

Servant Leadership in educational contexts: A bibliometric analysis to guide management in the framework of SDG 4

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CHRONICLE

Article history:

Received July 16 2025

Received in Revised Format

July 26 2025

Accepted September 28 2025

Available online September 28 2025

Keywords:

Servant leadership

Education

Bibliometric

Sustainability

Education for sustainable

development

Sustainable Development Goal

4

SDG 4

Quality education

ABSTRACT

Servant leadership is a leadership approach that focuses fundamentally on service to others. In educational contexts, servant leadership has become an attractive topic for research. The main objective of this research was to analyze the last 11 years of scientific production from the Scopus database on servant leadership in educational settings (2013-2023). 48 publications analyzed using bibliometric indicators were taken as a data source. The analysis includes visualization, bibliographic coupling, co-occurrence, and co-authorship analysis. The results of the study show that collaborative research networks between countries around the world were examined, with the United States emerging as the dominant contributor, followed by Indonesia, India, China, and Peru, with the period 2020 and 2022 being those with the highest scientific production, also validating that K. Dahleez, KF Latif, and F. Marimon were the most influential contributors in scientific production and citations; however, A. Abbas has made a greater contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 4, Quality education. The major legacy has focused on two main thematic areas, the Social Sciences and Business, Management and Accounting. The analysis of the main keywords revealed a deep research interest, highlighting the extension and diversity of the concepts of servant leadership, higher education, education, teachers, knowledge hiding, learning, leadership and life satisfaction. This study highlights the importance of international cooperation in the field of cultural research and the need for countries to develop research capital to address knowledge gaps. These findings reveal research trends for future studies, influential authors, and co-authorships across countries, helping researchers identify gaps and future directions. The findings may facilitate the development and use of servant leadership in educational settings to improve outcomes as a sector.

1. Introduction

Despite decades of study of leadership, it remains one of the topics that sparks interest in various sectors. Leadership has been defined as a driver that has allowed governments, groups, organizations and businesses to face new challenges in a changing and uncertain environment (Palafox et al., 2020). This term is considered as the ability of a person to inspire and influence others (Zamad et al., 2021). However, it only takes a quick glance at the headlines and news to recognize that the entire world is going through a leadership crisis, and around this, questions are revealed such as what style of leadership is optimal? A question that, ironically, has made it the most misunderstood business phenomenon to date (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018). Leadership style is already considered a business management philosophy that serves to promote sustainable, psychological development and for employees to achieve a better quality of work and personal life (Huynh & Hua, 2020). The term servant leadership was first coined by Robert Greenleaf in the 1970s, who, having a singular emotion for the benefits he had discovered from its application, designed his theoretical proposal more than 5 decades ago. He believed that the attributes of the leader were mostly based on selfless service and not on a camouflaged attitude to achieve a selfish benefit (Wang et al.,

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ISSN 1929-5812 (Online) - ISSN 1929-5804 (Print)

2026 Growing Science Ltd.

doi: 10.5267/j.dsl.2025.9.005

2022). Putting the needs of those in their charge before their own is one of the premises of this type of leader (Iqbal et al., 2020). This model posits that service should be the hallmark of leadership. The exercise of servant leadership would not only make today's companies an optimal and better managed entity but would also have stronger organizational principles that would be sustainable over time. Greenleaf (1997) in his work entitled "Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness", Greenleaf asserts that business leaders who first and unanimously establish this model of leadership, by precept, for example, would discover a greater purpose that would elevate the aspect of their service and bring joy into their lives. Nearly five decades have passed since these words were first articulated, and a variety of research has asserted that servant leadership is gaining more and more disciples in university chairs, nurseries, business schools, among executives, in government, and in public and private institutions, whether for-profit or not. Greenleaf was one of the first to research the qualities that surround leaders and followers, and the importance of being attentive to the needs of others.

In that sense, according to Greenleaf (1977) the servant leader constantly questions himself in order to know if the most important needs of those he leads are being met. Questions such as: Are they better people now? Are they growing integrally? Are they becoming healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more whole, while being served? Is there someone among them prone to becoming a servant leader? True leadership, then, is both an inner quality and an exercise of authority. To the extent that the leader faithfully exercises his servant task, his sphere of influence and authority grows harmoniously. Servant leadership has the power to achieve high standards of trust between both parties. Several researchers (Eryanto et al., 2022; Eva et al., 2019; Saleem et al., 2020; van Dierendonck, 2011; van Winkle et al., 2014), have agreed that trust plays a preponderant role in the relationship between the servant leader and his followers. In this sense, it is important to create an atmosphere of trust where people feel accepted and free to make mistakes, knowing that they will not be rejected, putting the interests of others above one's own interests (Manala, 2014). Servant leaders are those who lead with a clear focus on their work team, where they are the main concern, and the needs of the organization are peripheral (Grobler & Flotman, 2020). They continually try to discover what their followers need to succeed in life, instead of seeking to be pleased by their followers, their leaders take over this primacy. This is, on the other hand, a real outrage for the servant leadership approach (Resane, 2020); a philosophy that does not receive the applause of the entire community, but that, without a doubt, its author and precursors were completely convinced that it would transform the world (McClellan, 2009). Knowing how important it is to submit to an ideology, Taylor (2012) ensures that the leadership style chosen is based on the worldview and life perspective of the leader.

