

Fragmentation and Interdisciplinarity of Women's Leadership Research: Bibliometric Analysis of Scopus Data in 2025

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Abstract

Women's leadership continues to be a rapidly growing field of study as global attention to gender equality across various sectors increases. Despite the increasing volume of scientific publications on this topic, systematic mapping of their direction, thematic distribution, and citation impact remains limited, particularly for recent publications. This study aims to map the landscape of women's leadership research in 2025 through a descriptive bibliometric approach. Data were searched from the Scopus database using Publish or Perish software with the keyword "Women's Leadership," resulting in 200 articles analyzed for citation count, h- and g-indexes, journal distribution, and title-based thematic clusters. The analysis revealed a total of 553 citations with an h-index of 10, dominated by education, socio-cultural issues, and health. The most highly cited articles focused on the relationship between gender diversity and organizational and environmental performance. These findings confirm that women's leadership research is multidisciplinary yet fragmented, necessitating a more integrated, cross-disciplinary synthesis in future research.

Keywords: women's leadership; bibliometric analysis; gender equality; Scopus; research trends



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INTRODUCTION

The issue of women's leadership has become a major concern in the global discourse on gender equality, organizational governance, and sustainable development. Various international forums and national policies consistently position women's representation in leadership positions as an indicator of a nation's social and economic progress. This phenomenon is inseparable from the accumulation of empirical evidence showing that gender diversity in leadership contributes to improved organizational performance, including in environmental, social, and governance aspects (Sandretto, 2025). In this context, the study of women's leadership is no longer limited to the realm of gender studies alone, but has expanded into various disciplines, ranging from business management and public health to higher education and political governance.

Recent literature shows an increasing trend in the number of scientific publications addressing the topic of women's leadership across sectors. Kalbarczyk (2025), for example, conducted a scoping review of the global impact of women's leadership to inform leadership strengthening in the health sector, while Borger (2025) reviewed various global perspectives on strengthening strategies for women's advancement in leadership in the health and STEMM sectors. In the realm of human resource governance, Gierke (2025) conducted a systematic review of organizational contextual factors that help women obtain and maintain leadership positions in the 21st century. The diversity of these research focuses confirms that women's leadership is a multidimensional construct that requires a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach.

Despite this growing literature, a persistent key research issue is the gap in women's representation in strategic leadership positions, often explained through the phenomenon of the glass ceiling, or invisible structural barriers that systematically limit women's career mobility. Khan (2025) identified that gender inequality in healthcare leadership remains a significant challenge for women in breaking through this glass ceiling. Similar issues are also found in the context of leadership in historically masculine institutions, as reviewed by Choi (2025), who examined how women in leadership positions interact with organizational performance in gender-specific institutions. In response to this issue, common solutions proposed in the literature include strengthening affirmative action policies, reforming organizational structures, and expanding access to professional networks and leadership sponsorship for women.

In addition to structural solutions, the literature also highlights the importance of interventions at the individual and group levels, such as mentoring programs and transformational leadership capacity development. Decker-Tonnesen (2025) explores the various barriers women face in achieving leadership positions in the context of large healthcare institutions and emphasizes the need for structured interventions to address these barriers. These efforts are fundamentally based on the premise that the women's leadership gap is not simply a matter of individual capacity but rather a product of organizational systems that require comprehensive overhaul.

At a more specific solution level, several studies have evaluated the effectiveness of mentoring and leadership training programs for women in specific sectoral contexts. Mbatha (2025) conducted a systematic review of mentorship programs for women in coaching and leadership roles in the sports sector and found that such programs play a significant role in encouraging women's retention in leadership positions. In the education sector, Ramachandaran (2025) examined strategies for empowering women through education as a means of leadership development in Malaysia to achieve sustainable development goals. Meanwhile, in the context of business organizations, Bilal (2025) demonstrated how transformational leadership by women can encourage innovative employee behavior through the mediation of trust and connectivity.

Another solution emerging in the literature is strengthening women's leadership through narrative approaches and the direct experiences of women leaders themselves. Mott (2025), for example, conducted a qualitative analysis of mentoring and sponsorship experiences for women in cardiothoracic surgery, a historically male-dominated field. This experience-based approach provides a deeper understanding of the dynamics of women's leadership at the micro level, complementing macro-scale studies that focus on policies and organizational structures.

The literature overview above shows that the study of women's leadership has developed rapidly and is spread across various scientific fields, from health and education to business, to sports and politics. However, efforts to systematically map this entire research landscape, particularly for recent publications, remain limited. Existing bibliometric studies tend to focus on a narrow geographic or thematic scope, as reflected in Alrashidi's (2025) study, which conducted a bibliometric analysis of articles on Arab women's leadership from 2018 to 2022. This limited scope leaves a research gap in the lack of a comprehensive and up-to-date bibliometric mapping of the global women's leadership research landscape in recent publications.

