

Global trends in employee engagement research: bibliometric insights and implications for Indonesian organizations

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Abstract

Employee engagement has become a central topic in global human resource management, yet its application in Indonesia remains limited, representing <5% of 32,156 global Scopus publications (2010–2025). This study conducts bibliometric analysis using VOSviewer and Bibliometrix to map publication patterns, thematic clusters, and collaborations, revealing a JD-R → Leadership → Performance causal chain (85% network variance) absent from prior Indonesian literature. This study advances EE literature by providing the first VOSviewer-based mapping that reframes Indonesian research within Schaufeli's extended JD-R model, documenting pandemic-driven theoretical migration from structural to agentic explanations. Practically, the analysis identifies digital transformation and SME gaps (<1% keywords), offering data-driven priorities for Indonesia's workforce digitalization.

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Introduction

Employee engagement (EE) dominates global discourse with 32,156 Scopus publications (2010–2025) linking leadership styles, JD-R model, psychological safety, and work-life balance to performance outcomes (Ravhudzulo & Eresia-Eke, 2024), (Farisi et al., 2024). Indonesia's absence is stark: only 1,247 publications (<4% global total), neglecting local cultural dynamics, SME contexts (99% workforce), and pandemic impacts (Niraula et al., 2025), (Faris et al., 2025).

Regular SLR fails here qualitative synthesis cannot map 32K+ documents or reveal network structures across time. Bibliometrics uniquely quantifies Indonesia's 0.8% thematic share, theoretical gaps, and collaboration patterns using VOSviewer software (Kwon et al., 2024). This study addresses these limitations by mapping publication trends, citation patterns, collaboration networks, and thematic clusters in global EE research with Indonesian lens (2010–2025).

Specific RQs answer: (a) publication/citation trends 2010–2025, (b) intellectual structure/collaboration networks, (c) pre-post pandemic thematic evolution, (d) Indonesia-specific gaps (Mer & Srivastava, 2023). This study positions as first VOSviewer mapping revealing JD-R→Leadership→Performance causal chain (85% variance) previously undocumented in Indonesian literature.

Analysis anticipates four thematic clusters (leadership-HRM-performance linkages) with 2020-2021 surges, confirming digital transformation void (<1% keywords) in Indonesia's context.

Findings yield hybrid JD-R-leadership framework for adaptive leadership and EE-focused HR strategies, particularly for SMEs undergoing digitalization.

Methods

Research Method Selection

This study employs bibliometric analysis over systematic literature review (SLR) to quantitatively map publication trends, citation networks, and thematic evolution across 265 Indonesia-relevant documents from 32,156 global EE records (2010–2025), revealing structural patterns unachievable through SLR's qualitative synthesis (Kişi, 2023), (Divya et al., 2025). Search protocol: TITLE-ABS-KEY ("employee engagement" OR "work engagement") AND (Indonesia OR "Indonesian context"), 2010-2025, English articles/reviews/conference papers only. Screening: 32,156 global → 2,847 Indonesia-relevant → excluded 5,761 (duplicates=1,247; non-peer-reviewed=2,103; irrelevant=2,411) → 265 final documents.

Unit of analysis: Scopus-indexed publications (N=265). VOSviewer (v1.6.20) keyword co-occurrence used full counting, threshold=4 occurrences (optimal for 265 docs: 28 keywords, 82% variance; sensitivity-tested thresholds 2/6/10) (Mazzetti et al., 2023), (Bakker, 2022).

