



Mapping Sustainable Woman Career Advancement Research: A Bibliometric Analysis of the Research Trend and Performance

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ABSTRACT

The advancement of woman in professional careers has been a critical and evolving theme in management and organizational research, particularly in the context of gender equality and inclusive leadership. Despite increasing scholarly attention, existing literature remains fragmented, lacking a comprehensive understanding of its intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and research performance over time. This study aims to map the landscape of research on woman's career advancement published between 2015 and 2025 through a rigorous bibliometric analysis. Using the Scopus database, a total of 77 publications were retrieved using a refined set of keywords encompassing "woman," "career advancement," "promotion," and "leadership." Analytical tools such as VOSviewer and Bibliometrix (R-package). The findings reveal a steady increase in scholarly output, with a concentration of research in high-impact journals related to human resource management, gender studies, and organizational behavior. Dominant research themes include barriers to advancement, leadership pathways, mentorship, and gendered organizational cultures. This research contributes by offering a systematic and visual representation of the intellectual domain of woman's career advancement research. It identifies knowledge gaps, emerging trends, and future research directions that can inform academic inquiry, policy development, and human resource practices. The results are particularly relevant for scholars, practitioners, and institutions committed to promoting gender equity in the workplace.

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of woman in professional careers has emerged as a pressing concern within the broader discourse of gender equality, diversity, and inclusion. Over the past few decades, the growing participation of woman in the labor force has reshaped organizational structures and leadership pipelines across various industries (Khan et al., 2025). However, despite progressive global movements and institutional efforts to create more equitable workplaces, woman continue to face systemic barriers to career progression, particularly in attaining senior leadership and decision-making roles (Franczak & Margolis, 2022). This persistent imbalance not only reflects a social and ethical dilemma but also poses significant implications for organizational performance, innovation, and competitiveness. In the wake of Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5) on Gender Equality, scholars and practitioners alike have intensified their focus on identifying the structural and cultural impediments that hinder woman's upward mobility. Numerous studies have highlighted the prevalence of phenomena such as the "glass ceiling," gendered career paths, unconscious bias in promotions, and underrepresentation in corporate governance (Taparia & Lenka, 2025). These challenges are especially salient in sectors traditionally dominated by male leadership and in organizational cultures that undervalue non-traditional career trajectories. Consequently, the academic literature on woman's career advancement has expanded considerably, encompassing themes from mentorship and work-life balance to organizational support systems and leadership identity formation (Izquierdo & Fabra, 2024).

Several research have acknowledged the need for a more systematic understanding of this scholarly domain. For instance, leadership research has examined gender-based differences in style and effectiveness, while organizational behavior studies have explored how institutional norms shape career trajectories (Galdiero et al., 2024). Human resource management literature has also addressed organizational policies that enable or constrain woman's advancement, such as flexible working arrangements, gender quotas, and diversity training programs (International Labour Organization, 2024). However, these discussions are frequently siloed within disciplinary boundaries and geographic regions, limiting their ability to inform a unified research agenda.

This observation underscores a critical gap in literature. There is a lack of research that systematically assesses the development of research on sustainable woman's career advancement over the past decade, particularly through the lens of performance metrics and thematic clustering. To address this gap, the present study conducts a bibliometric analysis of the global scholarly output on woman's career advancement from 2015 to 2025. By analyzing publications indexed in Scopus, we aim to uncover key trends, influential authors and journals, thematic clusters, and geographical patterns. This study contributes a novel and data-driven perspective to literature by offering a longitudinal and global mapping of the field. In doing so, it informs future academic inquiry, supports evidence-based policymaking, and encourages a more coherent and collaborative research environment focused on advancing gender equity in careers. Bibliometric analysis serves at least two primary purposes in academic research. First, it enables the quantitative assessment of scholarly performance by using statistical indicators such as citation counts, publication frequency, and h-index to evaluate the impact of journals, authors, and institutions (Donthu et al., 2021a). Second, it provides insights into the intellectual structure, thematic composition, and developmental trajectory of a given research field over time (Jing et al., 2015). Through this approach, the study seeks to uncover underlying patterns, key contributors, and emerging research clusters that have shaped the field in the past decade. Accordingly, the following research questions are addressed:

RQ1: What are the prevailing research trends on woman's career advancement in the management and organizational literature from 2015 to 2025? RQ2: Which years represent peak productivity in terms of scholarly output on this topic? RQ3: Who are the most influential

authors, institutions, journals, and countries contributing to the discourse on woman's career advancement? RQ4: What are the major thematic clusters and keyword trends that define the intellectual structure of this research field?

