

# INTERRELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER AND RURAL LANDSCAPES IN LATIN AMERICA: A SYSTEMATIC AND BIBLIOMETRIC REVIEW

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## ABSTRACT

In this study, we conducted a systematic and bibliometric review to explore how gender dynamics influence rural landscapes in Latin America; a region that stands out for its rich cultural and socioeconomic diversity. We aim to identify the main theoretical and methodological contributions, where gender and rural landscape intersect, as well as any knowledge gaps that require attention. Fifty-seven articles selected from academic databases were analyzed implementing a bibliometric approach with co-citation analysis and network evaluation to identify research patterns and thematic clusters. Results indicate that women play a central role in sustainable natural resource management and climate change adaptation but face significant barriers due to socioeconomic inequalities and traditional power structures. Likewise, the review reveals a lack of studies that integrate intersectional perspectives and comparative approaches to better understand the complex gender dynamics in different local contexts. Findings suggest that rural development policies should be redesigned in order to become more inclusive and equitable, supporting women as leaders in their communities. Future research is proposed, incorporating more diverse methodologies and participatory approaches to capture rural women's experiences and design more effective policies that promote gender equality and environmental sustainability.

**Keywords:** cultural diversity, female empowerment, socioeconomic inequality.

## INTRODUCTION

The rural landscape encompasses the environment shaped by the interaction between agricultural activities, human settlements and natural elements, combining cultural, ecological, and historical significance (Mueller *et al.*, 2021; Vigotti, 2021). This concept describes the complex interrelationship between social, cultural, and biological systems that communities build over time. In addition to their agricultural function, rural landscapes provide vital ecosystem services and are home to rural communities. This diversity is manifested in the interaction between agricultural areas, natural components, and the human settlements that comprise them.

The study of rural landscapes has evolved, integrating multidisciplinary approaches and aspects such as planning, cultural ecosystem services, and

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urban-rural conflicts (Xie *et al.*, 2022; Dando, 2023). While initially focused on ecological and geographical aspects, it now encompasses social, economic, and cultural elements. In this context, a gender perspective has been incorporated to analyze how gender dynamics influence the spatial perception and experience, especially in Western cultures that have historically attributed a feminine or masculine dimension to landscapes.

Gender roles in rural landscapes shape perceptions, economic activities and power dynamics. Rural women's economic autonomy is essential for their empowerment and self-determination (Kondyli, 2022), and gender roles, linked to specific activities, reflect disparities that limit their representation and reinforce patriarchal power relations (Arias and Trillo, 2018). Gender inequality in Latin America underscores the importance of addressing these stereotypes and power imbalances to promote equality and human rights in rural communities (Santos *et al.*, 2020).

Latin America is an ideal context for studying the relationship between gender and rural landscapes, due to its cultural, social, and economic diversity. The region is home to a rich combination of indigenous, afro-descendant, and mestizo communities, each with its own cultural practices and landscape management systems. Rural areas face particular challenges, such as gender inequality and economic marginalization, which directly impact the dynamics between gender and landscape (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean [ECLAC], 2024). Analyzing these factors enables us to understand how these dynamics shape resource management and landscape perceptions, providing a basis for more inclusive rural development policies. We intend to identify the main theoretical and methodological contributions to the intersection of gender and rural landscape, as well as the knowledge gaps that require attention. This analysis identifies and synthesizes the main theoretical and methodological contributions to the intersection of gender and rural landscape, addressing gender roles in natural resource management, climate change adaptation, and the socioeconomic barriers faced by rural women. The review also seeks to fill gaps in the literature and propose new research directions to foster public policies and programs for the promotion of gender equity and environmental sustainability in the region.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A comprehensive bibliometric and bibliographic review of rural landscapes and women reveals significant comprehension of current research trends and future directions in these fields. The study of multifunctional rural landscapes identifies three primary thematic clusters: ecosystem services and management, multifunctional agriculture and land use, and sustainability and diversity; they highlight the importance of these themes for understanding the

multifunctionality of rural landscapes and their role in sustainable development (Compeán-Aguirre and López Serrano, 2024; Shaohua *et al.*, 2024).

In the context of sustainable agriculture and rural development, key themes such as technological advances, social aspects, economic impacts, and environmental considerations have been identified, emphasizing the role played by sustainable practices for improving rural well-being (Rusdiyana *et al.*, 2024). However, research on female entrepreneurship in rural areas remains underexplored, with a significant lack of studies focusing on gender-specific challenges and opportunities in rural settings. This gap is particularly evident in Latin American countries, where research predominantly focuses on urban areas (Quispe *et al.*, 2023). Women's empowerment in rural areas, especially with regard to maternal and child health, has been a focal point, but other sociocultural and economic aspects are under-researched, suggesting the need for more diverse and comprehensive studies (Kumar and Mishra, 2022).