Based on these gaps, this study aims to map the landscape of women's leadership research in 2025 through a bibliometric analysis approach, examining publication productivity patterns, citation impact, journal distribution, and thematic distribution of published literature. The novelty of this study lies in its scope, which is not limited to a specific geographic region or sector, thus providing a comprehensive overview of the direction of development of women's leadership research globally in the most recent year. The scope of this study includes 200 articles indexed in the Scopus database with the keyword "Women's Leadership" published throughout 2025. The results of the analysis are expected to serve as a reference for future researchers in identifying the direction and gaps in research that are still open.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive quantitative approach with a bibliometric analysis design, a method that utilizes statistical data from scientific publications to map patterns of productivity, impact, and intellectual structure in a field of study. This approach was chosen because it provides an objective and measurable picture of the development of women's leadership research, in line with the need to fill the gap in literature mapping outlined in the introduction, especially compared to the narrower scope of previous bibliometric studies such as Alrashidi (2025).

The population in this study is all scientific articles indexed in the Scopus database with the keyword in the title "Women's Leadership" published in the year 2025. The research sample was determined using a total sampling technique on all search results that met the search criteria, resulting in 200 articles as the unit of analysis. The use of total sampling was chosen to ensure that the mapping results reflect the entire population of publications available in the specified time period, without the risk of selection bias that can arise if random or purposive sampling techniques are used in bibliometric data.

The instrument used for data search and retrieval was Publish or Perish version 8 software, which functions as a programmatic data retrieval interface (harvester) to the Scopus database. This software was chosen for its ability to automatically calculate citation metrics, including the Hirsch (h) index, the Egghe (g) index, and other derived metrics, thereby increasing the efficiency and accuracy of data collection compared to manual searching and calculations.

The data collection procedure was carried out by entering the keyword "Women's Leadership" in the title search field with a publication year range limitation of 2025 to 2025. Data search was carried out on August 1, 2026, through the Scopus data source. All article metadata obtained, including title, author name, year of publication, journal name, volume and page number, number of citations, and Digital Object Identifier (DOI) link, were then extracted and compiled into a structured database for further analysis.

The data analysis technique was carried out in three stages. First, descriptive statistical analysis was applied to calculate basic bibliometric indicators, including total citations, average citations per article, h-index, and g-index, as commonly used in bibliometric studies in the fields of management and gender studies. Second, a source analysis was conducted to identify the journals most productive in publishing articles on the topic of women's leadership during the study period. Third, a keyword-based content analysis was conducted on article titles to classify articles into thematic clusters, such as education, health, business and corporate governance, politics, sports, and tourism. This classification used a thematic coding approach based on the occurrence of key terms in article titles, allowing an article to be classified into more than one cluster if the title contains cross-theme indications.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of a bibliometric analysis of 200 articles on women's leadership published in 2025 and indexed in the Scopus database. The results are presented in four sections: an

overview of bibliometric indicators, articles with the highest citation impact, journal distribution, and thematic distribution.

Overview of Bibliometric Indicators

The search results show that there are 200 articles that meet the search criteria, with a total accumulated citation of 553 citations over a citation period of one year (2025-2026). The average citation per article was recorded at 2.77, which is considered reasonable considering that most articles were only published in the current year and therefore have not had sufficient time to accumulate maximum citations. The h-index was recorded at 10, meaning that there are ten articles that have each been cited at least ten times, while the g-index was recorded at 14, indicating a fairly concentrated distribution of citations in a small number of high-impact articles. Table 1 summarizes these key bibliometric indicators.

Table 1. Summary of Bibliometric Indicators for Women's Leadership Research in 2025

Indicator	Mark
Number of articles	200
Total citations	553
Average citations per article	2,77
h-index (Hirsch)	10
g-Index (Egg)	14
Articles without citations	26 (13%)
Articles with ≥10 citations	13 (6.5%)

The data in Table 1 also shows that 26 articles (13%) had not received any citations at all by the date of the data search, while only 13 articles (6.5%) had achieved ten or more citations. This distribution pattern reflects the citation curve commonly found in newly published scientific publications, where most articles are still in the early stages of their citation cycle.