This investigation aims to provide a holistic and data-driven understanding of how the academic community has engaged with the topic of woman's career advancement over the past decade, thereby offering a foundation for future research and practice in promoting gender equity in professional settings.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Sustainable Woman Career Advancement

The concept of sustainable woman's career advancement refers to the ability of woman to pursue and maintain long-term career development while balancing professional achievements, personal well-being, and broader social responsibilities. This perspective emphasizes the dynamic interaction between individuals and their work environments, suggesting that sustainable career development emerges when there is alignment between personal competencies, career aspirations, and organizational contexts. Such alignment allows individuals to adapt to evolving workplace demands while maintaining career continuity and well-being (Donald et al., 2024).

From a theoretical standpoint, Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) provides an important lens for understanding how woman advance in their careers over time. The theory posits that career outcomes are shaped by the interaction between personal attributes, behavioral patterns, and environmental influences. In the context of woman's careers, factors such as self-efficacy, access to professional development opportunities, and organizational support significantly influence career decision-making and persistence (Wang et al., 2022). Research indicates that woman's long-term career sustainability often depends on their ability to navigate multiple social roles, including responsibilities related to family and community.

Furthermore, studies on woman's career advancement highlight that structural and cultural barriers within organizations continue to influence woman's opportunities for leadership and professional growth. Despite increasing participation of woman in the workforce, issues such as gender stereotypes, limited access to strategic networks, and the persistence of the "glass ceiling" remain significant challenges. A comprehensive review of the literature suggests that achieving sustainable career advancement for woman requires an integrated approach that combines individual capability development with supportive institutional frameworks (Aminah et al., 2024) & (Kim et al., 2024). Organizations that actively promote gender-inclusive policies, leadership development programs, and equitable career opportunities are more likely to create environments where woman can progress and sustain their careers in the long term (Das & Jha, 2024b)

Finally, the career resilience dimension reflects the psychological strength and confidence individuals possess when dealing with career-related obstacles and pressures. This dimension is measured through several indicators. The first is self-confidence, which indicates an individual's belief in their ability to achieve career goals (Peeters et al., 2022). The second is resilience to discrimination, which describes the capacity of individuals to withstand structural barriers and discriminatory treatment that may arise in their career progression (Peeters et al., 2022). The third indicator is career resilience, referring to the ability of individuals to recover from setbacks, failures, or work-related pressures and continue progressing in their careers (Park et al., 2022).

METHODS

Data Sources and Search Strategy

The primary objective of this study is to analyze the research trends and map the intellectual structure of scholarly publications related to sustainable woman's career advancement within the field of business and management. To achieve this, a bibliometric analysis was adopted due to its methodological rigor in quantitatively evaluating and synthesizing scientific knowledge (Donthu et al., 2021b). For the purpose of data collection, the Scopus database was selected as the primary source.

Although both Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) are widely recognized as comprehensive and reliable databases for bibliometric research, Scopus offers several advantages that make it particularly suitable for this study. These include broader journal coverage, especially in the social sciences and management fields, increased accessibility to author and institution profiles, and inclusion of a larger number of peer-reviewed sources not indexed by WoS. As noted by (Pranckutė, 2021), Scopus indexes a greater volume of unique titles, and approximately 89% of articles indexed in WoS in the areas of business, economics, and management are also available in Scopus. Given the interdisciplinary and global nature of woman's career advancement research, the broader coverage provided by Scopus ensures the inclusion of diverse perspectives and scholarly outputs across geographic and institutional contexts.

Following the selection of the database, the next step involved formulating a comprehensive search strategy to identify relevant documents. The search string was carefully constructed to include terms related to "sustainable", "woman", "career advancement", "promotion", "leadership", and "gender equality" within the title, abstract, and keywords. These keywords were selected to ensure conceptual relevance while maintaining a balance between specificity and comprehensiveness. For example, the term "career advancement" captures various professional growth trajectories, while "leadership" reflects one of the most studied outcomes of upward career mobility among woman. The inclusion of related constructs such as "glass ceiling", "career barriers", and "organizational support" was also considered to capture research nuances across different methodological and disciplinary traditions.

