural and resource constraints. Despite the growing attention paid to leadership in higher education, there is still a need for systematic analysis of scholarship in this area. Most existing studies tend to focus on qualitative insights or case studies, with limited meta-level understanding of publishing trends, major contributors, influential journals, and collaborative networks. Bibliometric analysis offers a powerful method to map the intellectual landscape of a research field and assess its evolution over time (Donthu et al., 2021). By focusing on transformational leadership in higher education institutions, particularly UGC Group-I journals, this study aims to fill a critical gap by identifying publication patterns, citation impact, and collaborative structures, thereby contributing to the theoretical development and practical leadership discussion in the academic community.

## **Methodology**

### **Bibliometric analysis**

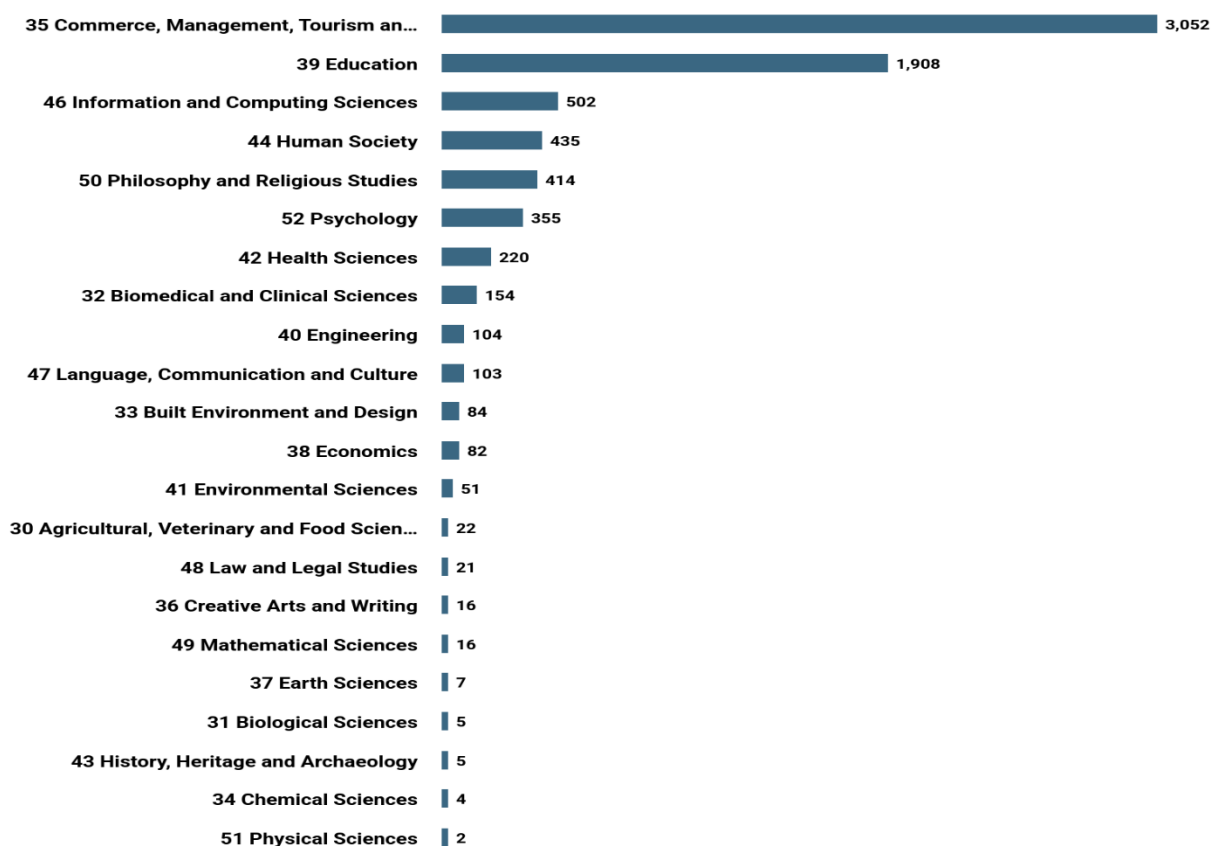
Bibliometric analysis is referred to as a quantitative method in research that is used to evaluate the development, trends and structure under a field of academic literature. It helps in systematic examination of the outputs in research—which includes citations, publications in each year, citation per author, journal articles, keyword occurrences, etc. Thus, Bibliometric analysis helps the researches in gaining the objective overview of the evolvement of research over time and where the research is headed in future (Donthu et al., 2021).