In the extremely chaotic business environment, where survival and reducing employees' intentions to quit has become a challenging task, servant leadership promises to be a help in reducing such indicators. Empirical evidence is highly sufficient to affirm this predicament (Dutta & Khatri, 2017). Servant leadership shows its ability to distinguish itself by achieving a variety of results above other leadership models (Ying et al., 2020). Leaders who combine their motivation to lead with a strong desire to serve demonstrate authentic servant leadership (van Dierendonck, 2013). This leadership model is especially relevant in the chaotic times the world is experiencing, as it adds the component of social responsibility and emphasizes the need for those led as opposed to the proposal of transformational leadership. Empirical studies affirm that the contribution leadership takes time to be effective on those it leads, and there is still no set time that has been uniformly applicable to everyone, however, some may experience an instant impact on results, while others will require more time to obtain the same effect (Thao & Kang, 2020). This leadership style focuses on a person who is competent, conscientious, ethical, who brings value to the community, who forms cohesive and high-performing teams (Meuser & Smallfield, 2023). Over time, other pioneers of servant leadership have left their contributions to the academic community, among them Spears is referenced (1995), Laub (1999), Farling et al. (1999), Page and Wong (2000), Russell and Stone (2002), Patterson (2003), Liden et al. (2008), Sendjaya et al. (2008) and van Dierendonck (2011). Recently, scholars have found that servant leadership has some association with variables applied to the educational sector, such as job satisfaction and organizational justice (Dahleez & Aboramadan, 2022), human resource management and competitive advantage (Asfahani, 2023), student success and organizational health (Gultekin & Kara, 2022), perceived support from coworkers (Anwaar & Jingwei, 2022), spirituality (Maglione & Neville, 2021), life satisfaction (K. Latif et al., 2021), academic performance (Gultekin & Dougherty, 2021), academic commitment (Aboramadan et al., 2020a), social justice (Jeyaraj & Gandolfi, 2020), employee performance (Abbas et al., 2020) and student growth and development (Thompson, 2014), all these factors that have been studied with the purpose of describing their behavior together with servant leadership, could improve the personal, group and work experience of the individual.

The educational system has made various efforts with the purpose of adopting leadership styles that strengthen its institutions and optimize their growth and management. State or local initiatives have even been taken to identify barriers and facilitate leadership (Crippen & Willows, 2019). The importance of addressing servant leadership in educational contexts lies in the fact that it fosters collaboration, examines the mediating role of organizational justice and trust (Dahleez & Aboramadan, 2022), improves motivation and positively impacts work commitment (Aboramadan et al., 2020a), is a proactive predictor of worker performance (Abbas et al., 2020) and the relationship is strengthened when tested with religiosity, develops future leaders, strengthens the educational community, increases staff job satisfaction (Dahleez & Aboramadan, 2022), facilitates problem solving, promotes equity and inclusion. Indeed, servant leadership is essential in educational contexts because it creates an environment in which the well-being of students, educators and administrative staff is a priority (Sihombing et al., 2024; Udin, 2024). This not only improves the quality of education and contributes significantly to the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) promoted by the United Nations since 2015 (Bray, 2024; Miranda-Gonçalves, 2023; Morris et

al., 2023; Tomasella et al., 2023), but also transforms an educational community from more solid principles and training leaders who value service to others, fostering a more humanized culture (Villar-Guevara et al., 2024).

It is interesting to explore research trends on servant leadership in educational contexts due to the importance of this topic. However, from the existing research, there is no evidence of any bibliometric analysis that analyzes the evolution and frontier of knowledge in the research of servant leadership in educational contexts. In this sense, the research aims to analyze the number of studies, authors, journals and influential countries of the literature, as well as the current trend of this topic. This research could provide important information about the growth, development and emerging trends associated with servant leadership in educational contexts.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research methodology

For the bibliometric analysis, the Scopus® database was reviewed and carried out in three stages: visual analysis, literature analysis, and discussion. In the visual analysis stage, these articles were visualized using VOS viewer (version 1.16.9) and Bibliometrix (version 4.4.1) as bibliometric analysis tools, according to the study topic. The results of the visualization were then analyzed, and the relevant conclusions were drawn. To analyze the scientific production of servant leadership in educational environments, while VOS viewer can divide ranges by color to generate knowledge maps, the individual advantages of VOS viewer and Bibliometrix were used as bibliometric analysis tools for knowledge mapping and visualization. Likewise, the co-occurrence map allows analyzing the focus and relevance in studies of servant leadership in educational environments.

