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Autocratic, Authoritarian, and Command Leadership: A Systematic Bibliometric Literature Review

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Abstract

This study presents a systematic bibliometric literature review examining the scholarly landscape of autocratic, authoritarian, command-and-control, directive, and militaristic leadership styles in relation to four primary organizational outcome domains: organizational performance, employee motivation, crisis management, and compliance. A total of 284 publications retrieved from the Dimensions database (Digital Science), spanning from 1993 to 2026, were analyzed using bibliometric methods encompassing publication trend analysis, citation mapping, author productivity measurement, geographic distribution profiling, and thematic keyword clustering. Results reveal a dramatic acceleration in research output since 2020, with 2025 recording the highest annual publication count ($n = 81$). The most frequently employed terminological frame is authoritarian leadership ($n = 22$ title occurrences), followed by autocratic leadership ($n = 16$) and directive leadership ($n = 12$). China, Indonesia, and the Netherlands are the leading

contributing countries by author affiliation. Five major thematic clusters were identified: (1) performance and compliance dynamics, (2) motivational consequences and employee silence, (3) cultural and contextual moderation, (4) crisis management and adaptive autocracy, and (5) innovation suppression and knowledge-sharing under directive supervision. The top ten most-cited publications account for 48.8% of all recorded citations, indicating high concentration of scholarly influence. The review identifies critical theoretical gaps including construct proliferation, over-reliance on cross-sectional survey designs, and underrepresentation of military and non-Western organizational contexts. A forward-looking research agenda addressing longitudinal, experimental, and geographically diverse designs is proposed. These findings contribute to a more nuanced, context-sensitive understanding of directive leadership and its consequences for organizations.

Keywords: Autocratic Leadership, Authoritarian Leadership, Directive Leadership, Bibliometric Analysis, Organizational Performance, Employee Motivation

1. Introduction

Leadership style is among the most consequential determinants of organizational behavior, employee well-being, and performance^[1, 2]. Of the many typologies documented in the management sciences, the autocratic or command-and-control style remains uniquely contested: widely credited with decisive effectiveness under crisis conditions, yet consistently linked to voice suppression and motivational erosion in collaborative, knowledge-intensive settings^[3, 4]. Characterized by centralized decision authority, unilateral task direction, and limited tolerance for subordinate participation, autocratic leadership has endured as a central preoccupation across organizational theory, industrial psychology, and management practice^[5].

The intellectual lineage of the construct reaches back to Weber's typology of rational-legal authority, which frames hierarchical obedience as structurally legitimate in bureaucratic organizations^[6], and to McGregor's Theory X, which provided the motivational premise that workers require directive supervision due to an inherent reluctance to self-direct^[7]. The landmark experimental comparison by Lewin, Lippitt, and White^[8] of autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire climates established the first empirical evidence that directive groups achieve higher output under observation but exhibit heightened hostility and productivity collapse in the leader's absence — a paradox that continues to animate contemporary scholarship.

Subsequent decades of research substantially refined this picture. Bass^[9] and Burns^[10] placed autocratic leadership within a transactional paradigm, contrasting it with transformational styles on motivational depth and long-term efficacy. Hofstede's^[11] cross-national framework demonstrated that high power-distance societies normatively accept hierarchical authority,

attenuating resistance and disengagement effects observed in Western individualist samples. This cultural moderation hypothesis has generated a productive research stream in East Asian contexts: Yam *et al.* [12] showed that authoritarian supervision significantly elevates employee silence in Chinese firms, whereas Afsar *et al.* [13] found that paternalistic leadership — blending directive control with personal benevolence — can stimulate follower innovation through relational obligation and trust, illustrating that control and creativity are not invariably opposed.

