

Mapping the Research Landscape of Gender Dynamics in Public Administration Leadership: A Bibliometric Analysis

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ABSTRACT

Background: The increasing emphasis on gender inclusivity in public administration has generated a growing body of interdisciplinary scholarship, yet the global intellectual structure and collaboration patterns of this field remain fragmented. This study aims to map the knowledge landscape of gender dynamics in public administration leadership through a comprehensive bibliometric and network analysis.

Methods: Using the Scopus database, relevant publications were extracted and analyzed employing VOSviewer for co-authorship, country collaboration, and keyword co-occurrence mapping.

Results: Findings reveal that the United States serves as the central hub of scholarly production and international collaboration, with strong linkages to the United Kingdom, Canada, and emerging contributions from India, South Africa, and China. Keyword clustering indicates a multidisciplinary convergence dominated by themes such as “gender,” “leadership,” “qualitative research,” and “psychology,” alongside strong intersections with health, social behavior, and policy-oriented research. The prominence of terms like “young adult,” “cross-sectional study,” and “questionnaire” suggests a methodological leaning toward empirical and survey-based approaches.

Conclusion: The study contributes by providing a structured visualization of the field’s intellectual evolution, identifying key research clusters, geographic disparities, and methodological trends. These insights inform future research directions and policy discourse, particularly in advancing gender-responsive leadership frameworks in public administration.

Keywords: Gender dynamics; Public administration; Leadership; Bibliometric analysis; Science mapping; Research collaboration

Introduction

Public administration leadership has long been shaped by intricate gender dynamics, which reflect broader societal norms and institutional structures deeply embedded within our systems. Despite the progress that has been made toward achieving gender equality over the years, women continue to be significantly underrepresented in leadership roles across various contexts within public administration. This persistent underrepresentation is often attributed to a combination of

structural barriers, deeply rooted cultural norms, and enduring stereotypes that not only influence access to leadership opportunities but also shape perceptions regarding the effectiveness of female leaders (Nguyen, 2022; Rodriguez et al., 2026; Viveros et al., 2025). For instance, women in public administration frequently encounter a range of challenges, including notable wage disparities, limited representation in top-level positions, and biases that can undermine their authority and decision-making capabilities (Rodriguez et al., 2026; Viveros et al., 2025; Lee & Park, 2021). These issues highlight the necessity of addressing systemic inequalities that hinder the advancement of women in these sectors.

Research in this area highlights that gendered leadership styles play a significant role in shaping organizational dynamics and influencing the overall effectiveness of leadership within public administration. Women leaders are often associated with transformational and collaborative approaches that emphasize inclusivity and team-building, fostering a more cooperative work environment. In contrast, men are more frequently linked to directive and results-oriented leadership styles that prioritize efficiency and performance outcomes (Sabharwal et al., 2017; Bueno de la Fuente & De la Fuente Anuncibay, 2024; Ion & Tomàs Folch, 2009). These differences, while nuanced, can have a profound impact on perceptions of leadership effectiveness and the ability of leaders to navigate complex organizational challenges. However, it is essential to recognize that such distinctions are not absolute. Leadership styles are also shaped by a multitude of factors, including individual experiences, particular organizational contexts, and prevailing cultural expectations (Lee & Park, 2021; Bueno de la Fuente & De la Fuente Anuncibay, 2024). This complexity necessitates a more comprehensive understanding of how gender influences leadership beyond mere stereotypes.

Moreover, the gender ratios within organizations, as well as the interaction between supervisors and subordinate genders, can significantly affect workplace dynamics and overall productivity. For example, recent studies suggest that male subordinates may respond more positively to transformational leadership styles, demonstrating a certain level of affinity for collaborative approaches. However, this positive response tends to diminish in work units where there is a higher representation of female employees (Jong, 2023). This underscores the importance of considering not only the gender composition within organizations but also the interaction effects that arise between different genders when analyzing leadership outcomes in public administration. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for developing strategies that foster equitable leadership practices and enhance organizational effectiveness.

Despite the growing body of research, several gaps remain evident. First, there is limited synthesis of global publication trends that systematically maps how gender dynamics in public administration leadership have evolved. Second, the structure and extent of international research collaboration remain underexplored, particularly in terms of how knowledge flows between developed and developing countries. Third, there is a lack of comprehensive identification of dominant and emerging thematic areas, especially those related to governance, leadership, and administrative reforms. Finally, the temporal evolution of research topics—how scholarly

attention has shifted across themes—has not been sufficiently examined using large-scale bibliometric techniques.

In response to these gaps, this study provides a systematic and data-driven mapping of the scholarly landscape on gender dynamics in public administration leadership by analyzing global publication trends and country contributions, mapping international research collaboration networks, identifying dominant and emerging thematic clusters, and examining the evolution of research topics over time. To achieve these objectives, it adopts a bibliometric and network analysis approach, which is particularly well-suited for synthesizing large volumes of scholarly data and uncovering structural patterns not readily observable through traditional literature reviews. Bibliometric methods enable the quantitative assessment of publication outputs, citation relationships, and keyword co-occurrences, while network analysis facilitates the visualization of collaboration linkages and thematic structures; by leveraging tools such as VOSviewer, this approach provides a robust framework for identifying research frontiers, intellectual structures, and knowledge gaps within the field. Ultimately, the study contributes to the literature by offering a comprehensive overview of how gender dynamics in public administration leadership are conceptualized, studied, and disseminated globally, while also providing critical insights for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners seeking to advance gender-responsive governance and inclusive leadership in the public sector.

Methods

Study design

The study employed bibliometric approaches to characterize the structural evolution of gender dynamics in public administration leadership research. Bibliometrics enables the quantitative assessment of scientific productivity, collaborative networks, and thematic trajectories through analysis of bibliographic metadata, co-authorship linkages, and keyword co-occurrence patterns. This approach offers a systematic means to trace the growth, diversification, and emerging directions of a research field.

Data Source

The dataset for this study was obtained from Scopus, the most widely used database with comprehensive disciplinary coverage, strong citation indexing, and established use in bibliometric research in business. Scopus was selected because it provides standardized citation metadata, broad multidisciplinary coverage, and consistent indexing quality, offering an optimal balance between coverage and data reliability for mapping intellectual structures and collaboration networks. Extracted metadata included publication year, authorship, institutional affiliations, journal sources, keywords, abstracts, subject categories, and citation counts. While Scopus provides comprehensive coverage and standardized citation metadata for bibliometric analysis, it is noteworthy that this may underrepresent locally published research from lower-income settings.

Search Strategy and Data Extraction

The data search incorporated validated research trends in gender dynamics in public administration leadership, research keywords, and geographic identifiers, and was conducted on March 26, 2026. To ensure data consistency and citation stability, publications from the most recent incomplete

years, namely 2026, were excluded. Only original research articles affiliated with institutions are included. Editorials, reviews, letters, conference papers, and other non-research outputs were excluded. Only the final stage of publication was considered, and the source type was limited to journals. The dataset was limited to peer-reviewed journal articles written in English to ensure comparability of bibliometric indicators and consistency of citation analysis across countries. Eligible records were exported in CSV format for subsequent analysis.

