



Adaptive leadership research trends in education

Muhamad Mujari¹, Yuni Astuti², Priadi Surya³

^{1,2,3} Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Sleman, Indonesia

muhamadmujari.2024@student.uny.ac.id¹, yuniastuti@uny.ac.id², priadisurya@uny.ac.id³

ABSTRACT

Adaptive leadership has attracted scholarly attention for several decades; however, comprehensive studies that systematically map its development remain limited. This study aims to examine the evolution, research trends, and theoretical and practical contributions of adaptive leadership, with particular focus on educational management. This study employs a Systematic Literature Review approach combined with bibliometric analysis. A total of 463 publications from 1989 to 2025 were retrieved from the Scopus database using the keyword "adaptive leadership". Data were collected on 21 May 2025 and analyzed using VOSviewer to map collaboration networks, thematic concentrations, and the evolution of scholarly discourse. The findings reveal a significant increase in research interest in adaptive leadership, particularly in response to rapid change, uncertainty, complex decision-making, and innovation within the context of digital transformation in education. This review identifies key attributes of effective adaptive leadership, including emotional intelligence, communication, empowerment, sense-making, resilience, navigational skills, collaboration, and proactive support for staff and student well-being. These findings contribute to the literature on educational leadership and offer practical implications for school governance in increasingly dynamic and complex educational environments.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: 7 Sep 2025

Revised: 3 Jan 2026

Accepted: 12 Jan 2026

Publish online: 1 Feb 2026

Keywords:

adaptive leadership;
bibliometric analysis;
transformation in education

Open access

Curricula: Journal of Curriculum Development is a peer-reviewed open-access journal.

ABSTRAK

Kepemimpinan adaptif telah menarik perhatian akademik selama beberapa dekade, namun kajian komprehensif yang memetakan perkembangannya masih terbatas. Studi ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis evolusi, tren penelitian, serta kontribusi teoritis dan praktis kepemimpinan adaptif, khususnya dalam konteks manajemen pendidikan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan Systematic Literature Review yang dipadukan dengan analisis bibliometrik. Sebanyak 463 publikasi yang diterbitkan antara tahun 1989 hingga 2025 diidentifikasi dari basis data Scopus menggunakan kata kunci adaptive leadership. Data dikumpulkan pada 21 Mei 2025 dan dianalisis menggunakan perangkat lunak VOSviewer untuk memetakan pola kolaborasi, fokus tema, dan perkembangan wacana ilmiah. Hasil analisis menunjukkan peningkatan signifikan minat terhadap kepemimpinan adaptif, terutama dalam merespons perubahan cepat, ketidakpastian, pengambilan keputusan kompleks, dan inovasi di era transformasi digital pendidikan. Studi ini mengidentifikasi atribut kunci kepemimpinan adaptif, meliputi kecerdasan emosional, komunikasi, pemberdayaan, penciptaan makna, ketahanan, keterampilan navigasi, kolaborasi, serta dukungan proaktif bagi kesejahteraan staf dan siswa. Temuan ini memperkaya literatur kepemimpinan pendidikan dan memberikan implikasi praktis bagi tata kelola sekolah di lingkungan yang dinamis dan kompleks.

Kata Kunci: analisis bibliometrik; kepemimpinan adaptif; transformasi pendidikan

How to cite (APA 7)

Mujari, M., Astuti, Y., & Surya, P. (2026). Adaptive leadership research trends in education. *Curricula: Journal of Curriculum Development*, 5(1), 133-148.

Peer review

This article has been peer-reviewed through the journal's standard double-blind peer review, where both the reviewers and authors are anonymised during review.

Copyright

2026, Muhamad Mujari, Yuni Astuti, Priadi Surya. This an open-access is article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International (CC BY-SA 4.0) <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author, and source are credited.

*Corresponding author: muhamadmujari.2024@student.uny.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

Adaptive leadership is a practice of mobilizing individuals to address complex challenges through a continuous process of observation, interpretation, and intervention. This concept underscores the importance of active participation between leaders and followers, as well as the utilization of collective intelligence to foster a safe and responsive environment amid shifting values, roles, and objectives (Yozi & Mbokota, 2024). In uncertain situations, adaptive leaders are expected to distinguish between technical and adaptive challenges and select appropriate responses (Hadicaksono et al., 2024).

A key feature of adaptive leadership is its flexibility in addressing the evolving dynamics of contemporary organizations, encompassing both socio-educational and technological transformations. The concept of adaptive leadership emphasizes tailoring leadership behaviors to followers' context and maturity levels to achieve organizational effectiveness and job satisfaction (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969; Vargas & Cornejo, 2024). In the digital transformation era, leaders are expected to make swift decisions, adapt their leadership styles, and foster innovation amid uncertainty (Candrasa et al., 2024).

In the educational domain, adaptive leadership is particularly relevant for institutions aiming to transform into world-class organizations. Leaders are required to develop contextually grounded and resilient strategies to respond effectively to institutional environmental dynamics (Marlia et al., 2025). Moreover, this leadership approach emphasizes pragmatism and resilience, enabling leaders to safeguard organizational and community well-being amidst uncertainty (Macpherson, 2025).