Strategic and motivational consequences have been equally scrutinized. Stace [14] documented the functional utility of coercive styles during rapid corporate restructuring where decision speed outweighs deliberation. Haile *et al.* [15] reported a negative association between autocratic supervision and intrinsic motivation, aligned with Self-Determination Theory's [16] prediction that autonomy-restricting environments displace internalized regulation with compliance-based behavior. Hogg [17] extended this by proposing a social identity mechanism whereby institutional uncertainty makes highly directive leaders psychologically attractive to followers seeking certitude and group identity — a thesis whose empirical resonance intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite the breadth of accumulated findings, the field lacks a systematic bibliometric mapping of its intellectual scope, geographic distribution, and thematic evolution. Construct proliferation — with 'autocratic,' 'authoritarian,' 'command-and-control,' 'directive,' and 'militaristic' used interchangeably or as distinct entities — continues to impede cumulative synthesis. Bibliometric analysis, as systematized by Donthu *et al.*, [18] provides a rigorous method for delineating intellectual structures and emerging research fronts across large scholarly corpora, yet no such analysis exists for this domain. The present study addresses this gap through a bibliometric review of 284 publications retrieved from the Dimensions database. Four objectives guide the inquiry: (i) to map publication growth and citation impact; (ii) to identify leading journals, authors, and individual works; (iii) to chart the geographic and disciplinary landscape; and (iv) to synthesize major thematic clusters and propose a future research agenda.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study Design

This study employs a systematic bibliometric literature review design. Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative method for evaluating and mapping the structure of a scientific field using publication and citation metadata [18]. It enables objective, reproducible characterization of research volume, impact, authorship patterns, geographic distributions, and thematic evolution — analytical dimensions that narrative reviews cannot readily quantify. The study follows PRISMA guidelines adapted for bibliometric applications, [19] ensuring transparency of search procedures, screening decisions, and analytical choices. Bibliometric analysis was selected over full-text systematic review given the volume of records (n = 284) and the objective of mapping the field's intellectual structure rather than synthesizing effect sizes from primary studies.

2.2 Data Source and Search Strategy

The Dimensions database (Digital Science & Research Solutions Inc., London, UK) [20] was selected as the sole

data source. Dimensions provides one of the largest multidisciplinary scholarly indexes currently available, integrating journal articles, book chapters, conference proceedings, preprints, and monographs alongside citation counts, author affiliation strings, field-of-research classifications (ANZSRC 2020), and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) mappings. A Boolean search query was constructed to capture the full terminological spectrum of autocratic and command-oriented leadership styles while linking them to four key organizational outcome domains. Search parameters are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Search Strategy Parameters Applied to the Dimensions Database

Parameter	Details
Database	Dimensions (Digital Science & Research Solutions Inc.)
Search fields	Title and Abstract
Boolean query	("autocratic leadership" OR "authoritarian leadership" OR "command and control leadership" OR "directive leadership" OR "militaristic leadership") AND ("organizational performance" OR "motivation" OR "crisis management" OR "compliance")
Publication types	All (articles, chapters, preprints, proceedings, monographs)
Language	All (primary analysis restricted to English-language records)
Date range	No restriction (earliest retrieved: 1993; latest: 2026)
Export date	21 May 2026
Records retrieved	284

2.3 Eligibility Criteria

All 284 retrieved records were assessed against the inclusion and exclusion criteria presented in Table 2. Eligibility was evaluated at the title-and-abstract level without full-text screening, consistent with bibliometric study conventions.

Table 2: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Record Eligibility

Criterion	Included	Excluded
Topic relevance	Publications explicitly addressing autocratic, authoritarian, directive, command-and-control, or militaristic leadership in an organizational context	Publications using search terms in non-leadership contexts (e.g., political science, clinical settings)
Outcome domain	Studies examining organizational performance, employee motivation, crisis management, or compliance as primary outcomes	Studies focused solely on individual personality without organizational application
Publication type	Peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, conference proceedings, preprints, monographs	Editorials, letters, commentaries without retrievable abstracts
Metadata completeness	Records with complete title, publication year, and citation count	Records missing title or publication year (n = 0 identified)
Duplicates	Unique records (verified by DOI and title)	Duplicate records identified by identical DOI (n = 0 identified)