The Scopus advanced search query was designed to capture scholarly articles related to swimming crab global research and was applied to article titles and abstracts. The full search string used in this study is presented below:

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TITLE-ABS-KEY ( "gender dynamics" OR "gender differences" OR "gender equality" OR "gender inequality" OR "gender gap" OR "gender representation" OR "gender diversity" OR "women leadership" OR "female leadership" OR "women in leadership" OR "gender inclusivity" ) AND ( "public administration" OR "public sector" OR "government" OR "civil service" OR "public management" OR "public governance" ) AND ( "leadership" OR "leadership roles" OR "decision-making" OR "executive leadership" OR "administrative leadership" OR "policy leadership" OR "organizational leadership" ) AND PUBYEAR > 1976 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 AND ( LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "ar" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( DOCTYPE , "re" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( PUBSTAGE , "final" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( SRCTYPE , "j" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( LANGUAGE , "English" ) )
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This search strategy prioritized sensitivity over specificity to capture the breadth of gender dynamics in public administration leadership research across heterogeneous financial and institutional contexts in the global landscape. This approach was deemed appropriate for ecosystem-level scientometric mapping rather than narrowly focused asset- or country-specific analysis.

Data Cleaning

To ensure data accuracy and validity, a manual data cleaning was conducted in the extracted dataset. It involved the removal of keyword artifacts and harmonization of terms through a manually curated synonym file (.txt), enabling consistent keyword merging and improved accuracy of analyses.

Data Analysis

This study conducted science mapping and performance analysis using the retrieved dataset (.csv) through enrichment tools, such as Bibliometrix/Biblioshiny (R package) (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017) and VOSviewer version. 1.6.20. (Universiteit Leiden and CWTS Meaningful Metrics). Bibliometrix/Biblioshiny (R) and VOSviewer, a widely used tool for bibliometric mapping and visualization of scientific knowledge structures (van Eck & Waltman, 2010), were employed to generate network maps, thematic diagrams, and trend visualizations. Bibliometric mapping techniques such as co-citation and co-occurrence analysis have long been used to examine intellectual structures and relationships within scientific literature. Publication and citation metrics, including annual publication counts, citation trends, top journals, influential articles, and leading institutions, were computed using Bibliometrix. Co-authorship and co-occurrence

networks were mapped in VOSviewer to characterize inter-country and inter-institutional collaborations, as well as centrality structures of keywords, accordingly. Thematic evolution was assessed using keyword co-occurrence analysis of titles and abstracts, producing cluster maps and temporal overlays to identify dominant research areas and emerging fronts.

Results and Discussion

Research trends and temporal dynamics

A total of 5,556 documents were retrieved from the Scopus database. Figure 1A demonstrates a long-term but highly uneven growth trajectory in the research landscape of gender dynamics in public administration leadership. From 1977 through roughly the late 1980s, annual scientific production remained extremely low, indicating that this topic occupied only a marginal position within public administration scholarship. During the 1990s and early 2000s, publication output began to rise gradually, but growth was still modest and somewhat irregular, suggesting that the field was developing slowly without yet reaching broad consolidation. A clearer upward shift became visible after the mid-2000s, followed by a much steeper acceleration from the mid-2010s onward. This sharp increase is especially pronounced after 2018, where annual output expands rapidly from below 200 articles to approximately 1,000 articles by 2025. Such a pattern suggests that research on gender dynamics in public administration leadership has entered a high-growth phase, likely driven by intensified global attention to gender equity, women's representation in leadership, diversity in governance, institutional reform, and inclusive public sector management. The near-exponential rise in the most recent years indicates that the field is no longer peripheral, but has become a major and increasingly institutionalized area of inquiry within the broader public administration and leadership literature.

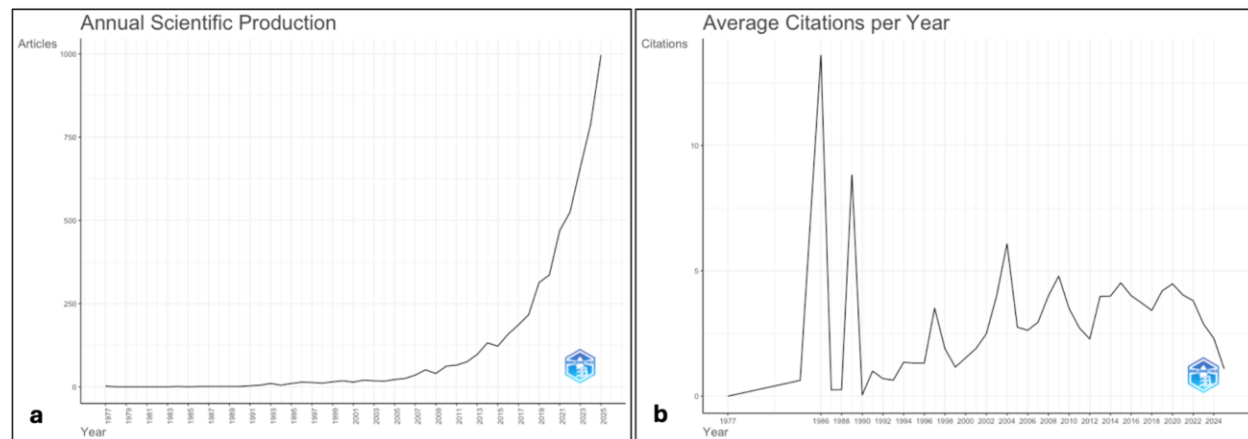


Figure 1. Publication volume trend by year (A) and annual citation counts (B) of the research landscape of gender dynamics in public administration leadership.

Figure 1B, which presents average citations per year, adds an important qualitative dimension to this publication growth by showing how the scholarly impact of the field has evolved over time. Citation levels in the earliest years were very low, reflecting the limited size and visibility of the literature. However, several sharp peaks appear in the mid-to-late 1980s and again

around the late 1980s, suggesting that a small number of foundational publications from those years achieved disproportionately high influence relative to the small volume of papers produced. After this early volatility, the citation curve becomes more stable from the 1990s onward, generally fluctuating at moderate levels and then rising more consistently in the 2000s and 2010s. The field appears to sustain average citation values mostly between about 2 and 5 citations per year across much of the more mature period, indicating a steady and credible scholarly uptake rather than isolated citation bursts alone. The decline visible in the most recent years should be interpreted cautiously, as it most likely reflects citation lag rather than a true reduction in relevance or quality; newly published articles have had less time to accumulate citations. Taken together, the two figures suggest a field that has transitioned from a niche and sporadically cited research area into a rapidly expanding and increasingly influential domain, with recent publication growth outpacing immediate citation accrual but signaling strong future potential for continued scholarly consolidation and impact.

Figure 2A indicates that the research landscape on gender dynamics in public administration leadership has moved from a long formative phase into a period of very rapid expansion, with the fitted life-cycle model showing an excellent goodness of fit ($R^2 = 0.997$). Publication output remained very low and relatively flat from the late 1970s through the early 2000s, suggesting that the topic existed only as a marginal or fragmented area of inquiry during that period. A modest increase then became visible in the late 2000s and early 2010s, followed by a much sharper acceleration from around 2018 onward, culminating in a projected peak annual output of roughly 3,000 publications around 2035.7. This pattern reflects a classic bell-shaped scientific life cycle in which a field transitions from emergence to rapid growth as scholarly attention intensifies, conceptual frameworks become clearer, and the issue gains stronger policy and institutional relevance. In substantive terms, the steep rise in recent years likely signals growing recognition of gender equity, representation, leadership inclusion, and governance reform as central concerns in public administration research. The projected post-peak decline should not be interpreted as the disappearance of the field, but rather as a likely sign of maturation, where publication activity may eventually stabilize or decrease as foundational themes become well established and research agendas become more specialized.