Given the accelerating pace of global change, the concept of adaptive leadership has garnered significant attention as organizations increasingly operate in environments characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA). Traditional leadership theories often fail to equip leaders with the necessary agility to tackle unpredictable and rapidly evolving challenges (Abukalusa & Oosthuizen, 2025). In contrast, adaptive leadership, which emphasizes learning agility, systems thinking, and proactive responsiveness, offers a compelling alternative. Therefore, conducting a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is essential to consolidate dispersed insights, critically evaluate theoretical developments, and form a cohesive understanding of adaptive leadership in today's dynamic context.

Although an increasing number of studies affirm the relevance of adaptive leadership, the existing literature frequently focuses on individual-level competencies, such as cognitive flexibility or emotional resilience. However, it often overlooks the dynamics at the team and organizational levels (Setiyadi et al., 2024). This narrow scope weakens the comprehensive application of adaptive leadership principles across organizational structures. An SLR can reveal such gaps by mapping existing empirical findings across multiple levels of analysis, thereby enabling researchers to identify patterns, inconsistencies, and underexplored areas in the literature (Laureani et al., 2024). This process not only enhances theoretical rigor but also expands the practical utility of adaptive leadership research.

From a practical standpoint, insights derived from a well-conducted SLR can significantly inform the design of leadership development programs aligned with current and future

demands. Sectors such as healthcare, public administration, and education increasingly require leaders who can adapt to rapidly shifting operational and policy landscapes (Abbas et al., 2024; Singh et al., 2024). The SLR approach provides evidence-based recommendations to guide institutions in cultivating adaptive leadership capacity within these critical sectors.

Additionally, cross-disciplinary integration is increasingly relevant, particularly given the growing intersection of leadership and emerging technologies. The proliferation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) within organizational contexts presents both opportunities and ethical challenges to existing leadership models (Aziz et al., 2024; Sposato, 2024). When viewed through an interdisciplinary lens, adaptive leadership provides valuable insights into how leaders can navigate these transformations with agility and foresight. The SLR is uniquely positioned to capture and synthesize such cross-disciplinary insights, thereby fostering theoretical advancement and strategic innovation in leadership studies.

Conducting an SLR on adaptive leadership is not merely an academic exercise; it is a critical step in addressing the complexities of contemporary organizational life. An SLR enables the consolidation of fragmented knowledge, identification of theoretical and practical gaps, the foundation for leadership training and development, and the encouragement of cross-disciplinary collaboration. By offering a structured and comprehensive foundation, the SLR empowers both scholars and practitioners to develop leadership practices that are contextualized and responsive to the demands of Education 5.0 (Agazu & Debela, 2024; Clark et al., 2021; Ngoc Khuong et al., 2022).

This study examines the contemporary body of research on adaptive leadership and assesses its potential as a scholarly focus. It also analyzes the development of academic discourse in adaptive leadership and examines how this growing literature contributes to the advancement of leadership theory and organizational practice. Furthermore, this study aims to examine the continued relevance of adaptive leadership as a focus of academic research, to analyze current research trends and distributions in the field of adaptive leadership, and to explore the theoretical and practical implications of adaptive leadership for schools in the context of the Education 5.0 era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Adaptive Leadership

Adaptive leadership is a dynamic and flexible leadership framework designed to help leaders confront complex challenges and transformative changes within organizations. Unlike traditional leadership models, adaptive leadership distinguishes between technical challenges, which can be addressed through existing knowledge and expertise, and adaptive challenges, which require new learning, innovation, and changes in behavior and mindset (Abukalusa & Oosthuizen, 2025).

Adaptive leadership is increasingly emphasized in the literature as a vital leadership approach for organizations operating in environments characterized by rapid technological advancement and continuous change. It focuses on leaders' capacity to respond flexibly to complex, unpredictable situations while remaining aligned with long-term strategic objectives. Adaptive leadership is essential for enabling organizations to navigate the

complexities of the digital age and respond effectively to rapid technological developments. Unlike traditional leadership models that rely on fixed solutions, adaptive leadership promotes continuous learning, innovation, and adjustment to emerging challenges (Adnan et al., 2024).

From a structural perspective, adaptive leadership must be institutionalized through appropriate administrative and governance systems that support effective organizational functioning. Organizations should adopt structures that ensure clear lines of authority and decision-making, strong governance and accountability, effective communication and collaboration, and efficient resource allocation and management (Kasule, 2025). These systems enhance organizational flexibility and enable leaders to respond to changing priorities while maintaining operational efficiency. Such structures create an enabling environment in which leaders and employees can collectively address evolving demands.

An adaptive leader is expected to manage both immediate and long-term challenges simultaneously. An adaptive leader addresses the immediate needs of a crisis without sacrificing long-term objectives, suggesting that leaders must balance technical problem-solving with deeper adaptive work (Cederquist, 2022). These principles emphasize inclusive participation, strong relationships, continuous learning, and ethical responsibility, positioning adaptive leadership as a holistic and values-driven approach to sustainable organizational change (McKimm et al., 2023).

Key Elements of Adaptive Leadership

Adaptive leadership comprises several key elements that underpin the management of organizational change and learning. First is the holding environment, which involves creating a safe space in which individuals can manage pressure and address challenges without becoming overwhelmed (Seibel et al., 2023). Second is the disciplined attention, which maintains focus on critical issues and ensures that teams remain engaged with adaptive challenges (Lovett et al., 2023). Third is collective leadership, which emphasizes empowerment, collaboration, and shared responsibility in addressing complex problems (Scortzaru et al., 2024). Fourth is emotional intelligence, which is essential for managing conflict, fostering adaptability, and sustaining team morale. Fifth is anticipating future trends, which involves proactively identifying and preparing for upcoming challenges and opportunities.