Notably, the use of varied yet thematically consistent keywords was necessary to account for terminological diversity across disciplines and publication practices. While some articles explicitly refer to "career advancement," others may discuss similar constructs using terms such as "promotion inequality," "gendered leadership pathways," or "career development for woman in management." Hence, a deliberate combination of keyword variations was implemented to maximize the coverage of the topic without diluting its conceptual integrity. This careful keyword strategy ensures that the collected data set adequately represents the scholarly discourse on woman's career advancement and aligns with the overarching goal of mapping its knowledge structure over the past decade. The search was limited to documents in English, specifically journal articles and conference proceedings, using the article title, abstract, and keyword fields as the primary search domains.

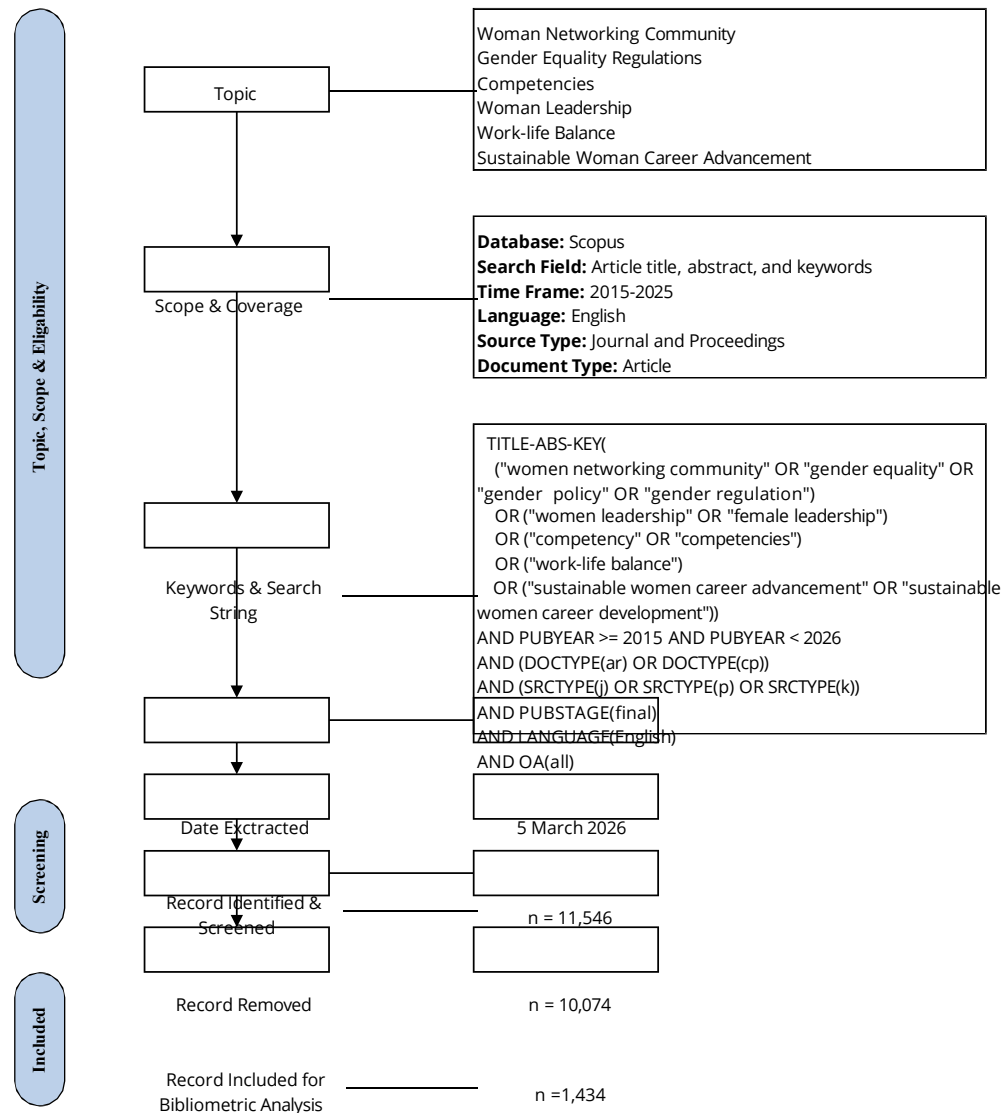
The search string was carefully constructed to reflect the conceptual focus of the research, combining three key dimensions: population (e.g., woman, female, gender), concept (e.g., career, promotion, leadership, management position), and advancement constructs (e.g., development, success, progression). The initial query identified a total of 10,074 records, which were then screened based on title, abstract relevance, and document type. A total of 1,434 records were removed due to duplication, language exclusion, or thematic irrelevance, resulting in a final dataset of 1,434 documents for bibliometric analysis.

