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Editorial

Season Greetings and Happy New Year 2026....!!!

As we step into 2026, the boundaries between disciplines are dissolving at an unprecedented pace. The challenges and opportunities of the present era—ranging from rapid technological transformation and climate change to workforce diversity, ethical leadership, and social resilience—can no longer be understood or addressed through a single lens.

In today's context, management converges with technology, psychology intersects with economics, sustainability aligns with governance, and education blends with data and innovation. Artificial Intelligence and analytics are redefining decision-making; human-centric leadership is gaining prominence amid automation; environmental consciousness is shaping business strategies; and public policy increasingly draws upon insights from social sciences, law, and ethics. This convergence underscores the need for integrative thinking that balances efficiency with empathy, growth with sustainability, and innovation with responsibility.

The multidisciplinary discourse is particularly relevant for institutions, organizations, and professionals navigating uncertainty. It encourages collaboration across domains, fosters creative problem-solving, and prepares learners and leaders to respond effectively to real-world challenges. By embracing diverse perspectives, we not only enhance academic rigor but also ensure practical relevance and societal impact.

This edition brings together scholars, practitioners, and thought leaders from varied fields to share research, reflections, and best practices that resonate with contemporary needs. The contributions aim to stimulate dialogue, inspire innovation, and build bridges between theory and practice.

We hope this edition serves as a platform for integrated learning and forward-looking insights, reinforcing the belief that the future belongs to those who think beyond silos and act with collective wisdom.

Once again I wish happy new year 2026 and all success in future.

Vinayshil Gautam PhD-FRAS (London)

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The Impact of Higher Education on Women Leadership and Decision-Making Roles

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Abstract

Higher education plays a pivotal role in shaping women's capacity to lead, influence, and participate in decision-making processes within society. This study explores the profound impact of higher education on women's leadership and decision-making roles across various sectors, including politics, business, education, and community development. It seeks to understand how access to higher education enhances women's confidence, critical thinking, communication, and managerial skills, thereby enabling them to challenge gender stereotypes and contribute meaningfully to leadership spaces traditionally dominated by men.

The research highlights that higher education not only provides academic knowledge but also fosters social awareness, self-reliance, and empowerment among women. It examines how women with advanced education levels are more likely to hold influential positions, participate in policy formulation, and advocate for gender equality. The study further investigates the correlation between educational attainment and the ability of women to make independent decisions concerning their careers, finances, and family lives. Through an analytical review of existing literature, surveys, and case studies, the research demonstrates that educational institutions serve as vital platforms for developing leadership potential and nurturing decision-making capabilities.

Moreover, the paper emphasizes the socio-cultural and institutional challenges that women face despite their educational achievements, such as gender bias, limited access to mentorship, and work-life balance issues. It argues that while higher education provides the foundation for empowerment, systemic barriers must be addressed to ensure that women can fully utilize their potential in leadership roles. The study concludes that promoting women's access to higher education is not merely a matter of personal growth but a strategic investment in societal progress, economic development, and democratic governance.

In essence, the findings reaffirm that higher education acts as a transformative tool for empowering women to become agents of change, fostering inclusive growth and sustainable development. Encouraging more women to pursue higher education and occupy leadership positions will strengthen gender equality and create a more balanced and just society.

Key Words

Higher education, Women Empowerment, Leadership, Decision Making, Gender Equality

Introduction

Education has long been recognized as one of the most powerful tools for human development, and its impact on women's empowerment is particularly profound. In the modern era, higher education serves not only as a means of acquiring academic knowledge but also as a key driver for social transformation, gender equality, and leadership development. The empowerment of women through education has become a global priority, as it enables women to participate actively in leadership and decision-making processes across various spheres of life. Higher education provides women with the intellectual foundation, confidence, and critical thinking abilities necessary to assume leadership roles and influence decisions that

shape communities and nations.

Historically, women have been underrepresented in leadership positions due to cultural, social, and economic barriers. Patriarchal norms and traditional gender roles have limited women's access to education and opportunities for professional growth. However, over the past few decades, increasing access to higher education has opened new avenues for women to challenge these constraints. Institutions of higher learning play a transformative role in equipping women with the skills, values, and competencies essential for leadership, such as communication, problem-solving, decision-making, and ethical reasoning. These competencies empower women to participate in decision-making at household, organizational, and political levels.

Higher education not only enhances women's personal development but also contributes to their professional advancement. Women with advanced education are more likely to hold leadership positions in government, business, education, and civil society organizations. They become role models who inspire other women and advocate for policies that promote gender equality and social justice. Furthermore, exposure to diverse ideas, networks, and mentorship opportunities within higher education institutions helps women to develop confidence and leadership identities. This, in turn, fosters a culture of inclusion and collaboration that benefits both institutions and society at large.

Despite these positive developments, challenges persist. Many educated women continue to face barriers such as gender discrimination, lack of institutional support, limited representation in leadership positions, and societal expectations regarding family responsibilities. These challenges often hinder women from fully exercising their decision-making authority or advancing to higher levels of leadership. Therefore, understanding the link between higher education and women's leadership roles requires examining not only the opportunities education provides but also the structural and cultural obstacles that limit its impact.

This study aims to explore how higher education influences women's leadership and decision-making roles in different social, cultural, and professional contexts. It seeks to identify the ways in which education empowers women to overcome barriers, assert their voices, and contribute effectively to development processes. The research also emphasizes the importance of inclusive educational policies and gender-sensitive institutional frameworks that support women's leadership aspirations. Ultimately, empowering women through higher education is essential for building equitable societies, promoting democratic governance, and achieving sustainable development.

Literature Review

The relationship between higher education and women's leadership has been widely studied by scholars across disciplines, highlighting education as a central factor in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. According to Kabeer (1999), education is a crucial element of empowerment as it enhances women's capacity to make strategic life choices. Higher education equips women with cognitive, social, and professional skills that enable them to participate actively in decision-making processes at both personal and institutional levels.

Research by UNESCO (2022) underscores that women with access to higher education are more likely to take up leadership roles in politics, business, and academia. Education not

only provides technical knowledge but also fosters confidence, critical thinking, and self-efficacy—qualities essential for leadership. Studies conducted by Madsen and Andrade (2018) indicate that higher education institutions serve as incubators for leadership development by offering opportunities for women to engage in mentorship, networking, and leadership training programs. Such experiences help women challenge traditional gender norms and establish their presence in decision-making spheres.

Furthermore, Nussbaum (2011) emphasizes that education expands women's capabilities, allowing them to make informed decisions and participate meaningfully in democratic governance. Similarly, Singh (2020) found that women with advanced educational qualifications are more likely to occupy managerial and policy-making positions, suggesting a positive correlation between higher education and leadership attainment. However, the literature also highlights persistent challenges such as gender bias, institutional discrimination, and social expectations that continue to restrict women's advancement despite educational achievements.

Studies from developing countries, including India, reveal that cultural barriers and limited access to higher education remain significant obstacles. According to Agarwal (2021), even educated women often face systemic resistance when seeking leadership roles due to deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes. Yet, evidence from various global contexts suggests that as more women gain higher education, there is a gradual shift toward inclusive leadership and gender-balanced decision-making structures.

Overall, the reviewed literature confirms that higher education is a transformative force that enhances women's leadership capacity and decision-making power. However, the extent of its impact depends on institutional support, policy frameworks, and societal attitudes toward women's roles. Future research must continue to explore strategies for ensuring that higher education not only enables women's empowerment but also translates into tangible leadership opportunities and equitable participation in decision-making processes.

Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to examine the impact of higher education on women's leadership and decision-making roles. The research focuses on understanding how access to higher education contributes to women's empowerment, enhances their leadership capabilities, and influences their participation in decision-making processes within different sectors of society.

Research Design and Approach

A mixed-method approach combining both qualitative and quantitative methods is employed. The quantitative component involves the collection of data through structured questionnaires, while the qualitative component explores the personal experiences and perceptions of women leaders through interviews and case studies. This dual approach enables a comprehensive understanding of both measurable outcomes and contextual factors influencing women's leadership development.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The study targets women who have completed higher education (graduate and postgraduate levels) and are engaged in leadership or managerial positions in education, business, administration, or community organizations.

A sample size of 100 respondents is selected using purposive sampling, ensuring that participants represent diverse socioeconomic backgrounds and professional sectors. Additionally, 10 in-depth interviews were conducted with women leaders to gain detailed

insights into their educational journeys and leadership challenges.

Findings

The study reveals that higher education has a significant and positive impact on women's leadership development and participation in decision-making processes. The data collected from the respondents indicate that women who have attained graduate or postgraduate education demonstrate greater confidence, self-reliance, and the ability to take initiative in leadership roles. Education was found to be a key factor in enhancing critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills—qualities essential for effective leadership.

80% respondents agreed that higher education has helped them develop confidence, leadership competencies and provided exposure to diverse perspectives through seminars, group discussions, and project-based learning.

Respondents stated that their educational experiences increased their awareness of social, political, and economic issues, motivating them to become more active in community decision-making and organizational leadership.

The findings also suggest that higher education empowers women to challenge traditional gender roles and advocate for gender equality in professional and social settings. Educated women are more likely to participate in leadership activities, occupy managerial positions, and influence policies related to women's welfare and development. Respondents reported that education had improved their capacity to make independent decisions regarding career, finances, and family matters.

However, the study also identifies several challenges and barriers that limit women's full participation in leadership despite educational attainment. These include workplace discrimination, gender bias, lack of mentorship opportunities, and societal expectations regarding family responsibilities. Many participants expressed that balancing professional and personal life remains a significant challenge, often hindering their advancement to higher leadership roles.

Despite these obstacles, the study concludes that women with higher education serve as change agents who inspire others and contribute to the creation of more inclusive and equitable societies. The results affirm that promoting women's access to higher education and leadership training is essential for sustainable social transformation. Higher education not only enhances women's intellectual and professional abilities but also strengthens their role in shaping policies, institutions, and communities through informed and participatory decision-making.

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Towards the future of creativity: Impact of AI on student Imagination, Innovative learning in Higher Education

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Introduction to AI in creativity

The intersection of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and creativity marks one of the most transformative developments in the modern educational era. From a tool for computational efficiency, AI has evolved into a potent force capable of augmenting, replicating, and even redefining human creative processes. Its applications span a multitude of disciplines—art, literature, music, design, and beyond—ushering in profound shifts in how we perceive and engage with creativity. In higher education, AI is similarly reshaping teaching, learning, and institutional practices.

AI technologies are driving a paradigm shift in education by enhancing personalized learning experiences, supporting administrative tasks, and enabling innovative pedagogical approaches. These changes are not limited to administrative or logistical functions; AI is also playing a significant role in fostering creativity in academic settings, offering new ways to engage students, enhance collaboration, and explore novel solutions to complex problems. Historically, creativity has been considered an intrinsically human attribute, characterized by originality, emotional depth, and the ability to innovate.

Yet, advancements in AI challenge this perspective by enabling machines to generate outputs that are often indistinguishable from those of human creators. Whether through the generation of art, the composition of music, or the crafting of narratives, AI-driven systems are transforming both the practice and understanding of creative endeavors. In educational contexts, this shift offers opportunities to explore AI as both a tool for enhancing creativity and as a subject for critical inquiry. The integration of AI into education can foster creativity and inclusivity by offering personalized learning experiences that cater to diverse student needs and learning styles. However, the adoption of AI in both educational and creative domains also necessitate addressing a range of ethical concerns, such as issues of equity, privacy, bias, and authorship. These concerns are critical in ensuring that AI's potential to enhance creativity and learning does not come at the cost of fairness or accessibility. As AI technologies become increasingly integrated into academic ecosystems, it becomes imperative to understand how these tools can be used responsibly to support, rather than replace, human creativity and ingenuity.

This paper synthesizes findings from multiple studies on AI's role in higher education and its applications in creative fields, exploring its potential to enhance learning, foster creativity, and address ethical challenges. By examining the evolving role of AI and its potential to redefine both

academic and artistic practices, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how AI can be responsibly integrated into educational ecosystems and creative processes.

AI and Creativity

AI's transformative impact on creativity is perhaps most visible in the realm of visual arts. Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs), a breakthrough in machine learning, exemplify how AI systems can produce art that both imitates and innovates. GANs function through a dual network system: one generates outputs, while the other critiques them, refining results through iterative feedback loops. Researchers like Elgammal et al. have expanded on this framework with Creative Adversarial Networks (CANs), which deviate from learned styles to create novel and unique artworks [3][8]. AI's influence extends to architecture and design. Tools like Autodesk's Dreamcatcher analyze parameters to generate efficient designs tailored to user needs. These advancements are redefining traditional roles in the design process, allowing for both enhanced functionality and aesthetic appeal.

In music, AI tools such as Google's Magenta and Sony's Flow Machines have revolutionized composition. These systems analyze extensive datasets of musical scores to generate pieces that blend stylistic influences with innovative structures. Notably, Flow Machines created "Daddy's Car," a song inspired by The Beatles, showcasing AI's ability to mimic and innovate simultaneously. Such technologies democratize music creation, enabling individuals without formal training to explore and produce original compositions. Literary creativity is also transforming.