These elements are closely related to teachers' pedagogical competence and performance. The holding environment helps teachers manage pressure during teaching, while disciplined attention sustains focus on improving instructional quality. Collective leadership fosters collaboration among teachers to solve educational challenges, and emotional intelligence enhances their ability to manage classroom dynamics. Meanwhile, anticipating future trends enables teachers to design contextual and relevant learning strategies in line with educational developments.

Characteristics of Adaptive Leadership

In addition to its key elements, adaptive leadership is also defined by several core characteristics. First is flexibility and innovation, referring to the ability to generate creative solutions to emerging challenges (Scortzaru et al., 2024). Second, the focus is on learning, emphasizing continuous learning through reflection and practical action (Laur et al., 2021). Third is managing uncertainty, which entails viewing change as an opportunity to develop new strategies and approaches (Abukalusa & Oosthuizen, 2025). Fourth is influence and collaboration, in which leaders guide through influence and cooperation rather than through command and control.

These characteristics directly enhance pedagogical competence and teacher performance. Flexibility and innovation encourage teachers to adapt and develop relevant instructional strategies; a focus on learning cultivates reflective teaching practices; managing uncertainty strengthens teachers' readiness to address curriculum- or learner-related changes; and collaboration fosters a participatory professional environment that enhances collective performance.

Overall, adaptive leadership is an approach that emphasizes resilience, collaboration, continuous learning, and responsiveness to change. In educational contexts, the implementation of adaptive leadership is strategically significant for strengthening teachers' pedagogical competence and improving performance by fostering safe, reflective, and collaborative work environments. Thus, adaptive leadership serves not only as a conceptual framework for navigating change but also as a practical model for building teacher capacity and institutional effectiveness in the era of educational transformation.

METHODS

A SLR using a bibliometric approach is a quantitative method for mapping and assessing scholarly literature by identifying research trends, patterns, and influential contributors within a particular field. The application of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) framework enhances the transparency, rigor, and replicability of the review process, resulting in a structured and comprehensive overview of the research topic. The inclusion criteria established for this study were as follows: 1) Articles published up to May 21, 2025; 2) Publications written in English; and 3) Studies explicitly focused on the topic of adaptive leadership.

The bibliometric analysis in this study was conducted using VOSviewer to explore and visualize bibliographic data, including citation relationships, collaboration patterns among authors, and keyword co-occurrence. Through this process, the study illustrates the intellectual structure and research dynamics within the field. The integration of bibliometric techniques with a systematic literature review enables the synthesis of empirical findings while mapping the overall research landscape, including the identification of major contributors and emerging areas of interest. This combined approach provides a more holistic understanding of the field's development, historical progression, and potential future directions, and is particularly useful in interdisciplinary research contexts.

The first stage of this study focused on keyword selection using a macro, or top-down, strategy, beginning with broad search terms and gradually narrowing the scope to more specific topics. Considering the relatively limited number of prior studies on adaptive leadership, the term “adaptive leadership” was intentionally selected as the main keyword and was searched within article titles, abstracts, and author-provided keywords.

The Scopus database was selected as the primary data source because of its broad coverage and strong academic reputation. Scholars widely use it for a range of purposes, including conducting systematic reviews, identifying experts in specific fields, and tracking research trends across disciplines.

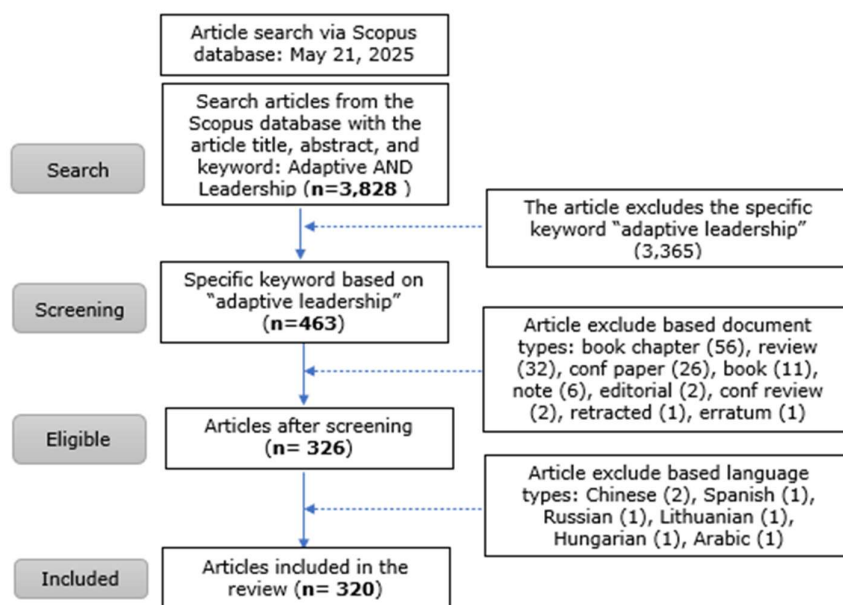


Figure 1. Systematic Literature Review Information Flow using PRISMA
Source: Research 2026

Based on the search results retrieved from the Scopus database on May 21, 2025, using the keyword combination “adaptive AND leadership” within the article title, abstract, and keywords across various academic disciplines, a total of 3,828 documents were identified, covering publications from the earliest in 1989 to the most recent in 2025. Among these, a more targeted search using the exact phrase “adaptive leadership” yielded 463 documents (see **Figure 1**).

