

# Trends on Leadership, Social Support, and Workplace Inclusion: A Systematic Science Mapping Study

Rr. Hawik Ervina I<sup>1\*</sup>

Qristin Violinda<sup>2</sup>

Noventia Karina P<sup>3</sup>

Mochamad Fadjar Darmaputra<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>Universitas PGRI Semarang, Indonesia

\*Author's correspondence: [hawikervina@upgris.ac.id](mailto:hawikervina@upgris.ac.id)

**Abstract.** This study examines the intellectual structure and research dynamics related to leadership, workplace inclusion, and social support within organizational and management contexts using a systematic science mapping approach. Data were collected from Scopus and Web of Science databases, covering publications between 2000 and 2024. Following PRISMA screening guidelines, 80 high-quality articles were included for analysis. The findings reveal an exponential growth of publications after 2015, with significant contributions from scholars in workplace, psychology, and management. Science mapping identified five major thematic clusters: inclusive leadership, workplace equity, psychosocial well-being, family engagement, and policy development. Beyond these general trends, the results hold specific implications for families, particularly working mothers raising children with special needs, whose dual responsibilities highlight the importance of robust social support systems and inclusive policies. The study highlights gaps in cross-regional comparisons and limited integration of digital transformation into workplace inclusion research. It concludes with a future agenda emphasizing interdisciplinary collaboration and longitudinal designs to address persistent inequalities in access and leadership practices. This paper contributes by synthesizing fragmented literature and offering a holistic overview that can inform both academic research and policy development.

**Keywords:** Leadership; Organizational policy; Science mapping; Social support; Workplace inclusion.

**Abstrak.** Penelitian ini mengkaji struktur intelektual dan dinamika penelitian yang berkaitan dengan kepemimpinan, inklusi di tempat kerja, dan dukungan sosial dalam konteks organisasi dan manajemen dengan menggunakan pendekatan systematic science mapping. Data dikumpulkan dari basis data Scopus dan Web of Science yang mencakup publikasi pada periode 2000 hingga 2024. Berdasarkan pedoman penyaringan PRISMA, sebanyak 80 artikel berkualitas tinggi disertakan dalam analisis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya pertumbuhan publikasi yang bersifat eksponensial setelah tahun 2015, dengan kontribusi signifikan dari para peneliti di bidang pendidikan, psikologi,

dan manajemen. Analisis science mapping mengidentifikasi lima klaster tematik utama, yaitu kepemimpinan inklusif, kesetaraan pendidikan, kesejahteraan psikososial, keterlibatan keluarga, dan pengembangan kebijakan. Selain menggambarkan tren penelitian secara umum, hasil penelitian ini juga memiliki implikasi khusus bagi keluarga, terutama ibu bekerja yang membesarkan anak dengan kebutuhan khusus, di mana tanggung jawab ganda yang mereka emban menegaskan pentingnya sistem dukungan sosial yang kuat serta kebijakan yang inklusif. Penelitian ini juga menyoroti adanya kesenjangan dalam perbandingan lintas wilayah serta keterbatasan integrasi transformasi digital dalam penelitian terkait inklusi di tempat kerja. Studi ini memberikan kontribusi dengan menyintesis berbagai literatur yang masih terfragmentasi serta menyajikan gambaran komprehensif yang dapat menjadi rujukan bagi pengembangan penelitian akademik maupun perumusan kebijakan organisasi.

**Kata kunci:** *Kepemimpinan; Inklusi di tempat kerja; Dukungan sosial; Kebijakan organisasi; Science mapping.*

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## BACKGROUND

Over the past two decades, research on leadership, workplace inclusion, and social support has gained increasing attention in organizational and management studies as institutions strive to create more inclusive and supportive work environments. Leadership has been recognized as a pivotal driver in ensuring effective policy implementation, fostering teacher development, and shaping school cultures that embrace diversity (Karakose et al., 2024). At the same time, workplace inclusion has evolved beyond a pedagogical concern to a broader socio-political agenda that addresses equity, participation, and social justice for marginalized groups (Singh et al., 2023). Social support, whether from families, communities, or institutional frameworks, further enhances the psychosocial well-being of learners, contributing to improved educational outcomes and long-term resilience (Vanhée et al., 2025).