The Bibliometric review is mostly used in scientific research knowledge and is mostly used in literature reviews, evaluation of performance and formulation of research strategy. Data for this analysis is typically drafted from the Dimensions.ai, scopus and web of science. There is an option for researchers to apply filters (like keywords, subject areas, years, journal categories like UGC Group-I, etc.) and download the metadata (titles, abstracts, authorship, references) and thus analyze it using specific tools such as VOSviewer, Biblioshiny (R), or CiteSpace.

Through this approach, researchers can identify publication trends, co-authorship networks, citation impact, and keyword co-occurrences—providing a comprehensive picture of the knowledge landscape. In this study, we employed bibliometric analysis to examine scholarship on transformational leadership in higher education institutions, focusing on identifying patterns in UGC Group-I journals and other journals.

1. Publications in each category.

number of publications in each research category. (Criteria: see below)



Source: <https://app.dimensions.ai>

Exported: May 05, 2025

Criteria: "Transformational leadership" and "Higher Education Institutions" in full data; Publication Type is Article.

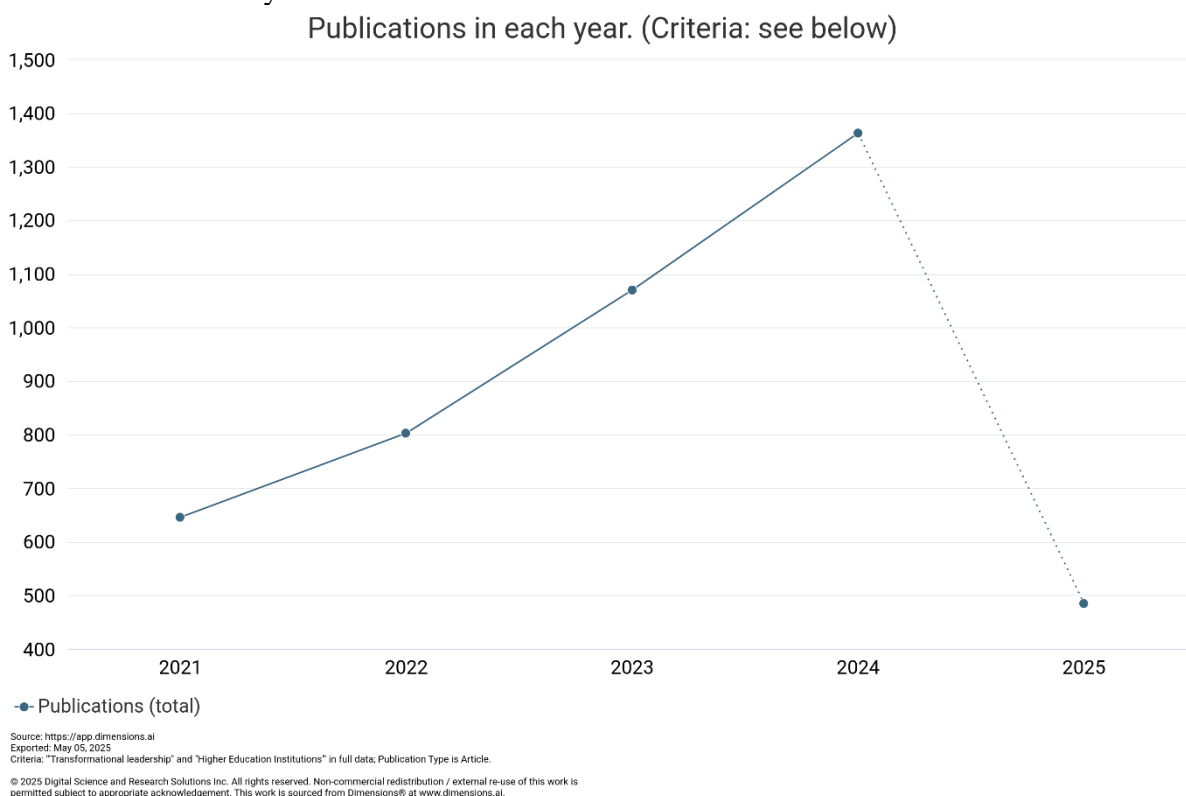
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**Graph 1**  
**Source: Dimensions.ai**

