


Exploring Positive Humor as a Leadership Tool: A Bibliometric Review

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<p>Submitted: 2025-01-21</p> <p>Published: 2025-04-02</p> <p>Keywords: Leader Positive Humor, bibliometric, VOSviewer, Industrial Organization</p> <p>Copyright holder: © Author/s (2024)</p> <p>This article is under:</p>  <p>How to cite: Syaifussalam, M., Saikhoni, S., & Wilantika, R. (2025). Exploring Positive Humor as a Leadership Tool: A Bibliometric Review. <i>Bulletin of Counseling and Psychotherapy</i>, 7(1). https://doi.org/10.51214/002025071288000</p> <p>Published by: Kuras Institute</p> <p>E-ISSN: 2656-1050</p>	<p>ABSTRACT: The concept of positive humor is one way to manage stress during work so that employees can be fully involved in work. The paper aims to provide a broad bibliometric literature review of 'leader positive humor'. Articles were obtained through Publish or Perish (PoP) software with the Google Scholar database. 53 out of 81 articles found in the Google Scholar database from 2018 to 2023 were analyzed in this research. Selected references are then managed using reference management software, namely Zotero. After managing the database, this research classifies and visualizes it using <i>VOSviewer</i> software. This review provides an appropriate reference for further research on 'leader positive humor'. Hopefully, this research can contribute to scientific development in industrial and organizational psychology, especially on the topic of 'leader positive humor'.</p>
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INTRODUCTION

Stressful work environment can endanger physical and mental health and decrease work productivity and job satisfaction (Padmanabhan, 2021). Various work problems such as additional workload, toxic leaders, salaries that do not match work demands, and unclear duties, authority and responsibilities result in employees being reluctant to be fully involved in work (Dehais et al., 2020). Employee involvement in work is an indication that an organization can be said to be management-wise healthy (Zhang et al., 2021). Employee involvement in work can increase production and the quality of a particular organization or institution (Heyns & Boikanyo, 2019).

Employee engagement is the primary benchmark in identifying the health of an organization (Neuber et al., 2022). Employee involvement can be known through active behaviour in every activity that is scheduled, completing work on time, helping other people's work happily, being happy to share knowledge, developing together rather than tearing each other down, and being a quality guarantor for the organization or institution (Han et al. al., 2021). Employee involvement in work is not only determined by salary, benefits and bonuses (Kulikowski & Sedlak, 2020) but also by leadership style and leadership behaviour, in this case, the leader's positive humor.

Humor is a valuable technique for managers to help overcome employees' perceptions of workload and increase stress control (Cheng et al., 2021). Some business and political leaders consider humor training as a step to increase leadership effectiveness. A group of researchers has even tested the influence of leader humor (Cooper et al., 2018).

Besides that, humor is a way for someone to express ideas, opinions, and perspective taking of their thinking (Freud, 2023). Abdurrahman Wahid is known as a humorous president but is also critical of social, political, economic and religious issues (Barton, 2003). A leader's humor implication

can influence the lives and performance of employees in an organization. Then, humor can be used as a strategy that leaders must implement to increase employee involvement in work (Ali et al., 2021). A leader's positive humor is a cost-effective strategy because it can create a relaxed work atmosphere and increase employee involvement in the work environment (Gkorezis, 2020; X. Wang et al., 2022). A leader's humor can motivate employees to achieve optimal performance. Therefore, leaders must be able to use positive humor because aggressive humor impacts the quality of relationships and triggers many violations of regulations that apply in the work environment (Yam et al., 2018). For creative workers, humor supports creative behaviour because humor increases positive attitudes, so happiness resulting from humor creates strong internal motivation to be creative (Chen et al., 2019).

Leaders with good social skills are able to motivate employees through positive humor to get them involved in work directly or indirectly (Cooper et al., 2018). In fact, institutions or organizations should encourage employees to use humor as an effective measure to overcome stress and reduce work stress (Wang et al., 2018). Leader humor is also positively related to employee performance through the mediation of work enjoyment variables and indirectly influences the level of leader suspicion (Gkorezis, 2020).

Leaders with an affiliative and self-enhancing humor style are beneficial for employees with low levels of self-evaluation, help employees to trust their supervisors, and have an impact on improving employee performance (Neves & Karagonlar, 2020). Positive humor is able to directly or indirectly predict a person's true nature and increase employee engagement and creativity (Saricali & Türküm, 2021; Yang, 2021). Therefore, organizations or institutions must encourage leaders to use positive humor, which has been proven to increase employee engagement and lead to creative outcomes (Yang, 2021).