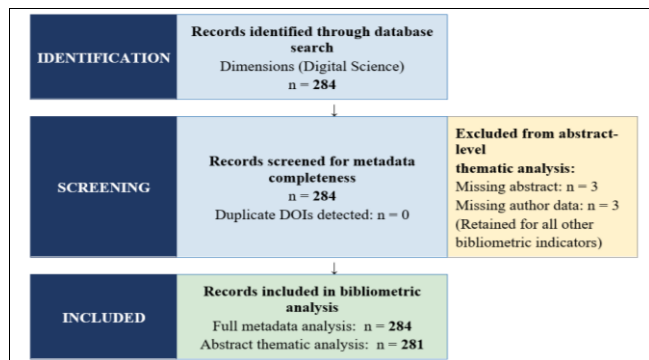


Fig 1: PRISMA-Adapted Study Selection Flow Diagram

2.4 Study Selection and Data Screening

Figure 1 presents the PRISMA-adapted study selection flowchart. Following database export, all 284 records were screened for metadata completeness. No duplicate records were identified (verified by DOI and title matching). All 284 records possessed complete titles and publication years. Three records (1.1%) were missing abstracts and three (1.1%) were missing author affiliation data; these were retained for citation and publication trend computations but excluded from abstract-level thematic keyword analysis and geographic distribution calculations, respectively. The final corpus comprised 284 records for full bibliometric analysis and 281 for thematic abstract analysis.

2.5 Data Extraction

The Dimensions export file was delivered in CSV format containing 35 metadata fields per record. Variables extracted for analysis included: publication identifier (Dimensions ID and DOI), title, abstract text, publication year, author names, raw and structured author affiliation strings, source journal or venue title, publication type, open-access status, total citation count, field-of-research classifications (ANZSRC 2020), and SDG alignments.

2.6 Bibliometric Analysis Procedures

Bibliometric analyses were conducted through a multi-stage sequential procedure. Table 3 summarizes all indicators computed, their definitions, and units of measurement. Publication trend and citation analyses computed annual frequency distributions and per-year citation statistics. Citation distribution analysis classified all records into six citation tiers to characterize distributional shape consistent with Bradford's and Lotka's bibliometric laws [21]. Author productivity analysis applied Lotka's inverse-square law to examine concentration of publishing activity. Geographic distribution was operationalized by parsing affiliation strings for country-identifying keywords. Thematic keyword analysis concatenated all available abstracts into a single corpus and applied predefined keyword lists corresponding to ten thematic research categories.

Table 3: Bibliometric Indicators, Definitions, and Units of Analysis

Indicator	Definition	Unit / Output
Annual publication count	Number of publications per calendar year	Count; trend line
Total citations (TC)	Cumulative citations received by each record at export date	Integer count per record; summed per year
Average citations per paper	TC divided by number of publications in a given year or set	Ratio (2 decimal places)
Citation distribution	Frequency of records in defined citation tiers (0; 1-5; 6-20; 21-50; 51-100; 100+)	Count and percentage per tier
Author productivity (Lotka)	Publications per unique author; proportion of single-publication authors	Count; proportion
Source concentration	Frequency of publications per journal or venue	Ranked frequency list
Geographic distribution	Country of author affiliation, parsed via keyword matching	Count per country
Field of research (FOR)	ANZSRC 2020 classification codes assigned by Dimensions	Frequency per discipline category
Title-term frequency	Occurrence of pre-defined leadership-style terms in publication titles	Count per term
Abstract keyword frequency	Occurrence of thematic keywords in concatenated abstract corpus	Count per theme keyword

2.7 Software and Analytical Tools

All data processing and bibliometric computations were performed using Python (version 3.12) [22] with the pandas library for tabular data manipulation [23] and the NumPy and collections standard libraries for numerical operations and frequency counting. Regular expression-based text parsing was performed using Python's built-in re module. All analyses were executed in a reproducible scripted pipeline available upon request from the corresponding author.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Overview of the Corpus

The final corpus comprised 284 publications spanning 33 years (1993–2026), yielding a total of 2,500 recorded

citations and a mean of 8.80 citations per paper (median = 0; range = 0–245). The corpus exhibits a pronounced skew characteristic of bibliometric distributions: 56.7% of records (n = 161) have received zero citations, while the top ten papers alone account for 1,221 citations — 48.8% of all citations in the corpus. This concentration is consistent with Price's Law of scientific literature, which predicts that a small elite of publications generates a disproportionate share of scholarly impact [24]. The zero-citation majority is substantially explained by recency: 54.9% of all publications appeared in or after 2024, a period insufficient for meaningful citation accumulation given the typical 12–18-month lag between publication and first citation.