The chart shows the total number of publications in the academic field on the topic “Transformational leadership” and “Higher Education Institutes”. Commerce, Management, Tourism, and Services, has the highest number of publications of 3,052 publications, which shows the strong interest in leadership in the service and organisational related areas. 1908 publications are shown in the Education category which is slightly close to the commerce journal, which also shows an important role of leadership in shaping educational institutions. Some other field that contributed to this are:

Information and Computing Sciences (502), Human Society (435), and Philosophy and Religious Studies (414), which shows that the topic is used widely in social sciences and humanities as well. Some moderate research is also done in the other fields like Psychology (355), Engineering (104), Health Sciences (220). However, fields like Environmental Sciences (51), Agricultural and Food Sciences (22), and Legal Studies (21) have relatively fewer publications. There are very few research in Mathematics, Physical Sciences and Biological Sciences. Thus which shows that Transformational leadership is clearly explored in the education and social sciences but still research is to be done in scientific, legal and technical fields.

## 2. Publications in each year



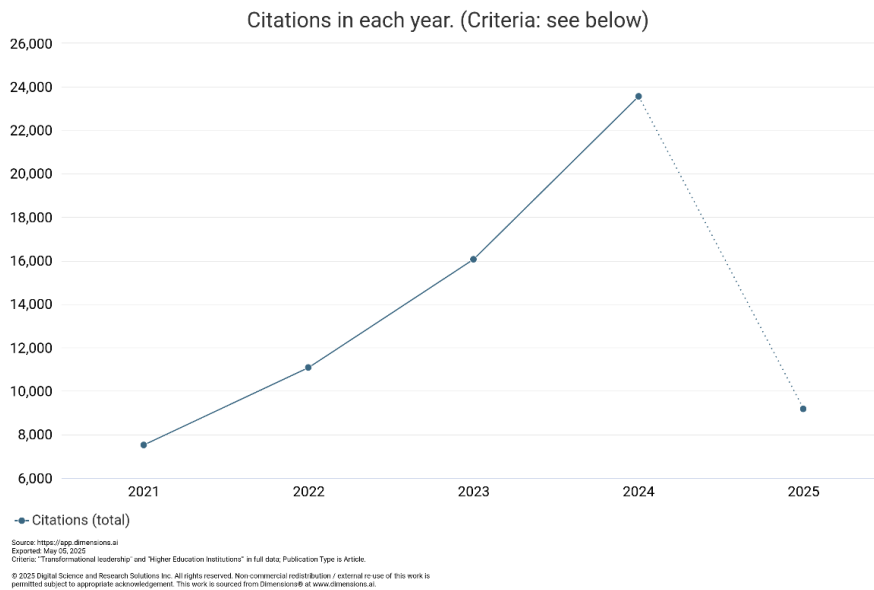
**Graph 2**  
**Source: Dimensions.ai**

The graph above shows the publications of research in each category from 2021-2025, which is based on “Transformational Leadership” and “Higher Education Institutes” which has been sourced by Dimensions.ai.

The graph shows that there is a consistent upward direction which shows 2021 (approximately 650 articles) and it has its peak in 2023 (approximately 1370 articles). There is a steady growth with noticeable growth in 2023 and 2024 which shows that there is increasing scholarly subject. This rise shows the growth of transformational leadership even after post-pandemic challenges and transition from digital within HEIs.

