

Visualizing the Landscape of Social Identity Leadership: A Bibliometric Analysis

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Article Info

Volume 83

Page Number: 871 - 881

Publication Issue:

May-June 2020

Abstract:

Post 2005 there has been a surge in research on social identity leadership. This has led to advances in the area with researchers examining this approach from a wide range of perspectives. There has been some qualitative work and large-scale empirical work in the area but there remains a need to complement this with a quantitative review of literature in the area. This bibliometric analysis is an attempt to portray the landscape of research in this area and to highlight the research trajectory over the last decade by using bibliographic coupling, co-citation and co-occurrence analyses. The visualization tool Vos Viewer was used for the analysis. 302 publications in the area were collected as a sample using the Scopus database as a source for the years from 2009 to 2019 in the category of “business, management and accounting” to serve as a base to understand the research landscape. Prominent researchers, popularly cited papers and journals with major publications in the area are identified. We also discuss some insights based on our bibliometric analysis and highlight research trends in the area.

Article History

Article Received: 11 August 2019

Revised: 18 November 2019

Accepted: 23 January 2020

Publication: 09 May 2020

Keywords: Public Accounting, State Accounting, State Financial Statement, Vietnam

JEL Classification Code: G18, M38, M48, M40

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is centred on the ability to influence others. The insight that social identity leadership can be a source of social influence has drawn much research attention to the area (Gaffney et al., 2018). The social identity leadership theory posits that people's sense of shared identity can be a way to influence them but leaders can yield this influence only when they embody the group attributes. This makes prototypical leaders more effective (Tang, 2019; Manoharan, & Singal, 2019).

Researchers have used several theoretical models to better understand leadership in the context of organizational effectiveness (Tang, 2019). Several theories based on traits, behaviours, social exchange, etc. have been used to understand leadership (Lemoine et al., 2019). There have been more than 49 approaches in published research to study leadership (Meuser et al., 2016). But still

commentators have pointed out that the area is only moderately understood (Eva et al., 2019).

Despite the different approaches to study leadership, researchers are in agreement that effective leaders motivate followers to achieve common organizational objectives (Burton et al., 2019). Some researchers proposed that leadership research has overlooked the implications of the shared group membership context when studying leader effectiveness (Sweeney et al., 2019). Leaders are members of organizations as well as groups that they lead. So group membership is an important factor to consider (Slater et al., 2019). Today organizations are centred on teams (Salanova, et al., 2017) and it is crucial to understand leadership taking into consideration group perceptions and identities (Steffens et al., 2019) in today's business environment.

Researchers have extensively reviewed literature in the area of leadership (Zhu et al., 2019). There have been numerous reviews on leadership research (e.g. Dinh et al., 2014; Day & Antonakis, 2012; Gardner et al., 2010) but most of the reviews take a qualitative approach to reviewing the literature. More recently the review by Zhu et al. (2019) took a bibliometric analysis approach to review literature in the area of leadership. In this paper, a similar bibliometric analysis approach is adopted but on a more micro area of social identity leadership.

Bibliometric analysis allows for a quantitative evaluation of research in the area (Chatterjee, & Sahasranamam, 2018). This analysis can help researchers study the evolution of research in the area as well as validate the qualitative analysis (Kozlowski, Chen, & Salas, 2017). Social identity leadership is an emerging research area and can benefit from the use of bibliographic analysis to understand how research in this area is shaping up. Visualization tools like the VoSViewer provide a rigorous way to understand the research landscape (Van Eck and Waltman, 2009).

In this review, we aim to portray the research landscape for social identity leadership with the aim to detect emerging research areas. We have reviewed a decade of research publications (from January 2009 to September 2019) from the Scopus database. VoSViewer, visualization tool was used to identify, quantify and visualize the landscape of research in the area as well as to examine how research in this area is evolving.

The paper is structured as follows. The next section gives a brief overview of the social identity leadership. The section after that presents the methodological procedures followed. The section after that maps the field by presenting the results of the bibliographic coupling, co-citation analyses as well as co-occurrence analyses. The last section concludes the study by highlighting the analyses and suggesting avenues for future research.