Within this discourse, the challenges faced by working mothers of children with special needs have emerged as an important yet underexplored dimension. These mothers often juggle professional responsibilities alongside the caregiving demands of children requiring additional educational and psychosocial support. Recent bibliometric and empirical studies show that parental involvement and caregiver well-being significantly influence children's developmental outcomes, particularly in contexts of autism spectrum disorder, disability, and workplace inclusion (Abdelaziz et al., 2024; Abín et al., 2024; Carmona-Serrano & Moreno-Guerrero, 2021; Demircioğlu & Demir, 2025; Gull & Kaur, 2023). Research also indicates that maternal stress and work-family conflict are critical determinants of family resilience and children's well-being (Arumdani et al., 2024; Baba et al., 2025; Gull & Kaur, 2023).

Despite these findings, scholarship in the fields of leadership, inclusion, and social support often overlooks the lived realities of such families. Leadership studies frequently emphasize managerial aspects but rarely consider how institutional policies can support

employees with caregiving responsibilities (Abín et al., 2024; Carmona-Serrano & Moreno-Guerrero, 2021). Similarly, workplace inclusion research still tends to privilege the school as the primary site of inclusion, underestimating the central role of families, particularly mothers, in sustaining educational engagement at home (Addi-Raccah & Dusi, 2023). Meanwhile, social support literature often examines community-level interventions without integrating workplace policies that affect caregivers' ability to balance work and family roles (Badrolhisam & Jamil, 2025; Biedma-Ferrer & Medina-Garrido, 2024).

Another challenge is the geographical imbalance of scholarship. Much of the literature originates from high-income countries, particularly in North America and Europe, while contributions from the Global South remain underrepresented (Al-Dekah et al., 2025; Ali et al., 2022; Cretu & Grosseck, 2025; Fenyi, 2023). This creates blind spots regarding contextual variations, especially as issues of resource scarcity, cultural diversity, and policy enforcement differ substantially across regions (Badrolhisam & Jamil, 2025; Biedma-Ferrer & Medina-Garrido, 2024; Cretu & Grosseck, 2025).

In addition, the digital transformation in the workplace has only recently begun to intersect with inclusive leadership and social support. While studies highlight the promise of technology in expanding access (Bahroun et al., 2023; Chemnad & Othman, 2024; Wang & Si, 2023). Limited research explores how digital tools might relieve the dual burdens faced by working mothers of children with special needs, such as flexible work arrangements, remote learning support, and online caregiver communities (Arumdani et al., 2024; Gull & Kaur, 2023).

Against this backdrop, the present study offers a systematic synthesis of research on leadership, workplace inclusion, and social support. By visualizing thematic clusters and co-authorship networks across 80 articles, this study not only identifies intellectual structures and research frontiers but also situates them in relation to the specific challenges faced by working mothers raising children with special needs. This contribution bridges broader academic discourse with urgent family and caregiving realities, thereby advancing a multidimensional understanding of inclusion.

## **THEORETICAL REVIEW**

### **Leadership and Inclusive Leadership in Organizations**

Leadership plays a crucial role in shaping organizational culture and determining how institutions respond to diversity and inclusion challenges. Inclusive leadership refers to leadership practices that encourage participation, fairness, and equal opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds within organizational settings. Effective leaders foster environments where employees feel valued, respected, and supported, thereby improving organizational performance and employee well-being.