However, we see a decline in the year 2025 as only 500 articles are recorded. This is likely because the data is incomplete and we have only considered the data till May 2025. Therefore, this drop should be interpreted cautiously and not as a genuine downward trend in research activity.

## 3. Citation in each year

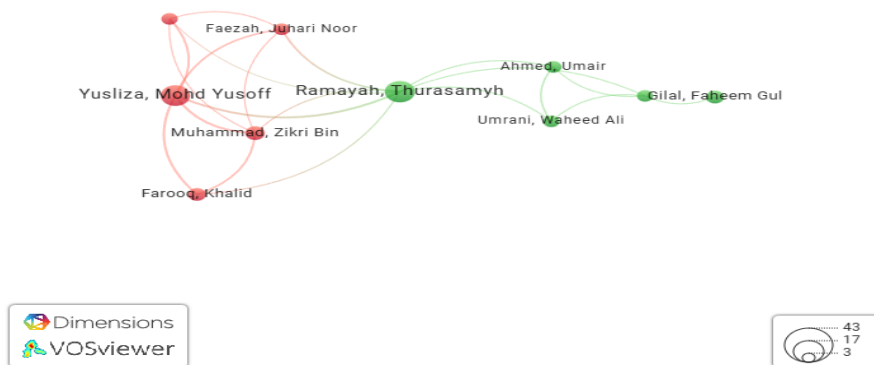


**Graph 3**  
**Source: Dimensions.ai**

The annual citations is shown in the line graph from 2021-2025 for the articles related to "Transformational leadership" and "Higher Education Institutions," which has been sourced from Dimensions.ai. The data has been exported on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May, 2025.

We can see that there is a significant growth in citation from the year 2021 (7,500 citations) and 2024 (24,000 citations). This rise in citation shows that there is an increase growth of academic influence and the impact of work published in the domain. The most substantial leap occurs between 2023 and 2024, suggesting that articles published around 2022–2023 began receiving greater recognition and citation momentum. However, a decline in citations has been noted for 2025, which has less than 9,000 citations recorded so far. This drop, as with publication trends, is not reflective of reduced scholarly attention but is rather a result of partial year data. Since 2025 data was captured in early May, it lacks the citation accumulation that typically builds throughout the year.

4. Co-authorship analysis



**Figure 1**  
**Source: Dimensions.ai**

This figure shows the co-authorship visualization, taken from VOVviewer which has been based on Dimensions.ai which shows the collaborative relationship in the most productive researchers in the area of "Transformational leadership" and "Higher Education Institutions."