To ensure the validity and relevance of the data, the extraction was conducted on 5 March 2026, ensuring the most updated coverage of the research corpus within the specified timeframe. The inclusion of only peer-reviewed articles and proceedings contributed to the academic robustness of the analysis. The final corpus of 1,434 publications is sufficiently

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comprehensive to capture the thematic diversity and developmental trajectory of research in woman's career advancement. These records serve as the foundation for subsequent quantitative analyses, including performance metrics, citation trends, and conceptual mapping, which together offer a holistic overview of the intellectual structure and emerging directions of this evolving research field.

Figure 1 The Search Strategy Flow Diagram



Data Analysis

The first stage of the analysis involved a descriptive evaluation of the dataset to assess both the quantity and quality of publications using standard bibliometric indicators (Baharom & Abdullah, 2025). The total number of publications (TP) was employed to measure the quantitative growth of research on woman's career advancement, while additional metrics such as total citations (TC), number of cited publications (NCP), average citations per publication (C/P), and average citations per cited publication (C/CP) were used to reflect the scholarly impact and research quality (Hirsch, 2007). Furthermore, the inclusion of the g-index and h-index served to provide more robust insights into the distribution and consistency of research performance, with implications for projecting future scholarly influence.

The second stage of the study focused on the visualization of the research landscape to uncover intellectual patterns, thematic structures, and relational networks among scholarly entities. Specifically, keyword co-occurrence analysis was conducted to map the conceptual evolution of research topics related to woman's career advancement. The visualization aimed to identify dominant themes, emerging research foci, and conceptual clusters that have shaped the field over the past decade. Each keyword was treated as a node, with connections (edges) representing the frequency and strength of co-occurrence between pairs of keywords. Nodes with higher frequency appear larger in the visualization, while thicker edges denote stronger associations. The mapping and clustering processes were conducted using VOSviewer, a widely used open Through this layered approach, the research offers a comprehensive portrayal of how the academic discourse on woman's career advancement has developed, diversified, and transformed from 2015 to 2025.

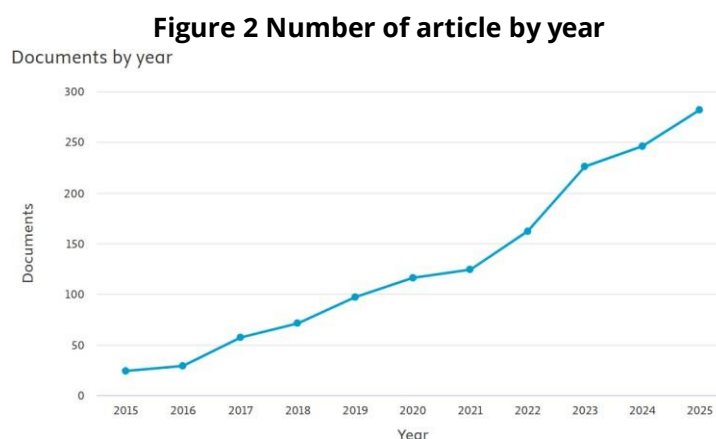
RESULTS

Research Trend

RQ1: What are the prevailing research trends on woman's career advancement in the management and organizational literature from 2015 to 2025?

The trend of publications shown in the "Documents by year" graph indicates a consistent and significant growth in the number of articles related to the studied topic over the past decade. Beginning in 2015 with approximately 24 publications, the number of articles gradually increased to 30 in 2016 and rose substantially to 58 in 2017, indicating the early emergence of scholarly interest in the topic. This upward trajectory continued in the following years, with 71 publications in 2018 and 97 in 2019, reflecting a growing academic recognition of issues related to women, leadership, work-life balance, and gender equality in professional contexts. The increasing number of publications during this early period suggests that the research field was entering a phase of expansion, driven by the rising global discourse on gender inclusion, workplace equality, and sustainable career development.

The growth became even more pronounced after 2020, where the number of publications increased from 116 articles in 2020 to 124 in 2021, and then significantly surged to 162 in 2022. This rapid growth continued in 2023 with 226 publications and 246 publications in 2024, reaching its highest point in 2025 with 281 publications. This pattern demonstrates that the topic has gained substantial academic momentum in recent years, likely influenced by increasing global attention to gender equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives, and the integration of sustainability perspectives into organizational research.