Previous research highlights that inclusive leadership contributes to organizational effectiveness by promoting collaboration, trust, and psychological safety among employees. Leaders who adopt inclusive approaches are more likely to support diverse needs within the workforce, including employees with caregiving responsibilities and individuals facing social or structural disadvantages (Bauwens et al., 2022; Chan & Hutchings, 2024). In addition, leadership research increasingly emphasizes the importance of leadership practices that respond to workforce diversity and employee

well-being, particularly in organizations that seek to create inclusive work environments and supportive organizational cultures (Biedma-Ferrer & Medina-Garrido, 2024).

### **Workplace Inclusion**

Workplace inclusion refers to organizational efforts to create environments in which individuals from diverse backgrounds can fully participate in professional activities and decision-making processes. Inclusive workplaces emphasize equality, fairness, and accessibility, ensuring that employees are not marginalized due to gender, disability, cultural background, or other social characteristics.

Research on workplace inclusion suggests that inclusive organizational practices contribute to employee satisfaction, productivity, and long-term organizational sustainability. Organizations that prioritize inclusion often implement policies that promote flexible work arrangements, equal opportunities, and supportive workplace cultures. Such policies are particularly important for employees who balance professional responsibilities with family caregiving roles (Demircioğlu & Demir, 2025).

Recent studies also highlight the importance of collaboration between organizations, families, and broader social institutions in supporting inclusive practices. Inclusive environments often depend on coordinated support systems that integrate organizational policies with social and family support mechanisms (Deng & Romainoor, 2022; Dusi & Addi-Racah, 2022).

### **Social Support and Employee Well-Being**

Social support represents a critical factor influencing employee well-being and work performance. Within organizational contexts, social support may originate from supervisors, colleagues, families, or institutional policies that facilitate work–life balance. Strong support systems help employees cope with work-related stress and enhance psychological resilience in the workplace.

Previous studies indicate that social support contributes significantly to individual well-being and improves the ability of employees to manage professional and personal demands. Organizational environments that provide supportive relationships and collaborative cultures tend to foster higher levels of employee satisfaction and engagement (Elsamani & Kajikawa, 2024; H. Gao & Wang, 2022).

Furthermore, research highlights that social support systems can strengthen resilience and reduce stress in complex social environments. Supportive institutional and community structures enable individuals to maintain psychological stability and adapt to evolving workplace challenges (Ermawati et al., 2024; M. Gao et al., 2022).

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

This study adopts a systematic science mapping approach, combining the rigor of a systematic literature review with bibliometric and visualization techniques to identify the intellectual structure and research dynamics in the domains of leadership, workplace inclusion, and social support. Following established review protocols, this method enables the consolidation of fragmented scholarship while minimizing selection bias and ensuring transparency (Bahroun et al., 2023; Imaniyati et al., 2024; Zhao et al., 2023).

The review process began with the formulation of guiding research questions: (1) How has research on leadership, workplace inclusion, and social support evolved over the past two decades? (2) What are the major intellectual clusters and thematic frontiers in this field? (3) What research gaps remain unaddressed? These questions provided a framework for developing the search strategy and subsequent analysis (Chemnad & Othman, 2024; Wang & Si, 2023; Zhao et al., 2023)

Data were retrieved from two major indexing databases, Scopus and Web of Science (WoS), due to their extensive coverage of peer-reviewed international journals in education, psychology, and management (Chemnad & Othman, 2024; Zhan et al., 2022). The search string combined key terms related to the three focal areas: *leadership*, *workplace inclusion*, and *social support*. Boolean operators and truncations were applied to maximize the sensitivity and specificity of results (Chemnad & Othman, 2024). The initial search yielded 524 records (Scopus and WoS combined). An additional 10 articles were identified through manual screening of reference lists and relevant reviews, resulting in a total of 534 records.

All retrieved records were exported to Mendeley for reference management and duplicate detection. After eliminating duplicates, 510 unique records remained. Titles and abstracts were screened according to predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria required that studies: (1) were published in peer-reviewed journals, (2) explicitly addressed themes of leadership, workplace inclusion, or social support, (3) were published in English between 2000 and 2024, and (4) were indexed in Scopus or WoS (Abín et al., 2024; Aggarwal & Johal, 2021; Akpan & Ezeume, 2022). Exclusion criteria encompassed conference proceedings, book chapters, non-English publications, and studies outside the thematic scope, such as purely clinical psychology or non-educational health interventions.