The VOS viewer, on the other hand, is relatively easier to use and allows for a clear analysis of authors, countries, and inter-institutional collaboration networks, helping to obtain the current state of research collaboration in the field of servant leadership research in educational contexts. Within the inclusion criteria, the filters provided by the Scopus® database were used, where only empirical articles (document type), which were published between 2013 and 2023 (range in years), full texts, all subject areas, open access documents, and only in English (language) were considered. Textbooks or book chapters, conference papers, review articles, notes, errata, editorials, letters, and preprints were discarded. The specific research questions addressed by this study are as follows:

Question 1: What is the coefficient of determination that indicates the trend in research on servant leadership in educational contexts?

Question 2: What has been the total number of publications and citations per year of research on servant leadership in contexts?

Question 3: Which journals and authors made the greatest scientific contribution in publications and citations on servant leadership in educational contexts?

Question 4: Which authors have the highest h-Index and percentage of international contribution and contribution to SDG 4 of research on servant leadership in educational contexts?

Question 5: Which countries have gained greater relevance in the scientific development of servant leadership in educational contexts?

Question 6: How has scientific collaboration between countries been in research on servant leadership in educational contexts?

Question 7: What topic areas have been prominent, emerging, weakly developed, or declining during the scientific evolution of servant leadership in educational contexts?

2.2. Keyword selection

The search terms used to select the articles were: “Servant leadership”, “higher education”, “learning”, “education”, “teaching”, “educational”, “student” and “academic”. It should be noted that various combinations were made in order to identify the most appropriate one possible.

2.3. Information sources and search strategy

A search was conducted in the Scopus® database in order to obtain a representative number of scientific resources on servant leadership in educational settings. Scopus® was used because it is known as one of the leading databases in the field of science due to its wide coverage of scientific journals, books, and conference proceedings. Its value in bibliometrics lies in its ability to provide search metrics and other impact indicators, thus measuring the influence and visibility of articles and authors. In addition, Scopus® employs rigorous selection to ensure the quality and reliability of its content, to allow the data obtained to be used for in-depth research, to map processes in different fields, to inform decision-making, and to ensure scientific policy. In this regard, 55 documents were initially found in the first search carried out on December 31, 2023. All documents were then reviewed to ensure they met the inclusion criteria, identifying only 48 scientific publications, as shown in the path diagram in Fig. 1.

2.4. Article selection processes and synthesis method

It should be noted that after having the total of 48 articles to be examined (PRISMA flow chart detailed in Figure 1), the authors read the articles in their entirety, taking into consideration the PRISMA review proposal (Page et al., 2021), titles, area, abstracts and keywords. The information collected was summarized by classifying the articles in Excel by: authors, year published, title, area of study, abstract and contribution, then they were analyzed and coded. For the search, we used the construction of chains, boolean operators, as well as AND and OR to integrate the selected variables. The search equation was: TITLE-ABS-KEY ("servant leadership" AND "higher education" OR learning OR education OR teaching OR educational OR students OR academic).

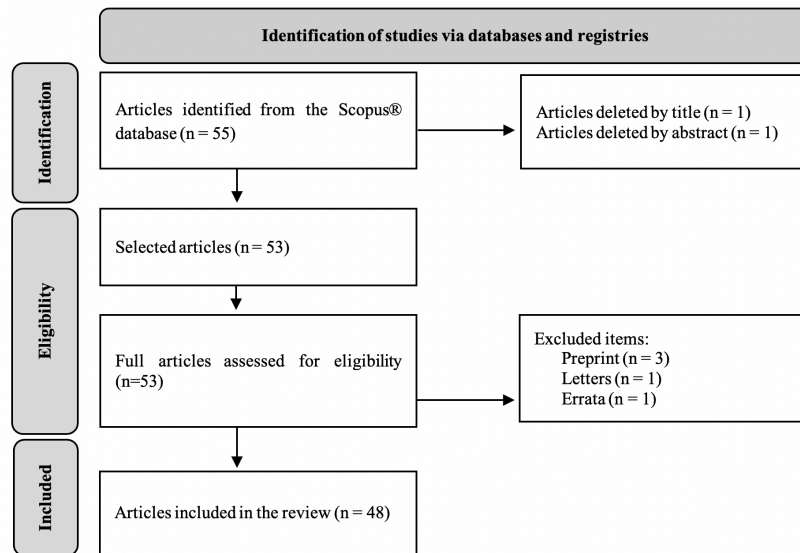


Fig. 1. PRISMA flow diagram.