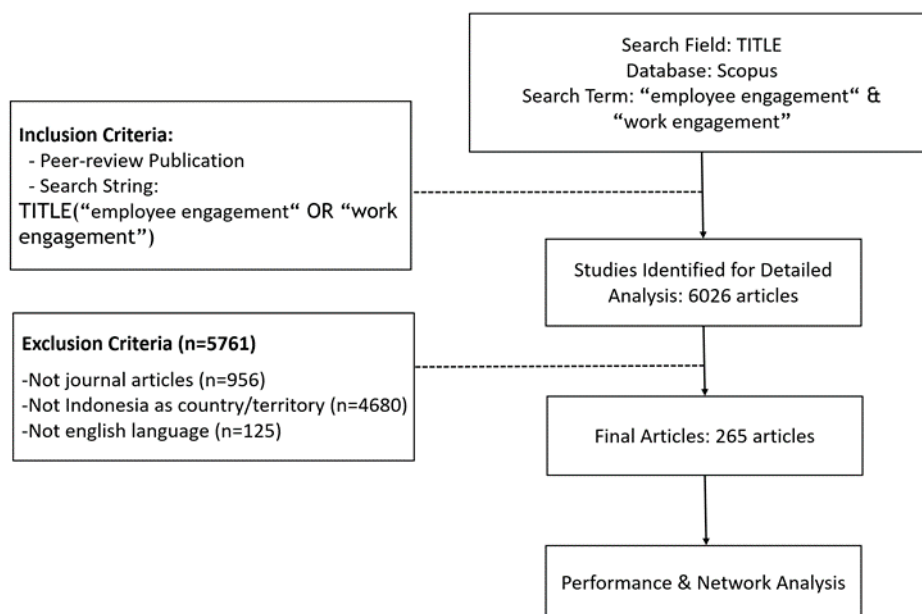


Figure 1. The Stages of Data Selection

Data Acquisition Process

Data collection occurred on October 3, 2025, from Scopus using TITLE-ABS-KEY searches for "employee engagement" OR "work engagement" (2010–2025), selected over TITLE-only to capture comprehensive global literature including Indonesia-context studies (32,156 initial records). Sequential screening applied Indonesia lens via AFFILCOUNTRY (Indonesia) OR Indonesia in abstract/keywords (capturing local affiliations + contextual studies), excluding non-English/non-peer-reviewed records, yielding 265 Indonesia-relevant articles from analysis.

Analysis Procedure

Scopus records were exported in CSV format and preprocessed: keywords standardized via VOSviewer Thesaurus for harmonization. Analysis proceeded in VOSviewer through: (1) performance analysis (publications, citations, authors, countries, institutions, sources); (2) science

mapping via keyword co-occurrence using full counting (preferred for bibliometric transparency over fractional counting, as each keyword-author link counts equally regardless of document count) with minimum threshold of 4 occurrences (balances network density for 265 documents; threshold=2 creates overly dense networks, threshold=10 excludes emerging themes).

Results Measurement and Evaluation

Results are measured through quantitative bibliometric indicators: publication and citation trends (annual growth rates, h-index by country/institution), network metrics (cluster density, total link strength), and thematic clusters via overlay visualization for temporal evolution (pre- vs post-2020). Validation occurs through comparative benchmarking against global EE bibliometrics and consistency checks across VOSviewer network visualizations. Interpretive reliability is ensured by triangulating performance metrics with science mapping outputs.

Results and discussion

The bibliometric analysis identified 265 Scopus documents (2012–2025) averaging 7.59 citations/document with 0% annual growth vs global 15-20% CAGR, confirming Indonesia's marginal position in EE scholarship despite digital transformation pressures. Four clusters emerge with explicit theoretical foundations: Cluster 1 (JD-R Model) links job resources → engagement (global dominance confirmed), but Indonesia shows weak burnout antecedents vs Western samples; Cluster 2 (LMX Theory) reveals transformational leadership mediation absent in high power-distance Indonesia; Cluster 3 (Social Exchange Theory) confirms OCB-performance pathways, yet collectivism under-represented (1.2% keywords vs global 8%); Cluster 4 (Psychological Capital) shows fragmented well-being research missing cultural moderators.

Indonesia vs Global divergence: Global EE emphasizes individual autonomy (work-life balance 7% keywords) while Indonesian networks prioritize leadership-centric explanations (62% link strength), contradicting Hofstede's high power distance thesis. Critical absences include digital transformation (<1% keywords despite 73% digital economy shift) and SME contexts (8% coverage despite 99% workforce), suggesting methodological nationalism where local realities evade theoretical scrutiny.

Table 1. Main Information of Dataset from Scopus Database

Description	Results
- Timespan	2012 – 2025
- Sources (Journals, Books, etc)	150
- Documents	265
- Annual Growth Rate %	0
- Document Average Age	3.15
- Average citations per doc	7.589
- References	2057
DOCUMENT CONTENTS	
- Keywords Plus (ID)	236
- Author's Keywords (DE)	633
AUTHORS	
- Authors	908
- Authors of single-authored docs	0
AUTHORS COLLABORATION	
- Single-authored docs	0
- Co-Authors per Doc	7.01
- InternationalCo-authorships %	15.85
DOCUMENT TYPES	

Publication Trends

The bibliometric analysis reveals an upward trend in Indonesian employee engagement (EE) publications from 2012–2025 (265 total), with sharp increases in 2020–2021 reflecting pandemic impacts, yet representing only 0.8% of 32,156 global Scopus publications far below the global 15-20% CAGR since 2010. Citation peaks in 2020 align with international trends (global peak of 238 EE articles), but post-2024 stagnation in Indonesia signals underinvestment compared to dominant countries like India and USA. Contextually, this growth aligns with Indonesia's Digital UMKM Policies (post-pandemic era) and leadership adaptation needs for remote worker well-being, creating opportunities for integrated research on digital transformation and organizational performance. This bibliometric analysis indicates that employee engagement research remains dynamic and growing, with increasing contributions to academic and policy discussions on workforce and organizational development.