A subsequent screening process was conducted to filter the documents by document type. The following types were excluded: book chapters (56), review articles (32), conference papers (26), books (11), notes (6), editorials (2), conference reviews (2), retracted articles (1), errata (1), and non-English publications (7), resulting in the elimination of 143 documents in total.

The final dataset, after screening by document type, comprised 320 peer-reviewed journal articles, which were then selected for in-depth analysis in this study to address the proposed research questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are derived from a comprehensive examination of 320 peer-reviewed articles on adaptive leadership indexed in the Scopus database. The data collection process focused on analyzing publication volume, temporal trends in research output, and the journals that served as primary outlets for publication. Furthermore, the study identifies the most influential components within the field of adaptive leadership, including prominent authors, leading institutions, and the countries that have made the most significant scholarly contributions.

The Continued Relevance of Adaptive Leadership for Future Research

Based on data retrieved from Scopus, it is evident that over more than four decades, only 320 articles have directly addressed adaptive leadership. This relatively modest volume of research suggests that the field remains underexplored.

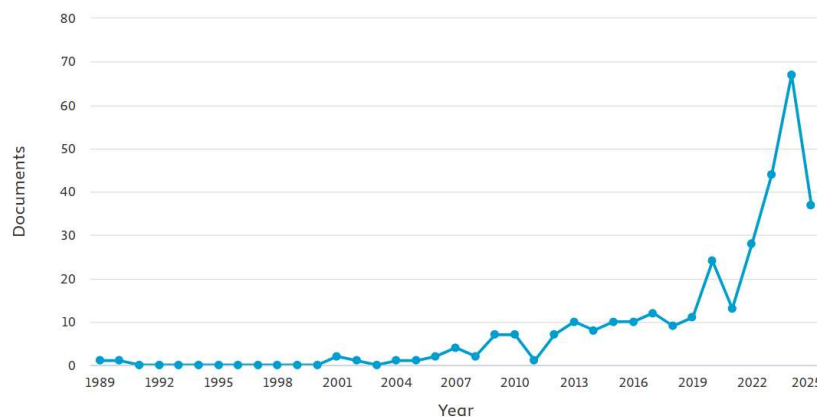


Figure 2. Number of Adaptive Leadership Publications
Source: Research 2026

Figure 2 shows that interest in adaptive leadership has increased markedly over the past decade, particularly since 2019. This was due to the global COVID-19 pandemic. The first known scholarly article on this topic, authored by Rhoades Jr. in 1989, was titled “Adaptive Leadership Style Spells Success”, marking the introduction of what is now recognized as the concept of adaptive leadership.

Research on adaptive leadership is gaining significant momentum among scholars, particularly regarding its applicability to managing change, making rapid decisions, navigating uncertainty, and driving innovation, particularly within social, technological, and educational contexts. These emerging areas of focus reflect the growing relevance and utility of adaptive leadership in addressing complex and evolving challenges across various sectors.

Since 1989, scholarly work on adaptive leadership has remained relatively sparse, largely due to the limited number of studies published in high-quality academic journals (see **Figure 2**). This condition presents a substantial opportunity for future researchers to develop and strengthen this field of study. The present research is significant for advancing the

understanding of adaptive leadership by examining its influence on individual behavior and for contributing to the formulation of a more integrated conceptual framework. These contributions are expected to deepen understanding of how adaptive leadership can be applied effectively and sustainably across sectors, particularly in education. This demonstrates that adaptive leadership remains a relevant subject for future academic research.

The Distribution of Recent Research on Adaptive Leadership

An analysis of the distribution of research on adaptive leadership was conducted using the 320 selected articles, categorized by country, region, institutional affiliation, journal, and author, with a focus on the top 10 in each category. Insights into the geographical and institutional dissemination of scholarship on adaptive leadership are valuable for academics and practitioners alike in formulating future research agendas, particularly in advancing a more sustainable adaptive leadership paradigm.

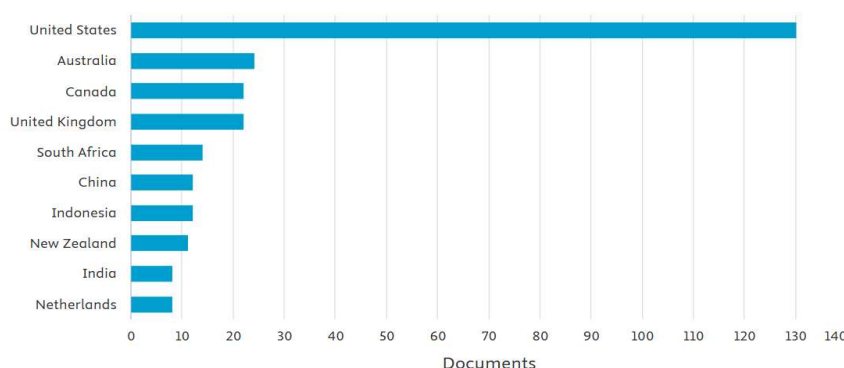


Figure 3. Number of articles by country or territory (top 10 countries)
Source: Research 2026

Figure 3 shows that the geographic distribution of scholarly work on adaptive leadership is predominantly concentrated in the United States, which accounts for 130 articles. This is followed by Australia (24 articles), Canada (22), the United Kingdom (22), South Africa (14), China (12), Indonesia (12), New Zealand (11), India (8), and the Netherlands (8). The geographical patterns of adaptive leadership research indicate that the United States dominates the field, accounting for the largest number of publications (130 articles). Several other countries have also shown substantial academic involvement, notably Australia (24 publications) and both Canada and the United Kingdom (22 each). Additionally, growing contributions are evident from emerging and developing economies, including South Africa (14), China (12), Indonesia (12), New Zealand (11), India (8), and the Netherlands (8), reflecting an expanding global interest in this area of study.