In the last five years, research has been conducted on the benefits of leader humor in organizational settings (Hofmann et al., 2020; Jiang et al., 2020; Kong et al., 2019; Neves & Karagonlar, 2020). Kong et al. (2019) conducted a meta-analysis literature study to determine the clarity of the construct and measurement of leader humor. Hofmann et al. (2020) conducted a literature study of 77 articles that met the research criteria and found seven themes related to humor and gender differences. Men tend to express aggressive humor compared to women, but the personalities of men or women do not influence humor (Hofmann et al., 2020).

Neves and Karagonlar (2020) conducted correlation research using the Structure Equation Modeling (SEM) technique to determine the relationship between a leader's humor style and work performance and irregularities, the variable trust in supervisors as a mediator variable. The research subjects were 428 employees and supervisors from 19 operational service system organizations. The results show that affiliative humor and self-improvement programs can have an impact on employees with low self-evaluation, improve employee performance, and increase trust in supervisors.

Research on humor using the Path-Analysis technique to determine the relationship between challenge stress demand and work-related flow with the interaction between challenge stress demand, hindrance stress demand, and cynicism humor as mediator variables was carried out by Oortmerssen et al. (2020). The subjects in the research were 256 employees of financial services organizations in the Netherlands. The results of this study show that challenge stress demand and work-related flow have a linear positive relationship and a negative relationship with hindrance demand and flow.

Research on humor still needs to be developed, for example, regarding the strong influence of leadership humor, expanding the influence of leader humor with other variables, improving research methods, and expanding cross-cultural leader humor research (Baofeng & Xia, 2019).

METHODS

Systematic and explicit methods are the basis of bibliometric literature reviews (Garza-Reyes, 2015) or mapping methods that emphasize the boundaries of knowledge (Tranfield et al., 2003). This research method adopts a five-stage method (Tranfield et al., 2003; Setyaningsih et al., 2018; Nur et al., 2020).



Figure 1 Methods

Determining Search Keywords

The data search was carried out in November 2023 with the keyword "leader positive humor." Search data using Publish or Perish because it is one of the more effective ways to search data on Google Scholar. Researchers access articles from Google Scholar because it is currently the largest database.

Initial Search Results

Article searches are specific to journals, titles, and years 2018-2023. A total of 81 articles were obtained at this stage. Search results are combined into the Research Information System (RIS) format to collect important information from articles such as title, author's name, affiliation, abstract, keywords, DOI, and references.

Refinement of Search Results

At this stage, the researcher filters suitable articles indexed in Google Scholar. Only journal articles were selected. Proceedings, news, books, reviews, and book chapters were eliminated. Selected journal articles that have been adapted to research criteria are stored in RIS format. Furthermore, the RIS data were imported to Zotero bibliographic software for use in further analysis.

Combining Preliminary Statistical Data

The Data was collected in the form of RIS. At this initial stage, the complete composition of journal articles. Year of publication, volume, number, pages, and Digital Object Identifier (DOI) are checked, and the required data is added if there is incomplete information. The analysis carried out can be grouped by year, publication source, and publisher.

Data analysis

In this bibliometric analysis, researchers used several applications. First, the reference manager application is used to collect research data, which will be analyzed using VOSviewer (Al et al., 2021). Researchers used Publish or Perish (PoP) to collect research data from Google Scholar (Garino et al., 2022). Zotero is used to organize article components, such as year of publication, publisher, page, number, Digital Object Identifier (DOI), and volume. *Second*, the application used for mapping data can be obtained from the open-source application *VOSviewer*. *VOSviewer* is an application that can help researchers visualize the mapping of data that has been analyzed (Al Husaeni & Nandiyanto, 2021). In order to obtain a comprehensive analysis via *VOSviewer*, researchers used a manual method by collecting DOI as instruments before analyzing the research articles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

After the manuscript was corrected for completeness, analysis using *VOSviewer* was carried out to determine the frequency of the keywords that appeared most frequently. However, the keywords that appear are adjusted to the needs of the data collection and analysis carried out. *VOSviewer* helps researchers visualize bibliometric maps to obtain three bibliometric mapping visualizations, namely network visualization, overlay visualization, and density visualization.