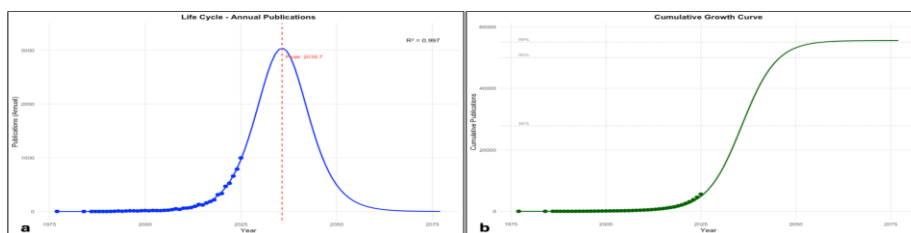


Figure 2. Life cycle of annual publication (A) and cumulative growth curve (B) of the research landscape in gender dynamics in public administration leadership.

Figure 2B reinforces this interpretation by showing a logistic cumulative growth trajectory, where the total body of literature increases slowly at first, then enters a very steep expansion phase before gradually approaching saturation. The early segment of the curve, extending from the late 1970s to roughly the mid-2010s, is nearly flat, confirming that cumulative knowledge production was limited for decades. However, the sharp upward inflection beginning in the early-to-mid 2020s marks the transition into the field's most dynamic developmental stage, where cumulative publications rise rapidly and the knowledge base expands at its fastest rate. The curve crosses its midpoint near the late 2030s to early 2040s, implying that the field is either entering or approaching its high-growth maturity phase, after which the slope begins to flatten as it approaches the 90% and 99% reference lines. This flattening suggests that the literature may eventually reach a saturation point of approximately 55,000–56,000 cumulative publications, indicating a mature and highly consolidated domain rather than an endlessly expanding one. Overall, taken together, the two panels suggest that gender dynamics in public administration leadership is no longer an emerging niche, but a rapidly institutionalizing field that is expected to remain highly productive in the near future before transitioning into a more mature, stabilized phase of scholarly development.

Most Productive Countries

The geographic distribution of research on gender dynamics in public administration leadership reveals a highly uneven and hierarchical global structure, dominated by a small group of high-income, research-intensive countries, as shown in Figure 3. The United States clearly leads with 2,760 publications, more than doubling the United Kingdom's ($n=1,163$), followed by Australia ($n=871$), China ($n=783$), and India ($n=759$). This concentration reflects the strong institutional capacity, funding availability, and long-standing academic traditions in these countries, particularly in governance, public policy, and gender studies. Western Europe (e.g., Spain, Italy, Germany, France, Netherlands) and North America (Canada) also show strong representation, indicating that the field is deeply rooted in regions where gender equality discourse has been institutionalized in both academia and policy. These patterns align with global observations that research on gender and leadership is often driven by countries with stronger policy frameworks and data systems supporting gender equality initiatives. Meanwhile, emerging contributions from large and rapidly developing countries such as China and India suggest a broadening of the research base, reflecting growing awareness of gender disparities in governance and leadership structures across diverse political and administrative systems.

Country Scientific Production

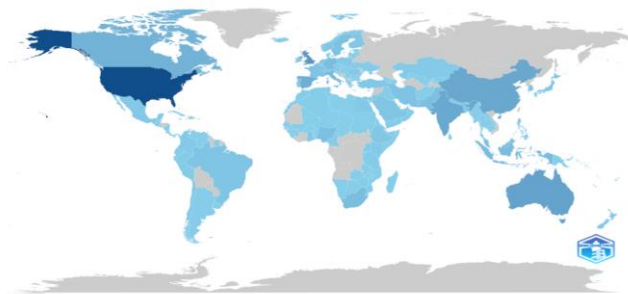


Figure 3. Geographic distribution of research on gender dynamics in public administration leadership publications by country.

Beyond these dominant hubs, the distribution reveals a wide but fragmented participation from the Global South and middle-income countries, including Indonesia, South Africa, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Malaysia, each contributing moderate but meaningful publication outputs. These countries reflect increasing scholarly engagement with gender issues in governance, often shaped by local socio-political contexts and development priorities. However, much of Africa, parts of Latin America, and smaller Asian nations (e.g., the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam) are notably absent or minimal) remain underrepresented, indicating structural disparities in research capacity, access to funding, and publication visibility. This imbalance mirrors broader global inequalities in gender leadership representation, where disparities persist across regions due to cultural, institutional, and economic constraints. The long tail of countries with very low publication counts (often fewer than 10 outputs) highlights the limited integration of many regions into the global knowledge network. Overall, the map suggests that while gender dynamics in public administration leadership is a globally relevant research area, its scholarly production remains concentrated in a few dominant regions, underscoring the need for more inclusive, cross-regional collaboration and capacity-building to ensure a truly global and representative research landscape.

Co-authorship and Collaborations

Figure 4A reveals a dense and highly interconnected international co-authorship network, indicating that research on gender dynamics in public administration leadership has developed through substantial cross-national scholarly collaboration rather than isolated national efforts. The United States occupies the most central and dominant position in the network, acting as the principal hub linking multiple regional clusters, which suggests both high productivity and strong international collaborative reach. The United Kingdom and China also emerge as major nodes with extensive ties, while countries such as India, Spain, Italy, Australia, and Saudi Arabia appear as influential secondary hubs that help connect broader sub-networks. The clustering structure indicates the presence of several collaboration communities: one centered around Anglo-American and European partnerships, another involving Asian and Middle Eastern countries, and others connecting African and Latin American contributors. The close proximity and dense linkages among major countries imply frequent co-authored outputs, high knowledge exchange, and an internationally shared research agenda. At the same time, the presence of smaller peripheral nodes, such as several African, Central Asian, and smaller European countries, suggests that while the network is globally expansive, participation remains uneven, with many countries connected through a few dominant hubs rather than through equally distributed collaboration pathways.

Figure 4B deepens this interpretation by showing the temporal evolution of these collaborations through overlay visualization. The color gradient suggests that older collaborative activity is concentrated around the core traditional leaders, particularly the United States, the United Kingdom, and several established European partners, while more recent collaboration activity appears to be expanding toward a wider range of countries, including China, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, South Korea, and parts of South and Southeast Asia. This indicates that the field has not

remained static; rather, it has undergone a process of geographic diversification, with newer contributors becoming increasingly integrated into the global co-authorship structure. The persistence of the United States and the United Kingdom near the center across the temporal overlay implies that these countries continue to shape the field's collaborative architecture, but the emergence of greener and yellow-toned nodes around Asia, the Middle East, and some developing regions signals that the research landscape is becoming more internationally distributed in recent years. This pattern may reflect the growing policy salience of gender equity, leadership representation, and governance reform across diverse administrative settings, encouraging a broader range of countries to contribute to and collaborate within this scholarly domain.