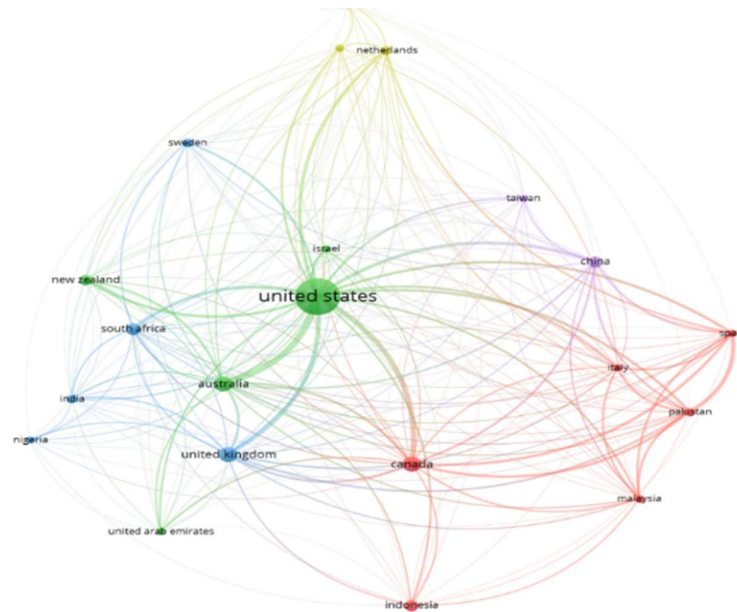


Figure 4. Country Network Visualization
Source: Research 2026

These findings indicate that adaptive leadership is not only a topic of interest among developed nations but is also gaining prominence in developing countries, underscoring its global relevance and applicability. To further explore the international research landscape, the authors employed VOSviewer software to analyze collaborative linkages among countries involved in adaptive leadership studies. This stage is crucial for shaping a systematic and prospective research agenda. The VOSviewer analysis illustrates the interconnectedness among countries in the examination of adaptive leadership (see **Figure 4**).

These findings strengthen the view that adaptive leadership is not solely a concern of developed countries such as the United States, Australia, and European nations, but is also attracting growing scholarly attention in developing contexts. The concept demonstrates strong relevance and practical value, particularly for countries seeking to adopt its principles in order to develop more inclusive, flexible, and responsive leadership models.

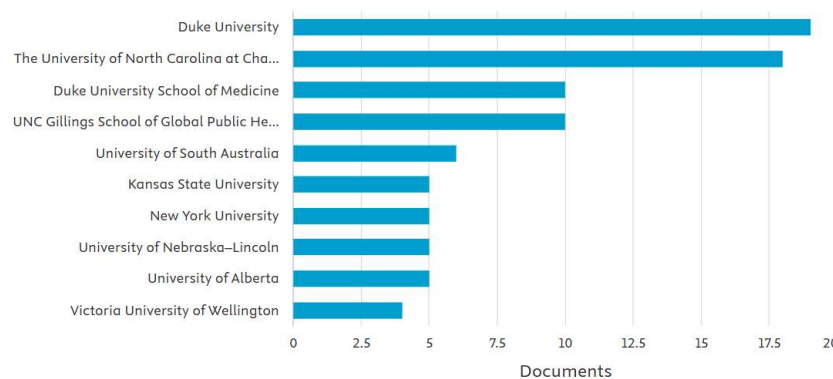


Figure 5. Count of Publications by Affiliation (top 10 universities)
Source: Research 2026

The distribution of academic publications on adaptive leadership, by institutional affiliation, shows a clear concentration among leading universities. Duke University (USA) leads with 19 publications, followed by the University of North Carolina with 18 publications. Both the Duke University School of Medicine and the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health contributed 10 articles each. Additionally, the University of South Australia contributed 6 publications, while Kansas State University, New York University, University of Nebraska, and the University of Alberta each contributed 5 publications. Victoria University rounds out the list with 4 publications (see **Figure 5**).

Theoretical and Practical Implications for Adaptive Leadership

This study examined 320 articles from the Scopus database and used VOSviewer to visualize bibliometric patterns and implications for future research on adaptive leadership. The metadata analysis enabled a clearer understanding of the core concepts and principal findings within the field. Furthermore, the results identified research areas that have been widely explored and those that remain underexplored, offering valuable insights to guide future scholarly work.