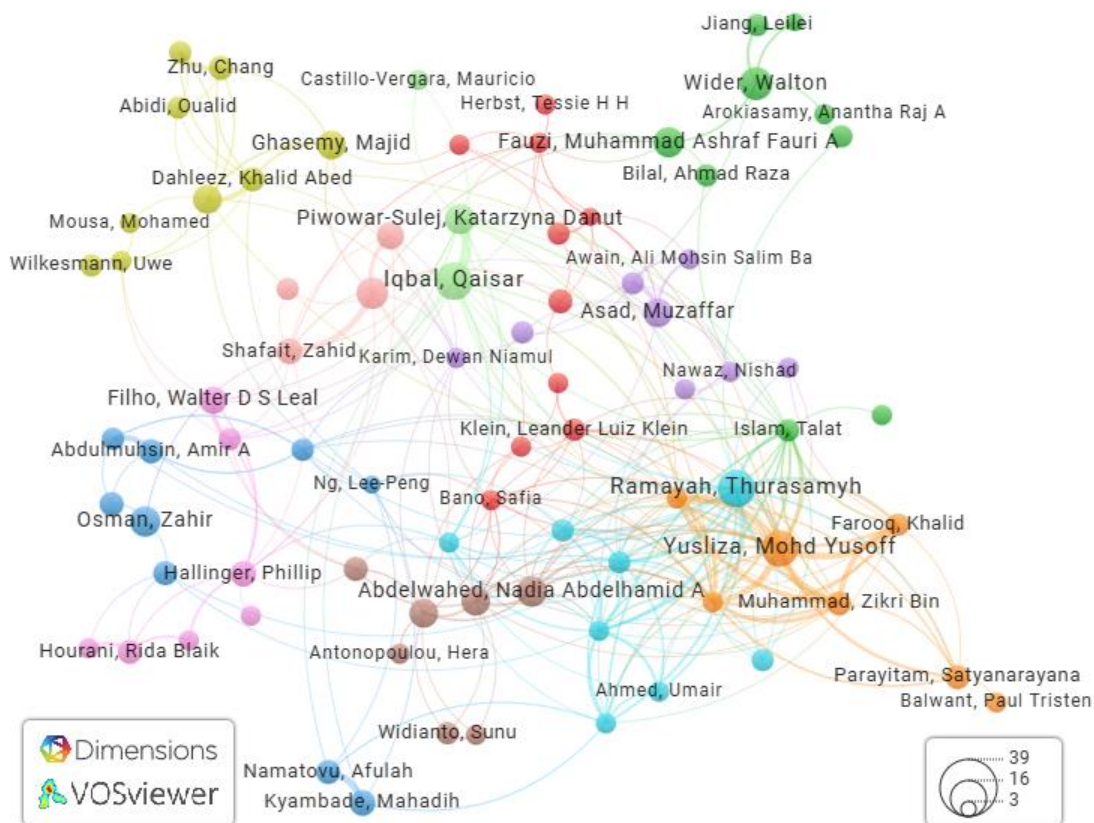
Each node in the network represents an author, and the size of the node reflects the number of publications or the strength of co-authorship. Collaborative ties has been indicated by the lines (edges), stronger and more frequent collaboration is shown by the thicker lines. The distinct and collaborative communities are shown by the color-coded clusters of the authors.

Two major clusters are clearly visible:

- The red cluster is led by Yusliza Mohd Yusoff and includes long-term collaborators such as Faezah, Juhari Noor, Muhammad, Zikri Bin, and Farooq Khalid, suggesting that the research team may be based in Malaysia or Southeast Asia and are well connected based on author relationships in previous literature.
- The Green Cluster centered around Ramayah and Thurasamy served as a bridge between the Red and Green Groups, highlighting its key role in cross-group collaboration. Other lead authors on the group include Gilal, Faheem Gul, Ahmed Umair and Umrani, Waheed Ali, suggesting that another regional collaboration group may be South Asian.

The interconnectivity between clusters, especially through Thurasamy, demonstrates cross-institutional and even international research collaboration. The overall network structure shows a moderate concentration of co-authors, with a few key researchers acting as hubs to promote knowledge integration and collaborative synergy.

### 5. Citation analysis per author



**Figure 2**  
 Source: Dimensions.ai

Citation based author-level analysis is developed by the VOSviewer and sourced by Dimensions.ai in the domain of “Transformational Leadership” and “Higher Education Institutes”. Individual author is represented by each node and the size is proportional to the number of citations received by the end of author’s publications. The connecting lines (edges) shows co-citation relationships, i.e., How the two authors are cited together in the other’s scholarly work.