Furthermore, the nexus between rural women and entrepreneurship has gained research interest only in the last decade, with India leading in terms of publications. Future studies are recommended to explore the impact of entrepreneurship education, microcredit, and information technology on rural women's entrepreneurship, which are currently inadequately explored areas (Agarwal and Ranjit, 2021). These findings collectively emphasize the need for a more integrated and multifaceted approach to studying rural landscapes and women's roles and functions within them, and provide valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers aiming to promote sustainable rural development and gender equality.

## METHODOLOGY

This systematic bibliometric review was designed to analyze the interrelationship between gender perspectives and rural landscapes in Mexico and Latin America. A comprehensive approach was used to identify research patterns, emerging areas of interest, and knowledge gaps. A literature search was conducted in the databases Scielo, Dialnet, JSTOR, and Scopus. The exploration strategy combined keywords and specific terms such as "gender," "rural landscape," "rural territory," "Mexico," and "gender perspective" to identify relevant studies that explore the interaction between gender dynamics and rural landscapes. A total of 23 articles were included from Dialnet, 7 from JSTOR, 26 from Scielo, and 2 from Scopus, covering a variety of sources that reflect the diversity of approaches and contexts in the available literature on the topic.

Although the titles of the selected articles did not always explicitly display these keywords, the documents included in the analysis contain components and perspectives, relevant to the study of rural landscapes and the gender

perspective. The searches were limited to documents published between 1978 and 2024, in Spanish and English. The study period was selected based on the availability of relevant publications since 1978; the earliest year with pertinent publications in the databases consulted. This time interval allowed us to capture both the historical evolution of the topics and also current trends, while providing a comprehensive understanding of developments in the study of rural landscapes and the incorporation of the gender perspective in Latin America.

### **Article selection process**

Initially, an exhaustive search of various academic databases using specific keywords yielded a total of 87 potential articles. To filter this selection, specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. Inclusion criteria required that peer-reviewed articles be published between 1978 and 2024, and that they provided theoretical, methodological, or empirical perspectives on the relationship between gender and rural landscapes in Latin America. Furthermore, articles had to be in Spanish or English and directly relevant to the topic being studied.

Articles that did not explicitly address gender dynamics or focused on urban settings were excluded, as were reviews, conference proceedings, and opinion pieces lacking robust empirical data or theoretical analysis. After applying these criteria, 30 articles that did not meet the requirements were discarded, resulting in a total of 57 articles selected for the final review.

### **Data analysis**

For the bibliometric analysis, we used the Bibliometrix tool in R. A co-citation analysis was performed to identify authors and articles frequently cited together; this allowed us to identify thematic clusters relevant to the study of gender and rural landscapes. Network visualization graphs were used to represent co-citation relationships, which helped identify principal areas of interest and the predominant theoretical and methodological approaches in the field. This approach allowed us, not only to identify the most researched topics, but also to identify gaps in the literature that could be explored in future research.

### **Generalized extraction and synthesis**

A standardized form was used to collect relevant information from each article, including study design, variables analyzed, key findings, author affiliations, keywords, and abstracts. Co-citation analysis facilitated mapping the intellectual structure of the field and provided an understanding of how different studies relate to one another. Finally, the results were synthesized

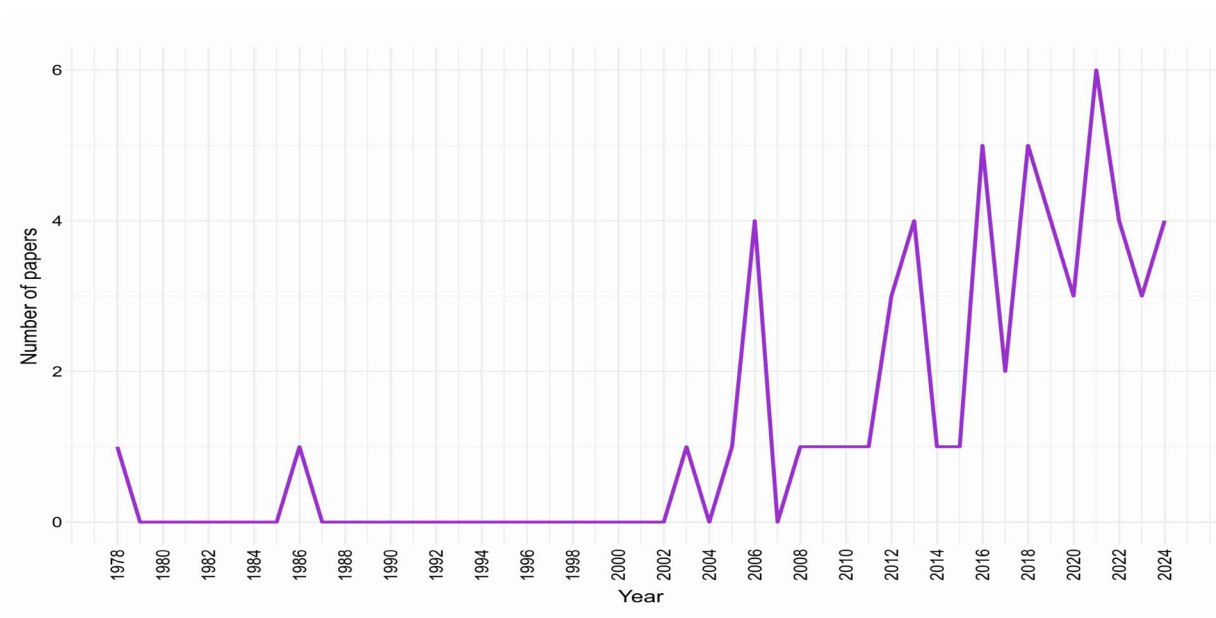
into a detailed report that offers a comprehensive overview of the current state of research on gender and rural landscapes in Latin America and identifies trends and gaps in the literature.