2. Social Identity Leadership: An overview

Research has examined leadership as an individual level construct with studies focusing on the personal traits, characteristics as well as competencies of effective leaders (Park et al., 2018). There has also been some research that has studied leadership as a dyadic construct, focusing on the relationship between the leader and the follower and the dynamics of the relationship (Antonakis & Day, 2017). A perspective that is now gaining attention focuses on placing psychological group membership at the centre of the study of leadership (Van Kippenberg & Hogg, 2003). The approach, the Social Identity approach to leadership (SIL), explores leadership from a social influence perspective structured around group memberships (Van Dick et al., 2018). It states that the leader also is a part of the group and can be seen as a prototype of both in and out group members (Hogg, 2016). This can be a source of collective identity (Lee, Park, & Koo, 2015) for group members increasing the influence of the leader and thus increasing leader effectiveness.

The Social Identity Leadership approach is based on two theories: the social identity theory (e.g. Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and the self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987; Turner, 1985). This Theory was first proposed by van Knippenberg and Hogg (2003) to better understand leadership effectiveness in organizations. They stated that

As group members identify more strongly with their group and group membership becomes more salient, leadership perceptions, evaluations, and effectiveness become increasingly based on: (a) how group prototypical the leader is perceived to be; and (b) the extent to which the leader is perceived to act with the group's best interest in mind. (i.e., is group-oriented; van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2003, pp. 250-251)

The social identity theory states that individuals develop a sense of identity based on factors that are both unique to them as well as those they have in common with other group members. This leadership theory is built around the premise that leadership revolves around a sense of shared membership between the leader and followers (Van Dick, 2018). This sense of shared identity can be central to the understanding of leadership (Van Dick et al., 2018). Leaders that are more aligned to the shared identity with the group members have higher effectiveness and influence over followers. Identity prototypically is one of the key constructs in social identity leadership. The self-categorization theory posits that prototypical group characteristics are internalized so that they appear as self-characteristics. As a result matters relating to the group are perceived as relating to the self. The more the identification with the group the higher is the similarity of the individual with/higher is the conformity to the group prototype.

There is empirical evidence that the social identity approach to leadership is an important approach to understanding leader effectiveness across contexts (see Steffens et al., 2014a; Haslam et al., 2011). Researchers (Subašić, Reynolds, Turner, Veenstra, & Haslam, 2011; Geissner & van Knippenberg, 2008; van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005) have shown that individuals who are seen as representing the in-group are reported to be more trustworthy, influential, and also effective.

Early research in the area focused on leader-identity prototypicality (Steffens et al., 2014a) as well as understanding leader-identity formation (eg. Nyberg & Sveningsson, 2014; Steffens et al., 2014). In the past two years (since 2017) however, researchers have explored how social identity leadership can be used to better understand the influence of other leadership aspects like other leadership styles (Roof et al., 2018; Gumusluoglu et al., 2017; Cassar et al., 2017), coaching (Cummins et al., 2017) and interfirm leadership (Smith, et al., 2018; Hao et al., 2017). Researchers (Worley, 2019; Kwok et al.,

2018) have also studied how social identity leadership can be used as a framework to better understand leader emergence.

The Social identity approach to leadership is a contemporary leadership approach and research in the area has increased exponentially in the past decade. Given that this is an emerging area of research, application of bibliometric analysis can help explore research activity in the different areas and identify influential authors, journals and publications. This can serve as a base for current and future researchers to identify areas for making research contributions as well as identifying gaps in research that should be addressed.

3. Bibliometric Method

Bibliometric analysis involves the analysis of publications and respective citations so as to give data about the focus of research in the area, to explore the work of researchers, journals, institutes as well as countries (Ferreira, 2018). Bibliometric analysis involves a number of different methods to evaluate the research. One of them is bibliographic coupling. This is the case when two publications cite a common publication in their references. This is indicative of the fact that the two publications are in a related subject area. The more common the citations between publications, the higher is the coupling strength (cf. Martyn, 1964). One of the criticisms of this method is that two publications on unrelated research areas can cite a common article (Ferreira, 2018). Also this method is retrospective in its view on the research area. Co-citation is the case when two publications are independently cited by more than one publication (Ferreira, 2018). This is a forward-looking method and also is a better indicator of similarity (cf. Small, 1973). Using both these complementary methods in the paper allows for a more well-rounded study of literature in the area. This analysis is used to identify clusters of articles on social identity leadership, identify influential authors in the research area and explore the network of authorship.