Natural Language Processing (NLP) models, particularly OpenAI's GPT series, are capable of crafting coherent narratives, poetry, and essays. These systems analyse vast corpora of text to generate outputs that are grammatically accurate and stylistically nuanced. GPT-3, for instance, has been used to assist with ideation, summaries lengthy texts, and draft fictional works. By assisting with ideation and writing, AI tools offer invaluable support to authors, journalists, and researchers. However, questions about authenticity and the creative value of machine-generated text persist.

Philosophical Dimensions: Defining Creativity in the AI Era

The integration of AI into creative practices raises fundamental philosophical questions about the essence of creativity. Traditional definitions emphasize originality, intentionality, and emotional resonance. AI, however, operates through pattern recognition, data analysis, and algorithmic processes, challenging these human-centric criteria. Margaret Boden categories creativity into three types: combinational, exploratory, and transformational excels in the first two. Combinational creativity involves blending existing ideas in novel ways, while exploratory creativity entails navigating possibilities within established frameworks.

Transformational creativity, which redefines paradigms, remains largely a human domain, though some argue that advanced AI systems are beginning to encroach on this territory. Critics of AI creativity often cite the lack of emotional depth and cultural context in machine-generated outputs.

A painting produced by a neural network, for instance, may replicate the aesthetic style of

Van Gogh but cannot encapsulate the emotional turmoil or historical context that shaped his work. Proponents, however, argue that AI introduces a new form of creativity—one driven by algorithmic innovation rather than human experience. This perspective invites a redefinition of creativity, emphasizing process over intent.

Applications Beyond Traditional Creative Fields

Beyond the arts, AI is making significant inroads into scientific and technological innovation. For example, IBM's Watson has contributed to culinary creativity by generating novel recipes, blending flavours based on data-driven predictions of taste profiles. AI also plays a pivotal role in marketing and advertising, where systems like Persado create persuasive ad copy tailored to target audiences. These applications demonstrate how AI's creative potential extends beyond traditional artistic domains, influencing industries and reshaping professional practices.

Enhancing Creativity and Learning

AI technologies, such as adaptive learning systems, intelligent tutoring platforms, and generative AI tools like ChatGPT, have revolutionised how students and educators interact with educational content. These tools enable personalised feedback, foster problem-solving skills, and inspire creative thinking by tailoring learning experiences to individual needs. Gamified applications and AI-driven platforms further enhance engagement, promoting innovation and collaboration among learners. Despite these benefits, AI's rigid frameworks can sometimes stifle creativity, while its impersonal nature may lead to emotional disengagement and performance anxiety. Addressing these limitations requires a balanced approach that integrates human intuition with AI's computational power.

Applications of AI in Education

AI is transforming higher education through five primary applications: assessment and evaluation, predictive analytics, AI assistants, intelligent tutoring systems, and content creation and management. AI-powered tools automate grading and provide personalized feedback, reducing instructor workload while enhancing assessment quality. Predictive analytics identify at-risk students, enabling timely interventions to improve academic outcomes.

Virtual assistants streamline administrative and academic tasks, boosting efficiency, while intelligent tutoring systems deliver personalized instruction tailored to learners' needs and progress. Generative AI tools facilitate the creation and management of educational materials, simplifying resource development. However, these advancements underscore the necessity of robust ethical guidelines and infrastructure to address risks such as bias, data privacy concerns, and inequitable access, ensuring AI's responsible integration into education.

Stakeholder Perspectives

Students' Views

Students generally perceive AI as a valuable tool for enhancing creativity and learning. They appreciate its ability to provide personalized support and foster collaboration. However, concerns about over-reliance on AI, reduced critical thinking, and the digital divide remain significant. Addressing these issues requires targeted strategies to demystify AI and promote its responsible use.

Educators' Insights

Educators recognise AI's potential to augment teaching practices and improve productivity. They emphasise the importance of training and ethical considerations in integrating AI into curricula. Faculty members highlight challenges like ensuring academic integrity, adapting assessment methods, and addressing technostress among students and staff.

Institutional Implications

Institutions play a pivotal role in facilitating AI integration. This involves investing in infrastructure, developing comprehensive policies, and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration. Equitable access to AI tools and addressing ethical concerns are critical priorities for creating inclusive and adaptive educational environments.

Challenges and Ethical Considerations

The rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in creative and educational domains brings with it a range of significant challenges and ethical considerations. One of the most pressing concerns is data privacy and bias. AI systems often rely on extensive data collection, raising serious concerns about privacy and security. In the educational context, this is especially relevant as AI tools increasingly collect personal data to provide personalized learning experiences. Additionally, algorithmic bias further exacerbates these issues, potentially perpetuating inequities in educational outcomes. If AI systems are trained on biased data, they can produce outcomes that disproportionately disadvantage certain groups, further entrenching existing social disparities. For instance, biased algorithms may affect grading systems, student evaluations, and even access to learning resources. To address these concerns, institutions must implement robust safeguards to ensure fairness and transparency in AI applications, emphasising the importance of inclusive, diverse, and representative datasets.

Another significant issue is the digital divide. Disparities in access to technology hinder the equitable implementation of AI in education. While AI can transform teaching and learning experiences, its benefits are not uniformly accessible. Students and institutions in underrepresented regions may lack the necessary digital infrastructure, devices, and internet access to effectively utilise AI-driven tools. This creates a gap between those who can harness the potential of AI in education and those who cannot, leading to further inequalities. Bridging this gap requires targeted investments in digital infrastructure, particularly in underserved areas, to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to benefit from AI's transformative potential.

Future Directions

Policy Development

Developing comprehensive policies that address ethical, cultural, and practical implications of AI integration is essential. These policies should emphasise transparency, accountability, and inclusivity.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration

Collaboration between educators, technologists, and policymakers can drive innovative solutions to optimize AI's impact on education. Research focusing on diverse educational contexts and populations will further refine AI's applications.

Promoting Human-AI Collaboration

Encouraging synergistic interactions between humans and AI can enhance creativity and critical thinking. Designing adaptive tools that complement human intuition will foster meaningful learning experiences.

Conclusion

The intersection of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and creativity presents a profound shift in the landscape of both education and the arts. As AI technologies increasingly influence creative practices, they not only challenge traditional notions of creativity but also expand the boundaries of human expression. By enabling machines to generate art, music, literature, and design, AI blurs the lines between human and machine creativity, prompting us to rethink our understanding of originality, innovation, and emotional depth.

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Lin and Chen BMC Psychology (2024) Artificial intelligence (AI) -integrated educational applications and college students' creativity and academic emotions: students and teachers' perceptions and attitudes

Creativity and Artificial Intelligence—A Student Perspective Rebecca Marrone 1,* , Victoria Taddeo 1 and Gillian Hill 2

Analyzing online reviews research in the tourism sector: a comprehensive bibliometric review and thematic mapping

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Abstract

A comprehensive bibliometric evaluation has been performed in this study to chart the research terrain of online reviews within the tourism sector during the period 2004 to 2024. The methodology involved utilizing advanced bibliometric tools, including the Biblioshiny package in RStudio and VOSviewer, to analyze 746 scholarly papers from Scopus Database and trace the evolution of this field. Our analysis highlights key metrics such as influential studies, citation counts, leading authors, prominent journals, contributing countries, and major research affiliations. Our study identified that there is a notable increase in publications related to online reviews in tourism since 2017, with China emerging as a significant contributor followed closely by US and UK. Additionally, the study contributes to reveal prominent research themes like Tourism and Digital Engagement, Pandemic-Driven Hospitality: Enhancing Service and Satisfaction, Management of Online Reputation in the T&H Industry, Advanced Analytics in Textual Data Processing, Enhancing Tourist Experience in Hospitality Industry Through Advanced Data Analysis, Collaborative Hospitality Ecosystem. The findings of this study offer holistic insights of ORR in Tourism which is valuable for policymakers, industry practitioners, and academics, underscoring emerging trends and providing a foundation for future research directions. The paper also discusses limitations and proposes recommendations for advancing research in this domain.

Keywords: *Online Reviews, Tourism, Bibliometric Analysis, VOSviewer, Biblioshiny*

Introduction

Online reviews have become a critical component of tourism research, offering valuable insights into traveller experiences and preferences (Chatterjee & Mandal, 2020; Gretzel & Yoo, 2008). The proliferation of review platforms has provided tourists with robust channels to share feedback and

express opinions, significantly influencing travel decisions and destination marketing strategies (Xiang et al., 2017). These reviews deliver rich qualitative data that enhances traditional quantitative research methods, offering a deeper understanding of tourist perceptions and behaviours.

Online reviews are much more than mere feedback; they significantly influence the process of the decision-making of the consumer. Social media platforms and review sites have facilitated extensive discussions about travel brands, shaping consumer choices (Rosario et al., 2016; Chu & Kim, 2011). This phenomenon transcends geographical boundaries, impacting consumer behavior on a global scale (Lee & Youn, 2009). In the hotel industry consumer emotions and the need for social validation are the main drivers of electronic word of mouth (eWOM), notwithstanding the impact of demographic variables and economic incentives (Yen & Tang, 2019; Chu et al., 2019). With the rise of digital technologies, customer interactions increasingly occur in the online realm, further underscoring the importance of eWOM (Litvin et al., 2008).

With the online reviews gaining importance in tourism research a comprehensive bibliometric analysis lacking on the said topic, this research aim at addressing this gap by performing the bibliometric analysis on 746 publications from 2004 to 2024. This analysis presents a thorough overview of the present landscape of research, inclusive of identifying the leading journals, key authors, influential countries, prominent affiliations, and trending research themes. By mapping these elements, the study offers a detailed understanding of the development and present condition of online review research in tourism, thereby highlighting trends, emerging topics, and potential areas for future inquiry.

Theoretical Background

Online reviews research within the tourism sector has expanded significantly in recent years (Chen et al., 2021). Scholars have employed a range of analytical methods, including sentiment analysis, text mining, and network analysis, to delve into tourists' emotions and preferences (Hu et al., 2018). Despite this progress, there remains a notable gap in interdisciplinary research that integrates insights from computer science, marketing, and psychology. The evolving landscape of online reviews is anticipated to undergo transformative changes driven by advancements in machine learning and artificial intelligence (Guttentag, 2019). Thus, interdisciplinary collaborations are critically need for better understand these shifts and their implications for the tourism industry (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010).

The increasing volume of academic studies on online reviews underscores their profound impact on tourists' perceptions and behaviours. These reviews are pivotal in shaping travel decisions and informing destination marketing strategies (Huang et al., 2021). Analysing the scholarly discourse surrounding online reviews is essential to map the complex research dynamics in this field (Xiang et al., 2015). Prior research has explored various facets, including how destination perceptions influence online reviews (Filieri & McLeay, 2014) and the application of sentiment analysis in assessing tourist satisfaction (Tao & Kim, 2019).

Several key researches have enhanced our knowledge and understanding the online reviews in the tourism sector. Ye et al. (2009) emphasized the importance of reputation management and its impact on hotel room sales. Sparks and Browning (2011) found that customers favor easily

digestible information. Filieri and McLeay (2014) examined the function of trust and credibility in review platforms available online. Liu and Park (2015) investigated how review content and timing affect customer purchasing decisions. Cantaloops and Salvi (2014) highlighted the need for proactive online reputation management. Guo et al. (2017) analysed factors affecting the credibility and usefulness of travel reviews. Ert et al. (2016) discussed the challenges posed by fraudulent tactics and the need for effective misinformation detection systems. Xiang et al. (2017) demonstrated the significance of consumer-generated media for destination promotion and competitive positioning. Fang (2016) offered a framework for understanding the complexities of online review dynamics and their impact on tourism stakeholders.

Despite the wealth of Online Reviews Research (ORR) in tourism, there has been no comprehensive bibliometric analysis covering scholarly research from 2004 to 2024. This research paper seeks to address this gap by carrying out a meticulous bibliometric examination on ORR in the sector of tourism. The research objectives are formulated into the research questions (RQs) as follows:

RQ1: What are the patterns of contribution in the field of ORR in Tourism?

RQ2: Which are the major affiliations, influential authors, and key researches in this field?

RQ3: What are the dominant themes in the extant literature, the recent research trends, and future research avenues?

Methodology

A bibliometric study is a computational technique used to evaluate and identify key articles and contributors in a specific research area by examining existing publications (Han et al., 2020). This method helps uncover literature gaps and provides an unbiased, systematic, and replicable process for reviewing the literature (Randhawa et al., 2016). By systematically mapping subject areas and literature, bibliometric analysis enhances the comprehensiveness of research (Nasir et al., 2020). This study employed bibliometric techniques to analyse ORR in tourism, utilizing the Scopus database for data collection and various visual tools to depict research trends.

Data Sourcing

For this bibliometric analysis, we selected the Scopus database due to its extensive coverage and reputation as a source for high-quality scientific research (Schotten et al., 2017). Scopus offers comprehensive bibliometric data, making it a preferred choice for citation analysis and bibliometric investigations in various subfields of tourism and hospitality.