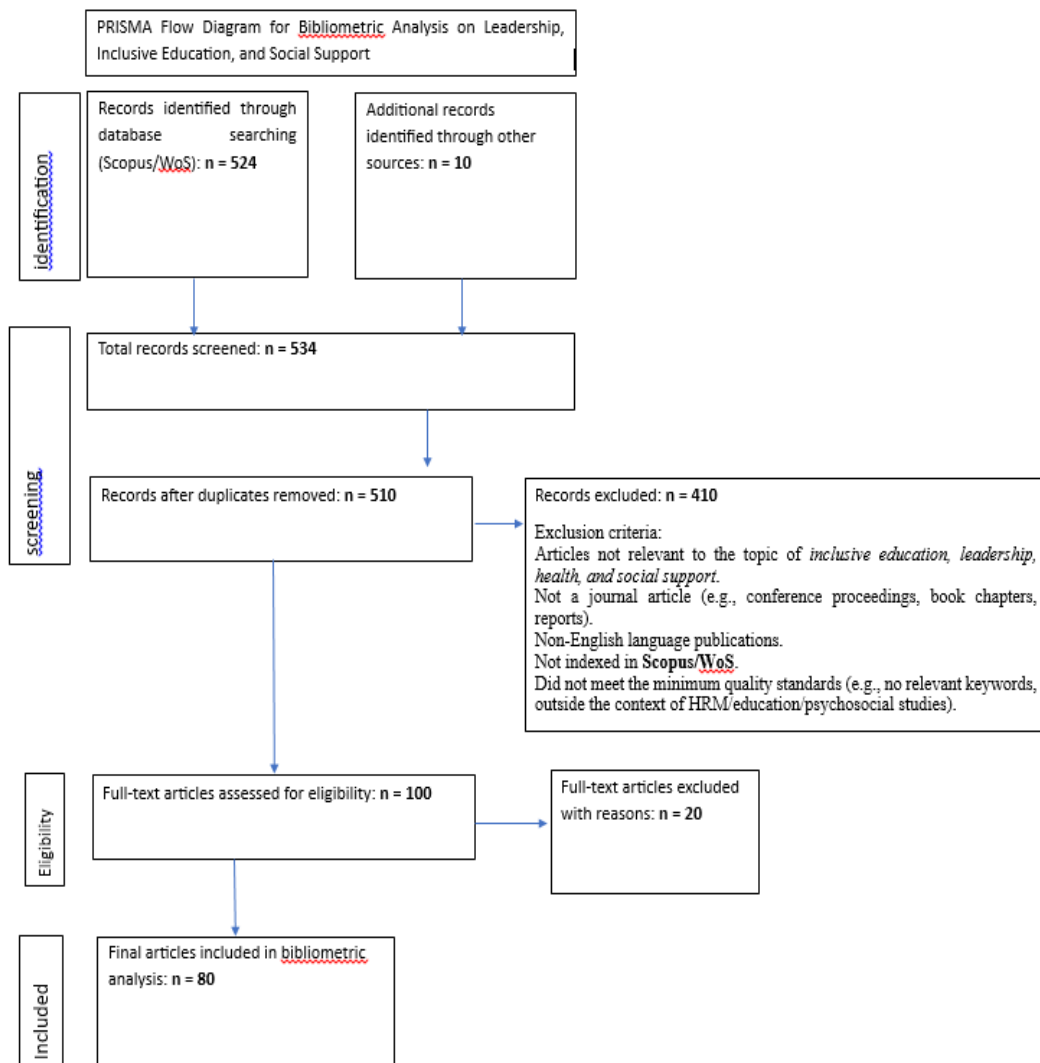
Screening reduced the pool to 100 articles eligible for full-text review. Each article was then evaluated for methodological rigor, conceptual relevance, and contribution to the research questions. This assessment led to the exclusion of 20 studies that failed to meet quality standards (e.g., insufficient conceptual focus, methodological limitations, or absence of relevant keywords). The final dataset comprised 80 articles, which were subjected to bibliometric and content analysis. This process is summarized in the PRISMA flow diagram (Figure 1), ensuring transparency in article identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion (Abín et al., 2024; Aggarwal & Johal, 2021; Alan, 2024).