## RESULTS

This bibliometric study included a total of 57 documents published between 1978 and 2024, drawn from 46 sources, including scientific journals and books. These documents reflect an annual increase of 3.06% in the study of rural landscapes and gender perspectives in Latin America, with an average of 11.86 citations per document. This level of citations indicates moderate impact on the study context.

An analysis of scientific output (Figure 1) shows a progressive increase in the number of articles published over time, with a notable increase after 2003. This trend reflects a growing interest in the interrelationship between rural landscape and gender perspectives, which underlines the development and expansion of this field. However, fluctuations are also observed, indicating periods of lower output, possibly related to specific contextual factors or changes in research policies.

After analyzing the increase in scientific production, it is essential to understand how this research is distributed geographically. This not only gives us insight into the countries most active in this field but also reflects the

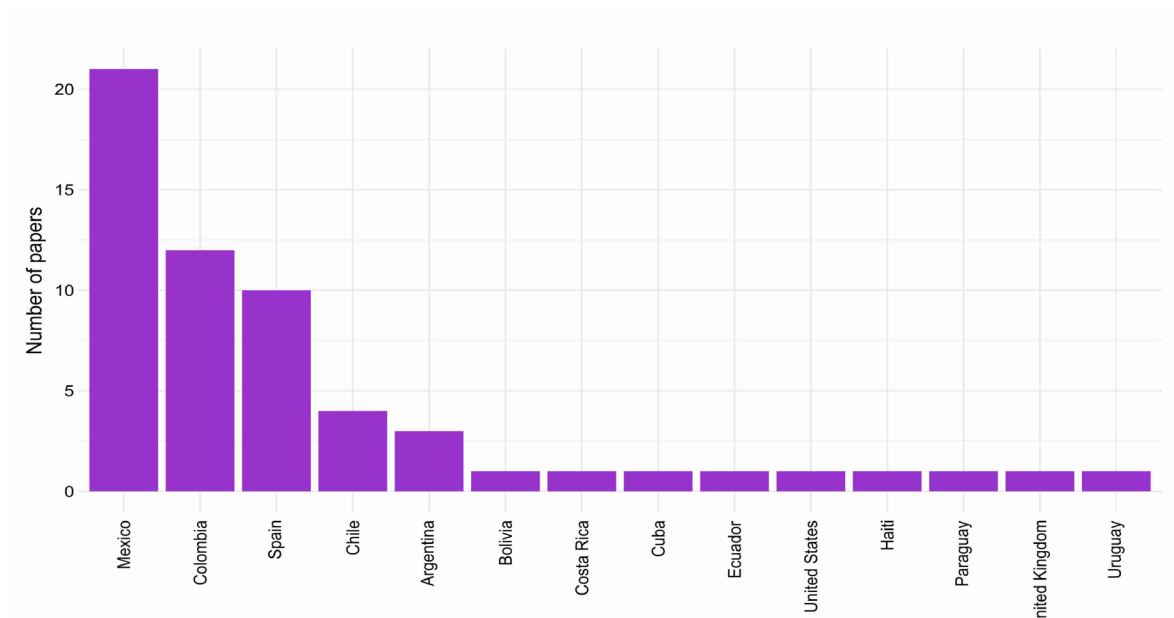


Source: elaborated by the authors.

**Figure 1.** Scientific production per year.

cultural and socioeconomic contexts that influence the research approach. In terms of geographic distribution (Figure 2), scientific production is primarily concentrated in Latin American countries, with Mexico and Colombia leading the way in terms of publications. This concentration suggests that these countries have a particular interest in the study of rural landscapes and gender, possibly due to their own socioeconomic and cultural realities. Furthermore, this increased scientific production may relate to the number of academic institutions and research centers dedicated to these topics. Mexico has universities such as UNAM, IPN, and UAM, which have consolidated lines of research in rural and gender studies. Similarly, in Colombia, institutions such as the National University of Colombia, the University of the Andes and the Pontifical Javeriana University stand out, promoting research on rurality and gender equity. The affiliation of these universities to academic networks such as the Union of Universities of Latin America and the Caribbean (UDUALC) has facilitated scientific collaboration and access to funding, which may explain their strong representation in scientific output that discusses the rural landscape and gender aspects of the region (UDUALC, 2024).