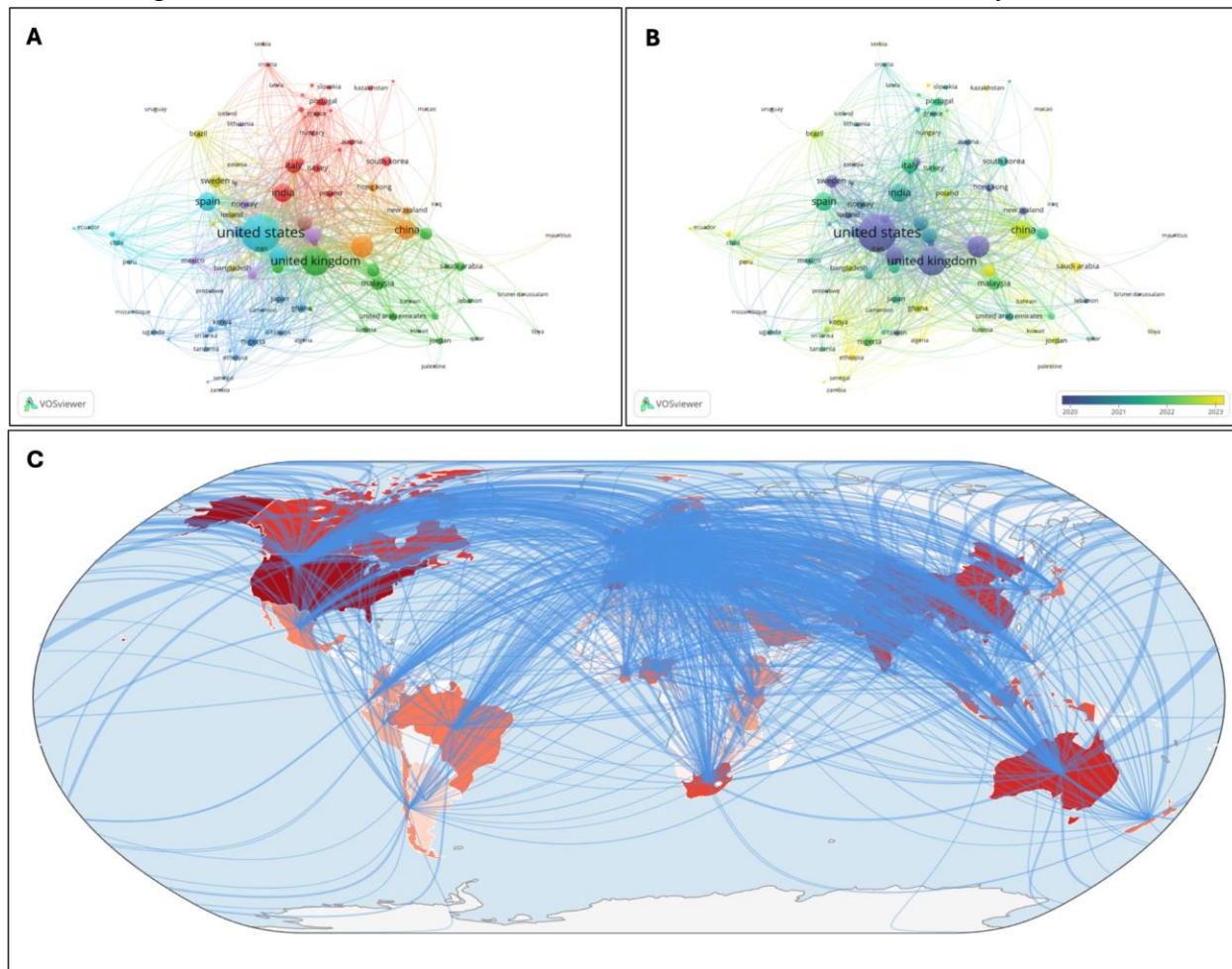


Figure 4. Co-authorship in the research landscape of gender dynamics in public administration leadership research among countries' collaboration through (A) network analysis, (B) overlay visualization, and (C) countries' collaboration world map

In Figure C, the countries' collaboration world map, confirms the strongly globalized character of the field while also highlighting the highly uneven geography of collaboration intensity. The densest flows are concentrated across North America, Europe, East Asia, and Oceania, with especially prominent transatlantic and Europe–Asia linkages, showing that the field is sustained by robust interregional knowledge exchange. The United States stands out visually as

the most prominent collaboration anchor, with extensive ties stretching across Europe, Asia, Africa, and Australia, while the United Kingdom appears as another major bridge between regions. Countries such as China, India, Australia, Spain, and South Africa also appear to contribute meaningfully to this global web, indicating that collaboration extends beyond a purely Western axis. However, despite the broad geographic spread, the map also reveals an imbalance in collaborative density: Africa, Latin America, and parts of Southeast and Central Asia are visibly less central and appear more dependent on ties with dominant hubs than on strong intra-regional collaboration. Overall, the three panels collectively suggest that research on gender dynamics in public administration leadership is supported by a mature and internationally connected collaboration system, but one still characterized by asymmetrical power structures in which a small set of highly productive countries drive much of the global research coordination and visibility.