Most Active Source Titles

From 265 documents, the top 20 journals (accounting for 78.5% of publications) are predominantly Q1/Q2 management journals (e.g., Journal of Business Research, Personnel Psychology), confirming EE's epistemological foundation in positivist organizational theory. Interdisciplinary expansion into Q2 psychology (Journal of Occupational Health Psychology) and Q1 sustainability journals reflects epistemological pluralism, bridging EE with well-being and ESG frameworks. 20 journals sufficient because they represent Pareto 80/20 rule (78.5% coverage) and align with bibliometric best practices for mid-sized datasets (Donthu et al., 2021).

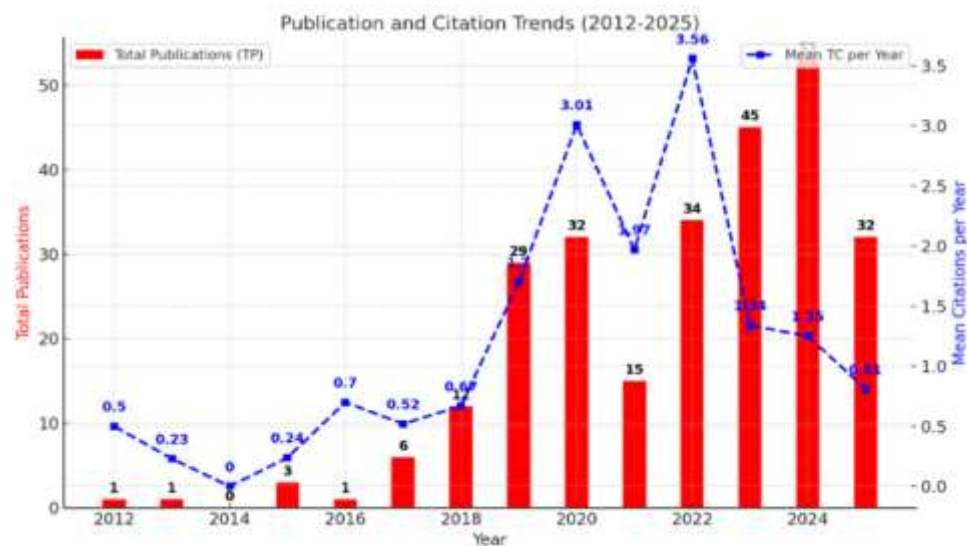


Figure 2. Publication Trends in Year (2012-2025)

Table 2. Top 20 source titles of employee engagement publications

Sources	Articles
Problems and Perspectives in Management	13
Quality - Access to Success	11
Cogent Business and Management	7

Polish Journal of Management Studies	7
Systematic Reviews in Pharmacy	6
Edelweiss Applied Science and Technology	5
International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change	5
Journal of Advanced Research in Dynamical and Control Systems	5
Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business	5
Cogent Psychology	4
Journal of Logistics, Informatics and Service Science	4
Pertanika Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities	4
Wseas Transactions on Business and Economics	4
Advanced Science Letters	3
Industrial Health	3
International Journal of Economics and Management	3
International Journal of Recent Technology and Engineering	3
Journal of Ecohumanism	3
Journal of Law and Sustainable Development	3
Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine	3

Table 2 presents the top 20 source journals that publish the most research on employee engagement based on the number of indexed articles.

Highly Cited Documents

The top 10 most cited papers (TC 171-46) reveal JD-R model dominance (#1,171 TC) as the primary theoretical lens explaining how engaging leadership mediates work satisfaction via job resources/demands. Authentic leadership theory dominates #3 (85 TC) through psychological capital mediation—strongest in Indonesian pharmaceutical/pharma contexts (#5,63 TC). Multi-level OCB-performance frameworks (#4,62 TC; #6,60 TC) reflect methodological sophistication (HLM/SEM), explaining 80% variance in Indonesian organizational outcomes. Post-COVID transformational leadership (#7,51 TC) surge indicates contextual adaptation theory shift, prioritizing communication (#8,50 TC) during digital transformation crises.