Data Collection

On February 2, 2024, we conducted a search in the Scopus database to identify relevant publications on ORR in tourism. The search strategy involved using terms such as "tourism," "online review," and "tourist" within article titles, keywords, and abstracts. We restricted the search to documents published in English up to and including 2024. The search string used was: TITLE-ABS-KEY ("tourism **" OR "tourist **") AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Online Review**") AND (EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR, 2025)) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English")).

This search yielded 1021 documents, of which 793 were research articles. After filtering, 746 documents in English were selected for further analysis is explained comprehensively in the

Figure 1

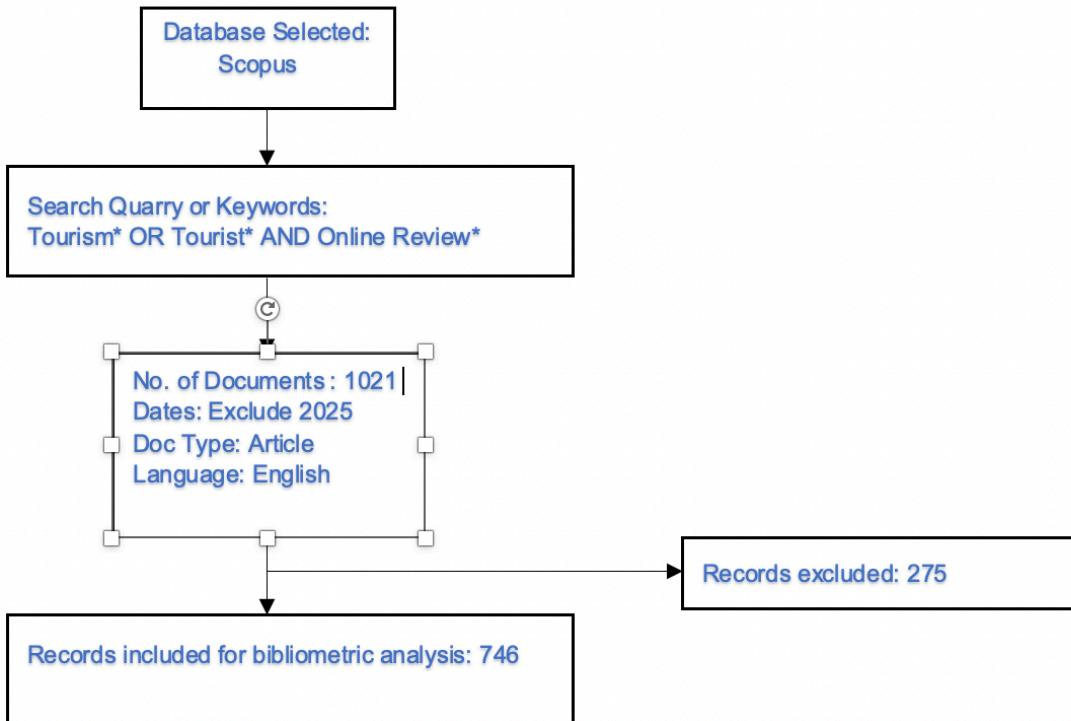


Figure 1: Flow chart of bibliometric analysis
Source: Figure by Authors

Data Analysis

The study utilized VOSviewer and the Biblioshiny package in RStudio for data visualization and analysis. These tools were employed to conduct several types of bibliometric analyses:

- **Citation Analysis:** Identifies the journals, authors, and documents that are the most cited ones, providing insights into influential contributions and trends in the field.
- **Co-word Analysis:** Uses thematic maps to explore keyword co-occurrence, revealing key themes, research trends, and their evolution over time (Hinterberger, 2018).
- **Co-authorship Analysis:** Examines the patterns of collaboration among institutions and researchers, highlighting influential authors and research networks (Gaviria-Marin et al., 2019).
- **Bibliographic Coupling:** Examines the correlation among documents by examining common references to uncover thematic clusters and emerging research areas (Moyle et al., 2022; Rauniyar et al., 2021).

Visualization and Interpretation

Data visualization involved creating thematic maps and word clouds to depict the most frequently used terms and research themes in ORR in tourism. The study sought to provide a thorough cum all-encompassing summary of the present research patterns, impactful publications,

and future research avenues.

Findings

Annual Growth Trend of ORR in Tourism

Figure 2 illustrates the chronological distribution of ORR in tourism between 2005 and 2024. The initial phase (2005–2016) began with the first publication in 2009, showing a modest growth rate with an average of only 6 publications annually. Notably, there was no publication in 2010. From 2017 onwards, there was a notable surge in the number of publications, with the number increasing from 30 in 2017 to 141 in 2024. This led to an average of 46.6 publications per year during this time.

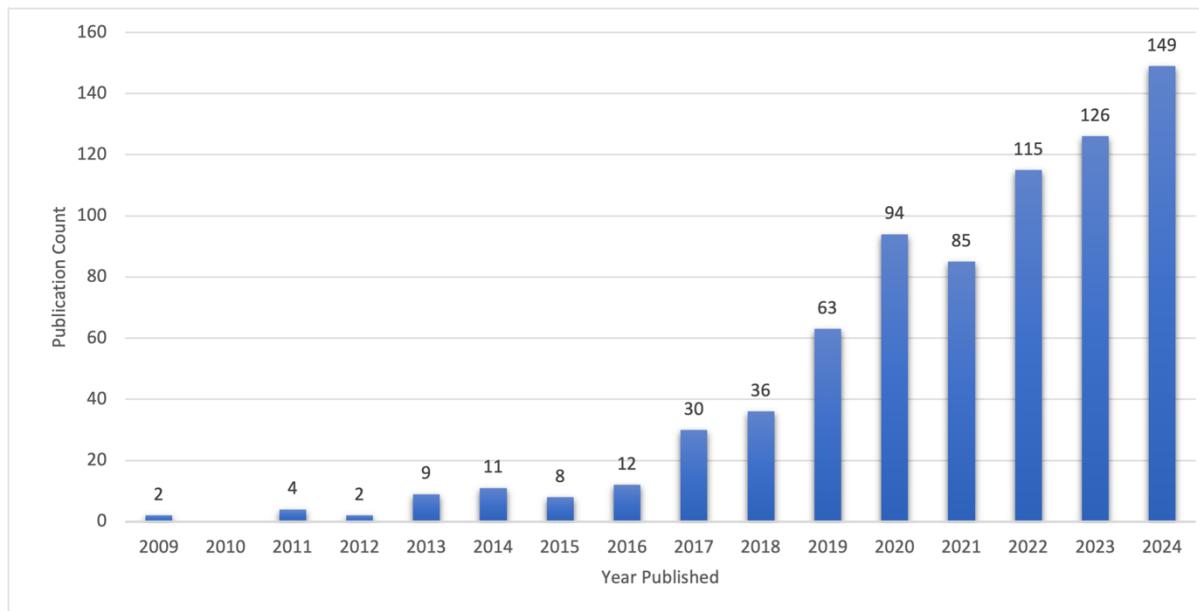


Figure 2: Annual Scientific Production of ORR in Tourism

Source: Figure by Authors

Citation Analysis

Citation analysis presents insights into the recognition and impact of research articles within academia, though it primarily reflects popularity rather than domain-specific significance (Caviggioli & Ughetto, 2019; Ding & Cronin, 2018; Xu et al., 2018).

4.2.1. Top 10 Journals in Online Reviews in Tourism

Table 1 presents the top 10 journals, ranked according to their citation metrics. *Tourism Management* leads with 59 publications and 10,323 citations, boasting the highest cite score (24.1), g-index (59), and h-index (41). *Sustainability (Switzerland)* ranks second by publication count but lags behind in citation impact compared to other leading journals. However, the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* exceeds its predecessor in terms of both the cite score (21.2) as well as the total citation count (3750). *Current Issues in Tourism* is the next among the other three topmost journals having the highest count of published articles in comparison to the remaining 7 journals implying a comparatively lesser citation impact.

Table 1: Top 10 Journals for Online Reviews in Tourism based on Citation Index

Ran k	Source	TP	TC	C/P	First Paper	Last Paper	Cite Score	h_index	g_index
1	Tourism management	59	10323	174.97	2011	2024	24.1	41	59
2	Sustainability (switzerland)	35	711	20.31	2017	2024	6.8	16	25
3	Current issues in tourism	34	915	26.91	2017	2024	15.5	15	30
4	International journal of hospitality management	32	3750	117.19	2009	2024	21.2	22	32
5	International journal of contemporary hospitality management	30	1016	33.87	2015	2024	16.9	18	30
6	Annals of tourism research	16	1114	69.63	2015	2024	19.1	11	16
7	Journal of hospitality and tourism technology	16	301	18.81	2013	2024	8.4	9	16
8	Journal of travel research	15	1325	88.33	2014	2024	18.9	12	15
9	Asia pacific journal of tourism research	13	100	7.69	2016	2024	7.7	7	9
10	International journal of culture, tourism, and hospitality research	12	166	13.83	2013	2022	3.8	9	12

Note: TP = total published articles; TC = total citations;

C/P = citations received per paper

Source: Authors' research

Most influential authors

Table 2 highlights the leading authors in ORR in tourism. Rob Law stands out with the greatest h-index, number of publications and citations, trailed by Mehrbakhsh Nilashi and Samad Sarminah. Jian-Qiang Wang, although having fewer publications and lower h-index, has a high citation count (832) alongside a citation average of 104 per article.

Table 2: Top 10 most influential researchers on ORR in Tourism

Rank	Author	h-index	TP	TC	C/P
1	Law, Rob	19	32	4028	125.88
2	Nilashi, Mehrbakhsh	11	13	591	45.46

3	Samad, Sarminah	9	11	516	46.91
4	Borghi, Matteo	7	7	292	41.71
5	Liang, Sai	7	10	521	52.10
6	Rita, Paulo	7	12	301	25.08
7	Wang, Jian-Qiang	7	8	832	104.00
8	Kim, Hak-Seon	6	10	74	7.40
9	Li, Gang	6	6	514	85.67
10	Li, Hengyun	6	9	449	49.89

Source: Authors

The Top 10 nations in terms of academic production

Table 3 presents the top 10 nations contributing to the ORR in Tourism. along with their corresponding citations. Based on the available data, China emerged as the frontrunner with a remarkable tally of 244 papers, trailed by the US (104) and UK(76).

Table 3: Top 10 productive Nations in ORR

Rank	Country	TP	TC	C/P
1	China	244	10352	42.43
2	United States	104	6189	59.51
3	United Kingdom	76	5966	78.50
4	Spain	61	2773	45.46
5	Australia	52	4574	87.96
6	Hong Kong	47	4611	98.11
7	South Korea	47	1023	21.77
8	India	44	750	17.05
9	Malaysia	38	882	23.21
10	Portugal	38	1080	28.42

Source: Table by authors

Most cited country

As per (Table 3), China was the leading country with 10328 citations of ORR in Tourism. Second and third were the USA and the UK with 6175 and 5493 citations, respectively. It is also noteworthy to consider that, in terms of the average citation per article, Hong Kong and Australia lead the list with 97 and 87 citations per article, respectively.

Top 10 articles in ORR

The top cited articles on ORR are presented in Table 4. Sparks and Browning (2011) is the most influential article with 1185 citations, followed by Ert et al., (2016) with 1041 citations and Ye et al. (2009) a with 998 citations. Sparks and Browning (2011) found that being exposed to negative material initially leads to a negative influence on consumers, but when evaluations are framed positively along with numerical ratings, it could increase trust and booking intentions. They

heavily emphasize interpersonal service in creating trust and use an experimental approach to carefully evaluate these elements. Their studies reveal how online reviews affect hotel reputation and company performance, with major ramifications. Ye et al. (2009) a illuminate on how hotel bookings are impacted by online Word of Mouth (WOM) and evaluations generated by users of hospitality services. Their empirical findings fill the literature gap on WOM distribution and its effect in the Internet era, helping practitioners and scholars navigate the changing terrain of online consumer evaluations.

Lastly, Ert et al. (2016) show that Airbnb hosts' images' perceived trustworthiness affects price and purchase decisions, emphasizing the importance of seller credibility in sharing economy consumer experiences. Their study combines sharing economy market insights and photo trust inference, suggesting additional research into tourism-related service trust mechanisms.

Table 4: Top 10 articles in terms of citations

<i>Author (Year)</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>TC</i>
Sparks and Browning (2011)	The impact of online reviews on hotel booking intentions and perception of trust	1185
Ert et al (2016)	Trust and reputation in the sharing economy: The role of personal photos in Airbnb	1041
Ye et al. (2009)a	The impact of online user reviews on hotel room sales	998
Guo et al. (2017)	Mining meaning from online ratings and reviews: Tourist satisfaction analysis using latent dirichlet allocation	779
Liu and Park (2015)	What makes a useful online review? Implication for travel product websites	770
Filieri and McLeay (2014)	E-WOM and Accommodation: An Analysis of the Factors That Influence Travelers' Adoption of Information from Online Reviews	721
Xiang et al. (2017)	A comparative analysis of major online review platforms: Implications for social media analytics in hospitality and tourism	678
Serra Cantallops and Salvi (2014)	New consumer behaviour: A review of research on eWOM and hotels	633
Ye et al (2009)b	Sentiment classification of online reviews to travel destinations by supervised machine learning approaches	542
Fang et al (2016)	Analysis of the perceived value of online tourism reviews: Influence of readability and reviewer characteristics	510

Source: Table by authors

Bibliometric Analyses

Bibliographic Coupling

Bibliographic coupling assesses the intellectual linkage between publications by identifying common references (Shin & Perdue, 2019). Table 6 highlights the contributors that lead in the area of ORR in tourism based on bibliographic coupling.