Table 1. Keyword by Author of Adaptive Leadership

Rank	Keywords	Frequency	Total Link Strength
1	Leadership	114	634
2	Organization and Management	20	188
3	Adaptive Leadership	101	172
4	Organization	9	87
5	Adaptation	9	79
6	Psychology	7	78
7	Culture Anthropology	5	62
8	Education	10	60
9	Quality Improvement	5	48
10	Total Quality Management	5	41

Source: Output VOSviewer in Research 2026

From a practical standpoint, the literature analysis using VOSviewer supports the sustainable implementation of adaptive leadership and the promotion of adaptive leadership styles within organizations globally, particularly in educational institutions. According to **Table 2** and **Figure 6**, keyword frequency analysis reveals dominant topics in the literature: leadership (114 occurrences), adaptive leadership (101), organizational & management (20), adaptation (9), psychology (7), cultural anthropology (5), education (10), quality improvement (5), and total quality management (5).

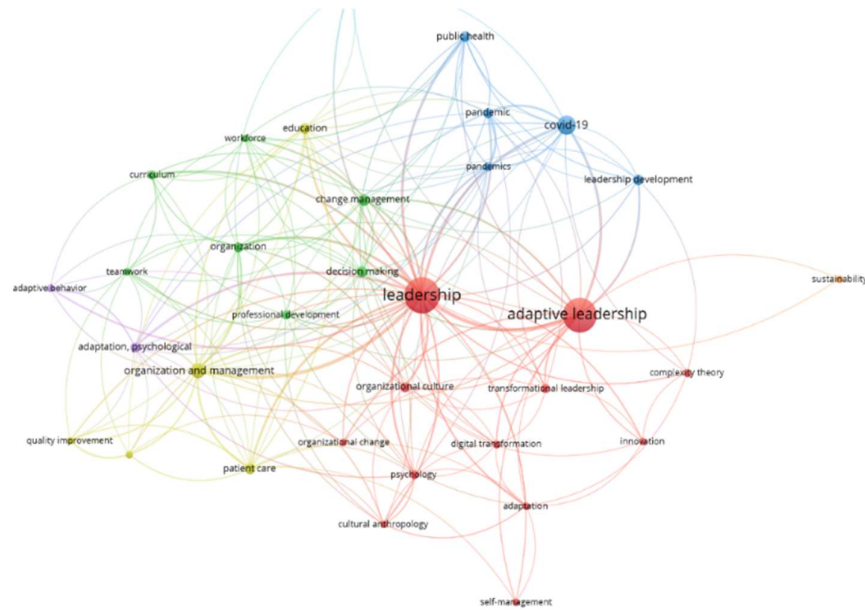


Figure 6. Keywords Network Visualization
Source: Research 2026

Discussion

Based on a mapping and review of prior studies, a notable gap has been identified: most research on adaptive leadership has been conducted in developed countries, including the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia (see Figures 3 and Figures 4). Consequently, future research should focus more on developing countries, including Indonesia. Such studies have the potential to address these research gaps and to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how adaptive leadership enhances organizational performance. This can be explored within a universal framework by examining its effectiveness across diverse cultural contexts in developing nations, where adaptive leadership can respond to the dynamic challenges faced by modern organizations. This emphasizes the importance of leadership flexibility in adapting styles to specific contexts and follower maturity levels (Vargas & Cornejo, 2024).

In confronting complex challenges and conditions of uncertainty, adaptive leadership is characterized by the leader's ability to adjust dynamically and direct change by distinguishing between technical and adaptive problems and selecting appropriate approaches based on the nature of the challenges faced (Oktaviani et al., 2025). Findings from prior research on adaptive leadership indicate that attention must be paid to fundamental aspects that serve as key success factors for adaptive leadership. Findings from prior research on adaptive leadership suggest that attention should be paid to its fundamental attributes. Collectively, these attributes empower adaptive leaders to positively influence their organizations, particularly in volatile environments, enabling teams to navigate complexity and achieve successful outcomes. Below are the adaptive leadership attributes that can be leveraged to address educational challenges in the era of Education 5.0.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is a vital foundation of adaptive leadership, encompassing the ability to objectively self-assess, maintain high self-awareness, and effectively manage emotions to enhance team engagement and performance (Jasubhai, 2025). Emotionally intelligent leaders recognize personal strengths and limitations, respond calmly under pressure, and create empathetic, inclusive work environments. By understanding team emotional dynamics such as implicit conflicts or individual motivations, they align interactions, promote open communication, and build deep trust. This skill also helps prevent conflict escalation by channeling negative emotions productively, motivating team members through acknowledgment of their contributions and emotional needs, thereby fostering psychological safety and quicker adaptation to change.

Effective Communication

Effective communication is a crucial pillar of adaptive leadership, combining influence-building, problem-solving, trust development, and the delivery of a holistic vision (Alanazi et al., 2025). Adaptive leaders convey messages clearly and empathetically, guiding teams through challenges and creating inclusive dialogue spaces to respond to change. This skill enables the identification of root causes, the encouragement of critical thinking, and the articulation of inspiring visions. Transparency and consistency in communication strengthen trust, foster collaboration, and ensure that all members feel heard and involved in decision-making, thereby building team resilience and alignment amid complex dynamics.

Empowerment

Empowerment entails delegating authority to team members, enabling them to take initiative, foster creativity, and assume responsibility for decisions (Hulme et al., 2023). Adaptive leaders foster environments in which experimentation and proactive problem-solving flourish, without rigid hierarchies. This enhances individual ownership and spurs innovative solutions. Empowerment accelerates team responsiveness in dynamic contexts by instilling trust to act independently. It also cultivates a culture of collaboration and continuous learning, strengthening collective resilience.