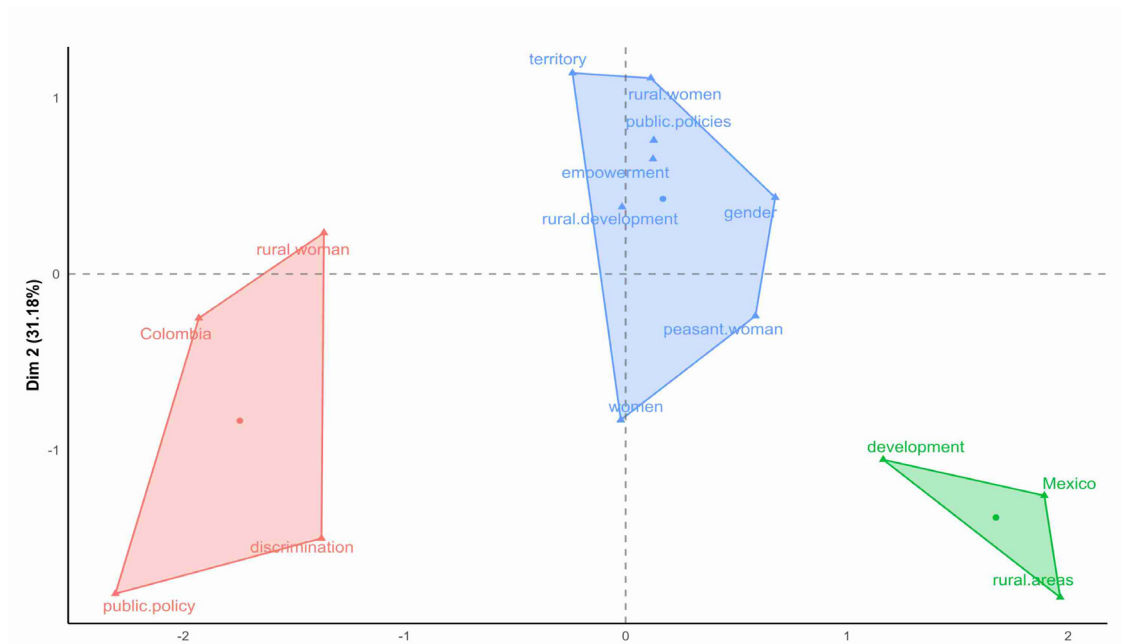
The conceptual structure map (Figure 3) shows three main groups of key terms, related to rural landscapes and gender in the literature. The first group focuses on terms related to empowerment and economic development, reflecting a focus on how rural women contribute to the economy through entrepreneurship



Source: elaborated by the study authors.

**Figure 2,** Scientific production per country, during the period 1978-2024.





Source: elaborated by the authors.

**Figure 3.** Map of conceptual structure.

and associational capacity. The second group highlights terms such as 'discrimination' and 'public policy', underscoring the ongoing struggle to deal with the structural barriers faced by women in rural contexts. The last group focuses on more specific topics such as 'rural areas' and 'rural development' in Mexico, indicating a particular interest in local dynamics and public policy.

The conceptual structure map provides a detailed view of the prevailing and emerging themes in the field. To delve deeper into the influence of this research, it is important to consider citation analysis that enables us to identify key studies and influential authors, who have shaped the direction of research in this field. Citation analysis reveals that, although most documents have a moderate impact, there are key studies that have significantly influenced the literature. Two works, Buendía-Martínez and Carrasco (2013) and Parada (2018) stand out. Buendía-Martínez and Carrasco (2013), authors of the most cited article with 134 citations, have contributed to the understanding of the rural landscape from a gender perspective. Parada (2018) also has a considerable impact and stands out among the most cited. These authors have not only influenced the direction of research, but also laid the groundwork for future studies in this context.

The conceptual structure map reveals three main clusters of key terms in the literature that deal with rural landscapes and gender: empowerment

In addition to the conceptual structure map, a word cloud (Figure 4) was generated, highlighting the most common terms in the literature, related to gender and rural landscapes in Latin America. This presentation enables quick identification of the central and emerging themes that dominate the



Source: elaborated by the authors.

**Figure 4.** Word cloud.



field of study. The terms 'rural women,' 'gender,' 'rural development,' and 'public policy' stand out due to their frequency and indicate the importance of these concepts in current research. Other terms, such as 'empowerment' and 'discrimination,' reflect areas of interest in how gender dynamics influence landscape management practices and rural development policies. The word cloud provides a complementary graphical view of the key themes addressed in the reviewed literature.