- **Authors:** Rob Law emerges as the foremost scholar in ORR, with a substantial lead in total link strength (TLS), followed by Mehrbakhsh Nilashi and Sarminah Samad. Law's work is significantly influential, reflected in his high TLS of 3289.
- **Organizations:** The top institutions include three departments from Kyungsung University in South Korea, indicating the institution's prominence in ORR research. Other notable contributors are the College of Business and Administration at Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University (Saudi Arabia) and Griffith Business School (Australia).
- **Countries:** China leads in scholarly impact on ORR literature, with significant contributions from the US and the UK following. Despite its effectiveness, bibliographic coupling, which relies on backward citation chaining, has limitations in analysing prior works (Van Eck & Waltman, 2014).

Table 6: Top 10 contributors based on Bibliographic Coupling

Author	TLS	Organisation	TLS	Country	TLS
Law, Rob	6594	Department Of Global Business, KSU, South Korea.	1238	China	68452
Nilashi, Mehrbakhsh	4939	School Of Hospitality & Tourism Management, KSU, South Korea,	1238	United States	44480
Samad, Sarminah	4571	Wellness & Tourism Big Data Research Institute, KSU, South Korea,	1077	United Kingdom	37775
Liang, Sai	2923	Department Of Business Strategy And Innovation, Griffith Business School, GU, Australia.	914	Hong Kong	25525
Ahani, Ali	2859	Department Of Business Administration, College Of Business And Administration, PNU, Saudi Arabia.	914	Spain	24344
Borghi, Matteo	2701	School Of Hotel And Tourism Management, PolyU, Hong Kong.	471	Australia	21874
Mohd, Saidatulakmal	2362	School Of Business, CSU, China.	403	India	17546

Schuckert, Markus	2225	Nova Information Management School (Nova Ims), UNL, Portugal.	253	Malaysia	17211
Mariani, Marcello M.	2020	Instituto Universitário De Lisboa (Iscte-Iul), Portugal	232	South Korea	16625
Zhang, Ziqiong	1836	College of Tourism and Service Management, NU, China	223	Saudi Arabia	15800

Source: Table by authors. KSU: Kyungsung University; PNU: Princess Nourah Bint Abdulrahman University; GU: Griffith University; PolyU: Hong Kong Polytechnic University; CSU: Central South University, China; UNL: Universidade Nova De Lisboa.

Co-occurrence analysis

The co-occurrence analysis of Keywords relies on the idea that terms that often appear together reveal conceptual connections (Callon et al., 1983). It was used to chart the research landscape. This approach facilitates the visualization of key themes and their interconnections. A keyword co-occurrence cluster was produced using the VOSviewer software. A co-occurrence analysis on was carried out on the 54 keywords that were chosen from the 1881 keywords that had a frequency of more than 5, as depicted in Figure 3. It can be seen that the research theme of online reviews in the tourism industry has roughly formed eight clusters in the above figure. The clusters were analysed as follows:

Cluster 1 (Red): Tourism and Digital Engagement

The cluster containing 13 items compiled publications that emphasised keywords related to social media, satisfaction, content analysis, netnography, authenticity and customer experience. They indicate a focus on using technology and online platforms to improve tourism experiences, analyse customer satisfaction, and manage reputation in the digital world.

Cluster 2 (Green): Pandemic-Driven Hospitality: Enhancing Service and Satisfaction

This cluster contains 8 items, and the major keywords identified in this cluster showed trends in the travel and tourism sectors including Covid-19. Various facets of tourism and hospitality, like experience, service quality and, customer satisfaction, are the primary areas of focus, with a particular emphasis on user-generated content (UGC).

Cluster 3 (Blue): Management of Online Reputation in the T&H Industry.

Featuring 8 items, this cluster mainly includes publications focusing on online reviews. The theme encompasses several aspects related to the management of internet visibility, consumer evaluations (e-wom), hotels and their reactions to feedback on sites like TripAdvisor and Booking.com. It involves utilizing big data analytics to gain insights into eWOM and the helpfulness of reviews.

Cluster 4 (Yellow): Advanced Analytics in Textual Data Processing

This cluster has 7 keywords, including sentiment analysis, data mining, text mining, machine learning, topic modelling, and Natural Language Processing (NLP). The keywords included in this cluster cover a range of areas in computational linguistics, with a specific emphasis on extracting valuable insights from textual data using advanced computational techniques.

Cluster 5 (Purple): Enhancing Tourist Experience in Hospitality Industry Through Advanced Data Analysis

The set of keywords in this cluster focuses on utilising deep learning techniques, particularly Latent Dirichlet Allocation, to examine hotel attributes along with the perceived value of travel agencies online. Through an analysis of the hotels' perceived value on online platforms, such as ratings and reviews, it is possible to enhance tourist satisfaction.

Cluster 6 (Light Blue): Collaborative Hospitality Ecosystem

The publications in this cluster explore the idea of individuals utilising platforms such as Airbnb to share their accommodations within the framework of the sharing economy. This practice enables direct interactions and creates value for both hosts and guests.

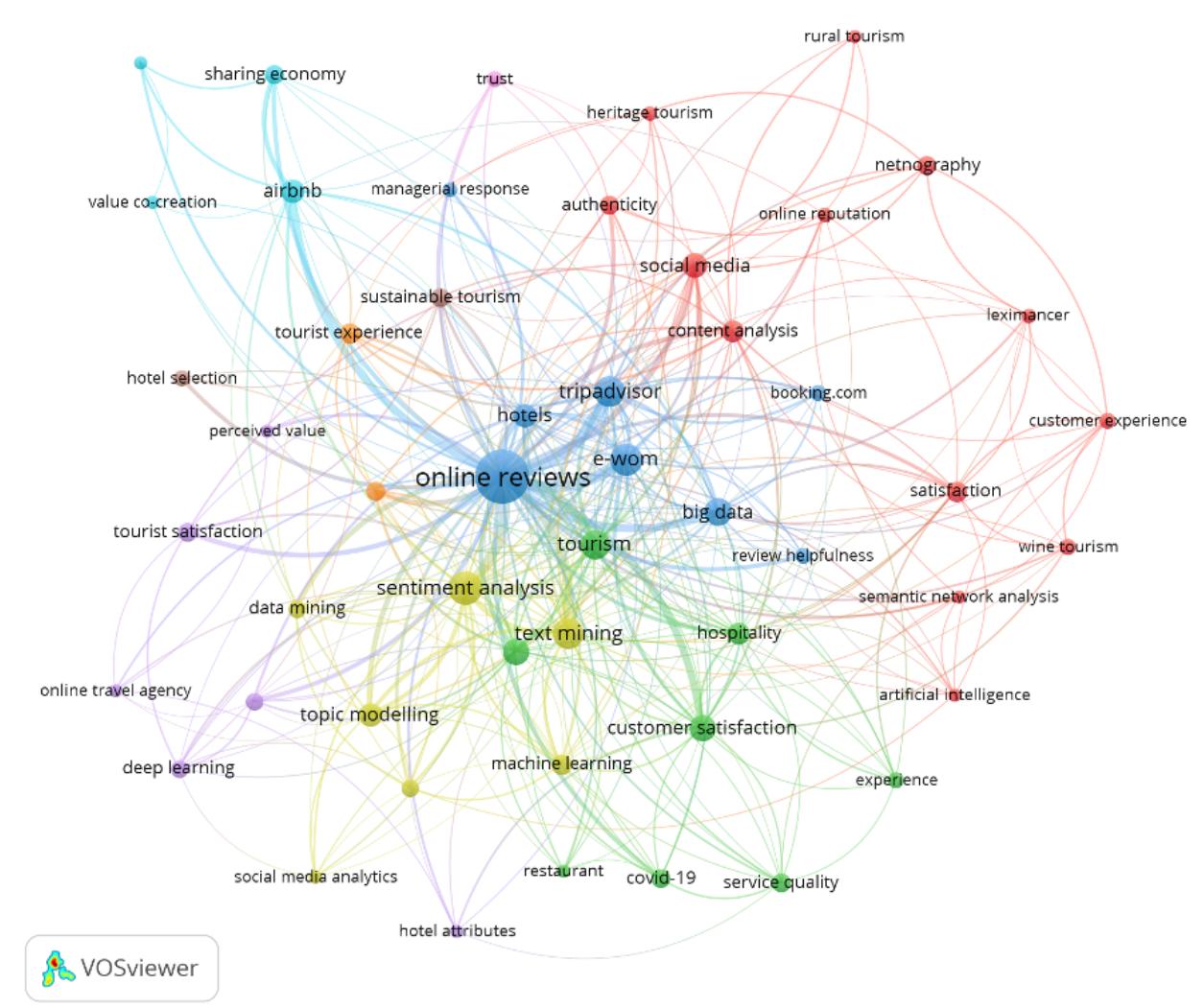


Figure 3 Co-occurrence analysis of keywords
Source: Figure by Authors

Co-citation analysis

Given the extensive number of cited references in the selected articles, totalling around 35,118, it is not feasible to analyse the entire collection of references. Danyila-del-Valle et al.

(2019) propose that employing a threshold for selection can be a valuable approach in choosing the references that are most impactful and pinpointing the foundational material forming the basis of the intellectual framework (Leung et al., 2017). The map was generated through co-citation analysis, using fractional counting as the technique for counting and cited references being the unit of analysis, in accordance with the suggestion made by Van Eck and Waltman (2014). When the threshold was set at 24 citations, we were able to identify the top 20 most co-cited publications. This methodology has been utilized in prior bibliometric research (Liu et al., 2015). The weight for visualisation was ascertained by the citation count, while the technique employed for normalisation was association strength. The node size reflects the total of citations an item has garnered, whereas the level of co-citation strength is indicated by the thickness of the line joining two nodes indicates. The co-citation network identified the following three clusters. Figure 4 displays the network map of co-citation. The current top twenty seminal or most influential papers in the field are represented by the documents in the nodes. These publications, while not widely cited, have been extensively referenced by selected documents and are regarded as essential literature. The papers can be categorised into three clusters, each displaying a consistent pattern within its group.

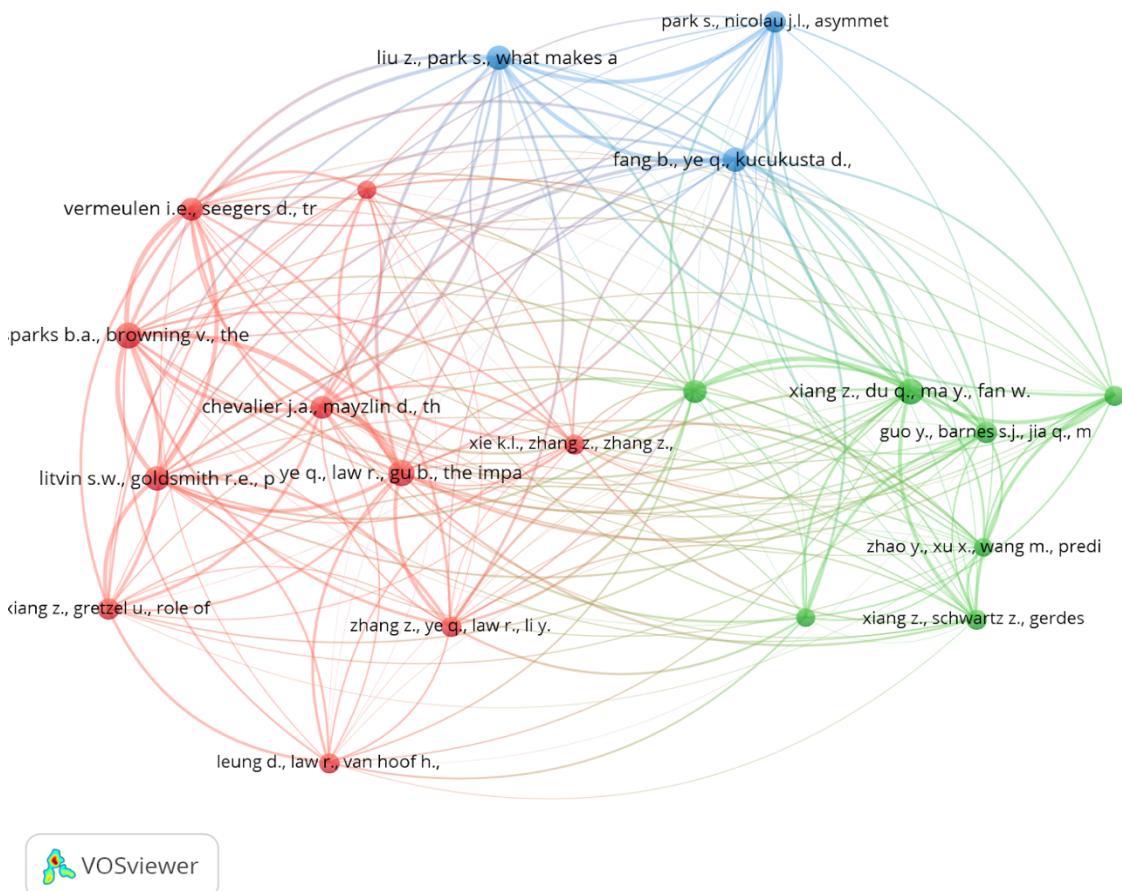


Figure 4 Co-citation analysis
Source: Figure by Authors

Word cloud

As represented in Figure 5, the terms 'Internet', 'Tourism', 'Tourist Behavior', 'Online Reviews' and others were the most frequently used terms. The words' sizes depicted in the word cloud are influenced by their frequency of appearance. The placement of words is somewhat disorganized; however, the most relevant ones are centrally located and larger to enhance visibility.