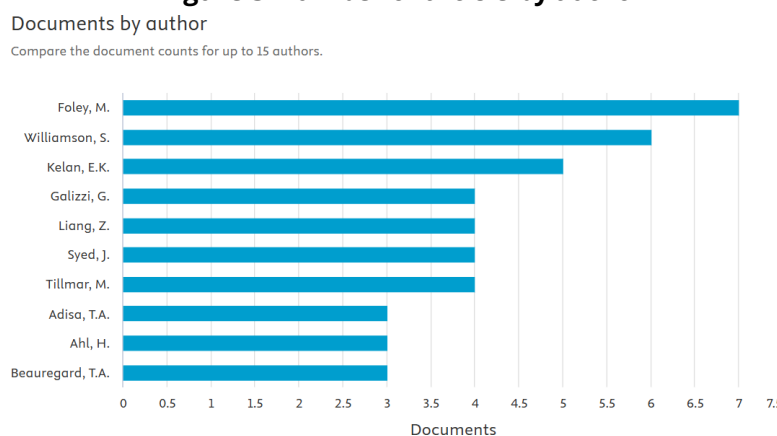
Overall, the publication trend reflects a strong and accelerating scholarly interest, indicating that research on women's career development, leadership, and work-life balance has become an increasingly important area within contemporary academic discourse.

RQ2: Who are the most influential authors, institutions, journals, and countries contributing to the discourse on woman's career advancement?

The "Documents by author" visualization highlights the most productive scholars contributing to the research field under investigation. Based on the number of publications, Foley, M. emerges as the most prolific author with 7 documents ((Lee et al., 2024), (Foley et al., 2024), (Cortis et al., 2022), (Foley & Cooper, 2021), (Colley et al., 2021), (Foley et al., 2020), & (Williamson et al., 2019)), followed by Williamson, S. with 6 publications ((Williamson et al., 2024), (Williamson & Colley, 2023), (Cortis et al., 2022), (Colley et al., 2021), (Foley et al., 2020), & (Williamson et al., 2019)), and Kelan, E.K. with 5 publications ((Gröschl et al., 2025), (Kelan, 2022), (Kelan, 2020), (Kelan & Wratil, 2018), (Adamson et al., 2016)). Several other authors, including Galizzi, G ((Canestrini et al., 2025), (Galizzi et al., 2024).

(Galizzi et al., 2018), & (Galizzi & Siboni, 2016)), Syed, J ((Banihani & Syed, 2017), (Ali & Syed, 2017), (Davies et al., 2020), & (Koburtay et al., 2020))., and Tillmar, M., ((Tillmar, Ahl, et al., 2022), (Tillmar, Ahl, et al., 2022), (Pettersson et al., 2017), & (Tillmar, 2016)) each contributed 4 publications, while Adisa, T.A., ((Sani & Adisa, 2024), & (Adisa et al., 2019)), Ahl, H., ((Tillmar, Sköld, et al., 2022), (Tillmar, Ahl, et al., 2022) & (Pettersson et al., 2017)) and Beauregard, T.A. ((Chatrakul Na Ayudhya et al., 2019), (Hwang & Beauregard, 2022), & (Adamson et al., 2023)) have 3 publications each. This distribution suggests that the research domain does not rely on a single dominant scholar but is instead supported by a group of active contributors who collectively shape the intellectual development of the field.

Figure 3 Number of article by author

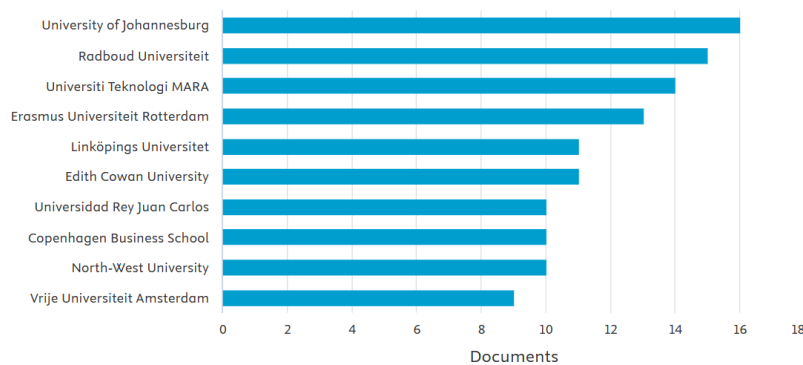


The relatively close range in publication counts among these authors indicates a collaborative and evolving research landscape, where multiple scholars contribute to advancing discussions on themes such as gender equality, leadership, work-life balance, and women's career development. The presence of several authors with comparable publication outputs also suggests that the topic attracts interdisciplinary interest across fields such as organizational studies, gender studies, and human resource management. Consequently, the scholarly contributions of these authors play an important role in expanding the theoretical and empirical understanding of sustainable women's career advancement, particularly in relation to leadership development, workplace equality, and institutional support for women's long-term career progression.