Before refinement, a total of 81 articles were obtained through a search on the GS database. Collected data from 2018-2023 has been verified with the keyword 'leader positive humor.' Initial search results obtained 81 articles with 872 citations (174.40 citations/year). Then, refinement was made to obtain 53 articles with 833 citations (166.60 citations/year). Complete results of the comparison of metric data from the initial search and after refinement can be seen in Table 1.

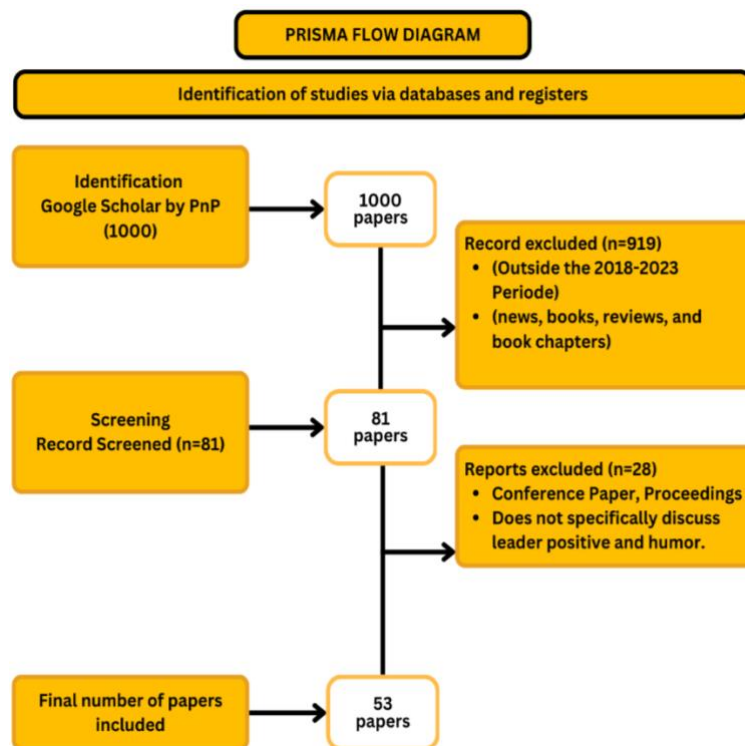


Figure 2. PRISMA flow diagram.

Table 1. Comparison Metrics

Metrics Data	Initial Research	Refinement Search
Source	'Leader Positive Humor'	'Leader Positive Humor'
Publication Year	2018-2023	2018-2023
Paper	81	53
Citations	872	833
Cites/Year	174.40	166.60
Cites/Paper	10.77	15.72
Author/Paper	2.44	2.79
h_index	15	15
g_Index	29	28
h_l norm	9	9
h_annual	1.80	1.80

Researchers strive to present the most relevant contributions in this research. That is made by selecting and refining articles based on the criteria used. At this stage, researchers determined

53 articles with the keyword "leader positive humor," which had the highest citation value (top 10 articles). Results can be seen in Table 2. The top 7 publishers who publish articles on this topic are presented in Table 3.

Tabel 2. Top 10 Cited Articles

No	Year	Author	Title	Journal	Cites	Publisher
1	2018	Kai Chi Yam, Michael S. Christian, Wu Wei, Zhenyu Liao, Louis Jared Nai	The Mixed Blessing of Leader Sense of Humor: Examining Costs and Benefits	Academy of Management Journal	247	Journals.aom.org
2	2019	Dejun Tony Kong, Cecily D. Cooper & John J. Sosik	The state of research on leader humor	Organizational Psychology Review	79	Sage Publication
3	2018	Chien-Chih Kuo, ChihYing Wu, Chia-Wu Lin	Supervisor workplace gossip and its impact on employees	Journal of Managerial Psychology	61	Emerald
4	2019	Paolo Guenzi, Deva Rangrajan, Nawar N. Chaker, Laszlo Sajtos	It is all in good humor? Examining the impact of salesperson evaluations of leader humor on salesperson job satisfaction and job stress	Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management	54	Taylor & Francis Online
5	2019	Sana Mumtaz, Chris Rowley	The relationship between leader and member exchange and employee outcomes: review of past themes and future potential	Management Review Quarterly	39	Springer
6	2022	Tamara Mohammad & Osama Khassawneh	The Impact of Humor on Work Efficiency at Workplace: An Empirical Examination in Tourism and Hospitality Sector in The United Arab Emirates	Journal of Business Strategy Finance and Management	26	Enviro Research Publishers
7	2020	Leiqing Peng, Shaohui Lei, Yulang Guo, Fei Qiu	How can leader humor enhance subordinates service creativity? The moderator of subordinates SFIT and the mediator of role modeling	Leadership & Organization Development	24	Emerald
8	2021	Caroline Rosenberg, Arlene Walker, Michele Leiter, Joe Graffam	Humor in Workplace Leadership: A Systematic Search Scoping Review	Organizational Psychology	15	Frotiersin.org
9	2021	Hassan Ali, Asif Mahmood, Ayyaz Ahmad, Amir Ikram	Humor of the Leader: A Source of Creativity of Employees Through Psychological Empowerment or Unethical Behavior Through Perceived Power? The Role of Self-Deprecating Behavior	Frontiers in Psychology	11	Frontiersin.org