For the bibliometric mapping, data such as authorship, year of publication, journal, country of origin, citations, and keywords were extracted. VOSviewer was used to generate co-authorship networks, co-citation analyses, and keyword co-occurrence maps, while Biblioshiny (R package) provided complementary analyses such as thematic evolution and source impact (Addi-Racah & Dusi, 2023; Akpan & Ezeume, 2022). This dual approach enabled both quantitative mapping of publication trends and qualitative interpretation of thematic clusters (Addi-Racah & Dusi, 2023; Akpan & Ezeume, 2022; Alan, 2024).

To enhance validity, two strategies were adopted. *First*, triangulation was employed by cross-verifying findings from multiple tools (VOSviewer and Biblioshiny) and manually checking the consistency of results (Akgün, 2023; Andersen & Lund, 2020). *Second*, inter-rater reliability was ensured during article screening, as two

reviewers independently assessed eligibility and resolved disagreements through discussion. These measures reduced subjectivity and improved the robustness of the findings (Alhammadi et al., 2021).

It is important to acknowledge limitations inherent in this method. The study relied exclusively on English-language publications indexed in Scopus and WoS, potentially excluding relevant regional studies published in other languages (Andersen, 2021). Moreover, bibliometric techniques privilege citation-based metrics, which may undervalue emerging scholarship or practice-oriented contributions not yet highly cited (Akpan & Ezeume, 2022; Alhammadi et al., 2021) Nevertheless, by systematically integrating content analysis with bibliometric mapping, this research provides a comprehensive and reliable synthesis of global trends in leadership, workplace inclusion, and social support.

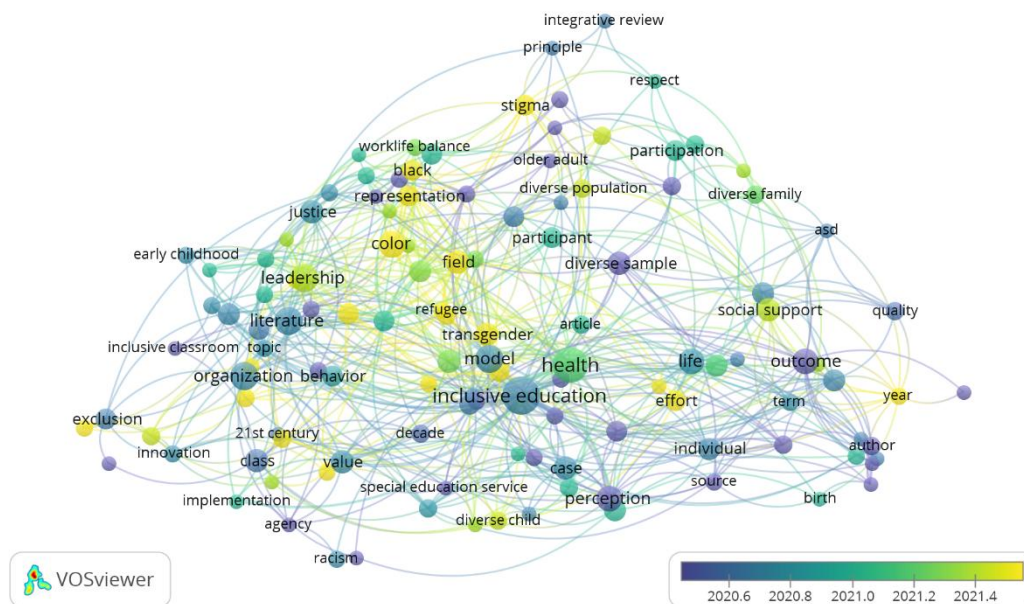


**Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram for Bibliometric Analysis on Leadership, Workplace Inclusion, and Social Support**