Figure 4 Number of article by affiliation

Documents by affiliation

Compare the document counts for up to 15 affiliations.

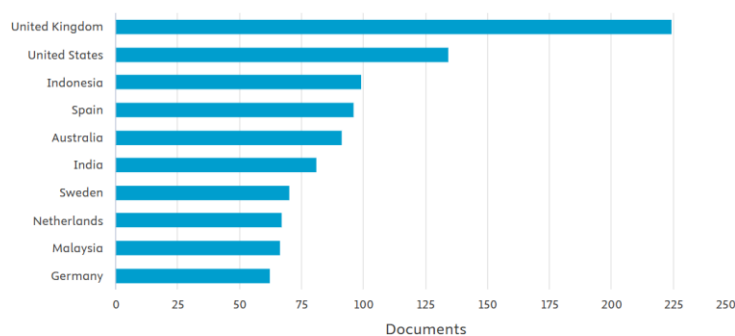


The presence of institutions from Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia reflects the global and interdisciplinary nature of research on women's career development and gender equality. Universities such as Radboud Universiteit, Erasmus University Rotterdam, and Copenhagen Business School represent strong European contributions, while institutions such as the University of Johannesburg and North-West University highlight the growing involvement of African academia in gender-related organizational studies. Similarly, Universiti Teknologi MARA demonstrates the active role of Asian institutions in advancing scholarship on gender equality and leadership. This geographical diversity suggests that the discourse on sustainable women's career advancement has become an international research agenda, reflecting increasing global awareness of the importance of gender-inclusive policies, leadership development, and workplace equality in supporting women's long-term career progression.

Figure 5 Number of article by country

Documents by country or territory

Compare the document counts for up to 15 countries/territories.

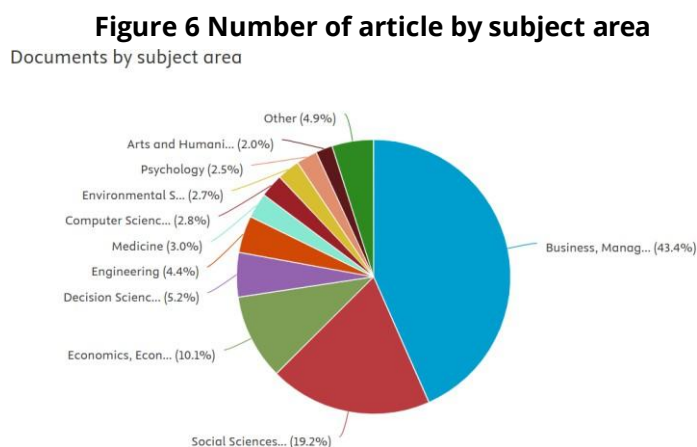


The documents by country or territory analysis reveals the geographical distribution of research contributions within the examined field. The United Kingdom emerges as the most productive country with 224 publications, indicating a strong scholarly engagement with issues related to women's career development, leadership, and gender equality. This is followed by the United States, which contributes 134 publications, reflecting its continued role as a major center for research in organizational studies and gender-related topics. The distribution of publications across these countries illustrates that research on women's career advancement and gender equality is not limited to a single geographic region but has evolved into a globally recognized research agenda. At the same time, the significant contributions from countries such as Indonesia, India, Malaysia, and Australia demonstrate the increasing engagement of scholars from the Asia-

Pacific region in examining issues of workplace equality and women's leadership

RQ3: What are the major thematic clusters and keyword trends that define the intellectual structure of this research field?