10	2020	Panagiotis Gkorezis	Supervisor humor and employee job performance: A moderated mediation model of work enjoyment and suspicion of the supervisor	Humor: International Journal of Humor Study	8	De Gruyter.com
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Tabel 3. Top 7 Publishers Who Publish Leader Positive Humor Topics

No	Publishers	Total Articles
1	Emerald	7
2	Elsevier	5
3	Frontiers	5
4	Springer	4
5	Taylor & Francis	4
6	dl.acm.org	3
7	De Gruyter.com	2

Tabel 4. Top 6 Journals That Have Relevant Articles On Leader Positive Humor Topic

No	Journal	Total Articles	Cites
1	Frontiers in Psychology	5	33
2	Current Opinion in Psychology	5	0
3	Leadership and Organization Development	3	28
4	Humor: International Journal of Humor Study	2	10
5	Springer E-books	2	1
6	Plos One	2	2

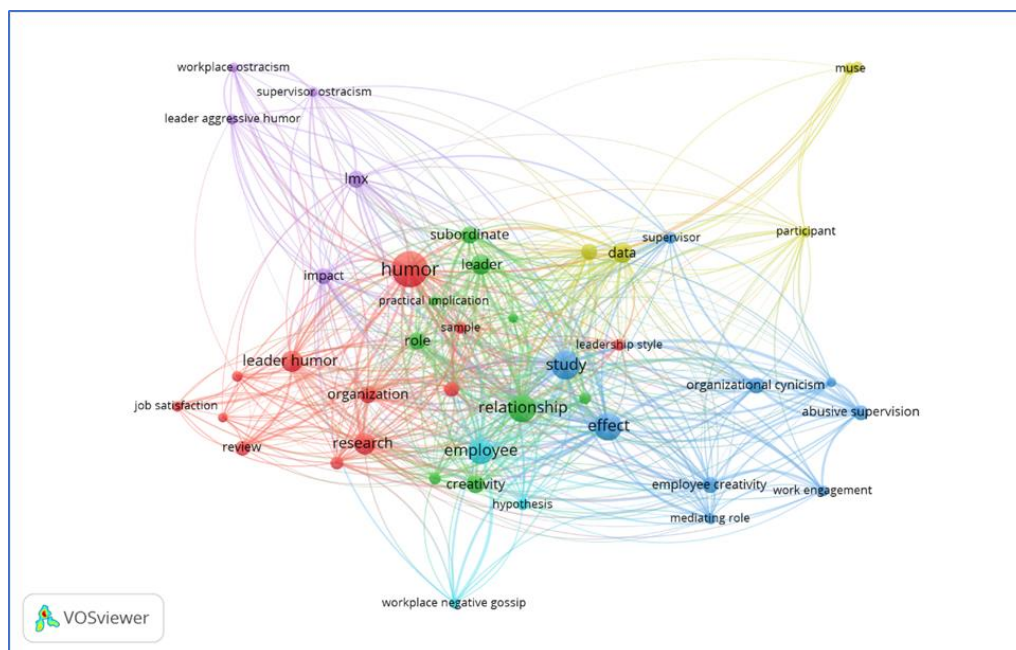


Figure 2 Network Visualization

The data network visualization display of GS data related to the keyword 'leader positive humor' has been refined in the search, which can be seen in Figure 2, the overlay visualization can be seen in Figure 3, and the density visualization in Figure 4.

Further analysis was also carried out to identify the words that appeared most frequently in articles obtained from the GS database after refinement with the keyword 'leader positive humor.' A list of the ten most frequently appearing words can be seen in Table 5.