Table 4: Publication Output, Citation Volume, and Mean Citation Impact by Period

Period	n	% of Corpus	Total Citations	Mean Citations/Paper
Pre-2017	22	7.7%	786	35.73
2017–2019	18	6.3%	708	39.33
2020	18	6.3%	385	21.39
2021–2022	52	18.3%	447	8.60
2023	18	6.3%	70	3.89
2024	45	15.8%	72	1.60
2025	81	28.5%	31	0.38
2026 (partial)	30	10.6%	1	0.03
Total	284	100%	2,500	8.80

3.2 Publication Growth Trends

Above Table 4 presents the distribution of publications and citations across eight chronological periods. The data reveal an unmistakable exponential growth trajectory, with output more than quadrupling between 2020 and 2025.

Prior to 2017, the field produced a cumulative total of only 22 publications (7.7%) across more than two decades, with no year exceeding three publications. The decisive inflection point occurs in 2020, when annual output surged 157% relative to 2019. This timing coincides with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted widespread scholarly inquiry into directive leadership as a crisis response mechanism [17]. The upward trajectory continued

through 2021–2022 (n = 52 combined), 2024 (n = 45), and culminated in a corpus-record 81 publications in 2025 — a 350% increase over the 2020 baseline. Earlier cohorts exhibit substantially higher mean citations (pre-2017: 35.73; 2017–2019: 39.33) because they have had more time to accumulate citations — the near-zero averages for 2024–2026 reflect bibliometric immaturity rather than low impact [18].

3.3 Citation Impact and Most-Cited Publications

Table 5 presents the ten most-cited publications — the intellectual core of the field most frequently invoked as theoretical anchors by subsequent scholarship.

Table 5: Top 10 Most-Cited Publications in the Corpus (n = 284)

Rank	First Author (Year)	Title	Journal / Venue	TC
1	Stace (1993)	The Strategic Management of Corporate Change	Human Relations	245
2	Choi & Mai-Dalton (2006)	Affective and Motivational Consequences of Leader Self-Sacrifice	The Leadership Quarterly	137
3	Warrick (2017)	Influence of Organizational Culture and Leadership Style on Employee Satisfaction	EuroMed Journal of Business	131
4	Hogg (2020)	Uncertain Self in a Changing World: Foundation for Radicalization, Populism, and Autocratic Leadership	European Review of Social Psychology	129
5	Afsar et al. (2020)	Linking Paternalistic Leadership to Follower's Innovative Work Behavior	European Journal of Innovation Management	119
6	Seemiller & Grace (2018)	The Social Impact of Technology on Millennials and Consequences for Higher Education	Telematics and Informatics	117
7	Yam et al. (2017)	Authoritarian Leadership and Employee Silence in China	Journal of Management & Organization	105
8	Haile et al. (2017)	Leadership Styles and Employees' Motivation: Perspective From an Emerging Economy	The Journal of Developing Areas	96
9	Larson et al. (1999)	The Impact of Directive Leadership on Group Information Sampling, Decisions, and Outcomes	Communication Research	72
10	Liu & Batt (2021)	Team Reflexivity and Employee Innovative Behavior: The Mediating Role of Knowledge Sharing	Journal of Knowledge Management	70

The most-cited publication is Stace's [14] 1993 article in *Human Relations* (TC = 245), which documented the strategic rationality of directive approaches during organizational restructuring. Choi and Mai-Dalton [5] (TC = 137) examined how leader self-sacrifice interacts with autocratic style to moderate follower motivation — complicating simple negative portrayals of directive supervision. The 2017 cohort is notably well-represented with three entries in the top ten (Warrick, [25] TC = 131; Yam et al., [12] TC = 105; Haile et al., [15] TC = 96), suggesting 2017 marked a watershed year for high-impact empirical work in this domain. Hogg's [17] social identity account (TC = 129) and Afsar et al.'s [13] paternalistic leadership-innovation study (TC = 119), both from 2020, reflect the field's responsiveness to the organizational disruptions of that year.