Bibliometric maps were created by using VosViewer (www.vosviewer.com). VoSViewer is a tool that can be used for Bibliometric mapping. It can be used to create maps based on the content of materials or based on networks (Van Eck & Waltman, 2010). This is especially useful for visualizing large maps in the form of easy clusters. This enables identification of potentially emerging ideas in a field of research. These maps are created on the basis of co-occurrence matrix, which is based on a similarity matrix of strength measure (van Eck and Waltman, 2007).

Data for use in the VoSViewer was obtained from the Scopus database. This database contains details of thousands of publications including the author details, citations, etc. There are several other databases like Web of Science that could have been used instead. But the Scopus database was used since in the area of leadership it has a larger number of indexed publications. The sample included all the publications in all sources in this area. The search terms used were “social identity” and “leadership”. The search generated 1844 documents. Then those documents that were in the category of business, management and accounting” between the years of 2009-2019 were filtered and selected. This brought down the number of publications to 302. Of these, 96 publications have been in the last 3 years (2017 onwards).

4. Bibliometric Analyses and Results

4.1. Bibliographic coupling and Citation Links of the Publications

Two publications are said to be bibliographically coupled if both the publications have cited a third publication (Kessler, 1963). To put it simply, an overlap of references is evaluated in this case.

Research interest in the area of social identity leadership has seen a steady growth over the years. In the last three years there have been over 100 papers published in the area. With 38 papers being published till October for 2019 and 50 papers published in the preceding year (i.e. 2018). It can be

seen that post 2015 there has been a spike in research in this area. And a large part of the research has explored the application and use of social identity leadership in organizational settings.

Bibliographic coupling of articles: The minimum number of citations selected for each publication was 50. Of the 326 publications, 29 publications met the threshold. The software calculated the total strength of the bibliographic coupling links with other publications. The document with the greatest total link strength was Van Kippenberg (2011) with 115 citations and a link strength of 234.

The 5 studies with the most number of citations are as under:

- Van Kippenberg, D. (2011). Embodying who we are: Leader group prototypicality and leadership effectiveness. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22(6), 1078-1091.
- Hirst, G., Van Dick, R., & Van Kippenberg, D. (2009). A social identity perspective on leadership and employee creativity. *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, 30(7), 963-982.
- Steffens, N. K., Haslam, S. A., Reicher, S. D., Platow, M. J., Fransen, K., Yang, J., ... & Boen, F. (2014a). Leadership as social identity management: Introducing the Identity Leadership Inventory (ILI) to assess and validate a four-dimensional model. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 25(5), 1001-1024.
- Steffens, N. K., Haslam, S. A., & Reicher, S. D. (2014). Up close and personal: Evidence that shared social identity is a basis for the ‘special’ relationship that binds followers to leaders. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 25(2), 296-313.
- Hogg, M. A., Van Kippenberg, D., & Rast III, D. E. (2012). Intergroup leadership in organizations: Leading across group and

organizational boundaries. *Academy of Management Review*, 37(2), 232-255.

2016 onwards the number of publications in the area has doubled. Since work in this area was previously scarce the recent publications have had to cite the previous publications available. Also previous research is the theoretical base for the empirical research that followed it in the latter part of the decade.

4.2. Co-citation of articles

Two publications are co-cited when they both are cited by a third publication (Marshakova, 1973). Thus, co-citation analysis examines the relationship between publications. After examining the 326 articles in the sample, and applying a minimum threshold of 10 citations a cited reference is considered. The final set had 15 publications. Three sets emerge in this case. The sets are almost equal in size. One set is of five items each and two sets have four items.

The publications in the two largest sets are as below:

Set 1: (5 publications)

Brown, M. E, Trevino, L.K., Harrison, D.A., (2005) Ethical Leadership: A Social Learning Perspective for Construct Development and Testing, *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 97 (2), pp. 117-134

Derue, D.S., Ashford, S.J., (2010) Who Will Lead And Who Will Follow? A Social Process of Leadership Identity Construction In Organizations, *Academy of Management Review*, 35 (4), pp. 627-647

Hogg, M.A., (2001) A Social Identity Theory of Leadership, *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 5 (3), pp. 184-200

Riketta, M., (2005) Organizational Identification: A Meta-analysis, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 66 (2), pp. 358-384

Van Knippenberg, D., Hogg, M.A., (2003) A Social Identity Model of Leadership Effectiveness in

Organizations, *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 25, pp. 243-295

4.3 Co-occurrence analysis

Keywords are often representative of the content of the publication (Xiang et al., 2017). Keywords are used to examine associations between publications. In co-occurrence analysis, research priorities and interests can be identified. According to these keywords, the top five keywords in terms of the total number of occurrences were: leadership (97), social identity (36), gender (20), social identity theory (17) and transformational leadership (16). The strength between social identity and leadership concepts shows a close relationship between the areas. Researchers have explored emerging processes of social identity leadership and what are some of the factors that influence social identity formation.