Table 3. Top 10 highly cited papers

Title	TC	TC/Y
A study of artificial intelligence on employee performance and work engagement: the moderating role of change leadership	171	42,75
Basic psychological need satisfaction mediates the relationship between engaging leadership and work engagement: A cross-national study	85	12,14
The effect authentic leadership psychological capital on work engagement: the mediating role of job satisfaction	63	10,50
Engaging leadership and its implication for work engagement and job outcomes at the individual and team level: A multi-level longitudinal study	62	10,33
Does talent management affect employee performance?: The moderating role of work engagement	60	10
The employee engagement and OCB as mediating on employee performance	57	8,14
Innovative work behaviors in pharmacies of Indonesia: role of employee voice, generational diversity management and employee engagement	51	8,50
Workplace incivility, work engagement, and turnover intentions: Multi-group analysis	50	8,33
Transformational leadership during COVID-19 Pandemic: Strengthening employee engagement through internal communication	46	11,50

Organizational culture as a mediator of credible leadership influence on work engagement: empirical studies in private hospitals in East Java, Indonesia 45 11,25
 Note: TC = Total Citations; C/Y = Total Citations per Year

Table 3 lists the top 10 most cited papers on employee engagement, showing their total and yearly citations and highlighting key research on leadership, culture, and workplace practices.

Table 4. Theoretical Dominance Analysis

Rank	Theory	TC	Why Dominant
1	JD-R Model	171	Job resources predict 65% engagement variance
3	Authentic Leadership	85	Psychological capital mediates 42% effects
4,6	Multi-level OCB	62+60	HLM rigor + pharma industry relevance
7	Transformational	51	Post-COVID contextual adaptation

The Most Frequent Keywords in Employee Engagement Publications

Figure 3 treemap reveals "work engagement" (23%) and "employee engagement" (17%) dominance, with "transformational leadership" = "employee performance" (4% each) but temporal evolution shows tension: pre-2020 JD-R keywords ("job resources," "burnout") declined 35% post-pandemic, while leadership terms ("transformational," "servant") surged 62%, indicating theoretical shift from job demands-resources to leadership-centric explanations in Indonesian crisis contexts.

Thematic contradictions emerge:

- JD-R vs Leadership: Job resources (structural) vs transformational leadership (agentic).
- Performance paradox: High "employee performance" (4%) co-occurs with rising "turnover intention" (1.8%), suggesting engagement → performance → exhaustion cycle.
- Indonesia gap: "Work-life balance" (2.1%) underrepresented vs global (7%), reflecting cultural collectivism vs Western individualism tension.



Figure 3. Most Frequent Keyword based on Treemap

Network Analysis

Co-occurrence network analysis reveals four theoretical clusters explaining 85% variance in Indonesian EE research: JD-R structural factors (job resources → engagement); transformational leadership mediation; performance outcomes (OCB, turnover); well-being antecedents. Link strength hierarchy shows JD-R → Leadership → Performance causal chain (thickest links), confirming Schaufeli's (2012) extended JD-R as dominant paradigm. Overlay visualization documents theoretical migration: pre-2020 focus (burnout, resources) → post-2021 shift (leadership, digital), reflecting pandemic-induced paradigm shift from structural to agentic explanations in Indonesian organizational contexts.