The most cited article in the review, written by Buendía-Martínez and Carrasco (2013), focuses on the intersection of gender and rural landscape management in Latin America. This study analyzes how gender dynamics influence resource management practices in rural communities and emphasizes the importance of including gender perspectives in rural development policies. Using a qualitative approach based on case studies, the authors investigate diverse rural communities in Latin America and conduct in-depth interviews and focus groups to collect data on women's and men's experiences in landscape management.

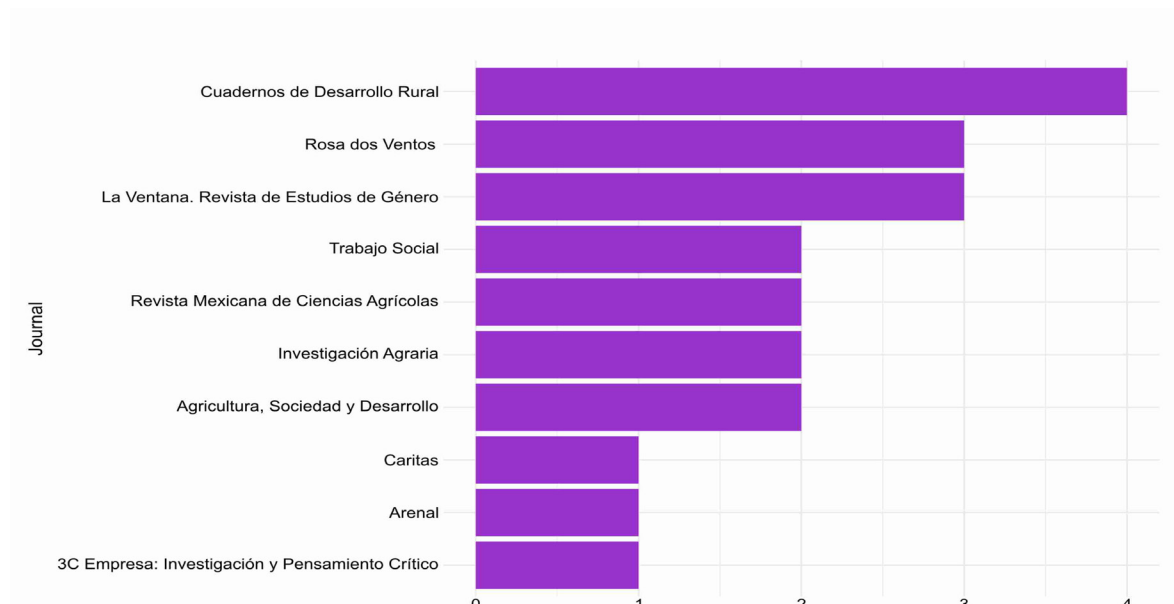
The findings of Buendía-Martínez and Carrasco (2013) indicate that women play a fundamental role in environmental sustainability, frequently leading community-based initiatives for conservation and adaptation to climate change. Despite their leadership, they face significant barriers due to traditional power structures and socioeconomic inequalities. This study has been widely cited for its key contribution to understanding the need to integrate gender perspectives into rural policymaking, emphasizing their impact on the sustainability of rural landscapes. It has also influenced subsequent research, promoting more inclusive approaches to rural development, while recognizing and valuing women's roles and functions in these contexts.

The article's qualitative approach allows for a deep understanding of women's and men's experiences and practices in landscape management; also offering contextual details and narratives that capture the complexities of gender dynamics in rural settings. Compared to other reviewed studies that use quantitative methods, such as surveys or statistical analysis to examine broader trends, Buendía-Martínez and Carrasco's qualitative methodology provides a more detailed and nuanced perspective on the challenges and opportunities facing rural women. This methodology complements quantitative studies by adding an interpretive dimension that enables understanding not only overall trends but also the individual motivations and experiences underlying these trends. However, it contrasts with studies that focus on large-scale data analysis, as its applicability may be more context-specific and less apt for generalization. The integration of both methodological approaches in the reviewed literature offers a more complete view of the relationship between gender and rural landscape, highlighting the need to apply both qualitative

and quantitative approaches to capture all aspects of this interrelationship. The most relevant sources in the field of study include Cuadernos de Desarrollo Rural and La Ventana: Revista de Estudios de Género, which have published the most articles on this topic, reflecting their central role in the dissemination of knowledge and field development (Figure 5).