Table 5. Top 10 Words That Appear On Leader Positive Humor Topic

Term	Occurrences	Relevance score
Humor	95	0.4023
Relationship	58	0.1356
Employee	46	0.7282
Leader Humor	35	0.3603
Leader	30	0.1702
Creativity	25	0.2772
Role	22	0.0834
Lmx	21	0.7856
Organization	21	0.2255

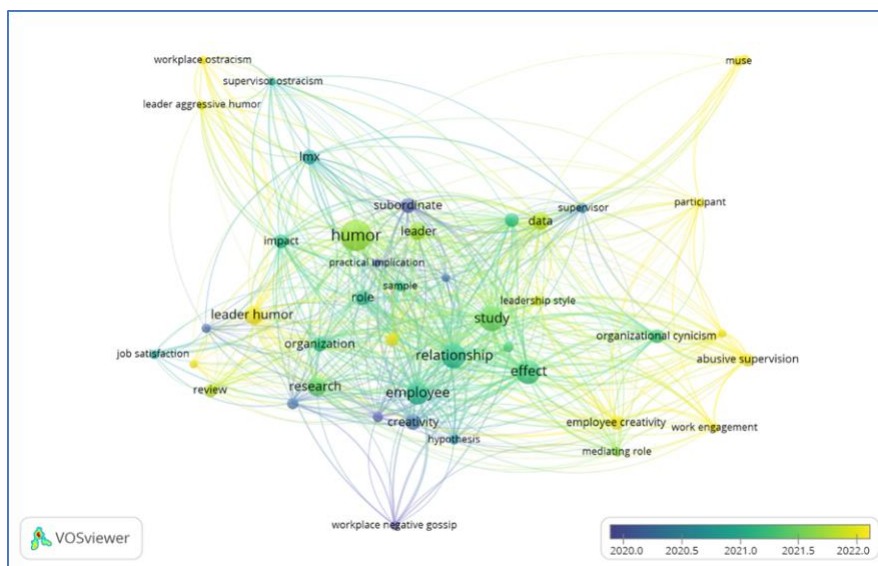


Figure 3 Visualization of overlays in the GS data base

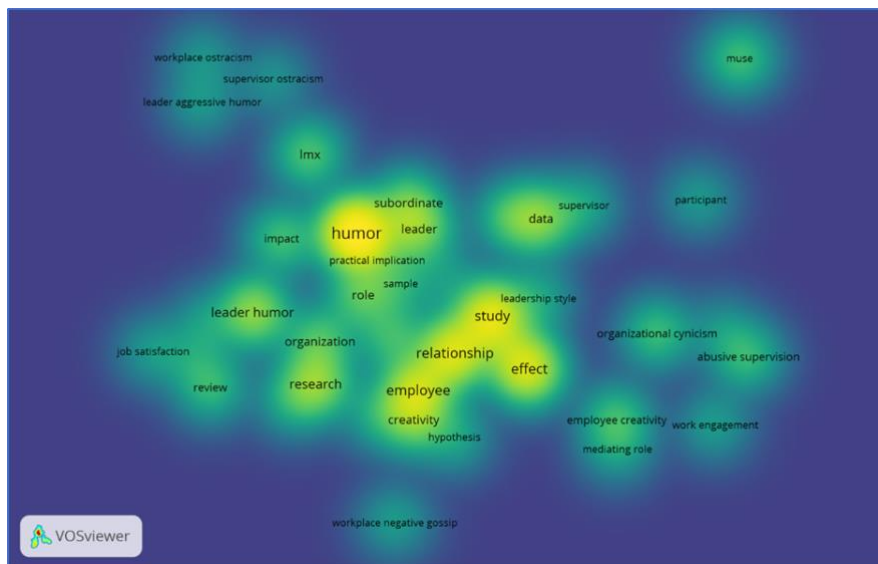


Figure 4 Density Visualization

These results are extracted from the title, keywords, and abstract with a full count of the minimum number of occurrences set to 7. Around 43 items were found, and 1138 items met the criteria. Common words are not included in this item. Each item representing a keyword is added, which is indicated by the node's size so that the node's size indicates the frequency of occurrence of the keyword together. From the analysis at this stage, six clusters were identified. The keywords

appearing in each cluster that represent the research flow 'leader positive humor' can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6. Keywords That Represent Each Group