3. Results

48 articles indexed in the Scopus® database on servant leadership in educational environments were identified, with only one initial article published in 2013 (Russell, 2013). When analyzing the trend in years, it can be observed that each year there is an increase in the number of publications, with the exception of some weak points (2015, 2017 and 2021). The highest number of papers was observed in 2020, followed by the year 2022, with a slight decrease in 2021. The analysis by years allows us to analyze the development of scientific publications and the gradual increase in literature, showing the incremental progress achieved. The analysis of the second-order polynomial trend indicated a coefficient of determination of $R^2 = 73.11\%$, which indicates an upward trend in the number of articles published (Fig. 2).

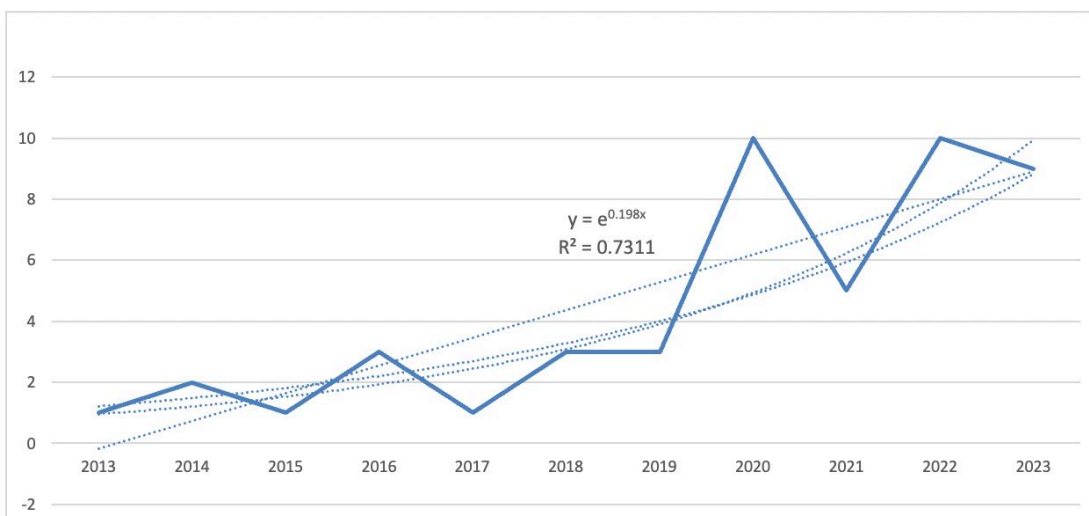


Fig. 2. Publication trend on servant leadership in educational environments (2013 - 2023)

Table 1 and Fig. 3 detail the scientific production per year recorded in the Scopus® database on servant leadership in educational environments, focusing on the years 2013 to 2023. Although it is known that this period is part of the era of scientific expansion on servant leadership (Mustamil & Najam, 2020), and since this research considered its contribution in educational environments, it can be verified that the year of greatest scientific production (TP) were the periods 2020, 2022 and 2023. However, between the years 2013 to 2019, a low scientific interest is perceived compared to subsequent years, this is probably due to the fact that it is part of the first years of the expansion of this topic to other knowledge sciences. On the other hand, when verifying the citations per year (TC), it is noted that two periods have stood out with more than 100 citations (2016 and 2020) allowing greater dissemination among academics and professionals in the educational sector. When evaluating the average citations per publication (C/P), the highest values correspond to 2016, 2015 and 2020, with indicators of 43.0, 13.0 and 11.9, respectively.

Table 1

Scientific production per year on servant leadership in educational environments (n= 48).