Figure 5 Word Cloud

Source: Figure by Authors

Discussion

This study explored key elements and patterns in the literature on ORR within the tourism sector. Through comprehensive analysis involving thematic maps and conceptual structures, this research uncovered significant patterns as well as the topics emerging in this field. By examining the frequently used terms and themes, key areas of focus and gaps in the existing literature were highlighted. Notably, the study revealed that research on internet reviews in the tourism industry is relatively nascent, with a clear trajectory for future growth. As ORR in tourism continues to evolve, it is anticipated that forthcoming publications will increasingly address this burgeoning field.

For tourism businesses, leveraging online reviews effectively can drive growth and enhance market positioning. By offering unique and meaningful experiences to travellers, businesses can capitalize on the growing influence of online reviews. Evaluating top journals helps researchers identify suitable platforms for their work and stay informed about current trends in the field (Al Rousan et al., 2023). Our analysis has successfully mapped out the current trends in ORR within the tourism industry (Atabay & Güzel, 2021).

RQ1 addressed the publication trends of ORR in tourism. By 2024, the field had accumulated 746 papers since its initial publication in 2009, with the number of authors increasing from 4 to 1,494. This growth reflects a substantial expansion in both the volume of research and

the scholarly community engaged in ORR.

RQ2 focused on identifying influential research studies, authors, and affiliations. Ye et al. (2009) surfaced as the most co-cited paper, with a TLS of 51 in addition to 57 citations, highlighting its significant impact. Among authors, R. Law stands out with 26 publications and a total of 3,457 citations, marking him as a leading figure in the field. The Hong Kong Polytechnic University is noteworthy contributor, with 41 papers and 3,907 citations.

RQ3 aimed to clarify the intellectual structure of ORR and propose new research directions. The study identified several prominent and trending topics, including online reviews, natural language processing, sentiment analysis, and the impact on tourist behavior due to Covid-19. Co-citation and co-occurrence analyses, facilitated by VOSviewer, revealed eight distinct clusters. The major clusters include Tourism and Digital Engagement; Pandemic-Driven Hospitality: Enhancing Service and Satisfaction; Management of Online Reputation in the T&H Industry; Advanced Analytics in Textual Data Processing; Enhancing Tourist Experience Through Advanced Data Analysis; and Collaborative Hospitality Ecosystem.

Limitations

This study has certain limitations. First of all, the Scopus database was exclusively used as the data source as of February 2, 2024. Future research may yield different results if conducted using alternative databases or updated data. The choice of terms and sample selection inherently limits the study's scope. Additionally, the classification of clusters and keyword themes may reflect some degree of bias due to the specific focus on ORR within the tourism sector. Finally, the research concentrated solely on the tourism industry; broader studies encompassing various sectors could provide more generalized insights and enhance the applicability of the findings.

Conclusion and future research implications

ORR in tourism is an area that is rapidly evolving and presents significant opportunities for future exploration. This study provides a detailed overview of leading authors, influential countries, prominent journals, and current keyword trends within this specialized domain. By highlighting these key elements, the study provides a significant foundation for researchers and scholars interested in exploring the study of Internet reviews within the tourism sector. Future research in ORR can benefit from expanding the scope of bibliometric analyses by incorporating data from additional databases beyond the current study. This would help address existing limitations and present a deeper insight into ORR in tourism. The thematic map developed in this study has pinpointed areas ripe for further investigation, which can be especially beneficial for systematic literature reviews.

The growing volume of research papers on ORR and tourism reflects an increasing academic interest in this area. Future studies should explore various facets of tourism and hospitality, including accommodation, adventure tourism, eco-tourism, events, meals and beverages, tourist amenities, and travel commerce. Integrating these diverse aspects into a unified research framework could enhance the applicability of findings and deepen our understanding of this emerging trend. Additionally, incorporating sentiment analysis into the evaluation of ORR and travel destinations could provide more nuanced insights.

The flourishing concept of marketing to tourists also presents an area ripe for exploration. Future research can investigate how ORR contributes to a company's competitive edge within the tourism industry, focusing on several marketing strategies including email marketing, digital marketing and social media marketing.

Moreover, the study's findings open up avenues for investigating the impact of ORR on tourist behavior. Expanding the sample size or the amount of papers analysed could yield more robust insights. Future quantitative research might explore how different dimensions of online review ratings affect tourists' purchase intentions, considering factors such as product type, consumer preferences, platform type, and local contexts.

Finally, leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) in ORR can enhance data retrieval and decision-making processes. AI can facilitate a comprehensive rating system by aggregating and analysing data from multiple sources, thereby simplifying the decision-making process for both consumers and businesses.

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Exploring the Relationship Between Followership Styles and Performance Among Mid-Management in the Service Sector

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Abstract

*This study explores the relationship between **followership styles and performance** among mid-management professionals in the service sector. Data were collected from 188 randomly selected participants across two organisations—a banking institution and an export house—using a structured questionnaire. To test the proposed hypotheses, **multiple regression analysis** was employed. The findings reveal that four of Kelley's (1992) five followership styles—**passive, alienated, exemplary, and conformist**—were evident among the respondents. Among these, the **conformist followership style** emerged as the most prevalent within mid-management roles. The results further indicate a **positive relationship between high active engagement and dependent, uncritical thinking**, suggesting that conformity and compliance are linked to improved performance outcomes in the service sector context. These findings underscore the significance of understanding followership dynamics as a critical component of organisational effectiveness and leadership development.*

Keywords: **followership style, performance, an organisation in Delhi NCR.**

Introduction

Organisations comprise not only leaders but also followers, both of whom play critical and interdependent roles in achieving success (Avolio & Reichard, 2008). However, existing literature suggests that the role of followers has historically been underrecognized and undervalued in organisational research and practice (Kelley, 1992). As Shondrick and Lord (2010) emphasise, followers are as essential to organisational effectiveness as leaders, and the dynamics of **leadership and followership** must be viewed as **co-existing and mutually reinforcing constructs** (Kelley, 2008).

Banutu-Gomez (2004) further posits that for leaders to succeed, they must engage followers in understanding how to lead, as both roles are inherently interdependent (Henry, 2012). This underscores the need to **cultivate effective followership** as a vital component of organisational development. In corporate settings, **mid-management professionals** operate in close coordination with departmental heads, serving as a crucial link between strategic leadership and operational execution. Their responsibilities typically encompass achieving performance targets, overseeing administrative and customer-facing functions, and monitoring progress toward organisational goals. While departmental heads focus on setting strategic objectives, mid-managers translate these goals into actionable outcomes through collaboration with junior management. For this system to function optimally, it is imperative that departmental heads **recognise and understand the followership styles** of mid-management employees, as doing so enhances alignment, motivation, and overall organisational effectiveness.

The study of followership is at its nascent stage of research and within the organisational management is relatively new (Kellerman, 2008). Though various models and theories have been

developed on followership. It's important all the theories need to be translated into practice within organisational settings to see the results. The purpose of current research is to identify followership styles in the middle management to examine if evidence actually supports the use of five followership styles as a means of improving organisational performance.

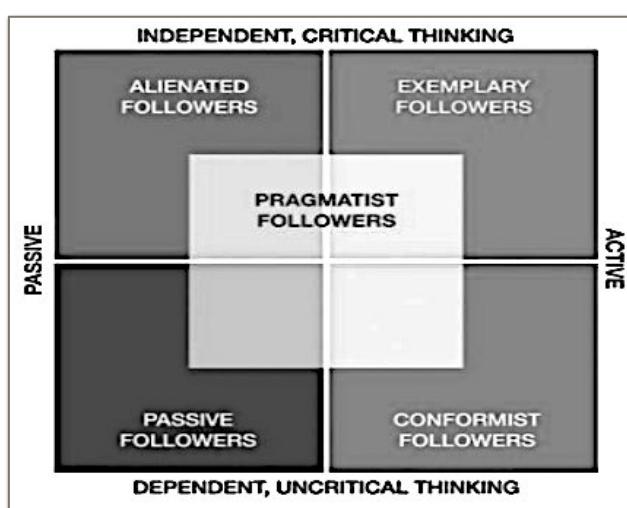
One of the most significant contributions to the field of organisational behavior is **Kelley's (1988, 1992) conceptualization of followership**, which occupies a **cardinal position in followership literature**. Kelley's framework not only redefined how followers are perceived but also emphasized their critical role in organisational success. Building on this foundation, the present research examines **followership styles among mid-management professionals** in organisations located in the **Delhi National Capital Region (NCR)**. The study specifically investigates two sectors—a **banking institution** and an **export house**—to analyse the relationship between followership styles and performance outcomes.

The study aims to generate **practically relevant insights** for organisational administrators and leaders in these sectors by identifying prevalent followership styles and their performance implications. The findings are expected to assist **departmental heads**—particularly in customer service, human resources, and marketing—in recognising employees who may require greater levels of **partnership, guidance, or empowerment**. Such understanding will contribute to **enhanced collaboration, improved leadership-follower dynamics**, and the overall **empowerment of mid-management**, ultimately fostering a more effective and performance-driven organisational culture.

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Followership Style

The present research paper is empirical in nature and is based on Kelley's (1992) theory of followership i.e based on the two dimensions. The first dimension is referred as independent critical thinking, vs dependent uncritical thinking and the second is active engagement vs passive engagement. It is one of the most important contributions to literature with the leadership concept (Blanchard et al., 2009).



Based on the two dimensions stated, Kelley (1992) identified five basic styles of followership on the two dimensions as shown in below figure. Out of two quadrants: active vs passive and independent critical thinker vs dependent uncritical thinker and describes “exemplary followers” as actively engaged and exhibiting high independent critical thinker. This type of follower is vital to organisational success and likely to function very well in self-managed teams. Hence, in Kelley's work, followership is operationalized along two main dimensions:

- a) Active Engagement (AE), or the propensity to take initiative;
- b) Independent Critical Thinking (ICT), which consists in offering constructive criticism and showing the ability to think for oneself.

Kelley's (1992) model identifies **five distinct followership styles**, each defined by the degree of **independent critical thinking** and **active engagement** demonstrated by followers.

Alienated followers are characterized by **high levels of independent and critical thinking** but **low levels of active engagement**. While they possess strong analytical and evaluative capabilities, they often display passivity in their roles. These individuals frequently perceive that their contributions are undervalued or unrecognised within the organization, leading to feelings of frustration and disengagement. Alienated followers tend to voice their dissent openly, expressing dissatisfaction with organisational decisions or leadership directions. Consequently, they are more prone to **job dissatisfaction, reduced organisational commitment, diminished motivation, and lower performance levels**. As Kelley (1988) notes, alienated followers, despite their intellectual independence, tend to rely heavily on leadership direction due to their passive behavior, often lacking the creativity or ambition necessary to drive change autonomously.

Conformist followers, often referred to as "yes people," are **active participants** who demonstrate **low levels of critical and independent thinking**. They follow instructions diligently and comply unquestioningly with organisational or leadership directives (Bjugstad et al., 2006). Conformists typically maintain positive relationships with their superiors, showing strong loyalty and willingness to accommodate organisational demands (Collinson, 2006). While their dependability contributes to operational consistency, their tendency to suppress personal judgment and creativity may hinder innovation. Conformist followers frequently prioritise organisational goals over personal values or perspectives, thereby aligning themselves closely with leadership expectations.

Pragmatic followers represent a **balanced or situationally adaptive style**, exhibiting moderate levels of both critical thinking and engagement. They demonstrate elements of all four followership types, adjusting their behaviour according to situational demands and personal benefit. Pragmatic followers tend to be cautious and flexible, aligning their stance with prevailing circumstances while avoiding overt confrontation or deep commitment. They seldom challenge leadership decisions, instead opting for a practical approach that ensures self-preservation and stability within the organisational system.

The Concept of Performance

An organisation's effectiveness is seen by its performance and has most important focus (Fauzilasalley, 2011). The duties, responsibilities or individual's job assignments are referred for performance (Vigoda, 2000). Performance is classified into 'will-do' approach leading to a positive approach for "can-do" as will-do refers to individuals 'knowledge, skills, abilities (Schmitt & Chan in Motowidlo, 2003).