Most Relevant Authors

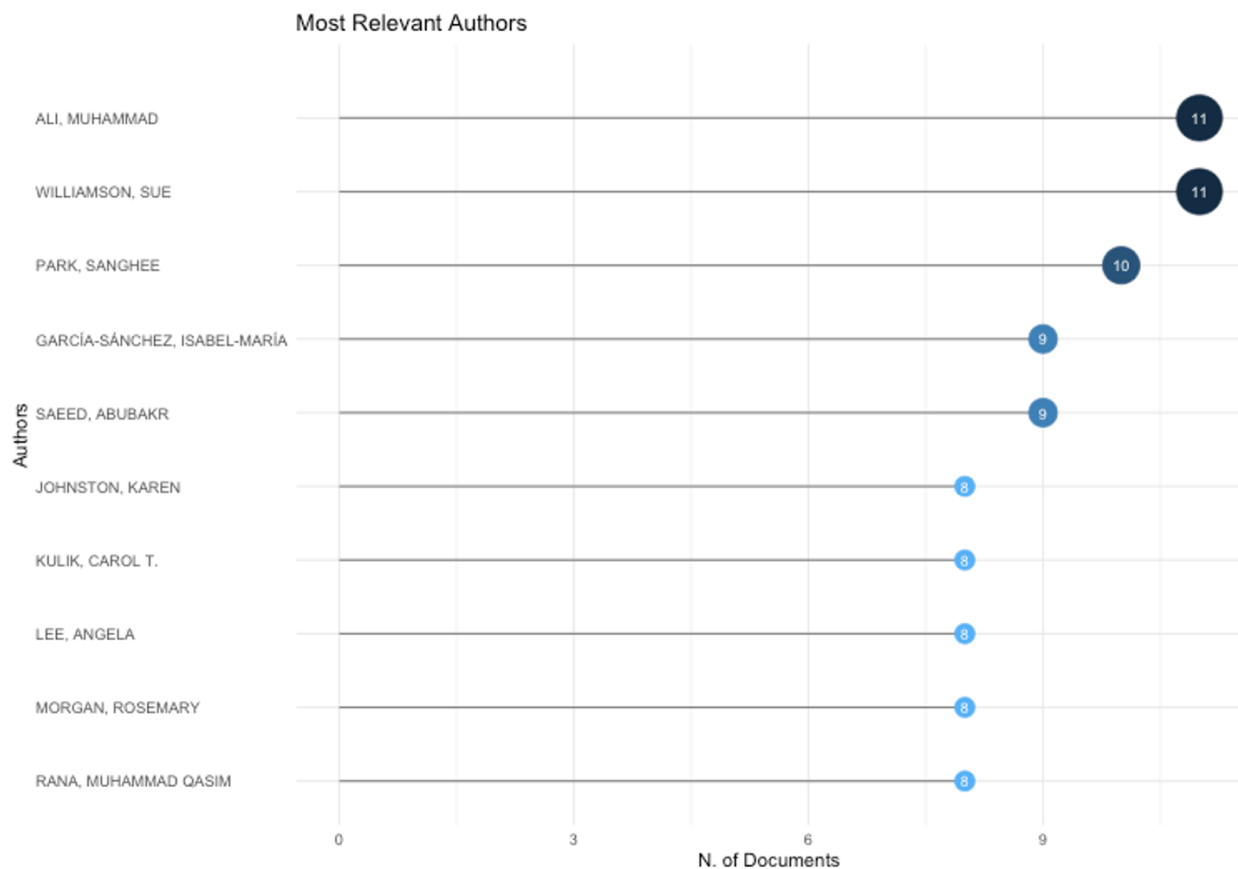


Figure 5. Top 10 most prolific authors publishing research on gender dynamics in public administration leadership.

The distribution of the top 10 most prolific authors in gender dynamics in public administration leadership reflects a relatively concentrated yet moderately competitive authorship structure (Figure 5). Leading the field are Ali, Muhammad and Williamson, Sue, each with 11

publications, indicating their strong and sustained contributions to advancing scholarship in this domain. Closely following is Park, Sanghee with 10 publications, while Garcia-Sánchez, Isabel-Maria and Saeed, Abubakr each contribute 9 publications, forming a second tier of highly productive scholars. The remaining authors—Johnston, Karen; Kulik, Carol T.; Lee, Angela; Morgan, Rosemary; and Rana, Muhammad Qasim—each with 8 publications, suggest a tightly clustered group of contributors with comparable output levels. The relatively narrow range of publication counts (8–11) indicates that no single author overwhelmingly dominates the field, but rather that intellectual leadership is distributed among several key scholars who collectively shape the research agenda. This pattern is characteristic of a maturing research area, where productivity is shared across a network of active contributors rather than concentrated in a few dominant figures.

Beyond publication counts, the composition of this author group also reflects the interdisciplinary and international nature of the field. Many of these scholars are known for integrating perspectives from public administration, gender studies, organizational behavior, and governance, which contributes to the conceptual richness of the research landscape. The presence of authors from diverse geographic and institutional backgrounds suggests that knowledge production is not confined to a single region but is instead shaped by multiple academic systems and policy contexts. Additionally, the clustering of several authors at similar productivity levels (particularly those with 8 publications) implies the existence of collaborative or overlapping research networks, where co-authorship and shared thematic interests may drive collective output. Overall, the figure highlights a balanced and evolving authorship structure, where a core group of prolific researchers provides continuity and direction, while also allowing space for emerging contributors to participate in and expand the field.

Most Relevant Institutions

The distribution of the top 10 institutions publishing on gender dynamics in public administration leadership shows a concentrated but internationally diverse institutional landscape, led by a small group of universities with strong and sustained research engagement (Figure 6). Monash University ranks first with 51 publications, clearly distinguishing itself as the most productive institutional contributor in the field. It is followed by the University of Toronto with 44 publications and Tehran University of Medical Sciences with 41, indicating that high research output is not confined to one geographic region or disciplinary tradition. The University of Oxford (n=39) and Harvard University (n=36) also occupy prominent positions, reinforcing the strong role of globally recognized research universities in shaping this literature. Other notable contributors include the University of Johannesburg (n=35), Australian National University (n=32), University of California (n=32), RMIT University (n=30), and University of Southampton (n=30). The relatively narrow spread between the first and tenth institutions suggests that although Monash University leads, the field is not overwhelmingly dominated by a single institution; rather, it is supported by a competitive cluster of universities contributing at broadly comparable levels. This pattern reflects a mature institutional base in which productivity is distributed across multiple centers of excellence rather than monopolized by one or two dominant organizations.

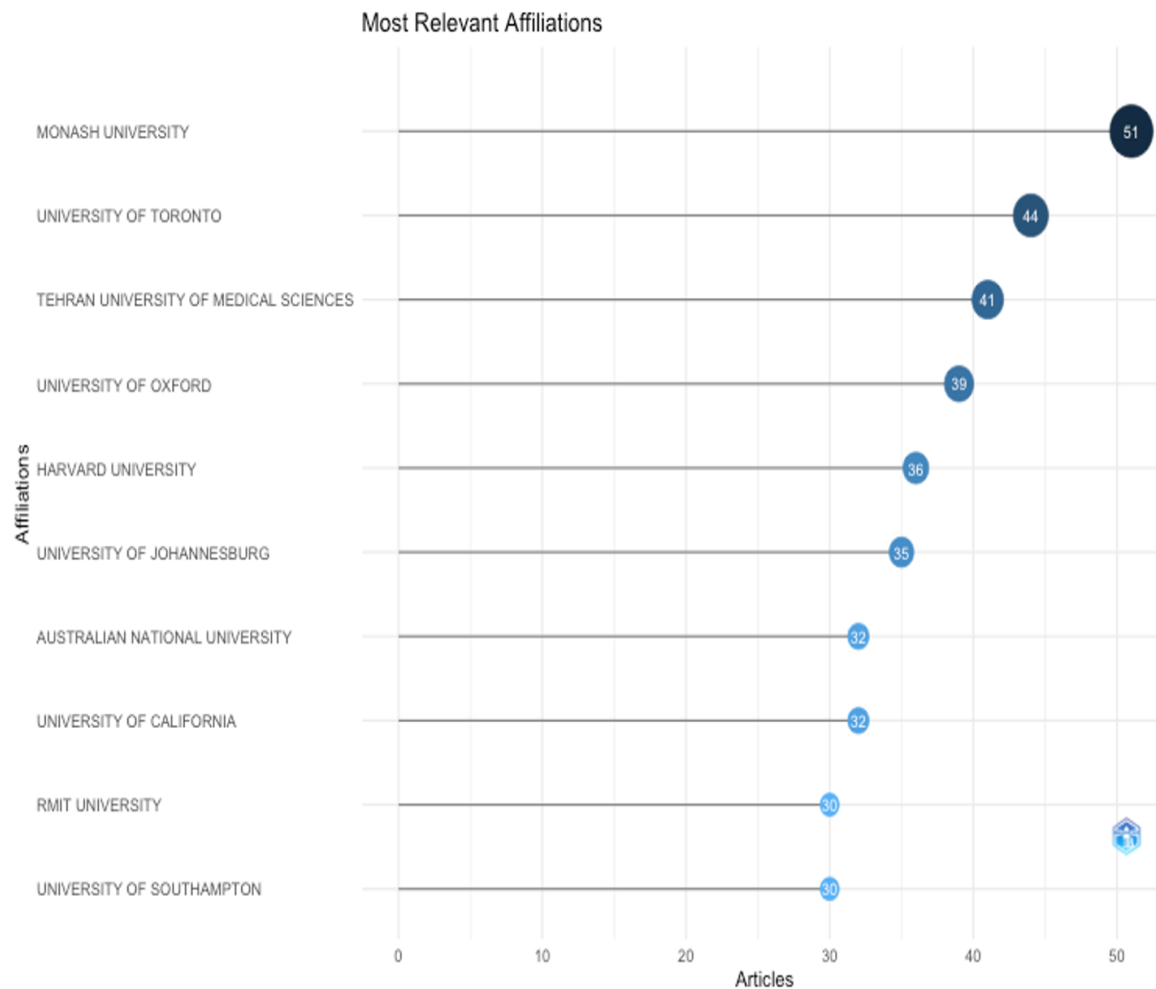


Figure 6. Top 10 institutions publishing research on gender dynamics in public administration leadership.