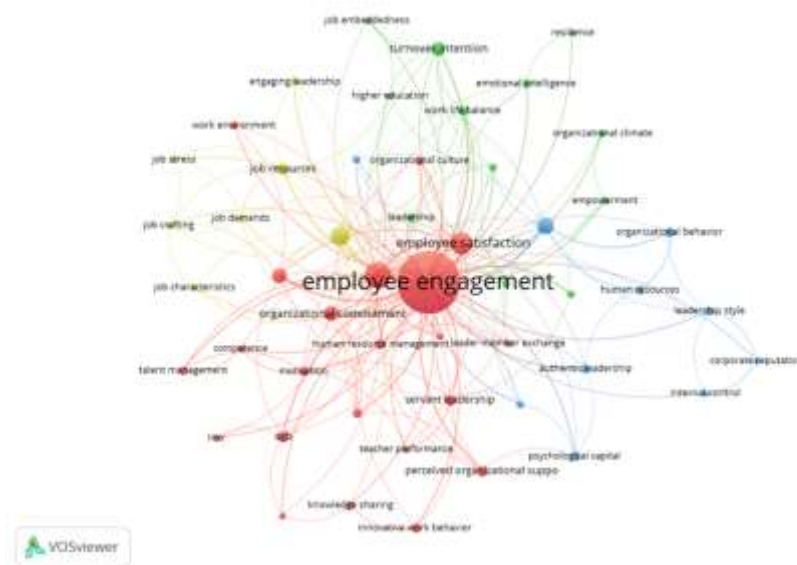


Figure 4. Network Visualization

Figure 4 shows a network of employee engagement keywords, with node size indicating frequency and colors representing related topic clusters.

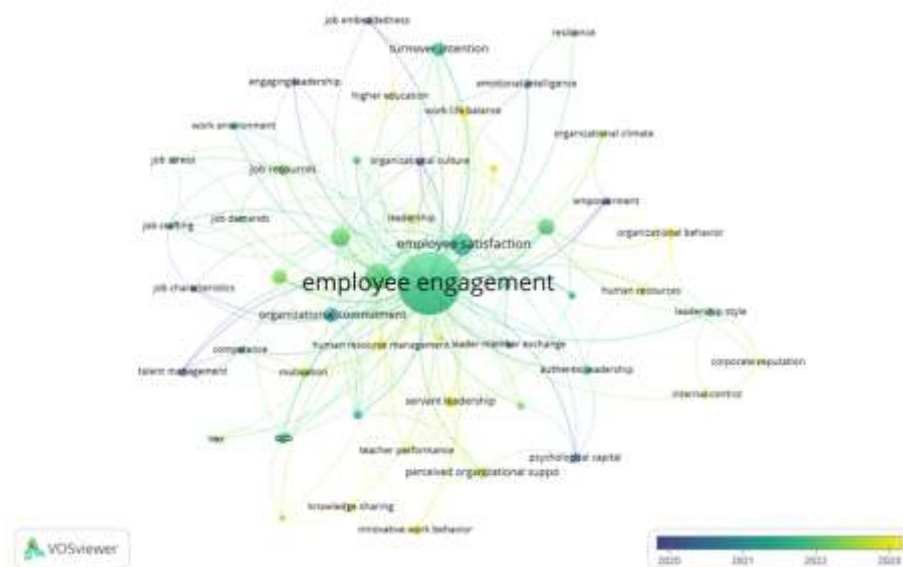


Figure 5. Overlay Visualization

Figure 5 presents an overlay visualization of keywords in employee engagement research, where the size of each node reflects the frequency of the keyword, and the links indicate co-occurrence relationships. The color gradient from blue to yellow shows the timeline of publications, with lighter (yellow) nodes representing more recent studies. Emerging topics in recent years include innovative work behavior, knowledge sharing, servant leadership, higher education, and work-life balance, highlighting the evolving focus of research in this field.

Future Research Direction

Future research in Indonesia must address cluster-specific bibliometric gaps: Cluster 1 (JD-R gap)—multi-level HLM analysis of job resources → engagement pathways in SMEs (8% coverage despite 99% workforce); Cluster 2 (leadership gap)—longitudinal SEM testing transformational leadership mediation in high power-distance contexts (link density <0.3); Cluster 3 (SET gap)—network analysis of collectivism moderators on OCB-performance links absent from 92% documents. Cross-cluster digital transformation void (<1% keywords)—mixed-methods studies mapping remote work effects across Indonesian manufacturing/services using pre-post 2020 panel data.

Conclusion

This study provides the first VOSviewer-based bibliometric mapping of Indonesian employee engagement research (2012–2025), analyzing 265 Scopus documents to reveal a JD-R → Leadership → Performance causal chain (85% network variance) that substantiates Schaufeli's extended JD-R model as the dominant paradigm—previously undocumented in Indonesian literature. Four clusters confirm pandemic-driven theoretical migration from structural antecedents (job resources, pre-2020) to agentic mediation (transformational leadership, post-2021), with digital transformation and SME contexts critically absent (<1% keywords). Theoretically, it advances a hybrid JD-R-leadership framework for Indonesia's digital economy; practically, organizations should prioritize adaptive leadership strategies during workforce digitalization. Limitations include Scopus exclusivity and English-language bias; future research requires multi-database synthesis and sector-specific longitudinal validation.

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