Year	Articles	TP	TC	C/P
2013	(E. J. Russell, 2013)	1	1	1.0
2014	(Souyri, 2014; Thompson, 2014)	2	2	1.0
2015	(Erkutlu & Chafra, 2015)	1	13	13.0
2016	(Allen et al., 2016; Anderson, 2016; Tang et al., 2016)	3	129	43.0
2017	(Bhandarkar et al., 2017)	1	3	3.0
2018	(Krumrei-Mancuso, 2018; Lagasca & Andres, 2018; Seok et al., 2018)	3	8	2.7
2019	(Gonaim, 2019; K. F. Latif & Marimon, 2019; Schary, 2019)	3	31	10.3
2020	(Abbas et al., 2020; Aboramadan et al., 2020b, 2020a; du Plessis & Nkambule, 2020; Joseph Jeyaraj & Gandolfi, 2020; Kumar et al., 2020; Murphy et al., 2020; Pino et al., 2020; Sawan et al., 2020; Xie, 2020)	10	119	11.9
2021	(Grobler & Flotman, 2021; Gultekin & Dougherty, 2021; K. Latif et al., 2021; Maglione & Neville, 2021; Shetty et al., 2021)	5	27	5.4
2022	(Abbas et al., 2022; Al-Asfour et al., 2022; Anwaar & Jingwei, 2022; Dahleez & Aboramadan, 2022; Ghasemy, Akbarzadeh, et al., 2022; Ghasemy, Elwood, et al., 2022; Gultekin & Kara, 2022; Mackasare, 2022; Shetty et al., 2022; Turner, 2022)	10	77	7.7
2023	(Anselmus Dami et al., 2023; Asfahani, 2023; Ghasemy & Frömbling, 2023; K. F. Latif et al., 2023; Nawaz et al., 2023; Quinteros-Durand et al., 2023; Tsarkos, 2023; Usman et al., 2023; Xiao et al., 2023)	9	6	0.7

Note: TP= Total Publications; TC= Total Citations; C/P= Average citations per publication.

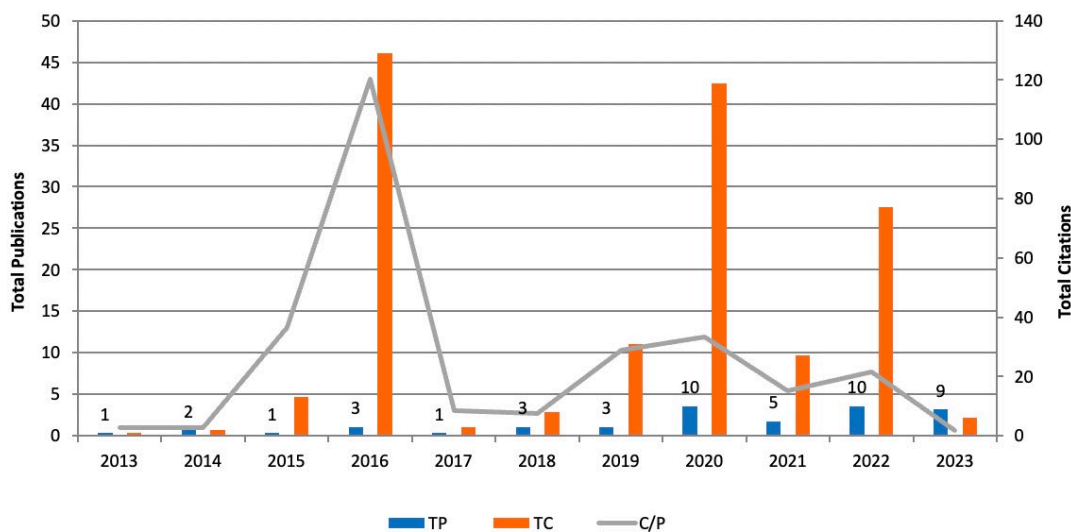


Fig. 3. Total publications and citations per year (2013 - 2023).

When analyzing the 10 authors with the highest scientific production (Table 2), it is detailed that K. Dahleez, KF Latif and F. Marimon were the most influential contributors in scientific production and citations; however, A. Abbas, D. Ekowati and M. Saud are the authors who have made the greatest contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which refers to Quality education, with indicators of 19.4%, 17.1% and 15.4% respectively on the total of their scientific publications. On the other hand, the percentage of international collaboration (IC) was analyzed where the highest indicators were achieved by M. Aboramadan, K.Dahleez andKF Latif, with 86.0%, 85.7% and 79.4% respectively. Finally, the h-Index that predominated was represented by F. Marimon (30), KF Latif (24) and M. Aboramadan (22). In this sense, these authors are considered as referents of servant leadership in educational environments.



Fig. 5. World map of collaboration between countries.

Before the well-known era of scientific expansion on servant leadership, there were very few studies on this topic focused on other fields of study such as education. Since Robert Greenleaf in 1970, servant leadership was in its embryonic stage, with attention focused on defining the construct and on the construction of measurement scales, until approximately 2010. Afterwards, a takeoff of servant leadership can be seen, linked to key words such as “higher education”, “education”, “teachers”, “knowledge hiding”, “learning”, “leadership”, “life satisfaction”, “job satisfaction” and “religiosity”, as shown in Fig. 6.