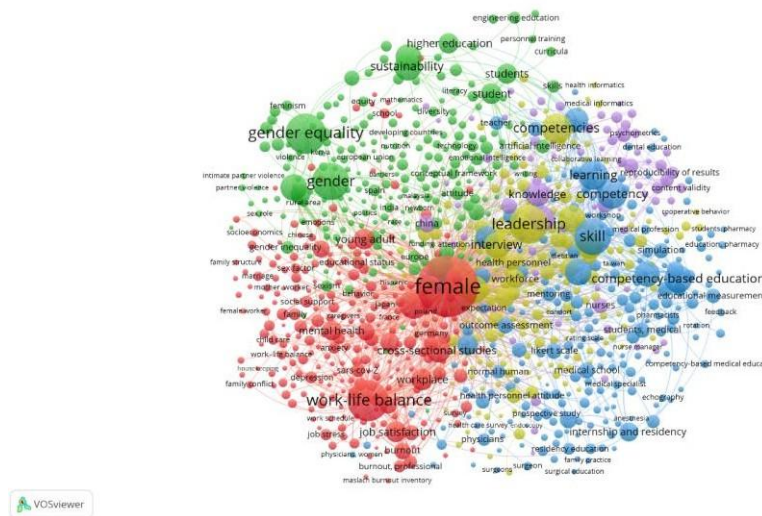
The documents by subject area distribution illustrates the multidisciplinary nature of research related to women's career advancement, leadership, and workplace equality. The largest proportion of publications is concentrated in Business, Management, and Accounting, which accounts for 43.4% of the total publications, indicating that the topic is primarily examined from the perspective of organizational management, leadership development, and human resource practices. This is followed by Social Sciences (19.2%), reflecting the strong influence of sociological and policy-oriented perspectives in understanding gender equality, workplace inclusion, and institutional frameworks. Additionally, Economics, Econometrics, and Finance (10.1%) also contribute significantly, suggesting that scholars increasingly analyze women's career progression within broader economic and labor market context



Beyond these dominant fields, the presence of other disciplines such as Decision Sciences (5.2%), Engineering (4.4%), Medicine (3.0%), Computer Science (2.8%), Environmental Science (2.7%), Psychology (2.5%), and Arts and Humanities (2.0%) indicates that the research topic extends beyond traditional management studies into diverse academic domains. This interdisciplinary spread suggests that issues are increasingly examined through multiple analytical lenses.

DISCUSSION

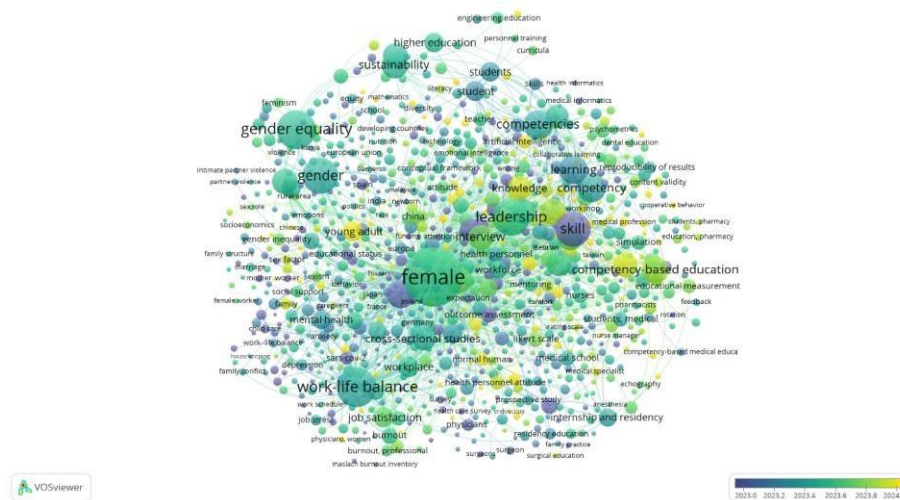
The network visualization illustrates the conceptual relationships among keywords that appear in the body of literature concerning women, leadership, work-life balance, and gender equality. In this bibliometric map, larger nodes represent keywords with higher frequency of occurrence, while the proximity between nodes indicates the strength of co-occurrence relationships within the analyzed publications. The keyword "female" appears as the most prominent and central node in the network, indicating that women constitute the core focus of the scholarly discourse captured in the dataset. Its central position also demonstrates strong linkages with several related themes such as leadership, work-life balance, competency, gender equality, and workplace well-being. This pattern suggests that research on women in the professional sphere is inherently multidisciplinary, integrating perspectives from organizational studies, gender studies, human resource management, and social psychology.

Figure 7 Network Visualization

The red cluster highlights a strong association between keywords such as work-life balance, mental health, job satisfaction, burnout, and workplace. This cluster shows that much of the literature focuses on the tension between professional responsibilities and personal life and how it affects women's psychological well-being in organizational contexts. Terms such as family conflict, caregivers, depression, and job stress further illustrate the challenges women face in managing dual roles at work and home. These findings emphasize that work-life integration and psychological well-being are crucial foundations for sustaining women's long-term career development.