As seen in the network diagram below, the figure (Fig. 1) shows the relatedness between terms. The nodes are representative of the keywords, with node sizes showing each keyword's "betweenness" with the centrality term. The links between the nodes represent how close the keyword is with others based on the distance as well as the thickness. As can be seen leadership had the most relatedness with all the clusters. Leadership is the largest and the most central node. The keyword has strong relatedness with social identity, identity and social construction. The weakest links appear to be with the keywords of collaboration and followership. The keywords in cluster 1 include authentic leadership, collaboration, etc. that focused on "factors affecting follower behaviour". The keywords in cluster 2 include ethical leadership, ethics, etc. that focus on "basis of identification with the group". Garavan & McGuire (2010) pointed out that social identity theory explains how individuals are attracted to groups and how they identify with them. Ethical behaviour, moral identity, etc are the basis on which individuals identify with or are attracted to the groups. The keywords of cluster 3 include Female, human, male, etc. that are based on the "Contributors to evaluation of leader effectiveness". The Social identity

leadership theory is based on the premise that leader prototypicality is a function of the group's prototype (Turner & Rivera, 2019). Van Kippenberg & Hogg (2003) have also pointed out that leadership evaluations are often based on how group prototypical the leader is perceived to be. The factors in cluster 3 can be the sources of group prototype like the gender of the group members, the trust, etc. The keywords in cluster 4 are diversity, gender, etc and the common ground is "work group characteristics". Finally, cluster 5 is the smallest and includes intersectionality, leader identity, leadership development which focuses on "Perspectives on studying social identity leadership". Intersectionality is a perspective that focuses on exploring relational aspects of human connections (Agosto & Roland, 2018). Leader identity development is another area growing in research attention.

The data of the keywords emerges in 4 clusters. The details of the clusters are in the table below:

Table1 : Cluster and keyword details

Cluster	No. of keywords	Details
Cluster 1	9	authentic leadership, collaboration, followership, human resource management, identity, innovation, leadership, social construction, social identity
Cluster 2	7	ethical leadership, ethics, moral identity, organizational identification, performance, social identity theory, transformational leadership
Cluster 3	7	Female, human, male, physician, professional identity, social identification, trust
Cluster 4	4	Diversity, gender, organizational culture, sensemaking
Cluster 5	3	Intersectionality, leader identity, leadership development

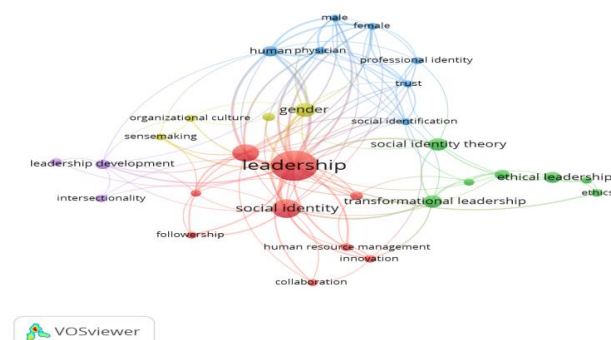


Fig.1 Density and Network diagrams of co-occurrence

An analysis of the data of keywords reveals that the research publications vary in focus in varied time frames. Fig. 2 shows a colour based difference in the focus on research areas. In 2014 the focus of research was in the areas of social identity leadership and other leadership theories like transformational leadership, ethical leadership, authentic leadership, etc. in their 2017s the research has moved focus to

the areas of leader/follower characteristics like gender, professional identity, trust, etc.