A second important feature of the figure is the clear geographic breadth of institutional participation, spanning Australia, North America, Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. Australian institutions are especially prominent, with Monash University, Australian National University, and RMIT University all appearing in the top 10, highlighting Australia's strong institutional investment in gender, governance, and leadership research. North America is also well represented through the University of Toronto, Harvard University, and the University of California, while Europe contributes through Oxford and Southampton. The inclusion of Tehran University of Medical Sciences and the University of Johannesburg is particularly notable because it suggests that the field has expanded beyond traditional Western public administration centers into more regionally diverse and interdisciplinary settings. This may indicate that gender dynamics in leadership are being examined not only within public administration and political science but also through public health, organizational studies, and development-oriented research environments. Overall, the figure suggests that scholarship on gender dynamics in public administration

leadership is anchored in a globally distributed institutional network, but one still led by well-resourced universities with strong international visibility, interdisciplinary capacity, and established research infrastructures.

Most Relevant Sources

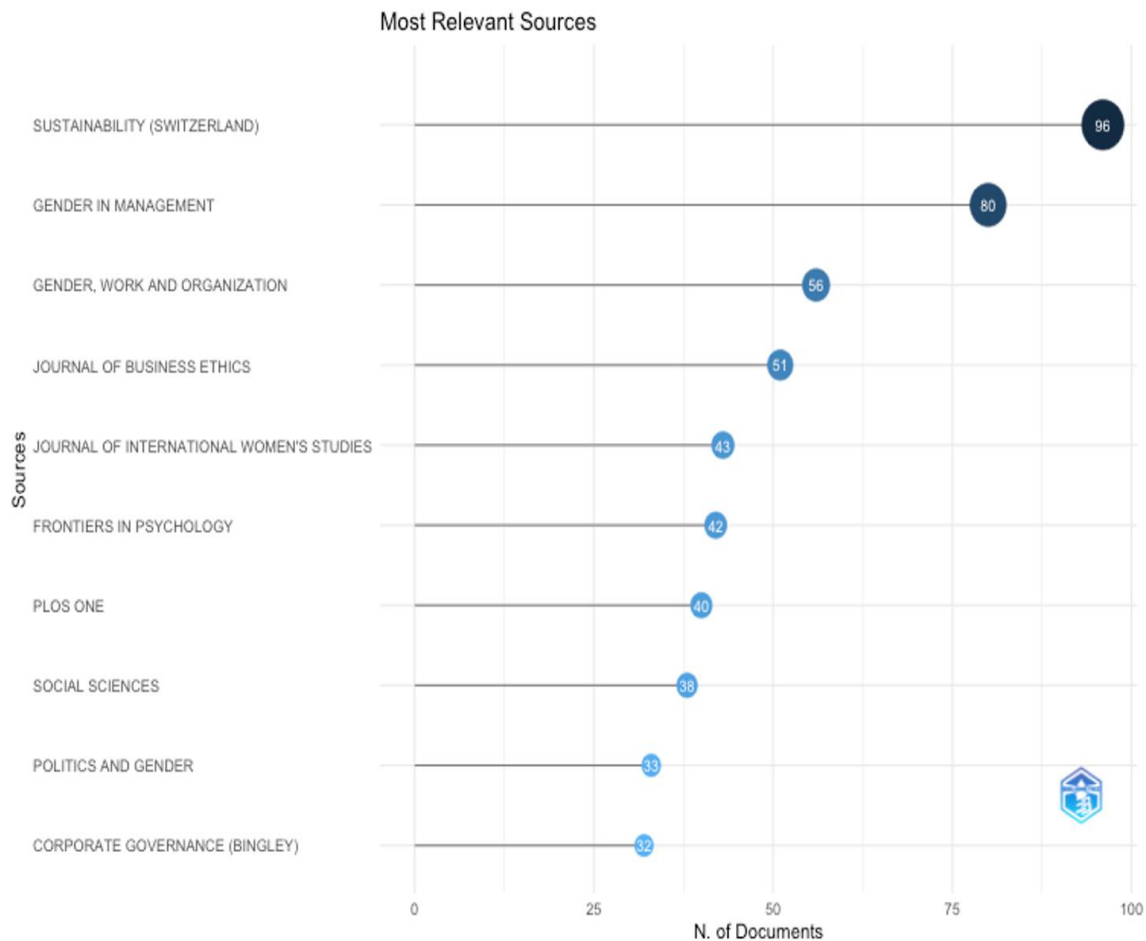


Figure 7. Most relevant sources publishing research on gender dynamics in public administration leadership research.

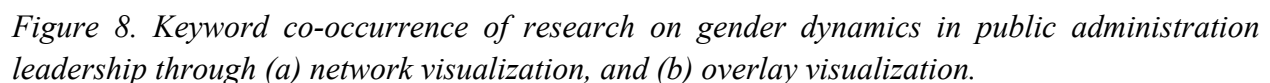
The distribution of the most relevant sources publishing on gender dynamics in public administration leadership reveals a clear concentration of scholarly output within a mix of high-impact, interdisciplinary, and specialized journals, as shown in Figure 7. *Sustainability (Switzerland)* emerges as the leading outlet with 96 publications, indicating a strong integration of gender dynamics within broader sustainability, governance, and development discourses. This is followed by *Gender in Management* (80 publications) and *Gender, Work and Organization* (n=56), which represent core disciplinary journals explicitly focused on gender and organizational studies. The prominence of these journals suggests that much of the research is grounded in organizational leadership, workplace dynamics, and gender equity frameworks. Meanwhile, *Journal of Business Ethics* (n=51) highlights the ethical and governance dimensions of gender

representation in leadership, particularly in relation to accountability, diversity, and corporate responsibility. The presence of *Journal of International Women's Studies* (n=43) further reinforces the global and socio-political orientation of the field, emphasizing cross-cultural and international perspectives on gender and leadership.

In addition to these core outlets, the inclusion of multidisciplinary and broad-scope journals such as *Frontiers in Psychology* (n=42), *PLOS ONE* (n=40), and *Social Sciences* (n=38) indicates that the field extends beyond traditional public administration and management boundaries into psychology, behavioral sciences, and general social science research. Journals like *Politics and Gender* (n=33) and *Corporate Governance (Bingley)* (n=32) reflect the intersection of gender studies with political institutions and governance structures, underscoring the field's relevance to both public and private sector leadership contexts. The overall distribution suggests a highly interdisciplinary publication landscape, where research on gender dynamics in leadership is disseminated across specialized gender journals, governance and ethics-focused outlets, and broad multidisciplinary platforms. This diversity of sources indicates both the conceptual richness of the field and its wide applicability across different domains, while also suggesting that scholars strategically target journals aligned with specific thematic emphases such as sustainability, organizational behavior, public policy, and institutional governance.