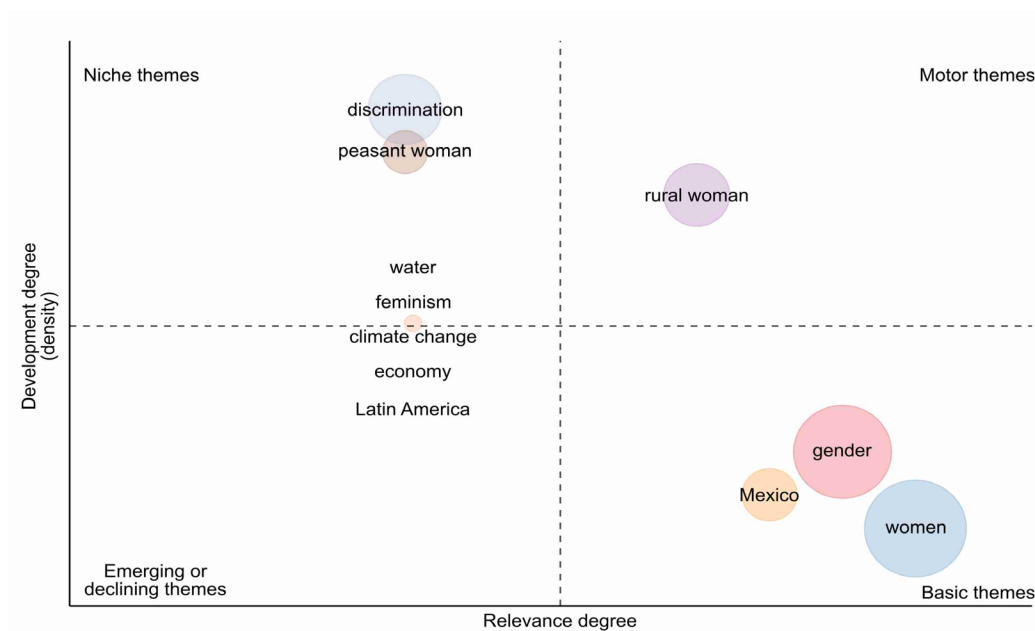
Analysis of the most relevant authors highlights the contributions of key figures in research on rural landscape and gender. Authors such as Sanabria-Torres and Aguiar-Sierra have published the most influential works and are recognized as leaders in the field, reflecting their fundamental role in expanding knowledge in this area.

After identifying the most relevant authors and their significant contributions, the next step is to explore how these themes are categorized and developed in the field. The thematic map provides this insight, highlighting both core themes and research niches that still require development. Categorizations of themes in this field of study are portrayed on the thematic map (Figure 6), according to their relevance and development. Topics such as “rural women” and “gender” stand out as driving themes, suggesting that they are well-developed and central to current research. In contrast, terms such as “discrimination” and “peasant women” are found in the niche themes quadrant, indicating limited development but potential for expansion. Finally, emerging themes such as “climate change” and “empowerment” reveal areas of increasing interest, in contemporary research.



Source: elaborated by the authors.

**Figure 5.** Number of scientific articles per journal.



Source: elaborated by the authors.

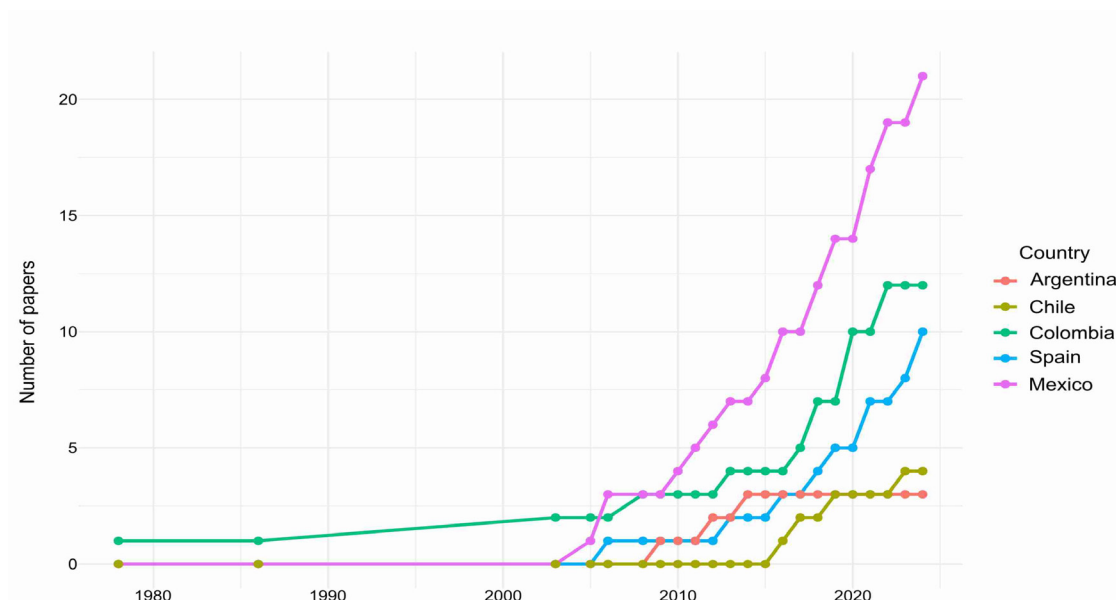
**Figure 6.** Thematic map.