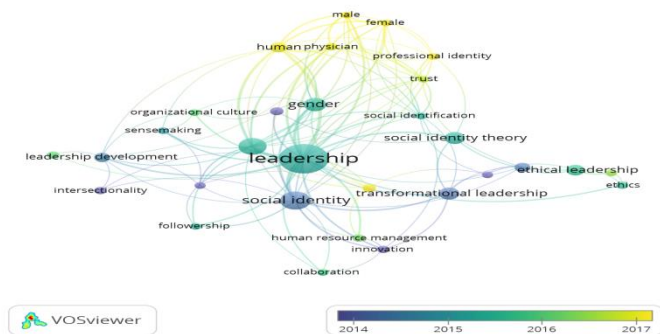


Fig. 2 Overlay diagram of co-occurrences

5 Conclusion and avenues for future research

The bibliometric analysis has shown that post 2017 there has been increased research interest in the area of social identity leadership. Van Knippenberg, D. (2011) has 115 citations and a link strength of 234. Leadership, the Leadership Quarterly and the Journal of Business Ethics have the most publications in the area of social identity leadership. Alex Haslam (School of Psychology, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia) (8 publications), Nik Steffens (School of Psychology, University of Queensland, St. Lucia) (7 publications) and Rolf van Dick (Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany) (7 publications) are the most influential authors in this area. The top five author keywords are leadership, social identity, gender, social identity theory and transformational leadership.

As stated in the introduction, social identity leadership is a relatively contemporary approach to study leadership. Thus there is a need to visualize the evolution of research in this area. This visualization can serve as a base for future research in this area. It is hoped that new researchers in this area will be encouraged to explore different perspectives in this area. The mapping can serve as a template to identify new research areas. Practically, managers can acquaint themselves with research in the area and effectively find a way to transform it into managerial practice.

We will discuss the insights obtained from the bibliometric analysis. Based on the analyses there are three major research trends that can be identified.

Trend one: Leader emergence

In the past two years, a lot of research has explored the emergence of leadership and leader identity. Turner & Chacon-Rivera (2019) posited that leadership prototypicality should be considered when designing leadership interventions. Riyadi et al., (2019) explored variables like leader group prototypicality, leadership self-efficacy, leader endorsement, and leader group-oriented behaviour in terms of leader identity construction. Clifton & Dai (2019) explored how members construct leadership and leader identity. Virtaharju & Liiri (2019) explored leader emergence from a contextual perspective. Sendjaya & Sendjaya (2019) has given insights on how understanding the construction of leader identity can help engage organizational members in meaningful ways. There are a number of factors like organizational setting, value congruence, etc. that can be explored as variables of interest in this context.

Trend two: Cross sector, Cross-firm relations

In 2017-18, there was research that extended the social identity leadership model to understand inter-organizational collaboration and inter-firm linkages. Smith et al., (2018) examined how leadership emergences between inter-organizational R & D teams. Li et al., (2018) explored how leadership identity claims help new ventures in dynamic industries acquire resources from the venture capital market. Hao et al., (2017) used the social identity leadership and network orchestration to propose a framework to enhance inter-firm leadership, identifying the hub firm's ability to shape the partners' relational identity is central to the leadership role. As collaborative work structure emerges, this is another area of interest for inter-organizational relations research.

Trending three: Understanding work-related experiences

Research has attempted to apply the social identity leadership model to understand other organizational factors. Lorinkova & Perry (2019) have used the social identity leadership perspective to understand how group-focused transformational leadership can foster felt obligation, motivating helping behaviour, and enhancing group performance. Saraniemi & Komppula (2019) applied this theory to understand leadership in destination brand identity development. Wang et al., (2019) explored this theory as a tool to understand internal branding of a hotel. Anderson et al., (2018) examined the relationship between social identity and safety climate in organizations. Since work in this area is in its nascent stages, there is scope for research to contribute to this area.

Bibliometric analysis has not yet been applied to the emerging area of social identity leadership. This study attempts to systematically present the existing research in this area. Since data for the analysis is collected using the Scopus database exclusively it could mean that there are issues/areas that could be overlooked. Also for homogeneity of the sample publications only those from the category of “business, management and accounting” were considered. More insights could be obtained by examining other publications in the area.

Though the study has some limitations, the use of multiple analytical methods has ensured a well-rounded analysis of the area. The research agenda can be further widened in the area by including more articles from the past (this is based only on the last decade of research in the area) and including other type of publications like proceedings, reports, etc. Also given that research has increasingly become multidisciplinary, articles categorized in other domains (other than business, management and accounting) can also be included to understand research in the area and identify new avenues for research. Future research in this area would greatly complement this study and its results.

Thus this is an emerging area of research with scope for a lot more work in this area.

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