3.4 Publication Types and Open-Access Status

Peer-reviewed journal articles dominate the corpus (n = 264; 93.0%), with book chapters (n = 10; 3.5%) and preprints (n = 7; 2.5%) constituting the remainder. Open-access publication is the norm rather than the exception: 216 papers (76.1%) are available under some form of open access, with Gold OA predominating (n = 140; 49.3%). Closed-access records represent only 23.9% (n = 68). This high OA proportion has practical consequences: findings on directive leadership are broadly accessible to policymakers and practitioners in lower-income contexts — particularly relevant given the geographic spread of contributing institutions across developing economies.

3.5 Most Productive Publication Venues

Table 6 presents the ten most frequent publication venues.

The distribution is highly fragmented: no single journal publishes more than five papers (1.8%), and the top ten venues combined account for only 26 publications (9.2%). This pattern conforms to Bradford's Law of scattering ^[21].

Table 6: Top 10 Most Productive Publication Venues

Rank	Journal / Venue	n	%
1	SSRN Electronic Journal	5	1.8%
2	Frontiers in Psychology	4	1.4%
3	International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science	3	1.1%
4	BMC Health Services Research	2	0.7%
5	Public Performance & Management Review	2	0.7%
6	Social Sciences & Humanity Research Review	2	0.7%
7	Edukasi Journal of Educational Research	2	0.7%
8	International Journal of Scientific Research and Management	2	0.7%
9	Journal of Management Perspectives	2	0.7%
10	Inverge Journal of Social Sciences	2	0.7%

The SSRN Electronic Journal leads with five papers — all preprints — reflecting its role as a rapid-dissemination repository. *Frontiers in Psychology* (n = 4) is the highest-ranked peer-reviewed journal, consistent with its broad coverage of applied psychology. The absence of flagship management journals — *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Applied Psychology* — from the top venues is a substantively important finding, suggesting that autocratic

and directive leadership research is published predominantly in second- and third-tier outlets. This may reflect either a lesser perceived prestige of the topic within elite journals, its stronger resonance in applied regional contexts, or its cross-disciplinary nature frustrating disciplinary gatekeeping. The practical implication is that high-quality findings may be systematically under-cited due to lower journal visibility.

3.6 Author Productivity and Collaboration Patterns

The corpus involved 757 unique authors with a mean of 2.81 co-authors per publication (range: 1–9). Single-authored papers constitute 21.5% (n = 61), two-authored papers 24.6% (n = 70), and multi-authored papers 52.8% (n = 150). Applying Lotka's Law, ^[21] 95.5% of authors (n = 723) contributed exactly one publication — a proportion higher than Lotka's predicted 60.8%, indicating that the field has not yet developed a stable core of prolific specialists. Among the 20 authors who published two or more papers, none exceeded two publications, suggesting research momentum remains dispersed and that the topic has not yet generated the anchoring scholar-networks typical of mature bibliometric domains.

3.7 Geographic Distribution of Research Activity

Table 7 presents the geographic distribution of author affiliations across 15 identified countries.

Table 7: Geographic Distribution of Author Affiliations (Top 15 Countries)

Rank	Country	n	%	Predominant Research Focus
1	China	13	4.6%	Authoritarian/paternalistic leadership; employee silence; power distance
2	Indonesia	5	1.8%	Leadership styles in education and public sector; motivation
3	Netherlands	3	1.1%	Compliance ethics; cross-national leadership comparison
4	Pakistan	3	1.1%	Autocratic leadership and organizational commitment; motivation
5	South Korea	2	0.7%	Team performance; directive leadership in corporate firms
6	Taiwan	2	0.7%	Paternalistic leadership; cultural moderators of leadership effects
7	India	2	0.7%	Performance management; employee engagement
8	Malaysia	2	0.7%	Leadership in healthcare; Islamic management principles
9	Australia	2	0.7%	Organizational change; crisis management
10	Ethiopia	2	0.7%	Motivation in education; directive leadership in public institutions
11	USA	1	0.4%	Communication and directive decision-making; millennial leadership
12	Germany	1	0.4%	Organizational behavior theory
13	Saudi Arabia	1	0.4%	Nurse manager leadership styles; healthcare motivation
14	United Kingdom	1	0.4%	Corporate restructuring; strategic autocratic management
15	Nigeria	1	0.4%	Educational leadership; directive headteacher styles