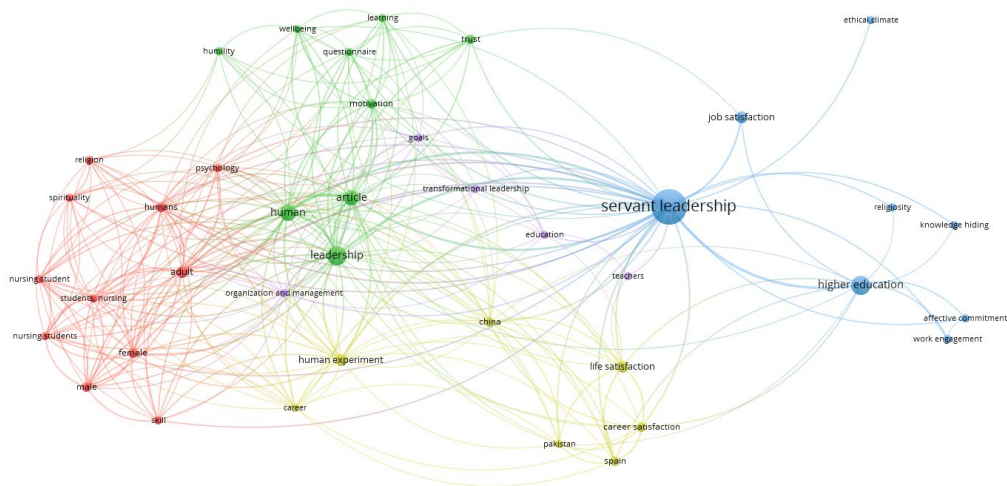


Fig. 6. Visualization in VOSviewer of the co-occurrence of keywords on servant leadership in educational environments.

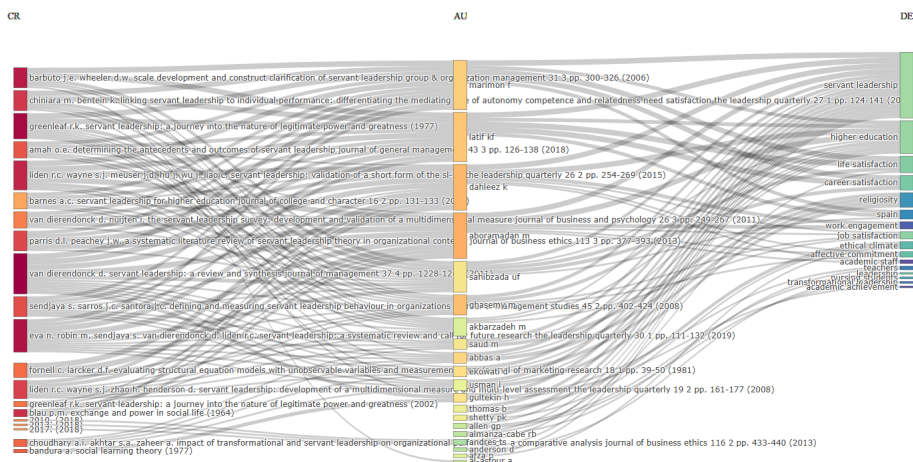


Fig. 7. Three-Field Plot showing correlations between: the most cited works (CR), the authors of the selected articles (AU) and descriptors with the most common keywords (DE).

Fig. 7 also shows another way of presenting the general data and the quantitative correlation of different parameters, measuring it graphically in three planes from a “Three-Field Plot”. For this research, the correlation between the most cited works (CR), the most prolific or influential authors in the area of study analyzed (AU) has been represented. This helps to identify thought leaders and collaborations between researchers. And, in addition, the descriptors with the most common keywords (DE). The latter reflects an evolution of servant leadership in the field of education linked to the main keywords of the sample (servant leadership, higher education, life satisfaction, career satisfaction, religiosity, work engagement, job satisfaction, etc.). In that sense, these statements define part of the theoretical framework, which is the response to the main ontological and epistemological aspects of the topic, and the main themes and ideas of this research.

Table 3 shows that the journal with the highest scientific production was *International Journal of Leadership in Education* (publications = 3). On the other hand, the top three journals by citations were *Journal of Business Ethics* (citations = 91), *Leadership and Organization Development Journal* (citations = 53) and *Current Psychology* (citations = 41). For the 2023 period, the journal with the highest CiteScore was *Journal of Business Ethics* (CiteScore = 12.7). This is a metric that evaluates the impact of a journal based on the citations received by the articles published in it, hosted in the Scopus database in five categories: Social Sciences (percentile = 99); Arts and Humanities (percentile = 99); General Business, Management and Accounting (percentile = 96); Economics, Econometrics and Finance (percentile = 96) and Business and International Management (percentile = 93). 81.3% of the journals were ranked between Q1 and Q2, and only two of them were ranked in Q3 (*International Journal of Education and Practice* and *Creative Nursing*) and one in Q4 (*Hacettepe Egitim Dergisi*). The highest Scimago Journal Rank (SJR) and h-Index indices were found by the *Journal of Business Ethics*.