Sense-making

Sense-making is a critical capability in adaptive leadership, involving the interpretation of complex situations, the strategic framing of challenges, and the guidance of teams through uncertainty (Hulme et al., 2023). Leaders use this skill to decipher ambiguous information, identify hidden patterns, and transform raw data into a structured understanding. This enables clear challenge definition, concrete action planning, and shared narratives, facilitating collaboration. Sense-making integrates logic, intuition, and multistakeholder perspectives, ensuring that decisions remain relevant amid evolving external dynamics and that challenges are turned into opportunities.

Resilience

Resilience reflects the ability to remain adaptive, effective, and responsive amid change and disruption, while fostering an innovative organizational culture (Alanazi et al., 2025). Resilient leaders sustain performance momentum during crises and build collective learning mechanisms to convert obstacles into sources of growth. By encouraging risk-taking within safe boundaries and cross-functional collaboration, they embed innovation into the organizational DNA. This empowers teams to adapt and pioneer sustainable transformation.

Navigation Acumen

Navigation acumen involves mapping organizational complexity, managing diverse stakeholder dynamics, and forging strategic alliances to align with shared goals (Hulme et al., 2023). Adaptive leaders identify interests, priorities, and potential conflicts, designing inclusive approaches to unite perspectives. Through persuasive communication, cross-sector collaboration, and negotiation, they build strong support networks to advance change agendas. This skill translates broad visions into operational steps that are understood by all, mitigating the risk of miscommunication or conflict and transforming political or structural challenges into synergies that reinforce team cohesion and organizational relevance.

Collaborative Mindset

A collaborative mindset emphasizes active participation in collective problem-solving and decision-making, values diverse perspectives, and fosters synergistic teamwork (Chew & Zainal, 2024). Adaptive leaders invite contributions from all members, creating safe spaces for idea exchange where disagreements are viewed as creative assets. They integrate multidisciplinary viewpoints, facilitate constructive dialogue, and transform potential conflicts into shared learning. Collaboration facilitates holistic, sustainable solutions that are embraced by all stakeholders, thereby enhancing efficiency and collective ownership.

Proactive Wellbeing Support

Proactive well-being support focuses on leaders' ability to recognize, monitor, and address team members' mental health and holistic well-being, particularly in remote or hybrid work environments that are prone to isolation and emotional fatigue (Hadicaksono et al., 2024). Adaptive leaders build preventive support mechanisms, conduct regular check-ins, ensure access to mental health resources, implement flexible schedules, and foster transparent, stigma-free cultures in which psychological challenges can be openly discussed. This approach sustains engagement, productivity, and emotional bonds across dispersed teams, increasing resilience to external pressures and ensuring long-term performance sustainability amid evolving work dynamics.

Together, these adaptive leadership attributes significantly enhance organizational agility, team performance, innovation, resilience, stakeholder engagement, continuous learning, morale, and goal alignment. Collectively, they boost organizational capacity to adapt, thrive, and succeed in rapidly changing environments.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that adaptive leadership remains a highly relevant and critical topic for exploration within the context of ongoing social, technological, and educational changes. Adaptive leadership has been shown to make significant contributions in managing change, facilitating rapid decision-making, addressing uncertainty, and fostering innovation across various domains. The focus of this review extends beyond its impact on individual behavior to the development of a robust conceptual framework capable of addressing contemporary challenges.

The geographical distribution of research indicates a predominance of studies from developed countries, including the United States, Australia, and several European nations. However, emerging trends indicate growing interest from developing countries, reflecting the global urgency and relevance of adaptive leadership. Institutions like Duke University serve as key publication hubs, with the *Journal of Leadership Studies* standing out as a leading source of scholarly contributions. Prominent authors such as Anderson and Baily further enrich the theoretical and empirical literature in this field.

In terms of practical implementation, the success of adaptive leadership is highly dependent on mastering core attributes, including emotional intelligence, effective communication, empowerment, sense-making, resilience, navigation acumen, collaborative mindset, and proactive well-being support. These attributes provide a vital foundation for leaders, particularly in educational settings, to design responsive and sustainable strategies in the era of Education 5.0. Therefore, this study offers important contributions both to leadership theory development and as practical guidance for educational leaders facing the complex challenges of the future.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. The author confirms that the article's data and content are free of plagiarism.

REFERENCES

- Abbas, R., Shah, S., Diwan, S., Ashraf, A., Ameer, R., & Khan, M. A. (2024). Effective leadership in healthcare professions: an overview of challenges and solutions in Pakistan. *The Healer Journal of Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Sciences*, 4(4), 13-18.
- Abukalusa, K., & Oosthuizen, R. (2025). An adaptive organisational leadership framework through systems thinking. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 33(8), 2673-2703.