Articles with the Highest Citation Impact

An analysis of the ten most cited articles shows that Sandretto's (2025) article on the link between gender diversity in leadership and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance tops the list with 29 citations, followed by Kalbarczyk's (2025) scoping review of global women's leadership in the healthcare sector with 20 citations. Other highly cited articles include Rosser-Mims' (2025) study of Black feminist epistemological frameworks for women's leadership development, and Borger's (2025) cross-sector review of healthcare and STEMM. Further details are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Ten Articles with the Highest Number of Citations

Author (Year)	Title	Journal	Citation
Sandretto (2025)	Gender Diversity Leadership and ESG Performance	Business Strategy and the Environment	29
Kalbarczyk (2025)	A scoping review on the impact of women's global leadership	BMJ Global Health	20
Rosser-Mims	Black Feminism: An Epistemological	Advancing Women in	17

(2025)	Framework	Leadership Journal	
Citizen (2025)	Global perspectives to enhance strategies for advancing women in healthcare and STEMM leadership	Immunology and Cell Biology	15
Choi (2025)	Does she belong here? Women in leadership positions and organizational performance	Public Administration Review	15
Silva Dos Santos (2025)	Trust, traditions and indigenous women's leadership in sustainable tourism management	Journal of Sustainable Tourism	15
Free (2025)	Green Transitions in Developing Countries: Perspectives on Women's Political Leadership	Journal of Interdisciplinary Economics	14
Thien (2025)	Women leadership in higher education: enablers and challenges	Humanities and Social Sciences Communications	12
Morgan (2025)	Counting women: Indicator culture and gender inclusion in sports leadership	International Review for the Sociology of Sport	11
Bilal (2025)	How Women's Transformational Leadership Induces Employees' Innovative Behaviour	Global Business Review	11

The pattern in Table 2 shows that articles with the highest citation impact tend to come from highly reputable, interdisciplinary journals, such as Business Strategy and the Environment and BMJ Global Health, and tend to address issues of women's leadership in relation to organizational performance, global health, and social justice, compared to articles that focus on small, single case studies.

Distribution of Publication Journals

The analysis of publication sources shows that articles on the topic of women's leadership in 2025 are spread across more than one hundred different journal titles, indicating a fairly high level of fragmentation in publication sources. No single journal significantly dominates; the journals with the most publications, Gender, Work and Organization and the BMJ journal group, each published only three articles out of the 200 articles analyzed. Table 3 presents the nine journals with the most publications during the study period.

Table 3. Journals with the Most Publications

Journal	Number of Articles
Gender, Work and Organization	3
BMJ (including BMJ Global Health)	3
Advancing Women in Leadership Journal	2
International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research	2
Human Resource Management Journal	2

JACC Advances	2
Nursing Inquiry	2
Journal of Management Development	2
Gender in Management	2

The high fragmentation of publication sources indicates that women's leadership is not a topic exclusive to gender-themed journals alone, but has been integrated into various journals in various scientific fields, ranging from health, human resource management, to specialist medicine.

Thematic Distribution

The results of thematic coding based on article titles indicate that education and academic themes were the cluster with the largest number of articles, with 46 articles (23.0%), followed by social, cultural, and religious themes with 37 articles (18.5%), health and medical themes with 31 articles (15.5%), and business, corporate, and governance themes with 29 articles (14.5%). Sustainable development and politics/public policy themes each accounted for 13 articles (6.5%), while sports themes were recorded in 8 articles (4.0%) and tourism themes in 2 articles (1.0%). Details of the thematic distribution are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Thematic Distribution of Women's Leadership Articles in 2025

Cluster Theme	Number of Articles	Percentage
Education and academics	46	23,0%
Social, cultural, and religious	37	18,5%
Health and medical	31	15,5%
Business, corporations and governance	29	14,5%
Sustainable development	13	6,5%
Politics and public policy	13	6,5%
Sport	8	4,0%
Tourism and hospitality	2	1,0%
Other/general (cross-theme)	70	35,0%

It should be noted that the "other/general" category includes 70 articles (35.0%) that discuss women's leadership in general without a specific sectoral emphasis in their titles, or articles that overlap with more than one thematic cluster. Overall, these findings indicate that research on women's leadership in 2025 is dominated by perspectives on education and socio-cultural issues, while more specific topics such as sports and tourism remain relatively limited.

Discussion

The results of the bibliometric analysis in this study show that research on women's leadership in 2025 is growing massively but fragmented across various scientific fields. A total of 553 citations collected from 200 articles in less than two years indicate that this topic is still in the active growth

phase of its scientific life cycle, as is usually indicated by a relatively moderate average citation but a fairly solid h-index for a one-year-old publication. This condition is consistent with the general description in the introduction, which emphasizes that women's leadership has become a concern across sectors, ranging from health (Kalbarczyk, 2025; Borger, 2025), corporate governance (Sandretto, 2025), to human resources (Gierke, 2025).