As mid-management performs a whole lot of duties & their key responsibilities. They not only deal directly with junior management by handling their issues but also drives senior

management goals. For an organisation to achieve its goals, mid-management needs to be exemplary or conformist followers in order to carry out their duties.

Methodology

Research Questions

This paper examines the relationship between followership styles and performance in the service sectors two organisations.

- 1-What are the preferred followership styles of the middle management in the Service Sector?
- 2-Is there a significant relationship between followership styles (independent critical thinking and active engagement) and the performance of the middle management in service sectors?

The present study analysed AE (active engagement) and ICT (independent critical thinking) in relation to their antecedents in their effort to validate Kelley's scale and also investigated the relationships between the two dimensions and some potential outcomes of performance. Considering the definitions of the two behaviours, and their operationalisation, which emphasise the positive side of AE and ICT, as well as the mixed results mentioned above, we hypothesise that:

H1—Conformist style has a positive relationship with performance.

H2—Passive followership style has a positive relationship with performance.

Participants

A total of 212 mid-management from the two Service Sector organisations have involved in this study. Many of the mid-management had master's degree with an average experience of four years and above in their current place of work. A random sample of 212 mid-management from different mid-management responded to the followership and performance questionnaires.

In addition to a socio-demographic section which included questions about the control variables, the Variance explained by the EFA solution was 55.4%, while Cronbach's alpha was .83.

Follower's active engagement on a 7-point Likert scale (0 = never, 6 = always) had a Cronbach's alpha .88.

Follower's independent critical thinking (ICT) explained variance (performance) was 44.4%, while Cronbach's alpha was .76.

The Instruments

Kelley (1992) followership style instrument (20-item of followership questionnaire) was used to identify followership style in mid-management with Williams and Anderson (1991) performance questionnaire (4-item of in-role) were used for data collection. The internal consistency reliability of the scale was (Cronbach alpha = 0.76).

Data Collection

Participants consisted of 212 mid-management employees working in the bank and the export house of Delhi NCR region.

Questionnaires were distributed and were collected by the researchers for all 212 participants and the overall response rate was 89%. The socio-demographic characteristics of the 189-respondent sample are summarised below.

Table 1:

Dimension	Sample mean/percentage
Gender	85.6% women 14.4% men
Age	39.5 years (<i>SD</i> 8.18, from min = 23 to max = 60)
Education level	15.7% with a master's degree or other post-graduate qualification
Type of contract (length)	97.5% with permanent contract 2.5% with temporary contract
Tenure in organization	4.6 years (<i>SD</i> 9.36)
Length of employment	7.8 years (<i>SD</i> 9.42)

Result

The first research question was: What are the preferred followership styles of mid-management in the Service Sector? The Service Sector mid-management examined followership styles were having all five Followership styles. Conformist followership style was the most preferred style i.e 34.51% of the participants.

Followership styles used by Service Sector mid-management: Commonly used styles.

Table 2

Followership Style	Number	Frequency %
Exemplary	48	25.5%
Alienated	21	11%
Passive	31	16.4%
Conformist	89	46.9%

(N= 189 Common/frequency %)

The Correlation matrix for followership styles and performance; Exploratory Factor Analysis (ML, Promax rotation) on the 24 items used to measure the investigated variables showed positive results. As expected, eigenvalues for six items were greater than 1 and the average variance extracted was 52.6%. Preliminary check results were thus satisfactory.

Here it shows means, standard deviations and intercorrelations of all variables. Performance shows positive correlations with conformist style.

Table 3

Parameters	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Performance	-						
2. Gender (1 = male)	0.09	-					
3. Tenure in organiz.	0.04	.23**	-				
5. Passive	.24**	-.16**	-0.09	-			
6. Exemplary	.12*	-0.03	-.17**	.47**	-		
7. Conformist	.41**	0.03	.16**	.29**	.19**	-	
8. Alienated	-.14**	0.04	-.13**	.16**	0.06	-0.01	-
<i>M</i>	3.33	-	15.6	34.9	3.36	3.66	5.18
<i>SD</i>	0.67	-	9.36	5.69	1.01	1.02	1.10

Means, standard deviations and intercorrelations of all variables.

Note.

* $p < .05$;

** $p < .01$

AE = follower's active engagement and ICT = follower's independent critical thinking.

Multiple regression results examining the linear and curvilinear effects of followership behaviors on Performance. It shows the results of the hierarchical multiple regression. Performance was explained by two variables. The positively related conformist ($\beta +.36, p < .001$), and tenure in organization ($\beta +.20, p < .05$).

Summarising, the findings show that:

H1—Conformist style has a positive relationship with performance was supported. There is a significant positive linear relationship between the Conformist style of followership and performance means when followers are high on independent critical thinkers, with passive engagement leading to performance. In other words, the followers with a critical approach the more they are satisfied, while their engagement, whether low or high does not have an impact on performance.

H2— Since there is no curvilinear relationship between passive style of followership and performance; passive followership style has a positive relationship with performance was not supported.

The results of the correlation of predictor variables with performance, however, suggest that mid-management who were passive followers were not high performers in this study. This finding did establish the main characteristics of passive followers as proposed by Kelley (1992). Hence clear why mid-management who claimed to be passive followers are the low performers in this context.

Conclusions and Implications

The findings of this study indicate that the majority of mid-management professionals exhibited a **conformist followership style**, reflecting a preference for compliance, alignment with authority, and adherence to established organisational norms. The analysis further revealed that **alienated** and **exemplary** followership styles did not demonstrate a significant relationship with performance outcomes, while the **passive** followership style showed a weak positive correlation with low performance levels. This suggests that mid-managers identifying as passive followers contribute minimally to organisational effectiveness. Notably, participants who self-identified with **exemplary followership characteristics**—typically associated with high performance and proactive engagement in prior literature—also reported lower performance levels, highlighting a potential contextual or systemic barrier within the service sector.

These findings carry important implications for leadership and organisational development. **Departmental heads and senior leaders** in the service sector must cultivate awareness of diverse followership styles among mid-management and their potential impact on organisational performance. Encouraging and developing **conformist followership traits** may ensure operational stability; however, fostering the **critical thinking, initiative, and independence** characteristic of exemplary followers is essential for innovation and sustainable growth.

Given the paradoxical observation that exemplary followers demonstrated low performance, **further empirical investigation** is warranted to identify the contextual, cultural, or structural factors inhibiting their effectiveness. Future research should also examine the **interaction between leadership styles and followership behaviors** to better understand how alignment or misalignment between the two influences overall organisational performance. A deeper understanding of these dynamics will enrich followership theory and contribute to more balanced leadership–followership development frameworks within the service sector.

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Transformational Leadership in the Indian Public Sector: Reimagining Governance Through Values, Vision, and Change

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Abstract

Transformational leadership has emerged as a critical paradigm for addressing the complexities of modern governance, particularly in developing democracies such as India. In the Indian public sector—characterized by bureaucracy, political pressures, and structural rigidity—transformational leadership offers a pathway to reform, innovation, and citizen-centric service delivery. This paper explores how transformational leadership principles, traditionally rooted in Western management theory, manifest within India's administrative and cultural context. Drawing on key cases such as the Delhi Metro under E. Sreedharan, ISRO's leadership culture under Dr. K. Radhakrishnan, and large-scale initiatives like Swachh Bharat and Digital India, the study demonstrates how visionary, value-driven, and ethically grounded leadership can inspire change within government systems. The research integrates theoretical foundations from Bass and Avolio with Indian philosophical frameworks such as Dharma and Seva, emphasizing the unique blend of moral purpose and institutional transformation. Through a qualitative review of case narratives and governance reforms, the paper aims to bridge the gap between leadership theory and public administration practice, offering insights into how Indian leaders can foster trust, integrity, and innovation across public institutions. Findings highlight that transformational leadership—anchored in authenticity, empathy, and collective purpose—can reimagine governance, not merely as administration, but as a moral and developmental mission.

Keyword : Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Governance Reform, Ethical & Value-Based Leadership, Dharma and Seva in Leadership

Introduction

The evolving challenges of governance in the twenty-first century—ranging from digital transformation and citizen expectations to sustainability and inclusivity—demand leadership that transcends routine management. In India, the public sector remains both the backbone of socio-economic development and the arena where the tensions between tradition and modernity are most visible. Transformational leadership, first conceptualized by James MacGregor Burns (1978) and later operationalized by Bernard Bass (1985), offers a model of leadership that emphasizes inspiration, moral elevation, and organizational change. Its relevance to India's governance ecosystem lies in its potential to cultivate purpose-driven bureaucracies, ethical decision-making, and adaptive governance.

The Indian public sector faces systemic challenges: hierarchical decision-making, limited accountability, and inertia toward innovation (Sarkar, 2021). These are compounded by socio-political complexities that constrain administrative autonomy. However, India also possesses deep cultural and philosophical traditions that align with the essence of transformational leadership. The ancient Indian ideal of *Rajadharma*—the righteous duty of a leader to serve—reflects the transformational leader's moral responsibility toward societal welfare. Concepts such as *Seva* (selfless service) and *Karma Yoga* (duty without attachment to reward) parallel modern ideas of intrinsic motivation and servant leadership (Chatterjee & Kulkarni, 2020).

This convergence of modern leadership theory and traditional Indian ethos provides fertile ground for reimagining governance. The transformational leader, in the Indian context, is not merely a visionary strategist but a moral steward who mobilizes teams around collective purpose. The examples of E. Sreedharan, the “Metro Man of India,” and Dr. K. Radhakrishnan, former ISRO Chairman, embody this synthesis. Both demonstrated visionary leadership rooted in ethics, discipline, and collective pride—transforming institutions and inspiring national confidence.

At the systemic level, initiatives such as the **Swachh Bharat Mission**, **Digital India**, and **Aadhaar** reflect attempts at transformational governance—large-scale programs that required cross-sectoral collaboration, public engagement, and sustained behavioral change (Mehta, 2022). Such initiatives show how transformational leadership principles—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—can be embedded in the public administration machinery.

Despite these successes, academic attention to transformational leadership within India's public governance remains limited. Existing literature often focuses on corporate or educational sectors (Basu & Nayak, 2019). There is a pressing need to explore how bureaucratic leaders, ministers, and institutional heads in India internalize and apply transformational principles. This research therefore seeks to examine transformational leadership not as an imported management model, but as a culturally resonant and practically essential framework for ethical and effective governance.

The study pursues three guiding questions:

1. How does transformational leadership manifest within India's public sector and governance contexts?
2. What role do cultural and ethical traditions play in shaping transformational behaviors among Indian public leaders?
3. How can transformational leadership contribute to building resilient, citizen-centered governance systems?

Through an interpretive and qualitative lens, this paper aims to advance the discourse on leadership in governance by bridging theoretical understanding with real-world application. It argues that transformational leadership—anchored in moral purpose and collective vision—is key to revitalizing the Indian public sector, making it more adaptive, ethical, and people-focused in the face of 21st-century governance challenges.

Literature Review

The Evolution of Transformational Leadership Theory

The concept of **transformational leadership** originated from James MacGregor Burns' (1978) seminal work, *Leadership*, which distinguished between transactional and transformational forms of leadership. Burns defined transformational leaders as those who engage followers by raising their levels of motivation, morality, and purpose, thus transcending self-interest for the collective good. Building upon this foundation, Bernard M. Bass (1985) operationalized the concept, introducing the "Four I's": **Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration**. These dimensions articulate how transformational leaders not only achieve organizational goals but also transform the values and aspirations of their followers (Avolio & Bass, 1991).

Subsequent research positioned transformational leadership as a catalyst for change in dynamic and uncertain environments (Yukl, 2013). Unlike transactional leaders, who rely on rewards and punishments, transformational leaders cultivate trust, empower innovation, and align individual purpose with institutional vision. In governance contexts, this approach has been linked to improved decision-making, organizational learning, and ethical accountability (Trottier, Van Wart, & Wang, 2008). These outcomes are crucial for public institutions facing complex policy challenges and growing demands for transparency.

Transformational leadership thus represents a paradigm shift from control-based bureaucratic management to adaptive, collaborative, and purpose-driven leadership. This theoretical evolution sets the foundation for its contextualization within the Indian governance landscape—where the interplay between institutional structure and moral ethos defines leadership success.

Transformational Leadership in the Public Sector

In the public administration literature, transformational leadership has been associated with **public value creation** and **citizen trust**. Wright and Pandey (2010) observed that transformational leaders in government enhance employee engagement by linking organizational missions to social impact. Similarly, Trottier et al. (2008) found that federal employees' perceptions of leadership effectiveness were strongly correlated with transformational behaviors such as vision articulation, fairness, and encouragement of innovation.

In the public sector, the role of transformational leadership extends beyond organizational performance—it shapes the moral and developmental orientation of governance itself (Van Wart, 2013). Leaders in this domain operate under political scrutiny, limited resources, and rigid institutional structures, requiring higher degrees of vision, adaptability, and moral courage. Transformational leadership therefore provides a behavioral model that supports reform-oriented governance—balancing political accountability with ethical stewardship (Fernandez & Moldogaziev, 2013).