No	Cluster	Elemen
1	The First Cluster (Red)	follower (23), future research (20), humor (37) job satisfaction (11), leader humor (31), leadership (30), level (29), organization (35), , research (35), review (20), sample (32)
2	The Second Cluster (Green)	Author (22), creativity (23), leader (34), literature (33), originality value (33), practical implication (30), relationship (38), role (37), subordinate (28)
3	The Third Cluster (Blue)	Abusive supervision (16), effect (39), employee creativity (23), mediating role (27), organizational cynicism (23), Pakistan (20), study (39), supervisor (25), work engagement (15)
4	The Fourth Cluster (Yellow)	Data (38), dataset (5), muse (7), paper (35), participant (31)
5	The Fifth Cluster (Purple)	Impact (36), leader aggressive humor (15), Imx (27), supervisor ostracism (20), workplace ostracism(11)
6	The Sixth Cluster (soft blue)	Employee (39), hypothesis (32), workplace negative gossip (12)

Researchers also conducted co-authorship analysis to obtain a visualization of the relationship between authors. The results of this analysis help the author identify authors who are very strongly interconnected and often conduct research on the topic 'leader positive humor'.

The Research is reached in two ways to visualize the location distribution of articles about leader positive humor . *First*, collect data on the distribution of article locations and convert it into tables to be presented in diagram form. *Second*, visualize the article's location using the *GPS Visualizer* application so that researchers can find out which areas have the most Research on leader-positive humor. The results of these two analyses can be seen in Figures 6.