- Adnan, A., Abubakar, R., Suryani, S., & Keysha, K. (2024). Impact of leadership on sales performance mediated by digital intellectuality and innovation in Aceh Province, Indonesia. *Journal of Ecohumanism*, 3(7), 5111-5126.
- Agazu, B. G., & Debela, K. L. (2024). Leadership effectiveness: a systematic literature review. *Library Leadership and Management*, 38(2), 1-23.
- Alanazi, A. F., Rabi, M., Al-Kheetan, M. J., & Alkherret, A. J. (2025). Enhancing safety and crisis management through adaptive leadership in complex construction engineering projects. *Safety*, 11(3), 1-30.
- Aziz, M. F., Rajesh, J. I., Jahan, F., McMurray, A., Ahmed, N., Narendran, R., & Harrison, C. (2024). AI-powered leadership: a systematic literature review. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 40(5), 604-630.
- Candrasa, L., Cahyadi, L., Cahyadi, W., & Cen, C. C. (2024). Change management strategies: building organizational resilience in the digital era. *Journal of Ecohumanism*, 3(7), 4125-4135.
- Cederquist, A. (2022). A causal model for creating public value (in institutional voids)-the case of Lesvos. *European Journal of Futures Research*, 10(19), 1-19.
- Chew, Y. C., & Zainal, S. R. M. (2024). A sustainable collaborative talent management through collaborative intelligence mindset theory: a systematic review. *Sage Journals*, 1(1), 1-22.
- Clark, W. R., Clark, L. A., Raffo, D. M., & Williams, R. I. (2021). Extending fisch and block's (2018) tips for a systematic review in management and business literature. *Management Review Quarterly*, 71(1), 215-231.
- Hadicaksono, W. H., Sugandi, Y. S., Sumadinata, W. S., & Nurasa, H. (2024). Adaptive leadership of the Indonesian government in handling the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development*, 8(8), 1-10.
- Hersey, P., & Blanchard, K. H. (1969). Life cycle theory of leadership. *Training & Development Journal*, 23(5), 26-34.
- Hulme, M., Beauchamp, G., Clarke, L., & Hamilton, L. (2023). Collaboration in times of crisis: leading UK Schools in the early stages of a pandemic. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 22(1), 161-180.
- Jasubhai, S. (2025). Leadership dynamics: the interplay of cognition, emotion, and resilience. *International Journal of Research in Medical and Clinical Science (IJRMCS)*, 3(1), 134-140.
- Kasule, G. W. (2025). Adaptive leadership in public universities in Uganda: a systematic literature review. *East African Journal of Arts and Social Sciences*, 8(1), 195-207.
- Laur, C. V, Agarwal, P., Mukerji, G., Goulbourne, E., Baranek, H., Pus, L., Bhatia, R. S., Martin, D., & Bhattacharyya, O. (2021). Building health services in a rapidly changing landscape: lessons in adaptive leadership and pivots in a COVID-19 remote monitoring program. *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 23(1), 1-8.

- Laureani, A., Antony, J., Sarabi, Y., & Gountcheva, N. (2024). Leadership for quality: a systematic review and future directions. *Total Quality Management and Business Excellence*, 35(14), 1465-1508.
- Lovett, M., Hebert, D., & McAlister, K. (2023). Adaptive leadership in educator preparation: a statewide case study. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Leadership Studies*, 4(1), 153-159.
- Macpherson, R. J. S. (2025). Building educative leadership theories: a non-foundational and culturally specific approach. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 57(11), 1003-1013.
- Marlia, M. A., Fahmy, R., Lukito, H., & Games, D. (2025). An exploratory study on effective leadership and change management in the transformation of Indonesian public universities towards world-class university status. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 17(3), 1-40.
- McKimm, J., Ramani, S., Forrest, K., Bishop, J., Findyartini, A., Mills, C., ... & Radu, G. (2023). Adaptive leadership during challenging times: effective strategies for health professions educators: AMEE Guide No. 148. *Medical Teacher*, 45(2), 128-138.
- Ngoc Khuong, M., Thanh Tung, D., & Hoang Quoc, T. (2022). Review of empirical research on leadership and firm performance. *SAGE Open*, 12(3), 1-14.
- Oktaviani, W. N., Apriani, S., Heri, A., Djenjen, & Iskandar, S. (2025). Adaptive leadership of principals: a Literature review of the challenges of technology and globalization in 21st century education. *Jurnal Ilmiah Global Education*, 6(2), 906-915.
- Scortzaru, M., DeVolt, M., Ogilvie, L., Luttrell, J., Mangum-Williams, M., & Parazin, J. (2024). Adaptive leadership in virtual nursing environments: enhancing teamwork, engagement, and retention. *Nurse Leader*, 22(5), 501-505.
- Seibel, M., Kaufman, E. K., Cletzer, D. A., & Elliott-Engel, J. (2023). Advancing adaptive leadership through adaption-innovation theory: enhancements to the holding environment. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 17(1), 23-29.
- Setiyadi, D., Septiarini, E., Kurniasih, N., Wijaya, A., Boyke, H., & Umadato, H. (2024). Determinants of adaptive performance at individual, team, and organizational levels: a systematic review of empirical studies (2011-2022). *Journal of Logistics, Informatics and Service Science*, 11(12), 39-70.
- Singh, P. K., Singh, S., Kumari, V., & Tiwari, M. (2024). Navigating healthcare leadership: theories, challenges, and practical insights for the future. *Journal of Postgraduate Medicine*, 70(4), 232-241.
- Sposato, M. (2024). Leadership training and development in the age of artificial intelligence. *Development and Learning in Organizations*, 38(4), 4-7.
- Vargas, D. J. D., & Cornejo, A. M. G. (2024). Bridging the gap: applying AI and bayesian statistics to traditional educational leadership training. *European Public and Social Innovation Review*, 9(1), 1-19.
- Yozi, K., & Mbokota, G. (2024). Adaptive leadership competencies for hybrid work teams in the South African banking sector. *South African Journal of Business Management*, 55(1), 1-14.