The green cluster centers on themes of gender equality, sustainability, and higher education, reflecting broader institutional and societal perspectives on women's professional development. Related concepts such as diversity, equity, and developing countries suggest that research also addresses organizational structures, policy frameworks, and global development agendas. The strong link between gender equality and sustainability indicates growing recognition that women's career advancement is closely tied to inclusive and sustainable institutional environments. Organizations that promote gender equality play a key role in enabling women to access leadership opportunities and achieve long-term career growth.

The blue and yellow clusters emphasize leadership, skill development, competency, and competency-based education, highlighting the importance of capability building in women's career progression. Keywords such as knowledge, learning, mentoring, and training indicate that many studies focus on professional development mechanisms that strengthen women's leadership potential and employability. In the context of sustainable women's career advancement, competency and leadership development provide essential pathways for women to enter, sustain, and progress in their careers. Overall, the network reveals three interconnected themes shaping the discourse: workplace well-being and work-life balance, institutional commitment to gender equality, and continuous competency and leadership development.

Figure 8 Overlay Visualization

The overlay visualization illustrates the temporal evolution of research themes in the literature on women, leadership, and career development. Node colors represent the average publication year of each keyword, ranging from darker tones (earlier studies) to brighter yellow tones (more recent trends). The keyword “female” remains central, indicating that women continue to be the main focus of scholarly discussion. However, the map shows a shift from earlier discussions on gender and workplace issues toward more recent themes related to competencies, leadership development, and sustainability, reflecting a transition from descriptive analyses of inequality to more strategic discussions on sustaining women’s careers.

Earlier studies, represented by darker blue and green nodes, focus on themes such as work-life balance, mental health, workplace conditions, and job satisfaction. Keywords like burnout, family conflict, and depression highlight the structural and psychosocial challenges women face when balancing professional and domestic roles. This early body of research established a foundation for understanding factors that influence women’s participation and retention in the workforce. It also emphasizes that psychological well-being and effective work–life integration are key prerequisites for sustaining women’s long-term career development.

More recent trends, shown by yellow nodes, highlight themes such as competency, skill development, leadership, knowledge, and competency-based education. The prominence of terms like learning, mentoring, training, and leadership development suggests that current research increasingly focuses on capacity-building mechanisms that support women’s professional advancement. This reflects a shift in the literature from problem-oriented discussions of gender inequality toward solution-oriented approaches emphasizing empowerment, leadership capability, and skill development.

The overlay map also reveals the growing integration of sustainability and gender equality within the discourse on women’s career development. Keywords such as sustainability, gender equality, and higher education appear in more recent publications, indicating that scholars increasingly connect women’s career advancement with global sustainability and diversity agendas. This trend highlights a convergence between gender studies, leadership, and sustainability research, emphasizing that sustainable career advancement for women requires both individual competency development and supportive institutional environments that promote equality and inclusion.

CONCLUSION

This research provides a comprehensive bibliometric overview of the publication trends, scholarly performance, and thematic evolution of research on woman's career advancement in the business and management disciplines from 2015 to 2025. The analysis revealed a steady increase in publication output, particularly accelerating in the years following 2020, reflecting growing academic interest and policy relevance in gender equity and leadership development. The United States, United Kingdom, and Australia emerged as the most productive countries, with notable contributions also from select Asian and African institutions. Research on woman's career advancement has been disseminated across diverse, multidisciplinary journals, ranging from human resource management to organizational behavior and gender studies.

Through keyword co-occurrence analysis, this study identified key thematic clusters that define the intellectual structure of the field, including leadership pathways, gender bias, work-life balance, mentoring, and organizational support systems. Emerging research fronts are increasingly focused on contemporary challenges such as digital leadership, flexible work arrangements, and post-pandemic career resilience. The contributions of this study include, first, mapping the research output and impact of the field over a ten-year period; second, identifying the most influential authors, institutions, and journals to guide academic collaboration and benchmarking; and third, providing a visual and conceptual synthesis of key topics and research gaps that can inform future inquiry. Despite the study's reliance on the Scopus database, which may limit the scope of included literature, the findings offer a solid foundation for advancing a more inclusive, data-driven research agenda on woman's career advancement in the global academic landscape. Future studies are encouraged to incorporate additional databases and qualitative approaches to capture deeper sociocultural dynamics influencing career trajectories of woman.

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