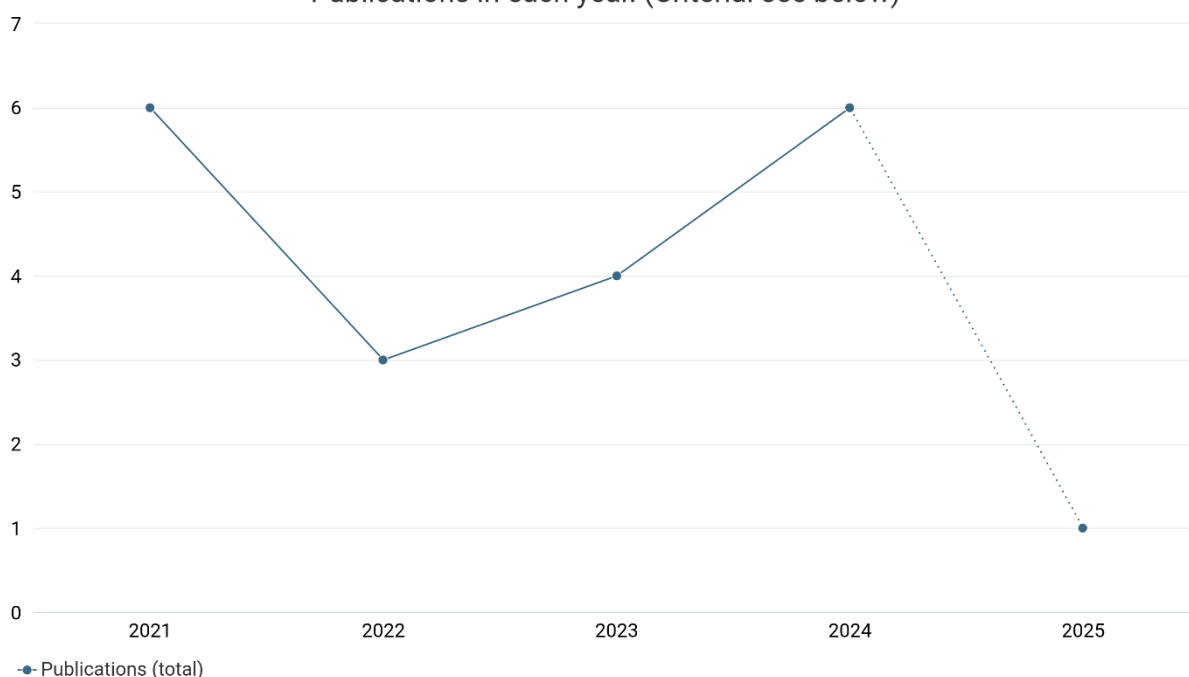
Notable insights include:

- Ramayah, Thurasamy and Yusliza, Mohd Yusoff stand out in the orange cluster, reflecting high citation frequency and central influence in the domain. This suggests their work is foundational or frequently referred to by others in the field.
- The blue, green, and red clusters represent other influential scholars such as Osman, Zaheer, Iqbal, Qaisar, Fawzi, Muhammad Ashraf, and Ghasemi, Majeed, who have strong regional or conceptual significance.
- Writers like Abdelwahed, Nadia, Parayitam, Satyanarayana and Asad, Muzaffar build bridges between groups, demonstrating the impact of interdisciplinary or integrative references.

Visual density and interconnectedness show that the citation landscape is diverse and highly networked, with multiple authors participating in overlapping scholarly conversations that create a rich intellectual structure within the field.

#### 6. Total number of article published in UGC- Journal List Group-I (Influential journal)

Publications in each year. (Criteria: see below)