Keyword Co-occurrence Network Analysis

The keyword co-occurrence network in Figure 8A shows that research on gender dynamics in public administration leadership is organized around several strongly interconnected thematic clusters, reflecting a broad and multidisciplinary intellectual structure. At the center of the map, the largest and most frequent keywords—gender equality, women, gender differences, and gender diversity—form the conceptual core of the field, indicating that scholarship is primarily anchored in questions of representation, inclusion, and structural inequality. These central terms are closely linked to governance- and leadership-oriented keywords such as corporate governance, board of directors, and gender mainstreaming, suggesting that the literature extends beyond descriptive gender studies into institutional, managerial, and policy-focused analyses of leadership structures. The clustering pattern also reveals distinct but overlapping subthemes: one cluster emphasizes organizational governance and decision-making, including board independence, audit committees, and sustainability; another focuses on public and social dimensions such as women's empowerment, public health, gender-based violence, quotas, elections, and women's rights; while additional clusters engage with workplace behavior, job satisfaction, innovation, leadership, social role theory, and even digital and social media contexts. The density of links among these keywords indicates that the field is not fragmented, but instead characterized by substantial conceptual integration, where issues of gender in leadership are examined through institutional, social, political, and organizational lenses simultaneously. Overall, the network suggests a mature and expanding research domain in which gender dynamics in public administration leadership are embedded within broader debates on governance reform, equity, organizational performance, and social inclusion.



The overlay visualization in Figure 8B adds a temporal dimension and shows how the thematic focus of the field has evolved over time. Earlier research, represented by the darker blue and purple tones, appears to have concentrated more on foundational themes such as social role theory, norms, workplace, occupational segregation, and related conceptual concerns, indicating an initial emphasis on explaining gendered leadership patterns through behavioral, sociological, and structural frameworks. In contrast, the more recent yellow and green tones highlight growing attention to applied and contemporary themes such as corporate governance, board of directors, board independence, audit committee, environmental sustainability, political connections, women entrepreneurs, and green innovation, suggesting that the field has increasingly shifted toward governance outcomes, accountability, and the role of gender diversity in institutional performance. At the same time, central terms such as gender equality, women, and gender diversity remain active across the whole period, showing that the core concerns of the field have remained stable even as newer analytical directions have emerged. This temporal pattern indicates that the literature is moving from foundational discussions of inequality and representation toward more specialized and policy-relevant inquiries, particularly those linking gender diversity to leadership effectiveness, sustainability agendas, and organizational governance. Taken together, the two panels suggest a field that is both conceptually established and dynamically evolving, with recent scholarship expanding into more strategic, interdisciplinary, and outcome-oriented domains.

Conceptual Structure Mapping

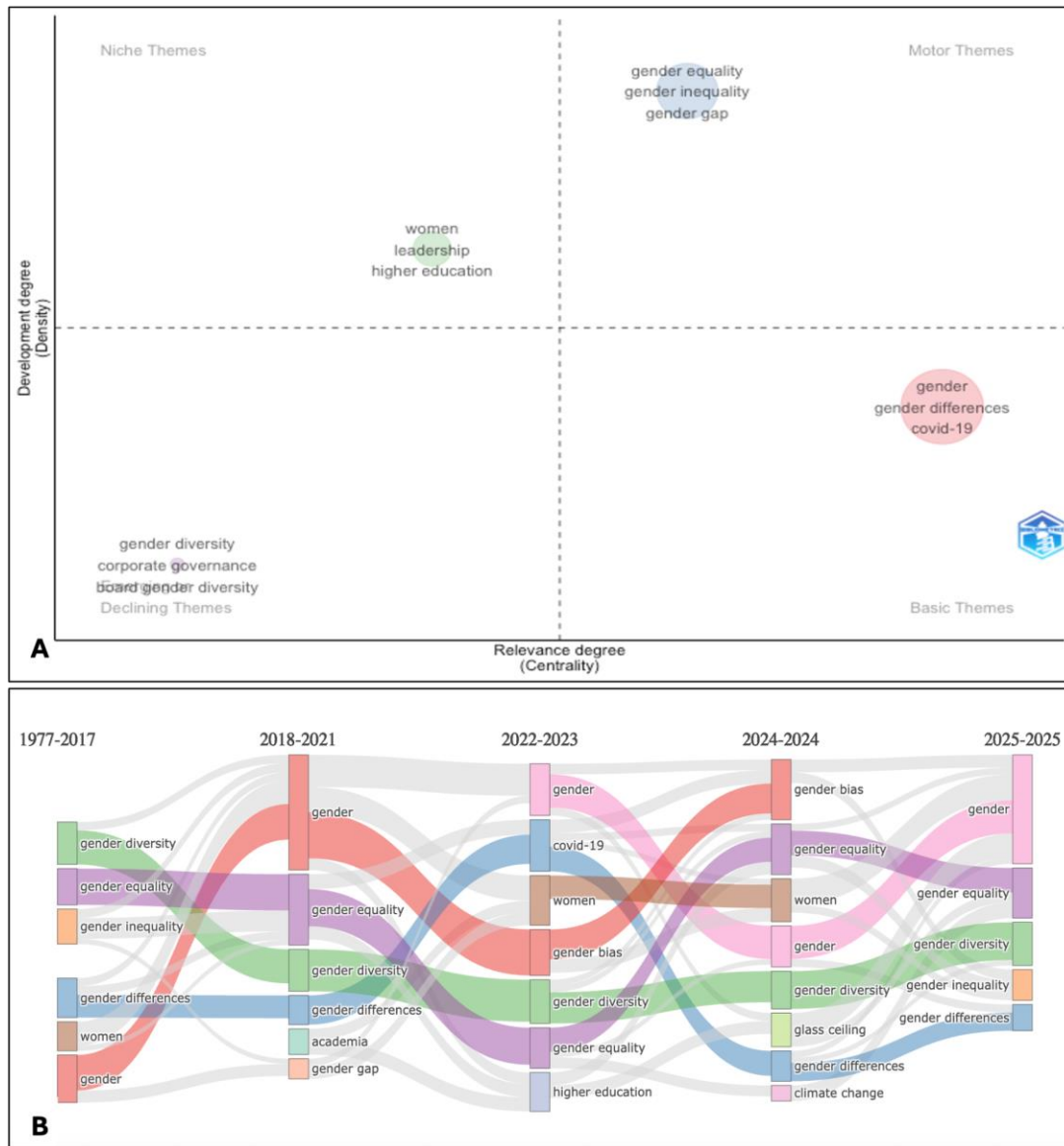


Figure 9. Strategic thematic map (A) and thematic evolution (B) of the research on gender dynamics in public administration leadership.