China accounts for the largest contribution (n = 13; 4.6%), reflecting sustained scholarly attention to authoritarian and paternalistic leadership in Chinese organizational settings where high power distance and Confucian hierarchical values provide a natural research laboratory ^[11]. The prominence of Indonesia (n = 5) and Pakistan (n = 3) similarly reflects high power-distance cultural profiles. The Netherlands (n = 3) is the leading European contributor — notable given its low power-distance cultural profile — likely reflecting cross-cultural comparison and ethical dimensions research. The relative absence of North American contributions (USA: n = 1) is striking given US dominance in general management research, reinforcing the interpretation that autocratic leadership is primarily studied empirically in its natural high-prevalence cultural contexts rather than as a theoretical problem in Western academic centers where it represents a norm-violating exception.

3.8 Disciplinary Classification and SDG Alignment

Field-of-research classification confirms the dominant positioning within management and organizational behavior scholarship: Commerce, Management, Tourism and Services (n = 210 field tags) and Strategy, Management and Organisational Behaviour (n = 199) are the most frequently assigned ANZSRC categories. Philosophy and Religious Studies appears third (n = 52), driven by publications examining leadership ethics, moral authority, and Islamic management principles — an emerging sub-domain particularly prominent in Malaysian and Middle Eastern research contexts. SDG alignment data show SDG 4 (Quality Education, n = 30) as the most linked goal, reflecting the substantial sub-corpus of directive leadership studies in educational institutions. SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth, n = 15) and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions, n = 13) follow, underscoring the policy

relevance of directive leadership research beyond purely academic interests.

3.9 Leadership Style Terminology in Publication Titles

Analysis of title-level keyword frequency reveals that 'authoritarian leadership' (n = 22) is the most common terminological frame, followed by 'autocratic leadership' (n = 16), 'directive leadership' (n = 12), and 'paternalistic leadership' (n = 12). The near-equal frequency of 'authoritarian' and 'autocratic' reflects the field's terminological fragmentation: while these terms are conceptually distinguishable — 'authoritarian' implies ideological rigidity and psychological dominance, whereas 'autocratic' refers more narrowly to unilateral decision-making style^[3] — they are frequently used synonymously, complicating systematic comparison. The very low frequency of 'militaristic' (n = 1) and 'command and control' (n = 2) in titles confirms that these constructs are predominantly practitioner and policy-domain labels rather than established academic constructs.

3.10 Thematic Research Clusters

Abstract-level keyword frequency analysis identified ten distinct thematic clusters within the corpus (Table 8), representing the primary substantive foci of this research domain.

Table 8: Thematic Research Clusters Identified by Abstract Keyword Frequency Analysis

Rank	Research Theme	Search Keywords (abstract corpus)	Frequency	% of Total
1	Employee Behavior	<i>behavior / behaviour / employee</i>	889	27.5%
2	Education Sector	<i>school / teacher / educat / university</i>	614	19.0%
3	Organizational Performance	<i>performance / produktiv</i>	576	17.8%
4	Employee Motivation	<i>motiv</i>	514	15.9%
5	Healthcare Sector	<i>health / hospital / nurs / clinic</i>	177	5.5%
6	Innovation & Creativity	<i>innovat / creativ</i>	171	5.3%
7	Job Satisfaction	<i>satisf</i>	140	4.3%
8	Crisis Management	<i>crisis / emergency</i>	112	3.5%
9	Compliance & Obedience	<i>compliance / obedience</i>	48	1.5%
10	Turnover Intention	<i>turnover / intention to leave</i>	29	0.9%

Employee behavior (n = 889; 27.5%) is the most prevalent thematic cluster, encompassing studies of voice, silence, presenteeism, and proactive behavior. This dominance is consistent with the field's primary concern with how directive supervision shapes the behavioral repertoire available to subordinates. The education sector (n = 614; 19.0%) emerges as the second most prominent cluster, reflecting extensive research on directive school leadership in developing-economy contexts. Organizational performance (n = 576; 17.8%) and employee motivation (n = 514; 15.9%) together represent the dual outcome framework most commonly studied. Healthcare sector presence (n = 177; 5.5%) reflects the hierarchical authority structures of clinical settings and documented associations between directive nursing leadership and staff burnout and

turnover.