Source: <https://app.dimensions.ai>  
Exported: May 05, 2025  
Criteria: "Transformational leadership" and "Higher Education Institutes" in full data; Publication Type is Article, Journal List is UGC Journal List Group I.  
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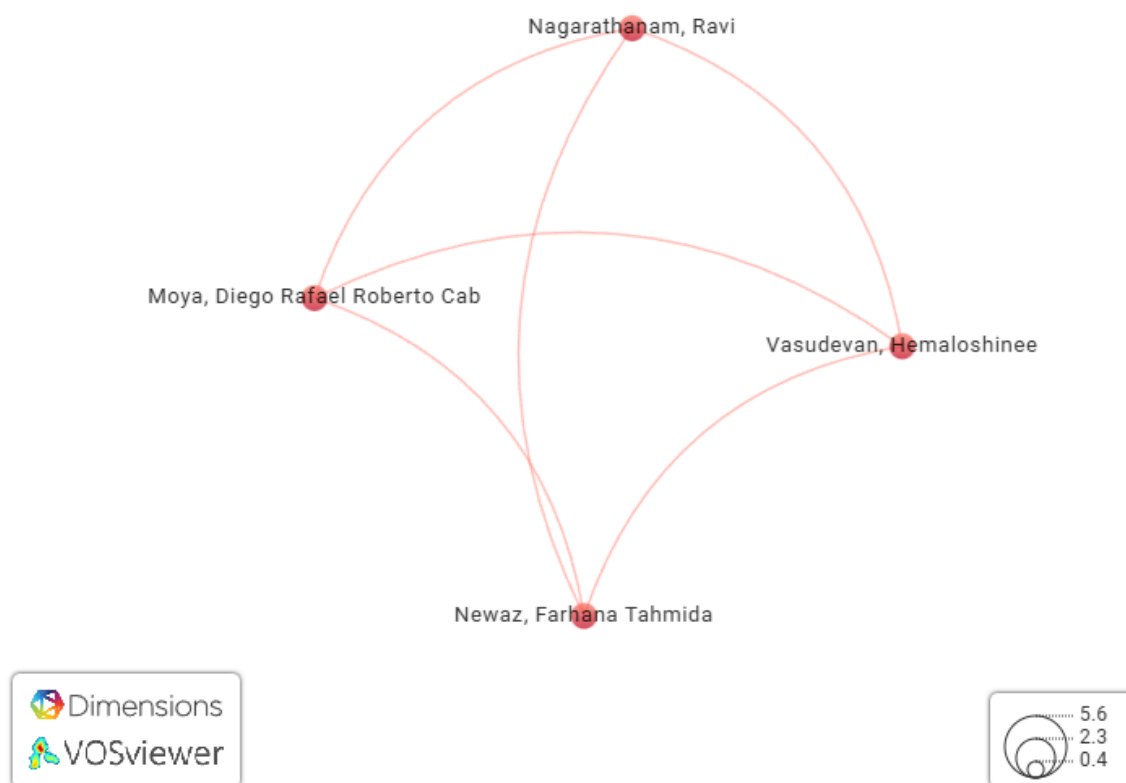
**Graph 4**  
**Source: Dimensions.ai**

This line graph shows the yearly trend in the articles published from 2021 to 2025 in the domain of “Transformational Leadership” and “Higher Education Institutions”, which is shown specifically in journals listed under **UGC Group-I** (has been shown as influential academic platforms).

The data is sourced by the Dimensions.ai and only articles are considered for this. Total number of articles are shown in each point of the graph in a particular given year, the dotted lines which is from 2021 to 2025 shows a incomplete projection as 2025 is still the ongoing year.

It's been observed that the year 2021 and 2024 recorded the good high number of publications, shows the periodic peaks in output of research. The sharp drop to just 1 article in 2025 suggests that either the year is still in progress or that current output is lagging. The analysis of trend shows a publication momentum in the prestigious journals and helps in gauging the engagement in academic and topic visibility in the mainstream scholarly that is discourse over time.

### 6.1 Co-suthorship analysis of UGC Group-I



**Figure 3**  
**Source: Dimensions.ai**

This co-authorship network visualization highlights the collaborative relationships among authors who have published articles on "Transformational Leadership" and "Higher Education Institutions" in UGC Group-I journals.

Each **node** shows an individual author, and each **link** between nodes shows a co-authored publication. Number of publication is indicated by the size of node, while intensity of collaboration is indicated by the thickness of the links between the respective authors.

In this network:

- Newaz, Farhana Tahmida, Moya, Diego Rafael Roberto Cab, Vasudevan, Hemaloshinee and Nagarathanam, Ravi formed a tightly knit cluster indicating repeated co-authorship.
- The overall structure reflects a tight cycle of collaboration, with all authors connected to each other, indicating the presence of interdisciplinary or transnational teamwork in the influential research recognized by the UGC.