The findings in Table 2 regarding the most highly cited articles reinforce the argument that the most impactful research on women's leadership tends to link gender issues to measurable organizational performance variables, such as ESG performance (Sandretto, 2025) or the performance of global health institutions (Kalbarczyk, 2025), compared to articles that are purely normatively descriptive. This pattern aligns with the argument presented in the introduction that gender diversity in leadership is closely linked to organizational outcomes (Sandretto, 2025), and suggests that the global scientific community places a higher citation value on studies that bridge the gender equality discourse with empirical evidence of organizational impact.

The dominance of education and academic themes as the largest thematic cluster (23.0%), as shown in Table 4, can be interpreted as a reflection of the higher education sector's position as a relatively open arena for the study of women's leadership, while also a sector that still faces significant challenges in representation. This finding aligns with the description in the introduction regarding the challenges and drivers of women's leadership in higher education institutions (Thien, 2025), as well as strategies for empowering women through educational pathways for leadership development (Ramachandaran, 2025). The large proportion of studies in the education sector also indicates that academic institutions have a dual role, both as objects of study on the representation of women's leadership and as a basis for producing knowledge on this issue.

The significant proportion of social, cultural, and religious themes (18.5%) is also a finding that requires special attention. This cluster reflects that the study of women's leadership cannot be separated from a broader structural context, including historical and cultural gender power relations. This is consistent with the epistemological framework of Black feminism as reviewed by Rosser-Mims (2025), which places the intersection of race and gender as a crucial analytical lens in understanding women's leadership development. The significant attention to this socio-cultural dimension also emphasizes that the issue of women's leadership cannot be reduced to merely quantitative representation but requires an understanding of the structural roots of the underlying inequality.

In the health sector, which accounted for 15.5% of all articles, these findings confirm the urgency of the glass ceiling issue as outlined in the introduction (Khan, 2025). The high level of attention to this sector is also relevant in the post-pandemic global context, where the role of women's leadership in health systems is receiving greater attention, in line with calls for the importance of women's leadership in global health. Meanwhile, the business and corporate governance cluster (14.5%) reflects continued research interest in the impact of women's leadership at the board level and in strategic management, as demonstrated by studies of gender spillover effects across various levels of organizational strategic leadership.

Interestingly, the relatively small proportion of political and public policy themes (6.5%) indicates that while women's political representation frequently figures in public discourse, academic attention to this issue in 2025 is relatively less than that of the education or health sectors. This situation may indicate a gap between the urgency of public discourse and the intensity of scientific knowledge production in the realm of women's political leadership, which deserves attention in developing a future research agenda.

The finding of high fragmentation of publication sources, with no single journal significantly dominating, has important methodological implications for researchers seeking a systematic literature review on this topic. This fragmentation emphasizes that a literature search strategy for women's leadership cannot rely solely on a handful of reputable journals on gender topics but requires a broader

cross-database and cross-disciplinary search strategy. This finding also reinforces the novelty of this study, as presented in the introduction, namely the need for bibliometric mapping that is not limited to a specific sector or geographic region, in contrast to previous bibliometric studies that focused specifically on the context of Arab women's leadership (Alrashidi, 2025).

Overall, the patterns identified in this study demonstrate that women's leadership research has transformed from a focus on gender studies to a truly interdisciplinary field. While this characteristic demonstrates the vitality and relevance of the topic of women's leadership across sectors, it also poses challenges in the form of duplication of research and a lack of cross-disciplinary knowledge synthesis, given that each discipline tends to develop discourse on women's leadership relatively separately from the others.

CONCLUSION

This study maps the landscape of women's leadership research in 2025 through a bibliometric analysis of 200 Scopus-indexed articles. The analysis shows that research on this topic is experiencing active growth, with an h-index of 10 and a total of 553 citations, and is widely distributed across more than one hundred different journals without dominance from any single publication source. Key findings indicate that education and academics, socio-cultural issues, health, and business and corporate governance are the four dominant thematic clusters, with articles with the highest citation impact tending to link women's leadership issues to empirically measurable organizational performance indicators.

These findings imply that women's leadership has evolved into a truly interdisciplinary field of study, necessitating cross-disciplinary and cross-database literature search and synthesis strategies on this topic. This research contributes to the body of knowledge by providing a comprehensive bibliometric mapping that is not limited to a specific sector or geographic region, complementing previous bibliometric studies that tended to focus on a narrower scope. For future research, it is recommended to conduct advanced bibliographic analyses such as co-citation mapping and co-word analysis using author abstracts and keywords to uncover the intellectual structure and conceptual linkages between theme clusters in greater depth. Expanding the search period in future research will also allow for a more comprehensive longitudinal trend analysis of the development of women's leadership research over time.

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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