Studies in various contexts—such as Singapore, South Korea, and New Zealand—demonstrate how transformational leaders can modernize bureaucracies while maintaining public trust (Park & Rainey, 2008). In India, however, such transformations face greater complexity due

to hierarchical culture, politicization of bureaucracy, and the legacy of colonial administrative norms (Mishra & Banerjee, 2019). This makes the study of transformational leadership in Indian governance not just relevant but necessary for systemic reform.

The Indian Context: Leadership, Bureaucracy, and Governance

India's governance ecosystem is characterized by its vast administrative machinery, federal structure, and deep social diversity. The Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and other civil services play a central role in policy formulation and implementation. However, these institutions often struggle with rigid hierarchies, procedural delays, and limited innovation incentives (Rao, 2020).

Transformational leadership in this context requires a shift from rule-based administration to purpose-driven governance. Leaders who inspire through vision, ethical conduct, and empowerment can reshape public institutions to be more responsive and transparent. For instance, **E. Sreedharan's leadership of the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC)** exemplified transformational change. His disciplined, ethical, and mission-driven approach not only delivered a world-class metro system but also instilled a culture of integrity and efficiency within a government entity (Banerjee, 2017).

Similarly, **Dr. K. Radhakrishnan's leadership at the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** demonstrated how transformational values—humility, intellectual rigor, and collective pride—can motivate high-performance teams in a public institution (Rao, 2018). These examples reflect a distinct “Indian model” of transformational leadership: one that integrates moral conviction (*Dharma*) with visionary execution.

Integrating Indian Philosophical and Ethical Traditions

Indian philosophy offers a profound moral foundation for transformational leadership. Ancient texts such as the *Bhagavad Gita* emphasize selfless action (*Karma Yoga*), ethical duty (*Dharma*), and detachment from personal gain—principles that resonate with transformational leadership's emphasis on intrinsic motivation and service orientation (Parameswaran, 2020).

The concept of *Seva* (service) reinforces the idea that leadership is not a position of privilege but a moral responsibility to uplift others. In public service, this aligns closely with Burns's (1978) view that leadership must elevate both leaders and followers to higher levels of morality and motivation. Indian administrative leaders who embody *Seva*-based leadership often demonstrate humility, empathy, and moral conviction—traits that strengthen citizen trust and institutional legitimacy.

Moreover, Indian spiritual traditions advocate *Sattvic* leadership—leadership grounded in balance, clarity, and ethical wisdom (Chakraborty & Chakraborty, 2019). This model parallels Bass's (1985) idea of *Idealized Influence*, where leaders act as moral exemplars who inspire respect and emulation. In the Indian governance context, the synthesis of transformational theory with *Sattvic* and *Karmic* principles creates a culturally resonant leadership framework that transcends instrumental management practices.

Transformational Leadership in Indian Governance Reforms

Transformational leadership has been instrumental in driving several governance reforms in India over the past two decades. Programs such as **Swachh Bharat Mission**, **Digital India**, and **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana** exemplify large-scale initiatives that relied on vision, citizen engagement, and innovation. Each required leader who could mobilize diverse stakeholders, inspire collective ownership, and navigate institutional resistance (Mehta, 2022).

The **Swachh Bharat Mission**, launched in 2014, transformed sanitation from a policy issue into a national movement. The success of this campaign was not purely administrative—it hinged on leaders at every level communicating a shared vision, fostering public participation, and modeling behavior change (Gupta & Sinha, 2021). Similarly, **Digital India** demonstrated how strategic vision and cross-sectoral collaboration could redefine governance delivery, bridging the gap between citizens and state institutions through technology-enabled empowerment (Prakash, 2020).

These initiatives reveal that transformational leadership in governance is not limited to individuals at the top; it can cascade across administrative hierarchies through purpose-driven narratives, decentralized empowerment, and moral commitment to public welfare.

Challenges and Barriers to Transformational Leadership in India

While India offers compelling examples of transformational leadership, systemic barriers remain. The persistence of bureaucratic silos, politicization, and procedural rigidity inhibits innovation and adaptability (Sarkar, 2021). Leadership development in the public sector often focuses on compliance and control rather than creativity and collaboration (Bhattacharya, 2018).

Moreover, risk aversion—stemming from fear of audit or political backlash—discourages experimentation. Transformational leadership requires psychological safety and trust, both of which are often constrained in hierarchical public systems. Gender and diversity gaps further limit the leadership pipeline, preventing broader representation and inclusivity (Mehrotra, 2022).

Addressing these barriers demands not only structural reform but also cultural transformation. Embedding transformational principles in training programs—such as those offered by the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA)—can nurture a new generation of ethical, empathetic, and innovative public leaders (Rao, 2020). Institutionalizing such leadership behaviors would support India's transition toward responsive and resilient governance.

Synthesis: Toward a Model of Transformational Governance

The literature suggests that transformational leadership, when contextualized within India's ethical and administrative traditions, has the potential to redefine governance. It moves beyond performance metrics to focus on *values-based transformation*—creating institutions that are morally grounded, citizen-centric, and future-ready.

An integrated model of **Transformational Governance in India** would combine:

1. **Visionary Leadership** – crafting shared national and institutional goals.
2. **Ethical Stewardship** – ensuring transparency, integrity, and moral accountability.

3. **Participatory Empowerment** – engaging citizens and employees in co-creation.
4. **Adaptive Innovation** – fostering continuous learning and experimentation.
5. **Cultural Resonance** – aligning leadership practice with Indian philosophical values.

Such a model positions transformational leadership not as a Western import, but as a natural evolution of India's civilizational ethos—where governance is seen as *Seva* and leadership as *Dharma*.

Theoretical Framework

Transformational leadership theory provides a foundational lens for understanding how leaders influence change within complex organizational systems. According to Bass (1985) and Avolio and Bass (1991), transformational leadership consists of **four interrelated components**—**Idealized Influence**, **Inspirational Motivation**, **Intellectual Stimulation**, and **Individualized Consideration**—collectively known as the “Four I's.” These dimensions capture how leaders move beyond transactional exchanges to transform the values, motivations, and performance of their followers.

- **Idealized Influence** refers to leaders serving as role models, demonstrating integrity and ethical conviction that earn the respect and trust of followers.
- **Inspirational Motivation** involves articulating a compelling vision and purpose that inspires followers to transcend self-interest.
- **Intellectual Stimulation** encourages creativity and problem-solving by challenging established norms and assumptions.
- **Individualized Consideration** reflects a leader's attention to personal development and well-being of each follower.

In public administration, these four components foster **collective commitment, innovation, and moral governance**—key to transforming bureaucratic cultures into dynamic, citizen-responsive institutions (Trottier et al., 2008).

When contextualized within India's governance landscape, the Four I's can be reinterpreted through indigenous ethical frameworks. *Idealized Influence* parallels the Indian concept of *Dharma* (righteous conduct), emphasizing moral legitimacy. *Inspirational Motivation* aligns with *Seva* (service), inspiring public servants to act selflessly. *Intellectual Stimulation* resonates with *Viveka* (discernment), promoting wisdom-led decision-making, while *Individualized Consideration* reflects *Karuna* (compassion), fostering empathy in leadership (Chatterjee & Kulkarni, 2020; Parameswaran, 2020).

By integrating Bass's model with these cultural constructs, a **Transformational Governance Framework for India** emerges—one that merges managerial excellence with ethical consciousness. This hybrid model underpins the paper's analytical approach to examining leadership cases within the Indian public sector.

Methodology

This study adopts a **qualitative, interpretive research design**, suitable for exploring leadership behaviors and governance dynamics that cannot be easily quantified. The goal is to contextualize

transformational leadership within India's public institutions, drawing from real-world examples of reform-oriented leadership.

Research Design

A **multi-case qualitative analysis** approach was used to identify patterns of transformational leadership behavior across selected Indian governance contexts. The cases were chosen for their demonstrable leadership-driven impact and diversity of administrative domains.

Case Selection

Three illustrative cases were analyzed:

1. **E. Sreedharan and the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC)** – exemplifying disciplined ethical leadership in large-scale infrastructure delivery.
2. **Dr. K. Radhakrishnan and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** – demonstrating transformational leadership in scientific innovation and institutional resilience.
3. **Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)** – representing a governance-level transformation driven by participatory vision and behavioral change.

These cases collectively provide insight into leadership across hierarchical, technical, and participatory governance dimensions.

Data Sources

Data were collected from **secondary sources**, including peer-reviewed journals, government reports, leadership interviews, and media archives. Document analysis was conducted on official publications (e.g., DMRC annual reports, ISRO communications, SBM evaluations).

Analytical Approach

Thematic analysis was used to identify manifestations of the Four I's within the case narratives. The analysis focused on:

- (a) Leadership behavior and values,
- (b) Organizational transformation outcomes, and
- (c) Ethical and cultural dimensions of governance.

Credibility was enhanced through **triangulation** of multiple sources and **pattern matching** across cases (Yin, 2018). The qualitative design enables both theoretical and practical insights into how transformational leadership operates within India's public governance ecosystem.

Analysis and Discussion

Case 1: E. Sreedharan and the Delhi Metro – Discipline, Integrity, and Vision

The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) stands as one of India's most successful examples of public sector transformation. Under the leadership of **E. Sreedharan**, DMRC achieved world-class execution standards despite bureaucratic constraints. Sreedharan's leadership demonstrated **Idealized Influence** through personal integrity and incorruptibility, setting ethical benchmarks for

public service (Banerjee, 2017). His insistence on transparency, punctuality, and accountability created a culture of professionalism previously unseen in Indian public enterprises.

Inspirational Motivation was evident in the way he articulated a vision of punctual, safe, and citizen-friendly transport that instilled pride among employees. He empowered engineers and managers to take ownership of outcomes, demonstrating **Intellectual Stimulation** by fostering problem-solving autonomy. Sreedharan's leadership went beyond project management—it redefined what public sector leadership could achieve through discipline anchored in moral purpose (*Dharma*). The Delhi Metro's timely completion and efficiency became a national symbol of ethical governance and transformational leadership.

Case 2: Dr. K. Radhakrishnan and ISRO – Visionary Science and Human Values

At the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), **Dr. K. Radhakrishnan** exemplified transformational leadership through humility, collective inspiration, and emotional intelligence. Under his tenure, ISRO achieved major milestones, including the **Mars Orbiter Mission (Mangalyaan)**, executed with minimal cost and maximum innovation.

Radhakrishnan's **Inspirational Motivation** was reflected in his ability to link scientific achievement with national pride and moral duty. He infused a sense of purpose, portraying space research as a mission of service to humanity rather than mere technological pursuit (Rao, 2018). His **Individualized Consideration** was visible in his attention to nurturing young scientists, promoting teamwork, and recognizing contributions at all levels.

Intellectual Stimulation was embedded in ISRO's culture of learning from failures—a crucial shift from blame to reflection. This aligns with Bass's transformational principle of fostering creativity and risk-taking. By merging scientific rigor with ethical grounding, Radhakrishnan built an organizational ethos centered on integrity, curiosity, and service, reinforcing India's identity as a knowledge-driven, value-based society.

Case 3: Swachh Bharat Mission – Transformational Governance at Scale

The **Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)** launched in 2014 epitomized transformational governance. It shifted sanitation from a technical policy issue to a national behavioral movement. The program's success depended not merely on administrative execution but on **visionary communication and motivation**—hallmarks of transformational leadership (Gupta & Sinha, 2021).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership in framing SBM as a patriotic duty galvanized collective action, while thousands of local administrators became agents of change. **Inspirational Motivation** was achieved through storytelling, symbolism, and moral appeal. Leaders encouraged **Intellectual Stimulation** by promoting innovation in waste management and behavioral science. The campaign's emotional connection—linking cleanliness to dignity and pride—reflects **Idealized Influence**. Moreover, its decentralized implementation allowed district officials to adapt strategies to local contexts, demonstrating **Individualized Consideration** at the governance level. The result was a rare convergence of leadership, citizen participation, and moral awakening—illustrating how transformational leadership principles can cascade across a vast administrative system.

Cross-Case Synthesis

Across all three cases, four consistent themes emerge:

1. Ethical Integrity as Leadership Core

All leaders demonstrated moral consistency, aligning actions with values. This resonates with the Indian ideal of *Dharma*, making ethical conduct the cornerstone of legitimacy.

2. Vision as a Mobilizing Force

Transformational leaders in India frame change not merely as efficiency but as moral progress—linking professional performance with national purpose.

3. Empowerment Through Trust

Delegation, autonomy, and shared ownership featured prominently. Leaders cultivated trust by empowering followers, reducing fear, and encouraging innovation.

4. Cultural Embeddedness

Indian transformational leadership uniquely integrates spirituality, humility, and service orientation—elements often absent in Western frameworks. This synthesis enhances resonance within India's socio-cultural milieu.

Challenges and Contradictions

While these cases highlight success, they also reveal challenges. Transformational leaders in India often operate **in isolation**, succeeding despite systemic inertia rather than because of it (Sarkar, 2021). Institutional rigidity, frequent political transfers, and bureaucratic caution inhibit sustained transformation. Additionally, the **charisma-dependence** of transformational leadership raises concerns of institutional continuity—what happens when the leader exits? (Wright & Pandey, 2010).