### **Research Implications**

The study offers some implications for the academic and institutional research. A clear reference point is identified by the frequent collaboration and highly cited author so that researchers align their work with the research clusters. Core publication outlets and leading contributors helps researchers in making strategic decision about the collaboration and journal targeting. Additionally, the use of transformational leadership in the UGC Group-I helps in suggesting that there is an increase in institutional emphasis on leadership as a very important component of educational reforms in India. The practices of evidence based leadership can be promoted by the policymakers and academic administrators, grounded in the robust of the scholarly work.

### **Conclusion**

The paper on bibliometric analysis provide a comprehensive overview of the trends in research in connection to the transformational leadership in higher educational institutes, with main focus on the articles published in the UGC Group-I journals. There seems to be a fluctuating scholarly interest in the annual publication trend from 2021-2025, while it's seen a higher number of publication in the year 2021 and 2024, a decline was seen in the year 2022 and 2025 and 2025 is still the partial data. The academic funding, broader educational and the policy reforms in leadership may be a case of such variations. Despite the oscillations, the persistence of publications every year signifies the field's relevance and importance in academic discourse.

Co-author analysis revealed the existence of different groups of authors, suggesting the presence of collaborative research centers. Writers such as Ramayah Thurasamy, Yusliza Mohd Yusoff and Muhammad Zikri Bin Muhammad have become prolific contributors, often serving as central nodes in collaborative networks. Their frequent collaborations with peers such as Farooq Khalid and Faezah Juhari Noor highlight a centralized model of collaboration, which can improve research quality but can also indicate limited outreach. In the UGC Group-I journal environment, the co-author network appears to be more compact, with some close collaborations (e.g., Hemaloshinee Vasudevan and Ravi Nagarathanam). This reflects ongoing efforts in India and also highlights the need to expand cross-institutional research partnerships.

Citation analysis further enhances understanding by identifying key influencers in the field. Scholars such as Iqbal Qaisar, Ghasemy Majid, and Asad Muzaffar are frequently cited, indicating that their work has had a significant intellectual impact. The interdisciplinary and international collaborations among the highly cited authors also suggest that transformational leadership in education is no longer viewed in isolation but is a multidimensional concept influenced by organizational behavior, psychology, and policy research. Citation patterns not only confirm the importance of these contributors but also hint at the broader global applicability of their research outputs.

When examining the publishing trends of UGC Group-I journals, it is evident that while the overall number of articles remains modest, the presence of influential authors and small collaborative clusters indicates a growing research base. However, to further improve this level, Indian scholars must actively seek inter-university collaborations, participate in international research forums, and target high-profile journals. Furthermore, the editorial boards of UGC-recognized journals should consider publishing special issues on emerging topics in transformational leadership to attract diverse submissions.

In conclusion, this bibliometric analysis highlights the strengths and gaps in current research on transformational leadership in higher education. While global contributions and citation impact indicate the maturity of the field, the Indian academic landscape, especially UGC Group-I publications, offers huge potential for growth. Strategic efforts to strengthen collaboration, support early-career researchers, and align scholarly output with institutional leadership reforms could significantly improve the quality and impact of research in this important field.

Future Research

This bibliometric analysis clearly highlights the growing academic interest in transformational leadership within higher education institutions (HEIs), but several research gaps remain, providing a promising direction for future exploration. One key area is the limited involvement of disciplines outside the social sciences and education, such as legal studies, engineering, environmental sciences, and agriculture. Future research could explore how transformational leadership principles can be applied to technical or discipline-specific academic settings to promote innovation and institutional development.

Furthermore, while co-authorship and citation networks indicate strong regional clusters, especially in Southeast and South Asia, more global and cross-institutional collaborations are needed, especially involving Indian scholars. Research can also be directed toward evaluating the impact of transformational leadership on measurable academic outcomes such as student success, faculty motivation, digital transformation, and institutional rankings, especially in developing countries. Furthermore, integrating qualitative and longitudinal research can help reveal the contextual and cultural dimensions of transformational leadership in higher education institutions, providing a deeper understanding of how leadership styles evolve and influence institutional change.

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