Table 3
Ranking of most cited journals.

Ranking	Name of the Journal	Based on the publications		Based on the magazines		
		TP	TC	CiteScore	SJR	h-Index
1	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	1	91	12.7	2.62 Q1	229
2	<i>Leadership and Organization Development Journal</i>	2	53	7.6	1.16 Q1	78
3	<i>Current Psychology</i>	1	41	4.6	1.00 Q1	54
4	<i>International Journal of Organizational Analysis</i>	1	38	5.9	0.82 Q2	36
5	<i>American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education</i>	1	33	3.6	1.11 Q1	74
6	<i>Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management</i>	1	31	5.3	0.96 Q1	50
7	<i>Applied Research in Quality of Life</i>	1	18	6.3	0.93 Q2	43
8	<i>Hacettepe Egitim Dergisi</i>	1	13	0.5	0.16 Q4	20
9	<i>International Journal of Leadership in Education</i>	3	13	5.0	0.75 Q1	44
10	<i>Asia Pacific Education Review</i>	1	9	5.2	0.70 Q2	41
11	<i>International Journal of Education and Practice</i>	1	9	2.0	0.28 Q3	11
12	<i>Journal of Further and Higher Education</i>	1	8	5.1	0.91 Q1	48
13	<i>Journal of Psychology and Theology</i>	1	8	1.2	0.26 Q1	38
14	<i>Journal of Religion and Health</i>	1	7	5.3	0.87 Q1	52
15	<i>Creative Nursing</i>	1	5	1.5	0.26 Q3	13
16	<i>Pedagogy, Culture and Society</i>	1	5	4.4	0.63 Q1	42

Note: TP= Total Publications; TC= Total Citations. CiteScore, Scimago Journal Rank (SJR) and h-Index were taken from 2023.

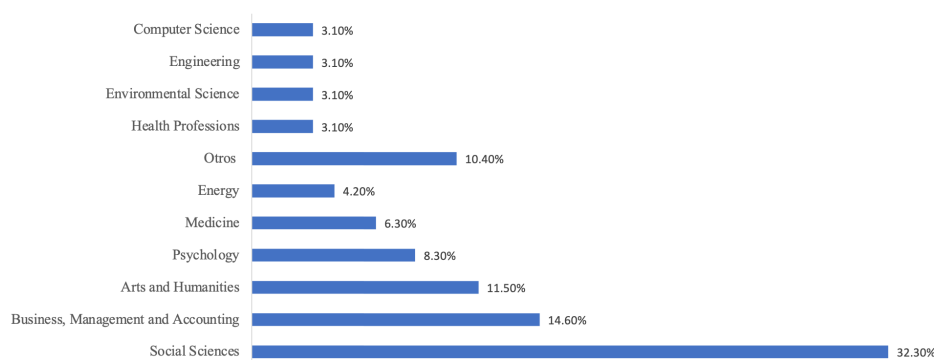


Fig. 8. Scientific production by thematic area.

In order to graph the scientific production by thematic area registered in the Scopus database on servant leadership in educational environments for the period 2013 to 2023, Fig. 8 was presented. The most predominant are Social Sciences (32.3% of the contribution), Business, Management and Accounting (14.6% of the contribution), and Arts and Humanities (11.5% of the contribution), which reflects a significant interest in continuing to develop proposals for improvement from the scientific community to the educational sector. Servant leadership in educational environments is strengthened by an interdisciplinary approach. From the social sciences, the participation and well-being of the educational community is promoted by understanding social and cultural aspects. In business, management and accounting, the principles of effective resource

management and strategic planning are used, which are essential to manage educational institutions sustainably. Finally, the arts and humanities provide a critical and ethical perspective, fostering empathy and creativity in decision-making. This inclusive approach allows servant leaders to inspire and encourage the general development of their educational community.

4. Discussions

The main objective of this research was to analyze the last 11 years of scientific production from the Scopus database on servant leadership in educational settings (2013-2023). The present research used bibliometric indicators to analyze the 48 scientific publications using VOS Viewer and Bibliometrix. The results reveal that a large part of the scientific production is concentrated in a few countries (United States, Indonesia, India, China and Malaysia) and in specific periods (2020-2022), which can translate into a gradual growth of this leadership approach focused on educational settings, especially in countries that are outside the dominant academic circle. This suggests that there is an important gap in the universality of servant leadership, which demands to be investigated and understood from a more global perspective, which could facilitate a better understanding of its applicability in diverse contexts, since this approach promises to solve problems of international relevance in education (Bier et al., 2024). Furthermore, the scarcity of previous bibliometric studies in the educational field highlights the relevance of this research, by presenting a methodological and knowledge base in a field where other more traditional leadership approaches such as transformational leadership still predominate (Benson et al., 2024; Eustachio et al., 2024; Tran et al., 2024).