The strategic thematic map (Figure 9A) reveals a mature and conceptually differentiated intellectual structure in gender dynamics research within public administration leadership. In the motor themes quadrant, the cluster comprising *gender equality*, *gender inequality*, and *gender gap* occupies the highest levels of both centrality and density, indicating that these themes are not only deeply developed but also serve as the principal driving forces of the field. Their location suggests that scholarship has increasingly converged on systemic inequities in leadership representation, promotion pathways, and institutional power asymmetries as the dominant analytical core. In contrast, the basic themes quadrant is characterized by the large and highly central cluster of

gender, *gender differences*, and *COVID-19*, reflecting foundational yet still developing lines of inquiry. The prominence of this cluster suggests that recent work has strongly incorporated pandemic-related disruptions as a lens for reassessing leadership roles, work arrangements, and gendered administrative burdens in public institutions. Meanwhile, the niche theme cluster (*women*, *leadership*, *higher education*) demonstrates moderate density but lower centrality, indicating a specialized and internally coherent stream focused on women's leadership trajectories, particularly in academic and bureaucratic governance settings, yet with weaker integration into the broader public administration discourse. At the lower-left quadrant, *gender diversity*, *corporate governance*, and *board gender diversity* appear as declining or highly specialized peripheral themes, suggesting either a shift away from private-sector governance analogies or the migration of these discussions into more public-sector-specific conceptual frameworks.

The thematic evolution map (Figure 9B) further demonstrates how the field has transitioned from broad descriptive gender constructs into more policy-relevant and structurally nuanced debates over nearly five decades. During the 1977–2017 period, the literature was anchored in broad foundational nodes such as *gender*, *women*, *gender inequality*, and *gender diversity*, indicating an early emphasis on representation and descriptive disparities in leadership participation. The 2018–2021 phase marked a consolidation period in which *gender* and *gender equality* became dominant bridging themes, while *academia* and *gender gap* emerged as context-specific applications. By 2022–2023, the field diversified substantially, with *COVID-19*, *gender bias*, and *higher education* entering the thematic stream, reflecting a methodological and contextual broadening toward crisis governance, institutional discrimination, and sectoral leadership studies. This trajectory culminated in 2024–2025, where the evolution branches into highly policy-salient themes including *glass ceiling*, *climate change*, *gender bias*, and renewed emphases on *women* and *gender equality*. The persistence of *gender*, *gender equality*, and *gender diversity* as continuous longitudinal nodes into 2025 confirms their role as enduring conceptual backbones of the field. Collectively, the evolution pattern suggests a shift from descriptive gender representation studies toward intersectional, crisis-responsive, and governance-oriented leadership scholarship, positioning the field to increasingly address structural inclusion, resilience, and equity in contemporary public administration systems.

Discussion

The present bibliometric analysis demonstrates that research on gender dynamics in public administration leadership has undergone rapid expansion and conceptual consolidation, particularly in the last decade. The dataset comprising 5,556 Scopus-indexed publications reveals a marked acceleration in output beginning around 2018, with annual publications approaching 1,000 by 2025, suggesting that the field has entered a phase of exponential growth and institutional maturity. This trajectory reflects a broader paradigmatic shift in public administration scholarship, where gender is increasingly framed not merely as a normative concern but as a structural determinant of governance quality, institutional legitimacy, and leadership effectiveness. Consistent with global assessments, women remain underrepresented in leadership positions across public institutions, underscoring the continued relevance of this research agenda.

(Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2023). The expansion of this literature, therefore, signals both a response to persistent gender disparities and a growing recognition that inclusive leadership is integral to effective public governance.

Despite this growth, the geographic distribution of research output remains highly uneven, with the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, China, and India emerging as dominant contributors. This concentration suggests that the intellectual and methodological directions of the field are largely shaped by countries with well-established research infrastructures and gender policy frameworks. However, the relative underrepresentation of regions such as Africa, Latin America, and parts of Southeast Asia raises concerns regarding the generalizability and contextual sensitivity of existing findings. Gender dynamics in public administration are deeply embedded within sociopolitical, cultural, and institutional contexts; thus, limited representation from diverse governance systems may constrain theoretical development and policy applicability. International frameworks emphasize that achieving gender parity in public leadership requires context-specific strategies, including reforms in recruitment, promotion, and organizational culture (UN Women, 2014). Consequently, future research should prioritize inclusivity in geographic representation to ensure a more comprehensive and globally relevant evidence base.

The co-authorship network analysis further reveals an increasingly interconnected global research landscape, albeit one characterized by asymmetrical collaboration structures. Central nodes—particularly the United States—serve as primary hubs linking multiple countries, while peripheral nations are often connected indirectly through these dominant actors. While such patterns facilitate knowledge diffusion and international cooperation, they also reflect underlying inequalities in research capacity and agenda-setting power. From a public administration perspective, this has important implications for epistemic equity: the dominance of certain countries may influence which research questions are prioritized and which governance models are considered normative. OECD (2019) highlights that inclusive governance requires not only representation but also equitable participation in decision-making processes. Analogously, in the research domain, fostering balanced collaboration—particularly through South–South partnerships—can enhance the diversity of perspectives and promote more contextually grounded analyses of gendered leadership.

The thematic evolution of the field underscores a transition from foundational concerns with gender equality and representation toward more complex, outcome-oriented analyses. Core keywords such as “gender equality,” “women,” and “gender diversity” remain central, but emerging themes—including governance, leadership accountability, sustainability, and organizational performance—indicate a broadening of the research agenda. This shift aligns with theoretical developments in representative bureaucracy, which posit that increased representation of women in public leadership can influence policy outcomes, administrative behavior, and citizen trust (Meier & Nicholson-Crotty, 2006). Moreover, the integration of gender dynamics with areas such as environmental governance and corporate accountability suggests a growing recognition of the cross-sectoral impact of inclusive leadership. For public administration, this evolution is

particularly significant, as it reframes gender diversity as a driver of institutional performance and innovation rather than solely an issue of equity.

Finally, the distribution of prolific institutions and publication outlets highlights both the interdisciplinary nature and the evolving maturity of the field. Leading universities such as Monash University, University of Toronto, and University of Oxford play central roles in advancing scholarship, while the most relevant journals span gender studies, management, ethics, and social sciences rather than being confined to core public administration outlets. This interdisciplinary dispersion enhances theoretical richness but may also indicate a lack of consolidation within public administration as a distinct analytical domain for gender leadership studies. To advance the field, future research should emphasize methodological rigor and diversification, including longitudinal and comparative designs that capture institutional dynamics over time. Additionally, stronger integration between bibliometric insights and qualitative policy analysis can deepen understanding of how gender dynamics shape leadership practices in real-world administrative contexts. Overall, the findings suggest that while the field has achieved substantial growth and visibility, its next phase will depend on theoretical integration, geographic inclusivity, and stronger translation of research into gender-responsive public administration reforms.

Conclusion

The present bibliometric study demonstrates that research on gender dynamics in public administration leadership has evolved into a rapidly expanding and increasingly structured field, marked by strong publication growth, intensifying international collaboration, and a clear shift toward outcome-oriented and governance-focused themes. While the field has achieved significant intellectual consolidation, it remains geographically imbalanced and influenced by dominant research hubs, highlighting the need for broader inclusion of underrepresented regions and governance contexts. The findings underscore that gender diversity in leadership is no longer a peripheral concern but a critical component of effective, equitable, and sustainable public administration. Moving forward, advancing the field will require deeper theoretical integration, more context-sensitive and comparative research designs, and stronger translation of evidence into policy and institutional reforms that promote inclusive leadership in the public sector.

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