The overlay visualization (Figure 4) illustrates the temporal evolution of research themes related to leadership, workplace inclusion, and social support between 2020 and 2024. Earlier studies, represented by darker nodes, focused primarily on structural and organizational issues such as exclusion, institutional practices, and policy implementation. These themes reflect the initial stage of research development, where scholars examined organizational barriers, leadership roles, and institutional responses to diversity and inclusion within professional environments (Aggarwal & Johal, 2021; Bauwens et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2023). Over time, the research landscape expanded toward broader organizational and social dimensions, including workforce diversity, employee well-being, and family–work dynamics. This shift indicates a growing recognition that workplace inclusion requires not only formal policies but also supportive leadership practices and organizational cultures that accommodate diverse employee needs (Biedma-Ferrer & Medina-Garrido, 2024; Chan & Hutchings, 2024).



**Figure 4. Overlay Visualization: Temporal Evolution of Research**

More recent studies, represented by brighter nodes, highlight emerging themes such as psychosocial well-being, social support, and digital transformation in organizational contexts. The increasing presence of these keywords suggests that contemporary research is moving toward a more holistic understanding of inclusion that integrates leadership, employee well-being, and flexible work arrangements. Scholars have increasingly emphasized the importance of supportive workplace policies and collaborative support systems in helping employees manage professional responsibilities alongside family or caregiving roles (Elsamani & Kajikawa, 2024; H. Gao & Wang, 2022; Gull & Kaur, 2023). These findings demonstrate that research on workplace inclusion is evolving from a narrow institutional focus toward a broader organizational perspective that considers leadership, employee well-being, and social support as interconnected elements of sustainable and inclusive workplaces.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study systematically mapped the evolution of research on leadership, inclusive education, and social support by analyzing 80 peer-reviewed articles indexed in Scopus and Web of Science. Through density, network, and overlay visualizations, the findings reveal that workplace inclusion and inclusive leadership remain central themes, while concerns about leadership, health, and social justice have become increasingly integrated into the discourse. Five major thematic clusters emerged: inclusive leadership and organizational practices, equity and social justice, health and psychosocial well-being, family and community engagement, and policy and innovation.

The temporal analysis further indicates a shift from traditional topics such as special education and exclusion toward more contemporary issues including refugee inclusion, transgender rights, stigma, and digital participation. This demonstrates the growing complexity of inclusive education research, which now addresses both institutional and psychosocial dimensions of learning environments.

Theoretically, this study contributes by offering a holistic synthesis that integrates organizational, cultural, and psychosocial perspectives on inclusion. Practically, the results underscore the need for policymakers, educators, and community stakeholders to strengthen leadership, foster family engagement, and integrate health and social support systems to achieve genuinely inclusive practices.

In addition, the findings carry specific implications for working mothers raising children with special needs. By highlighting family engagement and social support as critical dimensions of inclusion, this study emphasizes that inclusive education cannot be separated from the everyday challenges faced by families. Strengthening collaboration between schools, workplaces, and communities is therefore essential to ensure that these mothers are supported both as caregivers and as professionals. Addressing their dual roles not only advances the well-being of children with special needs but also fosters more equitable and sustainable systems of inclusion.

Future research should prioritize three areas: (1) expanding cross-cultural comparisons to incorporate perspectives from underrepresented regions, especially the Global South; (2) investigating the role of digital transformation in fostering inclusive practices; and (3) conducting longitudinal studies to evaluate the sustained impact of inclusive policies and leadership practices. By addressing these gaps, scholars and practitioners can better advance equity, justice, and well-being in diverse educational contexts.

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