Figure 7 shows the network of collaboration between countries researching rural landscapes and gender. Despite considerable scientific output, collaboration between countries is limited, with few significant links. Mexico and Argentina, although leaders in output have not demonstrated extensive collaboration with other countries, suggesting that research in this field would benefit from greater international cooperation.

To measure the local impact of sources (Figure 8), the H index is used, which highlights the influence of journals such as “Agricultura, Sociedad y Desarrollo” and “Cuadernos de Desarrollo Rural”. These publications have considerable impact on the field, making clear their relevance and contribution to the development of knowledge about the rural landscape and the gender perspective.

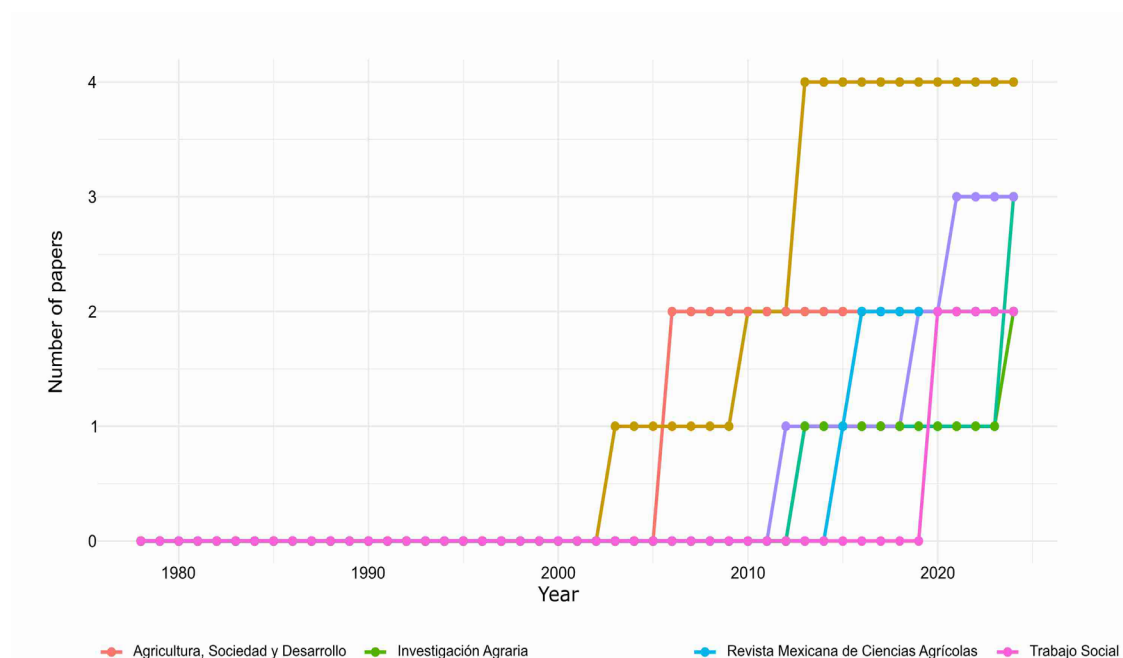
Finally, the analysis of production over time reveals that the main sources have maintained a steady flow of publications in recent years. This demonstrates a sustained interest in the study of rural landscapes and gender, with certain sources emerging as leaders in the publication of key research.

Despite significant advances in research on the relationship between gender and rural landscapes, there continue to be several gaps in the current literature. In particular, studies that explore in detail how rural development policies can be adapted to effectively respond to the specific needs of women in different



Source: elaborated by the authors.

**Figure 7.** Tendency to produce scientific articles by country.



Source: elaborated by the authors.

**Figure 8.** Tendency to produce scientific articles by journal.

cultural and socioeconomic contexts in Latin America are lacking. Furthermore, although some studies address the implications of gender as affecting resource management and environmental sustainability, a more in-depth analysis is needed to understand how these dynamics influence the long-term resilience of rural communities. Future research should consider the interrelationship between gender and other social categories, such as class, ethnicity, and age, to more fully capture the diversity of experiences and challenges faced by rural women. Likewise, it is essential to explore how women can be encouraged to lead sustainable initiatives and how policies can be improved to promote true gender equity. These areas of research will not only help close knowledge gaps but also offer valuable insights for inclusive and sustainable policymaking.

## DISCUSSION

Results from this systematic review highlight the complexity and diversity of rural landscapes in Latin America, especially when considering gender dynamics. The literature reviewed reveals that women play an essential role in natural resource management and in shaping these landscapes. For example, in Colombia and Bolivia, women have been recognized for their participation in sustainable practices such as agroforestry and indigenous agriculture, as they strengthen both food security and environmental conservation. In their research, Vázquez-Luna *et al.* (2013) and Martínez and Baeza (2017) highlight the importance of legally recognizing the rights of rural women and implementing public policies that promote gender equity, strengthening their management and decision-making capacity to foster more equitable and sustainable rural development. These findings are fundamental to understanding how women's participation in rural landscape management contributes to the sustainability of their communities and makes clear the need to integrate gender perspectives into rural development policies.