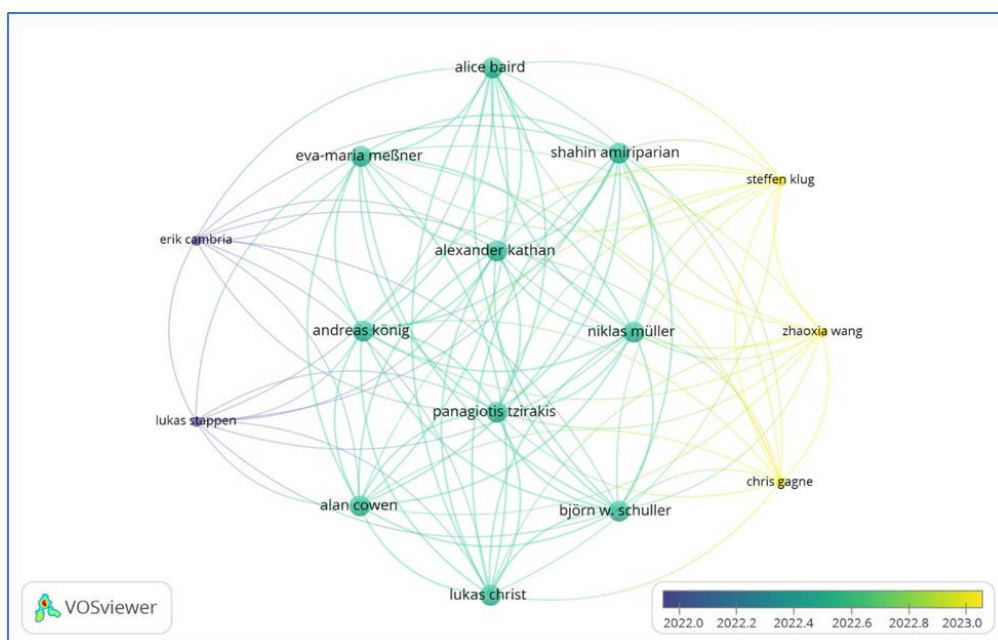


Figure 6 The Authors Visualization

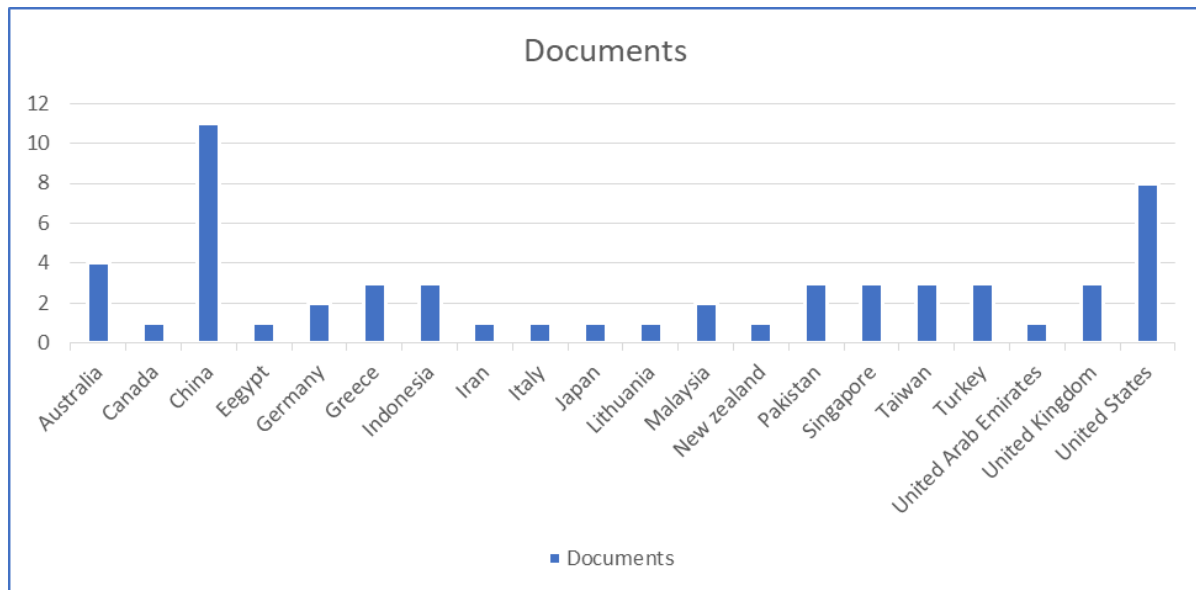


Figure 7 Documents and countries

The most relevant contribution to this research is the large number of citations. Based on Table 2, the highest indexed GS database article on the topic 'leader positive humor' is the article by Yam et al. (2018). The article discusses the influence of humor by leaders on employee productivity levels through analysis of costs and profits obtained (Yam et al., 2018). Based on the refined GS database, the journal "Frontiers in Psychology" is the journal that has published the most articles relevant to the topic 'leader positive humor' with five articles that have been cited 33 times by other scientific articles.

In addition, an analysis of publishers contributing to research on this topic was also carried out. Researchers took the top 7 publishers of published articles on relevant topics. There are 7 articles published by Emerald, followed by Elsevier with 5 articles, Frontiers with 5 articles, Springer and Taylor & Francis with 4 articles, dl.acm.org with 3 articles, and Degruyter with 4 articles.

Figure 2 shows a visualization of the network of interconnected keywords in articles (Manu & Akotia, 2021). Based on this figure, the keyword 'humor' is the word that appears most often in the refined article. This was confirmed by the researcher's further analysis so that the occurrence of the word 'humor' could be identified 95 times with a relevance of 0.4023 occurrences.



Figure 8 The Origin Visualization of Article

Based on Figure 3, the visualization shows the trend of new research articles from year to year (Gervasi et al., 2023; VOSviewer, 2024). From this image, information is obtained that the keywords workplace ostracism, leader aggressive humor, leader humor, muse, organizational cynicism, abusive supervision, employee creativity, and employee engagement are the latest research themes. This is one of the strong reasons why the study of leader humor is relevant for development.

The density visualization in Figure 4 provides a brief overview of the main areas in the bibliometric network. A lighter image indicates more articles published on that topic (Gervasi et al., 2023). The brighter yellow color spectrum shows that many people have researched the topic. If a topic is dull in color, only a few people have tried to raise the topic in research. From this result, it can be a special consideration for conducting research on a particular topic (Baharuddin, 2023).

A combined analysis of authors and networks regarding individual collaboration patterns can be seen in Figure 5. In this network, each node represents an author in his or her writing connections. Many different dimensions can be integrated into this analysis to visualize groups and relationships between authors (Tajane, 2022). Of the 114 author data items analyzed that are unrelated, Figure 5 shows a visualization of the 15 author data items that form the greatest connection and are connected to each other. Based on this visualization, it can be seen that Alan Cowen, Alexander Kathan, Andreas König, Niklas Müller, and Panagiotis Tzirakis are the authors who are most closely related to each other. Meanwhile, the yellow mark is the latest research conducted by Steffen Klug, Zhaoxia Wang, and Chris Gagne.

The density of author contributions to positive humor can be found from Asia to Europe. This geographical distribution data shows that the Asian region dominates research on leaders' positive humor, especially China. Overall, the distribution of this data can help researchers map research trends in 'leader positive humor' in the last five years.

Implications

The research on "leader positive humor" has the potential to significantly contribute to the scientific development within the field of industrial and organizational psychology, especially in the understanding of leadership dynamics and employee well-being. Positive humor, when strategically employed by leaders, can create a range of beneficial effects in organizational settings, from enhancing communication to fostering positive work environments. The implications of this research are far-reaching, providing valuable insights into leadership practices, team dynamics, and organizational culture.