Crisis management and compliance, despite featuring prominently in the search strategy, appear as comparatively minor thematic clusters (crisis: n = 112; 3.5%; compliance: n = 48; 1.5%). This finding has a methodological explanation: crisis and compliance constructs more frequently appear in results and discussion sections rather than abstract keywords, suggesting they function as contextual moderators rather than primary dependent variables in the majority of studies. The low frequency of 'compliance' as an abstract term relative to 'performance' (n = 576) indicates that behavioral compliance to directive authority is more often assumed or treated as a mediator than examined as a standalone outcome — representing a meaningful conceptual gap for future investigation. The innovation cluster (n = 171; 5.3%) reflects the theoretically generative tension between autocratic control and creative work behavior,^[13,27] one of the most productive unresolved questions in the contemporary literature.

4. Conclusion

This study has presented the first systematic bibliometric analysis of the autocratic, authoritarian, command-and-control, directive, and militaristic leadership literature, drawing on a corpus of 284 publications retrieved from the Dimensions database spanning 33 years (1993–2026). The analysis reveals a field that has undergone dramatic expansion — particularly since 2020 — yet remains structurally immature in several important respects. Four principal conclusions emerge from the evidence.

First, the field is experiencing an unprecedented growth surge, with 2025 recording 81 publications — the highest single-year output and a 350% increase over the 2020 baseline. This acceleration is attributable in part to pandemic-era scholarly attention to crisis leadership and directive authority as governance responses, as well as broadening interest in directive leadership across non-Western educational and public-sector contexts. The concentration of recent publications in lower-visibility venues and the predominance of zero-citation records among post-2023 work underscore that quantitative growth has not yet been matched by citation impact, a pattern consistent with bibliometric immaturity rather than low scholarly quality.

Second, the intellectual core of the field is both narrow and geographically concentrated. The top ten papers account for 48.8% of all citations, anchored by foundational works from Stace,^[14] Bass,^[9] Hogg,^[17] and Afsar *et al.*,^[13] while China, Indonesia, and the Netherlands lead geographic contribution. The near-absence of North American output reinforces the interpretation that directive leadership is primarily studied in cultures where hierarchical authority is normatively prevalent — a context-dependence that should be explicitly theorized rather than treated as incidental sampling variation.

Third, construct proliferation remains the most pressing theoretical challenge. The interchangeable deployment of 'autocratic,' 'authoritarian,' 'directive,' 'command-and-control,' and 'militaristic' across the corpus without conceptual disambiguation impedes cumulative synthesis and cross-study comparison. Future theoretical work should develop integrative frameworks — analogous to Bass's full-range leadership model^[9] — that situate these overlapping constructs on shared conceptual dimensions such as decision

centralization, subordinate participation latitude, and sanctioned dissent tolerance.

Fourth, significant methodological limitations constrain current evidence. The overwhelming reliance on cross-sectional survey designs limits causal inference regarding the effects of directive leadership on organizational performance and employee motivation. Future research should prioritize longitudinal panel designs, experimental and quasi-experimental methods, and multi-level studies capturing both individual and organizational-level outcomes. The underrepresentation of military, emergency services, and genuine crisis settings — arguably the natural laboratories of command leadership — represents a paradox that future empirical work should directly address.

The present review carries practical implications for leadership development, organizational design, and policy. The evidence suggests that directive leadership effects are highly context-sensitive: culturally moderated by power distance,^[11] situationally conditioned by crisis severity and time pressure,^[14] and psychologically mediated by followers' need for certainty and belonging^[17]. Organizations operating across high and low power-distance environments should train leaders in contextual style-switching rather than prescribing uniformly participative or directive norms. In high-stakes sectors — healthcare, education in developing economies, emergency management — the functional utility of directive coordination may warrant explicit acknowledgment alongside its motivational costs.

In sum, autocratic and command-oriented leadership occupies a complex, contingent, and increasingly consequential place in organizational life. This bibliometric review has mapped its scholarly terrain, identified its intellectual anchors, and delineated the theoretical and methodological gaps that must be addressed if the field is to advance from descriptive observation to explanatory precision. The accelerating publication trajectory promises fertile ground for the next generation of scholars willing to engage this contested yet indispensable domain of leadership research.

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