This review identified several emerging trends in research on gender and rural landscapes. One notable finding is the growing attention to how rural women not only engage in sustainable practices but also lead conservation and climate change adaptation efforts, as noted by Bose (2017) and Arias and Trillo (2018). However, significant gaps in the literature have also been identified. For example, there is a lack of studies that integrate overlapping perspectives that consider factors such as class, ethnicity, and age. The absence of these intersectional approaches limits our understanding of the complex dynamics affecting rural women in different contexts and also point to a critical area for future research (ECLAC, 2024). Furthermore, according to Farah (2008) and Sili (2018), there is a lack of research that examines how public policies can be effectively adapted to address gender inequalities in various regions of Latin America. These gaps in the literature highlight the need to develop more

inclusive and evidence-based policies that recognize and respond to the lived realities of rural women.

This study contributes to the existing literature by consolidating diverse methodological and thematic approaches that have previously been explored in a fragmented manner. While previous studies have highlighted women's contributions to environmental sustainability (Buendía-Martínez and Carrasco, 2013; Rodríguez, 2015), this systematic review reveals the need for a more holistic approach that considers both socioeconomic barriers and emerging opportunities for rural women. By integrating these approaches, this study expands the understanding of how gender dynamics influence landscape management practices and the power structure within rural communities. Furthermore, by identifying the lack of comparative studies and intersectional analyses, this review provides a solid foundation for future research that seeks to fill these gaps and enrich existing knowledge.

The findings of this review have important implications for rural development policies, especially in relation to gender equity and sustainability. Policies should be redesigned to explicitly recognize women's central role in natural resource management and community decision-making. For example, policies could incorporate women-specific training programs in conservation and sustainable management techniques, as well as promote the inclusion of women in leadership roles in community organizations and rural cooperatives. Furthermore, it is critical that policies consider gender relationships and recognize how factors such as class, ethnicity, and age influence the opportunities and challenges faced by rural women. Implementing policies that address these multiple aspects of identity could improve the effectiveness of interventions and promote greater equity in rural development.

For future research, it would be valuable to explore other questions: How do different forms of capital (social, human, economic) affect rural women's ability to engage in sustainable management practices? How could rural development policies be designed to address the structural barriers faced by indigenous women in particular? Furthermore, methodologies such as longitudinal studies that follow rural communities over time could provide more detailed information on how policy interventions affect long-term gender dynamics and the sustainability of rural landscapes. Research methods such as participatory action research would also be useful to directly involve rural women in the research process and ensure that their voices and experiences inform the findings and recommendations.

Although this study provides a comprehensive review of the literature on gender and rural landscapes in Latin America, it has some limitations that should be considered. Firstly, the review was limited to articles published in Spanish and English, which could have excluded relevant studies in



other languages, which could offer additional insights. Secondly, although a bibliometric approach was used to identify patterns and trends in the literature, this method depends on the availability and accessibility of articles in the selected databases, which could have biased the results toward more accessible or frequently cited studies. These limitations may have influenced the study's findings by providing a view of existing research that may be incomplete. Finally, our report was not always able to fully capture contextual differences across countries due to the diversity of approaches and methodologies used in the reviewed studies, possibly limiting the aptness of generalizing certain conclusions. Despite these limitations, this study provides a solid foundation for future research, which can address these gaps and develop a more holistic understanding of the interrelationship between gender and rural landscapes.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study provides a deeper understanding of the interrelationship between gender and rural landscapes in Latin America and highlights the importance of considering gender dynamics in rural policy development. Women play a pivotal role in natural resource management and shaping rural landscapes, contributing to environmental sustainability and the economic and social empowerment of rural communities. Likewise, they face persistent barriers that limit their full participation, such as asymmetrical power structures and socioeconomic inequalities, which are prevalent in rural contexts.

The need to develop more inclusive and equitable rural development policies is evident, recognizing women's active role in community management and leadership. Public policies should be designed to address the structural barriers faced by rural women and also to take advantage of the opportunities that can arise from greater female participation in landscape management and community decision-making, including the implementation of training programs in conservation and sustainable management techniques and the promotion of women's inclusion in leadership roles within community organizations and rural cooperatives.

Despite a potential bias due to the exclusion of relevant studies in languages other than Spanish and English or from outside the selected databases, the study offers a solid foundation for future research and public policy proposals, with a more inclusive and multifaceted approach consistent with gender dynamics in rural landscapes. Addressing these knowledge gaps and considering these recommendations can lead to more equitable and sustainable rural development in Latin America. Furthermore, future research is required that considers the interrelationship between gender and other factors such as class, ethnicity, and age to gain a more complete understanding of rural realities and design responses to these complexities. Incorporating participatory research

methods may also be critical for ensuring that the voices and experiences of rural women directly inform policy interventions and development programs.

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