One of the key contributions of this research is the enhancement of leadership effectiveness. Leaders who exhibit positive humor can break down hierarchical barriers, making themselves more approachable and relatable. This can improve communication channels within the organization, enabling employees to feel more comfortable voicing concerns, offering ideas, and seeking guidance. As a result, positive humor in leadership helps to create an atmosphere of trust and openness. Trust is fundamental to effective leadership, and by using humor in a non-threatening and supportive manner, leaders can strengthen their relationships with employees, thus boosting morale and productivity.

Furthermore, the use of humor can serve as an effective stress-buffering mechanism. Organizational environments, especially in high-pressure industries, can often be stressful and demanding. Leaders who deploy humor in a positive, inclusive way can alleviate some of these tensions, creating a more relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere. This reduction in stress can enhance job satisfaction and overall employee well-being, which in turn leads to increased engagement and job performance. Humor can also help mitigate burnout by providing a brief respite from the intensity of the work environment, promoting resilience and coping mechanisms among employees.

In addition to its impact on stress, humor can also improve creativity and problem-solving within teams. Positive humor often stimulates creative thinking by encouraging employees to think outside the box and approach challenges with a lighter perspective. This shift in mindset can lead to more innovative solutions and better decision-making processes. Leaders who are skilled at incorporating humor into team interactions can inspire greater collaboration and encourage employees to take risks in a safe and supportive environment. As a result, organizations can benefit from a more dynamic and adaptable workforce.

The research also emphasizes the importance of a leader's emotional intelligence in using humor effectively. Not all humor is perceived positively, and leaders must be attuned to the emotional needs and cultural contexts of their teams to avoid potential misinterpretations or negative outcomes. The study suggests that emotionally intelligent leaders are more likely to use humor in a way that promotes inclusivity, fosters positive relationships, and strengthens group cohesion. Thus, the research highlights the need for leadership training programs to incorporate emotional intelligence and humor as tools for enhancing leadership effectiveness and fostering a healthy organizational culture.

Moreover, the implications of this research extend to organizational culture. Organizations that encourage positive humor, as modeled by leaders, are likely to have a more collaborative, inclusive, and supportive environment. Humor can reduce the presence of power struggles and hierarchical tensions, promoting a culture where employees at all levels feel valued and respected. This creates an organizational climate conducive to both individual and collective growth, where creativity and well-being are prioritized alongside productivity.

In conclusion, the study of leader positive humor offers valuable insights into leadership effectiveness, employee well-being, and organizational culture. The positive impact of humor on stress reduction, communication, creativity, and job satisfaction underscores its importance in shaping a positive organizational environment. Leaders who understand how to harness humor effectively can foster a more engaged, motivated, and resilient workforce, contributing to long-term organizational success. Future research can further explore the nuances of humor in leadership across different industries and cultural contexts, offering deeper insights into how humor can be strategically used to enhance leadership outcomes and organizational performance.

Limitations and Further Research

Researchers identified two limitations in this study. First, these studies are generally based on a limited set of keywords and may also be limited by the narrow database (GS) used to collect the articles. Second, although official software (PoP software, VOSviewer, Zotero, Microsoft Excel, and gpsvisualizer.com) was used as a tool in this research, there is a subjective assessment of the author, and there are still some errors that may occur. Future research is encouraged to use larger samples by expanding the keywords used and providing more easily accessible databases. In addition, various comparisons and recommended bibliographic analysis results (e.g., BibExcel and HistCite) are also available. In order to get the perfect research article, the suggestions and limitations in this article have to be considered and become the reference for the enhancement.

CONCLUSION

This research examines journal articles with themes relevant to the keyword 'leader positive humor.' The articles obtained are the results of searches collected from the GS database via PoP software. Of the 81 articles collected and published from 2018 to 2023, 53 were selected based on research criteria. In order to fulfill the research objectives, the articles collected were then classified based on author, year of publication, publisher journal, keywords, author affiliation and statistics. Based on the findings of this research, it was concluded that the distribution of writers who researched the topic of 'leader positive humor' was still dominated by Asian writers, especially

Chinese. The existence of gaps in this research provides insight into the fact that the agenda for developing the topic of positive humor leaders is very important. Likewise, studies on 'leader positive humor' have increased from year to year, so collaboration between researchers in Asia and other countries is needed.

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