Since the contributions of systematic reviews, servant leadership has been scarcely addressed in specific topics of sectors such as the labor and organizational sphere (Lu et al., 2024; Mahon, 2024; Parris & Peachey, 2013) and health (Bavik, 2020; Demeke et al., 2024). While there is empirical research that has focused on analyzing servant leadership and its successful application to the educational environment (Dami et al., 2022; Laura-Arias et al., 2024; Murphy et al., 2020), at the time of this review, only one bibliometric study was found that specifically addresses servant leadership in education. Udin (2024) makes a bibliometric analysis of the scientific production of servant leadership focused exclusively on higher education during the last 24 years (2000 to 2023). Its conclusions focus on the four nodes of co-occurrence of the keywords and analyzes the impact of servant leadership on at least six aspects: professional competence, employee resilience and trust, psychological ownership, affective commitment, professional and life satisfaction, and job satisfaction and performance. Although the nodes of co-occurrence do not coincide with those of the present study, a similarity is observed in at least seven of the ten main authors, Abodaran, Marimon, Latif, Dahleez, Abbas, Ekowati and Saud.

On the other hand, the results of the bibliometric review by Mustamil and Najam (2020) covered scientific publications on servant leadership from 1978 to 2019 (41 years), however, when analyzing the thematic areas in the last nine years (2010-2019), it does not present education as a topic studied. Perhaps a possible cause is because this leadership approach is very few years old since its era of expansion to other fields of study. Finally, Hu et al. (2023) develop an analysis of the hundred most cited publications on servant leadership (1991-2021), revealing how little this topic has been addressed from the impact it has generated in the educational sector. This probably shows the need to address its influence beyond just business or industrial environments. The results of this analysis revealed some unexplored areas such as the educational environment that demands to be studied, which makes the present study a focus of interest for future research.

4.1. Implications of the study

The main contribution of this study is the bibliometric results from its exhaustive and objective design and structure. These findings provide guidance to researchers and practitioners in the sectors involved to further explore the role of servant leadership in educational settings. This study also provides researchers with the possibility of networking with multiple institutions, countries, and authors from around the world who have contributed significantly to this field of study. In turn, delving deeper into the various thematic areas where this leadership approach has impacted could guide those research groups or networks interested in continuing to analyze its behavior and evolution for strategic and informed decision making.

4.2. Limitations and future directions

The most obvious limitation of this research is the limitation of any review using bibliometric analysis. However, despite these limitations, the results have been interpreted and discussed with caution, despite having required further support from similar studies, which has been reduced to only one bibliometric review study in educational settings. Another limitation in this research is that only studies published in English were included, so scientific articles in another language could have provided an important contribution to servant leadership in educational settings. As mentioned in previous paragraphs, limiting the reviewed articles to those containing the word, "servant leadership", "higher education", "learning", "education", "teaching", "educational", "student" and/or "academic", in their TITLE-ABS-KEY, could have overlooked research related to the analyzed topic. Since this research includes different studies published in a database of international impact, the omission of some other scientific publications may have less impact on the results and should be taken into account when

interpreting them. Finally, this research only used one database (Scopus), so future research could include other high-impact databases such as Web of Sciences, Emerald, ERIC, Scielo, among others.

5. Conclusion

Servant leadership is a leadership approach that focuses fundamentally on service to others. In educational contexts, servant leadership has become an attractive topic for research. The main objective of this research was to analyze the last 11 years of scientific production from the Scopus database on servant leadership in educational settings (2013-2023). 48 publications analyzed using bibliometric indicators were taken as a data source. The analysis includes visualization, bibliographic coupling, co-occurrence, and co-authorship analysis. The results of the study show that collaborative research networks between countries around the world were examined, with the United States emerging as the dominant contributor, followed by Indonesia, India, China, and Peru, with the period 2020 and 2022 being those with the highest scientific production, also validating that K. Dahleez, KF Latif, and F. Marimon were the most influential contributors in scientific production and citations; however, A. Abbas has made a greater contribution to Sustainable Development Goal 4, Quality education.

The major legacy has focused on two main thematic areas, Social Sciences and Business, Management and Accounting. The analysis of the main keywords revealed a deep research interest, highlighting the extent and diversity of the concept of servant leadership, higher education, education, teachers, knowledge hiding, learning, leadership and life satisfaction. This study highlights the importance of international cooperation in the field of cultural research and the need for countries to develop research capital to address knowledge gaps. These findings reveal research trends for future studies, influential authors and co-authorships across other countries, helping researchers to identify gaps and future directions. The findings can facilitate the development and use of servant leadership in educational settings to improve outcomes as a sector.

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