There is also a tension between **ethical conviction and administrative conformity**. Leaders who challenge entrenched norms risk marginalization. Thus, embedding transformational leadership within institutional systems, rather than individual heroism, remains the next frontier for governance reform.

Toward Sustainable Transformational Governance

For transformational leadership to become systemic in India's governance, three enabling conditions are vital:

1. **Leadership Development Programs** – Incorporate transformational frameworks and mindfulness training into civil service academies like LBSNAA and IIPA.
2. **Cultural Reinforcement** – Promote values-based storytelling within institutions, aligning daily practice with *Dharma* and *Seva*.
3. **Institutional Design for Innovation** – Create safe spaces for experimentation, decentralized decision-making, and adaptive learning.

Transformational governance thus represents a shift from rule-following to purpose-driven administration—a model where leaders see governance as a moral enterprise, not just a managerial one.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings from the preceding analysis underscore that transformational leadership can play a pivotal role in reshaping the Indian public sector into an agile, ethical, and citizen-oriented governance ecosystem. For policymakers, administrators, and leadership trainers, the implications are multifold, cutting across institutional design, administrative culture, and leadership development strategies.

Embedding Transformational Leadership in Public Administration

A major implication is the need to embed transformational leadership principles directly within the structure and processes of Indian bureaucracy. Public institutions often prioritize compliance, hierarchy, and procedural correctness, while transformational leadership encourages **creativity, collaboration, and ethical innovation**. Bridging these paradigms requires policy reforms that incentivize outcome-oriented behavior, teamwork, and moral decision-making.

The **Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT)** and civil service academies such as **Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA)** could incorporate modules on transformational leadership, emotional intelligence, and mindfulness into their core training curricula. This would shift the emphasis from administrative control to visionary engagement. Research shows that when civil servants are empowered to act with purpose and autonomy, service delivery and citizen satisfaction improve significantly (Kaur & Gupta, 2022).

Fostering Ethical Governance through Leadership Values

Transformational leaders anchor their actions in integrity and ethical purpose—qualities that are essential for restoring public trust in governance. The Indian administrative tradition, historically influenced by Weberian bureaucracy, has tended to separate efficiency from ethics. However, modern governance challenges—such as corruption, digital privacy, and environmental justice—demand leadership that integrates **ethical reflection with decision-making** (Kumar & Sengupta, 2021).

To this end, ethics-oriented leadership frameworks should be institutionalized across ministries and state departments. Annual leadership assessments could include indicators for ethical influence, citizen engagement, and team empowerment—not merely administrative compliance. Mentoring systems that pair senior transformational leaders with younger officers could accelerate the diffusion of value-based governance practices.

Cross-Sectoral and Collaborative Leadership

In the 21st century, governance increasingly occurs through collaboration among government, private, and civil society actors. Transformational leadership provides a framework for aligning diverse stakeholders around shared goals. The success of the **Swachh Bharat Mission**, for instance, depended on partnerships with NGOs, local governments, and citizens—enabled by visionary storytelling and moral framing.

Policy programs can institutionalize such cross-sectoral collaboration through **Leadership Convergence Platforms (LCPs)**—forums where administrators, innovators, and community leaders co-create solutions. These should be integrated within NITI Aayog and state planning bodies to strengthen participatory governance.

By encouraging **collective visioning** and **adaptive leadership**, India can transition from government-led projects to **governance-led missions**, emphasizing purpose and partnership over procedure.

Building Leadership Resilience and Mindfulness

Indian transformational leadership often draws strength from spiritual and emotional intelligence. Practices rooted in *Yoga*, *Dhyana* (meditation), and *Karma Yoga* can help leaders develop the composure and clarity required to navigate uncertainty. Incorporating mindfulness programs within bureaucratic leadership development could enhance focus, empathy, and stress resilience (Bhatia & Singh, 2020).

International examples—such as mindfulness-based leadership initiatives in the UK's civil service—demonstrate improved emotional regulation and ethical decision-making. In India, such approaches can build on indigenous traditions to foster **inner transformation alongside institutional transformation**.

Leadership for Innovation and Digital Governance

Transformational leadership also aligns naturally with the goals of **Digital India** and the broader digital transformation of governance. Visionary leaders who embrace intellectual stimulation and empowerment can help bureaucracies adopt emerging technologies while safeguarding inclusivity and ethics.

For instance, district administrators leading digital inclusion drives often act as local transformational leaders—motivating staff, guiding behavioral change, and framing technology adoption as public empowerment rather than compliance (Singh, 2022). Policy frameworks should therefore link **leadership innovation incentives** to digital governance outcomes.

Gender-Inclusive and Diversity-Driven Leadership

Finally, transformational leadership principles—especially individualized consideration and empathy—offer a foundation for gender-inclusive governance. Indian public administration remains male-dominated, but emerging women leaders have demonstrated exceptional transformational traits.

Figures like **Dr. Tessy Thomas** (DRDO) and **Durga Shakti Nagpal** (IAS) illustrate how emotional intelligence, ethical courage, and participatory engagement enhance administrative legitimacy. Leadership programs must therefore incorporate diversity sensitization and promote inclusive leadership pipelines.

Such gender-inclusive approaches would not only democratize leadership but also strengthen transformational capacities across the governance system.

Conclusion

Transformational leadership, when contextualized within India's unique socio-cultural and administrative landscape, provides a powerful framework for ethical and effective governance. This study has demonstrated that transformational leadership in the Indian public sector is not merely an adaptation of Western models but a culturally rooted practice that harmonizes vision, values, and action.

The case studies of E. Sreedharan, Dr. K. Radhakrishnan, and the Swachh Bharat Mission reveal that **leadership grounded in moral conviction and collective purpose** can achieve large-scale transformation even within bureaucratic constraints. Such leadership does not rely on charisma alone but on disciplined integrity, service orientation, and empowerment of others.

At its core, transformational leadership in India resonates deeply with indigenous philosophical principles such as *Dharma* (righteous duty), *Seva* (selfless service), and *Karma Yoga* (action with detachment). This moral foundation distinguishes it from transactional or purely managerial approaches and situates it as a **spiritual-ethical model of governance**.

However, institutionalizing this leadership style across India's public sector requires deliberate policy interventions—particularly in leadership training, ethics-based evaluation, and collaborative mission structures. By fostering environments that encourage reflection, empathy, and innovation, India can move toward a governance model where transformation is not imposed but inspired.

Ultimately, transformational leadership offers India a pathway to reimagine governance as a **moral enterprise of national service**, capable of uniting administrative efficiency with human dignity. As the world confronts complex crises—climate change, inequality, and digital disruption—India's culturally grounded approach to transformational governance can serve as a global model for balancing ethical consciousness with developmental ambition.

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Quiet Strength
Emotional Intelligence

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Introduction

It was one of those mornings when everything seemed to go wrong. The project report was delayed, two team members had a disagreement, and the client meeting loomed like a storm cloud over the horizon. Yet, amidst the commotion, Maya, the project lead, walked into the office calm and unhurried. She listened to both sides of the argument, asked a few thoughtful questions, and somehow, by the end of that hour, everyone seemed lighter. The tension had melted, the plan was back on track, and the team — though tired — felt understood.

Later that day, someone asked her, “How do you stay so composed when things are falling apart?” Maya smiled. “It’s not about staying calm,” she said. “It’s about understanding what’s really happening — inside you and around you.”

That quiet strength Maya showed was not a trick of temperament or luck; it was Emotional Intelligence (EI) in action. EI is often an invisible but powerful force that shapes how we understand ourselves, relate to others, and respond to life’s challenges.

The Emotion behind the Mind

Emotional Intelligence, or EI, isn’t a new concept, though it is one of the most misunderstood. For decades, society glorified Intelligence Quotient (IQ) — the kind of intelligence that could be measured in test scores and degrees. But as Daniel Goleman pointed out in the 1990s; success in life rarely depends on intellect alone.

Think of the people you admire most. They’re not just smart people — they make others around them feel valued, seen, and motivated. They can read a room, calm a crisis, and turn conflict into cooperation. These are not technical abilities; these are emotional competencies. Emotional Intelligence is what helps us recognize our own feelings, manage them instead of being managed by them, understand the emotions of others, and navigate relationships with grace. It’s the wisdom of the heart guiding the intellect of the mind. EI allows us to take action instead of reacting to circumstances around us.

Maya’s lesson in Self-awareness

A few days after the project’s success, Maya was giving feedback to one of her team members, Rohan. She noticed he looked defensive, his arms crossed, his tone clipped. Instead of pushing through the meeting, she paused and mentioned gently, “Rohan, I am sorry, I sense you’re upset. I should have checked with you before. Is this a bad time to talk?”

That simple acknowledgment shifted the energy. Rohan opened up. He admitted to feeling overwhelmed — not by her feedback, but by his workload. Rest of the meeting, Maya only listened and allowed Rohan to vent. The closure can happen tomorrow; today she was being what Rohan required her to be; for him to return to the mental frame of seeking a solution.

In that moment, Maya's self-awareness saved the conversation. She had recognized her own tone, noticed the reaction it caused, and adjusted course. That's what self-awareness looks like — the courage to pause before reacting, to see emotion as information rather than interference and to not judge it.

Regulating the Storm within

But awareness alone isn't enough. The next challenge is regulation — the ability to manage emotions when they surge like waves.

Maya hadn't always been good at this. In her early years, she used to react quickly — a sharp email here, a cold silence there — whenever she felt frustrated. It took time and honest reflection to learn that emotional control wasn't suppression. It was the art of staying centered in the middle of chaos.

Now, when she felt irritation rising, she looked away from her screen, used breathing techniques to centre her and revisited the distressing issue when her mind was clear.

The problem rarely seemed as big once the heat fades.

Emotional regulation isn't about ignoring emotions — it's about respecting them enough to respond wisely.



The Fire within: Motivation

Emotionally intelligent people are not driven by external validation; they thrive once they resonate with the purpose.

For Maya, success wasn't about titles or praise. It was about making a difference through her work. Even when projects got messy, she stayed motivated because she saw meaning in what she did. Her energy came from within. That intrinsic motivation — the inner fire — helped her persevere through setbacks with optimism rather than cynicism.

EI does not mean one has to wait for the perfect conditions to feel inspired. EI allows to

usher inspiration into imperfect conditions.

Empathy: The Core of Connection

One evening, Maya received a call from a junior team member, Aisha, who had made a major mistake in a client presentation. Aisha was in tears, expecting reprimand. Instead, Maya listened patiently. She didn't rush to fix it or blame her. She simply said, "Hmmm. Thank you for your honesty. We will talk about this later. For now, let's see what we can do to sort this out together."

A week later, Aisha delivered her next presentation flawlessly — not out of fear, but confidence. What changed wasn't her skill, but the emotional space Maya gave her to learn and recover.

Maya used Empathy to not just understanding Aisha's feelings, but honouring them. Empathy is what allows Leaders, Parents, and Friends to connect in a way that transforms rather than operating from judgement.

Social Grace: The Invisible Bridge

In meetings, Maya had a knack for making everyone feel heard. She drew out the quiet ones, diffuse tensions with humour, and reminded the team of their shared goals. Her social skills were not charisma in the flashy sense — they were quiet attunement to others' emotions. When a colleague once asked her secret, she replied, "People just want to feel respected. When you make space for their emotions, cooperation follows naturally."

EI in relationships (personal or professional) acts like engine oil — unseen but essential. It keeps the gears of collaboration running smoothly, even when the work gets tough.

The Science behind the Art

Emotions originate in the Brain's Limbic system, especially the **Amygdala**, the centre of emotional impulses (like fear or anger).

The **Prefrontal Cortex** responsible for reasoning and planning, acts as a counterbalance regulating emotional impulses.

When emotional intelligence is high, these two regions communicate effectively. We feel emotions fully but respond to them thoughtfully. We become more balanced; using emotions as signals, not dictators.

The Digital Conundrum

In today's digital world, EI is being tested like never before.

Messages are typed, not spoken.

Reactions are reduced to emojis.

Misunderstandings multiply.

The need for Empathy, Awareness, and Connection has only deepened. Maya's team, like many others, is in the hybrid work mode. May has nurtured the habit of starting the day with a virtual

team meeting just to check on people and has ensured everyone attends the meeting. This meeting is not only about tasks, but about providing the Human Connection. It's a small act, but it goes a long way in the digital space.

In a world obsessed with speed, EI reminds us to slow down and actively listen.

The Enduring Lesson

Years later, when Maya was promoted to a Senior Leadership role, her team organized a small farewell. There were some tears, some hugs; but the most common sentiment expressed in the notes of gratitude was; May didn't just lead the team; she really understood what made them tick.

That's the essence of EI...Understanding. The kind of understanding that is not derived from logic alone, but the kind born from Empathy, Awareness, and Presence.

EI allows a Leader to Inspire; a Parent to Nurture; a Friend to Heal, and a Person to Grow.
EI isn't a skill you master once; it's a lifelong practice — a gentle tuning of the mind and heart. It asks us to...

Look inward before we reach outward;
Understand before we respond
Connect before we Command.

The smartest people in any room are not those with the highest IQ, but those with the warmest understanding like Maya.



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